

Diss High School teacher Mikela Bond wins novel prize

By Donna-Louise Bishop Specialist Reporter & Obituary Writer

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Mikela Bond has been announced as the winner of the 2023 New Anglia Manuscript Prize - Picture: Laxfield Literary Associates (Image: Laxfield Literary Associates)

An English teacher has turned her literary dreams into a reality after moving one step closer to publishing her debut novel. When she is not writing, Mikela Bond, can be found walking by the sea with her husband, two children, and their spaniel, by her side. And it is that beautiful East Anglian landscape that inspired her latest novel which has gone on to win the 2023 New Anglia Manuscript Prize.

The married mother-of-two, who teaches at Diss High School, won with her unpublished debut novel *The Hollow Hours*. Set in Norfolk, the book tells the story of a missing girl and the secrets that are contained in the house she vanished from.

Mrs Bond, 40, said: "As an East Anglian writer, I'm lucky to be surrounded by an inspiring landscape and the Norfolk countryside is very much a part of this story.

"Writing a novel is an exciting process and winning this competition and being recognised as a writer is phenomenal.

"I strongly encourage anyone who wants to write and get their work out there to think about joining a workshop or reaching out to writing groups online."

The New Anglia Manuscript Prize, run by local agency Laxfield Literary Associates and in association with the National Centre for Writing (NCW), recognises the best new debuts from unpublished Suffolk and Norfolk writers.

It was judged by Chris Gribble, the chief executive of the NCW, crime writer and publisher Phoebe Morgan, and agency founder Emma Shercliff.

Mrs Bond wins £500 and representation from Laxfield Literary Associates. The shortlisted works were *Street Sweeper* by Bren Gosling, *Funk* by Adam Leeder, and *Mispers* by Hannah Upton.