**PRESS RELEASE**

**September 2016**

**Creating Women of the World Festival Hull**

The people of Hull are being invited to help shape WOW (Women of the World) festival, which will be making its debut in the city for UK City of Culture 2017.

Through talks, music, debate, comedy and performance, WOW Hull celebrates International Women’s Day and asks why true gender equality is taking so long to achieve and what do we need to do to bring about real and lasting change?

Ahead of the weekend long festival in March, a series of 'Thinkin's have been organised, the first of which takes place on October 11, marking the International Day of the Girl Child. The day was declared such by the United Nations "to help galvanize worldwide enthusiasm for goals to better girls’ lives, providing an opportunity for them to show leadership and reach their full potential.”

The Thinkin sessions involve local people sharing ideas, suggestions and speakers, which will influence the shape of the topics, issues and debates. WOW Thinkins are free, fun and informal and will be led by Hull’s Assemble Festival Artistic Director, Madeleine O’Reilly.

Since WOW was founded in 2010 at Southbank Centre, London, it has become a rapidly expanding global movement with festivals taking place on five continents.

Jude Kelly, Southbank Centre's Artistic Director and founder of WOW, said: "Based on the premise that an equal world is better for all of us, WOW is a celebration not only of women and girls but of equality on all its forms. The festival is a celebration of the lives that women of all ages live, not just locally, but right across the world, the challenges they face, the gender issues that affect them, the indomitable spirit they have and the hope they give for the future."

Martin Green, CEO and director of Hull 2017, added: "We are delighted to be joining part of a global network of festivals which stretches from Europe to the US, Asia to Australia. We are hoping to replicate the success of our fellow City of Culture Derry, which premiered WOW in 2013 and has gone on to host the event annually.

"Taking inspiration from Hull’s own Women of the World, like Amy Johnson, Lilian Bilocca, Barbara Buttrick and Lucy Beaumont, we want to hear what matters to the women and girls of the city today."

The series of Thinkin's are being held at:

* Freedom Centre, Tuesday 11th October, 1100-1230
* Hull University, Wednesday 12th October, 1400-1530
* Bransholme Library, Thursday 13th October, 1330-1500
* Pave, Monday 17th October, 1945-2115
* Asda Mount Pleasant, Wednesday 19th October, 1330-1500 and 1800-1930
* Rayners, Friday 21st October, 1730-1900

Jude Kelly will also be giving a keynote speech at the final 'Thinkin' in November, date and location to be confirmed.

WOW Hull is produced in partnership with Southbank Centre London.

To register your interest in WOW Hull, contact wow@hull2017.co.uk

**-ENDS-**

For press information, please contact:

Alix Johnson at Hull 2017, alix.johnson@hull2017.co.uk / 07718 100784

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

About Hull UK City of Culture 2017

Hull secured the title of UK City of Culture 2017 in November 2013. It is only the second city to hold the title and the first in England. The vision of the Hull 2017 Culture Company, the delivery organisation of the project, is “to deliver 365 days of transformative culture in 2017 through a range of diverse and high-profile events and projects”.

The Culture Company is an independent organisation with charitable status, funded both publicly and privately. It has raised £32 million to deliver the programme, with key contributions coming from: Host City – Hull City Council; Principal Partners - Arts Council England, BBC, Big Lottery Fund, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, KCOM, KWL, Spirit of 2012, Yorkshire Water and the University of Hull; Major Partners –Associated British Ports, Arco, BP, the British Council, Hull Clinical Commissioning Group, MKM Building Supplies, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Sewell Group, Smith & Nephew and Wykeland Group.

Hull 2017’s International Partners are: Aarhus, Denmark, which is European Capital of Culture 2017; Reykjavik, Iceland; Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and Freetown, Sierra Leone (twinned with Hull).

Links for background information on Hull, the UK City of Culture bid and the UK City of Culture programme:

www.hull2017.co.uk www.visithullandeastyorkshire.com www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-vibrant-and-sustainable-arts-and-culture/supporting-pages/uk-city-of-culture-programme