

# Press Release

30<sup>th</sup> September 2015

## **Novel journey to Cheltenham** ***Harper Lee's classic novel chosen for train giveaway***

One hundred copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* were given away on a CrossCountry train today, surprising unsuspecting travellers on board the 10.17am service from Birmingham New Street to Cheltenham Spa, as part of The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival's Big Read Book Drop.

Harper Lee's classic has been chosen as the Festival Big Read book, with Cheltenham Literature Festival teaming up with the Official Rail Partner CrossCountry and Penguin Random House to distribute the title to passengers.

Book groups will also be run during the Festival, along with various other activities on site, including the Harper Lee Celebration event on Saturday 3rd October to encourage Gloucestershire residents to read and discuss the iconic novel as part of the Big Read Campaign.

Clare Shufflebotham, Head of Marketing at CrossCountry, said: "We are delighted to be the Official Rail Partner for The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival again this year. We know that many of our customers use their train journey as an opportunity to relax with a good book, and what a great way to unwind with a free copy of this timeless classic.

"Hopefully the book drop will encourage others to make the most of their journey and pack a book next time they're travelling with us."

Candice Pearson, Press Manager at Cheltenham Festivals, said: "Books are a perfect companion for any train journey and working with Cross Country as our Official Rail Partner helps us to not only spread the word about the Festival but encourages new audiences to rediscover wonderful classic books.

"Reading gets people thinking, talking, questioning and sharing and this is what the Literature Festival is all about. We hope the lucky commuters who get a free copy of *To Kill A Mockingbird* courtesy of Penguin Random House will be inspired to read this cherished book and then share their thoughts with us and others."

For more information about The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival visit [www.cheltenhamfestivals.com](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com)

**-ENDS-**

For further information, please contact Becky Riffel or Andrea Campos-Vigouroux on 020 7025 7522 or email [crosscountry@grayling.com](mailto:crosscountry@grayling.com).

### **Notes to editors**

#### **About CrossCountry**

The CrossCountry network is the most extensive passenger rail franchise in Britain. Stretching from Aberdeen to Penzance, and from Stansted to Cardiff, it calls at over 100 stations. Based in Birmingham, CrossCountry connects seven of the Britain's 10 largest cities and delivers 295 services every weekday, equating to some 32 million passenger journeys a year. For further information on CrossCountry services visit [crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://crosscountrytrains.co.uk) or follow them online via Twitter at @crosscountryuk, Facebook.com/crosscountrytrains and their student Facebook page, Facebook.com/studentraildeals.

#### **CrossCountry bookings**

Passengers can buy tickets for any rail journey in Britain, with any train company and with no booking fee at [crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://crosscountrytrains.co.uk) or via the free CrossCountry Train Tickets app. Download the app by visiting your app store or by texting TRAVEL to 87080.

#### **About Cheltenham Festival**

In its spectacular programme of more than 500 events, The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival touches upon subjects as diverse as history, politics, sport, food and fashion.

Running from Friday till Sunday, October 2-11 the Festival boasts speakers including **Ronnie Wood, Martha Lane Fox, Matthew Bourne, George the Poet, Garry Kasparov, Jeanette Winterson, Nick Clegg, Nigel Mansell, Nick Frost, Nigella Lawson, Boris Becker, Bill Bryson** and **Gino D'Acampo**.

Six past **Booker Prize** winners will appear, as well as other best-selling fiction authors, including **Anita Shreve, Robert Harris, Bill Bryson, Gill Hornby, Nell Zink, Kate Atkinson, Petyer Carey, Audrey Niffenegger, Marian Keyes, David Lodge, Ali Smith, Jilly Cooper, Louis de Bernieres, Jonathan Franzen, Åsne Seierstad, John Banville, Paula Hawkins, Jojo Moyes, Patrick Gale** and **Victoria Hislop**.

Delicious food is also on the table as celebrity chefs including **Gino D'Acampo, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, John Torode, Bill Granger** and **Gizzi Erskine** all take to the Spiegeltent to serve up their latest creations.

The wonderfully popular Book It! family programme also returns this year with an enviable programme that boasts five Children's Laureates, including **Chris Riddell** and **Michael Rosen**, as well as talks from **David Almond, Patrick Ness, Lauren Child, Julia Donaldson, Sandi Toksvig** and **Julian Clary**.

For tickets visit [cheltenhamfestivals.com](http://cheltenhamfestivals.com) or call 0844 880 8094.