



Press release

Norwich's historic statues are about to get chatty...
From September 8th they'll speak their minds!

Introducing:
TALKING STATUES NORWICH

Media and interview opportunity

Saturday 8 September, 12noon outside The Forum, Norwich

Meet some of the actors and writers involved, project partners and visit statues.

Contact Alice@creative-nation.co.uk for further details

If statues could talk, what stories would they tell?

Ten of Norwich's historic statues have been given the gift of the gab! Stephen Fry and Olivia Colman are amongst the writers and actors bringing the city's statues to life. Together, they tell Norwich's story.

Talking Statues, designed by Sing London, has seen statues brought to life in London, Manchester, Dublin and Chicago. Now local production company Creative Nation are bringing the project to Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature with the help of partner organisations across the city.

Working with the National Centre for Writing, they have commissioned some of Norwich's most celebrated writers and actors, alongside emerging local talent, to give Norwich's statues a voice.

Some approaches are dramatic, others comic and others pure flights of fantasy. All aim to persuade the public to look at the statues, and their place within the city, with new eyes.



Alice Whitney, the project producer from Creative Nation said:

‘I grew up in Norwich, and since relocating back to the area, I knew that I wanted to do something to showcase the city I love and its incredible heritage and cultural landscape. Having been on the advisory board of Sing London for the last decade, and having been involved with Talking Statues previous iterations, I just knew it would provide the perfect platform for us to celebrate our Fine city!’

The statues provide signposts to and a resource for the city’s cultural, heritage and civic organisations where participants can go and learn more about the real people behind the statues, and their work and lives in the city.

Talking Statues combines imaginative creative content and performance, with digital location technology to breathe new life into the statues that surround us.

To hear them speak, simply pass a Talking Statue, use your phone to scan the QR code or enter the short URL on the nearby plaque and hey presto, the statue calls you. When you receive your first call, your phone will take you to the website where you can learn more and download a map.

There is no charge to access Talking Statues, but network charges apply. Thanks to our partners at Norwich Business Improvement District (BID)/VisitNorwich, you may access them via their FREE city centre WIFI offer. For more information about the app and the city, including events, download the free VisitNorwich app or check out visitnorwich.co.uk.

Printed maps will also be available at locations across the City.
Transcripts are available on request for the deaf and hard of hearing.

The ten statues are:

- **Lord Nelson**- Written and voiced by Stephen Fry. In the Cathedral Close. How does Nelson feel about how we have chosen to remember him, and how did being from Norfolk make him the man he was?
- **Julian of Norwich**- Written by Sarah Perry and voiced by Olivia Colman. Also at the Cathedral, Julian wants to tell you a story about how she came to be here, if you could spare her a moment?
- **Peace**- Written and voiced by Molly Naylor. At the junction of Agricultural Hall Plain and Castle Meadow. Peace wants to talk to you about her role and what she can see from up high.
- **The City Hall Lions**- Written by Karl Minns and voiced by The Nimmo Twins. At the front steps of City Hall. The Lions have 80 years of history to share with you, from their unique perspective of the city.
- **Thomas Browne**- Written by George Szirtes and voiced by Adam Buxton. In the Haymarket. Thomas is feeling reflective of his life, work and persona.
- **Will Kempe**- Written and voiced by Luke Wright. In Chapelfield Gardens. Having been so energetic in life, Will has lots to say about his current situation!
- **Peter the Wild Boy**- Written by Alexander Gordon Smith and voiced by Keith Skipper. In Bridewell Alley. Allegedly mute in real life, what has Peter got to say for himself and what accent might he have?
- **Amelia Opie**- Written by Megan Bradbury and voiced by Zoe Telford. On Opie Street. Amelia would like to tell you what motivated and drove her in life and her work.
- **Snap the Dragon**- located at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, Snap is the subject of our Under 16's public writing competition. (More below).
- **Missing Statue**- located at the Church of St John Maddermarket, this post reformation space is the subject of our Over 16's public writing competition. (More below).



The project has been funded by The Forum, National Lottery through Arts Council England, Norwich Business Improvement District (BID), Festival Bridge, The Norwich Freeman's Charity, Historic England and the Norwich Heritage Fund.

A truly cross sector project, it has also had expert advice and in-kind support from Sing London, Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council (Museums, Libraries and the Norfolk Record Office), The Churches Conservation Trust and Norwich Cathedral.

For more information:

www.talkingstatuesnorwich.co.uk

We would like to invite participants to share their experience using #talkingstatuesnorwich on social media.

Facebook: @talkingstatuesnorwich

Twitter: @StatuesNorwich

Instagram: talkingstatuesnorwich

ENDS.

Images of the statues for your use can be found at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/reig9x1v11r93x0/AACmKjvMIRZKnXTgK6GiAYt5a?dl=0>

Partner logos and boilerplates can be found here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/x008m880zr4u5xl/AAAuFOrBk2jrpfK52LST_eZ6a?dl=0

For general press enquiries, bios, introductions, additional images and logos please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

Launch and Heritage Open Day Activities

8th & 15th September- We will be both outside and inside The Forum between 10am and 3pm.

Our Arts Award advisors will be inside The Forum running FREE fun arts and crafts activities themed around Talking Statues, for everyone to enjoy. They are also on hand to hand out workbooks, and answer questions about Arts Award.

8th ONLY- Press call at midday, outside the The Forum.

Meet the production team, some of the talent and partners and hear about the Public Writing Competitions and other opportunities.

12.20pm, a short-guided tour of three statues for press (City Hall Lions, Will Kempe and Thomas Browne).

2.30pm- public tours of the three statues, pre-booked via The Forum including a tour especially commissioned for BSL users. Visit <https://hods-norfolk.lineupnow.com/#/all> and scroll down for Talking Statues.

2-4pm. Creative writing workshops, led by the National Centre for Writing and supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Under 16's- at Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

Over 16's- at the Church of St John Maddermarket, Pottergate.

More details below.

Public Writing Competition

Facilitated by the National Centre for Writing and supported using public funding by the National Lottery, through Arts Council England, on the 8th of September we will also launch our public writing competitions. The public are invited to write the monologues for two further statues.

Under 16's statue- Snap the Dragon at the Museum of Norwich. Formerly the Costessey Snap, he now lives inside a glass case at the Museum. What does he get up to when the crowds go home? How does he feel having only a head and a small piece of his body remaining?

Over 16's statue- 'Missing' Statue space above the North Porch at St Johns Maddermarket Church.

Who could or should stand here above the north porch, looking out over the churchyard, and what story would they have to tell?

In line with Heritage Open Days (HoDs) [Extraordinary Women Theme](#), we have decided to take this opportunity to celebrate Norwich's impressive lineage of radical women, which includes Boudicca, Elizabeth Fry and Harriet Martineau.

The theme is, in part, a recognition of the centenary of the Universal Suffrage Act. But alongside celebrating the unique achievements of the suffragists, HoD's are also encouraging us to tell the stories of the hundreds and thousands of other women who have changed our lives, in both large and small ways over time.

Less than 20% of UK statues are of women, and we would like to do our bit to address this!

So, we are stipulating that our Missing Statue has the voice of a woman. She may be alive or dead, a human being or a very different creature, that's up to you!



For all competition details see the National Centre for Writing website <https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/unesco-city-of-literature/talking-statues/creative-writing-competitions/>

The competitions are being supported by creative writing workshops at the statue sites on the 8th and 15th September. Pre book here [Pre-book here https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/unesco-city-of-literature/talking-statues/creative-writing-competitions/](https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/unesco-city-of-literature/talking-statues/creative-writing-competitions/)

Discover Arts Award activities

We have a Discover Arts Award trail for families and schools. Booklets can be collected from The Forum and other key partners or downloaded from the website. This will be supported by Arts Award Club activities throughout the year. Keep an eye on social media for updates.

Our Arts Award Team will be at The Forum on Saturday 8th and Saturday 15th, both Heritage Open Day Saturdays, between 10am and 3pm. They will be there to hand out materials and offer guidance, as well as providing some FREE fun arts and crafts activities themed around Talking Statues, for everyone to enjoy.

Partner Quotes:

Tim Bishop, Chief Executive at The Forum said,

“Norwich has an incredibly rich history. Talking Statues is an exciting and accessible way to find out more about some of the people who created this history.

The Forum coordinates Heritage Open Days on behalf of the city and Talking Statues is a family friendly way for visitors and local people to engage with local heritage and find out more about Norwich, during Heritage Open Days and throughout the coming year.”



Chris Gribble, CEO of the National Centre for Writing said,

“Talking Statues is a brilliant way to explore England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. Connecting the heritage of our City – it’s writers, historical figures, social campaigners – with outstanding current writers and performers linked to Norwich, it’s a chance to enjoy and learn about Norwich in a fun and social way!”

Stefan Gurney, Executive Director, Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) said,

“Norwich BID are proud to be supporting Talking Statues, a novel and engaging project designed to animate and bring to life some of Norwich’s most iconic statues. Norwich is well known for its literary history and now the City of Stories is coming to life through storytelling and the voices of well-known celebrities linked to the city. Accessible to all, we encourage everyone to explore the city, discover hidden gems and enjoy spontaneous cultural encounters with the likes of Thomas Browne, Nelson and the iconic lions outside City Hall. Launching on 8th September, we look forward to this city centre cultural experience and seeing our best loved statues enjoyed throughout the city centre by the general public.”

Michael Corley, Head of Festival Bridge said,

“Festival Bridge is really excited to be supporting the Talking Statues project. As a Bridge Organisation we are passionate about making arts and culture accessible, as well as finding innovative ways to connect children, young people and families with their local heritage. We believe it is important for them to have the opportunity to celebrate and value their experiences of culture, and this is why we are delighted to be supporting the delivery of the Arts Award Discover trail for families and schools. Most of all we are looking



forward to seeing communities in Norwich, as well as visitors, engaging with the rich history of the city, and having fun in the process”

Jenny Caynes, Curator of Community History, Museum of Norwich said,

“We are very pleased to be involved in the Talking Statues project. Snap has played an important part in Norwich history for centuries, and I’m delighted he’ll be ‘coming to life’ enabling more people in the city to engage with his exciting story.”



Talent Quotes:

From Sarah Perry- Julian of Norwich

“I recall sitting in Norwich cathedral the day I moved here from London and being full of a sense of belonging. Julian's statue was part of that - she seems to be waiting by the door for people to come in - so I jumped at the chance to be part of a project giving her a voice. And of course, all women writers owe something of a debt to the author of the first book in English known to have been published by a woman, which made it particularly special.

I knew that Julian would be warm, and consoling, and welcoming - but I was surprised to find that her voice, as I heard it, was also very funny!”

From Karl Minns- The City Hall Lions

"It was an honour to be asked and having played the City Hall lions on stage many years ago, myself and Owen jumped at the chance to do the recording. I hope people enjoy it, smile and come away knowing a little bit more about these unsung heroes of Norwich. The most surprising thing was the sense of responsibility I felt both with the script and performance. Everyone knows them! Unlike a real historical figure, there was no biography or personality to recreate. So, I had fun imagining what they'd seen and what it's like to be a brass lion out in all weathers, watching the people of Norwich go about their days. It was great fun and the whole talking statues project is inspired. Grab your phones and go and learn more about the statues with whom you share your city. They too have a story to tell..."

From Luke Wright- Will Kempe

'Kempe was a comedian and comedians deal in the ephemeral. A laugh is fleeting. I wonder how many of comedians have statues dedicated to them? Posterity favours the serious. So, I thought it was cool that we have a statue of Kempe, but I also wanted to explore that idea of posterity from the point of view of someone who lived in the moment, who was a performer.