

### Press Release

**Press Release** Friday 22 May 2026

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Press images [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Press pack [HERE](#) including original press release in Scottish Gaelic & Welsh

## ***A Poet In Every Port* to launch in Great Yarmouth**

Mobile National Poetry Library begins UK tour visiting 11 coastal towns,  
as the Southbank Centre launches new national poetry competition

**Friday 29 May – Saturday 26 September 2026**



Pictured: Roger McGough © George Nindi, mobile National Poetry Library © Jo Underhill, map of locations

The Southbank Centre's ***A Poet In Every Port*** is set to launch on **Friday 29 May** at **Great Yarmouth's** Out There Arts Festival with ambassador Roger McGough making a special guest appearance. The mobile National Poetry Library - unveiled this week - will travel to 11 coastal locations across the UK, from **North Uist** (16-17 Jun) and **Dundee** (20-21 Jun) in Scotland, to **Penzance** in Cornwall (6-7 Jul); **Caernarfon** in Wales (9-10 Jul) and **Bangor** in Northern Ireland (25-26 Sep). Inspired by the travelling exhibitions of the 1951 Festival of Britain, it forms a key part of the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary national programme.

*A Poet In Every Port* celebrates the UK's diverse dialects and languages and tells the stories of the nation's coastal communities in poetry and spoken word throughout its journey. The mobile National Poetry Library features unique poetry collections, a recording studio, and space for workshops. Visitors of all ages are free to browse the collection, take part in free workshops and watch performances by local poets.

**Roger McGough, ambassador for *A Poet In Every Port*, said:** *“This initiative, inspired by the optimistic Festival of Britain 75 years ago, is to show poetry is for everyone. Writing poetry is what helps us feel human, vulnerable and yet powerful, and above all, alive. It’s something I have loved all my life, and I can’t wait to join the mobile National Poetry Library team in Great Yarmouth to launch this ambitious UK wide journey that is sure to inspire everyone it reaches. I’m looking forward to meeting visitors to the mobile library, to explore and celebrate their local dialects and languages - and perhaps write a new poem or two!”*

**Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, said:** *“A Poet In Every Port is a key project in the Southbank Centre’s 75th anniversary programme, where we consider what it means to be the arts centre of the future, and how, through creativity and culture, we can make a difference to people’s lives across the country. After extensive planning with our partner organisations in 11 coastal towns spread across the four nations of the UK, we’re thrilled to finally start our journey in Great Yarmouth. As we launch, we’re asking everyone across the UK to get involved through our national poetry competition.”*

### **National Poetry Competition**

As *A Poet In Every Port* takes to the road, the Southbank Centre is launching a UK wide Word Exchange poetry competition. Word Exchange poems are short poems that celebrate the words, sayings, languages, accents and dialects from a local region. The competition invites UK residents aged 16 and over to record a video of themselves performing their poem and post it on Instagram or TikTok using the hashtag #APoetinEveryPort. Entrants can submit via the form on the Southbank Centre’s website. A winner will be selected at the end of 2026, and awarded a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to perform their work live on stage at the 2027 London Literature Festival. To celebrate the launch of the competition, Roger McGough has written a new Word Exchange poem, *Poetry, the big fish in the Pool of Life*. Full details at [southbankcentre.co.uk](https://southbankcentre.co.uk)

Fri 29 – Sat 30 May  
**Great Yarmouth, England**  
[Out There Arts](#)

Sat 6 – Sun 7 June  
**Weston-super-Mare, England**  
[Super Culture](#)

Tues 16 – Weds 17 June  
**North Uist, Scotland**  
[Taigh Chearsabhaigh Museum & Arts Centre](#)

Sat 20 – Sun 21 June  
**Dundee, Scotland**  
[Dundee Book Festival](#)

Fri 26 June  
**Chatham, England**  
[Estuary Festival](#)

Sat 27 – Sun 28 June

**Southend, England**

[METAL Southend](#)

Mon 6 – Tues 7 July

**Penzance, England**

[The Acorn](#)

Thurs 9 – Fri 10 July

**Caernarfon, Wales**

[Gŵyl Arall \(Another Festival\)](#)

Sun 12 July

**London, England**

[Southbank Centre \(Poetry International Festival\)](#)

Sat 25 – Sun 26 July

**Blackpool, England**

[The Old Electric](#)

Fri 18 – Sat 19 Sept

**South Shields, England**

[The Word: National Centre for the Written Word](#)

Fri 25 – Sat 26 Sept

**Bangor, Northern Ireland**

[Aspects Festival](#)

At the heart of the project is a new cohort of the New Poets Collective, which has been formed to support emerging poets from each region *A Poet In Every Port* is visiting. They will lead the free activities in each location, working closely with the partner festivals and venues to celebrate local dialects and languages, and engage the wider community and public. Please visit the relevant partner website for information on the programme.

For more information about the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary celebrations, visit our [75th Anniversary](#) page. For more information on the project, visit the [A Poet in Every Port](#) page.

**#ENDS#**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For interviews and further information contact [ely.chegrinec@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:ely.chegrinec@southbankcentre.co.uk) and [louise.gilbert@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:louise.gilbert@southbankcentre.co.uk)

Press pack [HERE](#) includes 11 quotes from project partners, an extended quote from Roger McGough, press images, FAQs and translated versions of the original press release.

### **Roger McGough biography**

Poet, performer and broadcaster, Roger McGough has published over 100 poetry books for adults and children and has been hailed 'the patron saint of poetry' and 'the godfather of modern poetry'. He was one of the Liverpool poets, alongside Adrian Henri and Brian Patten, who influenced popular culture in the sixties. The Mersey Sound, published in 1967, is one of the bestselling poetry anthologies of all time, selling over a million copies. In the 1960's he formed The Scaffold with John Gorman, and Mike McGear, performing a combination of comic songs, poetry and sketches who had several top 20 singles including the hit song 'Lily the Pink'. He has won numerous awards, including The Cholmondeley Award in 1988, received the Freedom of the City of Liverpool in 2001, and was awarded a CBE in 2004. A Fellow of The Royal Society and President of The Poetry Society, he presents the popular Radio 4 Poetry Please series. His most recent book is "Collected Poems 1959-2024", published by Penguin.

[www.rogermcgough.org](http://www.rogermcgough.org)

### **Roger McGough's role as *A Poet In Every Port* ambassador**

As ambassador, Roger McGough will launch the tour in Great Yarmouth on 29 May and join the mobile National Poetry Library at a number of stops across the tour. He will also write a specially commissioned new Word Exchange poem to launch the national competition, and support the schools activity across the tour.

### **About the New Poets Collective**

The Southbank Centre's New Poets Collective is a national programme launched in 2021 to nurture and showcase emerging voices, led by poets Vanessa Kisuule and Will Harris. As part of the project in 2026, a new cohort of the New Poets Collective has been formed to support emerging poets from each region. A Poet In Every Port is visiting.

### **About the Southbank Centre**

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), two resident organisations (Kinetika Bloco and Tomorrow's Warriors) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra). The Southbank Centre's 75th Anniversary Season is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

### **About the Southbank Centre's National Poetry Library**

The Southbank Centre's National Poetry Library is the largest public collection of modern poetry in the world and is housed at the Southbank Centre in London. Founded by the Arts

Council in 1953 and opened by poets T.S. Eliot and Herbert Read, the library contains over 200,000 items spanning from 1912 to the present day, extensive resources for poets, academics, schools and families. Hosting exhibitions and events, as well as offering an extensive catalogue and ebook service accessible online, the library is free to use [www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk)

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