

Edinburgh Festivals legacy funding package announced

Funding for our festivals has received a boost by the council approving an annual funding contribution of £1million over each of the next five years towards the Platforms for Creative Excellence (PLACE) programme.

✘ This £5million is only a third of the overall package as The Scottish Government and Edinburgh Festivals will match this funding.

At yesterday's council meeting Council Leader Adam McVey and Culture and Communities Convener Donald Wilson made the recommendation to the council members.

Subject to full approval and match funding from Edinburgh's Festivals and the Scottish Government, the in-principle funding will support a range of areas such as:

- Enhancing the global reputation of the Festivals and standing of Scotland as an international partner of choice for culture and creativity
- Creating inclusive opportunities in disadvantaged areas, with schools, clubs and communities sharing world class experiences that increase motivation, confidence, and cohesion for diverse new audiences – helping to raise aspiration and attainment
- Strengthened community activity working with local artists and cultural activists, connecting communities with national and international partners, and developing the city's ability to use culture for inclusive social and economic development

- New export platforms developed for creative product, live and digital, to share the best of Scottish work from local organisations country-wide with wider audiences.
- New markets opened for Scotland in key countries which are targets for talent attraction, investment promotion and national reputation
- Increased visitor numbers through strengthening the Festivals as one of Scotland's most powerful 'reasons to visit' and providing a platform for Scotland-wide growth
- Extended tourism season through initiating new focal points during shoulder seasons in winter and late spring.

The launch of the programme will provide a further opportunity for the private sector, which benefits so greatly from the city's festivals, to supplement this investment by supporting the festivals individually and collectively. A new Independent Advisory Group would be set up to steer this work.

Council Leader Adam McVey, said: "Our festivals have been driving Edinburgh's tourism for 70 years. Attracting audiences of over 4.5m every year, they add £313m to the Scottish economy.

"If we are to sustain our position as the world's festival city and protect their legacy, we need to make a joint commitment towards supporting their future success. In this

crucial year, we need to recognise how our festivals support tourism, create jobs, and develop the creative and hospitality industries.

“I am, therefore, delighted to bring forward this report following many months of detailed discussions with the Scottish Government and the festivals as part of productive City Region Deal negotiations. Now we can continue conversations with partners to bring this fund to fruition.”

Councillor Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener and Festivals Champion, added: “The festivals are thriving in their 70th anniversary year but we know there are challenges on the horizon.

“This legacy funding package proposes an additional £5m investment from the Council to strengthen and future-proof the global reputation of the Festivals. We now hope the Scottish Government and Edinburgh’s Festivals will join us and pledge their own support.

“The funding package would address many of the issues raised by the Thundering Hooves studies, such as building further the accessibility and inclusivity of the festivals, and a real need to develop digital platforms and draw new markets.”

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: “The internationally renowned Edinburgh Festivals attract visitors from across the world every year and make a significant contribution to our economy. The Scottish Government has long made clear our

commitment to supporting the festivals – awarding £19 million since 2008 through the Expo Fund. I welcome the council's in principle agreement to invest an additional £5 million over the next five years and we are finalising our discussions on the Scottish Government's support for the festivals."

Julia Amour, Director of Festivals Edinburgh, added: "It's great to see the in-principle commitment from the City of Edinburgh to investing in the festivals' future during our 70th anniversary year, and we are committed to working with both the City and the Scottish Government to capitalise on our enormous value for the benefit of everyone in Edinburgh and Scotland.'

The Green Group countered the motion lodged by the administration by demanding again that a working group is set up to work on the case for a transient visitor levy (tourist tax) which they believe could raise at least £10million each year for investment in the city including the festivals.