

Is Nottingham's 'Literary Greats' Campaign enough to attract across the pond visitors?

By Tayla Maylon



<http://news.experiencenottinghamshire.com>

Nottingham is set to lead a new project to attract more American visitors to the area in partnership with Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature, Visit Hampshire and Shakespeare's England.

The project, called 'Creating England's Literary Greats', is one of a number of successful bids to secure funding from The £40 million Discover England Fund, administered by VisitEngland, which funds projects to enhance England's tourism offer to overseas visitors.

Often overlooked for London and Shakespearean tours, Nottingham and arguably the East Midlands in general is widely left out of the list of 'must visit' destinations. The VisitEngland website itself sadly represents this. Every category they overwhelmingly endorse predominately Southern stereotypical English locations such as CS Lewis tour Oxford and Various Jane Austen tours.

Whilst this can only be good news for the UK Economy, what does this actually mean for Nottingham?

In an interview with UNESCO City of Literature's Communications Manager Matt Turpin, I asked what this project means for Nottingham, specifically.

"It means we are using literature as a front and centre offer to the rest of the world, putting us on par with areas like Stratford Upon Avon and London in doing so."

So is Nottingham finally being given the opportunity to join London in the British hot spot destinations?

I'm not so sure...

Whilst Nottingham is a city rich in literary culture, from literary legends Lord Byron and D.H Lawrence all the way to 21st century award winning playwrights such as Amanda Whittington. It would seem there is something for everyone.

However the breakdown of figures reveals that Notts is in the lowest bracket of funding budgets and will receive a maximum of 1.5% of the total funding. Meanwhile the London campaigns are budgeted six figure numbers.

So why is Nottingham still being underrepresented?

Matt suggests it's because:

“London-based cultural commentators find Nottingham just a little bit too close to seem exotic; just a little too far away to be convenient.”

So is the reason the east midlands is forgotten about really due to geographical location?

Matt reveals:

“The East Midlands has historic low levels of funding, especially through the arts. Again, the reasons for this are complex”

Whilst I do think the distribution of funding directly contributes the already prominent issue of underrepresentation of Nottingham's literary culture, I do think any funding and media attention is valuable.

Matt reveals how UNESCO tackles this issue:

“part of our mission is to provide a framework for arts projects to address that [problem]. This involves ensuring high-quality bids go to the funding streams, often expressly backed by our brand, and the accreditation it brings with it. That is bearing fruit, and we've seen some great projects attract funding after we've helped with the process.”

He adds that UNESCO...

“are confident that we are moving in the right direction to address the issue of unbalanced distribution”

and I have to agree. The only way to make sure Nottingham is both seen and heard is through continuing campaigns to promote the, already growing, interest in our 'Literary Greats'.

For my 5 LIT things to do in Notts guide, follow link below:

<https://wordpress.com/post/tsmliterature.wordpress.com/11>