

Press release: UK starts selection process for next Poet Laureate

- Advisory panel appointed to advise on recommendation to Her Majesty The Queen
- Next poet laureate will take over from Dame Carol Ann Duffy in May 2019
- Government also announces National Poetry Competition, to increase access to poetry for young people

The process of selecting the UK's next Poet Laureate has begun with the appointment of a new advisory panel, Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, announced today.

The panel, made up of experts from across the regions and nations of the UK, includes the founder of the Bradford Literature Festival and the organiser of a showcase event with the Jamaican Poet Laureate.

It will offer its suggestions on the scope and purpose of the next Poet Laureate, with a recommendation put to Her Majesty The Queen.

The next Poet Laureate will take over from Dame Carol Ann Duffy, who was appointed in 2009, and was the first woman and first Scot to take up the post.

Representatives from the British Council, Arts Council England and Arts Council Northern Ireland, Royal Society of Literature, Scottish Poetry Library, Literature Wales, The Poetry Society, Forward Arts Foundation, British Library and Poetry Book Society are also included in the panel.

The news comes as the Government announces the relaunch of the National Poetry Competition in schools from September next year. The competition will give young people a chance to discover more about the UK's rich literary heritage and experience the joy that comes from learning a poem.

Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Poetry has the power to connect us to people, places and ideas. It also cuts across social and cultural divides. The important role of Poet Laureate helps to record key moments in British history and celebrates our rich literary tradition.

I pay tribute to Dame Carol Ann Duffy for her dedicated service in championing poetry to the nation. I look forward to working with a new advisory panel, that reflects the whole of the UK and the new ways we consume poetry, in electing her successor.

Nick Gibb, Minister for School Standards, said:

We hope that relaunching the National Poetry Competition will inspire children to read and write poetry and learn from the way the best poets use language.

Our focus on phonics in primary schools is helping more young children open up the joys of the written and spoken word, with 163,000 more six-year-olds on track to be fluent readers than in 2012. This means the world of poetry has never been more accessible to young people.

Since the role of Poet Laureate was established in 1668, incumbents have included William Wordsworth, Ted Hughes and Sir John Betjeman.

When she completes her ten-year term in April 2019, Dame Duffy – well-known for her range of monologues, love poems, children’s rhymes and plays – will have written poems to mark the deaths of Henry Allingham and Harry Patch (the last two British soldiers to fight in the First World War), the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, and even David Beckham’s injured Achilles in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup.

She has also just published ‘The Wound In Time’, a poem which seeks to remember those who died during the First World War, ahead of commemorations that will mark the centenary of Armistice Day next weekend.

Dame Duffy has spent much of her tenure boosting the national conversation about poetry, carrying out a range of visits to schools and festivals, and launching the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry, which seeks to recognise excellence in poetry, highlighting outstanding contributions made by poets to our cultural life.

Following the closure of nominations in December 2018, the advisory panel will agree a shortlist of candidates for consideration by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, before a final recommendation is put forward by the Prime Minister to Her Majesty The Queen in the Spring. A formal announcement is expected to be made in May 2019. The role will be for a ten year period.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

The news follows National Poetry Day research recently published by [the National Literacy Trust](#), which highlighted how poetry continues to transcend social backgrounds and the changing way children engage with it, finding that:

- Children who receive free school meals are more likely to say that they read, listen to or watch poetry in their spare time (34%) than those who don’t (23%)
- Almost half (46%) of all children and young people said they consume or create poetry in their spare time

Of this group:

- 47% read, listen to or watch poetry in their spare time at least once a week
- 32% of “young poetry consumers” now read poetry online or on a phone, and 31% now watch it as a video
- 68% said they read poetry because it makes them feel creative
- 66% said they write poetry because it is a great way to express themselves and their feelings
- 52% write or perform poetry in their spare time because it is different to other forms of writing they do in school

Those surveyed made a range of suggestions on how to make poetry more appealing, such as “including more narrative, making it more like a story”, “make it more relevant and modern”, and “find more poems about sports or video games”.

Membership of the Poet Laureate Steering Group:

- Alex Higgs, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Chair)
- Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England
- Cortina Butler, Director of Literature, British Council
- Molly Rosenberg, Director, Royal Society of Literature
- Judith Palmer, Director, The Poetry Society
- Sophie O’Neill, Managing Director, Poetry Book Society
- Nicola Solomon, CEO, Society of Authors
- Susannah Herbert, Executive Director, Forward Arts Foundation
- Chloe Garner, Artistic Director, Ledbury Poetry Festival
- Jamie Andrews, Head of Culture and Learning, British Library
- Lleucu Siencyn, Chief Executive, Literature Wales
- Syima Aslam, Director, Bradford Literature Festival
- Chris Gribble, Chief Executive, National Centre for Writing
- Asif Khan, Director, Scottish Poetry Library
- Damian Smyth, Head of Drama and Literature, Arts Council Northern Ireland

The Laureateship was a lifetime appointment until 1999. Following the death of Ted Hughes, it was decided that the appointment should be for a fixed term of ten years, to give more poets the opportunity to serve.

The appointment is made by Her Majesty The Queen, acting on the advice of Her Majesty’s Government.

The position is honorary and it is up to the individual poet to decide whether or not to produce poetry for national occasions or Royal events.

The Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry was devised by Carol Ann Duffy, and is supported by The Poetry Society to recognise outstanding contributions made by poets to our cultural life. The £5,000 annual prize money is awarded by Carol Ann Duffy, funded with the honorarium the Poet Laureate traditionally receives from Her Majesty The Queen.

Press release: James Brokenshire: building better and beautiful will deliver more homes

A commission to champion beautiful buildings as an integral part of the drive to build the homes communities need has been announced by the Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP today (3 November 2018).

The ['Building Better, Building Beautiful' Commission](#) will develop a vision and practical measures to help ensure new developments meet the needs and expectations of communities, making them more likely to be welcomed rather than resisted.

This move follows the government recently rewriting the planning rulebook to strengthen expectations for design quality and community engagement when planning for development. The new rules also ensure more consideration can be given to the character of the local area.

This commission will take that work further by expanding on the ways in which the planning system can encourage and incentivise a greater emphasis on design, style and community consent. It will raise the level of debate regarding the importance of beauty in the built environment.

The commission has 3 aims:

1. To promote better design and style of homes, villages, towns and high streets, to reflect what communities want, building on the knowledge and tradition of what they know works for their area.
2. To explore how new settlements can be developed with greater community consent.
3. To make the planning system work in support of better design and style, not against it.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Most people agree we need to build more for future generations, but too many still feel that new homes in their local area just aren't up to scratch.

Part of making the housing market work for everyone is helping to

ensure that what we build, is built to last. That it respects the integrity of our existing towns, villages and cities.

This will become increasingly important as we look to create a number of new settlements across the country and invest in the infrastructure and technology they will need to be thriving and successful places.

This commission will kick start a debate about the importance of design and style, helping develop practical ways of ensuring new developments gain the consent of communities, helping grow a sense of place, not undermine it. This will help deliver desperately needed homes – ultimately building better and beautiful will help us build more.

This announcement comes as a month long series of events coordinated by think tank [Policy Exchange](#), to showcase the importance of beauty in the built environment, begin.

Welcoming the announcement Policy Exchange Director Dean Godson said:

We know from our research and polling that local support for development increases across all income groups when beauty is made a priority and this commission represents a fantastic first step.

Placing beauty at the heart of housing policy is the biggest idea in a generation.

Sir Roger Scruton has been appointed to Chair the commission, with further commissioners to be announced in due course.

Biography – Professor Sir Roger Scruton

Eminent writer and philosopher, Prof Sir Roger Scruton has for over 3 decades taught at institutions on both sides of the Atlantic including Birkbeck College, Boston University, and more recently, the University of Buckingham.

He is an author of over 40 books. In his work as a philosopher he has specialised in aesthetics with particular attention to music and architecture. He has written several works of fiction, as well as memoirs and essays on topics of general interest.

He engages in contemporary political and cultural debates from the standpoint of a conservative thinker and is well known as a powerful polemicist. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the British Academy.

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In 2016 he was recipient of the Polish Lech Kaczynski Foundation's Medal for Courage and Integrity and was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

[Press release: Next round of Voter ID pilots announced for 2019](#)

The local authorities taking part in the 2019 Voter ID pilots are announced today.

The pilots will take place at the 2019 local elections, providing further insight into how best to ensure the security of the voting process and reduce the risk of voter fraud. In addition, the pilots will generate insight into the methods of ID that work best for voters.

The Cabinet Office facilitated pilots in five local authorities as part of the 2018 local elections. The evaluation showed that the trials were a success, with the overwhelming majority of people able to cast their vote without a problem.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, said:

I am pleased to see that so many local authorities came forward to participate in the 2019 pilots so we can gain a deeper understanding of how voter ID will work on a wider scale – and what works best for voters.

We want people to have confidence that our elections are safeguarded against any threat or perception of electoral fraud.

People are already required to show ID to pick up a parcel from the Post Office, rent a car, or apply for benefits, and this is a common sense next step to securing the integrity of our elections.

To verify that voters are who they say they are, each local authority will test one of four models of Voter ID checks in their pilot:

- photo ID
- photo and non-photo ID
- traditional poll cards
- poll cards with scannable barcodes

The Cabinet Office is engaging with a broad range of charities and civil society organisations – including members of the Accessibility of Elections Working Group – to ensure that the overall policy reflects the needs of all voters in the UK. Local authorities will provide alternative methods of ID to

individuals who do not have a specified form of ID, free of charge, ensuring that everyone who is registered has the opportunity to vote.

Voters in Pendle, East Staffordshire and Woking will be asked to show photo ID before they are given their ballot papers.

Ribble Valley, Broxtowe, Derby, North Kesteven and Braintree will require voters to present either one form of photo ID or up to two forms of non-photo ID.

Mid Sussex, Watford and North West Leicestershire will test using poll cards as a means of identification.

In addition, Peterborough and Pendle will run a separate postal vote pilot, looking at the security of postal votes and providing additional guidance in postal vote packs.

Proxy voters in Peterborough will also be required to show ID before they can vote.

Northern Ireland has required paper ID to vote since 1985 and photo ID since 2003, without adverse effect on turnout or participation.

Corporate Director and Returning Officer for Pendle Council, Philip Mousdale, said:

We're pleased to be a pilot area to help to shape the government's introduction of photo ID at polling stations.

It also means we can tackle concerns we have in Pendle around fraudulent behaviour in relation to postal voting.

Director of Communications and Research for the Electoral Commission, Craig Westwood, said:

Our key recommendation following the 2018 voter ID pilots was that any future pilots should include a wider range of local councils, taking in a mixture of rural and large urban areas and areas with different demographic profiles.

We are pleased to see this reflected in the proposed list of authorities for 2019, to provide more detailed evidence about the impact of voter identification on different groups of people.

The Electoral Commission is responsible for carrying out an independent evaluation of the Cabinet Office's pilot schemes. We will publish our findings following the May elections, in the summer of 2019.

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