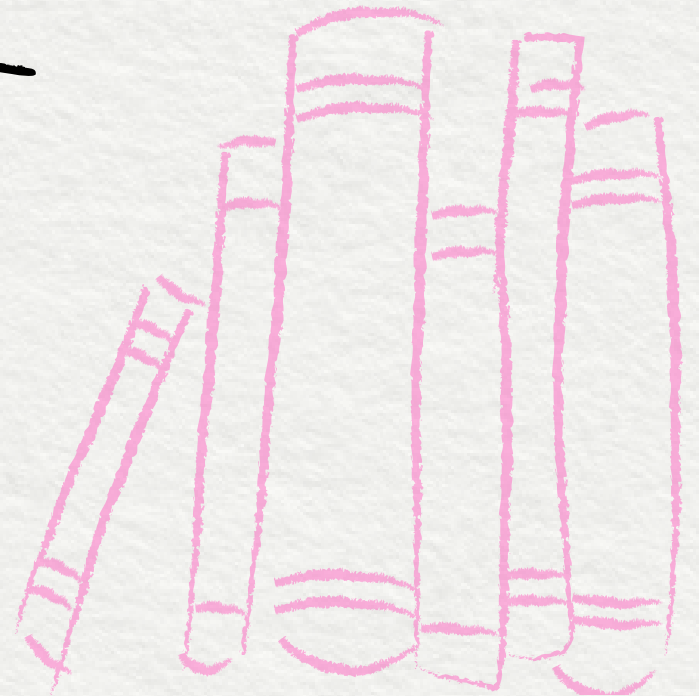


YEAR OF STORIES

— 2022 —

EVALUATION REPORT
APRIL 2023



Year of Stories in Numbers

Success can be measured against the 5 agreed Year of Stories (YS2022) objectives

1. Promotion

5.6bn Media Reach generated by 2,760 pieces of print and online media

112 pieces of Broadcast Coverage including BBC, ITV/STV and regional and national radio

4m views of YS2022 promotional videos

148m Marketing Reach via core and aligned VisitScotland marketing campaigns and activity

Increased Media Coverage
79% of Open Fund events generated increased media coverage (8,484 pieces)

YS2022 Awareness
64% of community event and 59% of open event attendees were aware of YS2022

Award Winning
YS2022 campaigns won 3 Digital and PR Awards



2. Celebration

£1.33m Events Funding invested by EventScotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund

354 Events Scotland-wide
All 32 local authorities hosted events: 21 open, 180 community, 153 partner

Scots and Gaelic showcased by 42% of funded events

Diverse Stories Shared
All 5 themes were showcased by a wide diversity of voices and organisations, many engaging specific under-represented groups

6,620 new artist opportunities created through events

91% of open fund events **commissioned new original work** from artists or storytellers

48 projects shared content for the national **Intangible Cultural Heritage** platform providing a valuable future resource

YEAR OF
STORIES
2022



3. Participation

1.4m Attended Funded Events
201 funded events attracted 754,827 in-person and 667,159 digital attendances

153 Partner Events extended participation with reported attendances ranging from 10 to 57,000

Increased Awareness
81% of community and 72% of open event attendees are more aware of the wealth and diversity of Scotland's stories

Inspiring Future Visits
75% of community and 65% of open event attendees are more likely to visit places connected with Scotland's stories

Inspiring Creativity
71% of community and 49% open event attendees were inspired to share their own story or stories of Scotland

(Click here for full evaluation report)

4. Collaboration

Effective Partnerships

32 Steering and Working Group partners directly involved in shaping the year

60k individual uses of #YS2022 and #TalesofScotland across the year by 100s of partners

Future Partnerships

96% of event partners want to take part in another Themed Year

Catalyst for Collaboration

VisitScotland worked in partnership MGS and NLHF to create the Community Stories Programme, increasing budget x9 and providing opportunities

across the country for communities to tell the stories that matter to them, develop skills, new partnerships and contribute to community cohesion and resilience

100% of projects were delivered in collaboration, with many organisations developing brand new partnerships and opening up new areas of work

78% of event organisers attending YS2022 skills webinars said these enabled peer support



5. Industry Engagement

11,900 Views of the online industry toolkit

442 YS2022 Logos in English and Gaelic downloaded by partners

624 Industry Reps engaged with the Toolkit Launch Webinar

800 Views of industry facing programme launch

629 attendances and views of event **skills development webinars**

Inspiring Case Studies

30 businesses showcased, sharing examples of new product, campaigns and initiatives created in response to YS2022

Day in the Life

Monthly Interviews highlighted 12 key individuals from a wide range of partner organisations

[\(Click here for full evaluation report\)](#)



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*Available on request via themedyears@visitscotland.com

This report is compiled by VisitScotland from a range of evaluation sources including event outcome reports, marketing and PR campaign results and independent commissioned research. It responds to the objectives agreed with Scottish Government and the project evaluation framework agreed by the Steering Group.

Executive Summary

2022 was a year in which stories inspired by, created, or written in Scotland were showcased and celebrated with a programme of activity designed to support the nation's tourism, events, and related sectors. Bringing our contemporary and traditional cultures to life, it set out to ensure that the full diversity of our stories, in all their richness and forms, reached the widest audiences, generating a range of agreed benefits. Developed across 2021 and launched in January 2022 when Covid-19 was still impacting our daily lives, YS2022 proved to be an important contribution towards recovery, delivering impressive results against set objectives, engaging communities and visitors alike, and supporting activity across all 32 local authorities.

A Developing Model

Rooted in driving domestic and international tourism by encouraging the tourism, events, and related sectors to unite around a common theme, the impacts of Themed Years have developed beyond their significant promotional values. Not only have Themed Years become a way for the widest range of partners to amplify their efforts to promote their offer and Scotland, but they have become important platforms for advancing innovation, product development, artist opportunities and wider priorities such as community engagement, responsible tourism, diversity, and inclusion. YS2022 is a strong example of how collaboration can amplify the efforts of many and generate multiple benefits.

Scope

At the heart of a successful Themed Year are three key strands of activity:

1. The development and delivery of an exciting and engaging public events programme,
2. Associated marketing and promotional campaigns,
3. Effective industry engagement.

Across all strands of activity YS2022 put **inclusivity and diversity at its heart**, embracing not only the **widest range of voices** but the **widest range of activity and content** aligned to the theme. There was a strong focus on recovery, (re)engagement and expanding awareness, audiences, and participation. The visitor opportunity in terms of experiences and events was broadly presented across **all types of storytelling forms** and across **five cross-cutting sub-themes: Iconic Stories and Storytellers, New Stories, Scotland's People and Places, Local Tales and Legends and Inspired by Nature**. Response from partners to the five themes was enthusiastic, creating a well-balanced and diverse programme.

YS2022 **encompassed all aspects of our tourism offering and visitor experience** in relation to our stories and storytelling heritage, with a focus on developing unique, authentic experiences and sustainable tourism opportunities. There was also a particular focus on engaging our communities, with close partnership working between VisitScotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund creating new opportunities for communities to engage with the Year and develop new skills through participation. Responsible Tourism principles

and practices also underpinned the design and delivery of all aspects of activity, with tangible results. For example, most event organisers reported an increased focus on sustainable events management due to their engagement with YS2022, whilst audience research showed that the majority of YS2022 event attendees were more aware of and more interested in engaging with our cultural heritage.

The YS2022 strategic plan was developed by the Steering Group and signed off by the (then) Culture Minister. This was supported by an evaluation framework which set out delivery strategies for each of the headline objectives – **Promotion, Celebration, Participation, Collaboration and Industry Engagement** – along with measurable targets. **YS2022 met all and surpassed many of its original targets.**

Headline Performance Against Objectives

Promotion

Media impact was vast, with **2,760 pieces of coverage** reaching people an estimated **5.6bn** times in print and online. Coverage spanned UK, North America, Europe and China, extending our reach to a global audience. In addition to print and online media, YS2022 generated **112 items of broadcast coverage**. VisitScotland marketing activity and campaigns *alone* are estimated to have reached people a total of **148m times** and there were also **over 4m video views** of YS2022 themed videos (promotional videos, community events videos, influencer videos and Chinese WeChat videos). An 'always on' approach adopted for the paid campaigns, ensured there was maximum reach and awareness of YS2022 messaging throughout the year. VisitScotland's reach was also greatly magnified by the activity delivered by YS2022's many partners.

Celebration

Creating a rich and varied events programme is a central aspect of the Themed Year approach. Events animate our places and spaces, provide exciting new hooks for media as well as impetus for participation, engagement, and event-led tourism. The YS2022 programme also provided a strong opportunity for artists

and creative talent to create and showcase new work and a total of **6,620 opportunities were created through funded events for artists to reach new audiences**. There were two events funding programmes and one non-funded 'partner' events programme for YS2022. **Across the three programmes more than 350 events/event programmes were delivered** with activity taking place in **all 32 of Scotland's local authorities, in every calendar month**. The Themed Years model requires that higher profile events are delivered by the Open Programme to provide key highlights, high profile opportunities for engagement and a strong narrative for the year. However, it was clear when scoping YS2022 that the theme provided an especially effective opportunity to reach diverse communities across Scotland, providing broader opportunities for participation, engagement, and skills development. This led to VisitScotland working in an effective close partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, with support from National Lottery Heritage Fund and Scottish Government, to create a **Community Stories Programme**. This new programme sat alongside the existing 'Open' and 'Partner' events programmes and was developed specifically to support community facing organisations and community groups to take part in the Year, spotlighting the unique stories that matter to them with the creation of new events, activities, and programming.

Headline Performance Against Objectives continued

From an initial budget of £100k carved out of the core YS2022 budget, such was the appetite to support communities that this budget was maximised more than nine-fold to £928k with additional support from partners. The Community Stories Programme included grant funding together with a 'wrap-around' programme of promotional support and skills development for its 180 grantees. [An independent report from Wavehill](#) evidences that the programme helped bring communities together, highlighted Scotland's diverse voices across a range of storytelling forms, advanced Intangible Cultural Heritage capture and understanding, and created multiple benefits including contributing to community wellbeing, skills development, developing new partnerships and opportunities, and creating thriving, resilient communities.

Participation

YS2022 more than met expectations in terms of attendances and participation with **more than 1.4m people attending a funded event either in-person or online**. There were 397,284 in-person and 82,641 digital attendances across the 21 YS2022 Open Fund events and

an additional 357,543 in-person and 584,518 digital attendances across the 180 Community Stories funded events. For the 153 Partner Events, the total attendance number is difficult to confidently estimate. From those Partner Events that supplied attendance information, the reported range was between 10 people at one event to 57,250 across ten days at another event. Overall attendance across the full programme was extremely high, however whilst many events exceeded expectations in terms of attendance, some events, particularly those taking place during the early part of the year when Covid-19 was still impacting our daily lives, reported lower than anticipated figures. In terms making participation accessible, in addition to the spread of activity across Scotland's communities, many events took action on financial access for example offering free tickets, operating a 'pay what you can' model or providing free transport.

Collaboration

Themed Years provide a proven and powerful platform for partnership working and collaboration across public, private and third sector organisations. 32 organisations were

involved in directly shaping and delivering YS2022 through the Steering and Working groups and hundreds of partners delivered events, campaigns and initiatives inspired by the year. YS2022 brought together interests across tourism, events, creative industries, culture, heritage and more. Many of the partners had not previously engaged with a Themed Year before, and the addition of their input and knowledge to shape the year was hugely beneficial. Both new and existing partners have reported benefits from the exchange of knowledge and a widening of networks, which in turn has enhanced the activity delivered as part of the year and provided strong future potential.

Industry Engagement

Despite the loss of a year's planning and pre-promotion time (due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the roll-over of the previous Themed Year into 2021) engagement from partners and stakeholders was strong with hundreds of industry reps engaging in online webinars and launches. A core aspect of industry engagement was the creation of a free to use **marketing toolkit**. This was launched in

September 2021 and went on to achieve **11.9k page views** (target 10k). The toolkit contained tips on how to get involved in the year, a dedicated image collection on VisitScotland's Digital Media Library and links to useful resources. **442** 'Supporting Year of Stories 2022' logos were downloaded from the toolkit, and there were more than **60k** individual uses of the campaign hashtags (target 50k) indicating the scale of engagement from organisations utilising the campaign platform and tools to create their own aligned campaigns. There were many examples of innovative new product, content and campaigns created by industry inspired by YS2022 - from **Isle of Cumbrae Distillers** who created a new gin to multiple Destination Marketing Organisations who created new content and campaigns.

Challenges

Although YS2022 was developed as a collaborative platform to assist recovery and was regarded as a positive strategy, the operating context obviously presented some key challenges for many. These included Covid-19 restrictions, staffing and skills shortages, increasing supply chain and utilities costs, etc. This meant that some potential partners reported they simply didn't have the capacity to proactively engage as they would like.

Despite the challenging circumstances, the level of industry engagement remained strong as evidenced by the wide and varied range of partners that engaged.

Ongoing Impact and Approval

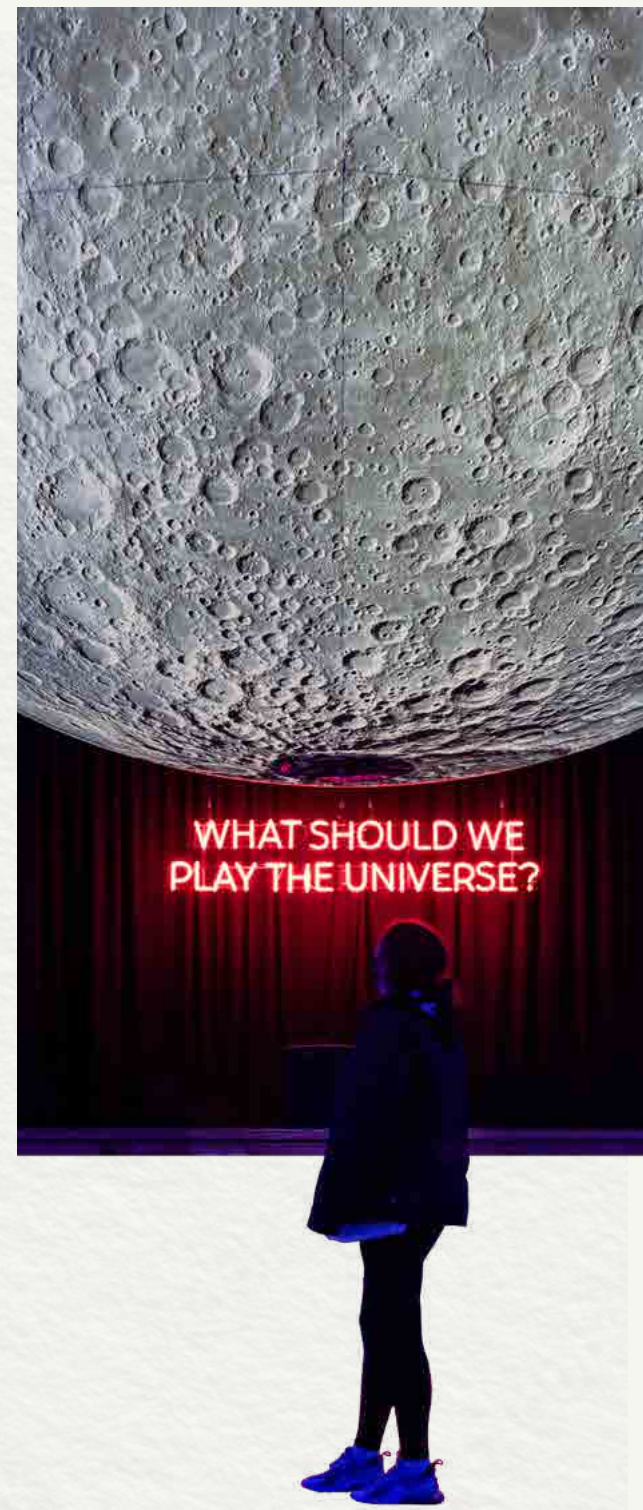
Formal feedback from partners highlighted that participation in a Themed Year can have an ongoing positive impact - examples included attracting new funding on the back of YS2022 activity and strategic policy advancement in respect of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Feedback also evidenced a high appetite from partners to participate in future Themed Years. When asked, 96% of all event partners stated they would like to participate again, and the Partner Case Studies undertaken by Wavehill further underline this enthusiasm.



1. Introduction

Stories are vital to every part of Scotland. Every community has its own tales to tell. Every part of Scotland has its own places to highlight as inspiration for well-known books and films, visitor attractions that showcase our storytelling heritage and all kinds of places and spaces where stories, old and new, can be enjoyed. Year of Stories 2022 (YS2022) gave the widest range of partners the opportunity to work together to further harness this powerful means to engage and thereby inspire locals and visitors to discover, celebrate and share their own stories of Scotland.

Developed across 2021 and launched in January 2022 when Covid-19 was still impacting our daily lives, YS2022 proved to be an important contribution towards recovery, delivering impressive results against objectives, engaging communities and visitors alike, and supporting activity across all 32 local authorities.



2. Background



Themed Years are designed to give Scottish tourism an edge, galvanise partners and create a strong collaborative platform to promote Scotland and its valuable attributes. Developed as a legacy from Homecoming Scotland 2009, VisitScotland has led the Themed Years programme on behalf of the Scottish Government since 2010. Themed Years provide a proven and powerful platform for partnership working and collaboration across public, private and third sector organisations, centring on driving domestic and international tourism by encouraging the tourism, events, and related sectors to unite around a common theme which showcases a particular aspect of Scotland. Our Themed Years celebrate the very best of Scotland, its culture, people, and places. The development and delivery of an exciting and engaging public events programme, associated marketing and promotional campaigns, and effective industry engagement are at the heart of a successful Themed Year.

The impact of Themed Years has grown year on year, with significant ongoing partnership support from a wide range of organisations, all working collaboratively to maximise the opportunity. **Themed Years have not only become a way for the widest range of partners to amplify their efforts to promote their offer and Scotland, they have also become important platforms for advancing innovation and wider priorities such as community engagement, responsible tourism, diversity, and inclusion.**

The current delivery model intends that Themed Years take place every second year, allowing time for preparation, promotion, and delivery across a three-year cycle. Covid-19 has impacted the sequence of Themed Years and the next is expected to take place in 2025. This evaluation underlines the value of Themed Years to its many participating partners and their appetite for the programme's continuance.

3. Governance Structure

A Steering Group, chaired by VisitScotland, set out the strategic plan for YS2022 and oversaw its delivery. The Steering Group comprised a range of organisations relevant to the purpose and theme. It included senior representatives from **Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Creative Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), Literature Alliance Scotland, TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland / Scottish International Storytelling Festival), The Scottish Government, and VisitScotland/EventScotland.** The strategic plan was approved by the (then) Culture Minister, Ms Jenny Gilruth MSP, in May 2021.

The Steering Group was supported by an active and highly collaborative Working Group, set up to coordinate activity at a delivery level and ensure that programmes, promotions, and events were delivered. Membership included operational representatives from organisations on the Steering

Group plus additional members as identified by the Steering or Working Groups, these included: **Abbotsford House/Scott 250 Partnership, ASVA, Festivals Edinburgh, Gaelic Books Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, NatureScot, National Library of Scotland, National Museums Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council, Publishing Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Saltire Society, Scotland Food and Drink, Scottish Book Festivals Network, Scottish Book Trust, Scottish Poetry Library, Scottish Storytelling Centre, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Tourist Guides Association, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland/Dig It!**

A total of 32 agencies and organisations worked alongside VisitScotland, directly shaping the strategic plan and its delivery. This was critical to the success of the Year by ensuring the aim and objectives were well formed, momentum of activity was maintained, and engagement was wide.



The chance to sit and be part of a positive Working Group, with regular meetings, was a really positive experience. It gives you the chance to raise your profile with those other partner organisations and to show the opportunities that are there and the kind of work that you do.

– Scottish Library & Information Council

4. Scope of the Year

Central to the success of any Themed Year is selecting a theme that every part of the country can embrace. YS2022 was particularly successful in this respect. YS2022 put **inclusivity and diversity at its heart**, embracing not only the **widest range of voices** but the **widest range of activity and content** aligned to the theme. There was a strong focus on recovery, (re)engagement and expanding awareness, audiences, and participation. The visitor opportunity in terms of experiences and events was broadly presented across the **all types of storytelling forms** and across **five cross-cutting strands**:

1. Iconic Stories and Storytellers:

Across literature, screen, and entertainment, YS2022 celebrated and showcased Scotland's wealth of treasured and iconic stories and storytellers from classics to the contemporary.

2. New Stories:

Scotland's new and untold stories. YS2022 shone a light on emerging, fresh and forward-looking talent and highlight the innovators that break boundaries across all forms of storytelling.

3. Scotland's People and Places:

Our people and places have inspired the widest range of stories and storytellers across the world. YS2022 promoted how Scotland's diverse culture, languages, landscapes, and ways of life, urban and rural, provide a source for all types and forms of stories, encouraging visitors and audiences to find out more.

4. Local Tales and Legends:

Every community has its distinct tales to tell, stories of now and those passed through the

generations. These are the stories we tell ourselves and share with others to make sense of time and place. YS2022 provided the opportunity for every part of Scotland to tell its story.

5. Inspired by Nature:

Our encounters with nature are an unfailing source of stories, old and new. Whether by sea or land, along rivers or through woods, in our cities and countryside, we discovered stories of birds, insects, animals and plants. Stories that connect us to the natural world can help create a more sustainable future for Scotland, and a greener planet.

YS2022 **encompassed all aspects of our tourism offering and visitor experience** in relation to our stories and storytelling heritage, with a focus on developing unique, authentic experiences and sustainable tourism opportunities. The scope of activities **also allowed partners to work in closer collaboration and raise the profile of key topics and sectors** that are associated with our stories (for example, the libraries network and publishing sector) through an integrated communications approach. There was also a particular focus on engaging our communities, with close partnership working between VisitScotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund creating new opportunities for communities to engage with the Year and develop new skills through participation.

Responsible Tourism principles and practices underpinned the design and delivery of all aspects of activity, with tangible results in terms of events industry development as well as audience response and engagement.

5. Aim and Objectives

The following Aim and Objectives were set out in the YS2022 Strategic Plan (May 2021):

Overarching Aim:

Scotland's Year of Stories will sustain and build upon the momentum of the preceding Themed Years to spotlight, celebrate, and promote the wealth of stories inspired by, written, or created in Scotland. From icons of literature to local tales, the year will encourage locals and visitors to experience a diversity of voices, take part in events and explore the places, people and cultures connected to all forms of our stories, past and present. It will contribute to recovery from the pandemic and inspire new stories of Scotland to be shared.

Objectives:

1. Promotion

Raise the profile of Scotland nationally and internationally, showcasing our wealth and diversity of stories and associated visitor experiences with a co-ordinated marketing and communications programme promoting responsible engagement and participation.

2. Celebration

Encourage and develop opportunities for the discovery and celebration of our stories with a focus on the tourism and events sectors.

3. Participation

Inspire the people of Scotland and our visitors to participate in activity aligned and developed in response to YS2022, with emphasis on encouraging (re)engagement of locals and broadening visitors' experiences and perceptions of Scotland.

4. Collaboration

Encourage collaborative working between the sectors represented by YS2022 themes and wider tourism sector.

5. Industry Engagement

Communicate with a wide range of businesses in tourism and other relevant sectors to help them recognise the opportunities presented by YS2022 and capitalise on those opportunities as part of Covid-19 recovery.

Despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19 affecting the planning, development, and pre-promotion stages of the year across 2020/21 (and the emergence of the Omicron variant in late 2021 into early 2022 bringing further complex operating conditions and challenges), **YS2022 met all and surpassed many of its original targets. Summary results are indicated in section 6 below.**



6. Summary Results



Objective 1: Promotion

Media reach: The Year of Stories promotional activity was wide ranging, offering many opportunities for partners to engage and amplify the message. Media impact was vast, with **2,760 pieces of coverage** reaching people an estimated **5.6bn** times in print and online. Coverage in features/travel/lifestyle publications was 100% positive in tone and news coverage was 95% positive and 5% neutral. Coverage spanned UK, North America, Europe and China, extending our reach to a global audience. Titles like BBC online, The Guardian, Vanitatis, Conde Nast Traveller, Travel Daily and sohu.com (China) featured Stories themed coverage across 2022. In addition to print and online media, YS2022 generated **112 items of broadcast coverage**. These included BBC and ITV/STV news broadcasts, as well as coverage on national and regional radio stations such as BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio Scotland, Central FM and West Sound. Highlights from the media and communications activity included:

- Scotland Week press activity in New York (April 2022) featured YS2022 themes highlighting Scotland's Myths and Legends, Robert Burns and Scotland's many book festivals generating 339 pieces of coverage and a potential 187m reach.

- The launch of Scotland's Witch Trail in September 2022 (incorporating pan-market press trips, content and PDF map on VisitScotland.com) resulted in more than 84 pieces of coverage with 30+m organic reach and a potential global reach of 249m through distribution via PR Newswire.
- The broadcast campaign for Spirit Journeys in November 2022 which showcased the Myths and Legends theme secured coverage on 38 stations (37 radio and one TV station) with an audience reach of 3.4m, and YS2022 direct mentions in 79% of coverage.
- Partnership opportunities allowed further extension of media reach, for example the sponsorship of the 'Influencer of the Year' category at the inaugural Scottish Influencer Awards recognised inspirational, distinct, and original storytelling aligned to one or more of the five YS2022 themes.

Marketing reach: In addition to media reach, the VisitScotland marketing activity and campaigns alone are estimated to have reached people a total of **148m times** across VisitScotland markets. There were also **over 4m video views** of YS2022 themed videos (promotional videos, community events videos, influencer videos and Chinese WeChat videos). An 'always on' approach adopted for the paid campaigns, ensured there was maximum reach and awareness of YS2022 messaging throughout the year.

Paid campaigns included:

- A **digital and print partnership with The List**, specifically promoting the YS2022 events programme between March and November with reach of 555k, as well as editorial and listings in **The List Guide to Scotland's Festivals 2022**.
- A **paid social and YouTube** campaign from March to November 2022, promoting the YS2022 video and driving people to the YS2022 landing page or content on VisitScotland.com. The objectives were to drive traffic and raise awareness, and there were 15.7m impressions from Facebook ads and 4.8m reach of the videos across YouTube.
- A targeted promotion on **Bauer Radio** which promoted the events programme across April to October on stations including Clyde 1, Forth 1, Northsound, Radio Borders with 19.2m impacts, and presenter visits to selected events.
- A **content partnership with The Guardian** across June to October with online articles focusing on stories in Scotland's cities, stories and tales from the Outer Hebrides, family friendly stories and locations, and film & TV locations, which delivered over 51m impressions.
- A focused events campaign to promote the wide range of supported Community events across August to October, with online articles, social media and display banners across **Reach PLC and Media Force titles** (including The Daily Record, Scotsman, Herald, Dundee Courier) delivering over 1m reach, and features in **The Skinny** weekly Zap newsletters in August and September.
- To help promote stories related attractions and experiences in the autumn shoulder season, a **Year of Stories 'Great Days Out' campaign** as part of the wider VisitScotland 'Great Days Out' activity promoted a wide range of storytelling attractions and experiences across Scotland (October to November). This campaign generated over 1.6m reach across the print and digital activity.
- A **Scottish Islands campaign** with CalMac also ran across October to November, promoting island stories and events through a print and online article in the Daily Record written by tv presenter Danni Menzies and online Teads advertising, with reach of over 1.1m.
- An **Industry Stories campaign** showcasing previous Scottish Thistle Award winners from 2019/20, celebrating the people behind the businesses and their stories, with reach of 659k.
- An influencer campaign involving three influencers delivering activity aligned to one or more of the YS2022 themes: **Scotland's Stories** activity reached people 225k times through a series of posts each aligned to a YS2022 theme across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram during August; Influencer **Ruby Granger** visited Edinburgh and The Highlands and created a 40min YouTube video showcasing literary tourism locations and experiences, and a shorter YouTube video showing her living like a Romantic Poet while in the Cairngorms – resulting in over 431k views of the YouTube videos and the accompanying Instagram Reel video, which reached people over 73k times; Influencer **Megan Beaudry** showcased Scottish film and TV locations through a series of three Instagram videos (Falkland Palace, Dunnottar Castle and Glenfinnan Viaduct) along with a video showcasing highlights of Findhorn Bay Festival and a 'learn Doric' video. Her activity reached people over 965k times, and her video content was viewed over 1m times.

Core and Aligned Activity: In addition to the paid campaigns, VisitScotland's core and aligned activity allowed the reach of YS2022 to be extended to international as well as UK audiences, given the global reach of the VisitScotland channels. **Consumer facing social media posts** across the year reached people over **40.8m times**, showcasing imagery and messaging aligned to YS2022 themes. **Consumer facing e-newsletters**, featuring content aligned to YS2022 themes and messaging, were sent to the global database of **1.2m** across the year. The YS2022 messaging was well received by all international markets, but in particular Chinese consumers responded strongly to the stories thematic across social media activity as **consumer Weibo and WeChat posts and videos reached people over 7.4m times and had over 5m post views**. Awareness days were also promoted in line with YS2022, primarily through consumer social media. These included World Book Day, World Storytelling Day, National Poetry Day and Independent Bookshop Week.

The stories thematic was weaved throughout VisitScotland communications, although not always in direct reference to Year of Stories as a whole. Recent marketing measurement study of VisitScotland UK & Ireland databases found that **18% were specifically aware that 2022 was the Year of Stories, rising to 28% for Scottish respondents**.

On the ground, to showcase YS2022 to visitors, VisitScotland's **network of iCentres** displayed point of sale encouraging visitors to ask staff about favourite Scottish stories or highlighting local tales from the surrounding area, as well as displaying the YS2022 promotional video on display screens.

Showcasing Scotland's indigenous languages:

Across the year it was important our communications showcased our indigenous languages, as part of the Scotland's People and Places theme, as well as supporting specific awareness days/weeks/anniversaries. For example:

- For World Gaelic Week in March 2022 cross channel activity included media coverage and a feature on BBC Alba, consumer social media support, Gaelic place names blog on [VisitScotland.com](https://www.visitScotland.com) and a Day in the Life article on [VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitScotland.org).

- The award-winning SEO Outreach campaign Braw Beginnings, showcased the Scots language by translating the first lines of well-known books into Scots and resulted in coverage in 244 online articles and 57 social posts about the piece including one by Ian Rankin.
- Influencer Megan Beaudry, created a short video on how to learn Doric which reached over 34k people on Instagram and continues to be shared by Simply Scotland on Instagram (February 2023 / over 105k views).



Access, Inclusion and Diversity: Including and engaging with those with protected characteristics, and making the communications as accessible as possible, was central to the approach. Communications activity included:

- BSL versions of the YS2022 main promotional film and the Community Stories legacy film.
- BSL interpretation at events, including the Year of Stories Parliamentary reception.
- Captions implemented on all promotional video content and skills development webinars.
- Reaching young people across the campaign activity – for example, children's events were promoted as part of our campaign with The List, a family audience was targeted through the Days Out campaign in autumn, influencer activity targeted younger audiences across the social media platforms and the Bauer radio campaign achieved a weekly reach of 207,000 in the 15-24 age group. Partner activity also targeted young people, including Historic Environment Scotland's If These Walls Could Talk storytelling initiative, and, of course, supported events targeted relevant audiences through their own promotions.
- Older people were also reached through Year of Stories marketing activity. The Bauer radio campaign had a weekly reach of 236,000 in the 65+ age group and 263,000 in the 55 to 64 age group. Multiple emails that included YS2022 messaging were sent to the VisitScotland consumer email database, which reaches a high proportion of older people.
- Many funded events told stories of minority ethnic, LGBTQI+ and other under-represented communities, and these events featured across the promotional campaign.
- Many events had free or affordable ticketing, and events took place in communities across Scotland. For example: one of the funded events Yoyo & The Little Auk, in collaboration with Wee Write Festival, allocated a limited number of free Yoyo tickets to newly settled Ukrainian refugee families in Scotland; as part of the 'Days Out' campaign, a number of free attractions were promoted; and across the Bauer radio campaign our messaging reached some of the most deprived areas of Scotland.
- Providing training to grantees on topics such as diversifying audiences and delivering accessible events, to influence the promotional campaigns of our grantees.



From the perspective of supported events, and further demonstrating the value of the coordinated promotional campaign:

79% of Open Fund supported events stated that

being part of YS2022 led to increased media coverage.

59% of attendees at Open Fund events and 64% of attendees at Community Stories Fund events said

they were aware the event was part of the nationwide Year of Stories campaign.

Event organisers of all types highlighted the power of being part of the Themed Year, which allowed them to grab attention and utilise the platform to maximise their own promotional potential:

“ Being part of a wider campaign made festival messaging stronger at a time of uncertainty.

– Celtic Connections

“ [The Themed Year] provided the festival with key marketing support and helped to build media and audience awareness on a national and regional scale.

– Findhorn Bay Arts

“ Being part of the Themed Year gave our organisation wider publicity and helped to promote us across the cultural sectors, locally, nationally and internationally.

– SEALL

“ We were delighted to take part in the Themed Year. It was an excellent fit for our work and a huge boost to our marketing.

– Push the Boat Out

“ Being involved with a national themed year was a wonderful opportunity to introduce new creative ideas and collaborations. It felt really positive for both the organisation and participants to know that our project was part of a larger tapestry across Scotland.

– ScrapAntics CIC

“ By being part of [the Themed Year] we were able to tap into a national programme that helped us showcase our event and wider project to a larger audience than we would have otherwise.

– Community Stories grantee

“ We have benefitted immensely from participating. It raised the profile of our project within East Ayrshire. It also allowed us to give back to people who have participated so far, by demonstrating the importance and value of their stories within the local community.

– Community Stories grantee

“ Being part of a national programme backed by National Organisations lends a certain degree of credibility and legitimacy to our small charity and reinforces that these campaigns are directed across all of Scotland - even in a rural Fife village on a wet and windy Thursday evening in November.

– Heids and Herts

Objective 2: Celebration

Creating a rich and varied events programme is a central aspect of the Themed Year approach. Events animate our places and spaces, provide exciting new hooks for media as well as impetus for participation, engagement, and event-led tourism. There were two events funding programmes and one non-funded 'partner' events programme for YS2022. The Open Events Fund opportunity was launched first in June 2021 with a two-month window for applications and a total budget of £600K. Awards between £15k - £60k were on offer. 103 applications were received. Decisions were communicated to applicants in October 2021.

Across the three programmes more than 350 events/event programmes were delivered with activity taking place in all 32 of Scotland's local authorities, in every calendar month:

- **21 larger-scale events** were awarded funding support through the YS2022 Open Events Fund, supporting established event partners to deliver higher profile, new events and programming across 24 local authorities see (Appendices 3-5).

- **183 organisations were awarded funding support** through the Community Stories Fund, which ultimately saw **180 community events and projects (including 1,002 individual events)** delivered across all 32 local authorities (see Appendices 3 and 7).
- a further **153 events registered with the Partner Events Programme**, also delivering activity across 32 local authorities (see Appendices 3 and 11).

Despite the emergence of Omicron in late 2021 threatening the delivery of early-year events, the funded events programme was successfully launched as planned in January (with some adjustments) and the impact of Covid-19 lessened as the year advanced.

The YS2022 programme also provided a strong opportunity for artists and creative talent to create and showcase new work. **A total of 6,620 opportunities were created through funded events for artists to reach new audiences.**

The Open Events Programme spanned the year, kicking off with a re-shaped YS2022 programme at **Celtic Connections** under the banner '**Whisper the Song**'. Across the

year the programme was diverse and wide reaching. From the spectacle of the 20-foot-high Hollywood style sign which appeared on Dundee Law declaring the city as 'BEANOTOWN', the home of comics, as part of **Dundee Summer (Bash) Streets Festival**, to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's '**Yoyo & The Little Auk**' which saw live orchestral and film performances entertain early years audiences and their families at various festivals and events nationwide, the Open Events Programme engaged communities and visitors across the whole of Scotland. All events were run safely and demonstrated appropriate measures were in place to respond to any evolving Covid-19 restrictions.

The Themed Years model requires the higher profile events delivered by the Open Programme to provide key highlights and a narrative for the year. However, it was clear when scoping YS2022 that the theme provided an especially effective opportunity to engage diverse communities across Scotland, providing broader opportunities for participation, engagement, and skills development. This led to VisitScotland working in an effective close partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, with support from National Lottery Heritage

Fund and Scottish Government, to create a **Community Stories Programme**. This new programme sat alongside the existing 'Open' and 'Partner' events programmes and was developed specifically to support community facing organisations and community groups to take part in the Themed Year, spotlighting the unique stories that matter to them with the creation of new, events, activities, and programming. From an initial budget of £100k carved out of the core YS2022 budget, such was the appetite to support communities that this budget was maximised more than nine-fold to £928k with additional support from partners. The Community Stories Programme included grant funding together with a 'wrap-around' programme of support and skills development for grantees:

- a **£748k grant fund** was created offering between £500 and £5k to support individual projects and events aligned with the themes.
- a **£180k 'wrap-around' programme of support** included: dedicated marketing and PR support; the creation of a community events promotional campaign; skills development webinars covering topics including marketing, delivering events online and sustainably, reaching digitally excluded audiences and diversifying audiences; training and support in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), including contributing to the national record at ICHScotland.org; the

commission of independent research to identify learnings; and, professional filming and photography of events (including asset creation for grantees).

The expansive and varied community programme contributed substantially to the overall diversity of Scotland's Year of Stories, providing a platform for under-represented groups to tell their stories, including but not limited to stories of Scotland's LGBTQI+ communities, refugees and disabled people, as well as promoting the use of Scotland's indigenous languages. A few highlights from the Community Stories Programme include **The Legend of Kinnoull Hill Dragon** which took place in Perth in November, reviving the long-forgotten ancient tradition of celebrating the slaying of the Kinnoull dragon with a spectacular new circus arts show featuring puppetry, fire breathing and knife juggling; **Govanhill Food Stories in Glasgow in August**, which used food to tell the stories of those who live in one of Scotland's most diverse communities; and **Story Ceilidh** which was delivered by Magic Torch Comics in **Greenock in September**, bringing together multicultural communities and people who have recently made Scotland their home, including young people and families from Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan, to share traditional tales, ballads and poems in Arabic, Scots and Gaelic.

A full independent evaluation report detailing the success and learnings of the Community Stories Programme has been produced (Appendices 6 & 7). Some key outcomes in terms of benefits of participation to grantees include:

- Strengthening and development of new partnerships or collaborations, supporting sustainable development
- Expanded reach of activities and audiences
- Raised profiles for participating organisations
- Discovery of innovative or new ways to deliver activity
- Opening up of new opportunities or areas of work
- Financial benefits through ticket sales, donations, or new funders
- Skills development
- Enhanced wellbeing through facilitating community connectedness



The Community Stories Programme was a successful partnership initiative, demonstrating the effectiveness of the central Themed Year principle of collaboration in full effect. The Programme hugely expanded the engagement in the Themed Year, providing a much-extended range of opportunities for engagement as well as effective skills building - **contributing to the development of thriving and resilient communities.**

The **Partner Events Programme** is a non-funded, free to access, promotional opportunity designed to allow organisations to align their events with a Themed Year and benefit from being part of the national campaign. The programme was promoted through YS2022 partners and through VisitScotland/EventScotland owned channels. A target of 100 sign-ups to the Partner Events Programme was exceeded with a final total of **153 events** registered. Partner events took place across the country and there was a huge range of types of events, including exhibitions, literary and storytelling events, science festivals, concerts, film screenings, family activities and nature-based events. Examples which illustrate the geographic and thematic spread include **National Trust for Scotland's Big Burns Night In** (online event), **Paisley Book**

Festival, the **Royal Highland Show Illuminated** which toured locations across Scotland, the **Book of Deer** exhibition in Aberdeen, **Fringe by the Sea** in North Berwick, and the **Orkney Science Festival**. The programme also included Scotland-wide programmes such as **Doors Open Day**, **Scottish Geology Festival** and **Refugee Festival Scotland**. A survey was issued to Partner Events Programme participants in March 2023. Reported benefits of being part of the programme included:

- obtaining an event listing on VisitScotland.com (86%)
- being part of the national campaign (76%)
- the opportunity for additional promotion (69%)
- reaching new audiences (66%)

Celebrating Scotland's Indigenous Languages: The events programme has also showcased Scotland's indigenous languages. All 21 Open Events featured Scotland's indigenous languages and 64 Community Stories Fund grantees reported that their events featured Scotland's indigenous languages, with 42 projects that included Scots and 29 that included Gaelic.

Encouraging Responsible Events Delivery: formal feedback gathered from funded event partners demonstrated that being part of YS2022 also inspired positive legacies in terms of responsible events delivery:

- 85% reported that the year had encouraged them to think more about sustainable events management.
- 71% implemented a new activity or process in managing their environmental impacts as a result of being part of the year.

Objective 3: Participation

The funded YS2022 event programmes more than met expectations in terms of attendances and participation with **1,421,986 people attending a funded event either in-person or online**. There were 397,284, in-person and 82,641 digital attendances across the 21 YS2022 Open Fund events and an additional 357,543 in-person and 584,518 digital attendances across the 180 Community Stories funded events. For the 153 Partner Events, the total attendance number is difficult to confidently estimate. For those Partner Events that supplied attendance information, the range was from 10 people at one small event to 57,250 across ten days at another event.



Total Number of Attendances (Open & Community Stories Fund (CSF)).....	1,421,986
Total Number of In Person Attendances (Open & CSF).....	754,827
Total Number of Digital Attendances (Open & CSF).....	667,159
Total Number of In Person Attendances (Open).....	397,284
Total Number of Digital Attendances (Open).....	82,641
Total Number of In Person Attendances (CSF).....	357,543
Total Number of Digital Attendances (CSF).....	584,518
Total Number of Artist Opportunities (Open & CSF).....	6,620
Total Number of Artist Opportunities (Open).....	1,438
Total Number of Artist Opportunities (CSF).....	5,182

Overall attendance across the full programme was high, however whilst some events exceeded expectations in terms of attendance, other events, particularly those taking place during the early part of the year when Covid-19 was still impacting our daily lives, reported lower than anticipated figures.

Event organisers also reported that they successfully expanded and diversified their audiences:

“ Being part of a Themed Year meant we were able to develop a largescale public engagement activity, which helped us reach new and more geographically dispersed audiences than we have in previous years.
 – **Edinburgh International Book Festival**

“ Both activities have been a significant contribution to our Audience Development plan for the year. The aim of diversifying our audiences includes an emphasis on attracting more family audiences to our venues. Thanks to the funding, the ability to bring in new and developing artists, and to commission new work has been a major factor in that success.
 – **Community Stories grantee**

“ The funding enabled us to be as creative as we could be, and it allowed us to put on these events without having to charge any families for their participation.
 – **Community Stories grantee**

Funded events reported on the scale of activity **specifically designed to engage** with or showcase under-represented groups:

Group	Number of events	% of programme
People on the basis of ethnicity	67	33%
People with disabilities	53	26%
LGBTQ+ individuals	26	13%
People on the basis of gender	23	11%
Children and young people	119	59%
Older people	75	37%
Faith groups or religious communities	10	5%
People on low incomes	84	42%

In terms making participation accessible, in addition to spread of activity across Scotland's communities, many events took action on financial access for example offering free tickets, operating a 'pay what you can' model or providing free transport.

Many partners reported that YS2022 provided a catalyst for (re)engagement following Covid-19:



It reconnected the libraries with their communities. Nearly every service ran at least one or two events. All of the themes really resonated with libraries and New Stories provided opportunities. For example, there were poetry workshops that looked at connecting with refugee communities. There were lots of activities and that gave libraries something positive to do after a difficult time. It was a really positive thing for libraries to reconnect with the users, and to promote Scottish storytellers and Scottish writers and books. And obviously the Themed Year was covering the whole of Scotland, so it really was a gift.

– **Scottish Library & Information Council** (Partner Case Study)

Inspiration through Participation:

YS2022 events also encouraged attendees to expand their interest in Scotland's wealth of stories.

After attending funded events:

81% of Community and 72% of Open event attendees said

they were more aware of the wealth and diversity of stories written, inspired by or created in Scotland.

75% of Community and 65% of Open event attendees said

they were more likely to visit locations or places connected with Scotland's stories.

71% of Community and 49% of Open event attendees said

they were inspired to share their own story or stories of Scotland.

Objective 4: Collaboration



I think (Themed Years) benefit smaller organisations that don't necessarily have budgets to explore collaborative opportunities. And that approach of working together brings more bang for your buck. The sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts. The Themed Year gives a platform for partnership.

– Historic Environment Scotland (Partner Case Study)

The Steering and Working Group membership represented 32 agencies and organisations. The groups brought together interests across tourism, events, creative industries, culture, heritage and more. Many of the partners for Year of Stories had not previously engaged with a Themed Year before, so the addition of their input and knowledge to shape the year was hugely beneficial. Both new and existing partners have benefitted from the exchange of knowledge and a widening of networks, which in turn has enhanced the activity delivered as part of the year and provided a strong legacy to take forward.

Following are some examples to demonstrate the range of partners involved in the delivery of collaborative work as part of the Themed Year:

- **VisitScotland** worked in partnership with **Museums Galleries Scotland** and **National Lottery Heritage Fund** to develop and deliver the **Community Stories Fund**, providing opportunities across the country for community organisations to build skills and tell the stories that matter to them.
- **Historic Environment Scotland** collaborated with **Scottish Book Trust** and **Scottish Storytelling Forum** on a competition called 'If These Walls Could Talk'. The competition encouraged young storytellers to write Scottish tales featuring historic sites, with prizes to be won and the stories showcased online.
- **Dig It!**, the hub for **Scottish archaeology**, showcased some compelling stories of archaeology and collaborated on the 'Forgotten Stories' project with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland - a film and documentary series with additional blogs and articles.
- **Scottish Book Trust** collaborated with the **Scottish Library and Information Council** as part of their **Community Campfires** events programme.
- **Literature Alliance Scotland** and their members regularly engaged in activity across the year, with events and created a blog to promote their own participation in the Themed Year and encourage stakeholders to get involved too.
- **Chamber Music Scotland** worked in partnership with literary and arts festivals and organisations across Scotland, including **Wigtown Book Festival**, **Findhorn Bay Arts** and **Lyth Arts Centre**, to deliver performances of **Songs from the Last Page**, supported through the Open Fund.
- **Figures of Speech**, a programme of cross-arts events celebrating Scottish literature through six universal themes, supported through the Open Fund, was delivered in partnership between **Scottish Storytelling Centre** and **Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust**, including collaborations with **Literature Alliance Scotland** and **Inklusion**.
- **Transgressive North and Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) / Scottish International Storytelling Festival** collaborated to create the [Map of Stories website](#) and legacy resource showcasing the diverse oral storytelling traditions and heritage of Scotland, supported by a programme of events delivered in collaboration with artists and venues across Scotland.



- **Scotland Food & Drink** collaborated with food and drink producers across Scotland for Scotland Food & Drink Fortnight in September 2022 to celebrate the stories of our unique food and drinks industry.
- The **RSNO** forged partnerships with two Scottish refugee charities: **Refuweegee** and the **Scottish Refugee Council** to widen access to the Yoyo & The Little Auk project which deepened its social impact. A learning toolkit was released on World Refugee Day (20 June) to help children better understand migration and cultural diversity and the RSNO worked with the Scottish Refugee Council to offer New Scots in Glasgow free tickets to attend the world premiere performances of Yoyo & The Little Auk at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's New Auditorium on 19 June.
- The **COAST project**, a gathering of stories from Scotland's west coast that reflect on the culture and heritage of coastal communities and how they have helped shape the world, launched during the Year of Stories. **The Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research, ruralDimensions** and **Lateral North** collaborated with 32 local Story Gatherers to bring this project to life through the Coast that Shaped the World website.
- **Scottish Poetry Library** collaborated with **Scotland's Makar Kathleen Jamie** on a contribution to the Year of Stories launch film and documented this on their website. They also worked with **Art in Healthcare** to bring artists and poets together to deliver art and written word workshops for health and wellbeing, working with care providers across Scotland.
- **VisitScotland** worked in partnership with key golf events (including **The 150th Open, The Genesis Scottish Open, Trust Golf Women's Scottish Open** and **The Rolex Senior Open**) to celebrate the Themed Year through media activity, as well weaving storytelling through 'Chip's Trip' into The 150th Open stand which had over 10,000 visitors.
- **The Spirit of the Highlands and Islands campaign**, a collaboration between **High Life Highlands** and **VisitScotland**, gathered and promoted stories that reflected the spirit of the Highlands and Islands.
- Dumfries & Galloway-based **Mostly Ghostly** teamed up with **Alive Radio** in a partnership inspired by Year of Stories to bring a storytelling element to the Alive & Local programme.
- The **Real Mary King's Close** created 'Stories & Wonders' gin tasting tours in partnership with **Edinburgh Gin**.

Social Sharing: The Year of Stories hashtags #YS2022 and #TalesOfScotland were created to encourage co-ordinated cross promotion of YS2022 activity across all our partners, with a target of 50k individual uses across the year. In total there were **60k individual** uses of the hashtags, with a wide range of partners using these in their social media posts.

Creating a Cohort: Funded events partners were brought together online for discussion, workshops and seminars across 2021 and 2022. Feedback from partners underlines how valuable the cooperative Themed Years platform and new partnerships established as a result have been, for example:

“ Being formally part of a Themed Year has been beneficial for us in the connections we have been able to build beyond the literature sector into other art forms, heritage and tourism.

– Scottish Book Trust

“ New contacts were established with user groups, artists and agents that will also be a valuable resource for future programming.

– Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

“ It has enabled the forging of productive relationships with a range of organisations and venues across the arts, hospitality, and culture sectors.

– Chamber Music Scotland

“ It has created strong links between local storytellers and authors and has greatly empowered members that were involved.

– Grassmarket Community Project



Objective 5: Industry Engagement

Despite the loss of a year's planning and pre-promotion time (due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the roll-over of the previous Themed Year into 2021) engagement from partners and stakeholders was strong.

A core aspect of industry engagement is the creation of a free to use **marketing toolkit**. This was launched on 9 September 2021 and went on to achieve **11.9k page views** against a target of 10k. The toolkit contained tips on how to get involved in the year, a dedicated image collection on VisitScotland's Digital Media Library and links to useful resources. **442** 'Supporting Year of Stories 2022' logos were downloaded from the toolkit, indicating the scale of engagement from organisations utilising the campaign platform to create their own aligned campaigns.

In comparison to previous Themed Years, much of the industry engagement activity took place online. Although perhaps more limited in the number of direct opportunities to engage industry, the results in terms of reach were significant. For example:

- The **industry webinar** hosted in September 2021 to coincide with the toolkit launch and give a comprehensive overview of opportunities for getting involved engaged **624 industry reps (234 individuals)** live at webinar plus **390 views** of the recording).
- On 13 December 2021, the YS2022 events programme was formally launched via media release and YouTube video. The video launch was chosen as an alternative to the traditional in-person event for stakeholders, which wasn't possible due to Covid-19 concerns. The video featured VisitScotland Chief Executive Malcolm Roughead, Culture Minister Jenny Gilruth MSP, Scotland's Makar, Kathleen Jamie, and Marie Christie, Head of Events Industry Development (Themed Years Lead). The launch video received **more than 800 views** and the accompanying news story on VisitScotland.org received **7,469 page views**. There were more than **130 items of media coverage** of the launch, with a **reach of 12.76m**.
- A Year of Stories **industry facing film** featuring a range of YS2022 partners outlining why they are involved in YS2022 was created and shared via VisitScotland's Connect YouTube channel in January 2022 achieving **265 views**.
- In January 2022, Year of Stories was the topic for the monthly online tourism discussion **#ScotlandHour** on Twitter. The @ScotlandHour Twitter account has more than 9,000 followers and the discussion helped to encourage industry engagement with the Themed Year on social.
- VisitScotland's **Tourism Insider e-newsletter** for industry, which has 13,500 subscribers, included links to Year of Stories activity, articles and toolkit on VisitScotland.org in **37** separate emails. YS2022 also regularly featured on VisitScotland's industry-facing **LinkedIn** (53,531 followers) and **Twitter** channels (99 tweets achieved 240,046 impressions) and posts reached 3,974 members of closed regional Facebook groups.
- In terms of Travel Trade industry engagement, a presentation featuring YS2022 was used at global events and a dedicated Themed Years **Travel Trade page** was created, achieving **1,150 page views**. A bespoke Travel Trade Year of Stories video was also created, highlighting destinations and attractions that aligned with the theme.
- **YS2022 Travel Trade itineraries** were created in seven different languages including English, Chinese, German, French, Dutch, Spanish and Italian – these were **viewed 2,144 times** on the travel trade site. YS2022 featured in the Travel Trade e-zine in January 2021 and was also promoted via the Travel Trade LinkedIn account (1,323 followers).

- At the **Discover Scotland 2022** virtual event for travel trade in April, YS2022 was promoted with a dedicated webinar "Scotland's Themed Years - Maximising the Opportunities for Year of Stories 2022" and the YS2022 travel trade video was showcased between 1-2-1 appointments. As part of the **Discover Scotland Live Showcases in May and September 2022**: a brief to Year of Stories was shared in the buyer itineraries to be consulted during fam trips; STGA tour guides were briefed to include YS2022 during trips; and the Themed Year was promoted during networking dinners.
- For the first time, a **Themed Years category** was introduced to **tour listings** on VisitScotland.com. In October 2021, a communication was sent to more than 850 tour operators registered with VisitScotland, to highlight that if they were operating tours in 2022 which aligned with any of the five programme strands then they could add 'Year of Stories' to their tour listing. Visitors who wanted to experience the Themed Year were easily able to find appropriate tours via the search function on VisitScotland.com. At least 68 tours were listed using this function.
- YS2022 content was weaved into trade webinars, meetings and presentations for **North America and China markets** - delivered to over **2,000 travel trade contacts**.

- VisitScotland teams included YS2022 messages in their (online and in-person) presentations at more than **20 tourism and industry conferences, stakeholder events and meetings** from September 2021 to December 2022 reaching **hundreds of attendees**.

VisitScotland also worked hard to create specific promotional opportunities that would engage and showcase industry, for example:

- An **Industry Stories marketing campaign** showcased 16 previous 2019/20 Scottish Thistle Award-winning businesses, bringing their stories to a wider audience. The publishing partnership with **Reach PLC** included Daily Record print and digital articles, 17 regional print articles and digital articles on the Edinburgh and Glasgow Live websites. Businesses featured had strong geographic spread and represented a variety of sectors, including accommodation, food and drink, visitor attractions and activity providers. The campaign performed well, with an **editorial print reach of 329k**, more than **7k native page views**, a **Facebook reach of more than 122k** and over **200k digital display impressions**.
- **Case studies** were created and published online on VisitScotland.org to showcase the ways in which partners and the wider industry engaged with and benefited from the Themed Year, and to provide inspiration

to those interested in participating. **Five case studies** were produced, highlighting **30 individual businesses and organisations** who had engaged and created content, product or activity to directly align with YS2022. To date these have received a total of **1,042 page views**. A full list of organisations profiled can be found in the Case Studies Appendix 10.

- The 'Day in the Life' series was established as part of Year of Coasts & Waters 20/21 and continued for Year of Stories 2022. Monthly interviews featured a range of people working in the tourism, events, culture and heritage sectors, who have a passion for Scotland's stories and whose work was part of the Themed Year. 12 interviews were published between January and December 2022, attracting **2,658 page views**, with an additional 516 views of the Day in the Life landing page. The top performing articles were interviews with John Norman MacDonald, Gaelic Bookshop Manager, Kenneth Bramham, tour guide and Chris Waddell, Learning Manager at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. (List of all those profiled is in Appendix 10).

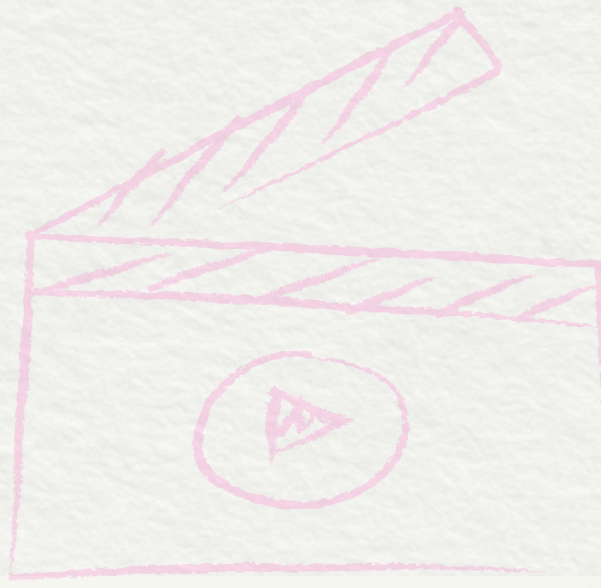
In December 2022 more than 100 guests (including 30 cross-party MSPs) attended a Year of Stories-themed **Parliamentary Reception**. Featuring speeches by Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business, Tourism, Trade and Enterprise and Neil Gray MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, the reception provided an opportunity for stakeholders to network and celebrate the success of the year.

Innovation through Inspiration: There were many examples of innovative new product, campaigns and initiatives created by industry to celebrate Year of Stories. Examples include:

- **Publishing Scotland** adapted their biannual catalogues to tie in with the Year of Stories themes and branding. They published a wealth of online content to complement the ethos of the year and partnered with book festivals across the country to sponsor events that spotlighted their member publishers and their output.
- Multiple **Destination Marketing Organisations** created new content for Year of Stories, including **Venture North** (promotion of local storytellers and creation of 'Tales and Legends' map), **Visit Inverness Loch Ness** ('Discover Our Stories' video

and influencer work), **Visit Moray Speyside** (#TalesOfMoraySpeyside campaign and blog series), **VisitAberdeenshire** ('Stories of our Home' campaign inc. films promoting local businesses and attractions), **VisitCairngorms** ('Characters of the Cairngorms' campaign featuring blogs, podcasts and video) and **Destination Orkney** ('Discover Orkney's Stories' hero film).

- **The South of Scotland Destination Alliance** also created a campaign inspired by YS2022 - 'Stories Start Here'. The campaign highlighted bookable products and showcased the south of Scotland as a literary tourism destination. It involved the creation of eight trails and itineraries, two immersive apps, four new videos and a Robert Burns Minecraft game. 1,500 new images of the regions were captured, 50 businesses were engaged and there were 7,800 unique visits to the campaign landing page.



- The **Scottish Tourist Guides Association** created a dedicated Year of Stories web page with new monthly content in a range of formats including videos, podcasts and written stories.
- Edinburgh-based **Merchat Tours** created a social impact project - 'Our Stories, Your City' - to support vulnerable people in Edinburgh through storytelling. They also partnered with the **Scottish Storytelling Forum**, as part of its **Talking Statues** project, to deliver an Edinburgh walking tour which explores Edinburgh's different statues, sharing history from a variety of diverse and under-represented backgrounds.
- **NorthLink Ferries** introduced a wide range of activities for the year, including a short story competition, online content, a children's activity sheet and 'share your story' postcards for passengers.
- The **Scottish Library and Information Council** ran a range of initiatives throughout the year and many individual libraries hosted their own events and projects. Activities included the 'Keep the Heid and Read!' Campaign, which asked people to pledge six minutes devoted to reading and included a book giveaway to celebrate Year of Stories.



- **National Trust for Scotland** created a range of new online content for the year, including blogs that explored some of the best libraries in the NTS estate and a look at Scottish storytelling traditions. They also delivered partner events, including Big Burns Night In and Brodie Illuminated.
- **Glamis Castle** took inspiration from YS2022 to put on a summer festival and Great Storytelling Search in July.
- **Shetland Museum and Archives** created a dedicated web page in celebration of the Themed Year, as well as hosting a series of events to showcase local community stories.
- YS2022 provided the inspiration for a new product created by **Isle of Cumbrae Distillers**, who produced a new gin – Maura – which celebrates Scotland's women, who helped shape its history, legends and stories of the sea.
- **The Scotch Whisky Experience** on Edinburgh's Royal Mile created the #collectionchronicles social campaign to highlight a different story each week about one of the bottles in their whisky collection and also included stories in their Tasting Tales events.
- **Rosslyn Chapel** launched an initiative which asked visitors from around the world to share a story about the attraction.
- **The West Highland Way** launched the 'People, Place & Passion: Gaelic Stories on the West Highland Way' project, an online resource supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
- **Keep Scotland Beautiful** used YS2022 as a category for their popular annual Pocket Garden competition for schools, and also used it as a theme for one of the online events in their Scotland's Climate Festival National Events Series.
- In support of YS2022, **Hostelling Scotland** created a video inspired by the poignant and insightful diaries written by 17-year-old Mary Harvie in the summer of 1936. The film was promoted at in-person screenings and on social media.
- **The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE)** used YS2022 as an editorial theme in their ReSourcE magazine for summer 2022 and signed up their August series events – Curious 2022 – to the YS2022 Partner Events Programme.
- Women authors were the focus of activity by the **National Records of Scotland (NRS)** during the Themed Year, including publication of two new entries in the Hall of Fame for Susan Edmonstone Ferrier and Nan Shepherd.

7. Recovery Context and Impacts

The ongoing impacts of Covid-19 were still very much being felt across the tourism and events sectors while the Year of Stories was being planned and promoted across 2021 - and into 2022 delivery.

The £600k **Open Events Programme** was launched on 18 June 2021. Applicants were asked to be specific about their approach to Covid-19 risks and managing uncertainty as well as specifying how plans might be adapted considering any emerging restrictions or issues at the time of event delivery. The fund closed for applications on 12 August 2021. It received a strong response with 103 applications and an overall ask of over £4m demonstrating the vital need for funding support and new opportunities within the sector at the time. The emergence of the Omicron variant at the end of 2021 placed further uncertainty around the planned programme launch on 14 December 2021 (which was delivered digitally) and initial events in plan during the first quarter of 2022. As the year progressed, the knock-on impacts of Covid-19 as well as rising costs, resource, and staffing challenges, altered audience behaviours and ticket booking trends and the cost-of-living crisis were all emerging issues that event organisers and partners were navigating throughout the period of delivery.

The Community Stories Programme was delivered within the same context. Round 1 opened on 11 August 2021 and closed on 1 October 2021, with a total of 135 applications received representing a total ask of over £500k. Support was agreed for 47 projects at the Round 1 panel meeting that took place on 8 November 2021. 2 projects were subsequently forced to cancel so a total of 45 projects were supported through Round 1. Round 2 opened on 24 January 2022 and closed on 18 March 2022, with a total of 266 applications received representing an ask of over £1m. Additional investment from NLHF and Scottish Government meant that it was possible to support a more substantial percentage of applications than the original budget would have allowed. Support was agreed for a total of 136 projects at the Round 2 decision panel on 25 April 2022. 1 project was subsequently forced to cancel so 135 projects were supported through Round 2, and a total of 180 projects across two rounds of funding were supported (183 including the three cancelled projects).

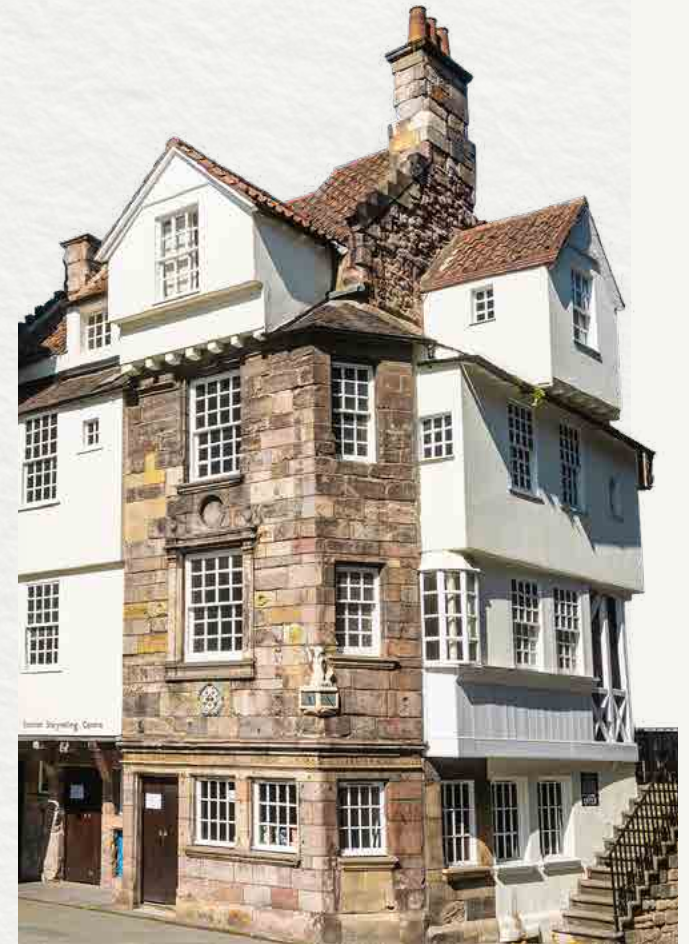
VisitScotland's overarching approach was to work pro-actively with event organisers and wider partners as they navigated the evolving situation, taking a flexible approach and allowing partners to reshape and/or postpone their plans if the situation demanded. The result was that all 21 Open Fund Events and 180 Community Stories Fund Events were able

to go ahead across 2022, with funded activity taking place in every local authority and in every calendar month. Impacts of Covid-19 were thus well managed and minimised. The sixth and final event in the Figures of Speech series was delayed until February 2023 after the planned October event was postponed due to artist illness, and a couple of Community Stories events delivered some aspects of their activity into 2023.

Impacts on Marketing and Industry

Engagement Activity. Although YS2022 was developed as collaborative platform to assist recovery and was regarded as a positive strategy, the operating context obviously presented some key challenges. Industry was facing significant issues including staffing and skills shortages, increasing supply chain and utilities costs, etc meaning some tourism businesses reported they simply didn't have the capacity to proactively engage with the Themed Year as they previously had or would like to. Also, compared to previous Themed Years, there were far fewer tourism conferences and in person events that took place across 21/22.

This meant there was a reliance on getting the message out digitally through industry comms. Despite the challenging circumstances, the level of industry engagement remained strong which can be seen from the wide and varied range of partners who engaged with the Year and are featured in this report. The Working Group provided an excellent forum to share information and test thinking. For example, the YS2022 Days Out marketing campaign, focusing on affordable days out and attractions, was in direct response to the Working Group and industry reporting that the attractions sector was struggling post-Covid-19. There was a focus on promoting storytelling attractions and experiences that were either free or had provided a discounted offer, being mindful of the cost-of-living crisis impacting on consumers during autumn 2022.



8. Ongoing Impact and Future Appetite

Feedback from partners detailed in the Partner Organisation Case Studies ([Appendix 8](#)) highlight that participation in a Themed Year can have an ongoing positive impact:

““ For me as an artist I have received funding from Creative Scotland to record an album and present a residency at the Fringe for a week. It's not over yet. The narrative of impact is still going. That is all off the back of the Themed Year.

– Songs from the Last Page

““ It's hard to think of Year of Stories in isolation. The Themed Years are becoming very important for artists. They really chalk up cultural value. We start to depend on them. I remember Coasts and Waters, and I was involved in Homecoming, and we are curious about seeing the next theme. It is part of the fabric of making work for artists. I know less about how it sits in the public consciousness, but for artists it's as important as the Proms in London. It allows so many artists to reach audiences.

– Chamber Music Scotland

““ We have also seen a benefit related to Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Previously you could talk about it, and no one really knew what you were talking about, but talking about the storytelling part of our heritage and people helps to make it more real. I think the Year of Stories has given a more accessible platform to talk about ICH.

– Historic Environment Scotland

““ That partnership working brought diverse content to our festivals, and it brought diverse participation which helped us to deliver against our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. It has also seeded new work for the future.

– TRACS / Scottish International Storytelling Festival)

““ There have been ongoing partnerships and further partnerships that have been developed because of the Year of Stories. That includes some funding opportunities that have emerged that we have been able to take advantage of and that have affirmed the role of storytellers. Through the Year we have seen storytellers enhanced, and further opportunities for employment, and I don't see that petering out. The Year of Stories had boosted the profile of storytelling as a kind of art form in its own right... I think there are ongoing benefits to collaboration with other partners, and specifically around strategic policy advancement around ICH.

– TRACS / Scottish International Storytelling Festival

““ I'm hopeful that it created new connections and opportunities. This is something we will follow up on as part of our overall strategy. I think it's been a great opportunity for us.

– Scottish Library & Information Council

There is a considerable appetite from partners to participate in future Themed Years. When asked, 96% of all event partners stated they would like to participate in future Themed Years and the Partner Organisation Case Studies ([Appendix 8](#)) underline this enthusiasm:



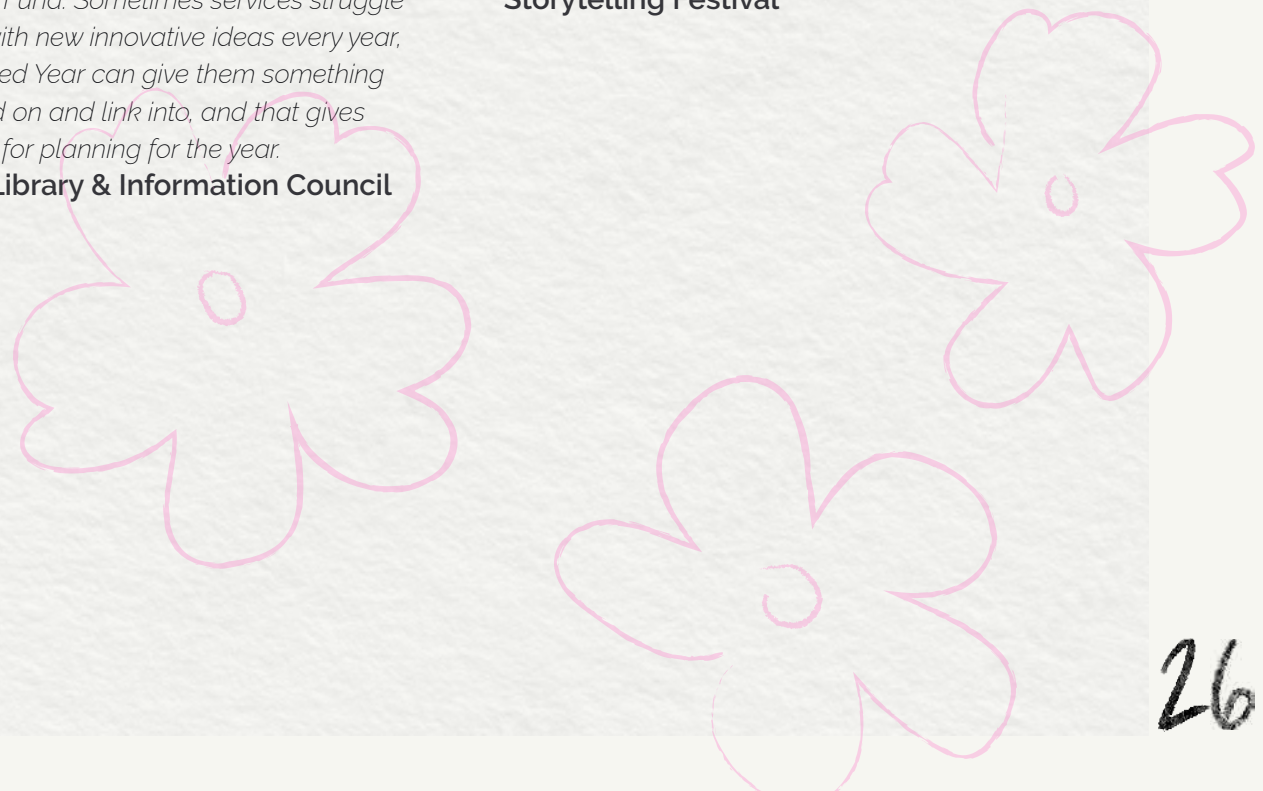
”” *Absolutely! The regular update meetings brought an awareness of organisations – including some I had never heard of – and it was great to have that opportunity to become aware of everything that was going on. It creates a cohesive offer.*
– Publishing Scotland

”” *Only a fool would say no if the theme is a good fit.*
– Chamber Music Scotland

”” *Absolutely. It helps the services, and it also provides them with opportunities to respond to the Public Library Improvement Fund. Sometimes services struggle to come up with new innovative ideas every year, but the Themed Year can give them something they can build on and link into, and that gives them a focus for planning for the year.*
– Scottish Library & Information Council

”” *Yes, we'll continue to be part of them. We find that some themes are easier to apply than others, and Year of Stories was particularly good, but we can usually find something to do to support the theme.*
– Historic Environment Scotland

”” *Absolutely. Obviously, we have to make a judgment each time according to the theme, thinking about how we would come at it and encourage our networks to get involved. We would definitely encourage other organisations to engage with the Themed Year... It's good for them, it's a development opportunity.*
– TRACS / Scottish International Storytelling Festival



9. Key Learnings and Commentary



YS2022 was delivered in the context of recovery. The drive to deliver it in 2022 as planned was fully supported by the events, tourism and related sectors as represented by the Steering and Working Groups. It embodied a positive, proactive strategy that relied on effective partnership working and the creation of a collaborative platform to multiply our individual efforts and deliver a range of valuable impacts. Some of the key/reinforced learnings include:

Importance of collective action to aid recovery:

YS2022 provides an example of what can be delivered, even in a challenging operating context, by working together with clear objectives and a common goal.

Importance of effective planning and preparation:

Themed Years rely on effective partnership working and this requires time to develop and secure. Although planning and pre-promotion time for YS2022 was in effect reduced to one year, the fact that the theme and date had been announced some years before ensured that many potential partners were already thinking about their response to the theme in their own strategic planning. Future years require the appropriate planning time to ensure success and maximise partnerships.

Importance of Themed Years for industry development:

Themed Years provide an excellent collaborative focus to facilitate sharing of good practice and advancement of sector priorities. As part of the approach to managing the events programme, grantees were effectively invited to be part of a YS2022 cohort that sought to advance good practice around aspects such as delivering sustainable events and fore-fronting equality, access and diversity. Supported events demonstrated new developments and activities across these aspects were delivered in direct response to being part of YS2022.

Importance of bringing together partners across sectors:

Themed Years provide a tried and tested mechanism to bring a wide range of partners together across the events, tourism and theme-related sectors to showcase and promote Scotland's assets. With a shared focus, and by bringing together those that may not naturally collaborate, this approach generates innovation, new lasting partnerships and new products.

Importance of direct support for industry through Marketing and Communications Campaigns:

The paid marketing campaign for YS2022 was 'always on', ensuring our messaging and activity was consistently visible across the year. This allowed the tailoring of campaigns to promote relevant messaging at key times of the year and allowed the provision of direct support to industry over autumn/winter 2022 when they most needed support. For example, the autumn Great Days Out and Industry Stories campaigns featured more than 50 businesses.

Importance of facilitating engagement with Communities:

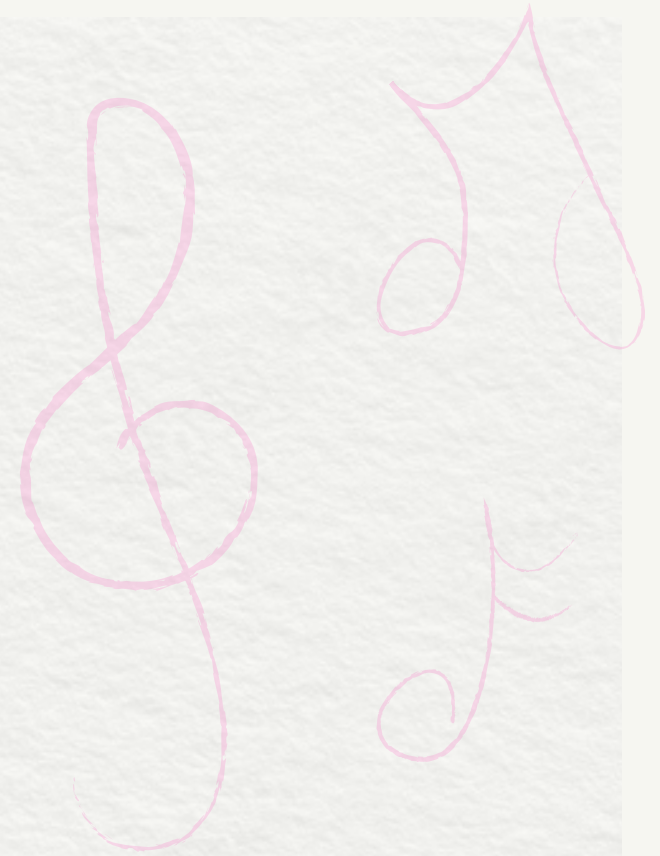
The YS2022 Community Stories Programme was not only successful in engaging diverse communities across Scotland through the 1000+ individual YS2022 events that were delivered, but it provided valuable skills development and learning opportunities for grantees through the 'wrap around' programme of support. The Programme's independent report ([Appendices 6 & 7](#)) evidences a wide range of benefits for participant organisations and their communities, helping them thrive and develop resilience.

Importance of selecting a theme that all parts of Scotland can respond to:

The selection of a theme that all parts of Scotland can see itself in - and reflect its strengths through - is a key principle of the Themed Years approach. The excellent engagement that the Stories theme was able to generate across sectors (even with a shortened time frame and in challenging operating conditions) underlines the importance of selecting a broad yet distinct theme.

Impact of Themed Years in contributing to wider Scottish Government strategies:

YS2022 has contributed to Scotland's vision to create a 'wellbeing economy'. It has encouraged innovation, collaboration, skills development, and knowledge sharing. It has spread the benefit to communities across the whole of Scotland, supporting and inspiring activity that is accessible to all and encouraging good practice in inclusion, diversity, and responsible tourism/ events delivery.



10. Budget Summary

	Available Funding	Funding Utilised
Scottish Government (Ringfenced)	£520,000	£520,000
VisitScotland (Grant In Aid)	£570,000	£570,000
National Lottery Heritage Fund	£500,000	£492,499
Museums Galleries Scotland	£100,000	£98,500
SG Community Stories Fund Top Up	£242,000	£238,369
Gross Total	£1,932,000	£1,919,368

	Projected Expenditure	Final Expenditure
Open Events Fund	£600,000	£600,000
Community Stories Programme	£942,000	£927,868
Marketing, Comms and Engagement	£320,000	£316,930
Staff	£70,000	£74,570
Gross Total	£1,932,000	£1,919,368

Contact us if you have any queries via ThemedYears@visitscotland.com

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