



Professor Katy Shaw will chair a debate at the Edinburgh International Book Festival later this month.

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## Book festival debate explores opportunities for Northern writers

**The lack of Northern voices within the UK publishing industry will be the focus of a debate taking place at the Edinburgh International Book Festival this month, chaired by Northumbria University's [Professor Katy Shaw](#).**

As Professor of Contemporary Writings at Northumbria, Professor Shaw's research focuses on the under-representation of writers, agents, editors and publishers from Northern England and Scotland, as well as those from working class backgrounds.

Earlier this year she was invited to give evidence before MPs at the [Performers' Alliance All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) inquiry](#) into the class ceiling in the creative sector.

Now she will chair a debate organised as part of [Northern Lights](#) – a collaborative project between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Bradford Literature Festival designed to bring together Northern and Scottish publishers with members of the Scottish parliament, including Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister.

The debate, entitled *Power Up North: A Manifesto Debate*, will explore new ways of increasing visibility, opportunity and promotion of publishing in the North of England and Scotland.

Speaking about the debate, Professor Shaw said: “This event is another vital step in uniting the countries of our United Kingdom to consider whose voices, realities and opinions are reflected in the contemporary literary and publishing industries.

“By facilitating these public debates as spaces to confront and consider class ceilings, we hope to broaden our discussions to draw upon Scottish experiences and industries to generate a wider understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when we power up the creative potential of the North.”

The debate will feature contributions from a variety of speakers including Northumbria University partner [New Writing North](#), the biggest writing development agency in the UK.

Claire Malcolm, CEO of New Writing North, will join the other speakers in delivering a manifesto pledge for changes to the future of publishing. These pledges will feed into a roundtable discussion involving publishers, agents and editors in the North. This will be followed by a formal parliamentary hearing, expected to take place in December.

Northern Lights is supported by Creative Scotland and Arts Council England. The two-part gathering started at [Bradford Literature Festival](#) on Friday 28 June and will culminate at the [Edinburgh International Book Festival](#) over the weekend of the 24 and 25 August.

Both gatherings offer publishers and those involved with publishing the chance to discuss key issues in the industry and share expertise around developing inclusive practice and diversifying readership.

*Power Up North: A Manifesto Debate* takes place from 11.45am to 1pm on Sunday 25 August – for more information please click [here](#).

Professor Shaw is a leading expert on the issue of under-representation within the publishing industry. In May this year she gave evidence in the House of Commons as part of *Breaking the Class Ceiling in the Arts: an inquiry into social mobility in the creative sector*.

The inquiry aims to address the barriers faced by working class writers attempting to break into a career in writing, including unequal access to networks, financial support, and the issue of ‘London based opportunities’.

Professor Shaw was invited to give evidence regarding her research into the value and impact of the Northern Writers Awards. In the first study of its kind she explored the impact the awards have had over the last 18 years based on feedback and responses from previous winners.

She found the Northern Writers Awards played a key role in championing Northern voices and underrepresented groups and were a key element in the North East creative economy, and a talent pipeline for the UK publishing industry.

Find out more about studying [Humanities at Northumbria University](#).

A limited number of places are available to high-achieving students on courses within Northumbria’s Department of Humanities through Clearing this year. For more information, visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/clearing](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/clearing) or call the Clearing Hotline on 0800 085 1085.

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