

NEWS RELEASE 28th May 2008

First Environmental Literary Award Launched

A major new book award is being launched to celebrate the life and writing of Robin Jenkins, widely regarded as Scotland's greatest writer of the twentieth century. With a £5000 prize for a work of either fiction or non fiction, The Robin Jenkins Literary Award is launched at the National Library of Scotland on Thursday 29th May by Michael Russell, Minister for Environment.

Sponsored by Forestry Commission Scotland, the Award is managed by Cowalfest, a Walking and Arts Festival in the Cowal Peninsula, where Jenkins lived and wrote for 32 years until his death in 2005.

Russell Bruce, chair of Cowalfest and a board member of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, said: "This really is a very special literary award celebrating John Robin Jenkins and is the culmination of a partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland who have supported Jenkins Memorial lectures in 2005 and 2006 and the sculpture inspired by The Cone Gatherers, perhaps Jenkins best known novel, which we commissioned last year for Benmore Botanic Garden in the National Park."

Russell explained: "A key element or theme of submissions for the Robin Jenkins Award must be Scotland's environment, trees and forestry and comes at a time when the value of our environment is increasingly understood and its care and maintenance for future generations has reached the top of a national agenda and that is something Jenkins would have surely approved of."

Launching the Award, Environment Minister, Michael Russell, said: "It is important to celebrate our cultural heritage and encourage talented writers to draw inspiration from Scotland's unique environmental assets, in particular trees and forestry.

"Robin Jenkins worked with the Commission in Argyll. A number of his novels feature these experiences and capture the spirit of the time and of the different types of people who worked in forestry. His books were the first to capture the role the Commission played in rural life and the major changes that were happening as a result of the significant afforestation programmes during the 20th century and foresters can get an insight of those fascinating days in his novels.

“I am delighted to launch this award and help to celebrate the memory of one of Scotland’s greatest contemporary writers.”

Brian Morton, writer and broadcaster and chair of the Award judging panel recalling Robin Jenkins, his former teacher and subsequent friend and neighbour said: “Prolific, grave, troubling, blackly comic, Robin Jenkins gave off the impression of a man who hadn’t stopped speaking yet, hadn’t quite formulated the complex idea he was searching for. His delightful hesitancy in person, his diffidence about praise (whether taking it or giving it), his unease with fixed critical categories were all part of a deep instinct that everything is unfinished. But, you know, I think he would be really quite pleased to know that all this was going on in his name.”

The other members of the panel of judges are Alan Taylor of The Sunday Herald and editor of The Scottish Review of Books, Isobel Murray of the School of Language and Literature, University of Aberdeen and travel writer Katie Wood. Full details of the Award are available at www.robinjenkinsaward.org

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Further information from

ROBIN JENKINS LITERARY AWARD

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FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission Scotland serves as the Scottish Government’s forestry department.

For more information log on to www.forestry.gov.uk/aboutfcs

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

Biography of Robin Jenkins www.robinjenkinsaward.org