

Embargoed until 00:01, 27 March 2019

Bestselling crime writer joins the search for stories

Val McDermid, Jane McCarry and Nikesh Shukla
encourages the public to pick up a pen



Val McDermid, patron of Scottish Book Trust and award-winning crime writer, has today launched the search for real-life stories from the people of Scotland. The Blether campaign seeks submissions from all backgrounds and experiences, whether in written, audio or video form.

Scottish Book Trust, the national charity changing lives through reading and writing, is searching for stories on the theme of Blether. Tied to [A Year of Conversation 2019](#), Blether is a celebration of Scotland and her stories. Whether it's the weekly catch up with a friend at a favourite coffee spot, a tough conversation or a connection with a complete stranger, Scottish Book Trust wants to know what 'blether' means to you.

Val McDermid said: "Everybody loves a blether. It can change your life, a good blether. Sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. But either way, a blether is the source of all the best stories. So take this chance to share those amazing exchanges with us."

Jane McCarry – Isa of *Still Game* and Scotland's favourite gossip – has penned her own personal Blether story as part of the campaign. Nikesh Shukla, editor of *The Good Immigrant* and author of *The One Who Wrote Destiny* has also contributed a story, alongside Leila Aboulela, winner the Saltire Fiction Book of Year 2018 for *Elsewhere, Home*. Chris McQueer, of short story collections *Hings* and *HWFG*, has provided his own Blether interpretation in Scots.

The submitted stories will be published in a weekly digital issue, available to read online via Scottish Book Trust's [website](#). A selection of the stories will also be published in a physical book for Book Week Scotland – a week long, national celebration of books and reading. Over 100,000 copies were distributed last year. This year's Book Week Scotland takes place between 18 – 24 November 2019.



For those unsure how to start their story, Scottish Book Trust will be running [workshops](#) across the country with award-winning writers Kirsty Logan and Lucy Ribchester, scriptwriter Marc Pye and poet Nadine Jassat. Workshops will take place in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee. The writers leading the workshops will also submit their own stories to the Blether campaign. For those who cannot attend, several video tutorials by Sara Sheridan will be made available via Scottish Book Trust's website and social media channels. The tutorials will cover how to brainstorm the theme, how to start the first line of the story, writer's voice, and more.

The Blether writing campaign is open for submissions from today until Wednesday 5 June 2019. Writers of all ages and experiences are welcome to submit their work, in any form – story, poem, comic strip, play or letter – of up to 1,000 words, in English, Gaelic or Scots.

Scottish Book Trust is working in partnership with The Gaelic Books Council, and writers Seonag Monk and Calum MacKinnon, along with poet Marion F. Morrison will be providing stories for Blether.

The Blether campaign will run in partnership with [Open Book](#), [Who Cares?](#), [HIV Scotland](#), [Support in Mind](#) and TURN Community Justice. Workshops are being organised in association with these partners in order to reach a diverse audience and gather their stories.

Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust, said:

“We are delighted to be launching the Blether writing campaign with the support of our patron, Val McDermid. During A Year of Conversation 2019, we hope the public will share their stories with us. In difficult and uncertain times, it's more important than ever to speak out and be heard.”

Alison Lang, Director of the Gaelic Books Council, said:

“This is the Year of Conversation and it's also UNESCO's International Year of Indigenous Languages, so we hope that Gaelic speakers will add their voices to the Blether and contribute to this year's campaign. Togaibh ur guthan agus ur pinn; let's make Gaelic stories part of the conversation.”

Irene Warner-Mackintosh, who was included in last year's book, *Rebel*, said:

“I was so very chuffed to have a poem selected for last year's collection of writing on the theme of Rebel. I've loved reading all the contributions to previous campaigns – and have them all at home on my bookshelf – so to actually have my wee poem picked was dead exciting, especially with such brilliant company.”

Workshop List:

- Saturday 13 April, 3-5pm. Nadine Jassat at Edinburgh Central Library.
- Saturday 13 April, 2-4pm, Lucy Ribchester at Perth Museum & Art Gallery.
- Saturday 20 April, 2-4pm. Marc Pye at Dundee Central Library.



- Saturday 27 April, 11am-1pm. Marc Pye at The Mitchell Library.
- Saturday 4 May, 11am-1pm. Lucy Ribchester at Edinburgh Central Library.
- Saturday 11 May, 11am-1pm. Kirsty Logan at The Mitchell Library.
- Saturday 18 May, 2-4pm. Kirsty Logan at Aberdeen Central Library
- Saturday 25 May, 11am-1pm. Nadine Jassat at Portobello Library.

Contact Gordon Connolly to book a place: Gordon.connolly@scottishbooktrust.com

Submissions can be made online via [Survey Monkey](#) or via post to: Blether, Scottish Book Trust, Sandeman House, Trunk's Close, 55 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR.

Notes to Editors

Photos of Val McDermid (free to use, copyright Rob McDougall) are available to download [here](#).

For media enquiries please contact Keara Donnachie, PR and Marketing Manager at Scottish Book Trust, on Keara.Donnachie@scottishbooktrust.com or 0131 524 0184.

Scottish Book Trust

Scottish Book Trust is a national charity changing lives through reading and writing. We inspire and support the people of Scotland to read and write for pleasure through programmes and outreach work that include:

- Gifting books to every child in Scotland to ensure families of all backgrounds can share the joy of books at home.
- Working with teachers to inspire children to develop a love of reading, creating innovative classroom activities, book awards and author events.
- Supporting Scotland's diverse writing community with our training, awards and writing opportunities.
- Funding a range of author events for the public to enjoy and promoting Scottish writing to people worldwide.

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Creative Scotland

In addition to general fundraising, Scottish Book Trust receives Creative Scotland support through Regular Funding. Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit www.creativescotland.com. Follow us @creativescots and www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

A Year of Conversation 2019

A Year of Conversation 2019 is about us all celebrating, initiating and exploring conversation in our lives. There will be some events involving many people at places you might expect – festivals for example. But there will be many conversation events that are smaller and more intimate too. What is a 'conversation event'? It's simply something that's been planned – that you might have planned – in which conversation plays a significant part or which gives rise to conversation. So it may be a performance of some kind or it may be a group of people (you have) chosen for a special reason to share a meal. There will be information about events on the website, but there will also be space for you to reflect on your own experiences of conversation.

Gaelic Books Council

The Gaelic Books Council is the lead organisation with responsibility for supporting Scottish Gaelic authors and publishers, and for raising the profile and reach of Scottish Gaelic Books in Scotland and internationally.

gaelicbooks.org