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Go North East puts poetry in motion to encourage mobility and drive customer wellbeing

As the UK welcomes World Poetry Day (Thursday 21 March 2019), Go North East is taking specially-commissioned verse on the road, as part of a creative project to promote inclusivity amongst residents.

Poems by Newcastle-based writer, Anna Woodford, appear on a special *Poetry in Motion* bus on one of the award-winning operator's most popular routes, which journeys across the Quayside and Great North Road.

Seven of Anna's pieces are emblazoned on the bus livery, each based on a three-year study called Co-Motion. Led by York University with Newcastle University, the project examined the link between mobility and wellbeing of over 55s living in Northumberland, York and Leeds.

Carried out between 2014-2017, researchers explored how the attitudes and behaviour of the general public greatly impacted – often negatively – on the mobility of older people.

Rose Gilroy, Professor of Ageing, Planning and Policy at Newcastle University and principal researcher on the Co-Motion project, explains: “The people involved in the research were going through a life transition, such as having just given up work, starting to live alone or losing sight, and our research looked at how that transition impacts on their sense of wellbeing and ways of getting about.

“We wanted to get our findings out there, and into people's heads, by engaging with creative people. I approached Anna to draw on the narratives, pick out the striking messages and create poetry that might get these across. Anna's poems are the vehicle for helping to change attitudes in the local community.”

As a Go North East Quaylink Q3 passenger herself, Professor Gilroy is excited to see the new *Poetry in Motion* bus. She said: “We approached Go North East to be a part of the project and bring it to life, holding that mirror up to society and saying, this is what's happening, to encourage people to be more conscious of their actions.”

Anna's poems, which includes a six-strong sequence entitled (T)here, about the experiences of research participants, were previously featured on 100 Go North East buses in 2018, as part of the Great Exhibition of the North and also appear in her new poetry book 'Changing Room' (Salt, 2018).

Anna added: “These poems are about encouraging people to be kinder to those sitting next to them. It's a thrill to see my poems on the side of the bus, but it's about more than that: the message is, treat others how you would want to be treated. And hopefully my words will help to change people's attitudes and inspire them to think about the difference a kind word or action can make to someone's day.”

Go North East's Commercial Director, Stephen King said: "We're really proud of our *Poetry in Motion* bus. Bus travel is a great opportunity to encourage community cohesion. Following on from the first of our chatty bus initiatives, we hope Anna's poems will be a prompt to people to scrutinise how their actions can have a positive impact on others."

This January Go North East launched the Chatty Bus initiative, following research that three-in-10 Britons go at least one-day-a-week without speaking to anyone close to them. Designated 'Chatty Buses', had Chatty Bus Champions on board ready to start conversations with fellow passengers who wanted a chat.

For more information about Go North East, visit www.gonortheast.co.uk.

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