

DEVELOPMENT OF 2030 FESTIVAL CITY VISION

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM CITY COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST [March 2022]

1. COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Online discussions with members of five City Centre Community Councils on 18 January 2022, and with members of Edinburgh Association of Community Councils on 17 February 2022, plus option to respond to online survey

Five City Centre Community Councils

- City Centre Community Council members welcomed the development of the 2030 Vision and their involvement. Members wanted to see the festivals' light shine brightly but there was concern.
- They felt it was crucial to renew the partnership with residents and festivals and the aim should be to find common ground around a shared set of values.
- The commercial basis of some operators, and the desire for continual growth, were problematic for members. It was important to ensure that it was not back to business as usual this summer.
- Environmental sustainability and protection of Edinburgh's built world heritage sites were key priorities expressed by members of City Centre community councils. Issues around use of public space were recognised not to be confined to festivals but were a fallout from festivals activity.
- There was a view that getting the City Council involved properly was crucial because a lot boiled down to Council enforcement.
- There was feedback that a concordat between citizens and festivals could be a way forward

Edinburgh Association of Community Councils

- Members from Community Councils citywide felt that festivals were an important element of what made Edinburgh special and their absence had been a real loss.
- Members were interested in seeing further information about the breakdown of audience figures and further research on the benefits of the festivals to Edinburgh.
- There was concern about the evolution of mega festival/event companies with disproportionate influence. It was felt that unfettered access could not be the governing principle.
- There was felt to be a need to ensure that the City of Edinburgh Council played its role in enforcing regulations.
- Community Council members citywide felt that central concentration of festival activity was an issue. They were interested in plans for the dispersal of events around the city and in their local community areas being engaged more directly with the festivals.
- It was suggested that the introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy should come back on to the agenda, as a mechanism to invest in developments.
- Recordings of the session can be found here in three parts of approx. 25 minutes each:
 - <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/679515844/973d904a95>
 - <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/683396616>
 - <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/683396616>

Online survey responses

- There was a view that the last two years had been an opportunity for a new, more responsible attitude from the festivals to the lives of residents and the spaces of the city, and that honesty and transparency were needed.
- There was feedback that the vision statement needed simplifying, and that with the challenges of competing priorities it might be impractical to deliver without a huge amount of funding. The goals were too lofty and would be looked upon as wasteful while people struggled with the basic needs of life.
- It was commented that the festivals should agree to environmental protection measures in the CEC 'Use of Public Spaces' policy.
- There was feedback that the festivals needed to address equity for people from low income areas and for disadvantaged families.
- There was feedback that a concordat between festivals and communities could be a way forward, or a community representative to join the Festivals Edinburgh Board. It was suggested that it would be desirable to have a 'festival ombudsman' to arbitrate when there are problems between the community and event organisers

2. CREATIVE EDINBURGH

Online discussion meeting on 23 February 2022 and online survey

- Festivals Edinburgh and Creative Edinburgh co-hosted an event attended by 57 creative practitioners (among their 5000+ members), and feedback was also invited through an online survey.
- There was a strong degree of agreement with the 2030 vision principles but feedback that the vision needed to be presented more succinctly, and comments offered as to how themes could be streamlined and made clearer.
- Some members wanted to see alongside the 2030 vision how success would be measured and who the festivals were accountable to. It was observed that funders and government could work to change the metrics of success to be truly about quality rather than quantity.
- In discussing the “Global Solidarity” principle, some felt that Edinburgh hadn’t yet celebrated its internationalism to the degree it deserved to be, and global solidarity felt of renewed importance. There was a view that the festivals perhaps did not fully connect with international artists who were based in Edinburgh year-round.
- A perception was voiced that the festivals focused too much on international connections and not enough on local participation. The 2030 vision mentioned joined up approaches to community engagement and empowering local people to get involved, but the language did not articulate this intention as clearly as hoped.
- It was suggested that the “Low Carbon Systems” 2030 vision principle could reference the festivals’ Environmental Strategies, to help reassure external audiences that festivals were undertaking strategic research and development to reduce their carbon emissions and impact.
- There were calls for the 2030 vision to include a commitment to greater transparency within structures and operations, along with suggestions of centralised information on staff lists and opportunities.
- There was discussion about rates of pay and some festival operators relying on minimum wage positions, with a call for more to become Real Living Wage employers. In discussion of volunteering practices, some shared examples of what they saw as good practice whilst others focussed on examples of what they saw as poor volunteering policies in connection to some Fringe venues.
- In discussion of the 2030 vision principle around ‘Inspiring Everyone’, there was positive feedback about offers already presented by the festivals and confidence that offers would continue to expand. There were some comments that the festivals need to be doing more to connect locally, and perhaps the principle could be more connected to Edinburgh.
- Cost and Access were spoken about and people had questions over how, at a moment in time where public funding is limited, festivals could remain an affordable option for audiences coming from a range of financial circumstances. D/deaf and disabled audiences/artists were not referenced in the Vision and there was a concern that Accessibility could be overlooked.
- When discussing sponsorship and income generation, there were concerns that with limitations on public funds, this could lead to commercial corporate takeover, which would do little to support overall infrastructure.
- There was a view that the year-round creative pipeline was not being serviced in a way which supported sustainable development, with the focus from some city partners on developing festival focussed partnerships leading to ad-hoc connections, rather than embedded strategies which could bring common benefit. This led to a wider desire for a joined-up culture strategy for the City.
- There was interest in how the 2030 festival city vision could be used to feed into a better understanding of the need for joined up cultural strategy across year-round stakeholders, and demonstrate the interest of the creative community in being actively involved in development of a Citywide Cultural Strategy.

3. EDINBURGH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

'Prospectus for Growth' report: recommendations on Edinburgh's Festivals

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce set up the Edinburgh Business Resilience Group in November 2020, with around 60 members from a wide variety of sectors across the city, to help shape the economic and business priorities for the city following the Coronavirus pandemic. Through the work of the group emerged a [report](#) containing 'policy suggestions and ideas to help reset the relationship between business and policymakers, and "build forward" to the kind of Edinburgh we all want to live in – fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable, and more resilient.'

Prospectus for Growth recommendations on Edinburgh's Festivals

- Edinburgh is a city with a global reputation, not just in the obvious areas of culture, festivals, events and tourism, but also in the fields of education, financial services, fintech, innovation and life sciences. We therefore need to consider our future through the prism of Edinburgh as a global city, ensuring that our international reputation in these areas is maintained and enhanced, and that we can continue to claim our place as a global centre of the arts as we emerge from the pandemic.
- We need a change in language and attitude around our festivals and events, to better recognise the contribution of the events and cultural sector to Edinburgh's high quality of life, and its role in attracting the talent and human capital so vital to Edinburgh's economic development.
- This will enhance the value and reputation at a local level of the Festivals, and publicly acknowledge and recognise the hugely significant contribution they make in more ways than just financially or economically.
- As a city we should play to our strengths in key areas such as our reputation as an international city of culture, events, festivals, education and innovation plus our strong financial services sector, fintech, digital and life sciences sectors and use these as engines for growth and recovery.
- City businesses need to do more to support our live events, culture & tourism sector. We need to work to engage larger employers in particular in supporting the arts and culture in the city – as they obviously indirectly benefit from the vibrancy of this sector e.g. subsidised tickets for staff, funding for outdoor city centre events, small city centre venues in empty shops or unused offices etc. Similarly, we should consider a new role for the festivals and live events sector in initiatives around re-purposing & re-invigorating the city centre.
- Public-private partnerships could be utilised to rectify a historic lack of investment in the cultural and events sector, e.g. through constructing facilities and auditoria to enable better management of crowds, and lessen the impact/maximise the opportunities of tourism to reduce frictions and arguments over the use of public spaces. This investment could extend well beyond the current Old Town and Festivals' heart of Edinburgh to extend the cultural and economic benefits into areas of urban poverty and disadvantage.