

NEW WRITING NORTH

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North East Launch Bid to be Capital of Creativity

A coalition of a charity, civic leaders, academics and industry leaders call on the new Labour Government to support its ambitious plan to make the North East the centre of creativity for the writing industries.

The coalition of supporters, led by Newcastle charity, New Writing North, and the North East's newly elected first mayor, Kim McGuinness, who represents two million people, is calling on the new government to invest in the region's cultural economy and infrastructure after the collapse of central government and local authority funding for the arts under 14 years of Tory rule.

The plan is to establish the first national centre for writing, based in Newcastle, to help reposition the southern and London bias of the writing industries.

North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness, said: "For too long, the North's creative talent has been overlooked and dismissed. Almost the entire British publishing industry is based in London, and decision-making centralised in the capital.

"It's time to abandon tired perceptions and the decades long control over funding and powers which stifles the nation's creative potential. Talent is classless, but not everyone gets the opportunity to develop it.

"The North East is a powerhouse of creativity and culture and as mayor, I have made commitments to build our economy around creative industries, writing, publishing, and film. Doing so will transform people's life chances, unearth hidden talent, and ensure our creative voice is heard on the national and world stage.

"Establishing the Centre for Writing in the North East is a vital first step to make that happen."

The key partners in the plan are New Writing North and Northumbria University, with the support of local and regional government and businesses and some of the country's largest publishers, including Hachette UK, Faber & Faber and Simon and Schuster.

The Centre for Writing will support writing and reading initiatives in the community as well as professional writers and publishing businesses across the North. It will be the first centre of its kind with a cross-section of national partners from the arts, academia, media, and publishing industries.

To acquire a building and develop the centre, New Writing North and Northumbria

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University have bid for a substantial grant from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Cultural Development Fund to match the grants already pledged by regional partners.

Claire Malcolm MBE, CEO of New Writing North said: "The cultural industries already play a huge role in our regional economy and this is growing. This investment would help revitalise the region, attract inward investment and help train and develop a new generation of local talent.

"I want young people here to be able to grow up to be publishers, writers, and creatives without presuming that they need to leave the North East to achieve their ambition."

The creation of the Centre for Writing will mean that the North East becomes a hub of creative talent, hitherto concentrated in London and the South East. It will create opportunities, build careers, and support and showcase undiscovered local talent.

Writing plays a major role in the UK's creative industries – underpinning publishing, film and TV, audio, gaming, music, theatre, communications, news, and media and developing areas of innovation in VR and AI - all of which will be brought together in the new Centre for Writing.

The UK's publishing industry contributes £11 billion to the economy. The industry exports more books than that of any other country and international demand for UK publishing is predicated to grow by a further 20% in the next decade. Bringing the industry to the North East will result in massive benefits to the regional economy.

The North East Child Poverty Commission reports 89% of all constituencies have at least one in four children growing up in poverty.

More than 118,000 children in Tyne and Wear are living below the poverty line. Of this number, over one third of children living in Newcastle are growing up in poverty.

A study undertaken by the Department of Work and Pensions demonstrates that being read to at age five is an important protective factor against poverty at age 30.

In the report, 'Words matter: the role of literacy in combating social exclusion', the National Literacy Trust states: "Lacking literacy skills puts people at extreme risk of social exclusion. People with poor literacy skills are significantly more likely to experience poverty, live in poor quality housing, be unemployed, become a perpetrator or a victim of crime, have poor physical or mental health and even lead shorter lives."

New Writing North already has a writing and publishing skills hub in Newcastle

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supporting skills and educational pathways and does significant work in higher education (HE) and in schools and communities across the North East.

This project will dynamically connect the dots between skills, education, and well-being.

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Notes to Editors

For further media info, please contact ann@causeuk.com m: 0753 489 2715

About New Writing North

New Writing North leads the development of creative writing and reading in the North of England. We are based in Newcastle upon Tyne, where we have produced nationally significant work since 1996.

We are proud to be a charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

We believe that writing talent is everywhere, but that opportunities are not. We work hard to both identify talent and create fantastic career-changing opportunities for people from across society.

We develop programmes and activities that inspire people to engage with creative writing and reading, whether this is to develop their skills and professional ambitions or for pleasure and wellbeing.

We help excellent writing find local, regional, national, and international audiences.

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