

Book Festival's Citizen programme involves local Edinburgh people

Throughout the year the Citizen programme provides a space for conversation and creativity in North Edinburgh, Musselburgh, and in Tollcross.

There are also some events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) to showcase what the discussions have brought about.

As part of Citizen, a programme which was set up in 2019, the work has centred predominantly in North Edinburgh, working with North Edinburgh Arts, but also working in and around Tollcross, Grassmarket with organisations like the Grassmarket Community Project and the Street Reads Library and also in Musselburgh.

The EIBF set up a Writer in Residence working with adult groups and a schools Writer in Residence who focus on getting people to tell their stories.

A main part of this year's programme takes place at 6.15pm every day when there is a free (but bookable in advance) session in the Baillie Gifford Storytime Yurt.

Noelle Cobden Communities Programme Director said: “We use the term writer in residence, but actually, they don’t focus solely on writing, it’s really about people’s stories. So they will work with groups to get people to bring out their stories and to think about things like place and identity, what it is to be a citizen of this city and more broadly of the world. And so we’ve had groups create podcasts about their local area.

“In Musselburgh we worked with a writing group to create a map of Musselburgh with audio stories. NEA did a project just before Covid, which was beautiful with parents and children who were new to the area, a lot of them with English as a second language. They created a children’s storybook based on the children’s lives and what they’re experiencing in the new area. The imagery from that was printed in large format and displayed on the hoardings on the building site where the new NEA will be.

“We also try and feed everything we’re doing throughout the year into the festival. We have an event called Stories and Scran where we bring everyone in who we’ve been working with. We work with the Scran Academy who are based in North Edinburgh and everyone who’s taken part can come and perform their work as well. And we air podcasts or video in a big celebratory event.

“We give these events the same level of production values as any of our other events so everyone can feel as important as any professional author. Part of my job is to break down the perception that some people may have that the book festival is not for them. I regularly remind our team that we’re hard to access rather than people being hard to reach.

[You may listen to the podcasts and find out more about the Citizen programme on the EIBF website here.](#)

As part of the programme writers in residence Eleanor

Thom and Ryan Van Winkle deliver everything from zine-making to podcasting. Continuing the Festival's 40th anniversary celebrations, Our City, Our Stories will take place on the three weekends of the Festival and invites writers from across the Citizen programme (and other community-based groups including Intercultural Youth Scotland and Open Book) to perform brand new stories helping to create a love letter to Edinburgh.

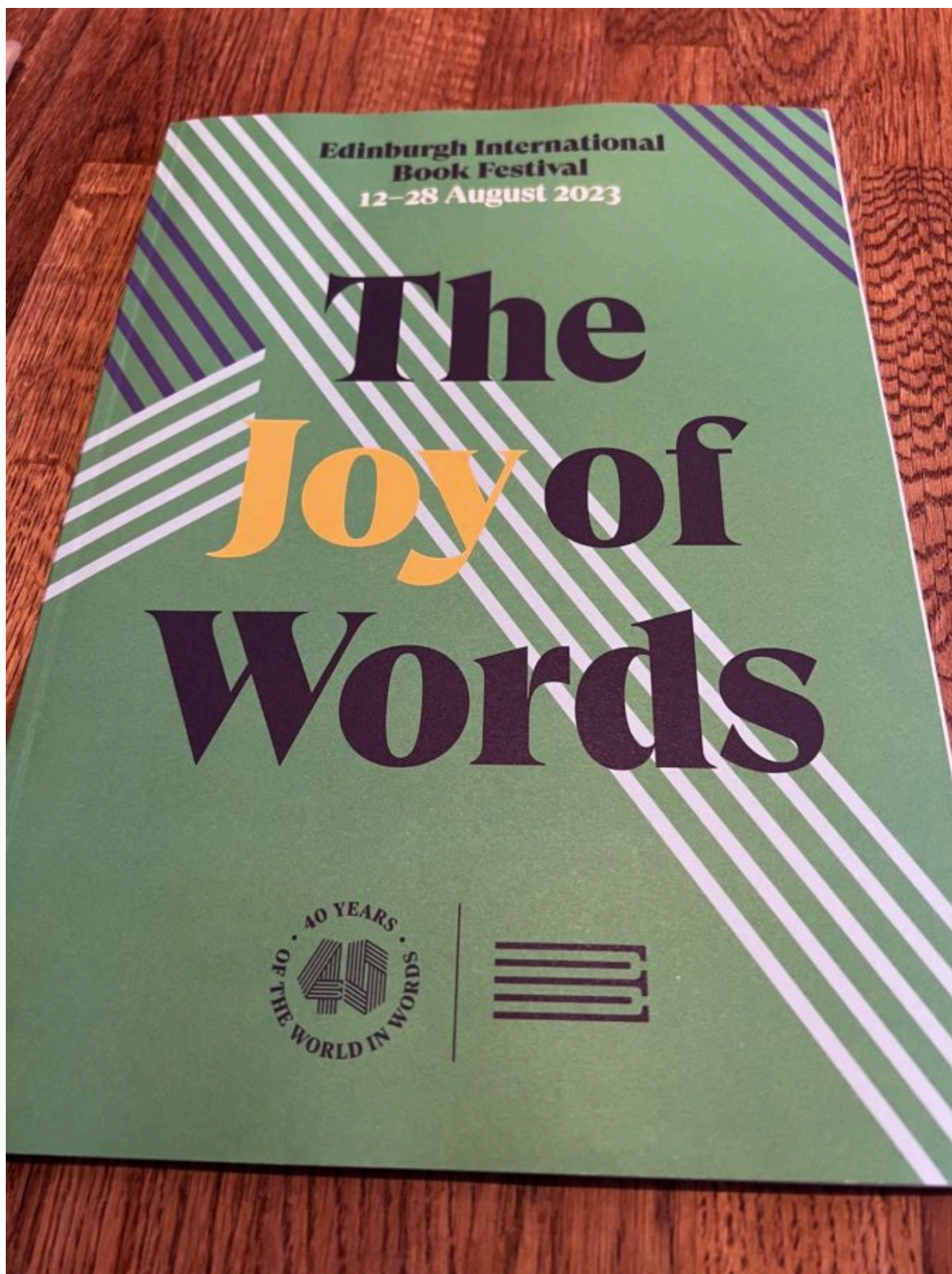
As part of its commitment to increasing the accessibility of the Book Festival for the people of Edinburgh, the Festival has developed a long-term partnership with The Alternative School at Spartan's Community Football Academy, and since August author Chris Barkley has been based at the club three days a week working with young people. Chris has helped these young people explore their local area, how adults perceive them and what they want for the world, and they have recently written their own film script and worked with filmmaker Rory Easton to make it a reality. Audiences are invited to join them for Letters of Hope, which will feature the world premiere of their film and words from Chris and the young people about their dreams for the future.

There are some livestreamed Pay What You Can events and also for any event there are £10 tickets for those under 26.

Since the beginning of 2023 the Communities Team has also been working on a new partnership with The Ripple in the North East Edinburgh communities of Restalrig, Lochend and Craightinny. Working on a series of events for the Friday Club has been one part of that as well as a visit from author Sara Sheridan talking about The Many Stories About Where We Come From. Sara shared her own journey about writing and read from her novel The Fair Botanist.

The Book Festival programme has now been published and tickets go on sale on 29 June 2023.

<https://www.edbookfest.co.uk>





Edinburgh International Book Festival – Day 1, Edinburgh School of Art, 13 August 2022 © 2022 J.L. Preece