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Sheffield: UK City of Culture bid

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In July 2010 the city of Sheffield will find out whether it is to be the UK City of Culture in 2013. Three other cities in the United Kingdom have been nominated alongside the city of Sheffield, including Derry, Birmingham and Norwich.

The City of Culture team in Sheffield has promoted 10 key areas of culture. This week BBC Sheffield will be looking at four of the areas which Sheffield is proud of, including music, new talent, stories and its heritage and business.

Today, BBC Sheffield has asked Dr Brendan Stone from the University of Sheffield to write about the importance of storytelling in the city's culture.

He teaches English at the University of Sheffield and has been working on a arts and community project in the city called Storying Sheffield. The project focuses on working with people who wouldn't ordinarily study and gathering people's stories in many different ways.



"Telling stories is about who we are and let's not forget that Sheffield has its very own story". Dr Brendon Stone.

UK City of Culture bid: Sheffield

By Dr Brendan Stone, University of Sheffield

He is a Sheffielder. Rooted in our streets; immersed in the heritage of the city. You can hear his allegiance in his accent, his laugh; see it in the twinkle of his eyes when he tells a joke. Even when he speaks of the painful things of his life, a mischievous humour is never far away. His smile is infectious. He was a successful joiner until ill-health changed everything. Yet despite the misfortunes of recent years, his hunger for culture is undimmed. He has been attending a creative writing evening class, and has just completed making a film about his life for a short University course. He can recite from memory poems he read once years ago, and he writes his own poetry too.

One of his poems speaks of walking in the leafy Sheffield streets with such lines as: "passing through the roadside covered with unmatching shades of yellow"; and: "I feel like a king walking on such vibrant colours of God's given tapestry, / tasselled with overripe and unpicked berries." Now he is applying to take a foundation degree in creative writing.

His house is decorated with objects he has made or found, and he has a keen interest in the symbolism of angels. He likes cacti, fish, and baby turtles. He appreciates colour and imagery, sound and style. He is a sharp dresser, favouring dark well cut suits and a simple

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Sheffield: UK City of Culture bid



Sheffield's bid for the UK City of Culture
This week BBC Sheffield takes a look at the city's strengths

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shirt. He is a fine cook and loves to share the food he makes with others. His favourite cuisine is Middle-eastern. Perhaps this is not surprising as Sheffielder Pedram was born and brought up in Iran.

Pedram's is one Sheffield story, and Pedram is one Sheffield person. His story is one thread in a rich fabric made up of thousands of diverse tales.

His story, like all these others, adds to and enriches the heritage and culture of Sheffield, and lays down the basis for new traditions which even now continue to emerge. Sheffield is not its buildings and streets, nor its parks and galleries.



Pedram is applying to take a foundation degree in creative writing.

Sheffield, and Sheffield's culture, is the cloth woven of its residents' stories; and these stories, like Pedram's, deserve to be told, heard, and celebrated. Sheffield's stories encompass every corner of the earth, and they echo with the heritage of this place and also with that of many other spaces on the globe.

Just as factories and steel works, transformed into galleries, cinemas, and community spaces, retain the marks of their history, so do the stories of Sheffield residents. Some Sheffield stories are fringed with memories of the little mesters, others with life in Tehran under the Shah.

Sheffield stories tell of journeys from Mogadishu to Gleadless, Hyderabad to Burngreave, Bucharest to Southey Green, Darnall to Dore, Dronfield to Attercliffe. It is this diversity which makes Sheffield, and its cloth of stories, the place it is.

Sheffield, then, is a city of culture, or rather a city of cultures. But winning the race to be UK City of Culture 2013 will mean that more stories like Pedram's could and would be told and heard.

At the heart of the Sheffield bid is an emphasis on the importance of community involvement in making culture. Culture is not envisaged as something which is passed down from on high, but as a process of the inclusion and engagement of the city's residents.

The results of such a focus can be quite stunning. My own experience of running the art and community project [Storying Sheffield](#) has taught me that wonderful moving art emerges when we are encouraged to pay attention to our everyday lives. Sheffield's stories are a rich cultural resource which deserve to be drawn on, learnt from, and celebrated.

On Tuesday, BBC Sheffield will be hearing from Hallam University's Head of Communications, John Palmer who will be talking about the city's developing talent.

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