

Edinburgh: The Festivals Forum

Background

The work of Festivals Edinburgh, the ongoing success of Edinburgh's Festivals, and the continued development of Edinburgh's reputation as the world's leading festival city is made possible by the enlightened advice, support, investment and confidence of a number of key partners and funders who sit on the Festivals Forum.

The transformative Thundering Hooves report (2006), its successor Thundering Hooves 2.0 (2015) and the current [City of Imagination: 2030 Festival City Vision \[2022\]](#) were indeed commissioned by these key national and city partners: the Scottish Government (previously the Scottish Executive), EventScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Creative Scotland (previously the Scottish Arts Council) and the City of Edinburgh Council.

These reports make recommendations on the strategic developments required to maintain the global competitive advantage of Edinburgh's Festivals and the first report led to the establishment of the strategic body that oversees and facilitates the implementation of all recommendations – the Festivals Forum.

Purpose

The Festivals Forum [established March 2007] is a high-level strategic commission bringing together representatives of those with a stake in maintaining the future success of the Edinburgh festivals. Its main purpose is:

- To ensure that Edinburgh maintains its position as the pre-eminent Festival City delivering cultural, social and economic benefit to the city, the region and the country
- To agree the long term strategic development of the Edinburgh Festivals, working closely with the festivals, Festivals Edinburgh and the Thundering Hooves Steering Group
- To articulate and oversee the investment strategy required to sustain Edinburgh's position as the world's leading Festival City
- To support and encourage a positive working relationship between the festivals and their stakeholders
- To monitor and ensure the delivery of this TH 2.0 Strategy and Action Plan

Membership

Membership of the Festivals Forum is non-executive and organisation members are ex-officio representatives. Whilst the Festivals Forum is not legally constituted and therefore not subject to specific governance requirements, it is recommended that the independent members should serve a maximum of three terms of three years making a total of nine years. There is no limit to the number of organisations that can be represented and new ones can be engaged as appropriate. However the following is the core membership of the Festivals Forum:

- British Council Scotland, Director
- City of Edinburgh Council, Convenor of Culture and Communities Committee, Festivals and Events Champion - Councillor Val Walker
- City of Edinburgh Council, Chief Executive - Andrew Kerr
- City of Edinburgh Council, Executive Director of Place - Paul Lawrence
- Creative Scotland, Chief Executive - Iain Munro
- Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Chief Executive - Liz MacAreavey
- Edinburgh Tourism Action Group, Chair - Donald Emslie
- Festivals Edinburgh, Director - Julia Amour

- Scottish Government, Director for Culture and Major Events - Penelope Cooper
- University of Edinburgh, Principal & Vice Chancellor - Peter Mathieson
- VisitScotland, Head of Development [Events Directorate] - Marie Christie

Three independent members are appointed to reflect wider sectors and international perspectives:

- Susan Deacon [Chair]
- Maggie Cunningham
- Gordon Dewar

In April 2016 Susan Deacon became the chair of the Festivals Forum, succeeding Lady Susan Rice who had held the post since April 2008.

Roles & Responsibilities

Members of the Festivals Forum are either ex-officio representatives of particular organisations or independent members. All members agree:

- To ensure the implementation of the 2030 Festival City Vision action plan and monitor its progress
- To support the long term success of the Edinburgh Festivals
- To act in the best interests of the Edinburgh Festivals where possible, accepting that the interests of the organisation they represent may occasionally take priority
- To attend a minimum of two out of three Forum meetings a year, playing an active part in the Festivals Forum
- To lead and contribute to delegated task groups set up by the Festivals Forum
- To host occasional meetings of the Festivals Forum on a three yearly cycle
- To act as a formal conduit between their organisation and the Festivals Forum, feeding back relevant information to their organisations and bringing pertinent information to the Festivals Forum's attention
- Where applicable, to liaise with the officer delegated to represent their organisation on the Thundering Hooves Steering Group who will ensure implementation of the Festivals Forum's strategic objectives

Thundering Hooves Steering Group [THSG]

A further group was created in 2007 to ensure that the work of the Festivals Forum is carried out - the Thundering Hooves Steering Group [THSG]. This is the officer led group of the main funding stakeholders of the festivals and current membership includes:

- City of Edinburgh Council
- Creative Scotland
- Scottish Government
- British Council
- VisitScotland
- Scottish Enterprise
- Festivals Edinburgh

The THSG meets ahead of the Festivals Forum to plan agendas, brief member CEOs, elected members and politicians in advance of meetings. Afterwards THSG is responsible for implementing any action agreed by the Forum, negotiating associated collaborative funding packages, acting as the panel for assessing specific project funding, closely monitoring the 2030 Festival City Vision action plan and identifying additional opportunities and threats.