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Monday 4 October 2021

## **EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL**

### **ENGAGES CITIZENS OF THE CITY**

With prison visits, cinema screenings, walking tours and communal meals, the Edinburgh International Book Festival engaged a wide audience in different communities this year. **Citizen**, the Book Festival's ongoing programme of long-term partnerships with organisations and residents across the city and Musselburgh, presented a series of events and activities reflecting on Edinburgh, its residents and their sense of place and home, while **StoryNation** reached out to those further afield who were unable to visit the Book Festival in person. **Citizen** is supported by the players of People's Postcode Lottery through their Postcode Culture Fund and through the PLACE programme.

Noëlle Cobden, Communities Programme Director at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "This August, through our Citizen programme, we celebrated a diverse range of voices, bringing local people from across the city to the Book Festival, in many cases for the first time. Whether eating together, taking part in events or joining the audience, a sense of community flourished that hasn't been possible over the last 18 months.

For those who weren't able to visit our new site at Edinburgh College of Art, as part of our Story Nation, we took authors and streamed events to them. Our prison sessions were extremely popular and have already begun to yield positive results with attendees reading more widely and developing their own writing following our visits. Our work in communities in Edinburgh and beyond will continue over the coming year with projects in schools, community venues, hospitals, prisons and care homes, as well as online."

In partnership with Scran Academy, a social enterprise catering organisation working with vulnerable young people, **Stories & Scran** brought together 40 participants in the **Citizen** Collective, the North Edinburgh/Musselburgh **Citizen** Writers, pupils from the Alternative School @ Spartans and local people from Tollcross for a community meal at the Book Festival's new home at Edinburgh College of Art followed by performances of their words and music created in writing workshops held online throughout the Covid pandemic. The work of other **Citizen** participants, including The Warblers, the Citizen Collective and the Citizen Saheliya Group, was also featured in **R Words**, a Scotland-wide game of poetry consequences.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT FRANCES SUTTON, PRESS MANAGER:

frances@edbookfest.co.uk / Tel: 0131 718 5654 / Mob: 07841 579481

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As part of *StoryNation*, Pat Nevin, Chris Brookmyre and Andrew O'Hagan participated in workshops and readings in **HMP Edinburgh, Perth and Kilmarnock**. Stellar Quines theatre company along with actors Genna Allan and Chloe Wyper from the Citizens Theatre's WAC Ensemble – Scotland's first professionally supported theatre company for performers and theatremakers with care experience – worked closely with novelist Jenni Fagan to create a masterful adaptation of Jessie Kesson's radio play *You've Never Slept in Mine*. This was performed twice in HMP Edinburgh following its premiere at the Book Festival. The Book Festival donated three copies of the books from the authors who visited to each Prison Library, and HMP Edinburgh advises that there was immediately a waiting list to read Pat Nevin's *The Accidental Footballer*.

Andrew O'Hagan also visited the new **Streetreads Library** in Edinburgh to read from *Mayflies*. Streetreads is a charity that takes books and stories to people affected by homelessness and the new library received 15 copies of *Mayflies* donated by the Book Festival.

*StoryNation* also worked with **The Birks Cinema**, a community owned social enterprise in Aberfeldy - a rural area that suffers from a lack of reliable broadband - to screen a series of live conversations direct from the Book Festival. Perthshire audiences enjoyed events with Salman Rushdie and Pat Nevin, the launch of the *Golden Treasury of Scottish Verse* with the new Scottish Makar Kathleen Jamie who was joined by poets Don Paterson and Peter Mackay, the Summer Crime Wave event featuring Val McDermid, Ambrose Parry, Doug Johnston and Mary Paulson-Ellis and finally a conversation with Ian Rankin as he launched *The Dark Remains*, his completion of the late William McIlvanney's final manuscript.

The Book Festival's **Citizen City Tour**, developed by with photographer Alicia Bruce and *Citizen Writer* in Residence Eleanor Thom in collaboration with residents of Tollcross, is free, self-guided audio tour which encourages participants to explore the gap between Edinburgh's postcard exterior and its inner heart. 300 maps with QR codes were picked up from the Book Festival and to date some of the stories have already been listened to over 45 times.

Edinburgh International Book Festival's Citizen programme returns with the Citizen Winter Warmer – a weekend of events and activities at North Edinburgh Arts and Brunton Theatre Musselburgh from 18 to 20 November 2021. The programme will be announced in late October, and full details can be found at <https://ontheroad.edbookfest.co.uk/>

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For further information please contact:

Frances Sutton, Press Manager

Edinburgh International Book Festival

07841 579481 or frances@edbookfest.co.uk

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