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For immediate release

Edinburgh International Book Festival Introduces Access Improvements for 2019

Edinburgh International Book Festival today confirmed a range of innovative plans to make it easier for people with a variety of access needs to enjoy visiting the Festival this summer. With the support of players of People's Postcode Lottery and House of Hearing, the Book Festival is building on the award-winning improvements made over previous years, doubling the number of captioned and BSL interpreted events, improving wheelchair accessibility around the Book Festival village, creating special events for children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities and designating a number of events as Pay What You Can.

Sophie Moxon, Executive Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival said "Making the Book Festival welcoming and accessible for all our visitors, whatever their needs or means, is extremely important to us. Whether you're coming to an event, to browse our bookshops, or just to enjoy the sunshine in the Gardens the Book Festival is a friendly space to visit with welcoming staff and events and activities to suit everyone. We are immensely proud to have won the Euan's Guide Accessible Tourism Award for Best Pop Up Venue for the last three years and strive to keep improving every year."

New innovations for 2019 include a wheelchair ramp from street level to provide easy access to Charlotte Square Gardens, and two new members of the Book Festival team based at the Information Desk in the Entrance Tent who will liaise directly with any visitors with additional needs and provide any assistance required. A Changing Places accessible toilet will be available in Charlotte Square Gardens alongside disabled toilets in both the Gardens and on George Street. Additional baby changing facilities have also been provided in close proximity to the new interactive children's area and bi-lingual events for younger readers in Gaelic/English and Polish/English have also been added to the programme for the first time.

In previous years the Book Festival has included Captioned and British Sign Language interpreted events and in 2019 there will be twice as many with twelve BSL Interpreted events scheduled in the Adult programme and three in the Baillie Gifford Children's programme. These currently include Ian Rankin, Ruth Davidson and Horrid Henry author Francesca Simon however BSL interpretation can be requested (before 26 July) for any event in the programme. In addition, fourteen events across the Adult programme including those featuring Sofie Hagen, Benjamin Zephaniah and Victoria Hislop, and four in the Children's programme including Clare Balding and Elmer's Big Birthday with David McKee, will be captioned and three

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The Edinburgh International Book Festival Ltd is a Scottish charity (SC010120) and a limited company (registered in Scotland no 79939) and has its registered office at 5A Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, EH2 4DR.

will be both BSL interpreted and captioned - Julian Clary & David Roberts, Mark Haddon and Sue Perkins. There are infrared hearing systems in almost all theatres and visitors can borrow headsets free of charge.

The 2019 programme will also see several events tailored specifically for children and adults with learning disabilities including a free and drop-in Sensory Storytelling day at the Festival's Story Box, and an interactive session with Mel Darbon whose wonderful book *Rosie Loves Jack* is told from the perspective of a girl with Downs Syndrome. An additional event, organised in collaboration with PAMIS (Promoting a more inclusive society), ARC Scotland (Association for Real Change) and NIN (National Involvement Network) will feature author Philip Ardagh and a host of sensory elements as Philip brings his characters Stick and Fetch, two unusual detectives, to life. Philip will be recreating this event in the Baillie Gifford Schools Programme for pupils of all ages with additional needs.

Laura Chow, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, said: "We are incredibly proud that as a result of funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery that even more people will be able to easily access the Book Festival space in Charlotte Square Gardens and George Street enabling them to join the almost 260,000 visitors who enjoy the tented village each year."

Twenty events across the 2019 Book Festival programme have been designated as Pay What You Can, a pricing structure designed to help make the Book Festival accessible for those with limited means. While most tickets are priced at £12, for Pay What You Can events audience members can choose to pay an amount anywhere between £0 and £25. Those who elect to pay more for their tickets are generously supporting the Festival's efforts to provide financial flexibility for those who most need it.

Other innovations for 2019 include a new online film giving guidance on how to visit the Book Festival for those who may be nervous about coming to the Festival for the first time, an Easy Read Guide, noise-reducing ear defenders and Additional Needs badges for those with additional or hidden needs. Details of all the above can be found on the Access page of the Book Festival website:

<https://www.edbookfest.co.uk/visiting-the-festival/access>

The Edinburgh International Book Festival runs from 10 to 26 August 2019 in Charlotte Square Gardens and the West End of George Street in the heart of the city. The Festival village, and all venues, bars, bookshops and cafes are all fully accessible. The Book Festival is free to enter, and while most events do require a ticket, there are free events throughout the day from Ten at Ten first thing in the morning to Unbound with Edinburgh Gin at the end of the evening. The full programme is available on the website - www.edbookfest.co.uk - and tickets are on sale online, by phone 0345 373 5888 or in person at The Hub, Castlehill until Friday 5 August, when the Book Festival Box Office opens in George Street.

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Notes to editors:

People's Postcode Lottery

The Edinburgh International Book Festival has received £1,450,000 from players of People's Postcode Lottery since 2015.

- People's Postcode Lottery manages multiple society lotteries promoted by different charities and good causes. People play with their chosen postcodes for a chance to win cash prizes. A minimum of 32% from each subscription goes directly to charities and good causes across Great Britain and internationally - players have raised £427 million so far. For details of the charities and good causes which are promoting and benefitting from the lottery draws, please visit <https://www.postcode lottery.co.uk/good-causes/draw-calendar>
- It costs £10 a month to play and winning postcodes are announced every day. The maximum amount a single ticket can win is 10% of the draw proceed. For details, please visit www.postcode lottery.co.uk/prizes
- New players can sign up to pay using direct debit by calling 0808 10 9 8 7 6 5. New players who sign up online at www.postcode lottery.co.uk can pay using direct debit, debit card or PayPal.
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