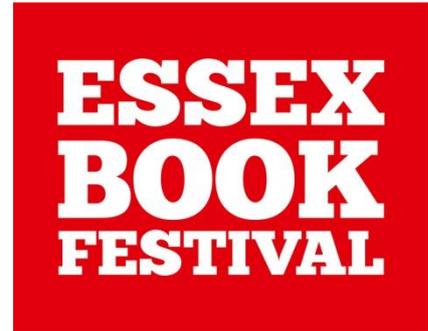**Press release**
16 January 2018

Pop-Up Essex Writers House created by Metal at Chalkwell Hall for the Essex Book Festival

As part of an exciting new partnership with Essex Book Festival, Metal is transforming Chalkwell Hall into a pop-up **Essex Writers House** for the whole month of March 2018 to host a wide range of literary events and activities. Our aim is to provide development opportunities for writers working in all genres, whilst engaging with audiences of all ages.

The month will include talks and practical seminars by invited authors, poets, non-fiction writers, playwrights and screen writers. There will be 'open mic' opportunities for new writers to read and perform short works. Six guest writers-in-residence will stay across the month to develop new work and there will be a number of 'hot desks' with stunning Estuary views that can be booked by writers to work at *(first come, first served – 2 days max).*

The ground floor of the Grade II listed Hall will become a Writers Café, where people can eat, read, swap books, have a coffee and write in the inspiring grounds of Chalkwell Park. In the evenings the café will become a bar and play host to our programme of readings, events, Book Club gatherings – and even a literary pub quiz.

As part of the month, Metal will be hosting a week long, residential **Culture LAB for Essex-based writers**, working in any genre (fiction / non-fiction / poetry / playwright / screenwriter / graphic novels etc) which will take place from **Monday 19 – Friday 23 March 2018**. The LAB is designed to provide a peer-to-peer environment for intensive development of participants writing practice. This amazing opportunity includes talks and workshops with acclaimed international writers, Paavo Matsin (Estonia) and Agnieszka Studinska (Poland); one-to-one advice and tutorials; support from the Metal creative team; time and space to write and develop specific aspects of a current project – or create a new piece of writing; discussion and exchange of ideas and practice; the opportunity to meet the Essex Book Festival team and create links for the future; as well as a public reading.

Colette Bailey, artistic director of Metal, said, "It was brilliant to be invited by Essex Book Festival to come up with an exciting way of partnering with the well-established and popular literary event. We are really excited to meet and work with writers working in a wide range of genres and styles from right across Essex"

Ros Green of the Essex Book Festival said, "We are thrilled to be collaborating with Metal on such an ambitious and innovative project as part of this year's Essex Book Festival. With 100+ events taking place in forty venues across the county, it is fantastic to have such a dynamic base for writers and readers throughout the Festival month."

For Criteria & How To Apply for Culture LAB: Essex Writers: Deadline - Friday 16 February 2018.
http://www.metalculture.com/projects/southend-culture-lab-essex-writers/

For Essex Writers House full programme and opening times:
http://www.metalculture.com/projects/southend-pop-up-essex-writers-house/

For full details of this year's Essex Book Festival got to: https://essexbookfestival.org.uk

The Culture LAB for Essex Writers is funded through Metal's NPO grant from Arts Council England. Essex Book Festival and the Pop Up Essex Writers House is funded through Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England, University of Essex, Southend Borough Council, Polish Cultural Institute and the British Council.

For further press information, please contact colette@metalculture.com at Metal / 01702 470700

EDITOR'S NOTES

About Metal

Metal was founded in 2002 by Jude Kelly CBE working with our current Artistic Director and CEO, Colette Bailey since inception. We have been active in Liverpool since 2004, the South Essex region since 2007 and Peterborough since 2012. Each of our spaces: Edge Hill Station in Liverpool, Chalkwell Hall in Southend and Chauffeurs Cottage in Peterborough were renovated to create centres of activity for artists, creatives and community. From these bases, Metal have worked with artists and local agencies to provide the catalyst that is helping to transform the potential for thriving creative and cultural industries in these three places over the last ten years.

Metal Southend has worked on several major literary projects over the years including an earlier Literature Culture Lab, and the critically acclaimed Shorelines festival, which celebrates literature of the sea. Many Time and Space residencies have been taken up by writers at varying stages of their careers and have often led to long term relationships with Metal. One such writer, Justin Hopper, was introduced this way, and went on to develop his project, Public Record, with Metal and performed it at the Shorelines festival. Metal Southend has also worked with Essex Libraries

delivering creative writing workshops with younger people and children.

We take a developmental approach to local creativity and talent – training, mentoring and supporting the growth of knowledge and capacity in the sector, encouraging cross-sector and cross-disciplinary conversations and sharing of knowledge. Metal also creates its own projects – large in scale, high in impact and involving a wide number of participants and audience from all walks of life. Each year Metal works with around 1200 artists from across the world, 18,000 active participants, over 60,000 live audiences and more than 100,000 online audiences.

About Essex Book Festival
Essex Book Festival takes place across the whole county throughout March. With over 100 events in more than 40 venues, from libraries and art galleries, to a norman castle, tudor mansion and secret nuclear bunker, the festival is a celebration of the book in all its forms. Find out more at www.essexbookfestival.org.uk