

17 January 2025

Government backs new centre for writing in the North East

At a national creative industries event at the Glasshouse in Gateshead today, DCMS announced £5 million investment in a new centre for writing in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) has awarded £5m of its Cultural Development Fund to help create a new centre for writing and publishing in Newcastle upon Tyne. The centre will develop the next generation of northern writers, become a hub for the publishing industry in the North and be a place where residents of the region can discover their writing potential.

The campaign for the new centre was led by the charity New Writing North, and Northumbria University, backed by local government and the North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness, with support from publishers including Hachette UK, Faber & Faber, and Simon & Schuster.

The new centre for writing will host programmes, courses, and events for professional and aspiring writers, for those who write purely for the love of it and for those who want to try creative writing for the first time. New Writing North has developed talented writers for nearly 30 years with enormous success. Early recipient of New Writing North support was Gateshead-born writer Peter Straughan who won the 2025 Golden Globe for best screenplay for *Conclave*.

The centre for writing will provide the opportunity for New Writing North to extend programmes that give people of all ages and from all backgrounds the opportunity to discover their writing potential. It will enable talented writers from the North to fulfil their potential and develop the skills, experience and connections needed to help them break into the publishing, TV, and film industries.

Claire Malcolm, CEO of New Writing North, who spearheaded the campaign said: "We are thrilled and excited that central government has chosen to support our vision for a centre for writing by investing in our region's cultural economy and infrastructure. Creative writing is the backbone of the UK's world-leading creative industries which employ 2.4 million. It also plays a vital role in wellbeing and public health. The centre for writing will provide an opportunity to expand our work with communities in the region and to work with even more brilliant Northern talent. It will also bring writers and readers together in a space which celebrates the power of storytelling."

The intention is for the centre to be based in Bolbec Hall, a 100-year-old, Grade II listed seven-storey building on Westgate Road, near Newcastle's Central Station.

Bolbec Hall, which is currently empty, was designed in 1907 by FW Rich as additional offices for the Literary and Philosophical Society next door.

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: “This is a big vote of confidence in the North East’s creative potential and will burnish our reputation as a leading region for the creative industries, with new jobs and opportunities coming to the region in writing, TV, and film. The centre for writing will help transform people’s life chances, unearth hidden talent, and ensure our voice is heard. The North East is a region on the rise and taking its rightful place in the world - standing tall and proud on the national and world stage, thanks to our world-class arts, culture, and creativity.”

Plans show the centre will be the first of its kind involving a cross-section of nationwide partners – from the arts, academia, media, and publishing industries - based in one, single dynamic site.

Cllr Karen Kilgour, Leader of Newcastle City Council, said: “This is the latest in a series of exciting investment announcements about Newcastle’s creative industries and an incredible time for our city. We want the new centre for writing to have a catalytic impact on our cultural heartbeat, with Bolbec Hall based in our city centre’s conservation area and Newcastle’s Culture and Creative Zone (CCN) known as Creative Central NCL.

“Not only will this help support talented residents in every corner of Newcastle, it can provide a huge economic boost to the economy of our entire city region, creating jobs, growth and opportunity for all as part of an inclusive economy. I want to thank Claire Malcolm at New Writing North and Northumbria University for spearheading this project, and for working with the City Council and Combined Authority to secure this funding for Newcastle.”

Alongside space for commercial publishers, a floor will be dedicated to Northumbria University, a key partner in the project. Students will be taught in this space so they can engage with other organisations within the centre. This will provide unique opportunities for networking, collaboration, and experiential learning, opening doors for them into the publishing industry.

The centre builds on the success of Northumbria’s MA Publishing, co-designed and co-taught with Hachette and New Writing North, which develops the skills and work experience that students need to work in this major UK growth industry.

Dan Monnery, Chief Strategy Officer, Northumbria University, said: “This initiative will bring the creative industries together with education, skills, and research to help build an inclusive economy. A new hub for talented writers in the North of England will help drive social mobility by providing better opportunities for individuals from the region to engage with writing and publishing.

“It will grow existing - and drive new - research activity and networks within the industry. And critically, it will support and create experiential learning opportunities for our students, such as placements and live projects, to support their future employability.”

The UK’s publishing industry contributes £11 billion overall to the economy and the industry exports more books than any other country globally. International demand for UK publishing is set to grow by a further 20% in the next decade.

New Writing North has worked with Hachette UK, one of the largest publishing groups in the UK, on various initiatives to rebalance career opportunities in publishing and the writing industries in the North.

David Shelley, Chief Executive of Hachette Book Group said: “We have got so much out of our partnership with New Writing North. From sponsorship of the Northumbria University Publishing MA to career roadshows in schools across the region, and from the Northern Writers Awards to the setting up of an audio studio in Newcastle. Like New Writing North, we believe that we will collectively reach even more readers and nurture diverse creative talent if we establish vibrant publishing hubs strategically across the UK. We are so thrilled for New Writing North on this major development, and we look forward to deepening our partnership and establishing an even bigger presence in the North of England with this move.’

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For more information and interview requests please contact Jill Read, Director of Communications, New Writing North on jillread@newwritingnorth.com or 07530 836 436.

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Notes to Editors

Creative industries generate £126bn and 2.4m employed: [Contribution of the arts to society and the economy - House of Lords Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/library/publications/publication/default-document-type/creative-industries-generate-126bn-and-2-4m-employed)

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.

<https://newwritingnorth.com/>

Northumbria University

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Northumbria makes a significant contribution to social mobility in the North East of England and the economy's demand for graduates. Almost a quarter of undergraduate students from the North East region study at Northumbria. Two thirds of Northumbria graduates who go into employment do so in the North East.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

Please contact media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests.

Creative Central NCL

Creative Central NCL is a project funded by the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) and Newcastle City Council, and is one of three Cultural and Creative Zones in the region funded North East CA.

It is located within the city centre's conservation area, with Clayton Street acting as a central spine and spreading outwards as far as The Common Room to the east, the Discovery Museum to the west, Grainger Market to the north, and the Centre for Life to the south.

With £1.7m of funding from 2022 – 2027 the project aims to make the city centre a place where creative people and careers thrive. The programmes and opportunities provided by the Creative Central NCL will be tailored:

- to meet the needs of existing cultural operators,
- to attract and retain creative talent,

- to facilitate the development of a diverse and highly skilled creative workforce for the future,
- to champion the development of sustainable, low-carbon, cultural production, and to catalyse the growth of the cultural economy and the wider economy of the city,
- create a distinctive new cultural destination for participants, residents, and visitors.

www.creativecentralncl.co.uk