

The Scottish International Storytelling Festival – Bridges Between

The full programme of events for The Scottish International Storytelling Festival (SISF) 2024, which takes place next month, was published on Wednesday. There are events for children and adults, and most, but not all, are held at the Scottish Storytelling Centre on the High Street.

The festival from 18 to 31 October 2024 is organised by TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland), and it is claimed that this is the world's largest celebration of storytelling.

Now in its 35th year, the festival has been building bridges between cultures, artists and audiences all over the world through the power of storytelling over the years. This anniversary coincides with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the festival has chosen "Bridges Between" as its programming theme.

This is also the inspiration for eight new story commissions which will be told for the first time during this year's festival. It has invited international storytellers from the Storytelling Arena in Berlin, from Ireland with the support of

Culture Ireland, and from India to participate in this year's event.

In a programme called GO Local there will be events held all over Scotland from The Scottish Borders to Orkney, both during SISF and also later in the year.

The festival draws to a close in Edinburgh on Halloween when the Beltane Fire Society will hold Samhuinn Fire Festival 2024 in the capital. On that final evening SISF will hold an Open Hearth session at the Netherbow Theatre gathering storytellers and musicians for a relaxed evening of stories and music.

[The programme is online here.](#)

Edinburgh 900

This year the Festival is also part of the city's **Edinburgh 900** programme, celebrating nine centuries of story and literature in Scotland's capital city.

Festival Director Donald Smith, who is also author of the newly published **Edinburgh *Our Storied Town***, has programmed a series of events showcasing Edinburgh through the centuries and exploring different eras of its history. These include talks on "chivalry" and the knightly values of the crusades, Edinburgh's theatres and the history of the festivals, Scotland's golden age of literature and a conference and "Lit Fandango" with new Edinburgh Makar, Michael Pedersen, to celebrate 20 years since Edinburgh was crowned the world's first UNESCO City of Literature.

There are also guided walks through the city to explore Edinburgh's founding women with Claire McNicol, an after-hours tour of Surgeon's Hall where tales of chloroform tea parties and grave robbing will be shared, and storytelling sessions at Bridgend Farmhouse, The Balm Well and Edinburgh's Philosophy Cafe on the Southside.

Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said: "Scotland is home to some of the best festivals in the world, and Edinburgh is the festival capital of the world. In addition to the amazing festivals that we have in August we've also got the Scottish international Storytelling Festival which takes place between the 18th and the 31st of October.

"There are lots of events in Edinburgh and in the rest of the country. I think it's a great reminder that we have an amazing story telling history, but that we also have connections to Europe and the wider world, and this festival brings all of that together. I'd encourage everybody go online and see what there is. There's something for young and old and everybody in between. There's a series of pieces that are being commissioned especially, and there's some stories that we may even remember from our childhood."

Donald Smith, Scottish International Storytelling Festival Director said: "The festival has lots of activities between festivals. We have a network of storytellers and storytelling projects in every corner of Scotland, and it's out of that ongoing activity that the ideas bubble up for the next festival.

"This is the city of literature's 20th anniversary – there's a lot of anniversaries going on – it's the 35th year of the festival. It's 35 years since the Berlin Wall came down, and we've got storytellers coming from Berlin to share what that experience was like. It is also 900 years of storytelling and literature in Edinburgh, so we are making a special effort this year.

"But of course, our theme always looks outward to the wider world. So Between Bridges reflects all the divisions we're facing, the shouting and the shooting. Storytelling is the alternative to that, a shared experience, a sense of sympathy, a bit of connection, that's what we're building this year."

The Scottish International Storytelling Festival will take place from Friday, 18 October to Thursday 31 October. Tickets to family events cost £5 per ticket. For those planning on attending multiple events, the Festival Supporter Pass offers discounted tickets to many live festival events, online and at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, as well as a discount at the Scottish Storytelling Centre's bookshop, Haggis Box Café and an invitation to the Festival launch event.

To purchase tickets and browse the full programme, visit sisf.org.uk

An art exhibition Take Me To New Lands & Then Take Me Home will be in place during the festival in the Storytelling Centre with paintings by Arcadian artist Sarah McFadyen will explore the line between the worlds of fact and fable, and where land and sea meet.



Scottish International Storytelling Festival 2024
L-R Storyteller Janis Mackay and Donald Smith, Scottish International Storytelling Festival Director with the Culture Secretary Angus Robertson as he prepares to rings the

Netherbow Bell to mark 35 years since the festival began and to celebrate 900 years of the city's vibrant history.

PHOTO Neil Hanna



Angus Robertson MSP, Culture Secretary



Culture Secretary, Angus Robertson



Donald Smith Scottish International Storytelling Festival Director, Angus Robertson Culture Secretary, Steve Byrne, Director of TRACS, and Janis Mackay storyteller.



Storyteller Janis Mackay, performing at this year's Scottish International Storytelling Festival Launch
Pic Neil Hanna



L-R Joanne Urwin (Storytelling Development Officer) Storyteller Janis Mackay and Donald Smith, Scottish International Storytelling Festival Director react as Culture Secretary Angus Robertson rings the Netherbow Bell to mark 35 years since the festival began and to celebrate 900 years of the city's vibrant history.

Pic Neil Hanna

The Netherbow Bell in the photos above is Edinburgh's official bell, commissioned from the Netherlands in 1621.

The bell was restored to the Netherbow when the Scottish Storytelling Centre was built in 2003 and was installed in the Centre's purpose built tower.