



Steve Gilroy of Northumbria University and Anna Disley of New Writing North

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New podcast series explores cultural concepts with academic insight

As the new academic year gets underway, Northumbria University and New Writing North have teamed up to launch a new podcast series – bringing together experts from a variety of disciplines to explore big cultural concepts, including fear and death.

The series, entitled [Pivotal](#), pairs intellectual inquiry with accessible discussion, breaking down complex theories and offering insights into how these ideas shape society today.

Hosted by journalist, academic and radio producer Angharad Hampshire, *Pivotal* promises to be a thought-provoking and engaging experience for listeners of all backgrounds.

The podcast is the latest in a series of collaborations between Northumbria University and the writing development agency [New Writing North](#), which works to develop opportunities for creative writing and reading in the North of England.

The two organisations have worked in partnership since 2012 and are currently in the process of establishing a new centre for writing in Newcastle, having been [awarded £5m by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport](#) (DCMS) through its Cultural Development Fund in January this year. The centre is backed [by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and her cabinet](#), who recently agreed to contribute £2m towards the project.

[Steve Gilroy](#), Creative Director in the [School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries](#) at Northumbria University, and co-producer of the new podcast, said: “The *Pivotal* podcast offers an opportunity to bridge the gap between academic research and public understanding. By exploring big ideas, we aim to bring fresh perspectives to topics that affect our everyday lives, and the format of the podcast makes this research easily accessible to everyone.”

[Anna Disley](#), Executive Director, Programmes at New Writing North added: “There is fascinating research happening at Northumbria University, and we want to ensure the public get to hear about it. This series focuses in on specific stories and ideas to help illuminate bigger ideas – we are very pleased to help bring this research out into the world and share it with our networks.”

The *Pivotal* podcast series is divided into four thematic episodes, with each episode dedicated to exploring a specific concept. They are:

- [Pivotal Provincial](#) – Why is there often a negative connotation attached to anything that comes from outside of capital cities? This episode looks at two provincial towns, Belfast in the 1960s and Leeds in the 1970s, and their unexpected cultural revolutions, featuring [Gavin Butt, Professor of Fine Art](#), and [Noel McLaughlin, Assistant Professor](#) at Northumbria University.
- [Pivotal Death](#) – Death is a concept that touches us all. In this

episode, [Wallace Chan, Associate Professor in Social Work](#) in the School of Communities and Education, and [Stacey Pitsillides, Associate Professor](#) in the School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries, explore our understanding of death and its place in human culture.

- [Pivotal Resilience](#) – Is resilience always a positive trait? In this episode, [Simon Winlow, Professor of Social Science](#), and Patrick Duggan, former Associate Professor of Performance and Culture at Northumbria, now Head of Winchester School of Art at the University of Southampton, examine the concept of resilience and its cultural implications, with a focus on nostalgia and the role of the arts in developing resilience.
- [Pivotal Fear](#) – What is fear? Is it an essential part of our lives, or something we should seek to protect ourselves and our children from? [Featuring Kate Egan, Assistant Professor](#) in the School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries, [and Johnny Walker, Associate Professor](#) at Northumbria University and Vice Chair of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies, this episode delves into the nature of fear and its place in human experience.

Each episode was recorded using Northumbria University's state-of-the-art recording studios and is produced and presented by Angharad Hampshire, with sound engineering by Jon Calver and original theme music, *Kaleidoscopes*, composed by Harrison Amer.

Music clips and readings from key works are featured alongside interviews to provide a dynamic audio experience that supports the engaging academic discussions.

The *Pivotal* podcast is now [available for streaming on Spotify](#), allowing listeners to immerse themselves in a wide range of topics and discover the fascinating research taking place at Northumbria University.

Search the episode name – **Pivotal Provincial, Pivotal Death, Pivotal Resilience** and **Pivotal Fear**.

New Writing North and Northumbria University have worked together for over 13 years, in a nationally recognised partnership which has delivered a wide range of activity, research, creativity and public value.

The annual [Northern Writers' Awards](#) have been at the heart of the partnership since its inception – organised by New Writing North and sponsored and hosted by the University.

In 2022 the two organisations launched a ground-breaking [MA Publishing](#), which is co-delivered with global publishers, [Hachette](#).

And last year [New Writing North's Sounds Good Audio Books](#) studio was opened on Northumbria University's campus, also in partnership with Hachette, operating commercially as well as providing opportunities for students.

Plans are now being pursued to establish a new Centre for Writing in Newcastle which will develop the next generation of northern writers, become a hub for the publishing industry in the North and be a place where residents of the region can discover their writing potential.

The campaign for the new centre was led by New Writing North and Northumbria University, backed by local government and the North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness, with support from publishers including Hachette UK, Faber & Faber and Simon & Schuster.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

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