



PRESS RELEASE

Friday 6th June 2008

EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE FEDERATION CHOOSES NEWCASTLEGATESHEAD TO HOLD ITS ANNUAL CONGRESS

EUROPA NOSTRA, Europe's most prestigious cultural heritage organisation, is bringing its Annual Congress to NewcastleGateshead this year, from 11th-15th June. For the past two decades the Annual Congress has usually met in a European capital city, but such is the appeal of the North East of England location that organisers have decided to gather this year with more than 300 delegates who will be enjoying the region's hospitality.

Europa Nostra in the last 45 years has built a network of almost 500 member NGOs and associate organisations from across the wider Europe and beyond. It represents millions of citizens working as professionals or as volunteers for safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage.

HRH The Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra said:

'The cultural heritage which we have collectively inherited from previous generations and which reflect the many centuries of our past, constitutes a true richness and a remarkable asset for Europe. This richness is, however, not sufficiently known, nor widely recognised. We need to reach the wider public, and in particular the youth, in order to enhance their understanding of the profound significance of our cultural heritage for the process of the building of Europe.'

The focus for this year's congress will include the Annual European Heritage Awards Ceremony, a meeting for 'a Celebration of the contribution of heritage to intercultural dialogue', and the yearly Europa Nostra Forum, this year focusing on 'Securing the Future of Europe's Engineering Heritage'.

John Sell, UK Chair of Europa Nostra said:

'The banks of the Tyne gave birth to an amazing engineering heritage. The depth of the river close to the sea, power derived from coal, and intellectual and craft skills all combined to enable Newcastle and Gateshead to become one of the frontiers of the industrial revolution.'

There will be a number of speakers at the Forum from across Austria, Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands. Sir Neil Cossons, renowned industrial archaeologist will be giving the keynote speech, 'The Duncan Sandys Memorial Lecture', an annual initiative of the United Kingdom Country Representation of Europa Nostra and named after Lord Duncan-Sandys, Europa Nostra's third President.

On Wednesday 11th June there will be a dinner at Newcastle Civic Centre to celebrate the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards and then the following day the European Heritage Awards Ceremony will take place at Durham Cathedral with the Awards being presented by HRH The Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra, and by Mr Vladimir Sucha, Director Culture, Multilingualism and Communication at the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. Dame Liz Forgan, chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund will give the closing address.

Cyril Winskell, Chair of the local organising committee said:

'The fact that the Europa Nostra Congress is coming to NewcastleGateshead, a non capital city, is a remarkable accolade for this area - we are looking forward to showcasing the history and culture of Tyneside, Northumberland and Durham and to hosting the prestigious EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS Ceremony.'

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive of NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), said:

'I'm delighted that Europa Nostra has chosen NewcastleGateshead to host its 2008 Congress. The event will attract high numbers of influential delegates from across Europe and will generate an estimated half a £million boost to the local economy.'

Dolan Conway, Chair of RIBA North East, said:

'Many organisations and individuals have worked together to secure this annual congress for our region and the Royal Institute of British Architects is a proud partner in this achievement. We are looking forward to a productive and meaningful discussion about how architecture influences and shapes our culture.'

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

PHOTO: (From left to right) Cyril Winskell (Europa Nostra local organiser), Andrew Dixon (Chief Executive, NewcastleGateshead Initiative) and Dolan Conway (Royal Institute of British Architects, North East) discuss the forthcoming Congress.

EUROPA NOSTRA was founded in 1963 and is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream public arena and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. **The Grainger Town Project, Newcastle upon Tyne**, was a top Prize winner in 2003 of the EUROPEAN UNION PRIZE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARDS, in the Category of Cultural Landscapes, recognised for the extraordinary achievement of transforming the historic core of a fine 18th century city.

For full details of the EUROPA NOSTRA Congress go to:

<http://www.europanostra.org/newcastlegatesheadcongress.html>

For information about the Awards winners, please contact: awards@europanostra.org

For media information for attending the European Heritage Awards Ceremony and other events please contact: co@europanostra.org

UK Media Contact: James McArdle (RIBA, North East) 07966 595075

Vanessa Robinson at NewcastleGateshead Convention Bureau

Tel: (0191) 243 8814, or email vanessa.robinson@ngi.org.uk