



## **Project charting 60 years of Housmans Radical Bookshop secures National Lottery support**

Today, On the Record Community Interest Company has received a grant of £87,500 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for an exciting heritage project ***Housmans: 60 years of books and activism***, in Kings Cross, London. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project will tell the incredible story of Housmans Bookshop, one of the leading progressive, radical bookshops in the UK, and Peace House, the building it is based in, which has provided space for grassroots movements for peace and social change since 1959.

In 1959, Peace House was officially opened by veteran peace activists, including Vera Brittain, at 5 Caledonian Road. Meanwhile, the anti-nuclear movement was bursting onto the scene, with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, (CND) and the Committee of 100 emerging in the same period. Over the following 60 years, the flow of books, ideas and people through the building has reflected how grassroots politics in the UK has changed. Apart from the bookshop's many customers, the building has sheltered a diverse crowd: peace activists seeking to ban the bomb or support conscientious objectors to war, activists from the Gay Liberation Front who started the first helpline for LGBT people in Housmans' basement (now known as Switchboard), and dogged environmental campaigners who defended themselves against McDonalds in the UK's longest ever libel trial, to name a few examples.

***Housmans: 60 years of books and activism*** will engage young people, aged between 18-25, as volunteers. They will carry out research, conduct oral history interviews, collect and digitise an archive dedicated to the fascinating building at 5 Caledonian Road and the diverse group of organisations and individuals that have passed through its doors since 1959. With the support and direction of an experienced theatre director they will write and perform site-specific theatre based on the stories they have uncovered. Housmans bookshop will host these performances, a sound installation, and several discussion events based around its fascinating history. A full history of the building will be published, using original archive material collected. On the Record will be recruiting volunteers and a Youth Theatre Coordinator soon – register your interest by contacting [rosa@on-the-record.org.uk](mailto:rosa@on-the-record.org.uk)



Nik Gorecki, co-manager of Housmans bookshop says “With sixty years of history under our collective belts there are so many important stories to be told, and many individuals involved in the earlier days are sadly already no longer with us. This anniversary year is a perfect moment to do justice to all those decades of work, and in some cases is a last chance to get the history verbatim from those who were there.”

Stuart McLeod, Director London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Sharing stories is vital to keeping our heritage alive and available for future generations. From its books to the groups who have passed through its doors, Housmans is a treasure trove of stories on social history and social change, thanks to National Lottery players we are pleased to support this project.”

## Notes to editors

### About On the Record

On the Record specialises in oral history that inspires social change. Since 2012, we have trained hundreds of people to record the memories of people and places that would otherwise be lost. We share the stories we gather through creative, high quality productions: podcasts, artworks, books, exhibitions, websites and audio walks.

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### About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK’s heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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## Further information

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