

New Scottish Makar appointed

First Minister, John Swinney, has appointed Dr Peter Mackay as Scotland's fifth Makar .

The person in this position takes the lead in promoting poetry nationally, as well as producing work relating to significant national events.

Dr Mackay was appointed by the First Minister on the recommendation of an expert panel representing Scotland's literary sector. He has chosen to serve for a three-year term.

He is the fifth person to hold the role since it was established by the Scottish Parliament in 2004, and has previously been a member of the panel which chose the Makar.

First Minister John Swinney said: "I am very pleased that Scotland's new Makar is Gaelic-speaking poet, Peter Mackay.

"Peter published his first collection *Gu Leor/Galore* in 2015. Since then, he has attracted a wide audience, and many accolades, through his originality, playfulness and willingness to take risks with language.

"With his keen understanding of how different languages interact with one another, Peter is well equipped to help forge strong connections between different linguistic communities across both Scotland and the rest of the world.

"I have no doubt that his passion and dynamism will allow him to excel at helping to promote both poetry and our wider cultural heritage."

Dr Peter Mackay said: "It is an honour and a pleasure to be

appointed as Scotland's new Makar. I'm very grateful to the panel for their faith in me, and to the First Minister for his support, and especially his enthusiasm about a Gaelic poet taking on the role.

"I have grown up reading the work of and learning from the previous holders of this post and it is a privilege to follow in their footsteps. I hope to do justice to their example: their warmth and support for other writers, their gifts for laughter and the right phrase, their advocacy for poetry as being central to Scottish life, as a medium that can tell truths slant, be a shape-shifter, and help us see and come to terms with the world anew.

"I love that Scotland has a 'Makar', not a poet laureate: the act of 'making' is central to the role, and that the title is in Scots adds a particular distinctive grounding. Part of my task, as I see it, is to encourage people to make things in all the different languages of Scotland, the dozens of languages spoken in this country: to see what kinds of conversations, games, debates can be sparked between them. I can't wait."

The previous Makars have included Kathleen Jamie, Edwin Morgan, Liz Lochhead, and Jackie Kay.

Panel members this year who chose the new Makar were:

- Anna Feintuck, Team Leader, Access, Arts and Participation Team, Culture & Historic Environment Division, Scottish Government, (Chair)
- Henry Bell, Editor, Gutter
- Dr David Goldie, President, Association for Scottish Literature
- Peggy Hughes, Director, National Centre for Writing, Norwich
- Marc Lambert, Chief Executive, Scottish Book Trust
- Duncan Lockerbie, Director, Tapsalteerie/Stewed Rhubarb

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- Marjorie Lotfi, Director, Open Book
- Jill Mackintosh, Head Librarian, Scottish Poetry Library
- Harriet Macmillan, Literature Officer, Creative Scotland
- Dr Robyn Marsack, Independent Adviser
- Niall O’Gallagher, Gaelic Poet and Broadcaster
- Amina Shah, National Librarian and Chief Executive, National Library of Scotland
- Ryan van Winkle, Director, Stanza, Scotland’s International Poetry Festival
- Mark Wringe, Senior Lecturer, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and Islands



