



National Events Strategy Review: Consultation Submission by Festivals Edinburgh [30.06.23]

Questionnaire

Question 1: To what extent do you support, or oppose the proposed Ambition?

- strongly oppose
- oppose
- neutral
- **support**
- strongly support
- don't know

Question 2: How important do you think each of these strategic priorities are for events over the next ten years? Give a score of one to five for each, where one is not important at all and five is very important, or “don't know”:

- Boosting the economy: **5**
- Enhancing well-being and community engagement: **3**
- Contributing to the drive towards net zero and environmental sustainability: **3**
- Making the event sector a better place to work: **3**
- Showcasing and promoting Scotland's assets: **5**

Question 3: What other strategic priorities, (if any), do you think should be included in a refreshed strategy?

The current strategic priorities are a mix of 1. what outcomes events can deliver (economic impact, well-being, reputational impact), and 2. how events can deliver better (as a place to work, more environmentally sustainable). As concentrated moments of focus, attention and energy, we believe major events are most suited to delivering an economic boost and showcasing and promoting Scotland's assets.

1. In terms of what benefits events are uniquely placed to deliver for Scotland, we recommend the addition of a strategic priority on **'Enhancing Scotland's international outlook'** especially given the post-Brexit context. International reach brings new ideas and networks to local businesses, communities and individuals across the country – and as a small country on the north west edge of Europe, Scotland needs the focused energy of major events to create the momentum for these engagements.

2. In terms of how the events sector delivers, a key priority missing from the list is **'Sustaining and developing the events sector to thrive'** which is the fundamental building block for achieving all the other priorities. While stakeholder views on what a thriving event sector looks like in 2035 prominently includes 'financially robust and sustainable', there is little emphasis on how the national strategy will help to support financial sustainability.

As part of the existing priority to contribute to the drive towards net zero and environmental sustainability, there also needs to be a focus on making the event sector resilient to climate change. Technical and financial tools and support should be put in place to help the sector understand different trajectories of global warming and its impacts, and integrate adaptation into strategies and delivery plans.

Question 4: People attend events for a range of different reasons. Can you identify what is important for you in creating an excellent event experience?

In City of Imagination, the 2030 Festival City Vision agreed in July 2022

https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/assets/000/005/213/2030_Vision_for_Edinburgh_Festival_City_original.pdf?1656601839, the Edinburgh Festivals define their core purposes as being: **to connect people, inspire creative ideas, and bring places alive in concentrated moments of communal celebration – focused on combining the local, the global, and the live.**

Collective surveys show that 80% of our audiences see the festivals as places of cultural discovery. This relies upon the quality and range of live experiences the festivals can offer, catering for a myriad of tastes.

Thanks to the festivals, Edinburgh is well placed to serve the growing audience appetite for prioritising meaningful encounters as part of more sustainable lifestyles, focusing on experiences rather than material things. This in turn relies on the wealth of local and global cultural talent valuing the festivals as a gathering place for ideas and people, and on a foundational level of core public funding supporting risk-taking on new work, uncovering hidden themes, and supporting participants whose voices would not otherwise be heard.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree, or disagree that events in Scotland are:

- Accessible (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly agree, or **don't know**)
- Affordable (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly agree, or **don't know**)
- Inclusive (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly agree, or **don't know**)
- Welcoming (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly agree, or **don't know**)

We have answered 'don't know' to these questions about how accessible, affordable, inclusive and welcoming events in Scotland are, because there is no point of comparison given. For an evidence-based assessment these questions need to be seen in context. Public funding for culture in the UK and Scotland is a third less than the EU average. As part of the national events strategy, we would like to see data on relevant international comparisons identified, so that the Scottish Government and its agencies are able to align ambitions and resource levels in their priority areas.

Question 6: We are also interested in knowing about why people might not be able to attend events. Can you identify any reasons for not attending the events you would like to?

We have answered 'don't know' to Question 5 about how accessible, affordable, inclusive and welcoming events in Scotland are, because there is no point of comparison given. For an evidence-based assessment these questions need to be seen in context. Public funding for culture in the UK and Scotland is a third less than the EU average. As part of the national events strategy, we would like to see data on relevant international comparisons identified, so that the Scottish Government and its agencies are able to align ambitions and resource levels in their priority areas.

Edinburgh's Festivals individually and collectively consult audiences and community partners regularly about why people do not attend events they would like to, especially local residents. Local authority surveys show 66% of Edinburgh residents report attending one or more of the festivals. Over 300,000 attendances were free in 2022, and ticket prices are more affordable on average than other festivals globally that we benchmark with – nevertheless, there are substantial barriers to attendance for a minority of citizens.

An example of collective research with six local communities from 2022 by the University of Edinburgh in partnership with the festivals is the 'Mapping Cultural Dispersal' report <https://www.edinburghculturalmap.org/outputs-events/mapping-cultural-dispersal-report/>. This, in common with other research, reported that the two primary barriers to access were financial costs – tickets, travel and food - and a sense of not belonging. People with health or mobility issues experience higher barriers to access, along with those who have further to travel. From our work on climate change, we are also aware that attendance at events is more likely to be affected by extreme weather in future which can lead to disruption.

The five-year Platforms for Creative Excellence (PlaCE programme), running from 2019 to 2023 in partnership between the festivals, City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Government, directed approx. £500k in public funding per annum to community engagement workstreams across eight festivals. This transformed the ability of the festivals to address these barriers through long-term investment in developing relationships and trust, replacing the short-term focus driven by annually fundraised programmes. By 2022, community partnerships increased by 33% to 148 and school activities increased by 72% to 800 engagements. However, 2023 is the final year of this partnership and due to festival costs increasing at twice the rate of inflation since 2019 together with public funding that has lost 44% of its value since 2010, it will be challenging to continue this work at scale without a successor agreement.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree, or not, that event organisers involve communities in planning the events they hold?

- strongly oppose
- oppose
- **neutral**
- support
- strongly support
- don't know

Question 8: To what extent do you agree, or not, that event organisers communicate about how the events taking place will affect local people?

- strongly oppose
- oppose
- neutral
- **support**
- strongly support
- don't know

Question 9: How could the benefits of events be increased for local communities?

Edinburgh's 11 major international festivals have a range of models for community engagement specific to the mission of each festival, from communication to consultation and community participation. In some targeted initiatives there is co-creation where local communities are invited to make programming choices, but the most typical focus is engaging with resident communities to inform and consult them.

Through the City of Edinburgh Council's Event Planning Operations Group meetings, there is a process for organisers to plan their event with an awareness of matters associated with the local community and report back on their engagement. City of Edinburgh Council is currently developing a new policy on Use of Public Spaces for Events and Filming, which the Edinburgh Festivals have contributed to along with other event organisers and community council representatives. The aims

are to ensure that future processes are transparent, accountable, and proportionate to the scale of the activity and location; that events have a net positive effect in one or more of the following areas - community wealth, cultural identity, reputation, quality of life & social value; and that organisers minimise disruption and impact as far as reasonably practicable.

See Q6 for an outline of the targeted Platforms for Creative Excellence Programme as an example of how long-term public funding commitments at modest levels have transformed approaches to the festivals' community engagement (for <5% of total public funding for Edinburgh's Festivals) - the external evaluation of the first three years of the programme is available here: <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/documents/1111-place-programme-interim-report-years-1-to-3-may-2023> . Continued investment in successor programmes would help to sustain these local community benefits at scale. Currently, Festivals Edinburgh and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council are jointly leading on the [Connect project](#), piloting a new collective approach to participatory cultural planning with Valley Park Community Centre in an under-served area of the city.

Edinburgh's Festivals latest impact study (see Q21) shows that the festivals created an additional 5,850 FTE jobs for Edinburgh in 2022. The festivals are working with local FE and HE institutions to enable local students to access work and study opportunities at the festivals; and in the 2030 Festival City Vision it has been identified that a sector initiative in sustainable stage and screen skills at city region level could open up opportunities further. Festivals Edinburgh is expanding our [online resource guide to working with the festivals](#) including videos of events held in partnership with Creative Edinburgh where festival teams describe key roles available and when and how they are recruited.

The impact study also shows that the festivals attracted net new income of £407,000,000 into the city in 2022. In the 2019 season around 50% of the suppliers to Edinburgh's Festivals were from the city and as they return post-pandemic, the festivals themselves are focusing on responsible re-growth including increasingly local sourcing where possible.

Question 10: How important is the diversity of events in Scotland in terms of each of the following? Give a score of one to five for each, where one is not important at all and five is very important, or "don't know":

- Range of size: **3**
- Spread of location: **3**
- Variety of type: **3**

Question 11: What barriers, if any, are there to holding a diversity of events in Scotland?

A national events strategy should aim to strike a balance in encouraging and supporting a diverse portfolio of events across Scotland, based on the agreed strategic priorities and how appropriate events are as a suitable type of intervention to deliver the desired outcomes. Barriers to a diversity of events across Scotland include the availability and cost of skills and workforce, transport, infrastructure and materials; the time needed to develop partner and supplier relationships; the diseconomies of scale in terms of attracting viable audience numbers in more rural areas; and the often short-term nature of financing so that projects may be one-off without being able to capitalise on putting offers into place and building audiences longer term.

Question 12: Do you think the event sector is an attractive place to work?

- Yes
- No

- **Don't know**

The answer to whether the event sector is an attractive place to work is both yes and no. Like all events, cultural festivals are time limited by their nature, and work opportunities fluctuate. After two years of lockdown disruption, by 2022 there was substantial staff turnover and understandable caution about embarking on a career in the events sector. But in 2023 demand to work with the festivals is gradually returning, as independent sector studies show that people value the flexibility and autonomy offered by the creative industries, and such work is predicted to increase rather than decrease as many other roles become automated.

Question 13: Please tell us why you selected yes, no or don't know here.

The answer to whether the event sector is an attractive place to work is both yes and no. Like all events, cultural festivals are time limited by their nature, and work opportunities fluctuate. After two years of lockdown disruption, by 2022 there was substantial staff turnover and understandable caution about embarking on a career in the events sector. But in 2023 demand to work with the festivals is gradually returning, as independent sector studies show that people value the flexibility and autonomy offered by the creative industries, and such work is predicted to increase rather than decrease as many other roles become automated.

Edinburgh is highly unusual for a small capital city, in having the year-round cultural infrastructure and four-season programme of major festivals that can help sustain the careers of event professionals, who may also work seasonally at the summer festivals season in the southern hemisphere especially Australia. These specialist skills should be recognised and nurtured as part of Scotland's national events strategy, as they combine an expert skills base at Scotland's disposal with an international network to bring in new learning, contacts and opportunities.

Recent academic and public policy evidence cited below has highlighted that the creative freedom and autonomy in our sector is valued by workers - with higher satisfaction levels than many industries - but that due to structure, practices, informality and culture there is a continuing need to improve job security, training, diversity and inclusion, and workplace health and wellbeing. The charities and local authority that underpin Edinburgh's 11 major international festivals are focusing on embedding Fair Work principles, see Q14.

In February 2023 the UK Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre (PEC) published the [Good Work Review](#) - the first examination of job quality across the entire UK creative industries - with Creative Scotland as the Scottish [partner](#) in this work. The study found that 'people working in the Creative Industries tended to have higher job satisfaction than workers in other sectors, could work more flexibly, and found their work to be an outlet for their creative passion'. However, they also found that there was 'lower than average pay in some sectors, long hours, evidence for poor workplace culture, and unequal access to the creative industries, with many people needing to work for free to get a foot in the door'.

The PEC report notes higher rates of job satisfaction in Music, performing and visual arts than some other areas of creative industries, and creative workers reporting benefit from control over their working hours; influence over the tasks they do in their job; the pace at which they work; and how they do their work.

These are some of the characteristics that make creative jobs highly resistant to automation. A 2021 UK Government report on the [Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on UK Employment and the Demand for Skills](#) concludes that 'jobs will be created to provide relatively hard-to automate services that are in greater demand due to the additional real incomes arising from higher productivity generated by AI - these include health care services but also other personal services and the artistic and creative industries'.

Question 14: If you work in the event sector, what are your experiences of Fair Work practices in the sector?

All of the Festivals Edinburgh members pay at least the real Living Wage, and have a code of practice on volunteering developed with Volunteer Edinburgh. The most complex model is the open access platform of the Fringe, which is proud to lead with its vision ‘to give anyone a stage and everyone a seat’. The Fringe vision and values published by the Fringe Society in June 2022 outline core values for Fringe makers to subscribe to, with clear goals and pledges against key areas, including thriving artists, fair work, good citizenship, climate action, an equitable Fringe and digital evolution. This includes the aim for 95% of all paid employees at Fringe venues to be paid the real Living Wage by 2027. The charities and local authority that underpin Edinburgh’s 11 major international festivals are focusing on embedding Fair Work principles, and reporting against Fair Work First criteria as part of public funding conditions.

Question 15: If you work in the event sector, is there anything you would like to see change in relation to Fair Work practices?

Edinburgh’s Festivals contributed to the Review of Fair Work commissioned by Creative Scotland in 2022, and a summary of the study can be found here: https://www.creativescotland.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/92776/Review-of-Fair-Work-Exec-Summary-FINAL-Aug-2022.pdf. Almost all employers surveyed (93%) indicated their organisation faced challenges in implementing the Fair Work principles, mainly due to the costs of increasing benefits to staff and freelancers, and only 44-64% (varying by principle) felt that they had adequate support to do this.

More recently Creative Scotland has published a guide with case study examples of Fair Work practices across the sector. Most important is their recognition that the creative and cultural ecosystem is dominated by freelancers, micro-businesses and SMEs, so that it is recognised in the requirement to grantholders to commit to the Fair Work First criteria, that they should do so in a way that is relevant and proportionate for their organisation.

Question 16: Do you think there are sufficient opportunities to do each of the following? Give an answer of yes, no, or don’t know for each:

- learn about what it is like to work in the sector: **No**
- gain the skills and experiences you need to work in the sector: **No**
- further a career in the sector: **No**
- learn from the lessons and good practice of others in the sector: **No**

Question 17: How do you think access to these opportunities could be improved?

Many studies have shown inequalities of access in ‘getting a foot in the door’, due to the fragmented and informal nature of the industry.

Access to clear information for people considering event sector careers could help – for example, the transferable skills that many roles provide and the future prospects for work in the sector. In 2021 the UK Government published a report on the [Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on UK Employment and the Demand for Skills](#) – highlighting that in the next 20 years arts officers, producers and directors are among the occupations that will experience large growth relative to current levels of employment, with the continued strength of the UK’s creative industries. Festivals Edinburgh and Creative Edinburgh have recently worked together to produce in-person events and [online resources](#) that help career entrants understand what sort of work opportunities are available and when.

More modular flexibility in the national skills system is needed, as the structure and length of Modern Apprenticeships is not suitable for the nature of the Creative Industries and therefore few

organisations or individuals are able to access this funding to support their development. Fiscal incentives such as tax or rates rebates could free up resources to support micro-businesses and freelancers to be able to invest more in development opportunities.

The Events Industry Advisory Group and the Sector Development activities of EventScotland are valuable tools in extending the scope for festival organisers to learn from the lessons and good practice of others in the sector. The more there can be stable long-term multi-year policies, funding and regulatory regimes, the more the sector can build on learning and innovation.

Question 18: What do you think would enable events to become more environmentally sustainable?

For events to become more environmentally sustainable there needs to be a holistic approach to environmental sustainability, together with ambitious structural changes both for events themselves and for the wider events and transport infrastructure, and clear principles to guide the practicalities. Some key governing principles embedded in collective work by the Edinburgh Festivals are highlighted below:

- **A commitment to measuring and then reducing carbon emissions with a plan looking ahead at least 5 years.** - For the event sector to start measuring their carbon footprint and having a carbon management plan at the individual level and to show how the sector will contribute towards Scotland's net zero targets.
- As part of this commitment, **internationalism needs to be managed with environmental sustainability in mind** because travel may be the main source of carbon emissions for major events. For the purposes of responsible tourism in attracting international audiences, it will be vital to understand how national low carbon ambitions translate into priority visitor segments and markets, and we look forward to seeing this analysis from VisitScotland and EventScotland. It will be important to look closely at how Scotland maximises our appeal to audiences who have options for lower-carbon travel. This will encourage everyone involved in the visitor economy to take action in line with Scotland's long-term plans to deliver a green recovery, and play an integral part in the global solution.
- Edinburgh's Festivals have collectively recognised that **carbon offsetting is not an adequate solution** to meeting the international target of keeping global warming as close to 1.5 degrees as possible, if absolute emissions are continuing to rise. It should be a residual measure after all possible reductions have been made.
- **A commitment to look beyond carbon emissions and consider protecting biodiversity and reducing wider environmental impacts** such as sustainability commitments in the areas of food and drinks, materials and waste, water etc.
- **A commitment to be prepared and resilient to survive new climate conditions** e.g. more heatwaves, storms, new rainfall patterns etc. - The event sector needs to integrate adaptation plans in delivery and get ready for different trajectories of global warming and its impacts.
- **A commitment to taking account of just and fair transition in environmental sustainability actions.** There is a risk that environmental sustainability actions result in discrimination or deepening of inequalities and this should be actively planned for and monitored to avoid negative impacts.

Long-term planning is crucial to effectively addressing environmental matters, and so multi-year funding agreements – even if only in principle – would be valuable to support the planning cycles to

put in place necessary measures. Governments at all levels should also help to drive forward the wider infrastructural changes need such as decarbonised transport and freight options, clean hardwired power for events, retro conversion of existing infrastructure, and circular waste disposal.

The importance of inbound international activity to a carbon efficient major events strategy for Scotland should also be embedded in thinking for the next 10 years. Scottish audiences experience new ideas and perspectives through encounters with international artists and thinkers travelling to Scotland that may change their world view; and inviting international professionals to work with groups of Scottish counterparts can be a highly impactful and carbon efficient way to foster innovations and new connections.

Question 19: What sources of income do you think events should be developing to be financially sustainable?

Cultural events with a charitable purpose must seek to balance quality, accessibility and innovation with financial viability. Ticket prices, hospitality, merchandise, sponsorship, philanthropy, and commercial income from intellectual property rights are all tools that are being used to increase financial sustainability and recover from the debt burden taken on by many during Covid. Some options may not be available for example where organisers are focusing on supporting artists and creatives to sustain their own livelihoods through retaining their intellectual property: this is commonly the case for cultural festivals, leaving them unable to secure headline sponsorship deals for broadcast rights in the way that many elite sporting events can.

At the same time, cost control and cost sharing are also increasingly important including through co-productions and shared suppliers, reduced staffing and infrastructure, and digital innovations in e-ticketing. However, increasing costs especially in providing more benefits to staff and freelancers, and inflation in festival delivery costs running at more than double the level of general inflation between 2019 and 2022 (30% vs 13%), means that despite these cost control and income generating initiatives, many events remain in a precarious financial position.

For the re-emerging Edinburgh Festivals, the quality, range and innovation of each festival's programme remains at the heart of their ability to support creative careers; secure industry and partner interest; create opportunities; and attract audiences in their millions. Although our festivals have grown to be among the country's strongest cultural entrepreneurs – generating around 85% earned income from around 15% public grants – the national events strategy must recognise that core public funding remains essential to business models to take risks on new work, uncover hidden themes, and support participants whose voices would not otherwise be heard.

There must be a realistic rebasing and alignment between funding levels and expected outputs, with different parts of the events sector enabled to focus on what they do best.

Question 20: What would support the event sector to measure the importance of events?

International benchmarks of what good looks like would be valuable – see answer to Question 6 where we feel unable to objectively assess how accessible, affordable, inclusive and welcoming events in Scotland are, because there is no point of comparison. Public funding for culture in the UK and Scotland is a third less than the EU average. As part of the national events strategy we would like to see data on relevant international comparisons identified, so that the Scottish Government and its agencies are able to align ambitions and resource levels in these areas.

The proposed indicators in the consultation document are missing out the productivity and innovation agendas, and the set of indicators should include the benefits of events in bringing 'new

ideas, skills, learning and connections’ to individuals and communities.

Because of the seasonal or one-off nature of events, and short-term funding, there is a lack of a long-term evidence base about cumulative impacts and legacy. In order to understand the potential for the events sector to address social impacts, it would be useful if relevant events were supported to pilot the evaluation of wellbeing impacts longer term, in a way that is recognisable to health, social care, education and social justice policy areas.

Question 21: We would welcome evidence on the measurable impacts of events, particularly those held in Scotland.

See Festivals Edinburgh’s latest externally commissioned 2022 Economic Impact Study, published 28 June 2023 <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/documents/156-research-reports>, and the external evaluation of the first three years of the Platforms for Creative Excellence programme which focuses on cultural and social impacts, available here: <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/documents/1111-place-programme-interim-report-years-1-to-3-may-2023>

Question 22: In what way do you think events can promote Scotland internationally?

The focused energy of events is a valuable tool to connect people, inspire creative ideas, and bring places alive in concentrated moments of communal celebration – and as such, an essential part of promoting Scotland across the world. Below are highlighted key opportunities for the Edinburgh Festivals to contribute to the national strategy as world leading cultural brands for Scotland.

VALUES: Edinburgh’s Festivals, one of Scotland’s truly global assets, are proudly and fiercely internationalist. It was a defining value of the festivals’ foundations in 1947, which sought to establish Scotland as a cultural hub for global understanding, connecting people and ideas through shared creative experiences, and a commitment to freedom of expression. This consistent focus over more than 75 years has grown a global reputation for Scotland as the host of an unparalleled cultural gathering of over 70 countries every August. These values align with Scottish Government’s ambition for the role that Scotland can play as a leading global citizen, and provide powerful platforms upon which to build mutually beneficial links with cultural, political and business leaders. There is potential to invest further in the cultural diplomacy opportunity offered by the largest Edinburgh Festivals platforms in August when the eyes of the world are on Scotland.

BRAND APPEAL: Post-Covid, the Edinburgh Festivals’ 2022 impact study shows that our unique appeal is a stronger draw than ever, in line with the national strategy to attract people to live, work, visit and study in Scotland as a progressive, creative, pioneering nation.

LEARNING AND SKILLS: Hosting artists, crew, producers and programmers gathers a pool of skilled talent and investment from home and abroad and is an unparalleled hothouse for exchange of new creative ideas, skills development and learning.

INWARD INVESTMENT AND EXPORT: The 4000+ shows and 2000+ industry and media professionals hosted by the Edinburgh Festivals, predominantly at the Fringe, make Edinburgh in August the world’s largest performing arts marketplace. This is an enviable global position that makes Edinburgh attractive to highly professional performers hoping to gain onward touring by appearing here, an attractiveness that would be lost if the international dimension dropped significantly. It also enables Scottish cultural products to achieve global recognition and export opportunities that would not be possible without Edinburgh’s Festivals working with the wider Scottish cultural ecosystem to offer international platforms and networks.

AUDIENCES: Our international audiences, though only 10% of the overall mix, account for around 300,000 attendances and through their higher spending and length of stay they can often offer more income potential than other customer segments (across Scotland as well as in Edinburgh). Working internationally to provide a rich cultural mix of content also attracts strong UK audiences beyond Scotland, around 30% of the overall total.

IDEAS EXCHANGE: As worldwide conflicts and tensions deepen, our festivals are determined to sustain opportunities for building understanding, connection and debate between people and peoples. Through partnerships with leading academics the festivals can strengthen the power of culture to generate new insights about ourselves, each other, and our intertwined past and future. For global decision-makers, convening around the unique moment of Edinburgh in August can provide thinking spaces that shed a different light on the world we live in and the great shared questions of our age.

Question 23: What specific aims would you prioritise for mega events?

The definition of mega events in the consultation is too narrow and should be revised - it is derived from a UK Sport definition for what is termed itinerant events which countries bid to hold on a one-off basis - and a more meaningful and comprehensive definition should be developed for Scotland's own national event strategy, given that Scotland has original homegrown mega events in both cultural and sporting arenas.

At 3.2 million attendances in 2022, even with 75% of the pre-pandemic level of programming, Edinburgh's Festivals remain on a par with a FIFA World Cup, and second only to an Olympic Games. The crucial difference is that our cultural mega events are homegrown assets for Scotland that create cumulative annual benefits rather than being staged in a location only once.

As an action point of the 2030 Festival City Vision, and with the input of EventScotland, Festivals Edinburgh will shortly undertake a scoping study to examine how integrated multi-year planning can be strengthened across local and national levels to secure long-term benefits, taking account of how mega events are managed elsewhere. We ask Scottish Government and its agencies to factor this new information into the national events strategy as the findings emerge in the autumn.

With the stark challenges facing Scottish Government medium-term finances, it is imperative that the strategy must consider the balance of investment between original homegrown events and itinerant one-off events, to prioritise where the best leverage is to be found across a range of economic, reputational, cultural and social impacts. Impact analysis already available to the Scottish Government shows that original homegrown events have a higher rate of return, but this does not seem to be reflected in prioritisation decisions.

The newly released economic impact study of Edinburgh's 2022 Festivals shows a powerful perennial return on investment even after the damage of the pandemic, creating annual employment of 5,000 FTE jobs a year for Scotland with £367m in additional economic impact.

Converting this to £217m in GVA impact and comparing it to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games:

- Based on the [Scottish Government's 2018 final evaluation report](#) P9, the overall net GVA impact for Scotland is stated to be £740M in total (average £92.5M each year), and an average of 2,100 new FTE jobs created each year.
- Setting aside the Glasgow 2014 related capital programme, these results were achieved by £473m in spend by the Organising Committee over 8 years, an average of £59m per year, of which an estimated £15m a year was commercial funding [see [Audit Scotland 2015 report](#) p23

£118m/8 years] leaving £44m a year in public funding contributions.

- The GVA return on investment for every pound from the public purse is therefore nearly 10 times stronger for Edinburgh's Festivals - £2.10 average return per year for every £1 spent by the Glasgow 2014 Organising Committee and £19.70 return for every £1 of public funding for Edinburgh's Festivals 2022.
- Average public funding per new FTE job created was £20,952 for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and £2,200 for the 2022 Edinburgh Festivals.

We have not seen the jobs and economic impact estimates for the 2023 UCI World Cycling Championships, but we understand that the original Scottish Government commitment was £5M a year over 5 years, and according to the Scotsman in April 2023 the grant has been increased to £36M in total.

We ask Scottish Government to consider the opportunity cost for original homegrown events, for example the major festivals in Edinburgh and Glasgow designated as eligible for the national Festivals Expo Fund. Even at half of the rate of return achieved by Edinburgh's Festivals in 2022, the level of public investment committed to UCI World Cycling Championships over 5 years could potentially have delivered an extra £594m in additional economic impact to Scotland over the same period.

£5M a year could restore the 44% decline in the value of static public grants to Edinburgh's Festivals since 2010, enabling Scotland's world famous homegrown cultural brands to increase investment in Profile, Innovation, Legacy, Economy, Participation and Sustainability outcomes in line with the proposed pilot framework for mega events. The UCI example also demonstrates that multi-year commitments can be made despite one-year government budgeting cycles, and we urge Scottish Government to apply this benefit to original homegrown events as well.

The success of EventScotland's recent Themed Years provides another valuable example of how investment through national initiatives can strengthen homegrown assets, led by their creative ideas. The report commissioned in 2019 by Scottish Government on the [value of Robert Burns to the Scottish economy](#) also highlighted the potential to capitalise further on Scotland's original cultural strengths, using a method to estimate the additional contribution of Burns to Scottish brand value across the world. The national events strategy should build on this method and seek to develop an understanding of the contribution to Scotland's brand value made by our country's home-grown major and mega events.

Question 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree that event organisers make connections between events and their ability to deliver broader positive impacts for society?

- strongly agree
- **agree**
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree
- don't know

Question 25: We would welcome evidence on how event organisers are working together with local and/or national bodies to deliver outcomes.

See answer to Question 9. Also, on Environmental Sustainability: Edinburgh's Festivals have been working together on environmental sustainability good practice since 2011 and were one of the three founders of Creative Carbon Scotland in 2013. The Festivals collectively published a 2030

[Carbon Reduction Route Map](#) in 2019, and a document outlining how the festivals are [Taking Action on Climate Change](#) published to coincide with Glasgow COP-26 in 2021. Creative Carbon Scotland cite the festivals' practice since 2016 of developing and reporting on annual carbon reduction plans as a leading model of international interest. The scale of the festivals' programmes in 2022 was 75% of pre-pandemic levels, and the comeback season explored new ways to sustain future cultural exchange without such intense global mobility – such as longer-term international residencies, digital industry programmes, new collaborations for lower carbon touring routes, and digital mapping enabling more production design to be done remotely.

Question 26: If there is anything else that you think we should be considering as part of impact assessments, please give details here.

N/A

Question 27: If there are any other changes to the current National Events Strategy you wish to see, please give details here.

Scotland's strength lies in the diversity of its events, and the national strategy should capitalise on that collective strength by supporting a portfolio approach where delivery against different public policy objectives is focused on different parts of the events sector. This selectivity in public policy ambitions can enable events to focus on what they do best, in an environment of constrained public funding.

Consideration should be given to events which work with a range of public sector organisations to support them to deliver joint priority outcomes across the funders. The pressure on organisations of meeting and reporting to multiple impact assessments and requirements across public funders is a huge challenge and drain on very stretched resources. Minimising this burden requires a meaningful collaborative approach across the public sector to agree priorities and ensure this approach is reflected when developing criteria for funds and subsequent impact assessments.

One of the key barriers to collaborative learning across the events sector is the pressures for organisations to deliver individual outputs and the lack of headroom to collaborate, which requires additional capacity. As such, a portfolio approach across the whole country could support the development of collaborative learning through creating capacity for system level thinking across a wide range of issues, such as who is best placed to support pipelines of creative opportunity at individual, organisational, local, national and international levels.