



National
Poetry
Day

FMCM

PRESS RELEASE

National Poetry Day and the BBC commission 12 new poems celebrating local words

News for release: Wednesday 24th May: National Poetry Day and the BBC are joining forces this year to discover and celebrate the nation's great local words in 12 specially commissioned poems - one for each of the 12 BBC regions in England.

From today and taking their cue from National Poetry Day's 2017 theme - Freedom - BBC Local Radio across England will be calling on listeners to 'Free the word': nominating a truly distinctive local word that deserves to be better known nationally. These 12 words, once chosen, will each be offered to a local poet as the creative spark for a new poem, to be broadcast on the BBC on National Poetry Day, 28th September.

Across BBC Local Radio, on social media, and in interviews and discussions, people are invited to recommend a word that is used by local people but not yet known by the nation at large.

The words suggested will be considered for inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary. The search embraces dialect, slang and idiom - any word that makes visitors do a double-take and ask what is meant. The ideal word will be striking and give a flavour of the place and local identity. It can be ancient or newly imported, just as long as it is regularly used by people locally and deserves wider circulation.

These suggestions will help an expert team of lexicographers from the **Oxford English Dictionary** build a fresh picture of regional English as it is spoken now. Each region will then be celebrated in its own poem, inspired by the chosen word, to be broadcast on National Poetry Day.

BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Radio Cymru (the Welsh-language station) are also taking part and will be calling for their own local words to provide the inspiration for a poem for National Poetry Day.

Susannah Herbert, Executive Director, National Poetry Day, said:

"National Poetry Day is truly national when it's truly local. The distinctive words and figures of speech used in different regions have inspired poets for centuries, from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Daljit Nagra and Liz Berry - and a poem is still a great way to get a favourite expression before a wide audience. These new poems will draw on words handed down by grandparents and picked up in street markets: we're hungry to hear how the nation speaks when it's at home."

James Stewart, Editor GNS Programmes for BBC English Regions, said:

"Following the success of last year's BBC Local Radio poetry initiative, we've commissioned 12 more uplifting and thoughtful poems for National Poetry Day. Each one will be broadcast on the BBC's local & regional radio and TV services, as well as being



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shared on social media. Once again, this celebration of local words through poetry puts BBC Local Radio at the heart of the creative energies of England”

Michael Proffitt, Chief Editor, Oxford English Dictionary, said:

“The Oxford English Dictionary is delighted to participate in National Poetry Day. This year’s focus on regional words and phrases makes it a particularly good match, as a celebration of linguistic creativity and diversity across the country.

The OED already records many thousands of words associated with particular regions. But language changes as society changes, and the OED is constantly updating its record of English. A national event about regional language is a great way for the OED to learn more about the distinctive, evocative, and poetic words and phrases that people use now, some of which have yet to appear in the dictionary.”

Last year on National Poetry Day the 40 stations of **BBC Local Radio** marked National Poetry Day by each broadcasting a poem about a local landmark commissioned from 40 #BBClocalpoets in an unprecedented lyrical mapping of the English landscape.

National Poetry Day (28 September 2017) is a mass celebration of poetry that annually engages people across the country with reading, writing, performing and listening to poetry. It enjoys very high participation rates, especially online and in schools and libraries: supporters include the Football Association, the Royal Mail, the BBC, and HRH the Prince of Wales. It is co-ordinated by Forward Arts Foundation, which brings together leading poetry, literacy and literary organisations around a common purpose: promoting the enjoyment, discovery and sharing of poetry.

For further information, visit <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk>

To nominate a local word on social media use #FreetheWord

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Notes to editors

How the initiative works:

BBC local radio programmes will be calling for local word nominations from Wednesday 24 May. 12 local words will be chosen - one for each of the 12 BBC regions in England - by a team of BBC producers and editors from Oxford English Dictionary. These words will then be given to a local poet to create a poem for broadcast on National Poetry Day.

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

National Poetry Day is an initiative of the Forward Arts Foundation, a charity that celebrates excellence in poetry and widens its audience. National Poetry Day brings



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together leading poetry, literacy and literary organisations around a shared purpose: promoting the enjoyment, discovery and sharing of poetry.

<http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk>

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OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

The *OED* is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of over 829,000 words, senses, and compounds - past and present - from across the English-speaking world. As a historical dictionary, the *OED* is very different from those of current English, in which the focus is on present-day meanings. You'll still find these in the *OED*, but you'll also find the history of individual words, and of the language - traced through over 3.3 million quotations, from classic literature and specialist periodicals to film scripts and cookery books. [View OED FAQs here.](#)