

Edinburgh to host Global Fair Trade Festival next year

Edinburgh is preparing to take the spotlight as the host city for the Global Fair Trade Festival from 29 to 31 August, 2025.

This international event, which will bring together Fair Trade advocates, producers, and businesses from around the world, is a significant opportunity for the city to further solidify its leadership in the global movement. Before arriving in Edinburgh, the festival will first be held in South Africa on the 20 to 22 September in Drakenstein. It's a country where Fair Trade plays a crucial role in addressing systemic poverty and creating sustainable livelihoods. South Africa's engagement in Fair Trade has set an inspiring example, one that Edinburgh hopes to build upon when it hosts the event.

The conference will focus on how Fair Trade intersects with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the importance of ethical trade in achieving poverty reduction, decent work, gender equality, and climate action. Edinburgh's own contribution to Fair Trade has been growing steadily, and the 2025 festival promises to boost its reputation as a global Fair Trade city. Fair Trade Fortnight is also coming in as it takes place between 9th and 22nd September, 2024 as it commemorates the Fair Trade Mark's 30th anniversary.

I've been a vocal advocate for Fair Trade and ethical working conditions. As a key member of the Cross-Party Group on Bangladesh, I was spoken to about the difficult conditions

faced by workers as I heard their stories during our trip to Bangladesh. The factories I visited were overcrowded, unsafe, and offered extremely low wages. There is an urgent need for intervention to improve these conditions, and I believe Fair Trade can provide a real solution as it ensures a minimum price guarantee and promotes transparency in supply chains, protecting workers from unpredictable market fluctuations, and this stark difference was noted in the Fair Trade factories.

This would offer stability to Bangladeshi workers, many of whom currently struggle to survive on inconsistent incomes. Additionally, Fair Trade provides a Fair Trade Premium which are extra funds that are reinvested into local communities for essential projects such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This premium could be especially beneficial in Bangladesh, where it could help build flood defenses and improve community resilience against climate change, an ongoing threat to the country. Fair pay for garment workers was on the agenda.

