

**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: Renfrewshire Council Major Events – 2023 performance and 2024 programme**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report updates Elected Members on the outputs of Renfrewshire Council's events programme in 2023 and how the programme has contributed to the council's current event strategy and to Future Paisley cultural regeneration programme. The report explains the economic and social impacts delivered by the programme, including the provision of high-quality volunteering opportunities, highlighting the journeys of some of the programme's volunteers.
  - 1.2 The report confirms the 2024 event programme and the intention to develop a revised event strategy for 2025 to 2028.
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## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council's events strategy 2022 to 2024 was produced to support the restart, recovery and stabilisation of cultural events in Renfrewshire following the Covid19 pandemic and is a key theme within Renfrewshire's new visitor plan. Over the past decade, delivering large outdoor events has played an important role in changing perceptions of Renfrewshire and has elevated Renfrewshire's (and the council's) reputation as a credible national event host (European Curling Championships, Scottish Album of the Year Awards, Scottish Trad Awards, British Pipe Band Championships,

About Us, Paolo Nutini at Paisley Abbey and The Royal National Mòd). The council's annual programme has helped to extend the visitor season in Renfrewshire and has maintained visitor numbers and visitor spend, especially through a period of closure of Paisley's cultural venues during their refurbishment. In addition, the significant national publicity generated by the council's programme has ensured Renfrewshire has continued to build its profile as a cultural destination and build connections with the audiences who are key to the success of the area's new cultural venues.

- 3.3 The strategy developed post-Covid, placed increased value and emphasis on the delivery of social impacts as well as traditional economic benefits. This has been heavily influenced by legacy planning which evolved through Future Paisley and the pursuit of Future Paisley's five step changes. In practice this has meant setting and achieving social impact beyond economic targets and achieving positive outcomes for communities through their active and passive participation in events.
- 3.4 The council's event strategy sets out objectives for the annual programme:
- encourage more people to spend time in Renfrewshire by offering a year-round programme of high-quality outdoor event experiences.
  - maximise co-design, participation and volunteering opportunities by embedding socially engaged practice through event design and delivery.
  - understand and remove barriers to participation so that everyone in our communities can join in.
  - seek local and national partnerships that strengthen the capacity of Renfrewshire's cultural sector and create opportunities for local talent.
  - strengthen emotional connection between local people and Renfrewshire by illuminating stories that are important and showcase the best of Renfrewshire.
  - support local businesses to fully maximise the benefits of supply opportunities and the publicity and footfall generated by events.
  - incorporate new event trends and technologies to ensure the programme continues to diversify and remain relevant.
  - deliver a programme that can withstand the impact of current and future Covid19 restrictions.
  - investigate how events can help work towards RenZero and raise awareness of climate action.
- 3.5 The event programme delivered in 2023 was marketed through Paisley marketing and was supported by Future Paisley funding. This enabled the council to partner with VisitScotland and secure EventScotland funding and has significantly contributed to a transformed image of Paisley. **Appendix 1** outlines the marketing and audience reach generated by the council's event programme.
- 3.6 A new council events strategy is being produced for 2025-28 informed by the evaluation of Future Paisley, five-years of event programme evaluations, and through detailed engagement with local and national event audiences and the cultural sector. The intention is to integrate Renfrewshire's regional programme, with the ambition and strategic priorities of Scotland's National Events Strategy 2024-2035, due to be published in April 2024 and which includes contribution from Renfrewshire Council's event manager.
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#### 4. Economic impact (2023)

4.1 The council programme delivers two levels of events - visitor and local, with further cultural events delivered by OneRen and Renfrewshire's cultural sector. Event evaluation research is undertaken at each visitor event delivered by the council to understand economic impact, using the recognised *eventIMPACTS* toolkit. Independent evaluations are commissioned for Paisley Food and Drink Festival, Sma' Shot Day, Renfrew Pipe Bands, Paisley Halloween Festival and Paisley's Christmas. Visitor events differ significantly in terms of audience profile and in scale e.g., Renfrew Pipe Band attracted 4,000 attendees and Paisley Halloween Festival attracted 50,000 in 2023.

4.2 The structure and format of the visitor event programme reflects changes in investment and available external funding support. A comparison of event impact data provided below highlights variations in the performance of the programme and the council's return on investment:

- Paisley Food & Drink Festival contributes significantly to the economic impact of the council's programme. In 2023, the festival attracted 22,500 individual attendees, of which 18% were visitors (non-Renfrewshire residents). The festival generated an overall economic impact for Renfrewshire of £1,383,654 (47% up on 2022). This comprises £219,619 direct economic impact and £1,164,035 local spend. The average spend per attendee was £64.36, an increase of 9% from 2022.
- Sma' Shot Day attracted 6,000 attendees of which 28% were visitors to the area. The event generated an overall economic impact for Renfrewshire of £151,180. This comprises £159,643 local spend (29% down on 2022) and a direct economic loss of (-£8,463). The average spend per attendee was £38.49 consistent with 2022 (£38.97) in 2022.
- Renfrew Pipe Band Competition was new to the council's event calendar in 2022 and is supported by Renfrew Common Good. The event was included as a visitor event for evaluation purposes in 2023 due to the number of visiting bands and spectators from outwith Renfrewshire. The event attracted 4,000 attendees of which 30% were visitors. The Competition generated an overall economic impact for Renfrewshire of £137,821. This comprises £28,873 direct economic impact and £108,948 local spend. The average spend per attendee was £38.91 a 23% reduction from 2022.
- Paisley Halloween Festival is the council's nationally recognised event, with 2024 marking its tenth year. In 2023, the festival attracted its largest audience of just over 50,000 individual attendees, of which 30% were visitors. The festival generated an overall economic impact for Renfrewshire of £1,556,473 (17.5% up on 2022). This comprises £211,779 direct economic impact and £1,344,694 local spend. The average spend per attendee was £39.93, a 5% increase on 2022.
- Paisley's Christmas delivers a programme of festive activities across the Christmas shopping period – the preference of town centre traders, instead of a one-day switch-on event (pre-pandemic format). The 2023 programme attracted 10,797 attendees of which 13% were visitors to Paisley. The programme generated an overall

economic impact for Renfrewshire of £525,319. This comprises £532,670 local spend (75% down on 2022), and a direct economic loss of (-£7,351). Low spend is linked to low attendance in 2023, which is attributed to two factors, extremely poor weather throughout December which reduced town centre footfall and a reduction in free indoor festive programming (funded in 2022 by Future Paisley as a one-off contribution to support recovery). The average spend per attendee was £57.74, a 19% increase from 2022.

## 5. The social value of events

- 5.1 The council's approach to outdoor event delivery provides opportunities for the cultural sector and local communities to work together and with the council, to co-produce and deliver events that animate Renfrewshire and provide social benefits. Council events help to build social capital and support employability by providing credible training, skills development and volunteering opportunities for individuals who are under-represented. Sustained participation improves wellbeing outcomes by helping people to connect and develop a greater understanding of each other and by increasing individual happiness through the act of 'joining-in'. The overarching benefits of cultural engagement are well documented.
- 5.2 Council events also provide a mechanism for sustained engagement, enabling the council to build positive relationships with communities, supporting creativity and enabling communities to share stories and tackle important issues through the design of events they want to attend, and which are of a significant quality to attract visitors. Through event engagement, we have been able to reach communities, in particular young people, who are under-represented and face significant barriers to participation. The council programme offers a range of access points across all aspects of event creation and delivery, whether as an event collaborator and or an audience member.
- 5.3 In 2023 the annual event programme generated over **3,500 participation opportunities** for children and young people and local target groups. This figure represents the total number of opportunities created (the table at 9.3 confirms the number of individuals who participated).
- 5.4 The council's commitment to generating positive social impact has resulted in a specific way of working:
  - 5.41 We design events that deliver four over-arching stakeholder benefits – to showcase local talent and support the cultural sector; to provide a creative workshop programme across art forms for local people; to provide free and accessible events with a range of access points for audiences and participants; and to provide trading opportunities for local businesses.
  - 5.42 We deliver events that our communities are able to design – we ensure the design of each event programme can be directly influenced and shaped by the community and that the views of young people are actively sought and respected. The events team and artistic partners provide broad themes to allow significant interpretation in workshop settings. This ensures events remain relevant for local people and a visitor audience.

5.43 We provide sustained recruitment and engagement - we purposely work with local organisations and groups in a bespoke way to co-create programme, which requires a network of cultural practitioners to be involved and we build on those community relationships year-on-year. For months at a time, the community are involved in decision making through creative workshops, and with professional partners in preparation for performance and volunteering. Engagement is not a token element of event delivery but an integral part of the programme and is sustained across the year.

5.44 We understand and remove barriers – by listening to feedback through the engagement process we make constant adjustments and accommodations to each event to make sure as many people as possible can attend and participate, understanding that barriers are different to everyone and protecting free access to council events.

5.45 We ensure equality – high quality and high ambitious installations created by the community sit alongside professional work and professional performance takes place alongside community performers.

5.46 We are clear who we want to work with and selected four target groups for collaboration:

- Care experienced children and young people and/or young carers, ensuring support for *The Promise*
- People living with a disability or experiencing long-term ill health (including physical or mental health)
- People living in the 20% most deprived areas (informed by SIMD data)
- Local cultural groups and organisations

## 6. Social Impact of visitor events (2023)

6.1 Paisley Food & Drink Festival delivers social and cultural benefits, most significantly in relation to supporting the local hospitality sector. National partners such as Platform and Zero Waste Scotland bring additional profile to the event and help to attract visitors.

***“It’s brilliant. My first time here and I didn’t realise it would be so busy. Loved the whole thing.”***

***“Love the atmosphere. Great for Paisley. Getting bigger all the time!”***

***(local business traders)***

- Four local cultural organisations benefited from supply chain opportunities
- 115 performers contributed to the live entertainment programme (79 local to Renfrewshire)
- 368 children participated in free family activities, including pizza making, chocolate decorating and cookery classes. This included targeted family groups through STAR Project and RIG Arts.
- 26% of attendees live in areas with high levels of deprivation (20% most deprived data zones in Scotland).

- Accessibility measures were implemented at the festival, developed and tested with partners and adopted as a Renfrewshire event standard. This includes a fully accessible event site with accessible parking, kerb ramps, quiet spaces for people who are neurodivergent and a changing place facility.

***“Great atmosphere. Friendly and safe feel to it (the event).”  
(event attendee)***

6.2 Sma’ Shot Day is delivered by the council with collaboration from a local partner group (nine organisations) to plan and agree the event theme. In 2023, the focus was the role of women in Renfrewshire’s weaving history.

- 350 people participated in the parade, including eight community groups.
- A total of 15 community groups (400 participant opportunities) co-designed the parade through a creative workshop programme (visual art, dance and costume workshops) led by Bridgeman Arts. This includes the development of large-scale parade makes.
- The event created a public platform for 30 local performers and 10 cultural organisations. The Shuttle Street site was activated and included a live music and spoken word programme.
- 20 local traders participate at the Abbey Close site.
- 70 older people attended the Sma’ Shot Day Tea Dance (free), enabling their participation with the wider town centre event.
- Multiple venues were used to promote and connect Paisley town centre visitor assets – Shuttle Street and Sma’ Shot Cottages, Paisley Abbey and Methodist Central Hall.
- Civic pride rated highly by those attending the event and 96% of those surveyed rated Paisley as friendly, 86% agreed there is more going on in Paisley; 84% agreed they have seen or heard something positive about Paisley recently; and 84% agreed they feel more positive about Paisley than they used to.
- 32% of attendees live in areas with high levels of deprivation (20% most deprived data zones in Scotland).

***“I love the general atmosphere as it’s nice for the children plus a lot is free”***

***“Music - makes me feel proud of Scotland. The parade was terrific”***

**(event attendees)**

6.3 Renfrew Pipe Band Competition - 16 bands took part in the 2023 event with 12 from outside Renfrewshire. Four local bands competed with Johnstone Pipe Band and the Renfrewshire Schools band taking home prizes.

- 180 children participated in circus skills workshops and football tasters provided by Renfrew Football Club and Street Stuff, with a programme of free activities available.
- Two local traders provided on-site trading alongside Renfrew Football Club.
- Civic pride rated highly by attendees with 86% of people noting they feel more positive towards Renfrew than they used to and 75% indicating they were proud of Renfrew’s culture and heritage.
- 27% of attendees currently live in areas with high levels of deprivation (20% most deprived data zones in Scotland).

6.4 Paisley Halloween Festival provides the greatest opportunity for social and cultural impact, engaging underrepresented groups and significant opportunities for young people to develop confidence and skills and socialise and make friends through high quality artist-led activity. The events team have worked with Disability Resource Centre and Gateway Intensive Support Service since 2018 to continuously improve event accessibility and several changes were implemented resulting in a *Renfrewshire standard* - dropped kerbs, the placement of designated blue badge parking, positioning of accessible viewing platforms, introduction of high level signage and large screens (supported by EventScotland National Fund), changing places facilities and accessibility guides - [event accessibility guide](#) and <https://paisley.is/visit/paisley-halloween-festival-access-guide/>. The team also work with ShopMobility, who reported a significant increase in users over the 2023 festival weekend (58 bookings). The Paisley Halloween Festival Case Study, prepared by the Centre for Culture, Sport and Events as part of the evaluation of Future Paisley provides more detail on the social and economic impact of the festival, see **Appendix 2**.

- The festival generated more than 700 participation opportunities and 81 opportunities for local performers.
- 238 people engaged in the creative workshop programme, which offered eight access points for participation with twenty workshop sessions delivered.
- 13 community groups directly engaged, and 27 local performers performed on each day of the event.
- The festival offered bespoke and unique creative opportunities tailored to our target groups, led by national and international event producers and carnival artists. An overview of the opportunities for co-design are highlighted below:

| Participation & co-design opportunity                  | Target groups   | Groups engaged   |
|--|---|--|
| Raven’s Realm Installation – Visual art / props making | Care experienced children and young people and/or young carers  | 33rd Gleniffer Scouts<br>Forest View Primary school and Goudie Academy<br>Renfrewshire Young Carers  |
| Spooky Bat Cave – Visual art / props making            | Care experienced children and young people and/or young carers<br><br>People living with a disability | Castlehead High School<br>Girl Guides Paisley Division<br>ArtBoss Creative Young Producers<br>Spinners Gate - Gateway Intensive Support Service<br>Individuals |

| <b>Participation &amp; co-design opportunity</b>       | <b>Target groups</b>  | <b>Groups engaged</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| Paisley Town Hall Chimes community composition project | Children and young people   | Paisley After School Care   |
| Despicable Dance performance                           | Children and young people   | Right2dance   |
| Accessibility Consultations on event site              | People living with a disability or people experiencing long-term ill health (including physical or mental health) | Disability Resource Centre<br>Spinners Gate - Gateway Intensive Support Service<br>Individuals                                    |
| Stage Performances                                     | Children and young people<br><br>Local cultural groups  | Local singer/songwriters:<br>Adam Dolan, Hollie Robinson, Kirsty Ward<br><br>Local groups: RockUs Choir & BlocoWinnoch Samba Band |
| Ravens' Realm Physical Theatre Performance             | Children and young people   | PACE Youth Theatre  |
| Aerial Dance Performances                              | People living in poverty<br><br>People living in the 20% most deprived areas according to SIMD statistics         | Community Circus Paisley (adult & youth groups)<br><br>Cameron School of Dance  |

- 100% of young people participating in creative workshops said they had a positive experience and had an opportunity to showcase their talents and skills within the festival, and confirmed they would take part again in future. All rated their enjoyment of the experience 8 out of 10 or above. Young people shared their motivation for taking part in the Halloween workshop activity - help shape the event, express myself creatively, showcase my skills and talent.

***“Young people enjoyed the workshop and loved seeing their bat lanterns in the bat cave at the festival.” (ArtBoss coordinator)***

***“The children had an amazing experience boosting their confidence and learnt new skills such as aerial skills - trapeze and hoops.” (Cameron School of Dance)***

- Civic pride is strong amongst residents attending the event, with 100% of those surveyed saying they were proud of the town and its culture and heritage.
- 99% of all people surveyed confirmed they were satisfied with the Halloween Festival experience.
- 96% of attendees confirmed attending the event has improved their impression of Paisley (100% of local residents and 88% of visitors). 92% of all attendees agree there is ‘more going on in Paisley these days’, and the ‘quality of events



has improved' in recent years. 94% of attendees to the festival had seen or heard something positive about Paisley recently.

- 36% of attendees currently live in areas with high levels of deprivation (20% most deprived data zones in Scotland). This is higher than 2022 (25%).

***“Everything was fantastic, I had the best time. Lights and fire effects were brilliant. The musical skeleton band was excellent.”***

***“It's so big - lots to see and do. Just so good. This is my first time here and everyone has said it's fantastic and it is”***

***“Something for everyone, live shows, lights, sound effects. Funfair and marshmallow toasting were definite winners. Brilliant time”***

***“Thought everything this year was outstanding! Kids having fun seeing everything”***

***“The whole event is amazing. It's very well organized. I like the one-way system. It's very busy but not as congested as previous years.”***

***“I like the trail zone. The lights and decorations around the Abbey are fabulous”***

***“I feel the council have thought of everything, down to toasting your own marshmallows”***

***“The kids love it, it gets better every year. There's lots to see and the costumes and street performers are great”***

***“It's great for people that it's free and the street performers are very talented”***

***“The whole event is utterly amazing. I couldn't possibly choose my favourite thing”***

6.5 Paisley's Christmas – the 2023 event involved significant collaboration with partners and a marketing partnership with Paisley First who delivered a programme of free family entertainment throughout December. Paisley's official lights switch was hosted by the Provost and included street performances, Santa meet-and-greet and a community stage which supported 98 local performers. The programme was promoted alongside PACE Panto and free and ticketed activities delivered by OneRen at the Town Hall, OnX, Lagoon and Libraries.

- Scotland's Theme Park provided a covered Ice Rink with daily ice-skating sessions, food concession and funfair rides throughout December. A discounted ticket price (25%) was offered to all PA post codes, student card and Young Scot card holders. Group discounts and ASN sessions were programmed to maximise accessibility for families, school groups and clubs.
- 393 visited Santa's Workshop and free family activities delivered by local cultural organisations over two weekends.

- 419 from 29 community groups were provided with free ice-skating vouchers, including Ferguslie Families, Home Links, School of African Cultures, Children Be-friending, Linstone Housing Families, STAR Project and Pals of Privies.

***'Thank you from everyone at Pals of the Privies. We had the best time today at the shows and the ice-skating. You were there throughout the whole event for any questions or information we needed, what a star you are. Well done for organising such a wonderful successful day for all the groups.'***

- 36% of attendees live in areas with high levels of deprivation (20% most deprived data zones in Scotland) A higher number than attendees in 2022 (24%).
- Civic pride is strongly reflected across attendees, with high levels of agreement on perceptions of Paisley. Notably, 96% of local residents describe Paisley as friendly, which is supported by 80% of visitors. Additionally, 94% of locals acknowledge an increase in activities within the town and 93% stated improvement in the quality of events.

***"Love it - I come every year with kids, always a great atmosphere and kids get discount with their Young Scots card. Loads of free things"***

***"Ice rink discount was good and kids loved seeing Santa walking about"***

## **7. Social Impact of local events (2023)**

7.1 Renfrew Gala Day - local groups were engaged to shape the theme of the event (circus). This included Renfrew Community Council, St Margaret's Church and Our Place Our Families.

- 320 children participated in free activity
- 52 local performers appeared on the main stage provided by Erskine Arts.
- More than 30 local businesses hosted stalls on the day.

7.2 Barshaw Gala Day

- 300 children participated in free activity
- Street Stuff, Paisley Rugby Club, Paisley Small Model Engineers and Scottish Fire and Rescue Heritage Trust offered activities and taster sessions.
- 45 local performers appeared on the main stage provided by Erskine Arts.
- More than 30 local businesses hosted stalls on the day.

7.3 Renfrew Christmas

- 750 children participated in free festive activities
- 28 local performers appeared on the main stage
- 10 local traders and charities took part in the event, with further opportunity for business generated through Spend Local festive competition.

- 7.4 Johnstone Christmas - participatory budgeting was undertaken to produce the 2023 event, with £5,000 ring-fenced for event programming. Active Communities, Johnstone Business Consortium and Johnstone Community Council worked together to design the process and to gather community ideas. A series of roadshow events were held to gather community suggestions with 227 responses received to the initial call for programming ideas. A total of 654 Johnstone residents voted to shape the final event programme.
- 200 local people participated in free activities
  - 8 local performers appeared on the main stage
  - 5 local businesses took part in the event.

## **8. Event volunteering programme**

- 8.1 A well-established volunteering programme underpins the delivery of events and offers numerous volunteer opportunities across the year. The programme prioritises inclusivity, actively involving students, older people, and those seeking to explore further education, employment or returning to the workforce. We successfully recruit volunteers through partnerships with educational institutions, volunteer recruitment organisations, and community groups. Volunteering opportunities are created to help drive improved health and well-being, skills development and professional advancement and community and friendship building.
- 8.2 Volunteering experienced significant growth in 2023, attributed in part to the Royal National Mòd, and through the creation of new volunteering roles in creative media, communications, site building, stewarding, event management and community capacity building.
- 8.3 Volunteer recruitment involves multiple stages, allowing the events team to identify and match volunteers into the most suitable roles, providing quality onboarding and training, support throughout the live event and follow-up survey and engagement to understand experience and future pathways. People who apply are invited to an informal interview to share what has led them to volunteer and what they would like to gain from the experience including current skill set, preferred role to be undertaken, and any additional tasks they would like to undertake beyond the advertised roles. Where a volunteer is seeking a specific role not listed within the advertised roles, the team will collaborate with creative partners, other council services and event suppliers to create a bespoke volunteering package. and provide the necessary experience for them.
- 8.4 A partnership with Engage Renfrewshire and Volunteer Scotland secures around 70% of all local volunteer sign-ups for major events, with a further 20% driven by University of West of Scotland and the Student Union, enabling direct access to volunteering and work experience for events students across the west of Scotland. 10% of sign-ups come direct to the team through various digital channels. While the primary objective is to recruit event volunteers, we also support opportunities through suppliers. Erskine Arts serves as exemplar in this area, and through involvement in council events, the organisation supports several youth volunteers to gain stage management experience to build skills and contribute to Saltire Awards. The table below details the volunteering opportunities provided at each event.

| Event                           | Volunteering Opportunities  | No of volunteers | Volunteering hours |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Paisley Food and Drink Festival | 6 - workshop buddies, event visitor welcome, radio room assistant, and shadowing opportunities for students   | 8                | 63                 |
| Barshaw Gala Day                | 2 - workshop assistants and event visitor welcome.  | 5                | 22                 |
| Renfrew Gala Day                | 3 - workshop assistant, stewarding and event visitor welcome.   | 2                | 10                 |
| Sma' Shot Day                   | 5 - welcoming host (Tea Dance), workshop assistant, parade support, event visitor welcome, radio room assistant.  | 9                | 45                 |
| Renfrew Pipe Band Competition   | 2 - way finders and programme distributors.   | 2                | 8                  |
| The Royal National Mòd          | 8 - public greeters, information guides, stewards, merchandise volunteer, competition assistant, competition steward, backstage assistant, venue assistant.                                     | 68               | 1,623              |
| Paisley Halloween Festival      | 8 - lighting volunteer, photography, installation & performance moderator, event access assistant, accessibility attendant, operational events team support, site dressing, and make-up artist. | 48               | 203                |
| Johnstone Lights                | 2 - Santa's helper and event visitor welcome.   | 4                | 24                 |
| Renfrew Lights                  | 3 - Santa's helper and visitor welcome  | 3                | 18                 |

8.5 Where possible the teams track volunteer progression and record where individuals successfully transition to further education or employment. **Four recent journeys are presented below:**

- Paul joined the events team with the goal of gaining additional event stewarding experience to pursue a career in the field. Through his dedicated volunteer work and shadowing opportunities with SGL stewards at council events, Paul successfully secured employment in security at Paisley Shopping Centre. We were happy to provide Paul with a reference to support his job application.
- Sami dedicated her time to volunteering at multiple events before making the decision to pursue studies in events management. Thanks to her experience with the events team, Sami is now in her third year of the events management course and also holds the position of student representative at the University of the West of Scotland. As a student representative, one of her responsibilities is to organise student trips and activities.
- Estery moved to Scotland at the start of 2022, and while searching for employment, her aim was to rebuild confidence and establish connections through volunteering

at our events. Estery volunteered at our Christmas events to gain experience make contacts, and as a result, she successfully secured employment at Peterborough College. We were pleased to assist Estery by providing a reference for her new job.

- Alastair joined our event volunteers' team with the aim of rebuilding his confidence and social skills. Alastair is on the autism spectrum and experienced setbacks in his social interactions due to the impact of the pandemic. He sought to regain his confidence in socialising and becoming more actively involved in his community. Alastair began his volunteering journey by taking on quieter tasks, such as managing the events radio room during the Paisley Food and Drink Festival and as his confidence grew, he expanded his involvement by assisting with the tea dance at Sma' Shot Day. Alastair remains one of our regular volunteers.

## 9. Events programme 2024

9.1 The events service is in the process of transitioning to a new structure following Right for Renfrewshire and the reduction of two FTE's and will continue to progress the development of a new strategy. This will review and refine events produced in-house, identify opportunities for the cultural sector to deliver local events, and better understand the scale of opportunity for hosting external events.

9.2 The programme for 2024 is detailed below, with the events team also supporting arrangements for a General Election:

| Date          | Event   |
|---------------|---|
| 26/27 April   | Paisley Food and Drink Festival                       |
| 2 June        | Renfrew Gala Day                                      |
| 23 June       | Barshaw Gala Day                                      |
| 6 July        | Sma' Shot Day   |
| 20 July       | Renfrew Pipe Band Competition                         |
| 7/8 September | Renfrewshire Doors Open Days                          |
| 25/26 October | Paisley Halloween Festival                            |
| 12 November   | Remembrance Day (Paisley)                             |
| Nov/December  | Paisley's Christmas* dates subject to tender exercise |
| 23 November   | Renfrew Christmas Lights Switch-on                    |
| 30 November   | Johnstone Christmas Lights Switch-on                  |

9.3 The 2025 programme will be informed by the review of 2022/23 evaluation data (see the summary table below), the development of the new events strategy and the launch of the refreshed National Events Strategy, Scotland the Perfect Stage 2024 - 2035. It will reflect available resources, council priorities and the continued rising costs of events infrastructure, including the implications of the incoming Martyn's Law/Protect Duty.

| KPI                 | 2022    | 2023    | Target  | Achieved |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Number of attendees | 151,000 | 139,927 | 170,000 | 290,927  |
| Number of visitors  | 17,579  | 19,454  | 30,000  | 37,033   |

|  |            |            |       |             |
|--|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
| <b>Economic impact including local spend</b> | £4,629,752 | £5,473,640 | £3m   | £10,103,392 |
| <b>Number of participants</b>                | 3,140      | 2,904      | 3,000 | 6,008       |
| <b>Number of local performers</b>            | 568        | 509        | 500   | 1,077       |
| <b>Number of volunteering hours</b>          | 301        | 2020       | 700   | 2,321       |
| <b>Satisfaction rating</b>                   | 96.7%      | 97.6%      | 96%   | 97%         |

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The activity outlined in the report contributes to the Place Theme within the Council Plan 2022 to 2027 (PLACE – positioning Renfrewshire as a destination of choice, through visitor and investor marketing and major events, building on our cultural infrastructure investment - delivering Future Paisley, our far-reaching cultural regeneration programme, harnessing the power of the arts, heritage and culture for social and economic change), and to the cross-cutting theme – improving outcomes for children and their families.
4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. The council event programme does not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.
8. **Health & Safety** – Event Safety Manuals are developed for individual events within the council programme with H&S and CCS, approved through the Event Safety Advisory Group.
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – A detailed individual risk assessment is developed the annual events programme.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **Cosla Policy Position** –not applicable

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# 2023 event programme

Marcomms OTSH

# Opportunities to see and hear (OTSH)

Marketing OTSH total (paid-for media)  
**22,373,137**

Press and PR OTSH total  
**31,510,128**

Social media OTSH total  
**1,228,485**

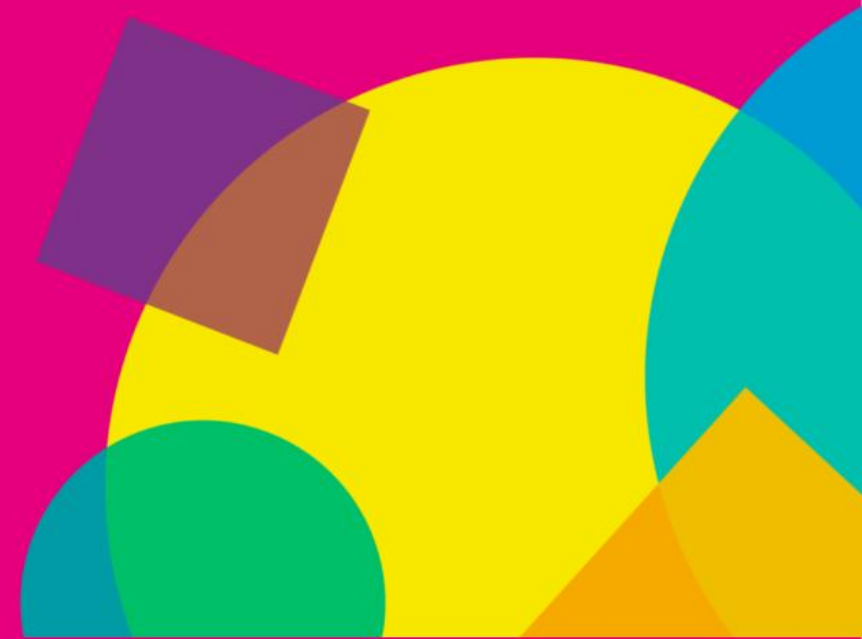
**Total OTSH for 2023 events**  
**55,111,750**





# Marketing OTSH breakdown

|                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Paisley Food & Drink Festival        | 3,114,563 |
| Renfrew Gala Day                     | 152,930   |
| Barshaw Gala Day                     | 238,804   |
| Sma' Shot Day                        | 1,615,776 |
| Renfrew Pipe Band Competition        | 4,935,040 |
| Mòd Phàislig                         | 5,445,925 |
| Paisley Halloween Festival           | 5,749,725 |
| Paisley's Christmas                  | 803,264   |
| Renfrew Christmas Lights Switch-On   | 159,164   |
| Johnstone Christmas Lights Switch-On | 171,071   |



# Press & PR OTSH breakdown

|                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Paisley Food & Drink Festival        | 4,239,664  |
| Renfrew Gala Day                     | 19,828     |
| Barshaw Gala Day                     | 42,044     |
| Sma' Shot Day                        | 1,601,694  |
| Renfrew Pipe Band Competition        | 51,526     |
| Renfrewshire Doors Open Days         | 18,667     |
| Mòd Phàislig                         | 2,217,933  |
| Paisley Halloween Festival           | 13,766,975 |
| Paisley's Christmas                  | 2,998,433  |
| Renfrew Christmas Lights Switch-On   | 3,407,448  |
| Johnstone Christmas Lights Switch-On | 3,325,916  |



# Social media OTSH breakdown

|                                      |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Paisley Food & Drink Festival        | 217,030 |
| Renfrew Gala Day                     | 46,452  |
| Barshaw Gala Day                     | 54,010  |
| Sma' Shot Day                        | 133,725 |
| Renfrew Pipe Band Competition        | 44,136  |
| Renfrewshire Doors Open Days         | 142,913 |
| Mòd Phàislig                         | 195,447 |
| Paisley Halloween Festival           | 256,050 |
| Paisley's Christmas                  | 98,886  |
| Renfrew Christmas Lights Switch-On   | 16,878  |
| Johnstone Christmas Lights Switch-On | 13,958  |





## **Paisley Halloween Festival** Case Study

Dr Sophie Mamattah  
CCSE/UWS

The Paisley Halloween Festival (PHF) has occupied a place in Renfrewshire's calendar of recurring events since 2014. With time and investment from *Future Paisley* and EventScotland, the festival has developed into a significant annual occurrence which secures Paisley a place on the itinerary of 'must see' seasonal events in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

## Background & Introduction

PHF is funded through Renfrewshire Council Events budget, EventScotland<sup>2</sup> and, since 2018, *Future Paisley*. *Future Paisley* comprises a far-reaching and progressive approach to cultural regeneration which seeks to mobilise culture in pursuance of positive social change.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, the festival has received £109,000 towards its costs from *Future Paisley*.<sup>4</sup> This resource has been invaluable as match funding to leverage other funding applications.<sup>5</sup> PHF is one of the UK's largest free to attend Halloween events and, a flagship event for Renfrewshire's Major Events Programme.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 2018 festival was named as one of the year's 'top 10' events and festivals in a competition held by Holidaylettings.co.uk featuring the UK's spookiest Halloween event (see: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018). PHF was named 'Best Festival or Outdoor Event' in the EventIt Awards of the same year and Best Cultural Event or Festival at the Scottish Thistle Awards, 2018–20 (See: <http://tinyurl.com/4wkrv8zy>, <https://visitscotland.eventsair.com/thistleawards2021/2019-2020> & Paisley Halloween Festival wins gold). PHF was also nominated in the Outstanding Festival category of The Herald Scottish Culture Awards 2019 (see: <https://newsquestscotlandevents.com/events/cultureawards/>).

<sup>2</sup> EventScotland funding is contingent upon annual applications to appropriate funding schemes (correspondence with Pauline Allen, 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/futurepaisley>

<sup>4</sup> Future Paisley provided £30,000 towards a total budget of £241,000 in 2018, £10,000 in 2019, 2020 was a casualty of COVID19. The 2021 PHF recorded a large underspend as live events were still limited due to the pandemic; Future Paisley funds were reallocated. In 2022 and 2023, Future Paisley support in the amounts of £30,000 and £39,000 were committed to PHF (see: Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022)). In 2022, an additional £6,000 was made available for evaluation purposes (correspondence with Pauline Allen, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2022

PHF is a sizable undertaking, the staging of which draws upon the experience and expertise of the Renfrewshire Council Major Events Team working in partnership with commissioned event producers (such as Cirque Bijou<sup>7</sup>, a leading specialist in carnival arts, who have collaborated on the event since 2019) and a range of artists, cultural groups and practitioners alongside local community members to realise its multi-faceted aims. These aims—listed below—span economic, social and cultural objectives:

- Encourage more people to spend time in Renfrewshire by offering a high-quality event experiences.
- Maximise co-design, participation and volunteering opportunities by embedding socially engaged practice through event design and delivery.
- Understand and remove barriers to participation so that everyone in our communities can access the event.
- Develop partnerships locally and nationally that strengthen the capacity of our cultural and creative sectors and create opportunities for local talent.
- Strengthen emotional connection between local people and their place by illuminating stories and issues that are important and showcasing the best of Renfrewshire.
- Support local businesses to fully maximise the benefits of supply opportunities and publicity and footfall generated by events.
- Incorporate new event trends and technologies ensuring the programme continues to diversify and remain relevant.
- Investigate how events can help work towards net zero Renfrewshire and raise awareness of climate change among attendees and participants.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cirquebijou.co.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2022.

The increased funding from Future Paisley enabled the festival to grow and, to 'significantly improve on community programming'.<sup>9</sup> It follows that the festival's scale and ambition presage its significance for a number of the aims and objectives foregrounded in the Future Paisley step changes and, recognised within the Evaluation Framework<sup>10</sup> developed to assess the outcomes, outputs and impacts that this suite of investments has accrued.

<sup>9</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022).

<sup>10</sup> <https://ccse.uws.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FuturePaisleyEvaluationFramework.pdf>

In this case study, data gathered for evaluation purposes, published reporting and key stakeholder interviews are drawn upon to explore the contribution that PHF and associated activities have made to the *Future Paisley* programme. PHF is an outstanding illustration of a number of the Framework's guiding Step Changes, contributing to:

- Step Change 1 [Radically Change Paisley's Image and Reputation in Scotland, the UK and Internationally] *Outcome 1: Increased civic pride; Outcome 2: Paisley is positioned as a destination of choice and Outcome 3: More people visit Renfrewshire attractions and events.*
- Step Change 2 [Raise Prosperity and Increase Wellbeing in our Communities] *Outcome 5: Children and young people thrive through everyday access to arts and culture; Outcome 6: The cultural offer is dispersed and accessible across Renfrewshire, enhancing wellbeing in our communities.*
- Step Change 3 [Paisley will be Recognised for its Cultural Innovation] *Outcome 8: Innovation in Paisley's programming leads to wider engagement by local and national audiences; Outcome 9: Community-led production and programming increases cultural participation and activism, and*
- Step Change 4: [Transform Paisley into a Vibrant Town Centre] *Outcome 10: Paisley's town centre is revitalised through the opening of major cultural venues and attractions and, Outcome 12: Paisley's town centre is animated by cultural production and participation.*

## Increased civic pride, Paisley is positioned as a destination of choice & more people visit Renfrewshire attractions and events.

In recent years, the PHF has recorded a steady increase in audience numbers. In 2018—the first year in which PHF received *Future Paisley* funding—34,000 spectators attended the festival, 10,982 of whom were non-local, event specific visitors to Paisley.<sup>11</sup> At this time, PHF was a single day event<sup>12</sup> which included a Halloween ball and movie night.<sup>13</sup> In 2022 and 2023, audience numbers had increased to 45,000 and 50,000 spectators respectively.<sup>14</sup> In 2022, 28.7% (or, 10,322) of attendees travelled from outside Renfrewshire to visit the festival.<sup>15</sup> In 2023, 30% of event visitors hailed from outside the local authority area (or 12,480 event specific visitors to Renfrewshire across the festival weekend).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the PHF has maintained reasonably consistent participant<sup>17</sup> numbers. Though at their highest in 2018 and 2019—when 710 and 590 community members, artists and others took part—the equivalent figures for 2021–3 have remained stable at 209 (2021), 240 (2022) and 238 (2023).<sup>18</sup> While COVID19 is a consideration here, a change in the approach taken to community engagement is of more significance. While the 2018 and 2019 events featured centrepiece parades for which participants could potentially only show up on the night and, daring aerial performance (which did require commitment to preparatory workshops), from 2021–23 emphasis was placed on deeper and more enduring involvement in creative workshops. As Creative Events Producer, Suzi Maciver, observes 'in '21 we had no live performance because of COVID, so we got young people involved in more visual art workshops and making [...] participating in things that contributed to installations and then, we [...] retained that format for '22 [and] '23'. While fewer in overall numbers, the involvement was likely achieved in 'a more meaningful [...] slightly longer-term way [...] with the view that [participants] would be getting a little bit more out of it than just performing in the parade.' Rather than potentially coming along on a single occasion, this format means that 'everyone who's participated has been part of an engagement process'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022) & Halloween Festival 2018, Event Evaluation (James Law Research Associated Ltd, November 2018).

<sup>12</sup> The festival was extended for the first time in 2019 (see: Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022)). PHF 2019 ran 25–26<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, from 26<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> of the month, 2022 spanned 27<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> and 2023, from 26<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> October. In 2021 the festival's timeframe was increased in order to reduce crowd density as a COVID19 precaution/mitigation (see: Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report).

<sup>13</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022).

<sup>14</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022).

<sup>15</sup> EventScotland, National Events Programmed 2022 Post Event Outcome Report.

<sup>16</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Here, participant refers to a person taking part in a parade or a pre-event or live-event community workshop (correspondence with Suzi Maciver 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>18</sup> Correspondence with Suzi Maciver (19<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024.



Data show that PHF is successfully staking a claim to a place on attendees' cultural calendars; 64% of the 2023 audience had attended a prior Paisley Halloween event.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, there is clear evidence that the festival plays a role in changing people's views of Paisley for the better.<sup>21</sup> For example, 66% of all those who attended the 2023 event reported 'net improved impressions of Paisley'. Although these figures were slightly lower for local authority area residents (at 59%), they were an impressive 83% among those who were visiting Renfrewshire and attending the PHF.<sup>22</sup> These sentiments are also reflected in feedback from a cross-section of the 2023 audience who participated in vox-pop surveys during their festival visit. Feedback received included remarks such as:

*"Everything was fantastic, I had the best time. Lights and fire effects were brilliant. The musical skeleton band was excellent. Toasting marshmallows was good fun."*

*"It's all great. Too much to just pick one thing. The one-way system is spot on."*

*"The whole event is utterly amazing; I couldn't possibly choose my favourite thing."<sup>23</sup>*

**"The whole event is utterly amazing; I couldn't possibly choose my favourite thing."**

<sup>20</sup> Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Further evidence for such change is seen in the work of Hell & McPherson (2022) which draws on the data collected for Hell's doctoral thesis examining the public value of festivals and events. PHF is one of the events included in the study and dataset.

<sup>22</sup> Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>23</sup> See: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

**“Can't wait to see what is in store for next year, this was fantastic!”**

<sup>24</sup> Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report.

<sup>25</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report.

<sup>27</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022).

<sup>28</sup> Gothic Halloween Proposal v10. In 2023, the 6 areas featuring programmed content developed by Cirque Bijou and collaborators included: Renfrew Lawn, Bridge Street, Abbey Close, the Cenotaph Steps and Abbey Lawn (Paisley Halloween Festival: Post Event Report, 2023).

<sup>29</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>30</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report, National Events Programme 2019.

Similar sentiments are echoed across the editions of the PHF, in 2021, for example, 88% of attendees reported that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their overall event experience. Vox pop feedback included observations such as:


*“It's been really cool and something different getting to see all the light displays—it's really lovely. My family come every year and say it's always amazing, so I thought I'd come and have a look too.”*

*“It was fantastic—went 3 nights in a row. Stunning.”<sup>24</sup>*

And, in 2018,

*“Can't wait to see what is in store for next year, this was fantastic!”<sup>25</sup>*

PHF draws thousands of people into the town centre where live performance is combined with installation artwork and spectacular Halloween themed decorative elements which adorn exemplars of Paisley's built heritage. As part of EventScotland's Year of Coasts & Waters, PHF 2021 emphasised interaction with the White Cart, the Clyde tributary navigable as far as Paisley.<sup>26</sup> With time, the festival format has evolved, offering increased opportunity for community involvement, 'diversify[ing] art forms and purposefully work[ing] with groups in a bespoke way to co-create an exciting and diverse programme'.<sup>27</sup> Further, routing the parade around the historical town centre,<sup>28</sup> situating decorative elements of the Halloween displays to spotlight the town's built heritage (including recently revitalised assets such as the Town Hall)<sup>29</sup> and, using new event locations to host activities related to the festival<sup>30</sup> both draws people into Paisley and brings attention to the town's cultural and historical assets. Harnessing lighting, visual arts and other decorative elements to temporarily animate the town, PHF can be seen to contribute to the outcomes: Paisley's town centre is revitalised through the opening of major cultural venues and attractions and, Paisley's town centre is animated by cultural production and participation.



Children and young people thrive through everyday access to arts and culture and, the cultural offer is dispersed and accessible across Renfrewshire, enhancing wellbeing in our communities.

The PHF can be seen to have enhanced and dispersed the cultural offer at local and regional levels along a number of axes. The festival has presented opportunities for local people to become involved in aspects of the preparation for and, production and performance of the festival. Over time, adjustments and accommodations have been made to ensure that those who would wish to attend are appropriately supported to allow them to do so.

Examples of the ways in which local community members (particularly young people) have been able to participate in PHF are many. With time, the education and workshop sessions that have prepared the ground for the festival have remained quite consistent. There were approximately 40 such sessions in the run up to the 2018 and 2019 events. Prior to the 2022 and 2023 iterations of PHF, about 20 and 24 sessions respectively were hosted.<sup>31</sup> This community related approach to the preparatory phases of the event provides space for co-creative activity. The approach comprises 'recruitment and, [a subsequent] engagement process [running] from the spring through to Halloween [, all of which requires a more structured commitment' from participating community members.<sup>32</sup>

Though COVID affected the 2021 PHF, organisers nevertheless successfully arranged approximately 20 workshops attended by 209 community members from 11 community groups<sup>33</sup> who were involved in making and performance opportunities. Typically, attendance to between 4–6 workshops is required, depending upon the activity being undertaken. Appropriate adaptations are made for groups where fatigue or concentration span are a consideration.<sup>34</sup> The outputs from these sessions included 155 dioramas, displayed in Earthship1, the centrepiece installation<sup>35</sup> of the 2021 edition of PHF.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, for PHF 2022, spoken word films created by local people from across the Renfrewshire region formed part of the festival exhibit.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Correspondence with Suzi Maciver, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

<sup>32</sup> Halloween Festival Evaluation Summary, Paisley Halloween Festival (2018–2022).

<sup>33</sup> Kibble School, Ferguslie Dance Group, ArtBOSS Young Carers Group and Renfrewshire Youth Services were among these (Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report & correspondence with Suzi Maciver, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, February 2024 & Interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024.

<sup>35</sup> The development of this artwork was led by visual artist, Mick Stephenson: <http://www.mickstephenson.net/>

<sup>36</sup> Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report.

<sup>37</sup> See: Paisley Halloween Festival 2022. Films can be viewed at: [1] <https://vimeo.com/763563775/be478211cf>, [2] <https://vimeo.com/763560516/63f410b9b5>, [3] <https://vimeo.com/763557880/3439720d17>, and [4] <https://vimeo.com/763487421/644a4d7630>.

While the Festival's overall themes is agreed by the Events' Team and artistic directors, these are sufficiently broad to allow significant room for interpretation in the workshop setting. In the lead-up to the 2023 event, for example, the Gothic theme was interpreted though an immersive theatre piece based around Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*<sup>38</sup> and the supernatural comedy horror series, *Wednesday*.<sup>39</sup> The poem was read by artist and performance poet, Imogen Stirling,<sup>40</sup> and performed by young people who worked together to devise a unique performance piece which was then staged within a specially created outdoor installation comprising set pieces, special effects and illumination; *Raven's Realm*. Community performers were also able to develop some of their own costumes with additional support from Cirque Bijou.<sup>41</sup> In this way, an emphasis is put on empowering community participants to create high-ambition work which can 'sit alongside the professional work' and, on 'creat[ing] a space in which the young people can feel very proud of their work'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13443470/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.imogenstirling.com/>

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024.

<sup>43</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018. Notably, the 2018 edition of PHF was also part of EventScotland's Year of Young People.

<sup>44</sup> See: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018. A paid creative internship was also established, part of the intern's role involved supporting the panel in its work. The appointed intern excelled in the role which was extended 'to sustain [the] Youth Events Panel along with Youth Services and to pull together recommendations for working with young people in our events going forward, including young people with complex, differing needs' (EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018). The Youth Events Panel (rebranded: RYEvents) continued to operate with a core group of 8-10 RYEvents ambassadors contributing to the programming for PHF 2019 (see: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report, National Events Programme 2019). As member retention became a significant obstacle, the Panel did not continue beyond this point. The young people participating had a variety of other interests and commitments. Some became involved with Renfrewshire Youth Voice [<https://www.ryv.org.uk/>] where the local authority had developed connections around shared aims, some also transitioned towards volunteering roles associated with PHF (interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/dynamic-youth-award/>

<sup>46</sup> Overall—including Event Panel members—96 young people received their Hi5 Awards (<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/hi5-award/>), 10 completed their YAA (silver) and 46 their Dynamic Youth Award through involvement with PHF (see: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018).

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/completing-your-awards/yaa-awards-completion-guide/> See: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, a tool for identifying the places in Scotland where people are experiencing disadvantage across different aspects of their lives (see: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2020/> ).

<sup>49</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report – Year of Young People 2018. Complex needs include additional support needs, caring responsibilities, young offenders.

Established in August 2018, a Youth Events Panel comprised of 'a group of young people from across the region meeting fortnightly to co-design the Halloween event [with the support of] the Council's Events Team and Youth Services.'<sup>43</sup> The 28 young people comprising the Panel were drawn from a range of community groups, including Kibble Centre, Renfrewshire Young Carers and the Disability Resource Centre, thus bringing representatives of often un(der)heard communities into key design and planning roles.<sup>44</sup> Through their involvement with the Panel, four young people completed their Dynamic Youth Award<sup>45</sup> alongside six who completed their Youth Achievement Award—YAA—(Silver).<sup>46</sup> The Panel also won the 'Spirt of Halloween' co-creation award at the Positive about Youth Awards, 2018.<sup>47</sup> Further, in the lead up to the Halloween parade, 541 young people from 24 school groups were engaged in preparatory work and projects, of these 321 from 15 school groups took part in the Parade on the night. Twenty percent of this group came from key SIMD<sup>48</sup> data zones and 13% were young people with complex needs.<sup>49</sup>

The same year, 62 young people—88% of whom resided in key SIMD areas—took part in the parade as aerial performers having participated in rigorous preparatory workshops. The taster workshops (hosted in key SIMD areas as well as central Paisley) reached a total of 163 young people overall. Notably, in comparison with the parade, there was 'no drop off in the core numbers [of young performers], all of the young people who had committed to the event [attended] rehearsals' and subsequently performed in the aerial spectacular.<sup>50</sup> It is notable too that wheelchair users have been able to participate as performers in aerial spectacular elements of the festival, feeding back—in 2019<sup>51</sup>—that:

***"I've never been fully out of the wheelchair before, when I get lifted in the harness it's an amazing feeling, it's freedom."***

And,

***"It feels amazing when you're up in the air. I know I'm a wheelchair user, but I don't feel disabled when I'm up there."***<sup>52</sup>

For spectators, access to the overall PHF event is un-ticketed<sup>53</sup> therefore maximising attendance opportunities regardless of income level.<sup>54</sup> The Events Team has also sought to work with local partners<sup>55</sup> and, national guidelines<sup>56</sup> to produce an event specific accessibility guide,<sup>57</sup> improve accessibility and experience for event visitors with additional support needs.<sup>58</sup>

**"I've never been fully out of the wheelchair before, when I get lifted in the harness it's an amazing feeling, it's freedom."**

<sup>50</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report—Year of Young People 2018. Also see: A local schoolgirl vows to conquer her fear of heights [...].

<sup>51</sup> In 2019, aerial dance company All or Nothing (<https://www.aerialdance.co.uk/>) worked alongside members of Paisley-based Dirty Feet Dance Company to create the show (INSIGHT, nd.).

<sup>52</sup> EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report, National Events Programme 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Some specific activities have been ticketed, for example, 2019's Silent Disco. Though ticket prices were kept very low at £3 ea. Or £10 for a family of 4 (see: EventScotland Post Event Outcome Report, National Events Programme 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters #YCW2021 Events Programme Open Fund Post Event Outcome Report.

<sup>55</sup> For example: Renfrewshire Learning Disability Service and Disability Resource Centre.

<sup>56</sup> Visit Scotland's 'Inclusive & Accessible' events guide, Euan's Guide and Attitude is Everything.

<sup>57</sup> See: <https://paisley.is/visit/paisley-halloween-festival-access-guide/>

<sup>58</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

Innovation in Paisley's programming leads to wider engagement by local and national audiences & Community-led production and programming increases cultural participation and activism.

The foregoing clearly evidences the ways in which PHF has been leveraged to bring members of the local community into the preparatory and delivery processes for the event. Community involvement in production has—for example—been foregrounded in the production workshops for the aerial spectacular and, the making work for Earthship1. Moreover, PHF has 'created a wide range of opportunities for artists, and [...] communities to create and showcase their work and reach new audiences.'<sup>59</sup> Numerous and diverse workshops have involved significant numbers of school and other community groups in creative making and performance opportunities.<sup>60</sup> Participation opportunities have reached those who are often lesser heard and, there is good evidence of successful and sustained engagement with people from these communities.

<sup>59</sup> Paisley Halloween Festival 2022.

<sup>60</sup> In addition to the opportunities already outlined: for PHF 2019, Cirque Bijou worked with PACE Youth Theatre (<https://www.pacetheatre.com/youththeatre/>). Community Circus Paisley (<https://www.communitycircus.co.uk/>), Right2dance (<https://www.right2dance.com/>) and Jennifer Taggart Dance (<https://theworkroom.org.uk/members/jennifer-scott/>) have also been involved in production and performance (see: Paisley Halloween Festival 2022). Workshop and creative making opportunities are also on offer for festival visitors at PHF itself (for example: <https://outspokenarts.org/event/halloween/>).



Opportunities to become involved in PHF have also embraced a range of volunteer roles.<sup>61</sup> for PHF 2023, 13 Film and Theatre Make-up Students from City of Glasgow College volunteered as make-up artists for the Ravens' Realm performance. This, in turn, counted towards their coursework work experience hours.<sup>62</sup> Over the 2018-22 timeframe, 1,780 local people were 'engaged in Paisley Halloween Festival, developing creative skills and confidence, and showcasing their talents, while more than 150 volunteers have been supported across the programme'<sup>63</sup>

### ***'What Hogmanay is to Edinburgh Hallowe'en is to Paisley'*<sup>64</sup>**

PHF has succeeded in drawing visitors into Paisley to see the event which has developed a significant national profile,<sup>65</sup> attracting artists from Scotland and further afield to collaborate with the community to bring spectral visions to life.<sup>66</sup> The emphasis on community participation has, in Artistic Director—Julian Bracey's—view, 'generated some really brilliant work and quite different to the work that we would produce if we [...] had sole ownership of it.'<sup>67</sup> The festival has developed to the point where it is highly anticipated<sup>68</sup> and, whereby 'people expect Paisley to produce something unexpected;' packs of werewolves, flying coffins and vampires are awaited.<sup>69</sup> As the festival has established itself, community groups have 'been very keen to come back' and participate in preparatory workshops on offer.<sup>70</sup>

## **"What Hogmanay is to Edinburgh Hallowe'en is to Paisley"**

<sup>61</sup> Including: installation and performance, event access assistant, make up artist, photography or lighting volunteer (see: Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023).

<sup>62</sup> Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>63</sup> Paisley Halloween Festival 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Seven things for seven days: what's on in Scotland this week?

<sup>65</sup> See: Seven things for seven days: what's on in Scotland this week?

<sup>66</sup> See: Future Paisley Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, February 2024. Renfrewshire Council's Suzi Maciver also noted the benefits that the community engagement approach developed for the Halloween festival have brought for the Major Event Team's thinking with regard to event development and the potential for community involvement across their portfolio creating 'a framework for the team of "this is how we work, this is how we wanna work, this is how we want our events to work, so every tender we develop is going to have that [community engagement and benefit opportunities] at the heart of it"' (Interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024).

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, February 2024, interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Pauline Allan & Suzi Maciver, February 2024.


<sup>70</sup> Interview with Julian Bracey, February 2024.



## Insights & learning from Paisley Halloween Festival

The PHF is a great example of the way in which an event of significant complexity and scale can be developed in ways that provide opportunities for members of the local community to participate in its development and delivery. These opportunities include creative and making workshops, performance and volunteering. In some cases, these activities have contributed to the achievement of arts-based qualifications.

It is noteworthy that, the benefits of community engagement have also been felt by festival organisers who recognise the ways in which community input has led to innovation and added value to the end product. The PHF has developed a significant reputation on local and national stages; drawing positive attention to Paisley and Renfrewshire, encouraging local residents to feel pride in their hometown and providing the opportunity to engage with and spectate a nationally significant event.



The festival provides good opportunity for community members from un(der)-heard groups to become involved in a large-scale event with a growing reputation. There is strong evidence of ongoing commitment to accessibility (to both event preparation/participation and, the event itself) across the arc of its development.

- There is considerable, multi-faceted value in enabling community involvement in large-scale events; benefits are evident for creative output, in terms of participant skills-development and reframing and developing event organisers' views with regard to what community participation can achieve. Building relationships with community groups over time and through repeated engagement is of value here.
- There is benefit—in terms of participant commitment and experience—to focussing on depth of engagement as well as breadth of engagement.
- Significant investment in an eye-catching, innovatively presented, large-scale event garners positive national attention and provides a locus for local engagement and civic pride. There is also opportunity to bring attention to elements of the civic realm which might ordinarily be overlooked.

Going forward, it is important to ensure that the engagement and participation opportunities provided through the PHF are retained and developed in spite of challenging funding landscapes. The significant participation and access achievements evident in the delivery of the festival to date should provide a firm platform for progress. Follow up on any longitudinal outcomes for participants in activities such as aerial performance or the Youth Panel, would provide insight into any enduring impacts that involvement with PHF has accrued for these groups.

As the reputation and popularity of the festival continues to grow, high expectations will need to be met, both creatively and with regard to spectator experience. Ongoing attention and innovation in crowd and queue distribution and management will be important for ensuring positive experiences continue to vastly outweigh any negativity.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023, Paisley Halloween Festival: Post Event Report, 2023 & Future Paisley Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Paisley Halloween Festival 2023.

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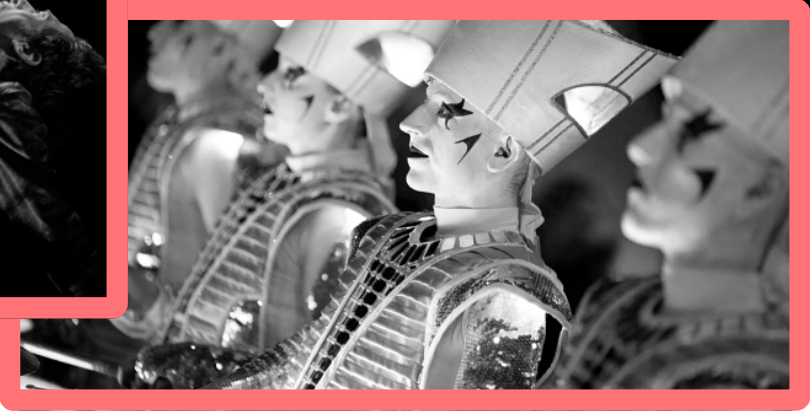
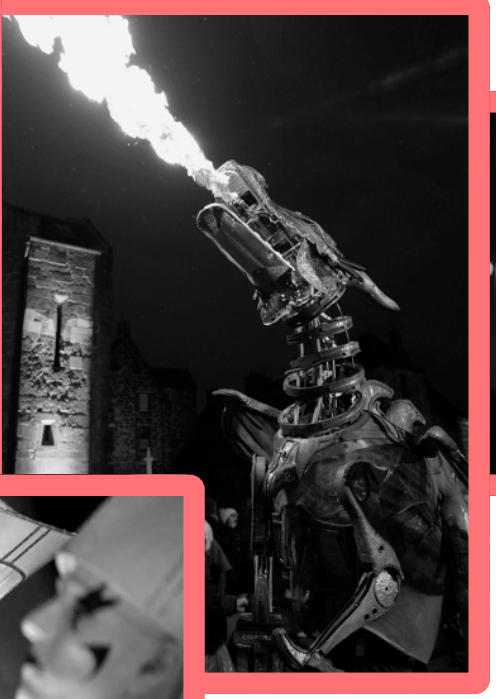
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