

Surrey's Big Poetry Weekend launches in Egham this summer

16 June 2026



A major new poetry festival is coming to Surrey this summer, as the Surrey Poet Laureateship launches its first annual poetry festival.

Surrey's Big Poetry Weekend '26 will take place on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 August 2026 at the Egham Literary Institute.

The festival has been created by the Surrey Poet Laureateship CIC, a self-funded, volunteer-led organisation founded in 2024. In its first two years, the Laureateship says it has delivered eight free Poetry Hubs across the county, created more than 5,000 engagements with poetry, established more than 20 partnerships and welcomed more than 200 open mic performers to the stage.

Organisers say the new weekend festival will celebrate Surrey's poets while also bringing nationally recognised contemporary UK poets to the county.

Adam Gary, President of the Surrey Poet Laureateship, said: "When we launched the Surrey Poet Laureateship, people told us poetry was struggling. What we've found is the opposite. People are hungry for connection, creativity, and spaces where they can express themselves and be heard.

"Everything we've built has been powered by volunteers, belief, and an extraordinary community. Surrey's Big Poetry Weekend is our biggest leap yet.

"We're bringing together nationally recognised poets, celebrated Surrey voices, and complete newcomers under one roof because we believe poetry should belong to everyone. We want people to leave inspired, connected, and excited about what poetry can do."

The weekend programme will include headline performances, talks, panel discussions, workshops and community meet-ups.

Poets appearing at the festival include Len Pennie, Bradley Taylor and Dakota Warren, alongside Surrey poets and emerging voices.

Talks will explore poetry, creativity and literary life, with speakers including Adam Gary, Nia Broomhall and Katie Griffiths. Panel discussions will bring together poets, performers, educators and creatives to consider poetry's place in modern life.

Topics include Finding Your Voice: Poetry, Wellbeing and Empowerment, looking at how poetry can support wellbeing, self-expression, confidence and resilience.

Another panel, Poetry Without Borders: How Different Voices Shape the Art, will consider how poetry can bridge communities, preserve heritage and create understanding across different backgrounds and lived experiences.

The programme will also include Poetry in the Digital Age: Social Media and the Modern Poet. Guest panellists are expected to include Len Pennie, Bradley Taylor, Adam Gary, Shaniqua Benjamin and others.

Workshops will cover writing, performance, creativity and spoken word. These include a performance workshop led by Bradley Taylor and a poetry for beginners workshop led by Surrey Poet Laureate Adam Gary.

A key feature of Surrey's Big Poetry Weekend will be its Community Meet-Ups initiative, allowing festivalgoers to help shape the festival experience themselves.

Organisers are inviting attendees to arrange their own gatherings across the weekend, whether focused on Victorian poetry, spoken word, performance technique, niche poetry movements or simply meeting other creative people.

Tori Monks, Vice President of the Surrey Poet Laureateship, said: "One of the things that makes the Laureateship so special is that it welcomes everyone, regardless of their experience with poetry.

"As someone who is new to the poetry world myself, I know how important that sense of openness can be. Our inaugural programme is packed with an incredible line-up of events, performances and voices, offering something to inspire, entertain and engage adults of all ages and backgrounds. We can't wait to welcome everyone and celebrate poetry together."

The Surrey Poet Laureateship says the festival is the next stage in two years of community-building, volunteer effort and work to make poetry more accessible.



Despite operating without regular funding, the organisation says it has created free creative opportunities for thousands of people across the county through workshops, outreach projects, open mics, competitions and community partnerships.

Organisers hope Surrey's Big Poetry Weekend will become an annual fixture in the county's cultural calendar, attracting nationally recognised poets while continuing to nurture local voices and emerging talent.

Early Bird weekend passes have already sold out. General release day passes are now available.

For more information, visit www.surreypoetlaureateship.org.

The Surrey Poet Laureateship is based at The Literary Institute, 51 High Street, Egham, Surrey, TW20 9EW.

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