

Press Release
25th January, 2019



The Words That Bind Us

St. Patrick's Festival 2019 Binds Irish and Scottish Cultural Connections Through Words

St. Patrick's Festival 2019 (14th-18th March) will explore the contemporary connections of culture, traditions and heritage between Ireland and Scotland in a new cultural exchange initiative entitled *The Words That Bind Us*, which was launched today by **Minister Josepha Madigan, T.D., Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland** and **Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Scotland**. The project brings together poets from Ireland and Scotland to collaborate with a new generation of young writers, exploring the roots between the two countries and topics of belonging and identity, through the prism of spoken word, poetry and performance.

Speaking at the launch **Minister Madigan** said, *"The power of words is fundamental to the core of who we are. From daily communication to timeless speeches, from music to spoken word and from shouts of joy to expressions of sorrow, words define, inform and create who we are and the environment around us. I applaud this initiative which shows how words can be used to unite through a cultural lens, in particular with our nearest neighbours, with whom we share so much heritage and legacy."*

Used as social commentary in music, writing and literature, spoken word and poetry are a force for change, allowing people to articulate and draw inspiration from topics including gender, race, identity and more. **Karen Walshe, St. Patrick's Festival Artistic Director**, has invited **Irish spoken word artist Stephen James Smith** and **Scottish poet Leyla Josephine** to work as 'poets in residence' at **Axis in Ballymun**, collaborating with a group of 20 teenage students from local secondary school **Trinity Comprehensive**, over a three-month period.

Through a series of participatory workshops and masterclasses with poets including **Felispeaks, Dagago Hart, John Cummins** and **Laureate na nÓg Sarah Crossan**, the students will go on to perform their own original spoken word pieces in front of a live

audience on the axis Ballymun stage. They will also be performing their works on the **Dublin UNESCO City of Literature Poetry Trail** as part of the 2019 St. Patrick's Festival programme.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Scotland Fiona Hyslop said, *“Scotland is an outward looking, open and internationalist country and this project is an excellent example of the close cultural ties between Scotland and Ireland. The Words That Bind Us is an ambitious and innovative project and I am delighted that the Scottish Poetry Library and Neu! Reekie! are involved. It is fitting that on Burns Night, as we celebrate the life and work of Scotland's national poet, that we are developing Scotland's cultural relations and demonstrating the strength, innovation and energy of both Scotland and Ireland's new generation of poets.”*

St. Patrick's Festival CEO, Susan Kirby noted that ***The Words That Bind Us*** demonstrates the Festival's ability to create international impact and space, *“St. Patrick's Festival is an unprecedented opportunity to enhance Ireland's cultural profile and global reputation by promoting Irish arts and Ireland worldwide. A key feature of the future vision of the Festival is to develop new and nurture existing collaborative cultural exchange programmes and curate enduring relationships around the world.”*

Building on existing community engagement initiatives, ***The Words That Bind Us*** lays the foundations of a new Creative Learning programme that will be incorporated into different areas of the Festival in future years. Meaningful engagement with young people through the Festival programme is important in supporting the Irish arts and cultural sector and in developing the future Festival audience. A key objective is to inspire the participating students to connect with their capital city and the Festival itself, by providing a platform to express themselves and share their voices.

The Words That Bind Us - Performance Schedule:

Wednesday 13th March

Scottish Event Partners: Scottish Poetry Library, Edinburgh & Neu! Reekie!

Three Irish and three Scottish poets will connect through the project and take part in youth engagement workshops at axis, Ballymun. The poets pair up and create a new performance which will be presented at an event in Edinburgh, based on the themes of identity, belonging and the exploration of the ties between Scotland and Ireland. All will gather on Wednesday March 13th to perform on stage at the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh, in celebration of the launch of St. Patrick's Festival Dublin, the following day.

Saturday 16th March

The Words That Bind Us – Live at axis, Ballymun, Dublin.

This performance will be the culmination of the work of 20 teens from Trinity Comprehensive Ballymun and their mentors' Irish poet Stephen James Smith and Scottish poet Leyla Josephine. A beautifully curated presentation of their work will feature special guest appearances from a host of invited poets. It will also feature Creative Sisters, led by Leyla Josephine, where young female minds dive into their personal 'WOW factor' (**W**omen **O**f the **W**orld), celebrating their power and potential as young Dublin women, and exploring notions of creativity, identity and belonging. Running concurrently with the live show, will be a new installation of the students work displayed through sound and photography in axis Ballymun.

Monday 18th March

Dublin UNESCO City of Literature Poetry Trail *The Words That Bind Us*.

We will celebrate the breadth and diversity of the city's living poets on a curated trail, based on the poets' own work and the locations that inspired them. Curated by Linda Devlin, the trail will include a mix of Irish and Scottish Poets; confirmed poets for the 2019 Poetry Trail include host John Cummins, Felispeaks, Dagago Hart, Colm Keegan etc. The route includes Gutter Bookshop, The Winding Stair, Books Upstairs, Science Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland and the International Bar.

The Words That Bind Us is a new artistic initiative from St Patrick's Festival 2019 with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland and the Department. of Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Scotland, the British Council and Dublin UNESCO City of Literature, in association with axis Ballymun, Neu! Reekie! and Scottish Poetry Library, Edinburgh.

Join the conversation online at #stpatricksfest
Facebook.com/StPatricksFestivalIreland,
Twitter.com/stpatricksfest,
instagram.com/stpatricksfestival
YouTube/stpatricksfestvideos

-Ends-

For further press information: Kerryann Conway/ Louise Keogh, Conway Communications.
Tel: 0868215246 / 0851277918.

NOTES TO EDITOR

St. Patrick's Festival's principal funders are Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Its aim is to develop a major annual international festival around the national holiday over which the Irish people can stand proud. It reflects the talents and achievements of Irish people on national and world stages, showcasing the skills of every age and social background. The first St. Patrick's Festival was held over one day, and night, on March 17th 1996. Preparation used to take five months, but with its subsequent growth, it now takes 18 months to plan for Ireland's biggest annual celebration.

Over 105,000 out-of-state visitors attended the Festival in 2016, spending an average of 8.8 days in Ireland, and 6.5 days in Dublin. During the 2015 Festival, out-of-state visitors generated an estimated total expenditure of €73m while in Ireland, including expenditure of €51.3m while in Dublin, and circa €22m which was spent in the rest of Ireland. (Independent research conducted in 2015 & 2016 by Behaviour and Attitudes on behalf of Fáilte Ireland).

Why was it started?

- To offer a national festival that ranks as one of the greatest celebrations in the world
- To create energy and excitement throughout Ireland via innovation, creativity and grassroots involvement, and marketing activity

- To provide the opportunity and motivation for people of Irish descent (and those who sometimes wish they were Irish) to attend and join in the imaginative and expressive celebrations
- To project, internationally, an accurate image of Ireland as a creative, professional and sophisticated country with wide appeal.