

# NEW WRITING NORTH

## Readers, writers and audiences come together to consider their role in the Climate Emergency

What are our individual roles in the Climate Emergency? How can reading, writing and discussion help to deepen empathy and understanding, extend our imaginations, and encourage us to take action?

Over the next two years, poet and climate writer Linda France will be creating spaces for connection, discussion and personal reflection, which encourage all of us to respond to the Climate Emergency and see ourselves as part of its solution.

**WRITING THE CLIMATE** is led by Linda France as part of her climate writing residency at New Writing North and Newcastle University. The residency began in 2020 after both organisations declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. New funding from Arts Council England now allows Linda to build on the success of the original programme with a varied programme of activity that encourages engagement at all levels.

The public part of the project includes:

- A monthly **Writing Hour**: an online experiment in shared writing time, where people can come together simply to write, starting on Tuesday 30 March
- A **Climate Reading Group**: where participants discuss a contemporary work with an environmental theme, starting on Tuesday 13 April, reading *Mama Amazonica* by Pascale Petit
- **How to Start Writing the Climate**: a series of workshops for both established and emerging writers who are interested in turning their attention to the climate crisis, starting on Tuesday 4 May
- A podcast series, **In Our Element**: featuring special guests, poems and reflection, to be broadcast weekly in the lead up to COP26
- A new collective collaborative project, to follow the 2020 filmpoem **Murmuration**

Alongside this, Linda will also be conducting her own research, including being an observer at the North of Tyne Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change, and writing poetry for a new collection to be published by New Writing North in 2022.

**Linda France said:** "Despite the global pandemic, we laid strong foundations in the first ten months of the Residency and made our mark, but it was always clear there was more to be done. Looking ahead, the next two years of Writing the Climate offer space for more creative collaborative projects so as many people as possible can respond to the accelerating challenge of the Climate Emergency and establish a culture of active hope. Writing and reading don't just raise awareness,

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they *change* awareness – an important part of fulfilling our commitment to a fairer carbon-zero future. I am excited at the prospect of seeing how much we can achieve, from one small spot on the planet, how far the ripples of interconnectedness might extend.”

**Anna Disley, Executive Director (Programme and Impact) at New Writing North, said:** "Since declaring a climate emergency in 2019 New Writing North has been determined to act to make change. This residency is about navigating the complexity and tangled connections of climate change, but it is also about encouraging people to see how they as individuals can act to make change, providing individual agency in the face of this enormous challenge."

**Professor Julie Sanders, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost at Newcastle University, said:** "Our University has put social and environmental justice and climate action research and learning at the heart of its values and its vision so it is absolutely wonderful that the Arts Council has enabled us, working with New Writing North and Linda France, to take this thinking even further. Linda will help us all to find the words and the stories we need for collective sense-making, both in the build up to COP26 and in the urgent actions necessary to combat the climate and ecological emergency."

Linda France's eight full-length poetry collections include: *The Simultaneous Dress* (Bloodaxe 2002) and *The Toast of the Kit-Cat Club* (Bloodaxe 2005), *You are Her* (Arc Publications 2010) and *Reading the Flowers* (Arc 2016). Linda also edited the acclaimed anthology *Sixty Women Poets* (Bloodaxe 1993), a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation. She completed a PhD on writing, plants and landscape in 2019 and received a Society of Authors Cholmondley Award in 2020.

To follow Writing the Climate or take part in any of the activities, visit <http://newwritingnorth.com/projects/writing-the-climate/>

**Ends**

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## **Newcastle University**

As a member of the Russell Group of research intensive universities in the UK, Newcastle has a world-class reputation for research excellence in the fields of medicine, science and engineering, social sciences and the humanities.

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Its academics are sharply focused on responding to the major challenges facing society today. Our research and teaching are world-leading in areas as diverse as health, culture, technology and the environment.

The Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF) placed Newcastle University 16th in the UK for Research Power and the vast majority of our research (78%) was assessed to be world-leading or internationally excellent.

Newcastle University is committed to providing its students with excellent, research-led teaching delivered by dedicated and passionate teachers. This is reaffirmed by achieving the best possible outcome - a Gold Award - in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

## **New Writing North**

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England, and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, the Gordon Burn Prize, Read Regional, Young Writers and Durham Book Festival. New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and acts as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber & Faber, Sky Studios and higher education partners including Durham University, Northumbria University and University of York. As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.

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