

Makar to help Scottish Government promote literature

✘ The expertise of Scotland's new Makar, Liz Lochhead, will be harnessed to promote Scottish literature at home and internationally as proposals to boost literature and publishing got the go ahead today.

Responding to the Literature Working Group report, Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop tasked Creative Scotland with the lead role in implementing the recommendations and outlined steps being taken to support the sector.

These include:

- * Creative Scotland will work with newly appointed Makar Liz Lochhead to promote Scottish literature throughout Scotland and internationally
- * A feasibility study for a National Book Week, the first to be held in 2012
- * Building on existing provisions of bursaries for writers through the Creative Futures programme
- * Creative Scotland, Learning Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Book Trust actively promoting Scottish literature across Scotland's schools, supported by a variety of innovative and exciting learning resources

Examining options for investing in the publishing industry to maximise impact of funding, Ms Hyslop said:

"Scotland boasts both cutting edge gritty writers as well as literary giants of the past. This beguiling combination of literary heritage and vibrant contemporary talent attracts visitors to Scotland and raises our cultural profile around the world. That is why we must do all we can to support and boost the sector.

“The Working Group has presented a challenging report with many achievable ideas. Creative Scotland will work with the sector and partner organisations to support and promote Scottish literature at home and internationally. Already, progress is being made.

“Scotland’s new Makar Liz Lochhead is a superb advocate for Scottish literature. Creative Scotland will work with Liz and others to ensure the full potential of the role is realised. The Makar will be commissioned to produce a work for the 2012 Commonwealth Day Observance which will be read at the event and broadcast internationally.

“Scotland’s writers will be able to develop their skills and form collaborations through Creative Scotland’s major new residency programme Creative Futures. This will build on the existing bursary schemes and offer mentorship opportunities. Creative Scotland’s Vital Sparks initiative will also bring investment into the sector, supporting writers as part of innovative cultural collaborations.

“A week dedicated to the appreciation of all things literary will undoubtedly be good news for Scotland. Creative Scotland will carry out a feasibility study for a National Book Week to be held for the first time in 2012. This study will ensure it delivers maximum benefits for the sector.

“We recognise that the economic downturn hit the publishing industry hard and that is why Creative Scotland is examining options for investing in the sector to maximise impact. Recognising the potential of the sector, Scotland’s Creative Industries Partnership is also considering how best it can serve the industry now and in the future.

“Scotland’s distinguished literary culture is a notable part of our national identity. We have produced more writers per head of population than any other artform. It is now time to ensure this rich legacy is maintained and strengthened in

future years. We will work with Creative Scotland to ensure that happens.

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland, said:

“Literature is one of Scotland’s greatest national assets, with many of our writers, past and present, renowned both at home and internationally. The Minister’s strong endorsement of this dynamic sector and our shared ambition for its future growth builds on the nation’s lively interest in, and affection for, its writers and their books. Creative Scotland’s commitment to writers, readers and publishers is matched by its commitment to working with partners to sustain and grow Scotland’s rich literary landscape.”