



## For Immediate Release – Friday September 30<sup>th</sup>

### Findhorn Bay Festival Exceeds all Targets

The second Findhorn Bay Festival drew to a close on Monday September 26 with many shows selling out over the six-day showcase. Two years since the first Festival launched in 2014, this year's event has exceeded all expectations and targets with audience attendances across ticketed and free events estimated to be in the region of 13,659. As well as seeing an increase in numbers of visitors coming from further afield across Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, international visitor numbers increased as well with people travelling from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, USA and Australia.

**Kresanna Aigner, Festival Director, Findhorn Bay Festival** said: "It was absolutely incredible to see so many visitors from near and far attending events and local people out enjoying themselves too.

"I spoke to many visitors over the course of the week including; a couple from New York who came especially, another couple who decided to come here instead of the Edinburgh Fringe, and a lady from London who intends to tell her friends about how special it is here and get them to put the next Festival dates in their diaries. A lady from Skye said it was the 'best Festival week ever and the local hospitality was amazing', and a journalist from Cologne visited the Festival and is writing a travel piece commented 'we really do have a special place here and more people should know about it'.

"I think we truly achieved our aim in putting together a very inclusive programme with something for all which also placed a spotlight on our stunning local area and authentic local hospitality. 'A genuine sense of pride and place' commented visitors from Whitley Bay who said they will be back in 2018".

Many of the concerts sold out including Julie Fowlis, Orkestra del Sol, The Lady Vanishes, Glitter & Sparkle Ball, Mallory: Beyond Everest, Forres on Foot, James Yorkston, Randolph's Leap and Duke Special, Secret Studio Tours and Culture Day Forres alone attracted attendances in the region of 3500 on the day.

**Richard Lochhead MSP, Scottish Parliament** who attended several Festival events said "the magnificent Findhorn Bay Arts staff and volunteers deserve huge credit for an enormously successful festival."

Many local businesses have also reported increased footfall and sales over the six-day period because of the Festival including Maclean's Highland Bakery on Forres High Street. Managing Director, Lewis Maclean said "what an incredible week for the Forres and Findhorn area. I think the events based around the High Street were just

great and they brought a lot of people to the Forres High Street. There was a real buzz and both of our shops were extremely busy.”

**Highlands & Islands (including Moray) MSP, David Stewart** tabled a motion at The Scottish Parliament on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sept acknowledging that the increased interest in Moray as a tourist destination had placed Forres in Scotland’s top 10 destination towns, placing Forres at No 2. He said, “Events such as Piping at Forres, The Findhorn Bay Festival, Forres Heritage Trust, Forres in Bloom, Burghead Visitor Centre, Roseisle Beach and the many other events organised locally are the events and attractions that draw people to these areas.” This is evidenced by TripAdvisor which recently named the Findhorn Bay Festival as “one of the best events in September because of its growing reputation.”

Along with the increased visitor numbers to the area over the Festival period the programme also included a broad range of educational activities available to schools. Over 1,000 school places were taken for both workshops and performances with Oi Musica, Science Museum London with the Falconer Museum, Guerrilla Lighting and Indigo Moon shadow puppetry workshops.

Two young people took up work experience with the Festival coordinating a young talent showcase on Culture Day and ‘Ignite presents’ showcasing young musical talent from the local area and across the Highlands. Laura McPherson-Zieger said “the experience has been amazing – I’ve learnt so much about planning and promoting events and have been inspired too. The Findhorn Bay Festival team are very supportive and great to work with too.”

Biomatrix Fresh Water Solutions educational activities took place in the grounds of Brodie Castle. Shona Ferguson with NTS at Brodie Castle said, “We’ve had a fantastic week here at Brodie Castle, welcoming more than 500 visitors. The exhibitions have put us on the map for a whole new audience and we have loved showing them round our castle for the first time and serving them scones. It has been fantastic to combine high quality arts experiences along with an educational programme for local schools who came to learn about fresh water solutions and eco systems as well as helped to install our floating bio-sculpture which is making our pond an even more welcoming place for Brodie’s, birds, insects and wildlife.”

Kresanna Aigner added, “A festival of this scale brings together a wide range of partnership working to deliver the many benefits and opportunities for the local area. Our local partners include a range of businesses, the local hospitality sector, community groups, cultural organisations, third sector groups, heritage organisations, venues, schools, local artists, volunteers and over 300 people contributing to Culture Day activities alone. It never ceases to amaze and inspire me how much one small community can achieve through collaborative working. These are the people who are the very backbone of this event”

The Festival is now collating evaluation and feedback from audiences, attendances across events, volunteers, local business, schools and participants. In order to demonstrate an accurate picture of the economic, social and learning outcomes from the Festival, a final report is expected in early December. Local feedback is welcomed and you can go online [www.findhornbayfestival.com](http://www.findhornbayfestival.com) to complete a feedback survey or pop into the Festival office at 3 Bank Lane, Forres.

Plans are already being set in motion for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Findhorn Bay Festival which will take place 26 - 30 September 2018. The Findhorn Bay Festival encompasses high quality events and an educational programme which takes time to plan and fundraising will begin immediately. The Festival is curated by Findhorn Bay Arts, a Forres based organisation that make creative things happen across Moray throughout the year. If you would like to find out more about the work they do or how you can get involved please visit [www.findhornbayarts.com](http://www.findhornbayarts.com)

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**Notes to Editor:**

**Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design 2016**

2016 will shine a spotlight on Scotland's achievements in innovation, architecture and design through a wide-ranging, variety of new and existing activity. The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design started on 1 January 2016 and will run until 31 December 2016. It will build on the momentum generated by the 2015 Year of Food and Drink as well as previous years including Homecoming Scotland 2014.

Through a series of exciting events and activity, the year will showcase Scotland's position as an "innovation nation", its outstanding built heritage, and its thriving, internationally acclaimed fashion, textiles and design sector. The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design is a Scottish Government initiative being led by VisitScotland, supported by partners including Scottish Government, Creative Scotland, Architecture + Design Scotland, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Enterprise, The National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS).

The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design events fund is managed by EventScotland, part of VisitScotland's Events Directorate.

**Findhorn Bay Festival Funding and Sponsorship Partners**

The Findhorn Bay Festival is made possible with generous support from the following: EventScotland in celebration of the 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Creative Scotland, Moray Council, Moray Towns Partnership, National Trust for Scotland, Berry Burn Community Fund, Gordon & MacPhail, Tornagrain, Adam Family Foundation, Gordon & Ena Baxter Foundation and the Saltire Society.

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