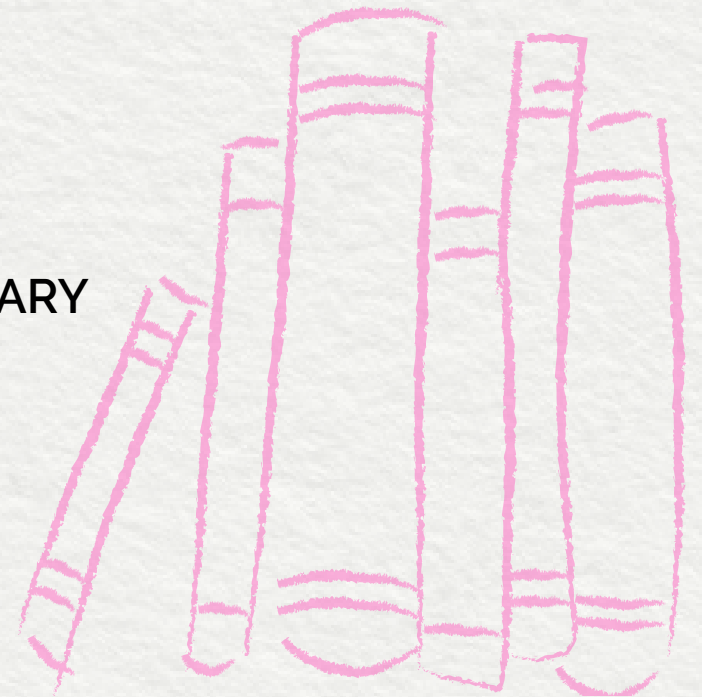


# YEAR OF STORIES — 2022 —

EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
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

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



# 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. The [full evaluation report](#) provides many examples of effective collaboration.

### 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.

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



Contact us if you have any queries via [ThemedYears@visitscotland.com](mailto:ThemedYears@visitscotland.com)

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