

Edinburgh Events Strategy: 2025 – 2030

Vision: Edinburgh supports and prioritises the delivery and development of environmentally responsible events and festivals that offer meaningful opportunities in which to participate, and which celebrate our communities and cultural heritage.

We will achieve this vision through 8 Strategic Goals

1. **Support and Prioritise Local Events and Festivals:**

- Prioritise funding and resources for Edinburgh-based or unique-to-Edinburgh festivals, community events, and cultural organisations.
- Foster partnerships between long-standing festivals and smaller, emerging initiatives to share expertise and resources.
- Encourage the development of community events that highlight Edinburgh's distinct identity, history, and culture.

2. **Commit to Sustainability:**

- Introduce mandatory carbon reporting for all funded events, with guidelines on calculating and minimising emissions in line with our other funded organisations.
- Provide resources and training for event organisers to adopt environmentally sustainable practices, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and local sourcing.
- Promote the use of green infrastructure, including renewable energy solutions, eco-friendly materials, and biodiversity conservation measures.
- Advocate for sustainable travel options for event attendees, such as public transportation, active travel (walking/cycling), and shared mobility schemes.

3. **Provide Multiyear Funding:**

- Allocate a dedicated portion of the budget for multiyear funding to support events with proven impact and alignment to strategic goals.
- Offer stability to funded organisations, enabling longer-term planning and reducing the administrative burden of annual funding applications.
- Develop clear, measurable criteria for multiyear funding eligibility, focusing on social impact, sustainability, and inclusivity.

4. **Widen Geographical Reach:**

- Expand events' geographic distribution to ensure equitable access to cultural opportunities across Edinburgh.

- Identify underserved areas through SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) data and prioritise funding for events in these communities.
- Encourage collaboration between community groups and event organisers to co-create culturally relevant programmes in local communities
- Encourage satellite versions of major festivals to engage communities beyond the city centre.

5. Deliver Edinburgh's Culture Strategy:

- Align all events with the core principles of Edinburgh's Citywide Culture Strategy
- Promote initiatives that celebrate Edinburgh's unique cultural heritage while fostering contemporary creativity.
- Highlight underrepresented voices, diverse traditions, and new artistic expressions in funded events.
- Encourage events to contribute to civic pride, cultural tourism, and social cohesion.

6. Streamline Processes:

- Implement a transparent and user-friendly application process for event funding, supported by comprehensive guidance for applicants.
- Develop an online portal for submissions to enhance accessibility and efficiency.
- Host workshops and information sessions to demystify the application process and build capacity among smaller organisations.

7. Focus Less on Peripatetic Events:

- Shift investment away from temporary, externally "bought-in" events that lack long-term impact.
- Focus funding on events that are rooted in Edinburgh's culture and have sustained benefits for local communities.
- Maintain flexibility to support major international opportunities that align with Edinburgh's values and strategic goals should the opportunity arise.

8. Demonstrate Value

- Provide clearer reporting templates that allow easy demonstration of tangible benefits

The Strategic Context:

This Events Strategy is a supporting pillar of the [City of Edinburgh Council Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-2030](#). The Culture Strategy outlines Edinburgh's priorities and details the guiding principles that will shape the Council's support for culture in the city for the period until 2030. The Culture Strategy is based on evidence and ideas from an array of sources and is integrated with wider strategies, such as the [City](#)

of [Edinburgh Council Business Plan](#), [Edinburgh's 2030 Tourism Strategy](#) and the [Festivals Edinburgh 2030 Vision](#). The key aims of the Culture Strategy are:

1. *All Edinburgh residents can easily access cultural experiences that they find meaningful in their local area, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute to shaping local cultural provision.*

Cultural provision is essential for wellbeing, therefore, residents need to have easy access to relevant resources and opportunities no matter what their personal circumstances or where or how they live. The Edinburgh Events Strategy 2025-2030 will place a focus on animating a diverse range of settings, broadening the coverage of the city and promoting equal access to all residents. This approach will create an increased spread of events across the city.

2. *Edinburgh is a welcoming and supportive city in which a broad spectrum of creative and cultural practitioners choose to develop their careers.*

Events provide the opportunity for cultural practitioners to showcase their talents and provide a seminal moment in the delivery of their projects. A commitment to supporting events that prioritises accessibility, inclusivity and diversity will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to shape local cultural provision. Promotion and delivery of a diverse events programme will support a broad range of practices and will ensure that Edinburgh is a desirable location for creatives to further develop their careers.

3. *Edinburgh is a world leading cultural capital, an environmentally responsible host city where ideas are exchanged freely, and the diversity of its residents is celebrated.*

Underpinning the strategy is the City of Edinburgh Council's commitment to environmental sustainability and the need to maintain its position as a responsible host city for events.

Edinburgh retains and enhances its reputation as a place to grow and develop festivals and events through partnership, collaboration and celebration.

This Events Strategy fully supports the City's Culture Strategy and sets out how it will deliver the Culture Strategy through the 8 Strategic Goals.

Edinburgh's Events Vision

Edinburgh sustains a core programme of world class events, delivering the maximum possible benefits for residents and visitors, while enhancing the city's and Scotland's international profile. Events in Edinburgh will successfully drive forward the delivery of the Citywide Culture Strategy, ensuring that residents can easily access and contribute to relevant cultural experiences. Edinburgh is welcoming and supportive of creative practitioners and is a world leading and environmentally responsible capital of culture that celebrates the diversity of its residents.

A considered events strategy will improve the events ecosystem, streamlining the process of application, organisation, delivery and evaluation. This process should be transparent and should communicate with organisers and stakeholders, alike.

Underpinning all work delivered by the City of Edinburgh Council is the target to deliver a net zero, climate ready city by 2030; which will extend to event delivery partners through the Events Strategy.

Why We Are Adopting This Approach

Edinburgh is host to 11 major festivals throughout the year and a multitude of other major sporting and cultural events across the city. The Citywide Culture Strategy clearly articulates support for culture across the city and delivers this through Third Party Cultural Grants to a range of organisations. These events and major festivals already represent a phenomenal cultural output; this Events Strategy addresses the festivals and events that are outwith this existing support and provides a framework to develop the next tier of events that have been built and developed in Edinburgh and its communities, complementing the existing year-round offer.

Building on a strong track record of success

Edinburgh has built an enviable reputation for presenting major high-profile events alongside its major festivals and, as Scotland's capital city, acts as the gateway to the rest of the country. In the 1990s, Edinburgh hosted an EU Summit, a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and launched Edinburgh's Hogmanay. In quick succession, the city hosted a series of major cultural, sporting and civic events including the Tall Ships Race, MTV Music Awards and the Make Poverty History rally and camp, at the time of the 2005 G8 Summit. Following these high profile events, the city's reputation grew when it hosted two Heineken Cup Finals and Rugby World Cups, welcomed the Pope in 2010, and successfully delivered a variety of major sporting events including the World Cross Country Championships, the Archery World Cup Finals; and Olympic, Paralympic and Queen's Baton Relays. All of this complemented the city's world-leading festival programme and globally-recognised Hogmanay event.

Edinburgh's events contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of the city. They promote Edinburgh as a vibrant, contemporary international city; encourage people to visit the city and live and invest in Edinburgh; and strengthen the city's international relations and development work. Alongside the major festivals, Edinburgh's events help to animate the city in all seasons; reflect the political and civic importance of Edinburgh as the capital city; and provide significant promotion of the city as a great place in which to live, invest, study, work and visit.

Some more recent examples of high profile events held in the city include stages of the UCI Road World Championships, Operation Unicorn, World Orienteering Championships and the support of Scotland's largest ever concerts held at Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium.

Edinburgh's Strengths

Over the last 30 years, Edinburgh's unique set of strengths has made it possible to build a reputation for event excellence.

This strategy will build on the city's clear strengths, which include:

- capital city status;
- A well-established festivals and events ecosystem;
- strong existing partnership approach and expertise in event and festival delivery;
- a dramatic and compact city centre famed for its architectural heritage and beauty, featuring iconic skylines and generous greenspace, which lends itself as a natural and telegenic arena for major outdoor events;
- thriving international airport and strong transport connectivity;
- coastal location; and
- world class indoor and outdoor venues.

Edinburgh's natural heritage makes it extremely desirable as an events destination. The city's parks, green spaces and other natural settings are highly sought after for events, particularly those spaces which have the Castle and Old Town, or Arthur's Seat, as their backdrop. Princes Street Gardens provides a beautiful arena for live music and the city's Hogmanay celebrations and Portobello beach has hosted professional volleyball championships.

The city also has world-class expertise in providing temporary event infrastructure for the Festivals, transforming prominent city centre spaces into cultural hubs each year (such as Bristo Square, the Mound Precinct, George Street and Princes Street Gardens).

In addition to the outdoor venues, Edinburgh has world class indoor venues, both sporting and cultural. The Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium, two premiership football stadia, the Royal Commonwealth Pool and Oriam, the National Performance Centre for Sport provide unrivalled sporting facilities; The Usher Hall is a world class concert hall hosting a broad range of events, and part of a wider infrastructure which includes many other significant venues including the Assembly Rooms, a number of theatres, Castle esplanade and the Royal Highland Centre. The development of the Dunard Centre and the Edinburgh Park Arena will provide further opportunities for the sector and underlines the city's flourishing arts and culture sector.

Arguably, the city's greatest strengths are its people and its communities. This strategy puts them at the centre and ensures that the events and festivals that the city supports deliver for our people and our communities.

Managing Our Spaces

Given the interest in the use of the city's spaces it is important that they be managed and protected. The Council's [Use of Public Spaces for Events and Filming Policy](#) provides a balance between the competing demands on public realm spaces; as well as ensuring that all activities have a positive effect on the city and minimise their impact on the environment.

The council's Cultural Partnerships Organisational review in 2024 laid the foundations for a more streamlined events function that would improve coordination of events. Dedicated events teams would

ensure strategic delivery of council priorities whilst Public Spaces teams would coordinate events held in the public realm and Public Safety teams would ensure that the safety of the public is upheld. This customer-focussed approach will provide the platform for considered and well-managed development of the industry.

Wider Strategic Contexts:

Supporting Scotland's National Events Strategy

Edinburgh's high profile events support [Scotland's National Events Strategy](#), *Scotland The Perfect Stage 2024-2035*. The national vision is that "Scotland is world leading in the creation, hosting, and delivery of cultural, sport and business events and has a global reputation for excellence". The mission to deliver this national vision is to "sustain and develop, through a 'Team Scotland' approach, a dynamic, resilient, and responsible events sector that is recognised as a global leader and valued for its contribution to Scotland's wellbeing economy". Council officers were involved in the development of the National Events Strategy.

The national strategy aims to develop events through the promotion of inclusivity, investment and support and the measuring, monitoring and reporting of impacts. Edinburgh's Events Strategy will ensure that supported events follow these principals and will support the sustainability of events through investment over multiple years, providing security and a platform for growth.

Supporting the City of Edinburgh Council Physical Activity and Sport Strategy

The City of Edinburgh Council Culture and Communities Committee acknowledged the importance of an active lifestyle to ensuring physical health, mental health and social wellbeing by approving the [Physical Activity and Sport Strategy](#) in 2024. This strategy sets the framework for building a city where everyone enjoys an active lifestyle and enjoys its associated physical, mental and social wellbeing benefits.

The Edinburgh Events Strategy aims to contribute to the delivery of the Physical Activity and Sport Strategy by reducing barriers to activity. Events should be delivered in a diverse range of settings across the city, allowing residents to access a variety of new experiences and build on existing interests.

While this strategy is primarily addressing cultural events it is not to the exclusion of sporting events. In recent years a Sports Events Fund has been established to specifically support local, regional and national events and championships. This was developed to protect funding for these events and is part of the overall strategic approach to delivering both the Events and Physical Activity & Sport strategies.

How We Will Deliver The Strategy

Support will be split into two portfolios: Civic Events and Development; and Open Fund

Civic Events and Development

Edinburgh is host to a number of annual events that are important to its civic life and these will continue to be funded through the Events budget. These include Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Day and The Edinburgh Award.

At the same time, we are continually looking for new opportunities for the city and have to maintain a degree of budget flexibility to accommodate last minute events or moments of national celebration. A retention sum will be kept aside to support these opportunities or to split larger financial contributions across a number of years. Where these sums are not allocated they will be opened up to an additional round of Open Funding later in the year.

Open Fund

As the name suggests, this will be an open fund for events to apply for funding on an initial two-year funding cycle. The end of this first period will bring the funding cycle in line with the Council's Third Party Cultural Grants funding and the introduction of the Visitor Levy.

The fund will be open to all but will prioritise events that are established in, or unique to, Edinburgh. Support will be offered on a multi-year basis to provide organisations with financial stability and allow them to invest in their own resources and secure longer-term sustainability. In return for the funding and delivery of events within the city, organisations will partake in evaluation programmes to ensure that their operations are environmentally responsible and deliver tangible benefits.

Priority will be given to organisations operating in the shoulder months (February to May and September to November) and in under-used and diverse settings. A key strand of the Culture Strategy is allowing residents to access and contribute to the shaping of the city's cultural landscape and priority will also be given to those operating in a manner that reduces barriers to access, utilising volunteer involvement and supporting of the local cultural sector.

In the case of both funds, the following selection criteria will apply.

Selection criteria for developing the portfolio

The Council will select events to be part of this portfolio if they meet criteria 1 to 4, and at least one criterion from 5 to 12.

1. demonstrate clear benefits for communities either through access to cultural provision, participation or celebration
2. spread of events – prioritising events outside of the city centre;
3. apply fair work and equality, diversity and inclusion principles; and
4. demonstrate environmental responsibility.

In addition, events must meet at least one of these criteria:

5. be established in Edinburgh or a unique Edinburgh festival or event;
6. complement the calendar of events – priority will be given to events which fall within the calendar's shoulder months;
7. employ a diverse range of local creative and cultural practitioners;
8. celebrate the diversity of the city;

9. enhance the wellbeing of residents through participation;
10. develop the voluntary sector;
11. collaborate with other organisations in the creative sector; and
12. enhance the global reputation of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh's natural and built resources provide a competitive advantage as an events destination. Nevertheless, the city must take a proactive approach to securing events. While work with national partners, such as EventScotland and the Scottish Government, may be responsible for securing many of the Major events for the city, the Council will continue to work with its partner agencies to bid for and secure events of all levels for Edinburgh.

As defined in the Use of Public Spaces for Filming and Events Policy, events can be categorised into four tiers:

Level 1: Small events

Some examples include community galas and fun runs which are delivered for the benefit of a localised area. These events promote inclusivity and social wellbeing amongst their host communities and are typically volunteer-led ventures. The Council's Events team will provide assistance and guidance when approached by organisers of Small events. The Use of Public Spaces for Events and Filming Policy and its more transparent and streamlined approach will provide best practice advice and will reduce barriers for organisers; including those delivering community-focussed Small events.

Level 2: Medium events .

These events will be flexible and bespoke for the city, designed to fill gaps in the city's calendar with animation and excitement. These events will be chosen to leverage investment in the city's events and festivals through commercial and public partners. Medium events would generate lower levels of economic impact for the city but would contribute to raising Edinburgh's profile; with longer term investment providing future opportunities for greater contribution to the visitor economy.

The significant number of civic events (including marches, parades and rallies) and royal events also add important profile and variety and attract substantial interest from local residents and visitors. Such events will be promoted as an asset for the city.

Edinburgh enjoys several busier periods throughout the year, notably during the winter and summer festival seasons. The Council aims to provide a balanced portfolio of events throughout the year and actively encourages events outwith these periods in the 'shoulder' months on either side (February to May and September to November).

Examples of Medium events also include public art installations, major arts and crafts exhibitions, lectures and city centre spectator sports events. Medium events also include commissions to mark national thematic years or significant Edinburgh and Scottish anniversaries and events such as Edinburgh 900.

Level 3: Large events

The Council will identify strategic event opportunities and identify one-off additional funding resources in order to pursue these opportunities. These events could also be led nationally by EventScotland with the Council acting as a key player in mobilising local resources and 'activating' the city through city dressing, destination marketing, business partner promotions and satellite events. This would require some separately identified financial resources and/or a major contribution in-kind from the Council. Large events would provide national media profile and generate positive economic impact for the city through the attraction of UK-wide audiences.

Level 4: Major events (*outwith the scope of support through this budget*)

Major international events attract significant global interest. Funding would have to be realised through national partnerships as the budget required for these events would not be available from the Council alone. These events would be expected to generate significant economic impact and international media attention for Edinburgh.

In line with the Cultural Strategy, the City of Edinburgh Council Events Strategy 2025-2030 will prioritise Small and Medium events with support for Large events by exception. All funding will be placed into bands for small, medium and large events to ensure a balance portfolio across the largest range possible.

Due to the economic and reputational benefits brought by Major events, the Events Strategy will not discount these events from funding where the contribution towards the aims of the Culture Strategy are significant. However, this is outwith the scope of the Events budget and will require additional resource.

The Events Strategy acknowledges the incoming Visitor Levy and will be scalable to increasing events resources, should additional resources be made available.

What Does Success Look Like?

- Edinburgh has a growing series of events outwith the city centre, held in the shoulder months; and curated by communities, utilising the local supply chain.
- A more transparent application and selection process with benefits of investment clearly measured and articulated.
- Increased growth of the cultural voluntary sector; allowing residents to contribute to culture in the city.
- Events are delivered in an environmentally responsible manner, with funded organisations committed to following carbon action plans to reduce negative impacts on the environment.
- Residents will report enhanced wellbeing and activity levels as a result of participating in cultural activity.
- Greater collaboration between creative organisations, creating opportunities for development and increased employment in the cultural sector.
- Financial sustainability of the local events sector.
- Edinburgh will have a worldwide reputation for the delivery of safe and well managed, inspiring events.

Event Governance

The Council's Events Management Group ensures that the Council takes a coordinated approach to the delivery of events in the city. It is composed of officers from a number of Council services and has representation from Marketing Edinburgh. It is not intended to act as a steering group for the strategic development of events. Instead, this Group focuses on operational issues and ensures events are delivered through internal partnership working. A key role of the Group is to alert stakeholders to any significant impacts that events may have on either the city or the Council's services (through an internal Red Flag Alert system).

The majority of events in the city will engage with the Council's Events Planning and Operations Group (EPOG). EPOG is an advisory body and assists event organisers in ensuring their events are well-planned, safe and successful. Developed by the Council, EPOG is a model for Safety Advisory Groups that is recognised as best practice and is to be promoted, nationally, by the Scottish Government. This group, chaired by the Council's Public Safety team, allows event organisers to engage with key stakeholders in a centralised forum, benefitting from a cohesive and coordinated approach to events in the city. Stakeholders include Roads, Licensing, Public Spaces, Public Safety and the emergency services.

The Events Management Group and EPOG process will embed this Strategy as one for the entire city, with the Council as custodian. The delivery of the Strategy will be the responsibility of many partners but the Council will retain the responsibility for ensuring it is monitored, implemented, and updated accordingly.

Measuring impacts

Since 2006 it has become increasingly important to demonstrate the value of events and any investment, financial or otherwise, made by the Council. The Council recognises and requires the use of data to measure cultural, social and environmental impacts. This Strategy will require events supported by the Council to report on these metrics.

While full impact assessments can be extremely expensive, [eventIMPACTS](#) provides a simple, internationally recognised method for event organisers to assess the impact of their events and is the methodology approved by the national events strategy. A reporting template will be provided to event organisers and the results will be reported annually to the relevant Council committee.

With sustainability at the forefront of the City of Edinburgh Council's operations, it is important that event operators benefiting from council support operate in an environmentally responsible way. All recipients of the Open Fund will work with Culture for Climate Scotland to document their carbon emissions and will create a carbon action plan to impact their impacts on the environment. This approach directly aligns with the City of Edinburgh Council target of becoming net zero by 2030.