

NEW WRITING NORTH

Writers sought to tell the story of England's high streets

A new project seeks to celebrate the unique distinctiveness of England's high streets and it's looking for writers to contribute.

High Street Tales is part of the cultural programme of the High Street Heritage Action Zones project run by Historic England. Led by New Writing North, the project will be produced in partnership by all seven of England's regional literature development agencies, including Literature Works, National Centre for Writing (representing the East of England), New Writing South, Spread the Word, Writing East Midlands, and Writing West Midlands.

England's high streets have always been at the heart of our communities. They are our landmarks and points of reference; our meeting places and marketplaces. Despite this, high streets are struggling, and need to adapt to survive – never more so than in a post-Covid landscape.

Every high street in England, whether it is in a seaside town or a post-war city centre, has its own history that creates identity and a sense of place. High Street Tales will tell the stories of such places all around England as Great Yarmouth, Hastings, North Shields, Leicester, Wednesbury, Weston-Super-Mare and Woolwich each come under a writer's gaze.

Through a series of digital forms, including an audio book, e-book and podcast series, writers-in-residence will uncover untold stories and work with communities in each location to each paint a picture of their local high street. Through the eyes of the people who live, work, and meet in our town centres, High Street Tales will depict the special role these streets have played – and continue to play – in all of our lives.

Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive of New Writing North, said: "We're delighted to be playing our part in supporting the future of our local high streets and celebrating the crucial role that they play in local communities. As Covid challenges everything about how we operate, it's important to focus and support local businesses, but also to celebrate the cultural role of our high streets and that they bring us together. Our writers-in-residence will work with the public, with shopkeepers and other retail organisations to explore what we value about our high streets and explore what their future might look like. It's exciting to be creating a national project that will gather stories from across England from our towns and cities, bringing together new ideas and creating new work".

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Peggy Hughes, Programme Direction at National Centre for Writing says:

“Our local high streets and town centres are places to gather, meet, celebrate, and witness, as well as to shop. During these strange and challenging days, it's important to be able to gather around the stories of what our town centres mean to us, and memories they hold, while we aren't able to gather physically. The streets and cobbles of Great Yarmouth have many stories to tell, and we're very pleased to be joining forces with other towns across the country to share those stories and hear theirs.”

Henderson Mullin, Chief Executive of Writing East Midlands, said: “We are delighted to be part of this national project and working with our sister organisations. We're also looking forward to uncovering tales of Leicester, which we've chosen because of the unique diversity of its population and the many communities that have a relationship with 'Town.' Leicester has a compelling story to tell about its High Street's journey from Roman thoroughfare, to the medieval pig market, Victorian promenade, and now echoing an international mercantile past as it prepares for the future. It'll be exciting to find a writer to uncover stories from local people, and to share them on a national platform.”

Helen Chaloner, Chief Executive of Literature Works, said: “Here at Literature Works we're delighted to be working in Weston Super-Mare and looking for a writer who can explore the tales of the High Street there. The project is an inspired way of giving voice to local people's experience of their town, showcased in words by a writer who has spent time connecting with them. We're looking forward to seeing who comes forward for this unique opportunity.”

The call out for writers is now open until Monday 2 November. Writers can find full information on their regional literature development agency's website.

Ends

Notes to editor

The call-outs for writers in residence for High Street Tales are now open on England's seven regional literature development agency websites.

Links below:

[Literature Works](#) (covering South West England)

[National Centre for Writing](#) (covering the East of England)

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[New Writing North](#) (covering the North of England)

[New Writing South](#) (covering South East England)

[Spread the Word](#) (covering London)

[Writing East Midlands](#) (covering the East Midlands)

[Writing West Midlands](#) (covering the West Midlands)