

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 8 August 2024

## The Seventh Edinburgh Makar

Executive/routine  
Wards

Executive  
All

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Acknowledge Hannah Lavery's achievements as Edinburgh Makar over her term from October 2021 to September 2024, and to extend Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future; and
  - 1.1.2 Approve the appointment of Michael Pedersen as the seventh Edinburgh Makar, from October 2024 to September 2027.

**Joan Parr**

Service Director, Culture and Wellbeing

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## The Seventh Edinburgh Makar

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report notes the achievements of the outgoing sixth Makar, Hannah Lavery, whose term of office comes to an end on 30 September 2024 and seeks approval of the appointment of Michael Pedersen as the seventh Edinburgh Makar, to take up the post from 1 October 2024.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 On 28 August 2001, the Council Executive approved the creation of the civic appointment of Edinburgh Makar, a 'poet laureate for Edinburgh'. The Edinburgh Makar is appointed in acknowledgement of his or her achievements in poetry.
- 3.2 This initiative built on the Council's existing commitment to the promotion of writers and literary projects through, for example, the Writers' Museum, Makars' Court, literary publications, Edinburgh City Libraries and designate at UNESCO City of Literature.
- 3.3 The Scots word 'makar' originally applied to writers of the 15th century such as William Dunbar but has come to be used to stress the role of the poet or author as a skilled and versatile worker in the craft of writing.
- 3.4 The post is a civic appointment made by Council and overseen by the Culture and Wellbeing service. The writer is selected and nominated by representatives of the Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, the Scottish Poetry Library, the Scottish Centre of PEN International and the Saltire Society in partnership with the Culture and Wellbeing service. Eligible writers are required to be resident in Edinburgh, or to have a strong connection with the city.
- 3.5 The Makar is required to write one poem each year on Edinburgh and/or aspects of life in the city and assist in the promotion of poetry throughout Edinburgh, in partnership with the Writers' Museum, City Libraries, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, the Scottish Poetry Library, Scottish PEN, the Saltire Society and other literary organisations
- 3.6 The poet and playwright Stewart Conn was appointed as the first Edinburgh Makar by the Council on 30 May 2002, taking up his post on 1 June 2002. He was

succeeded by the poet Valerie Gillies who was appointed on 2 June 2005. Ron Butlin, poet, novelist, playwright and librettist, was appointed on 1 May 2008 and became the third Edinburgh Makar. He was succeeded by Christine De Luca, who took up her appointment on 1 June 2014. Alan Spence became the fifth Makar on 1 October 2017. He was succeeded by the poet and playwright Hannah Lavery on 1 October 2021.

- 3.7 An honorarium, currently £2,500 per year for a fixed period of three years, is awarded for this civic appointment.

## 4. Main report

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### The Sixth Makar

- 4.1 During her time as Edinburgh Makar, Hannah Lavery has been an enthusiastic and hardworking advocate for poetry and the written word, engaging with a diverse range of people in different settings including community writing groups, cultural organisations, theatres and festivals, contemporary poets and dramatists, other city makars and the Council's Museums and Galleries team.
- 4.2 She has led and supported a variety of projects aiming to develop peoples' skills and confidence in creative writing, to highlight contemporary events and issues and to champion emerging poets.
- 4.3 Hannah has produced poems to celebrate three Edinburgh Award winners: Fergus Linehan, Sir Geoff Palmer and Nicola Benedetti.
- 4.4 A detailed calendar of activities undertaken by the sixth Edinburgh Makar is provided in Appendix 1.

### The Seventh Makar

- 4.5 The writer nominated to succeed Hannah Lavery as Edinburgh Makar is Michael Pedersen. Michael is a prize-winning Scottish poet and author, and the Writer in Residence at Edinburgh University. His poetic prose debut, *Boy Friends*, was published by Faber & Faber in 2022. It was a Sunday Times Critics Choice and shortlisted for Best Non-Fiction at Scotland's National Book Awards.
- 4.6 *The Cat Prince & Other Poems* (Corsair/Little Brown), his third collection, won the Books Are My Bag Readers Award for Best Poetry 2023. Michael has also been shortlisted for the Forward Prizes for Poetry and won a Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship. Having co-founded the literary production house Neu! Reekie!, his work has been praised by many writers and performers including Stephen Fry, Sara Pascoe, Nicola Sturgeon, Irvine Welsh, Jackie Kay, Alan Cumming and Kae Tempest.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 A civic reception will be held in the City Chambers for the outgoing and incoming Edinburgh Makars. A plaque in the City Chambers inscribed with the details of the previous Edinburgh Makars will be brought up to date to record the end of the sixth Makar's appointment, and the start of the seventh Makar's term.

## 6. Financial impact

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- 6.1 The honorarium of £2,500 per annum, the cost of updating the Edinburgh Makar plaque, and the costs of the civic reception can all be contained within the 2024/25 revenue budget held by Culture and Wellbeing.

## 7. Equality and Poverty Impact

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- 7.1 Not applicable.

## 8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

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- 8.1 Not applicable.

## 9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

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- 9.1 Council officers have worked in partnership with representatives of the Saltire Society, the Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, the Scottish Centre of PEN International, the Scottish Poetry Library and the sixth Makar Hannah Lavery to select the nominee for the seventh Edinburgh Makar appointment.

## 10. Background reading/external references

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- 10.1 [The Edinburgh Makar 2005-2008](#), City of Edinburgh Council 1 May 2008
- 10.2 [The Edinburgh Makar 2008-2011](#), City of Edinburgh Council 1 May 2008
- 10.3 [Update on the Edinburgh Makar](#), Culture and Leisure Committee 26 April 2011
- 10.4 [Edinburgh Makar Update](#), Culture and Leisure Committee 28 June 2011
- 10.5 [The Third and Fourth Makars](#), Culture and Sport Committee 27 May 2014
- 10.6 [Edinburgh Makar: Update and Extension of Term](#), Culture and Sport Committee 20 March 2017
- 10.7 [The Fifth Edinburgh Makar](#), Culture and Communities Committee 12 September 2017

10.8 [The Sixth Edinburgh Makar](#), Culture and Communities Committee 14 September 2021

## **11. Appendices**

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Appendix 1 Detailed calendar of activities undertaken by the Sixth Edinburgh Makar

## Edinburgh Makar Activity Log 2022-24

DATE	ACTIVITY
<b>2022</b>	
Jan- Dec	Monthly Meetings with Gillian
February	Radio Four Front Row, interview about Makarship
March and October	Radio Scotland Afternoon Show
Jan – Dec	Monthly Meetings with City Makars – Scottish Poetry Library
August	Poem for EIF Opening Concert MurryField
August	Filming Poem for EIF at Home series
August	Chairing three events at the Edinburgh Book Festival
August – Dec	Curating and hosting four live events for Stella Quines to be released as a Podcast in November called Quines Cast.
August	Reading a poem for First Minister Festivals Reception at Bute House
August	Reading a poem for Lord Provost reception for Fergus Lineham
September	First Makar Workshop for Faciliators
September	Braemer Literary Festival with Jackie Kay – Makar to Makar Event
October	Traverse Theatre Workshop for Creative Spaces Group
November	Push the Boat Out Festival – Event and Workshop
November	Second Makar Workshop for Faciliators – two sessions
November	Poem for Edinburgh Citizen Award and redaing at reception.
November	Key Note for Edinburgh Museum Conference
November	Release of Poetry film for EIF at Home Series
November	Release of Quines Cast podcast.
November	Queens’ Hall Concert with Aiden O’Rourke
<b>2023</b>	
February	Final Workshop for Community Writing
April	City Makar Event Edinburgh
June	Fringe of Colour Curating Reading event at Summerhall
June	Spit it Out Festival – Reading
August	Edinburgh Book Festival:
	Chairing Six Events
August	Edinburgh Fringe- Performing in Nassim at Traverse
Feb- July	Stella Quines Podcast Events – Traverse and Summerhall
August	Stella Quines Podcast Event at Edinburgh Book Festival
October	Stella Quines Event at Push the Boat Out Festival
May	Lyceum Playwriting Over 60s
August -October	Lyceum and Stella Quines- Scottish Adaptation of For Coloured Girls involving supporting and mentoring two Edinburgh based poets of colour.
Jan- June	Writers of Colour Group
June	Writers of Colour Group – Audio Anthology
November	Reading at the Portobello Book Festival
Easter 2023	Judging Writing Competition for Edinburgh Story
August	Judging for Push the Boat Out Call out for Performance projects
August - Nov	Judging for Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award
May	Poem for Scottish Building Society
June	Poem for Turn 2 Us charity based in Edinburgh

July	Writing forward for Leith Writings Anthology
October	Reading at Launch of Edinburgh based poet Marjorie Lotfi at Portobello Book Shop
October	Reading at launch of Edinburgh based poet Iona Lee at Summerhall
November	Makar Poem for Edinburgh Citizen Award
December -June	Writing New Collection: To Mark the end of Makar-ship
<b>2024</b>	
January	Scotland Poetry Showcase Event in London
February	Poetry in Aberdeen for Granite Fest
March	Stanza Poetry Festival- Reading and Chairing
April-June	Disrupting the Narrative Project – writing, mentoring, editing
June	Readings at Edinburgh University, Glasgow University
June	Commission for St Giles Cathedral Anniversary
August	Edinburgh Book Festival – Three Events.
August	Commissioned poem for Edinburgh Book Festival for Words from the Wards project