



WRITERS'
CENTRE
NORWICH

— National Centre for Writing —

Thursday 4 December 2014

WCN TO DEVELOP PLANNED NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING IN THE HISTORIC DRAGON HALL

Writers' Centre Norwich announces a new development in its plans to create a National Centre for Writing in Norwich, England's UNESCO City of Literature.

As a result of partnership discussions with Norwich City Council, Arts Council England, Norfolk County Council and UEA, Writers' Centre Norwich is pleased to announce its intention to develop the planned National Centre for Writing and home for Norwich UNESCO City of Literature in the historic Dragon Hall in King Street, Norwich.

After careful consideration by the current tenants, the Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust (who funded the original restoration of Dragon Hall), in partnership with Norwich City Council, the outstanding Grade I listed building has been offered as a potential alternative home for the prestigious National Centre for Writing.

Thanks to the outstanding stewardship of the current tenants, Dragon Hall has been subject to much improvement in recent years, and is already equipped with many of the spaces and facilities that were at the heart of WCN's previous plans to develop the NCW at Gladstone House.

Chris Gribble, CEO of WCN says:

"We are delighted with this new opportunity for the National Centre for Writing to be based in Dragon Hall. This was not an option when we were originally looking at venues in Norwich, and it is an opportunity that, after careful consideration, we are delighted to accept. Dragon Hall already offers an intimate and private venue for readings, office space, a garden, space for writers and translators to live and work and teaching space for young people and adults alike. In fact, much of what we need as a National Centre for Writing is already there making the economic case for Dragon Hall as the home for NCW as clear and compelling as the artistic case."

Graham Creelman, Chair of Writers' Centre Norwich says:

"As a jewel in Norwich's heritage crown, Dragon Hall is a rich and vibrant part of our history redolent with stories and narratives that will bring our UNESCO City of Literature programmes alive. At the heart of a community in the process of great development, it also allows us to be part of the regeneration of a key part of the city at a crucial time. We will aim to be proud custodians of Dragon Hall and this centre for visitors to and residents of the city. The NCW at Dragon Hall should prove to be of lasting artistic and economic benefit to Norwich and the whole region."

These developments mean that Writers' Centre Norwich is no longer pursuing its plans for the National Centre for Writing at Gladstone House and will be withdrawing from the ACE Large Capital Funding programme with the full backing and support of Arts Council England.

Antonia Byatt, Director, Literature and the South East, Arts Council England, said:

“We are proud to support Writers' Centre Norwich's move to Dragon Hall. Writers' Centre Norwich already plays an important role for writers and academics in the East of England; this move will support its ambitions to become a major new centre for writing in England's only UNESCO City of Literature.”

Writers' Centre Norwich aims to move into Dragon Hall at some point after the Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust relinquishes the lease in spring 2015, and to evolve into the National Centre for Writing in the autumn of 2016 in line with its original plans.

In the run-up to the 2016 opening as a National Centre for Writing, the organisation will continue its fund-raising campaign in order to develop the already approved south wing as an innovation and education space and to update key elements of the building's infrastructure to secure Dragon Hall's long term future for the city, its residents and visitors.

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Photographs are available on request

Editor's Notes

Writers' Centre Norwich

Writers' Centre Norwich is the literature development agency for the East and last year led the successful bid to have Norwich nominated as England's first UNESCO City of Literature, one of only eleven in the world. WCN supports emerging and established writers and seeks to explore the artistic and social power of creative writing through pioneering and collaborative projects with writers, readers, schools, libraries and cultural partners. Its programme includes mentoring, workshops, conferences, live literature events and talks by internationally acclaimed writers. Speakers at the WCN Worlds Literature Festival, which



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takes place in June, have in recent years included JM Coetzee, Michael Ondaatje and Jeanette Winterson.