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Edinburgh International Book Festival celebrates success as it flourishes in new home

- Ticket sales up 11% on 2024 including 19% rise in first time buyers
- Footfall increased by 60% with 25,000 visitors in a single weekend
- Library streaming service resounding success with 41 libraries in 12 local authorities tuning in, for free, for over 90 'watch parties'
- Digital reach saw audiences in 63 countries, ranging from Japan to The Vatican, join online, expanding global audience reach
- Female Scottish authors and independent publishers topped the Waterstones bestseller lists, alongside event led hits like *Katabasis* by R. F. Kuang and Nicola Sturgeon's memoir, *Frankly*
- New Kids' Zone gets seal of approval from thousands of young people and families, with Princess the Unicorn, Bunny Vs Monkey, Supertato and Pikachu inspiring future generations of readers
- This year's children's programme featured multiple sold-out events and a world premiere from Julia Donaldson's *Paper Chase*.

Edinburgh International Book Festival has wrapped up a landmark year, celebrating a two-week long 'Repair' themed programme of events for all ages and interests, that saw conversations of global significance take place on stage, and connected with existing audiences while welcoming a whole new generation of readers. The 2025 festival, which hosted over 650 authors and nearly 700 events saw a remarkable **11% increase in ticket sales** over the previous year, with record numbers of people enjoying the vibrant atmosphere.

The festival's new home at EFI proved a major draw with the courtyard welcoming over **25,000 visitors** in a single weekend and a whopping **161,889 people in total**, an increase of 60% compared to 2024, an unquestionable sign it's settled into its new, permanent home. This surge in footfall, combined with a significant rise in first-time bookers, shows the festival's success in reaching new audiences and capitalising on its new location right at the heart of the Edinburgh Festivals footprint. This was evident not least in the newly increased and re-targeted YA programme, which proved a resounding success, hitting its mark with readers 30 and under, solidifying the festival's appeal to the next generation of literary enthusiasts.

Once again, The Front List strand of events, which increased from eleven to fifteen in 2025, were packed out with over 12,000 people turning up in person at McEwan Hall to hear from writers including literary titans **Ian McEwan** and **Maggie O'Farrell**, contemporary phenomena **Asuko Yuzuki** and **R F Kuang**, political heavyweights **Yulia Navalnaya** and **Nicola Sturgeon**, and even the celebrity co-creator of beloved sitcom *Gavin and Stacey*, **Ruth Jones**.

This year also marked a cornerstone moment for Scottish independent publishers and female writers. The bestseller list was topped by standout titles from Scottish women including **Mairi Kidd's** *The Specimens*, and event led titles including *Katabasis* by **R. F. Kuang** and **Nicola Sturgeon's** *Frankly*.

Beyond the physical site, the festival's digital reach expanded dramatically, connecting communities across 12 local authority areas by streaming events, free of charge, into over 40 libraries, which in turn hosted over 90 'watch parties', as part of the newly launched Paper Trails initiative. In addition, a global audience of almost **19,000** from **63 countries across five continents** tuned in for streamed events, proving the festival's ability to foster conversations that transcend geographical boundaries. And with events available for the rest of the year, and more to be added on an on-demand basis in Autumn, global audiences have lots more coming to enjoy.

This year's program was defined by timely and important discussions that reflected a public hunger for considered, informed conversations on global issues. Sold-out events like the discussion with prominent Israeli historians **Ilan Pappé** and **Avi Shlaim** on the history of Israel and Palestine, a conversation between renowned journalists **Lindsey Hilsum** and **Edward Wong**, and several events looking at the impact of AI on literature and the arts more widely, exemplified this trend. These events drew large audiences and sparked meaningful dialogue on topics of international significance, underlining the festival's role in generating constructive in person conversations.

The brand new, dedicated Kids' Zone was also a resounding success, providing a comfortable environment for families to relax and have fun for free, and complementing the children's programme with unmissable opportunities to meet the Gruffalo, Pikachu and Supertato - and also, for the first time in book festival history, the real-life Princess the Unicorn. Hosting just some of the sold-out events in the Children and Families programme were **Julia Donaldson**, who attended with her world premiere of *Paper Chase*, **Cressida Cowell** who hosted a record-breaking back-to-back signing, ensuring hundreds of young people left with a memory that will last a lifetime, and the iconic **Michael Rosen**.

The festival's continued growth in both physical attendance and online engagement demonstrates its enduring relevance, and by providing a space for a diverse range of voices and fostering conversations that matter, it continues to thrive and align with its audiences in both its fun-filled programming and its considered approach to conversations of global significance.

ENDS

Media enquiries: Sarah Drummond | edbookfest@premiercomms.com | sarah.drummond@premiercomms.com | 07741316934

Notes to Editors

About Edinburgh International Book Festival

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is a charity which exists to celebrate and share the power of writers, their ideas, and the words they craft to illuminate, challenge, and inspire.

Since 1983, we have welcomed millions of visitors into conversations with the world's greatest and most exciting emerging writers, thinkers, artists, and performers. Iconic figures such as Margaret Atwood, Alain de Botton, Oliver Burkeman, Noam Chomsky, Seamus Heaney, Kazuo Ishiguro, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, and Benjamin Zephaniah have appeared on our stages over the years, alongside a wide range of debut and early career authors.

Across the hundreds of events in our Adults, Young Adults, Schools, and Children's programmes, the Book Festival offers audiences aged from 0 to 100 an active opportunity to engage with new and different perspectives on the world, creating lasting memories through storytelling, fill their minds with fascinating knowledge, and discover the creative secrets of writers and artists.

We strive to be a safe and supported environment for people to have difficult discussions and lively debates in an atmosphere of curiosity and consideration, where different opinions can be respectfully shared. We are proud to platform voices and stories which are often overlooked and are committed to breaking down barriers to access for those who may not initially consider themselves as a Book Festival audience.

Beyond August, the Book Festival is a year-round force for literary engagement. Working with partners in the local community -- including schools, libraries, prisons, hospitals, and other community hubs -- we foster a lifelong love of reading, embrace the life-changing potential of creativity, and develop engaged, informed audiences of all backgrounds and ages.

The Book Festival receives core funding through Creative Scotland. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation, and we rely greatly on the support of individuals, foundations and sponsors to continue to deliver world-class events and work towards our ambitions to improve literacy in Scotland. We are a founding member of Festivals Edinburgh.

Find out more about the key aspects of our work:

Edinburgh International Book Festival - <https://www.edbookfest.co.uk>

Schools Programme - <https://learning.edbookfest.co.uk/schools/schools-programme/>

Schools Outreach - <https://learning.edbookfest.co.uk/schools/outreach/>

Communities - <https://ontheroad.edbookfest.co.uk>

About Jenny Niven

Jenny Niven is CEO and Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She is an internationally recognised advocate for the arts and culture and has created, developed and led literature and cultural programmes and festivals for over 20 years.

In previous roles, she was founder and Director of the award-winning Push the Boat Out, a festival of poetry, spoken word and language, Head of Literature, Publishing and Languages at Creative Scotland, Executive Producer of the Edinburgh International Culture Summit, and led on the creation of the Muriel Spark 100 centenary celebrations. Internationally, she was Head of Programme/Associate Director at the Wheeler Centre for Books Writing & Ideas, Melbourne, and co-founded and ran Beijing's first book festival from 2004 to 2010.

Jenny has had an equally enduring interest and background in radio and on stage discussion, and has conducted hundreds of live interviews with authors since 2006, including Armando Iannucci, Nobel prize winner Mo Yan, Jeffrey Eugenides, Colson Whitehead, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Louise Welsh, Yiyun Li, Chang Rae Lee, David Mitchell, and many more.