

Press release

Embargoed until 00.00 Friday 9 August

Line-up revealed for Durham Book Festival 2019

The annual literary festival returns this October with headline guests including Louis de Bernières, Jung Chang, Caroline Criado Perez, Carrie Gracie, Mark Haddon, Joanne Harris, Kerry Hudson, Alexander McCall Smith, Roger McGough, Suzanne Moore, David Nicholls, Elif Shafak, Colm Tóibín, and Kirsty Wark.

The programme has been announced for Durham Book Festival 2019, the North East's largest literary festival. Tickets go on sale at 10am on Friday 9 August at durhambookfestival.com.

Between 5 and 13 October 2019, 100 writers, artists and thinkers from across the world will take part in more than 80 events in Durham City.

Durham Book Festival is commissioned by Durham County Council and produced by New Writing North, with funding from Durham University and Arts Council England. The festival was founded in 1990 and is one of an unprecedented number of events taking place across County Durham in 2019 as part of the #Durham19 Year of Culture campaign. This aims to raise the county's profile as a cultural destination, provide inspiring opportunities for residents and boost the local economy.

The festival hosts a vast array of talks, workshops, readings and performances, with many new commissions and unique experiences. Visitors will even find poetry within specially commissioned murals on display within Durham City.

A highlight is sure to be an afternoon with one of the most esteemed contemporary authors, **Colm Tóibín**, whose Costa Novel Award-winning book *Brooklyn* is this year's Durham Book Festival Big Read. In the lead up to the event, the festival will distribute 3,000 free copies of *Brooklyn* throughout County Durham, as well as running creative reading and writing workshops with community groups across the county.

The Little Read project brings picture books to life for the under 10s, sending copies of *Perfectly Norman* by **Tom Percival** to every primary school in County Durham. Children will have the chance to take part in craft and song-writing workshops at community centres throughout the county, before seeing their songs made into a professional theatre show at Gala Theatre, performed by Durham Book Festival favourites **Ruth Johnson, Jeremy Bradfield** and **Calum Howard**.

There will be many familiar faces at this year's festival. BBC broadcaster **Kirsty Wark** introduces her new novel, while her former colleague **Carrie**

Gracie takes on equal pay for women. Guests can take afternoon tea with former Blue Peter presenter **Janet Ellis**, as she discusses her latest novel, *How it Was*. Spend an evening with the cherished poet **Roger McGough** who came to fame in the 1960s as one of the Mersey Poets and has been part of the literary conversation ever since, or a joyful afternoon with **Alexander McCall Smith**, who will be publishing four new novels in 2019, including the twentieth book in the No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series.

Other fantastic fiction events include highly-anticipated new titles from some of Britain's bestselling novelists: **Louis de Bernières** introduces a new collection and a new Captain Corelli story in *Labels and Other Stories*; **Louise Doughty** will be talking about her new high-concept thriller, *Platform Seven*; **Mark Haddon** discusses his latest title, *The Porpoise*; **Joanne Harris** introduces *The Strawberry Thief*, a compelling new *Chocolat* novel, published 20 years after her original bestseller; while **David Nicholls**, author of *One Day*, returns to the theme of first love with his latest novel, *Sweet Sorrow*. Some of the year's most exciting debut fiction is also represented, with authors including **Sara Collins**, **Yvonne Battle-Felton**, **Okechukwu Nzelu** and **Elizabeth MacNeal**.

The festival also welcomes back some of its most popular speakers from previous years, including **Jung Chang**, the internationally bestselling author of *Wild Swans*, who introduces a major new biography, *Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister*. **Caroline Criado Perez** returns with a startling new book, *Invisible Women*, which exposes the data bias in a world designed for men; while **Peter Pomerantsev's** latest book *This is Not Propaganda* takes us on compelling journey into the dark heart of the disinformation age. Festival favourite **Chris Mullin**, the former MP for Sunderland South, also returns; his new novel *The Friends of Harry Perkins* is a topical political thriller set in a near-future post-Brexit Britain.

This year, Durham Book Festival welcomes the world to Durham, with a distinctly international flavour to many events, including with Dutch writers **Bart van Es**, whose book *The Cut-Out Girl* won the Costa Book of the Year Award 2019, and **Herman Koch**; and German writer **Dagmar Leupold**. Writing residencies have seen northern writers Jasmine Simms and Andrew Michael Hurley take part in exchanges with writers from Tübingen, Durham's twin town in Germany (**Marcus Hammerschmitt**) and Amman in Jordan (**Kafa Al-Zoubi**).

Closer to home, three new commissions take in people and places in the local area. In partnership with the National Trust, Durham Book Festival has hosted poets **Phoebe Power** and **Katrina Porteous** on the Durham coast, once home to one of the biggest coalmines in Europe and the subject of a massive clean-up project twenty years ago. The poets have spent time in the area this summer, exploring industrial and social heritage, and how people's actions and events have helped shape the landscape. *Kingdoms* by local writer **Jasmine Simms** and artist **Lily Arnold** is a triptych of poems painted as murals on some of Durham's landmarks, which explore the idea of buildings and spaces as autonomous.

The festival has also commissioned writer **Damian Le Bas**, author of *The Stopping Places*, and poet **Joanne Clement** to walk through Northumberland and County Durham, exploring how more than 500 years of ethnic Romany presence in the region interacts with the North East's more established histories of pilgrimage and travelling.

Other new commissions include writers **Suzanne Moore**, **Elif Shafak** and **Kerry Hudson** marking 90 years since the publication of the Virginia Woolf's seminal essay *A Room of One's Own*, by considering what conditions they need to thrive as women writing today. *The Infinite Cold*, an immersive theatre experience by **Anna Clarkson** and **Jennifer Hardy**, is suitable for all the family, and offers to show the audience the wonders of space and time in the Night-Sky-A-Rama. In *Zones*, emerging playwright **Sarah Watson's** semi-autobiographical play asks us to understand the roots of homelessness, trauma and addiction.

The Ted Hughes Award-winning poet **Raymond Antrobus** will act as this year's Festival Laureate, writing and performing a new poem inspired by Durham, as well as visiting local secondary schools and taking part in a special event at Durham University. The university will also be opening up Palace Green Library's special collections, offering the public the rare opportunity to discover a great number of fascinating archival treasures.

Another unique event will be the celebration of *Common People*, an anthology of working-class writing, which takes place at Redhills – Durham's own 'pitman's parliament'. The event will feature writers **Kit de Waal** and **Paul McVeigh**, alongside emerging voices from the north of England and beyond.

The announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize will this year take place on Thursday 10 October in Durham Town Hall. Celebrating bold fiction and non-fiction, this is one of the UK's most exciting awards with the 2019 shortlist featuring books by **Pat Barker**, **Bernardine Evaristo**, **Niven Govinden**, **David Keenan**, **Max Porter**, and **Nafissa Thompson-Spires**. The event will celebrate the shortlisted titles before the £5,000 prize is awarded to the winner.

A special schools programme takes place over two days at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, featuring award-winning authors **Onjali Q Raúf** and **Kiran Millwood Hargrave**; STEM ambassador and broadcaster **Emily Grossman**; and picture book maker **Debi Gliori**.

Cllr Joy Allen, Cabinet member for transformation, culture and tourism, said: "We are proud to commission an event that promotes the joy of reading on such a large scale and brings some of the world's best writers and thinkers to County Durham.

"There is an unprecedented number of festivals and events taking place in the county in 2019, which is why we have named it our Year of Culture and launched the #Durham19 campaign. Durham Book Festival is part of this and its page-turning programme of talks and activities will attract tens of

thousands of people to the county. Many of these visitors will stay overnight and visit our fantastic restaurants, shops and attractions. This not only boosts the economy, but raises the profile of County Durham as a cultural destination, encouraging even more people to visit all year round.”

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North, said: “We’re delighted to be welcoming the world to Durham Book Festival this year, with more international events than ever before. As well as bringing world-class authors to the city, we’re also proud to have commissioned new work from an exciting range of writers including Raymond Antrobus, Damian Le Bas, Suzanne Moore and Elif Shafak.

We’re really passionate about getting everyone in Durham reading and we’re delighted to present the Costa Award-winning novel, *Brooklyn*, as this year’s Big Read. Make sure you pick up your free copy and come and join us at the event on 13 October.”

Professor Stuart Corbridge, Vice-Chancellor, Durham University, said: “At Durham University, books are really important to us. We have a world-leading English Department, some great writers, artists and thinkers among our staff and students, and we’re passionate about inspiring new audiences to share our love of literature. So we’re very pleased to once again be sponsoring the Durham Book Festival. This year’s Festival promises to be the best yet and we’re looking forward to playing a full part, through our staff speaking and sharing, hosting events at our venues, and once again sponsoring the Festival Laureate. There will be something for all tastes, and I would encourage anyone to make a visit.”

ENDS

[High res images relating to festival highlights can be found via this link](#)

For all media enquiries, including interview requests, review tickets and any other images, please contact Laura Fraine
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Durham Book Festival takes place in October 2019 at venues across County Durham with events for all ages. Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North, which is made possible by support from partners Durham University, Arts Council England and BBC Newcastle.

Tickets for Durham Book Festival 2019 go on sale at
www.durhambookfestival.com from 10am on Friday 9 August.

About [#Durham19](#)

For a number of years Durham has seen continued growth and investment in its cultural offer through Durham County Council, wider partners, cultural and sporting institutions large and small. 2019 sees the compounding effect of this sustained investment in an incredible year of openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries, which has been designated as the county's Year of Culture.

With a number of high profile, multi-million pound developments coming on board to add to the wealth of world-class attractions and year-long programme of events taking place across the county, #Durham19 will celebrate the impact of this investment.

The campaign, delivered by Visit County Durham in partnership with Durham County Council, cultural and sporting partners from across the county, will increase visits, promote Durham as a cultural destination on a world stage, engage residents and encourage local communities to discover, experience and enjoy Durham's art, culture, heritage and sport.