Opening ceremony to mark official countdown to a



Runners grouped at the start of the race

On Thursday 4 September, the NewcastleGateshead Quayside and the River Tyne will be transformed into a huge outdoor arena for an opening ceremony, marking the start of the official countdown to the 1 millionth finish of the Bupa Great North Run on Sunday 7 September.

Through new writing, mass choreography, live music, a giant floating sculpture, video mapping onto the Sage Gateshead, pyrotechnics, a specially commissioned film and more, the Great North Run Million Opening Ceremony will tell the incredible story of the North East - a story of innovators in industry, sport and technology, of ordinary people working together to achieve extraordinary things - inspired by the energy of a million runners powering Tyneside's past and future.

Award-winning North East author, David Almond, will write the story and an exceptional creative team, led by Artistic Director Bradley Hemmings (co-Artistic Director of the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony) and other members of the London 2012 Opening Ceremonies team, will bring it to life along with thousands of volunteer performers forming a giant choreographed circuit around the quayside.

"In creating this ceremony, I wanted to honour the spirit of running for all. One million is much more than a statistic - it's a movement; a sporting movement born out of the North East's proud traditions of mass participation, endeavour,

industry and ingenuity. So, in this, the first ever One Millionth Ceremony, the River Tyne, surely one of the world's most iconic settings, will become the arena for an epic and inclusive story. Fittingly a mass cast of 1,500 volunteer performers will appear throughout, coming together to celebrate a vision of how, by acting together, we can achieve the most extraordinary and transformational things." said Bradley Hemmings, Artistic Director

David Almond, Writer, said: "I'm so happy to be working with such a talented team on this marvellous project. It has everything – words, music, theatre, video, fireworks, lights, barges, bridges, northern history, the River Tyne. What a great way to celebrate the success of the ground-breaking Bupa Great North Run. What a great way to dramatise the dynamism of our culture. And what a thrill it is to be involved."

BAFTA-winning artist and filmmaker Tal Rosner is creating a specially commissioned film and animation celebrating past, present and future ingenuity in the North East to be projected onto the Sage Gateshead. His work on multi-disciplinary collaborations, from orchestral music and contemporary dance to television graphics, has been described as 'most astounding' (The Times), 'ingenious' (Variety) and 'heralding a new genre' (The New Yorker). With a unique style of digital craftsmanship, he stands out at the forefront of international moving image practice, both on screen and on stage.

Designer Jon Bausor worked on the opening ceremony of the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, and more recently the kinetic sculpture to light the flame for the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games unveiled in Stoke Mandeville live on Channel 4. As well as designing the spectacular arena for the event, Jon will create a huge floating sculptural installation on the River Tyne, "My family is from Gateshead, and my sister Juliette is principal flautist of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, so I'm particularly excited to work on home soil for the Great North Run Million Opening Ceremony!"

BAFTA award-winning composer Dan Jones is writing new music for the Royal Northern Sinfonia for the event. Dan has earned a reputation for integrating music with powerful large-scale sound design, including Sky Orchestra - surround sound over a city using seven hot air balloons – which opened the Sydney Festival in 2007 and marked the start of the countdown to London 2012. Dan has written and conducted numerous scores for theatre, film and television and won BAFTA and Ivor Novello awards for his score for Channel 4's Any Human Heart.

Co-Artistic Director of award-winning physical theatre ensemble Tangled Feet, Nathan Curry will work with 1,500 volunteer performers to form a giant circuit around the quayside, running down both sides of the River Tyne and across both the Swing Bridge and the Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

Nathan says, "This is a unique opportunity to perform alongside hundreds of other performers and to be part of something life-changing. The experience of being in shows this big is like nothing else - ask anyone involved in opening ceremonies and they will tell you – it's a huge thrill! The great thing for me of working with a mass cast is that we can create huge images and statements that the audience find truly awesome. We are looking for anyone and everyone - no experience is needed just come along and represent the North East!" said Nathan Curry, Mass Movement Director.

Nathan is also Associate Director of Greenwich and Docklands International Festival. He regularly works with the National Theatre Studio in London, and recently created the first outdoor theatre project in Libya working with the British Council.

"Not only does Bupa Great North Run Culture provide opportunities for people to engage with the arts, but the Great North Run Million programme also has the extraordinary quality which has secured an Exceptional Award from Arts Council England." Sarah Maxfield, Area Director North, Arts Council England, said: "I am delighted that we are able to support this exciting cultural programme through our Exceptional Awards programme. The one millionth finish of the

Bupa Great North Run offers a unique opportunity to celebrate both the heritage and culture of North East and to mark this landmark occasion. The year-long programme will also bring more visitors to the area while enabling local audiences to experience the great art and culture on offer where they live."

For the last 22 years, Bupa has been the headline sponsor of the Great North Run, inspiring people of all ages across the UK to get active and take on a new challenge. The partnership, one of the longest in sport, has helped the event to achieve its millionth finisher this September. "When we started the Run all those years ago we could only dream of the millionth finish across the line. The Bupa Great North Run has since gone on to become the world's greatest half marathon and this September, we're proud to be the first event in the world to be officially recognised by the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) to celebrate this significant moment in the history of running." said Brendan Foster, founder of the Bupa Great North Run.

"The Opening Ceremony is the most incredibly exciting way to celebrate the millionth finish of the Bupa Great North Run and the rich, dynamic heritage of the North East. It's an honour to have such a brilliant team create such an ambitious event in the tenth year of Bupa Great North Run Culture. We're really grateful to all of our funders, particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England's Exceptional Award, for their valued help and support." said Beth Bate, Director of Great North Run Culture.

Last month, Bupa Great North Run Culture and Tyne and Wear Archive and Museums announced a grant of over £400,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support a year-long programme of events inspired by the Great North Run Million. The programme will focus on the people and stories behind incredible North East world firsts from our region's rich sporting and industrial heritage including Joseph Swan (inventor of the light bulb), Charles Parsons (who designed Turbinia, the first vessel to be powered by steam turbine), and Harry Clasper (the Tyneside oarsman famous for the first boat race on the Tyne). Artist Matt Stokes will work with communities along the course of the Bupa Great North Run, starting in South Shields in summer 2014, and the programme will culminate in an exhibition at Discovery Museum in Newcastle in September 2015.

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "Celebrating the millionth runner to cross the finish line at this year's Bupa Great North Run is a fantastic achievement. People come from all over the world both to compete and to show their support so what a great opportunity to get those thousands of people engaged with the North East's incredible cultural offering. We're sure this project will be a success and hope everyone gets involved in celebrating all that makes the North East great."

Leader of Gateshead Council, Mick Henry, said, "This is a significant milestone in what is an already very proud and successful sporting heritage for the North East. The NewcastleGateshead Quayside will provide a spectacular backdrop for this truly inspirational celebration and will recognise not just the millionth runner, but all those who have taken part and supported the Bupa Great North Run since it began."

Leader of Newcastle City Council, Cllr Nick Forbes, said: "The Bupa Great North Run is the world's greatest half marathon which puts the North East on the international map every year. Once again it will do it in style when the one millionth runner crosses the finishing line – the first time this will have happened anywhere on the planet. This celebratory event will be a great countdown to that momentous occasion and I look forward to being there."

The Great North Run Million Opening Ceremony will be broadcast on BBC2 on Sunday 7 September as part of the Bupa Great North Run coverage.

More details will be announced in the lead up to the event. To sign up for news and ticket alerts, or to apply online to be a volunteer performer, visit Great North Run Million website.

Notes to editors

Bradley Hemmings is the founder and Artistic Director of Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, described in The Guardian as 'an event whose annual contribution to the happiness of the people of London is unrivalled'. He is a leading advocate for outdoor theatre and, following on from his pioneering work with deaf and disabled artists, was appointed co-Artistic Director of the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Widely recognised as a “game-changer” in the history of the Paralympics, the ceremony was watched by record-breaking TV audiences of 11million and featured the talents of Paralympians such as Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, scientist Stephen Hawking, soul diva Beverley Knight and the globally recognised actor Sir Ian McKellen. Earlier this year, Bradley was invited to create the inaugural Paralympic Heritage Flame Ceremony at Stoke Mandeville Stadium and so the Great North Run Million Opening Ceremony will be his third large scale ceremony in the last two years!

David Almond was born in Newcastle, grew up in Felling-on-Tyne and now lives in Northumberland. He is the author of *Skellig*, *My Name is Mina*, *The Savage*, *Clay*, *The True Tale of the Monster Billy Dean*, and many other novels, stories and plays. His work - all of it set in the North East, and inspired by Northern landscape, language and character - is translated into over 40 languages, and is widely adapted for stage and screen. He broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 3 and 4 and speaks at festivals and conferences throughout the world. His many awards include The Carnegie Medal, two Whitbreads and The Eleanor Farjeon award. In 2010 he received The Hans Christian Andersen Award, the world’s most prestigious prize for children’s authors. “David Almond’s books are strange, unsettling wild things. They are, like all great literature, beyond classification.” The Guardian

Jon Bausor has designed extensively in dance, opera and theatre for companies worldwide including The Royal Opera House, National Theatre, Abbey Theatre Dublin, Young Vic, Rambert and both Finnish and Norwegian National Ballets. As an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company he has designed numerous productions including Hamlet, King Lear and The Winters Tale. Significant work includes: the opening ceremony of the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, the kinetic sculpture to light the flame for the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games unveiled in Stoke Mandeville live on Channel 4, KURSK (Sound and Fury/ Young Vic),Ghost Stories (West End), Lord of the Flies (Regents Park Open Air Theatre), Ghosts, Pleasure's Progress, Hansel and Gretel (ROH), The Believers (Frantic Assembly), Firebird (Norweigan National Ballet), The ROOF (Fuel), and Mametz (National Theatre of Wales).

Bupa Great North Run Culture is an annual series of arts projects, events and exhibitions that celebrate and explore sport and art. Featuring film, photography, dance, drama, writing, participation projects and more, we use the world's greatest half-marathon as the starting point for commissioning exciting, innovative and accessible work, "...linking the worlds of art and sport in a unique and innovative way," Culture24.

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) is a major regional museum, art gallery and archives service attracting around 6million visits to our venues each year. They manage a collection of nine museums and galleries across Tyneside and the Archives for Tyne and Wear. They are supported by the five local authorities of the area and Newcastle University. TWAM is also a Major Partner Museum funded by Arts Council England and has Core Funded Museum status. They hold collections of international importance in archives, art, science and technology, archaeology, military and social history, fashion and natural sciences.

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people’s lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music

to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2010 and 2015, they will invest £1.9billion of public money from government and an estimated £1.1billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. Arts Council England announced the Exceptional awards programme in July 2013. The award to Great North Run Culture is one of just a handful of strategic investments that will be made through the course of this programme, which culminates in March 2015.

The Bupa Great North Run is brought to you by Nova International and is sponsored by Bupa. Nova International, headed by Olympic medallist Brendan Foster also organise some of the biggest running events in the world, all based on the Bupa Great North Run, the world's leading half marathon with 57,000 entries in 2014. Nova International was established in 1988 and has a strong sporting pedigree. Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, Nova has established itself as a market leader in the world of sports marketing and event management.

Bupa is a leading international healthcare group with over 22m customers in 190 countries. This year Bupa's 'Your First Step' campaign will be inspiring people of all ages to take their first step towards a healthier and happier lifestyle. For more information on how Bupa can help you prepare for a running challenge visit the Bupa running website.

Further information

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