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Literature expert addresses House of Commons inquiry

A contemporary literature expert from Northumbria University has been invited to give evidence at the Performers' Alliance All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) inquiry into the class ceiling in the creative sector.

Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writing, will speak before MPs on Monday 13 May as part of a wider inquiry, *Breaking the Class Ceiling in the Arts: an inquiry into social mobility in the creative sector*.

This is the third meeting of the inquiry and will focus on the barriers faced by

working class writers when attempting to break into a career in writing. These include unequal access to networks, financial support, and the issue of 'London based opportunities', as well as investigating government and other schemes to support early career creatives.

Professor Shaw has been invited to speak about her research and its influence on new policy formation, including the use of regional literary awards as a potential model of intervention for addressing regional under-representation in the UK literary industries and publishing.

She is among academics from Northumbria University currently working with New Writing North to organise the biannual Newcastle Writing Conference, aimed at aspiring writers, including those who feel they are not currently represented by the publishing industry.

This year's event takes place on Saturday 18 May and will also mark the publication of *Common People*, a landmark anthology of working class writers, which is published by Unbound and supported by Northumbria University and New Writing North.

The APPG inquiry launched in November last year and aims identify and investigate the barriers faced by those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from establishing and sustaining careers as musicians, writers and actors.

It will also review the effectiveness of current initiatives by organisations for improving social diversity and to identify best practice across the industry.

A number of oral evidence sessions are now taking place, with a final report expected to be published this autumn, providing recommendations for government, industry and others to ensure changes are made in the future.

For more information about the inquiry please click [here](#). To read a report from the inquiry's first session click [here](#).

Last year Professor Shaw published research into the value and impact of the Northern Writers Awards – the UK's largest literary awards of their kind in the country.

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.

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