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**BBC Press Release Thursday September 22**

**A year of poetry, dance and much more as the BBC puts Hull – and the city’s people – centre stage for 2017**

* **Director-General Tony Hall commits the BBC to “an unashamedly Hull-centric 2017”**
* **BBC will be a key partner throughout Hull’s year as UK City of Culture**
* **Major new spoken word festival, a hundred local community reporters and a dance project through the streets of Hull among the BBC’s creative highlights**

A major new national spoken word festival, a ballet for young children made in Hull and the recruitment of a hundred local community reporters are just some of the projects the BBC will host as part of Hull’s year as the UK City of Culture.

The BBC will also launch a city-wide schools programme to help young people explore skills from the creative industries and its local and regional services will cover every single event, every day throughout 2017.

Tony Hall, the Director-General of the BBC, today (Thursday September 22) reaffirmed the BBC’s commitment to be a key partner for Hull throughout 2017, promising the BBC would create content in the city for audiences across the country and the world.

Among the BBC highlights for Hull City of Culture 2017 will be a major new spoken word and poetry festival called Contains Strong Language. The four day festival will open on National Poetry Day on September 28 and will be a celebration of both new and existing works.

A group of 17 poets, the Hull ’17, will be based in the city during the festival. The poets will include Louise Wallwein and Jacob Polley.

Acclaimed poet Peter Porter called Hull “the most poetic city in England”, having inspired the likes of Andrew Marvell, Philip Larkin, Andrew Motion, Douglas Dunn, Peter Didsbury, Maurice Rutherford and Stevie Smith.

Contains Strong Language will reflect Hull’s status as a major poetic city but will also look to the future by supporting and encouraging new local talent, giving new poets a platform alongside established national and international poets.

Contains Strong Language will return to Hull in 2019 and then become a touring festival that follows subsequent UK Cities of Culture. In 2017, it will be produced by BBC Radio in partnership with Hull UK City of Culture, Hull City Council, Humber Mouth, British Council, BBC Learning, Wrecking Ball Press and a number of poetry organisations. Much of the festival will be broadcast on BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Humberside.

Meanwhile, CBeebies, Northern Ballet and Hull 2017 will collaborate to create a new interactive ballet based on the book *The Great Blueness and Other Predicaments* by Arnold Lobel. The ballet will be choreographed to create a family friendly and accessible experience with children taking part. It will be supported by an extensive engagement programme supported by students of Hull College.

The event will culminate in a finale featuring local dancers, with the city of Hull providing a backdrop. Premièring in the city in August 2017, the ballet will then be broadcast on CBeebies with a host of digital resources available online.

It will be choreographed and directed by Northern Ballet’s Artistic Associate Daniel de Andrade. It will be accompanied by a commissioned score from Oscar-nominated composer Gary Yershon and costumes and sets designed by Mark Bailey. Both Gary and Mark are former students of Hull University.

Elsewhere, BBC Learning will be in Hull throughout 2017 with a range of activities to help young people explore career opportunities in the creative industries.

The BBC’s local and regional services will be showcasing events throughout Hull 2017. BBC Hull is to appoint a new presenter who will work across TV, radio and digital platforms. The new presenter will act as the “face and voice of Hull 2017” on the BBC. Open auditions to find the presenter started this week in Hull.

BBC Hull will also recruit 100 local community reporters as part of an outreach scheme. The reporters will cover events and produce content for BBC Radio Humberside, BBC Look North and the BBC website.

Radio Humberside will be the official radio station for Hull 2017 and will cover every event, every day for the entire year. The station is also partnering with BBC Radio 4 to work on a year-long version of Radio 4’s Listening Project, recording the stories of the people of Hull.

The BBC’s Performing Groups will take part in Hull 2017 with the BBC Philharmonic and BBC Concert Orchestra performing in the city. The BBC Philharmonic will perform new works by Simon Holt and Mica Levi, as part of the New Music Biennial, a **PRS for Music Foundation** initiative presented in partnership with **Hull UK City of Culture 2017**, **London’s Southbank Centre** and **BBC Radio 3**. The BBC Philharmonic will also perform works by Elgar, Debussy, Bizet, and Walton in a concert at Hull’s City Hall and take part in the Contains Strong Language festival. The BBC Concert Orchestra will appear as part of the Kirchin Weekender in a concert curated by Goldfrapp’s Will Gregory.

In addition to this activity, the BBC will also partner with Hull 2017 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK.

Other BBC projects and events will be announced closer to 2017 and throughout the year. A host of the BBC’s biggest programmes and events will visit Hull during 2017 and the BBC will also provide extensive regional, national and international coverage of Hull City of Culture 2017.

Director-General Tony Hall, who was in Hull today (Thursday September 22) for the launch of the Hull 2017 programme, said: “I want the BBC to be unashamedly Hull-centric in 2017. The plans we’ve revealed today show we are living up to that commitment.

“This is a programme of activity aimed at all ages and audiences across the country but rooted in Hull. Our aim is to showcase and celebrate the city’s big year, be a big part of it ourselves, and bring the best of Hull 2017 to our audiences around the world.

“We’re working hard to create an exciting, challenging and rewarding programme of events and activities for Hull 2017. And we’ll be announcing further plans soon to bring the BBC's best loved talent, events and programmes to Hull next year.”

Martin Green, CEO and Director, Hull 2017, said: “The partnership with the BBC is a fantastic boost for Hull as UK City of Culture. It's an endorsement of the wide-ranging artistic programme and the ambition to see Hull recognised as a cultural powerhouse, not just of the north, but of the whole country.

“2017 is a year that will show the power that art has to bring people together and to transform lives and our ambition is to reach as many people as we can living in this city and beyond.”

**Ends**