

Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature

MEMBERSHIP MONITORING REPORT
UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK

DECEMBER 2019

**Building a
better world
with words.**



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1. Executive Summary

“The UNESCO designation has already had a huge effect on Nottingham. It has given us numerous literary initiatives and events, national and international. As part of our bid to become a UNESCO City of Literature, we promised to build a new city library, and we are committed to doing this by the end of 2021. In doing so, we will learn from the best libraries in the world, especially those in the UNESCO Creative Cities. The designation has also helped the city to become more confident and more joined up, building networks, bringing in new investment and forging a powerful, ongoing partnership between the city council and our two universities. I want to develop that partnership further. Together, we can harness the synergy we create and make this city an even better, bolder, more outward-looking international creative city of literature.”

- Councillor David Mellen, Leader of Nottingham City Council

A vibrant city of 331,000 in the heart of the midlands of England, Nottingham has a rich and rebellious literary history. The city has made a remarkable contribution to literature, underpinned by the city's tradition of civil resistance, political defiance and social justice. There's a contrarian common thread running through our heritage from Byron to Lawrence through Sillitoe to Sleaford Mods and our thriving, multi-faced literary scene.

This energy can be witnessed in its many bookshops across the city, including Page 45 comic bookshop and the award-winning Five Leaves Bookshop, the only independent bookshop to open in any UK city centre this century. The city also has eighteen public libraries, and Bromley House, founded in 1816, is a flourishing independent lending library and one of the few remaining subscription libraries in the country.

Our city is home to a rich variety of novelists, playwrights, screenwriters, comic creators and poets. Nottingham Playhouse is the 2019 Regional Theatre of the year. We have a dynamic grassroots poetry scene

with numerous live literature and spoken word events, including an annual Poetry Festival.

Despite this strong literary heritage, a dichotomy exists concerning the current low level of literacy which prevails in Nottingham, and is directly linked to the city's poverty rates. Out of 317 districts in England, Nottingham is the eleventh most deprived. Literacy and reading are the most powerful weapons we have in alleviating patterns of poverty and inequality.

Nottingham was designated as a UNESCO City of Literature in 2015. The designation is managed by a charitable company which receives core funding provided in equal measure by Nottingham City Council, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham, and generous start-up strategic funds awarded by Arts Council England. Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature has led the way in terms of how Cities of Literature can be structured and governed through strong public, university and community partnerships.

Nottingham and Agenda 2030

Nottingham City of Literature embraces the Agenda 2030 sustainability goals, and in particular, our first four years has seen a focus on literacy which corresponds with Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

Our mission

**Building a better world
with words.**



We exist to...

- Advocate the importance of literacy
- Inspire more people to discover and love reading
- Shine a spotlight on the Nottingham writers of today and tomorrow
- Broker opportunities for international exchange and creative collaboration.

In pursuit of this, we have agreed three strategic goals, to be achieved by 2023

Place

To be a lead partner in Nottingham's cultural sector, promoting Nottingham's strong identity as a UNESCO Creative City and providing strong leadership and advocacy on the local, national and international stage.

Learning

To host events, develop programmes, commission new work and create new partnerships with schools, libraries, universities and communities and helping to grow diverse audiences for reading and writing.

International

To share knowledge, learning and best practice, and broker opportunities for creative collaboration.

We will make progress against these goals through a number of special projects with different sustainability goals as a focal point, as described in Section 6.

2. General information

2.1 Name of the City

Nottingham

2.2 Country

United Kingdom (England)

2.3 Creative field of designation

Literature

2.4 Date of designation

2015

2.5 Date of submission of current report

December 2019

2.6 Entity responsible for the report

Nottingham City of Literature
Bromley House Library
Angel Row
Nottingham
NG1 6HL

2.7 Previous reports submitted and dates

N/A

2.8 Focal points of contact

Sandeep Mahal, Director,
Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature

<https://nottinghamcityofliterature.com/>
[@NottmCityOfLit](https://twitter.com/NottmCityOfLit)

3. Contribution to the network's global management

3.1. Number of UCCN annual meetings attended in the last four years

UCCN Annual Meetings

Ostersund, Sweden: 2016

Enghien les Bain, France: 2017

Krakow-Katowice, Poland: 2018

Fabriano, Italy: 2019

Cities of Literature Sub-network Annual Meetings

Dublin, Ireland: 2016

Barcelona, Spain: 2017

Iowa City, USA: 2018

Nottwich, UK: 2019

3.2 Hosting of a UCCN annual meeting and dates

Nottwich (Nottingham/Norwich), UK: 2019

3.3 Hosting of a working or coordination meeting addressed to one or more specific UCCN creative field representatives

Hosted and chaired the bi-monthly Cities of Literature working group meetings via Skype

3.4 Hosting of an international conference or meeting on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with a large participation of members of the Network

N/A

3.5 Financial and/or in-kind support provided to UNESCO's Secretariat in order to ensure the management, communication and visibility of the UCCN (type of contribution, estimated value, main objectives, and dates)

£15,000 in-kind contribution p.a. which supports the Director to carry out her role as the Coordinator of the Cities of Literature sub-network and represent the network at Steering Group Meetings.

3.6 Membership of the Steering Group and period

Sandeep Mahal, since September 2018.

3.7 Participation in the evaluation of applications (number of applications evaluated per year)

2017 – 13 applications

2019 – 18 applications

4. Major initiatives implemented at the local level to achieve the objectives of the UCCN

UCCN Objectives

1. Strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognised creativity as a strategic factor for their sustainable development
2. Stimulate & enhance initiatives to make creativity an essential part of urban development, with partnerships involving public & private sectors and civil society
3. Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services
4. Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector
5. Improve access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals
6. Fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans

In conjunction with the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals highlighted in the executive summary, Nottingham City of Literature has also embraced the ethos of the UCCN and its objectives, and identified three key focal points to achieve its mission and aims.

They are:

- Support and encouragement of reading among young people
- Literature in public places
- Support for creativity and use of new technology

Within these areas, a number of projects and programmes have been successfully implemented through partnerships with a variety of local and national organisations.



4.1 Support and encouragement of reading among younger people

4.1.1 Read On Nottingham

1 in 8 children in deprived areas of Nottingham do not own a book.

Read On Nottingham is encouraging the next generation to become lifelong readers. This is a community-driven campaign from the National Literacy Trust and Small Steps Big Changes, backed by Nottingham City Council in a collective effort to improve literacy and inspire a love of reading for pleasure. The campaign encompasses a range of programmes and activities to equip children and young people in Nottingham with the literacy skills they need to succeed in life.

Read On Nottingham, with assistance from Nottingham City of Literature, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and other local education/literature-focused initiatives, encourages the whole city to make reading, writing and talking a priority.

Our programmes include...

Book Gifting – a partnership with Dolly Parton Imagination Library



The Imagination Library is a book-giving scheme for children aged 0-5. This scheme aims to improve a child's literacy skill, which promotes school readiness. It is:

- Delivered in 10 out of 20 wards in Nottingham
- As of 1st October 2019, 5367 children are registered
- 210,756 books delivered since 2012.

'Ambitious for Every Child'

A campaign which asked all primary school children in the city to recommend their favourite children's book to build the Nottingham 100 Reads list. 25 primary schools and all libraries in the city took part

with over 4,000 nominations for books. The list of the Top 100 Reads is available in age categories and displayed as a height chart gifted to all primary schools in the city.



To celebrate the 'Big Reader? Big Future' campaign, eight furry friendly monsters were hidden in every city library in Nottingham, each holding a secret word.

The Big Monster Hunt campaign saw:

- 24,000 children take part in a reading activities
- 3,000 take part in the Big Monster Hunt
- A 40% increase in library membership for under 12s
- A 13% increase in more library books borrowed in 2019 compared with 2018
- A 32% increase in more books borrowed by under 5s

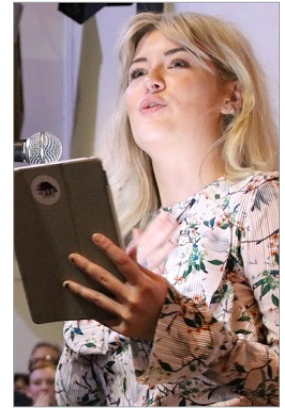
Scavengers Transition Project

Working to improve transition between primary and secondary school, children's publisher, Usborne Books donated 400 free copies of Scavengers, by local children's author Darren Simpson, in an area of Nottingham with the greatest literacy vulnerability. 6 primary schools started the book and on arriving at their secondary school in September, the children received their own copy of the book to finish and keep, and they took part in discussions with the author.



4.1.2 Young Poet Laureate

Appointed on National Poetry Day in 2017, Georgina Wilding became the first Young Poet Laureate for Nottingham. The programme worked towards the goal of developing new talent and making poetry more accessible to young people across the city.



The laureate achieved:

- a framework of over 50 public events reaching audiences of 53,000
- 5 youth-focussed residencies
- Profile beyond Nottingham reaching audiences of 1,500+ in Birmingham, Manchester and Newark
- Engagement with local media outlets including Left Lion Magazine, coverage on the BBC, ITV, Capital and Notts TV, and in the Nottingham Post
- Guest on BBC Radio 4 special broadcast on Front Row – reaching a national audience of 4 million listeners
- Performances alongside the UK's three National Poet Laureates, Carol-Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay and Gillian Clarke.

The laureateship has provided many international opportunities for Georgina, including:

- Two-month paid international residency in Krakow
- Performances in Granada for World Poetry Day and at the Off Milosz poetry festival dedicated to independent and experimental poetic works.
- Collection featured in a new 'Our Voices Are Verses' anthology published by Big White Shed

Georgina Wilding has since been appointed as the first Creative Director of Nottingham Poetry Festival and named in Nottingham's 30 Under 30, which highlights rising stars who "represent the spirit, drive and energy of a thriving city".

The Young Poet Laureate is supported by:



- Been exposed to new types of writing, writers and spaces to nurture their voices.
- Developed ability and confidence to articulate their thoughts and feelings on paper

Young City of Literature Ambassadors is supported by:



Nottingham
City Council

4.1.3 Young City of Literature Ambassadors



Inspiring the next generation of creative talent across the city

Launched in 2019, Young City of Literature Ambassadors is a new award and skills development opportunity given to a young person aged 14 - 18 studying in a Nottingham secondary school. This prestigious role recognises and rewards talent and potential, providing a programme of inspiring activities, skills development and networking.

14 Young City of Literature Ambassadors have carried out a range of activities including:

- Co-produced a week-long literacy festival
- Delivered creative writing sessions to their peers
- Shared their poetry in front of 250 students
- Attended and reviewed Nottingham Poetry Festival
- Competed in a poetry slam
- Performed at the Nottingham Young Writers Showcase

4.1.4 Eastwood Comics



Connecting young people to their local literary heritage

Eastwood Comics was inspired by the life, work and times of Nottingham-born writer, D.H Lawrence and James Walker's ground-breaking 2015 Dawn of the Unread web comic project, the book of which was published by Nottingham City of Literature and Spokesman Books. Under the mentorship of graphic novelists David Hine, Rachael Ball, and Luke Healy, 24 young people developed comics inspired by 'Lawrentian' themes of class, war and pacifism, censorship and non-conformity, sex and gender. This immersive experience saw the students visit the Manuscripts and Special Collections of the University of Nottingham to look at original material by D.H Lawrence which helped to develop a deep understanding of their local heritage and greater confidence in their own creativity.

The Eastwood Comics project has been explored in an exhibition at the D.H Lawrence Birthplace Museum, and a box-set of six comic collections published by SelfMadeHero. These comics will be distributed to schools and libraries in 2020 with an educational resource pack incorporating lesson plans, writers visiting schools, literary walking tours and encouragement for readers to write and draw their own stories.

There is no doubt that the project had considerable and lasting impact on all those who engaged with it. The benefits of this project are most clearly seen in the 21 participants who took the Eastwood Comics programme. The outcomes are impressive and feedback shows that the project’s major aims – to develop artistic skills, build confidence, civic pride and appreciation of Nottingham’s literary heritage – were amply met for the cohort which took the Eastwood Comics programme. Additionally, elements of the project promoted youth leadership. Young ambassadors for the City of Literature were given a platform at the project symposium and one result of this was their ‘Manifesto for Change’, which clearly inspired all present. Their manifesto was also transcribed to ensure it reached audiences beyond the symposium itself.

Eastwood Comics is supported by:



4.2 Literature in Public Places

4.2.1 Big City Reads



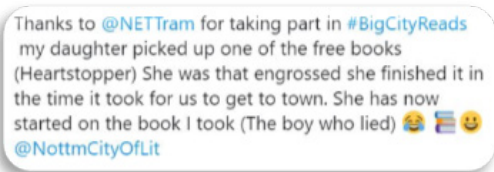
One city. Four books. Stories that matter.

The Nottingham Big City Reads campaign launched in July 2019, turning the city into one massive, interactive book group. In partnership with Nottingham City Libraries, our aim was to foster a positive attitude to reading through a shared exploration of uplifting books. The Young City of Literature Ambassadors championed four Young Adult titles, and encouraged everyone in Nottingham to adopt these titles as their own. Over 2,000 books were distributed and clues were left on social media using the hashtag #BigCityReads on where these books could be found (in libraries, schools, hospitals, Old Market Square, bookshops, gaming cafes and on public transport).

The success of Big City Reads was evident when distribution partners responded with positive feedback: It was really well organised with good communication between us and Big City Reads. A very positive initiative that hopefully we can be part of again. Nottingham Contemporary.



The Big City Readers’ Day brought together 120 young people with authors of the four chosen books [image of the four authors] for in-depth talks about their approaches to writing, the books that have inspired them, followed by an interactive workshop where young people worked on prompts to inspire them into writing and reading.



Big City Reads is supported by:



4.2.2 StoryParks



Promoting a sense of belonging and pride

'StoryParks – A Summer of Imagination' was designed to make reading more accessible to children and families through a series of creative sessions and self-led activities, all set in magical 'story dens' in five of Nottingham's city parks. Community engagement was key. Prior to the summer holidays, children engaged within their primary school settings, to help create the StoryParks area in each park. There was significant interaction between different sectors of the communities, welcoming all families into the 'neutral' park environment to engage in accessible activities.

- 6,944 Children and 2,076 engaged in facilitated activities
- 151 facilitated sessions delivered across 5 public parks
- 468,000 Marketing Reach through social media
- Over 6,000 people independently used the story dens

The project made a positive impact on literacy levels in the city, encouraging children to engage in library-led activities and use the natural environment as a tool for engaging in reading and writing.

4.2.3 UNESCO Lecture

Across the world, we are undergoing a significant political, social and cultural transformation. Many of us are asking ourselves what kind of communities we want to live in and hand over to future generations. Debates about identity, memory, belonging, co-existence and integration are being dramatically reframed. Every day we are bombarded with thousands of images and information: it becomes increasingly difficult to detect the boundary between fact and falsehood.

Against this turbulent background, it's more important than ever before to understand the power and the positive potential of words.

Our annual UNESCO lecture series, sponsored and hosted by our partner, the University of Nottingham, aims to promote our mission of 'building a better world with words' and create a platform for new thinking about the future. The aim of this series is to explore how literature speaks to one or more of UNESCO's global goals - a universal call to action to make our world a fairer, healthier and more peaceful place for everyone by 2030.

In 2017, Sarah Churchwell, on the 60th anniversary of UNESCO, gave an inspiring lecture on the role of literature in building peace, while award-winning British Turkish novelist, Elif Shafak, reflected on women and literature in 2018. Nature writer, Robert Macfarlane, who grew up in Nottinghamshire, gave the 2019 UNESCO Lecture. Robert's lecture, which can be viewed on YouTube, was a powerful testimony to the ways in which writing shapes, reflects and creates our understanding of the natural world.



4.3 Support for creativity and use of new technology

4.3.1 Storysmash



Experimenting with interactive digital stories

Storysmash was an ambitious 12-month project which engaged over 1,000 young people aged 11 – 25 in new library activities through use of digital gaming and creative writing. The programme used the free branching narrative and interactive fiction writing tool, Twine and delivered 71 Twine writing workshops in 5 main library hubs, Bulwell Riverside, St Ann’s Riverview, Aspley and Clifton libraries, as well as the main Nottingham Central Library. We also delivered 11 Masterclass sessions open to all ages with a view to stimulating creativity by giving them the chance to learn from leading authors and games writers. Our expert writers include Stuart Hill, Dean Wilkinson, Jeff Noon, Charlie Higson, Gabrielle Kent, Tony White and Ian Livingstone.

Outcomes:

- Working within areas of high poverty and unemployment, the project encouraged access to creative and cultural activities and enabled over 1,000 disadvantaged young individuals to express and develop their talents and have these represented in the public arena.
- Encouraged and enabled reading for pleasure and empowered new and emerging readers to gain a lifetime interest in literature and storytelling.
- Creative gaming is now embedded in the core library offer, ensuring a legacy of creativity and digital skills.

“I think the Storysmash sessions give young people a really different way of activating their creativity ... When the actual creative writing process is put alongside the coding, people don’t put as much pressure on themselves to write”

– Workshop facilitator

Storysmash is supported by:



The University of Nottingham

4.3.2 Poetry Pulse

Nottingham is a city of a thousand poets. There are around twenty poetry events every month, bringing over 6,000 people together to read, write, speak and listen to poems. Poetry Pulse is a research and development project led by Dr Becky Cullen, exploring how digital media and technology can equip poets with the skills and knowledge to capture their work, showcase Nottingham’s poetry locally, regionally, nationally - and internationally, through the Cities of Literature network.

Poetry Pulse aims to:

- Experiment with live-streaming of events globally
- Upskill poets to create their own films using their mobile phones
- Create a single digital archive for poetry in Nottingham, making our work more visible, accessible and easier to find

Impact:

- On World Poetry Day 2019, thirteen female poets performed at Nottingham Trent University’s Clifton Library and were live streamed on Facebook to a global audience of 3,500.
- On National Poetry Day 2019, a Poetry Funfair event was curated at Nottingham Playhouse, showcasing 15 poetry films and another 18 films were produced on the day.

4.3.3 MyVoice



MyVoice is a new creative writing competition for young people between 10 – 25 in Nottingham. Young writers are invited to unleash their imagination and create a story which involves or reflects on the theme of social justice and its global impact. The competition will be a test of creativity, originality, style and of the ability to entertain and enthrall. An array of formats such as poetry, short stories, audio, film and podcasts will be judged. All finalists' entries will be printed in the MyVoice anthology in 2020.

5. Major initiatives implemented through inter-city cooperation to achieve the objectives of the UCCN

The global nature of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is exciting for NUCoL as it provides opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other major literary cities around the world. It is a network with a collective appreciation for literature, and shared values for education, culture and free expression. We have a belief that literature changes lives profoundly, and a shared vision for a world that is more democratic, human, and creative.

Former leader of Nottingham City Council, Councillor Jon Collins attended two UCCN Annual Conferences (Enghien-Les-Bains & Krakowice). He presented Nottingham's vision for culture and creativity ensuring all citizens have the opportunity to benefit from local and international cultural exchange. Breaking the Frame is a new vision and model of cultural democracy which challenges how and where culture is made, who it is made for, who can make it, and to redefine what culture is.

Since September 2018, Director of Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature, Sandeep Mahal, has led the Literature sub-network in her capacity as Coordinator and has responsibility for:

- Maintaining channels of communication between all members of the network
- Encouraging pro-active participation
- Informing members about all UCCN Secretariat activities
- Collecting and consolidating input and feedback from member cities
- Actively representing the members on various forums
- Collaborating with Working Groups
- Organising, supporting and monitoring activities and projects
- Preparing internal meeting schedules and content for annual meetings
- Acting as a main point-of-contact for prospective candidates
- Overseeing induction and integration processes
- Motivating general well-being, sense of integration and happiness among the sub-network.

● **Nottwich**

● **2019**

5.1 Nottwich 2019

“Nottwich shone an important spotlight on the literature sector. It highlighted our role as an advocate for the importance of creativity in driving regeneration, growing tourism, creating jobs and giving people a sense of well-being”

– David Belbin, Chair, NUCoL

In May 2019, we co-hosted the global gathering of UNESCO Cities of Literature with Norwich - the first time that the prestigious international forum has taken place in England. The two-stage gathering - Nottwich 2019 - was a fantastic opportunity for the sub-network to re-connect with colleagues from around the world, meet with local creators and producers, talk about what we are doing in our cities and how we will collaborate on future projects.



The main achievements of Nottwich:

- 43 leaders from literature cities met in Nottingham and Norwich
- 25 best practices presented
- 6 new literature projects proposed
- A new strategy for global cooperation emerged
- Agreed operations and priorities of the sub-network for the coming year
- Provided a platform for dialogue between Literature cities and British Council
- Lots of planning of collective actions and networking

5.2 Creative Crossroads: Writing the Contemporary

Starting in 2018, the Critical Poetics Group from Nottingham Trent University visited four cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network: Katowice, Dublin, Tartu and Ljubljana, reaching over 50 emerging and established writers across Europe.

The interdisciplinary writing workshops were designed to:

- introduce innovative forms of writing to a wide range of individuals and communities
- inform cultural engagement with contemporary issues and inspire new literary expression.
- Draw on visual art, music, literature and film

Jo Dixon delivered writing workshops in Dublin and Tartu Cities of Literature on environmental themes. Earth and Sky considered representations of the natural world in creative and critical texts and across art forms and asked participants to re-imagine their relationship with our changing planet. The workshops offered new opportunities for thinking and writing, both creatively and critically, about our changing planet.

Texts and Technologies, led by Daniel Cordle in Ljubljana, produced some exciting new writing inspired by creative and critical texts concerned with a range of technologies. The creative-critical approach of the workshop was praised for providing 'new perspectives.'

It is hoped that some of these writers will progress onto a mentoring programme to publish new writing in a publication exploring ideas of the contemporary world through creative and critical writing.

5.3 Guest of Honour in Granada UNESCO City of Literature

Granada invited Nottingham as its first international Guest of Honour at the 2019 Granada Book Fair. The programme of cultural events, facilitated by Granada and Nottingham UNESCO Cities of Literature, celebrated authors and their books, and enhanced cultural exchange opportunities between the two cities.



Opening ceremony with speeches from the Mayor of Granada and Sandeep Mahal

Maximising the potential of UNESCO Cities of Literature, a discussion with Jesus Ortega and Sandeep Mahal

A Sense of Place - Lorca, Byron & DH Lawrence, their travels and relationship with landscape, with **Simon Brown**, Curator at Newstead Abbey, **Carolyn Melbourne**, museum and collections officer at the D.H Lawrence Birthplace Museum, **Stephen Roberts**, Associate Professor and Reader in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies and Head of Department, Faculty of Arts at the University of Nottingham, and **Gregory Woods**, Emeritus Professor of Gay and Lesbian Studies and a critically acclaimed poet

Changing the World, One Book at a Time with Five Leaves bookseller and publisher, Ross Bradshaw, and Gregory Woods.

Re:Vision Creative Writing workshops with poet and researcher at Nottingham Trent University, Becky Cullen and poet, critic, editor and academic, Rory Waterman.

A poetry evening celebrating Byron, Lorca and Lawrence with poets from Granada and Gregory Woods, Rory Waterman and Becky Cullen from Nottingham

“A book fair isn’t just about buying and selling rights to books; it represents an exchange of ideas and cultural values. We are lucky to have the opportunity of finding out more about Nottingham – the city, its people, its poetry and its publishing. I know they will make a great Guest of Honour and look forward to putting Nottingham at the forefront of Granada’s City of Literature activities over the next few years.”

– **Jesus Ortega, Director of Granada UNESCO City of Literature**

“The UNESCO Guest of Honour programme is a fantastic opportunity for booksellers, publishers, translators, readers and writers in Nottingham and Granada to get to know each other and discover ways of working together in the future. International links are particularly important at a time when nationalist feelings are on the rise.”

– **Ross Bradshaw, from Five Leaves Bookshop, Nottingham**

5.4 Jaipur Writer-in-Residence

In 2017, we launched our first international writer residency programme in partnership with visual arts gallery, New Art Exchange and ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival. The residency aims to support a greater diversity of voices and offer local writers the chance to create links with international writers. The 5-day residency included mentoring and guidance from the festival producer, the sharing of work and participating in the literary life of the city.

“We are delighted to be introducing this new and exciting partnership with one the world’s leading literature festivals and working with our prestigious partner Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature to help realise new dreams, ambitions and life changing opportunities for creative writers and thinkers from the region and UK’
– **Skinder Hundal, CEO, New Art Exchange**



6. Proposed action plan for the forthcoming mid-term period of four years

2020 marks a pivotal time for Nottingham as we enter an era of transformational development.

We will be aligning the contribution of Nottingham’s Creative City to the implementation of the 2030 Global Agenda for sustainable development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals through Nottingham’s 10-year Cultural Framework - a call to action devised from the views and aspirations of Nottingham’s citizens, artists and cultural organisations. The Framework begins to identify what we must now do to unlock potential in our creative city and ensure culture and creativity in Nottingham is open, inventive, diverse, networked, welcoming and open.

The launch of a new ten-year Cultural Framework in 2017, combined with over £500mn of investment in the South of the City will bring a £1.1bn boost to the local economy, alongside three million more visitors to the City. Alongside a newly re-developed Broadmarsh Shopping Centre, a re-developed Nottingham Castle

and the building of a new Nottingham College, are plans for a new Central Library.

The immediate future for Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature will see an ambitious plan of action, specifically focusing on incorporating the sustainable development goals 10: reducing inequalities and 16: promoting peace and justice.



6.1 Three initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on a local level

6.1.1 New City Library

Kickstarting a reading revolution

Nottingham's Central Library project (first mooted in our 2015 UNESCO application) is being developed through an unprecedented partnership between Nottingham Library Service and Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature. Our vision is to create the best children's library in Britain – an inspirational and accessible centre to drive forward reading, literacy and education. The new library will be an international exemplar of all that libraries have to offer in the 21st century, and a beacon for



children's learning and creativity in the city. It would embody the evolving brand of the city, reflect the aspirations of Nottingham, and help establish the city as a leading visitor destination.

The project aims to cement Nottingham's place as one of the key cultural destinations in the UK, driving forward tourism and investment in the City. It will, we hope, act as a model for all future library developments across the UK at a time when the social value of libraries has never been greater.

"It is important to have a world class space of international significance where people of all ages can participate in learning opportunities, performances and a range of other activities such as book clubs and author events. It's also important to have a better, brighter, more attractive and welcoming space which reflects the needs and aspirations of library customers in the 21st century"

– Sandeep Mahal, Director,
Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature

6.1.2 A New Creative Writing Bursary

Transforming the life chances of people is central to our mission. In 2020, we will launch a new Creative Writing Bursary in partnership with Nottingham Trent University. It will offer a talented and committed writer the chance to receive a fully-funded Master's bursary and will go on to study on the university's Creative Writing MA over two years. The bursary is intended to support a tendered student who would not otherwise be able to afford to take part in the course, targeting specifically students from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalised groups in the city. The student will be selected with the help of the City of Literature, and applications will open in January 2020..

6.1.3 Common Currency

Common Currency is a new partnership project that promotes the free flow of ideas and engages young adult audiences in conversations on freedom of expression, and aims to:

- Stimulate local, national and international debate around Freedom of Expression
- Empower and engage young people
- Highlight regional, national & international voices
- Develop the intersection between culture and human rights

Partnering with English PEN during their centenary year in 2021, this 2-year project will introduce a unique local debate and campaign to shape a national conversation on values and concerns around Freedom of Expression. We will do this by involving Young Freedom Ambassadors to host events with major writers, international residencies, a Rebel Reads and letter-writing campaigns in support of imprisoned writers and journalists.

6.2 Three initiatives, programmes or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on an international level, particularly those involving other member cities in the Network

6.2.1 Digital R&D Residency

In partnership with Nottingham's Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham, we will launch a series of Digital R&D Residencies for writers to research, develop and co-produce a prototype of immersive, interactive story experiences for young audiences. Nottingham's Mixed Reality Lab is home to sixty academics, research associates and PhD students. Their research activity is wide ranging and constantly evolving, shaping emerging technologies, exploring future applications, and establishing overarching concepts and methods. They are fully committed to transferring knowledge to industry through collaborative projects, and to the general public through public events, touring performances and installations in libraries, museums and galleries.

The Digital R&D Residency is highly cross-disciplinary combining research, writer-led and technology explorations. The commissioned writers will receive professional development, profile-raising and facilitated networking opportunities, as well as the support, advice and encouragement from Mixed Reality Lab.

The Digital Lab residency will also:

- Increase young people's involvement and confidence in research, design and co-creation;
- Inspire young people to explore the potential of immersive, writer-led, storytelling as a form of placemaking;
- Elevate young people's voices by sharing learning and celebrating achievement

6.2.2 Imagine: Writing Places

"Stories make us understand how people might be different, but also how we are all the same." (Daniel Hahn, British writer, editor and translator, in his introduction to *Odyssey for the Aarhus 39* project).

We want to harness the UNESCO Cities of Literature network to give young people a voice. We will provide opportunities for young people to explore each City of Literature using new media and technology and working with local professional writers to inspire young people's writing. Young people will then share their own writing about the place where they live and develop exchanges between schools in disadvantaged areas of each city of literature in order to address local literacy challenges.

We hope that young people will develop a strong affinity for creative writing as well as a better understanding of their own local literary scene, which they will have a chance to compare with that of other cities. This will not only improve writing skills but will widen and diversify audiences for local artists, literature and spoken word performance, providing these disadvantaged young people with a deeper understanding of why creativity can play an important element in their lives.

Developing this approach in a collaborative project across three UNESCO Cities of Literature facing similar literacy challenges should provide the opportunity for organisations in each city to better understand the value of writing for enjoyment.

6.2.3 Future Food Stories

Working with Associate Professor, Heike Bartel of the University of Nottingham, we will expand on her 'Hungry for Words' cafes – a project encouraging conversations and stories about people's troubled experiences with food and eating disorders - we will develop a new transversal project in partnership with the Cities of Gastronomy exploring their interest in food and stories, and bringing the two together. It will focus not only on stories of glorious feasts, but also food as an expression of culture, of power, of hierarchy and stories that present very different perspectives.

6.3 Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan

ANNUAL CORE FUNDING FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY OF LITERATURE OFFICE	£120,000
Staff: Director, Communications Coordinator & Executive Assistant, Associate Producers & Fundraiser	70%
Marketing	10%
Overheads	10%
UCCN Meetings	10%

PLANNED INITIATIVES 2020-2024	
New Central Library	£24.5 million
Local and international initiatives	£250,000

6.4 Plan for Communication and Awareness

- Review and refresh the Nottingham City of Literature brand and ensure it's a true and inspiring reflection of our goals and personality.
- Identify major opportunities for animating the UNESCO brand in public places.
- Redevelop the Nottingham City of Literature website with an integrated donations platform.
- Increase the range and depth of media coverage through local, national and international media and broadcast partnerships.
- Build an archive of media coverage with statistical analysis.
- Increase newsletter subscribers by 60%