Third national lockdown devastates Big Issue North vendors

Monday 1 March, 2021

On the 23rd
of March, the anniversary of the beginning of England's first lockdown, Big Issue North vendors will be struggling through their twenty-sixth week unable to work over the course of a year.

Big Issue North vendors are self-employed, buying magazines from offices around the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber for £1.50 and selling them on for £3. With a third of vendors currently homeless and the remainder vulnerably housed, half a year out of work is utterly devastating.

When the first lockdown began, Big Issue North set up a hardship fund to provide vendors with financial aid while they were unable to work. With the help of generous donations from the public, we were able to support many vendors with small pay-outs in lieu of the money they would normally make selling the magazine, but now the fund has started to dwindle, and staff have had to prioritise who gets support. This is a heart-breaking situation, but you can help.

Here are five things that you can do today:

1. Donate to the hardship fund, helping to provide vendors with everything they need to survive during lockdown, by texting HARDSHIP to 70970 to give £5 or going to easydonate.org/HARDSHIP.
2. Continue to buy Big Issue North, either in physical form in Sainsbury's, Co-Op, McColl's or Booths, or digitally at issuu.com/bigissuenorth. You can also subscribe, either by purchasing a three-, six- or twelve-month package at shop.bigissuenorth.com, or via a rolling weekly direct debit at pay.gocardless.com/AL0003E9T4AAG1. Half the cost of each magazine will go directly to the hardship fund, with the remainder covering production costs.
3. Subscribe to Big Issue North's new quarterly magazine, The New Issue, at www.bigissuenorth.com/the-new-issue. It offers stunning photography combined with high-quality independent writing, covering everything from changing landscapes and social issues to lifestyle and fiction, and the fifth issue has just gone to print.
4. Shop at shop.bigissuenorth.com. Big Issue North's 2021 calendar-cum-cookbook is now just £3, and features recipes for twelve vendors' favourite dishes by The Creameries chef and Eat Well MCR founder Mary-Ellen McTague. The shop also sells a beautiful range of unique handmade jewellery, previous issues, tote bags featuring quotes from poet Ian McMillan, music merchandise, and much more.
5. If you're trying to break a bad habit for lent, you can use makeitdonate.com to trigger a donation of your choice to the Big Issue North Trust every time you slip up – so even if you do give up on that social media detox, you can rest assured that you'll be doing good too! Or, if you own a business, why not share your success with vendors by setting it to make a small donation every time you make a sale?

On Saturday 6th
March at 6:30pm, Fish Flash Fiction Prize shortlisted and Bath Flash Fiction Award and Reflex Fiction Award longlisted writer Leonie Rowland is also holding a virtual launch for her debut short story collection, *In Bed With Melon Bread*, to raise money for the Big Issue North Trust.

With work described as "sharp, ominous", "wonderfully disquieting", "beautifully told, intriguing stories" and the product of "exceptional talent" previously published by Ad Hoc Fiction, The Cabinet of Heed, FlashFlood Journal, Reflex Press, Emerge Journal and more, *In Bed With Melon Bread*, published by Dreich, is Rowland's first independent collection. Her previous writing is available to read at www.leonierowland.com.

The event will be free to attend, with the option to donate during proceedings, but registration is essential. Sign up at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/141145284345.

Rowland also recently launched The Hungry Ghost Project, "a small press that publishes flash fiction and creative non-fiction on the topics of food, hauntings, memory and consumption."

The Hungry Ghost Project is currently open for submissions until 1st May 2021 for its first issue, which will be published in physical form. Submissions are free and each contributor will receive a payment of £5 on

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publication, with all further profits going to the Big Issue North Trust.

To find out more or to submit work for consideration, go to hungryghostproject.com.

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