

Agenda Item	5
Report No	G/02/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 28 March 2024

Report Title: Blas 2023 Festival Report

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 A Blas Report was submitted to the Gaelic Committee on 8 December 2023. The report gave a detailed over-view to Members, of the breadth of events, performances, concerts, workshops, and school activities which took place in communities across the Highlands and Islands. The 2023 Festival is the 19th annual Blas Festival which the Highland Council has supported.
- 1.2 The Festival took place between Friday 1st and Saturday 9th September. It was agreed at the December 2023 Gaelic Committee that a further Blas Festival report would be submitted to the Committee, which would focus on the impact of the Festival on the area.
- 1.3 **Paragraph 6** of this report includes detailed information which was submitted by the Chief Executive of Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnanG), and the Fèis Development Manager.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the success of the 2023 Blas Festival.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
The Highland Council provides support towards the Blas Festival. This has enabled FnanG to attract additional funding from other organisations including Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig. For the first time, Iomairt Cholm Cille funding and other key agencies and organisations also supported Blas.
- 3.2 Legal

There are currently no legal implications

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The Blas Festival takes place in community halls and venues across the Highlands and Islands. Blas also engages with local event promoters and volunteers who assist with the promotion and the organisational logistics of the Blas events in communities.

The on-line opportunities provided on Zoom and Teams also adds to and enhances the opportunity and choice of participating and engaging in-order to offer wider access to engagement with Blas.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

Several Blas festival events took place online. 98% of the promotional material was issued digitally. FnanG maximise the use of all social media platforms, when promoting the events.

3.5 Risk

The Highland Council support is crucial in relation to the Blas Festival.

3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

FnaG, organise all technical equipment and processes through their procedures and work with local promoters.

3.7 Gaelic

Blas promotes and includes Gaelic in all concerts, events, and activities which also includes a Gaelic speaking Fear an Taighe (Master of Ceremonies). Blas Festival has a programme of important events regarding the promotion of Gaelic and its associated, Culture.

Blas also provides a platform for Gaelic speaking performers of all ages to use and speak Gaelic. Several of the Blas events are also performed at the internationally renowned Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow which takes place annually mid to end January.

4. Blas Festival Programme

4.1 The Highland Council's financial contribution enabled FnanG, (who manage and organise the Blas Festival) to leverage funding from other key organisations such as Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and, and for the first time, Iomairt Cholm Cille.

4.2 Blas Festival included artists from communities across the country as well as leading artists from Ireland, England and Australia.

Over the 9 days of the festival the following was offered:

- 25 concerts and cèilidhs
- 2 Gaelic song sessions
- An online Gaelic workshop
- 2 school performances from festival artists
- A theatre tour for Highland schools where Gaelic Learners is taught
- Music and Gaelic song sessions in Highland primary schools
- Blas offered 3 free workshops/session during the festival which was attended by an international audience of over 100 people

- Deirdre Graham led an interactive Gaelic song session
- Alec MacDonald delivered a workshop on Gaelic idiom and proverbs
- Mary Ann Kennedy led a Gaelic song session on puirt-a-beul.

5. Partnerships, Ticketing, Audiences, Cost of Living Crises

- 5.1 Blas continue to work closely with a network of local promoters for all events that took place across the Highlands. TicketSource was the main ticketing platform and local sales were offered through their network of event promoters. Their Livestreamed concert was delivered through YouTube and the Zoom platform was used to deliver their online workshops.
- 5.2 The cost-of-living crisis was taken into consideration. Blas maintained ticket prices at previous levels. Options were priced between £14-18 depending on the event with concession prices available and group discounts for families. Blas also continued an offer of a £5 ticket to young people. Their online programme of Livestreamed concerts and workshops were all free with the option to submit a donation.

6. Statistics and Audience Feedback

- 6.1 The tables and the graphics below show the main statistics for the 2023 Festival along with audience settings and a selection of comments.

Attendance	Number
Staff	10
Volunteers	102
Contractors	72
Performers	240
Audience	6,791
Tutors	3
Total	7,218

Audience Satisfaction	Rating
Value for Money	99%
Enjoyment of the event	98%
Use of Gaelic	90%
Overall rating	96%

- 6.2 The following are a selection of comments as they appeared on the Blas Festival online questionnaire:

The following is a selection of comments, reproduced as they appeared in the online questionnaire:

"Tachartasan agus fèis sònraichte math is sònraichte cudromach. Mealaibh ur naidheachd air program air leth agus airson a chur air dòigh a dh'aindeoin nan duilgheadasan an cois iomairt mar sin san latha an-diugh".

"Bha an oidhche sin mìorbhalach dhomhsa. B' urrainn dhomh mo Ghàidhlig cleachadh. Chaidh mi dhan chuirm-ciùil airson seann sgoilearan agamsa a chluinntinn. B' e sònraichte a bh' ann luchd-ciùil ùr a chluinntinn cuideachd. Mòran taing airson cothroman còltach ri seo a thachairt."

"Wonderful evening, lovely community vibe. Felt really welcomed despite being from far away. Learnt some dancing."

"The Rita Hunter Ceilidh was just wonderful and very very special. Thank you Blas, Brilliant show"

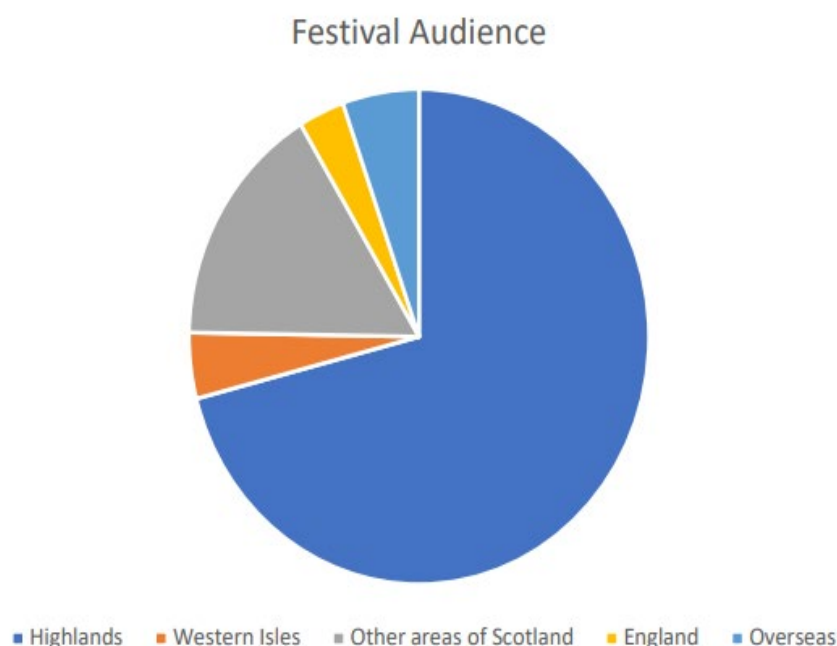
"The 3 events I attended were fantastic, the Ceòl na Fèis was particularly good giving our young people a great opportunity. I hope this will be replicated next year. Tapaidh leibh."

"Love that the young and learning musicians are supported and perform along with or as well as the professional musicians."

"All the singers and musicians were excellent on the night. The harmony of both the brother's and sisters' acts was a delight to experience."

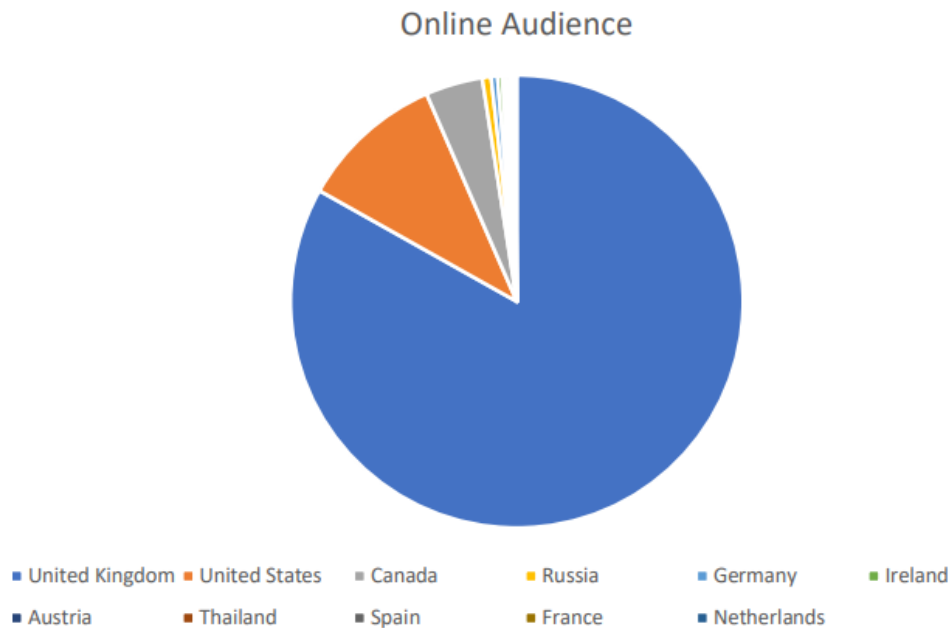
6.3 A significant majority of the Blas Festival audience came from within the Highlands as reflected in the chart below which was submitted by FnanG.

6.4 Members will see that there were international visitors from France, America, Germany, Ireland, Australia, America and Canada.



The Blas Festival online audience was international, with audiences watching the livestreams from the UK, USA, Canada, Russia, Germany, Ireland, Austria, Thailand, Spain, France and The Netherlands.

6.5



At the end of November, representatives from the Gaelic Team and the Head of Lifelong Learning and Gaelic Services met with the Chief Executive of FnanG and the Manager of FnaG and they informed us of the following:

Blas 2023 was reduced in scale due to increasing costs. FnanG shared that audience levels were positive. FnanG stated that reduced funding from other organisations had impacted the festival. They highlighted that greatly increased costs meant they were unable to deliver a festival programme with the same number of events, or artists, that was achievable in previous years. They highlighted the challenges and strengths which are detailed below.

6.6 Challenges:

- Accommodation costs during September
- Not sustainable to run the festival in its current format with the present levels of funding.

6.7 Strengths:

- Overall satisfaction rating of 96% with the cultural and linguistic outcomes, for the 2023 Festival
- Great demand for Blas
- Economic impact in the areas where the Blas Festival events take place across the Highland communities
- Blas Festival is a real feast, allowing communities across the Highlands, and visitors, to celebrate their linguistic and cultural heritage, music and song.
- Raises the profile, and enhances Gaelic and Cultural Tourism in the Highlands
- Additional funding has been attracted into the Highlands and positive partnerships have been formed with Highland Council, Creative Scotland and Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Designation:

Date: 28 February 2024

Author: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell

(Supporting information provided by Fèisean nan Gàidheal)

Background Papers:

Appendices:

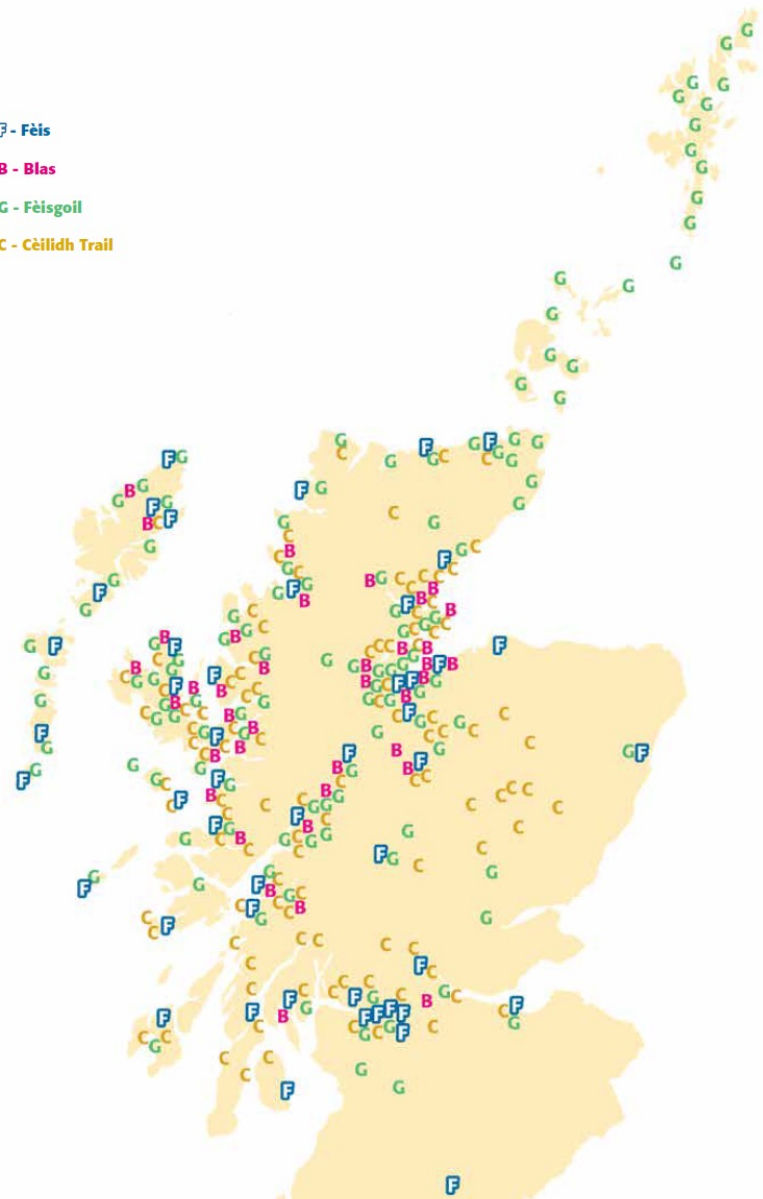


A' toirt ar dualchais do ar n-òigridh



**Tachartasan a' ruighinn mu 300
coimhearsnachd air feadh Alba is
luchd-amharc thall thairis**
**Events reaching around 300
communities across Scotland and
audiences abroad**

- F - Fèis
- B - Blas
- G - Fèisgoil
- C - Cèilidh Trail





F - Fèis
B - Blas
G - Fèisgoil
C - Cèilidh Trail

19 (41%) Fèisean air a' Ghàidhealtachd | 19 Fèisean in Highland

Fèis Air an Oir

Fèis a' Bhaile

Fèis a' Bhealaich

Fèis Chataibh

Fèis Eige

Fèis an Earraich

Fèis Farr

Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan

Fèis Ghallaibh

Fèis Ghleann Albainn

Fèis an Iar Thuath

Fèis Inbhir Narainn

Fèis na Linne

Fèis Lochabair

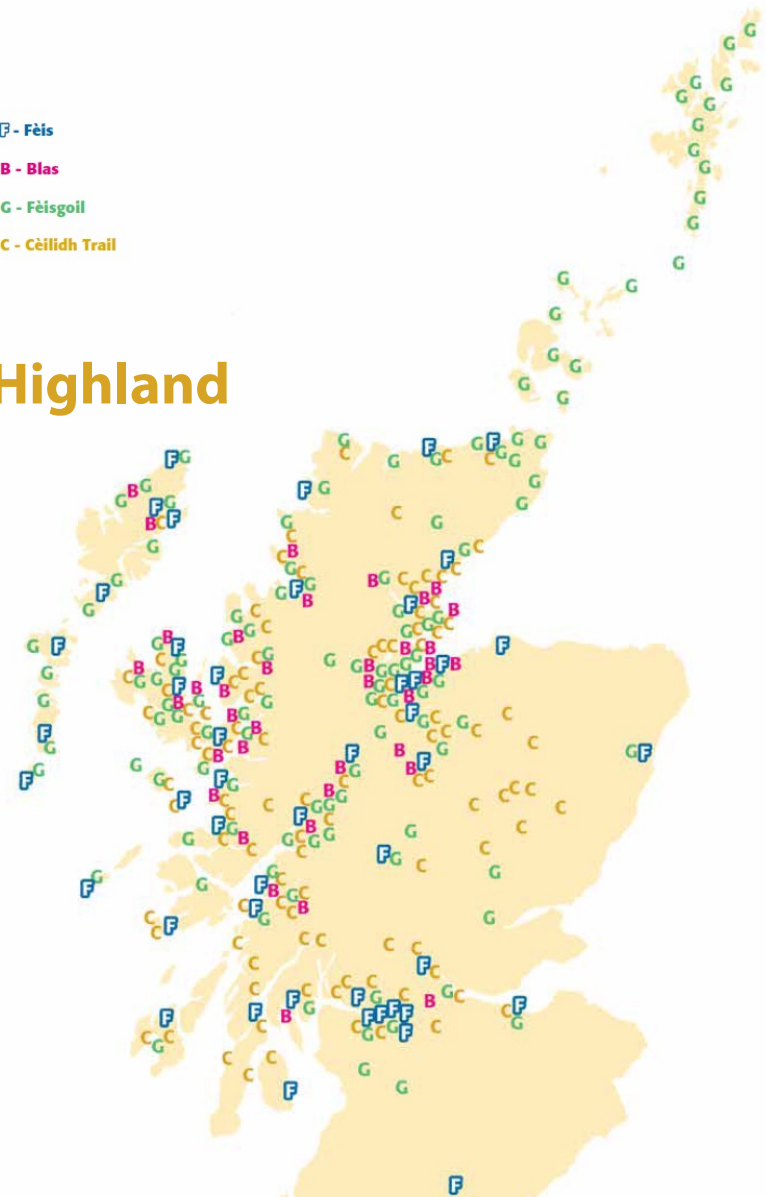
Fèis na h-Òige

Fèis Òigridh na Mara

Fèis Rois

Fèis Spè

Fèis Thròndairnis





Taic do na Fèisean | Support for Fèisean

- Taic-airgid | Grants
- Cèilidhean air Chuairt | Cèilidh Trails
- Com-pàirt ann am Blas | Participation in Blas
- Oifigear Leasachaidh | Development Officer
- Cleachdadh na Gàidhlig | Gaelic Use
- Àrachas | Insurance
- Trèanadh | Training
- Deuchainnean-sgrùdaidh | Disclosures
- Ionnsramaidean-chiùil | Musical instruments
- Goireasan-teagaisg | Learning resources
- Poileasaidhean agus Planaichean | Policies and Plans





Com-pàirteachas le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd | Partnership with The Highland Council

A' dol air ais gu 1994 | Goes back to 1994

Taic do na Fèisean | Support for Fèisean

- £22,100 (18%) towards grants of £119k (9.6% of £230k)
- £15,694 towards a Development Officer (used to be 2)

Taic do Bhlas | Support for Blas

- £62,869 (30-44%) towards total costs of £209k (2022)/£143k (2023)

Ceò traidiseanta anns na sgoiltean (ICO le HLnG) | Traditional music in schools (YMI with HLH)

- £155,000 for 8 lessons (used to be 16) in all Highland primary schools + online cèilidhs





Buannachdan

- Eòlas air dualchas na Gàidhealtachd
- Cothroman a' Ghàidhlig a chleachdadh
- Leudachadh foghlam òigridh
- Neartachadh choimhearsnachdan
- Buaidh air slàinte is sunnd
- Buaidh air gualan a lùghdachadh
- Buaidh eaconomach
- £12 ga chosg mu choinneamh gach £1





Benefits

- Knowledge of Highland culture
- Opportunities for Gaelic use
- Extending young people's education
- Strengthening communities
- Impact on health and wellbeing
- Impact on carbon reduction
- Economic impacts
- £12 spent for every £1





Ann an 2022-23 ràinig ar n-obair **89,079** neach

- Ghabh **4,562** pàirt anns na Fèisean le taic bho Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- Fhuair **693** oidean agus **1,126** luchd-ealain cosnadh agus bha **524** saor-thoilich an sàs
- Fhuair **15,407** sgoilearan oideachadh tro Fhèisgoil ann an **3,897** seiseanan
- Bha **4,583** an làthair aig tachartasan Blas
- Bha **46** Fèisean nam ball den bhuidhinn
- Thug sinn tabhartasan luach **£293,607** do na Fèisean
- Thug sinn **£83,027** do phròiseactean tro na sgeamaichean maoin eachaidh Tasgadh agus Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig aig Alba Chruthachail le luach **£205,241** gu h-iomlan, **7,596** daoine an sàs ann an **129** cuirmean, **22** coimiseanan ùra agus **132** seiseanan teagaisg
- Bha teachd a-steach **£3.247m** eadar Fèisean nan Gàidheal agus Fèisean agus chum an obair ga mìneachadh nar n-Aithisg Bhliadhnail taic ri **94.9** dreuchdan CLU





Work engaged **89,079** people during 2022-23

- **4,562** young people took part in Fèisean supported by Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- **693** tutors and **1,126** performers were employed and **524** volunteers engaged
- **15,407** school pupils engaged in Fèisgoil activities which included **3,897** sessions
- **4,583** attended Blas events
- **46** Fèisean were members of the organisation
- We granted **£293,607** to Fèisean
- We granted **£83,027** to projects through the Creative Scotland funded Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig grant programmes, which had a combined value of **£205,241** and involved **7,569** people in **129** performances, **22** new commissions and **132** workshop sessions
- Between Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Fèisean turnover was **£3.247m** supporting the activity detailed in the Annual Report and **94.9FTE** posts





Obair Fèisean nan Gàidheal fad na bliadhna

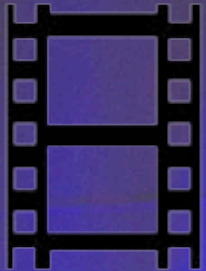
Fèisean nan Gàidheal's year-round programme





Fèisean and Regular Classes

vblas festival







festiv





Cèilidhean air Chuairt





Cèilidh Trails @ Opening of Edinburgh International Festival



Fuaran





5 Latha



FèisTV & Oide



MU OIDE

AR CÙRSAICHEAN

TÒISICH AN SEO

MU OIDE

AR CÙRSAICHEAN

TÒISICH AN SEO



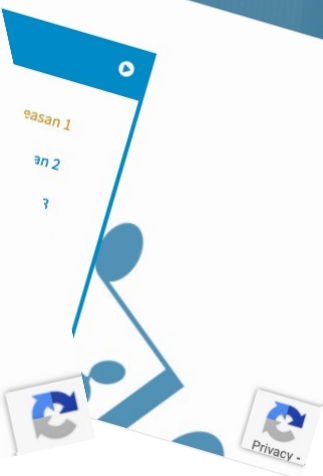
ÒRAIN GHÀIDHLIG - ADHARTACH - LEASAN 1

CH - LEASAN 1

TUILLEADH LEASANAN

- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 1
- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 2
- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 3
- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 4
- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 5
- Òrain Ghàidhlig - Adhartach - Leasan 6

Oide





Bidh Fèisgoil a' lìbhrigeadh sheirbheisean cànanain, ciùil, dràma, ealain is cultair do sgoiltean, ùghdarrasan ionadail agus buidhnean poblach air feadh Alba, glè thric gan cuideachadh Planaichean Gàidhlig a thoirt gu buil.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal's formal education service – Fèisgoil - delivers Gaelic language, drama, music and cultural arts sessions to schools, local authorities and public bodies throughout Scotland, very often helping to deliver Gaelic Language Plans.





Cànan - GME

feisean NAN GAIDHEAL

HUB HAB

Ri Fuine is Fealla-dhà

COLMCILLE 1500

mo bheanna ORT!

Our special guest tonight

colm cille

In the next episode of Mo Bheannachd Ort! We'll be celebrating the amazing life of Saint Columba

To learn more make sure you tune into FeisTV.

Further information can be found at feisean.org/meanbh-chuileag

brianna

mahanan mac Iir

bànrigh eichne



feisean NAN GAIDHEAL

DEALBH-CHLUICH NA NOLLAIGE DO SHEAN IS ÒG PRESENTS A GAELIC CHRISTMAS PANTOMINE

CALUM ANNDRA A' CHÒTA DHEIRG

SEÒMAR ÌTHIC ILLEATHAIN, EDEN COURT
MACLEAN ROOM, EDEN COURT

30TH SAMHAIN 2023 AIG 7F
30TH NOVEMBER AT 7PM

'S fhaða o chuala ùine sgeul mu mhaòadh-allaidh acrach anns a' Choilie Sheunta agus mar sin chan eil òragh air Calum Annndra nuair a chuireas e roimhe tadhal air a sheanmhair alrson a co-là-breith.

Tales of a hungry wolf in the Enchanted Forest are a distant memory and Calum Annndra has no reason to worry when he decides to visit his granny for her birthday.

Tiocaidean / Tickets
eden-court.co.uk / 01463 234234

Dorsan a' fosgladh aig 6.30f.
Biòh an taisbeanadh seo saor an-asgaidh do chlann.

Doors opening at 6.30pm.
This performance will be **free** of charge for children.

CUIDE RI CLEASAICHEAN
PERFORMANCE STARRING

Artair Donald, Fearghas Rothach, Raonaid Cheanadach

WILLIAM GRANT FOUNDATION

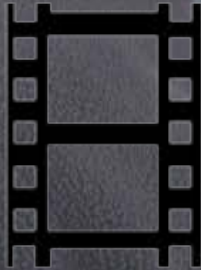
Scottish Government Rìghdhalas na h-Alba

Dràma - GME





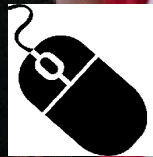
Dràma - GME



Ceòl – GME & GLE 



Cànan - GLE



Pròiseactan sònraichte

Unique projects



TREÒIR | VÒAR | VIRR
AIG BAILE

TREÒIR | VÒAR | VIRR
AIG BAILE

Danielle MacLeod

Danielle is a visual artist, writer, and musician. She has worked in the Islands for over 10 years. Her work is inspired by the landscape, her and its stories, and the mythical creatures that have been brought to life with her photography. 'Guardians' is a body of work since she moved to the Orkney Islands from Glasgow, Scotland.

Barry Nisbet

Barry Nisbet is a songwriter, musician, and sailor from Cullivoe, in Shetland. As one of the Cullivoe Fiddlers, Barry plays a unique regional style of Shetland fiddle from the 18th century, a style of tall ships such as the Cullivoe.

Stephanie Hellewell

Stephanie J Hellewell (Baird) is a studio owner, dance artist, dance practitioner and dance educator based in the Orkney Islands. She is interested in dance and the importance dance offers to a rural community, to support the value of dance artistry and mental health and wellbeing for children and adults thus promoting the benefits of dance within a rural setting. Stephanie is holistic in her approach to teach and is fully inclusive within her teaching standards to offer an inclusive environment for ALL participants.

Logos: SOUND, LANARNA, Scottish Government, Aig Baile, @cleachdail, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Scottish Government, Aig Baile.





Tapadh leibh!

Arthur Cormack
Chief Executive
arthur@feisean.scot

Anne Willoughby
Executive Manager
anne@feisean.scot

Calum A Macmillan
Development Manager
calum@feisean.scot

Eilidh Mackenzie
Fèisgoil Manager
eilidh@feisean.scot

www.feisean.org



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



WILLIAM GRANT
FOUNDATION