

THE PLACES OF POETRY

Prospectus for a national community arts project



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THE VISION

The Places of Poetry will create a digital map of England and Wales, onto which poems of place, heritage and identity will be pinned in the course of a public campaign. Classic poetry will be combined with original work, including commissioned pieces and work generated by members of the public writing about the places they know. A crowd-sourcing model will enable writers and poetry enthusiasts to pin poems onto the map.

We will gather details about authors of original poems, to enable filter-searching (e.g. by age, gender and nationality). We will also curate the site, raising the profile of particular pieces and engaging with users over our campaign period.

The Places of Poetry will prompt reflection on national and cultural identities in England and Wales, celebrating the diversity, heritage, environment and personalities of place.

- *A crowd-sourced digital map of poems about England and Wales*
- *Poetry of place, heritage and identity*
- *Classic poetry combined with original work generated through a national campaign*
- *Reinvigorating a historical model for the poetry of national identity*

THE CAMPAIGN

After a period of preparatory work, The Places of Poetry digital map will be populated through the course of an intensive campaign designed to raise the profile of the project and generate original poetry. Provisionally scheduled for early summer in 2019, the campaign will include:

- BBC radio programmes (provisionally agreed) on the poetry of place, heritage and identity
- Place-based events pairing commissioned poets with heritage and cultural sites, to provide models and inspiration for amateur writers
- Attention to ‘heritage’ in broad terms, including the natural environment, archaeological sites, agricultural and industrial heritage, sports and recreation
- Targeting of a range of demographic groups, including those not commonly included in the arts. The project will reflect a broad representation by age, socio-economic grouping, national and ethnic background



OUR INSPIRATION

Poly-Olbion (1612-22), by Michael Drayton, is the greatest effort ever made to describe the history and geography of England and Wales in poetry. It is composed of c.15,000 lines of poetry, and was published with unique, decorative county maps.

The Places of Poetry takes the model of *Poly-Olbion*, along with the rich heritage of English and Welsh poetry of place, to create an interactive creative-writing project for the present.

THE MAP

We will commission a new national map, based on the decorative model of William Hole’s maps published with Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*. This map will provide the project with a strong visual identity, and will help to reinforce our concern with the interface between place, heritage and identity.

The decorative map will be overlaid upon a reliable electronic map, so that users will be able to pin poems to places with a high degree of accuracy. Users will be able to slide between the distinctive Places of Poetry map and the accurate modern one beneath.



Pilot section of the map, combining original decorative imagery with modern features (e.g. the Glastonbury stages), and corrected to ensure cartographical accuracy.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

In preparation for the project, we are seeking to develop formal partnerships, with a view to maximizing engagement throughout the country.

We are seeking:

- National partners
- Regional partners
- Poets

SCHEDULE & FUNDING

We are planning a project that will begin with developmental work in the autumn of 2018, and culminate in a public campaign in the summer of 2019.

We will seek grant funding support for the project from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Applications will be led by the University of Exeter and are already in preparation.

PEOPLE



ANDREW MCRAE is Professor of Renaissance Literature at the University of Exeter. He is Principal Investigator of 'The Poly-Olbion Project'.



PAUL FARLEY (Professor of Poetry, Lancaster University) is an award-winning poet and experienced broadcaster. His *Electric Poly-Olbion* is contracted to Faber.



WHAT ABOUT SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND?

Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was written at a key moment in the history of 'Great Britain'. After being installed as King of England in 1603, James VI and I proclaimed a vision of a united island kingdom.

Like many of James's subjects, Drayton was not convinced. Although he stated an intention to extend his poem into Scotland, he never did so.

We will follow Drayton's model, and reflect in the project on the tensions – then and now – between the constituent nations of the United Kingdom.

