



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UK's largest ever festival of Chinese culture

CHINA NOW, the UK's largest ever festival of Chinese culture, today unveils a programme of over 800 events ahead of its launch celebrations over the Chinese New Year weekend.

Starting with the Chinese New Year celebrations, the 6-month, nationwide festival will include exhibitions, performances and activities spanning Chinese film, cuisine, comics, art, literature, music, design, science, technology, business, education and sport.

CHINA NOW aims to advance the public's understanding of China and forge strong relationships between artists, cultural leaders, schools, businesses and communities between the two countries.

CHINA NOW has been welcomed by both the British and Chinese government's, with leading figures from both countries endorsing the initiative:

Gordon Brown, British Prime Minister commented:

"I welcome CHINA NOW as a valuable and exciting idea to help bring our countries closer together and further develop and strengthen our relationship."

Wen Jiabao, Premier of the People's Republic of China commented:

"CHINA NOW will strengthen the understanding and friendship between China and the UK. We must work together to make the festival a success."

With the Beijing Olympics this year and the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010, China is playing an increasingly important role internationally. China has the biggest population in the world and the fourth largest economy. By 2040, China is expected to have the largest economy in the world.

Madam Fu Ying, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United Kingdom commented:

"I believe CHINA NOW has a very positive purpose as it seeks to advance the UK public's understanding of contemporary China."

Stephen Green, Chairman CHINA NOW commented:

"Between the Chinese New Year celebrations and the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, the UK will be bringing together a festival of celebrations showcasing the very best of modern China."

CHINA NOW Festival Highlights

CHINA NOW launches with the UK's Chinese New Year weekend celebrations. Events will be happening across the country, with a full day of family activities at the British Museum on 9th February. The capital's China in London festival, which is also a part of CHINA NOW, features a lantern lighting ceremony at Oxford Circus on 7th February followed by a day of celebrations with fireworks on 10th February at Trafalgar Square.

CHINA FILM NOW features three distinct film strands; a UK tour of 15 short films from popular Chinese film artists, a series of 3-9 minute films produced by students and famous Chinese producers and a BBC Big Screens nationwide project.

TASTE OF CHINA will see a culinary journey through China as part of the renowned annual Taste event held in London's Regent's Park. Highlighting food from top Chinese restaurants, it includes cooking demonstrations, cultural exhibits and cultural performances.

CHINA COMICS NOW is an exhibition featuring the art work that comprises the highly stylised and eye-catching *màn huà* comics.

CHINA LITERATURE NOW brings together a number of key Chinese authors in a number of literary events at some of the leading literature festivals and book fairs across the UK.

CHINA ART NOW is a nationwide art trail showcasing contemporary Chinese art including sculptures, sound-scapes, neon installations, film and photographic art.

CHINA NOW ClubFootball EXCHANGE is a grassroots project bringing together children from China and the UK through an international football competition.

CHINA DESIGN NOW, the V&A's spring exhibition, investigates the recent explosion of new design in China across three rapidly expanding cities: Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

CHINA DANCE NOW is an extensive dance programme showcasing performers in a collection of tours and workshops from world-renowned Chinese dance companies including Beijing Modern Dance Company, UK-based Akram Khan Dance Troupe and the National Ballet of China.

CHINA EDUCATION NOW is a nationwide outreach programme that encourages awareness and understanding of Chinese culture across primary and secondary schools as well as universities and colleges.

CHINA MUSIC NOW is a range of musical events that are taking place across the country ranging from Chinese Hip Hop and modern Beijing Opera to classical string quartets and 70-piece orchestral concerts.

Hong Kong Day at Ascot race course is a family day which, along with one of the richest five-furlong handicap races in Europe, will feature a combination of magnificent Chinese arts and crafts displays, fortune-telling, paper-folding

workshops, calligraphy, plate spinning, Chinese massage and spectacular racing action attracting 20,000 race fans.

The Chinese Tea Culture Exhibition explores China's long history of tea culture looking at the tea-making process, tea sets and utensils, tea art and customs, tea and health, and the China National Tea Museum.

A varied arts programme includes performances by Shaolin monks at Sadler's Wells, an acrobatic version of Swan Lake at the Royal Opera House, the Flying Dragon Circus in Newcastle and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra's nationwide tour.

A series of business conferences will explore issues such as sustainability, urbanisation, and education in China, in a series of locations ranging from Chatham House to Wilton Park.

Events will also be taking place across the UK in cities including Newcastle, Yorkshire, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Bath and London amongst others. In addition, CHINA NOW Scotland will see a range of events taking place north of the border.

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Note to Editors

CHINA NOW is an independently funded, non-profit organisation which aims to build partnerships between artists, cultural leaders, schools, businesses and communities across UK and China.

CHINA NOW was conceived by the UK business community and is chaired by Stephen Green, Group Chairman of HSBC Holdings Plc. Alan Parker, Chairman of Brunswick Group LLP, and James Hughes-Hallett, Chairman of John Swire & Sons Ltd are Co-Vice Chairmen. The Chief Executive is Simon Heale, the former Chief Executive of the London Metal Exchange.

CHINA NOW has the following corporate sponsors; Cathay Pacific Airways, InterContinental Hotels Group, Amoy, Harbin Lager, Penguin Group, Ping An of China, BP, Geely Automobiles, Shui On Land, The Times, Sohu, Brunswick Group, Bank of Communications, HSBC, China Tang, KPMG, Dickson Concepts, Lenovo, Norton Rose Group, The Swire Group, Standard Chartered Bank, Arts Council England, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Henderson Land, Hutchison Whampoa, Jardine Matheson Group, China International Capital Corporation, Newland UK Limited and HenDi Group.

The CHINA NOW website can be viewed at www.chinanow.org.uk