

Greta Thunberg cancels Edinburgh appearance over opposition to sponsors

The environment campaigner, Greta Thunberg, who was to appear at the Edinburgh International Book Festival will no longer appear over a spat with sponsors, Baillie Gifford.

The event was to take place at the newly reopened Playhouse on 13 August and would have been streamed online.

Greta Thunberg said: "I am unfortunately unable to attend the Edinburgh Book Festival. As a climate activist I cannot attend an event which receives sponsorship from Baillie Gifford, who invest heavily in the fossil fuel industry. Greenwashing efforts by the fossil fuel industry, including sponsorship of cultural events, allow them to keep the social license to continue operating. I cannot and do not want to be associated with events that accept this kind of sponsorship."

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said: "While I am disappointed that Greta will not be joining us on the 13 of August, I fully respect her decision. I share Greta's view that in all areas of society the rate of progress is not enough.

"However, in applauding Greta for standing by her principles, we too must stand by ours.

“The Book Festival exists to give a platform for debate and discussion around key issues affecting humanity today – including the climate emergency. As a charitable organisation, we would not be in a position to provide that platform without the long-term support of organisations such as Baillie Gifford.

“We strongly believe that Baillie Gifford are part of the solution to the climate emergency. They are early investors in progressive climate positive companies, providing funds to help them grow. While they acknowledge there is still work to do, we have seen them make rapid progress throughout our 19-year relationship.

“I apologise to all the people who bought tickets and were keen to meet Greta – and especially to the hundreds of young climate campaigners who we had invited to come along because of their hard work to change the system in Scotland. We will of course refund all ticket-buyers in full.”

Baillie Gifford said: “We are not a significant fossil fuel investor. Only 2% of our clients’ money is invested in companies with some business related to fossil fuels. This compares to the market average of 11%. Of those companies, some have already moved most of their business away from fossil fuels, and many are helping to drive the transition to clean energy.

“We are investing on behalf of our clients to grow their savings and retirement funds. When we invest in companies on their behalf, we do so over long time periods – typically 10 years or more – so this has naturally led us away from traditional fossil fuel firms. Currently, 5% of our clients’ money is invested in companies whose sole purpose is to develop clean energy solutions.

“We believe in open debate and discussion which is why we are long-term supporters of the Edinburgh International Book

Festival.”

Produced in association with Edinburgh International Festival
the event was sponsored by the Open University in Scotland.



Greta Thunberg PHOTO Kim Jakobsen



Edinburgh International Book Festival – Day 1, Edinburgh
School of Art, 13th Aug 2022

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