

FINDHORN BAY ARTS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 29TH FEBRUARY 2016

CULTURE DAY SUCCESS FOR FORRES AREA

Culture Day organisers Findhorn Bay Arts release evaluation results showing the day drew bumper crowds and a substantial local economic boost.

On Saturday 26 September 2015 the third annual Culture Day exploded onto the streets and parks of Forres in a colourful extravaganza of fun and creativity. Over 80 arts and cultural events took place throughout the town centre attracting an estimated 3,500 visitors with a peak audience attendance across all activities of 7,310.

The majority of visitors to Forres on the day came from within the local area but many were drawn in from as far as Carrbridge, Tain and Glasgow. Year on year Culture Day has seen increasing numbers of visitors with people traveling from ever further afield to attend. Culture Day curator Kresanna Aigner commented “we are absolutely delighted about how the day went and to find that yet again attendance numbers have grown”. She continued “Culture Day is bringing new people to Forres and helping place the area firmly on the visitor map as a go to arts and cultural destination”. Feedback gathered from the event was very positive with over 93% of survey respondents expressing that they would return to a future Culture Day event, and 91% felt that they had become more aware of local arts, culture and community activities.

Outreach & Education Coordinator Gill Bird said “this feedback shows that Culture Day achieved its primary objective to raise awareness of our local cultural assets available to the local community and visitors throughout the year. Moray and the Forres area abound with fun creative activities all year round so it’s fantastic that we have been able to spread this word and encourage participation all year round from a wide demographic”.

Gill also reported that the day was a success for volunteer involvement saying that “a total of 74 people contributed to Culture Day and through volunteering assisted event management, stewarding and customer care with young people excelling on the pre-event planning and hosting of events at Forres Area Youth Zone (FAYZ). Those that participated with the National Theatre of Scotland production *To Begin...* also gained invaluable professional acting experience and lifelong keepsakes on film and in print”. She continued “the keen uptake of volunteer participation is testament to the unique opportunities and experiences that Culture Day can provide.”

Local groups such as the The Penguins Tuxedo and the Forres branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society have had boosted attendance with new members joining as a direct result of Culture Day. Greater awareness of what is on offer at FAYZ and with T-Exchange were cited in visitor feedback. Visitors also learnt about new creative skills from Knockando Woolmill, Earthtime children’s nature activities and film making with Wildbird, amongst many others.

Along with the influx of visitors came an estimated local economic boost of £107k. Calculated using the VisitScotland economic impact measurement, this substantial sum came from visitor and participant spend and the utilisation of funding money. Kresanna explained “on Culture Day visitors and participants use local facilities, cafés and restaurants and browse the town centre shops. The money they spend helps boost the local economy through increased business takings. Events are essential in contributing to a sustainable local economy and this demonstrates the impact our events have locally – for a one day event this is incredible!”.

All visitors surveyed as part of the Culture Day evaluation reported that they spent money locally during the day; the majority spending up to £30 each with several individuals responding they had spent over £100. A business survey conducted after Culture Day showed that town centre shops reported an average increase in footfall of 30% on the day itself with more than a quarter reporting that sales had increased by 40% or more. Ray McDonald from The Community Café said “we were delighted that it was so busy, it caught us by surprise and for the first time ever, we ran out of food by mid-afternoon.” He continued “there was a great buzz on the day; everyone was having a fun time. Culture Day is a great event for Forres and we had lots of new visitors, both local and from further afield”.

Findhorn Bay Arts secured funding totalling £37k to host Culture Day 2015 from Creative Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and Moray Towns Partnership. This funding was spent locally to hire community venues such as The Tolbooth and Town Hall, to pay for services from The Hub, design and printing from local professionals, provision for volunteers and for many other local facilities. Kresanna noted “this year Culture Day Forres was produced on a shoestring budget and made possible with support from volunteers and in kind contributions from local business and groups too. It is our aspiration to produce Culture Day as an annual free event. To continue to achieve this we will need to secure funding and support from local sources.”

Kresanna added “the community and economic impacts of Culture Day go well beyond the event itself. Artists, businesses and local groups not only benefit on the day but are able to sustain and grow as a result of Culture Day. It is fantastic that the Forres area can host this event and to help the local area flourish”

Culture Day Forres will return this year on Saturday 24 September as part of the Findhorn Bay Festival (pending funding – to be announced April). This year The Findhorn Bay Festival is a spectacular six-day celebration of arts and culture, celebrating Moray’s contribution to architecture, innovation and design taking place from 21-26 September 2016, showcasing artists of national and international renown. To find out more about how you can get involved please visit www.findhornabayarts.com

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Notes to Editors

1. Findhorn Bay Arts (www.findhornbayarts.com)

Findhorn Bay Arts is a non-profit arts organisation, connecting creativity, people and place by:

- Delivering high quality arts events and projects.
- Nurturing and showcasing the creativity of the people of Moray.
- Celebrating and promoting Moray as a place for outstanding arts.

2. Findhorn Bay Festival 2016 (www.findhornbayarts.com/festival/)

The Findhorn Bay Festival is a spectacular six-day celebration of arts and culture, taking place at the heart of Moray from 21-26 September 2016, showcasing artists of national and international renown. This biennial event brings a vibrant mix of theatre and performance, exhibitions and live music, fine-art and photography, plus talks, tours and free activities, including Culture Day, making the Festival accessible to all.

In Scotland's Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, the Festival will place a spotlight on Moray's contribution within these fields, with highlight events such as the Guerilla Lighting Tours and Light Night Parties, plus a whole host of architecture, design and innovation-led events, installations, talks, tours and more.