

HAY FESTIVAL 2023 REPORT



HAY
FESTIVAL
HAY-ON-WYE





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WELCOME TO

Hay Festival 2023

Thank you, Haymakers, for joining us to explore and reflect on an extraordinary year of global upheaval and creative innovation, as you convened in your thousands along with hundreds of artists for Hay Festival 2023. Our bold programme of 530 events featuring 890 artists inspired everyone to reimagine our collective global future, exploring hope for change and to take positive action.

Over 11 days, 25 May–4 June, we enjoyed a detour from the day-to-day to refuel our curiosity and spark debate. Alongside the very best new fiction and non-fiction, the Festival programme shared insights and debate around significant global issues, equality, regenerative action, world-class comedy and music, and a vibrant programme of pop-up events, workshops and activities for everyone, whether in school groups, intergenerational families, with friends, individually or in communities.

In our free-to-enter Dairy Meadows site on the edge of Hay-on-Wye in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, Wales, we created a space for everyone to be inspired. For big ideas, or a little perspective. For open books and open minds. To be together. Or just be.

New projects like our Thinkers in Residence platform and our Planet Assembly workshops offered innovation and diversity in a programme that paired Festival favourites with new and exciting voices, led by headline-grabbing names including Dua Lipa and Stormzy. With footfall up by 37% compared to 2022 and ticket sales up 17%, many first-time festival-goers travelled from all over the world to experience the Festival.

As a charity, our mission is to increase access to Festival inspiration. In the most accessible Festival edition yet, 77 schools and 7,500 pupils (primary and secondary) took part in the free live Programme for Schools, with over 21,000 digital attendances. In addition, 43 libraries took part in streaming free events via the British Library and the Living Knowledge Network across the UK; and thousands more watched online with the Online Festival Pass or engaged with free event highlights available via our media partners: the BBC, Sky Arts and TikTok.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the artists, sponsors, partners and audiences who took part.

Thank you all for joining us.

Julie Finch, CEO Hay Festival





HAY FESTIVAL 2023 IN NUMBERS

11
days

533
events

36%
increase on
2022 footfall

185,086
tickets sold

892
artists

24%
increase in
book sales
on 2022

2,040
press
mentions

1bn+
opportunities to
see and hear

45m
social media
impressions via
Festival channels

7,500
pupils participated
in Programme for
Schools days

1m+
web sessions

125
schools in England
& Wales attended
in person

21,000
online pupil attendances
for free schools
events

THE PROGRAMME

in detail

Hay Festival 2023 launched the best new fiction and non-fiction books, while offering insights and debate around significant global issues, world-class comedy and music, and a vibrant programme of pop-up events, workshops and activities for all ages.

New projects offered innovation and diversity in a programme that paired Festival favourites with new and exciting voices.

THINKERS IN RESIDENCE

Thinkers in Residence Laura Bates, Jack Edwards, Will Gompertz, David Olusoga and Charlotte Williams convened artists and innovators to explore issues facing the world today and create new platforms to grow ideas.

CHAMPIONING WALES

Wales and its cultural impact was championed in events with Publishing Wales, Wales Arts International, National Theatre Wales, BBC Wales, Aberystwyth University, Swansea University and Cardiff University.

LVIV BOOKFORUM

Ukraine's biggest book festival, Lviv BookForum, came to Wales, co-curating events throughout the Festival to spotlight great Ukrainian storytelling and the state of Ukraine today.

DEBUT DISCOVERIES

The Debut Discoveries series showcased emerging writers alongside established names, offering opportunities for fresh talent to take part in Hay Festival events for the first time.

EUROVISION BOOK CONTEST

The Eurovision Book Contest highlighted dazzling literature in partnership with the European Song Contest team, as Eurovision fever swept the UK throughout May.

PLANET ASSEMBLY

A new series, Planet Assembly, pioneered the use of civic space and engagement in exploring dynamic solutions to regenerate the planet, with the support of Hive Energy.



Helena Bonham Carter



Stormzy



Douglas Stuart and Dua Lipa



HAY ON EARTH

This year's Hay on Earth Forum explored food production and climate change, including a range of activities aim to mitigate against the Festival's own negative environmental impacts.

CELEBRATING HAY-ON-WYE

Hay-on-Wye's creative community was championed in events with Pride, Hay Writers' Circle, Hay Music, Rural Media and Hereford College of Arts.

PROGRAMMING PARTNERS

The BBC Marquee brought leading BBC audio programmes and podcasts to the Festival site in free events, while additional media partners TikTok, Sky Arts, *Prospect* magazine, *The Welsh Agenda*, *JUNO* and *The TLS* contributed to programming here and around the Festival.

UNIVERSITY LECTURES

Rigour and intellect were celebrated in lectures from eight leading universities, showcasing the latest research in the arts and sciences.

PROGRAMMING DIVERSITY

Wide-ranging global collaborations strengthened the diversity of programming, with additional partners including British Council, the British Academy, National Literacy Trust, International Booker Prize, the Reading Agency, the Royal Society, English PEN, De Balie, Continental Drifts, Going South, Index on Censorship, RSA, BookAid International, LR Foundation, Accenture, the Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library and scientific journal *Nature*.

HAY FESTIVAL MEDALS

Winners of the Hay Festival Medals 2023 were celebrated: Salman Rushdie (Prose), Alice Oseman (Fiction), Serhiy Zhadan (Songwriting) and Mererid Hopwood (Poetry).



“ You always take such good care of your authors and we really felt inspired to be amongst such creative, energetic and thoughtful folk. The audience was so enthusiastic and kept us going through the three-hour signing!

Karrie Fransman & Jonathan Plackett
Festival artists





BESTSELLERS

Hay Festival 2023

ADULT

- JEREMY BOWEN**
Making of the Modern Middle East
- BARBARA KINGSOLVER**
Demon Copperhead
- NATALIE HAYNES**
Stone Blind
- RUBY WAX**
I'm Not As Well As I Thought I Was
- BEN MACINTYRE**
Colditz
- MARINA HYDE**
What Just Happened?
- MARGARET ATWOOD**
Old Babes in the Wood
- NICK CAVE**
Faith, Hope and Carnage
- CHRIS VAN TULLEKEN**
Ultra-Processed People
- RICHARD E GRANT**
A Pocketful of Happiness

- ELIF SHAFAK**
The Island of Missing Trees
- PETER FRANKOPAN**
The Earth Transformed
- RANULPH FIENNES**
Climb Your Mountain
- REBECCA KUANG**
Yellowface
- MARIELLA FROSTRUP & ALICE SMELLIE**
Cracking the Menopause
- RAYNOR WINN**
Landlines
- DAVID BADDIEL**
The God Desire
- RA PAGE (ed.)**
Collision
- ALASTAIR CAMPBELL**
But What Can I Do?
- MICHAEL ROSEN**
Getting Better



CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULT

DAVID WALLIAMS

Robodog

YEVA SKALIETSKA

You Don't Know What War Is

BEAR GRYLLS

You vs. the World

MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK

Am I Made of Stardust?

DR RANJ

Brain Power

PATRICE LAWRENCE

The Elemental Detectives

CRESSIDA COWELL

Which Way to Anywhere

ALLIE ESIRI

A Nursery Rhyme for Every Night of the Year

ROBIN STEVENS

The Ministry of Unladylike Activity

ANTHONY MCGOWAN

Dogs of the Deadlands

LAURA BATES

The Trial

JEFFREY BOAKYE

Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer

LIZ PICHON

Tom Gates: Happy to Help (Eventually)

LAURA DOCKRILL

You Are Story

CLARA KUMAGAI

Catfish Rolling

OTI MABUSE

Dance with Oti: The Lion Samba

JOSEPH COELHO

Creeping Beauty

LEE NEWBERY

The Last Firefox

DAVID WALLIAMS

The World's Worst Pets

JACKIE MCCANN & AARON CUSHLEY

If the World Were 100 People



Joseph Coelho book signing

EDUCATION & outreach

PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOLS (AGES 7–11, 11–14)

The first two days of Hay Festival 2023 were specially curated days for schools, blending fiction and non-fiction book events and inspiring live performances, offered free to all state schools. In total, 6,217 pupils from 139 schools and home educators across England and Wales attended in person, and there were over 20,800 online attendances.

KS2 events on Thursday 25 May included writers **Matt Goodfellow**, **Dr Ranj**, **Pamela Butchart**, **Chae Strathie**, **Abi Elphinstone**, **Emma Carroll**, **Jeffrey Boakye** and **SF Said**; poet **Mererid Hopwood**; Children's Laureate **Joseph Coelho**; adventurer **Bear Grylls**; and space scientist **Maggie Aderin-Pocock**.

KS3/4 events on Friday 26 May featured writers **Anthony McGowan**, **Dr Shini Somara**, **Nicola Davies**, **Patrice Lawrence**, **Nikesh Shukla**, **Chris Vick**, **Candy Gourlay** and **Laura Dockrill**; economist **Tim Harford**; Children's Laureate **Joseph Coelho**; activists **Laura Bates** and **Jeffrey Boakye** and space scientist **Maggie Aderin-Pocock**.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

For the first time this year, thanks to ACE funding, Hay Festival welcomed 120 Early Years (ages 4–5) pupils and their teachers on Thursday 25 May to experience a day of creativity in the Make & Take Tent and inspiring interactive events with leading children's authors **Ed Vere**, **Nicola Davies** and **Joseph Coelho**. Each child received a free book of their choice, which they could get signed by the author. These Herefordshire schools also had visits from Hay Festival's creative team for a day of creative adventures before and after the festival to embed and enrich the experience.

ACE also funded Hay Festival to welcome four local groups who work with underrepresented young people in the region to come to Hay Festival for a day, covering all costs including travel. We worked collaboratively with these organisations to remove as many barriers as possible to ensure that the participants had an enriching experience and engaged in culture, literature and the arts. Each group attended creative workshops and events with lunch and refreshments provided, along with a free book token to use at the Hay Festival Bookshop.



Programme for Schools



The Gruffalo



Maggie Aderin-Pocock



Beth Suzanna illustration workshop

The University of South Wales brought 18 care experienced young people, partnering with Dr Barnardo's Charity, and 30 adult learners from South Wales to the festival for the day on Thursday 1 June. Meanwhile, Barking & Dagenham Education Authority brought pupils to attend the Programme for Schools as well as adult learners from their Pen to Print project; and the Stephens & George Charitable Trust brought young carers from Merthyr Tydfil to Programme for Schools events.

HCA STUDENT COLLABORATIONS

Performing arts students from Hereford College of Arts and the HCA choir performed on several occasions throughout the festival, while Illustration students delivered printmaking workshops, created interactive sculptures with Augmented Reality elements for the festival site and produced 'Badvertising' graphic designs.

HAY ACADEMY (AGES 18–25)

Hay Academy is a skills development and practical apprenticeship programme for young people aged 18–25. It gives them the opportunity to learn, train and experience in practice how festivals and live events are created and produced from some of the industry's most experienced events practitioners.

All participants not only have access to the core staff team at Hay but also benefit from events and meetings with visiting speakers and artists drawn from the festival's programme.

This year we welcomed 33 young people from Wales and across the UK to Hay Festival to join us in Events Management, Broadcast Media, Journalism and Press.

HAYDAYS

For the 2023 Hay Festival programme we programmed daily events for children and families, offering 45 events in total and 45 creative workshops for all age ranges. In addition, 1,654 children aged 0–11 enjoyed creative adventures in the Make & Take Tent across the week.

Our commissioning was founded primarily on reading for pleasure, family (four quadrant) entertainment, learning through doing and the broadening accessibility principle that underpinned all Hay Festival 2023 programming.



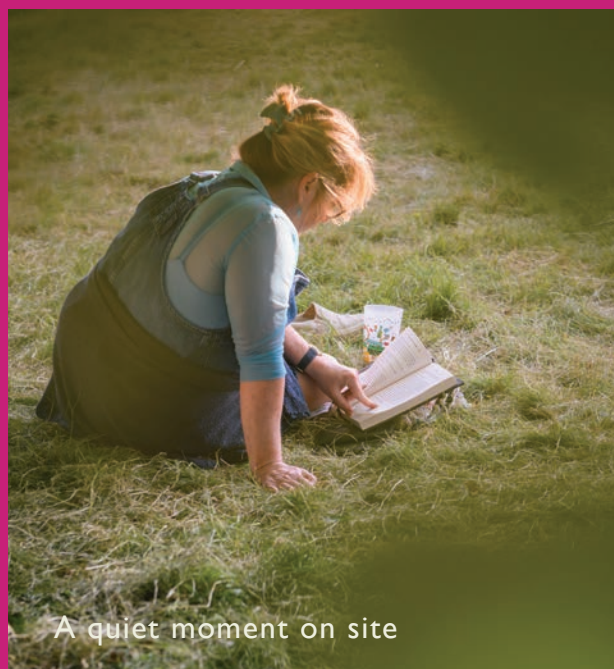
JB Gill



Benji Kust and Jack Edwards



Rooted Forest School



A quiet moment on site



First Minister Mark Drakeford and Hay Festival CEO Julie Finch



Planet Assembly



Festival Bookshop

A SUSTAINABLE festival

Sustainability is core to Hay Festival, both on stage and in the development and management of the Festival as an organisation.

A new initiative – Planet Assembly – was launched in 2023. A forum for discussion and debate, Planet Assembly proved successful in bringing together environmental experts and the public over eight days to workshop solutions to today's climate crisis. Eight sessions across the Festival focused on energy, health, food, mobility, water, fashion, biodiversity and housing. These culminated in a ninth, 'call to action' session led by Tony Juniper (former director of Friends of the Earth and currently chair of Natural England), and Emily Shuckburgh (academic and director of Cambridge Zero).

Throughout the Festival, we offered many other events exploring the key issues facing society in light of the climate and biodiversity crises.

In line with Hay Festival's goal to be a leader in sustainability, we work hard at reducing our own direct impacts by tightly managing our energy and water use, waste management, procurement and transport. We also encourage best practice with our on-site exhibitors and traders and aim to recognise those with the highest environmental and ethical standards via our annual Sustainability Awards.



THE FESTIVAL

in the media

A far-reaching communications campaign aimed to promote the Festival to the widest possible audience.

A total of 2,040 press mentions created an estimated OTS (opportunities to see/hear) of more than one billion (Gorkana, June 2023), up 18% on the previous year's campaign, with coverage across the BBC, ITV, LBC, Absolute Radio, TalkRadio, Times Radio, Press Association, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *i*, *Metro*, the *Independent*, *The Times*, *FT*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Western Mail*, *Evening Standard*, *Hereford Times*, *Brecon & Radnor Express*, *Waitrose Weekend*, *Country Living Magazine*, *New Statesman*, *National Geographic Traveller*, *Literary Hub*, *The Week*, *The School Librarian*, *School Travel Organiser*, *Monocle24*, *The Bookseller* and *BookBrunch*.

Media partnership with the BBC saw 32 shows recorded on site across BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester and BBC World. Meanwhile, partnership with Sky Arts saw a trio of Hay Festival programmes recorded for broadcast over the summer while further media partnerships with *The TLS*, *Magic FM*, *Juno*, *Prospect*, *Write On!*, *The Welsh Agenda* and *London Review of Books* reached further target groups.

Online, more than 1,152,819 web sessions (up 16%) were achieved in the campaign period with newsletter sign-ups growing a further 5.5%.

On social media, 45 million impressions were generated on Festival feeds through the campaign period, including 8.5 million Twitter impressions, 6.1 million Facebook impressions and 3.3 million Instagram impressions.

A digital media partnership with TikTok brought 30 creators to the Festival site with content showcased in a special hub on the platform, earning more than 27 million views, formed in close collaboration with our Hay Academy of young journalists.

Marketing distribution saw 40,000 print programmes shared in communities nationwide via 540 distribution channels, including bookshops, libraries, supermarkets and cultural centres. Meanwhile, strategic partnerships were developed to reach key audience groups, including collaborations with Eurovision, the Reading Agency, Bookshop.org, Great Western Railway, Barbour, Publishing Wales, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, Association of Ukrainian Refugees, Hereford College of Arts, Hay Castle, Hay Pride and more.

A one-off event in London – Hay Festival Tales: A Night of Wild Ideas – saw hundreds of festival-goers and speakers gather to launch the 2023 line-up in April, while further promotional activity included Moomintroll distributing programmes in Hay-on-Wye, a collaboration between Shepherd's Ice Cream and *Heartstopper* author Alice Oseman, and a special visit from the Gruffalo on site.

THE FESTIVAL

in quotes

“ This is a massive event in a tiny town that was once described as ‘the Woodstock of the mind.’ The weather is amazing, people are having a good time and the energy is bustling. It’s just so much fun and I am so happy to be here... There’s so much creative energy here; the guests – from Margaret Atwood to Nick Cave – are first rate. It’s my first time here and I have to say it’s unlike any festival I’ve ever been to.

Dua Lipa, *Service95: At Your Service*

“ Mark your diaries people, because Hay Festival – the UK literary event famous for enlisting prominent voices from the worlds of everything from fashion to entertainment, through to politics and science – is back. And we’re not kidding when we say it’s looking like it’ll be the most exciting and A-list-filled event yet.

Sakaynah Hunter, *ELLE*

“ The independent charity’s annual celebration presents the very best new literature from award-winning writers, understanding that fiction and non-fiction allow us to truly see the world, and imagine it as it could be.

PORT Magazine

“ Set on the edge of the majestic Brecon Beacons National Park, the annual Hay Festival might be the only event where you can find yourself reclining on deckchairs to the strains of live folk music one moment, and enthralled by gripping talks from leading writers, environmentalists, and Nobel Prize-winners the next.

Olivia Emily, *Country & Town House*

“ This year’s line-up was a particular triumph. Recognising the need to appeal to a younger audience, the organisers booked grime artist Stormzy – who set up Merky Books to give young writers from under-represented communities a platform – and pop star Dua Lipa, who has launched a book club called Service95. A canny partnership with TikTok also saw book-loving content creators hosting events and filming content on-site.

Sara Robinson, *Western Mail*

“ The Festival was brilliant, I sorely wish I could have stayed longer. I’m absolutely coming back next year with my family to experience it in full.

Sally Adey, *Festival artist*



“ It’s joyful, the positive energy is wonderful

“ Like a massage for the brain

“ It’s my happy place

Statements from Festival audiences, via focus groups on site

“ A mind and heart expanding experience

“ It’s a kind of cultural pilgrimage



HAY FESTIVAL

around the world

Hay Festival Foundation Ltd (England and Wales charity number 1070073) brings readers and writers together to share stories and ideas in sustainable events and projects live and online.

Festivals inspire, examine and entertain globally, inviting participants to imagine the world as it is and as it might be. Nobel Prize-winners and novelists, scientists and politicians, historians, environmentalists and musicians take part in the Festival's global conversation, sharing the latest thinking in the arts and sciences with curious audiences.

In 1987, the Festival was dreamt up in the booktown of Hay-on-Wye, Wales. Thirty-six years later, the Festival has travelled to editions in 30 locations, from the historic town of Cartagena in Colombia to the heart of cities in Peru, Mexico, Spain and the USA. The organisation now reaches a global audience of millions each year and continues to grow and innovate, building partnerships and initiatives alongside some of the leading bodies in arts and the media.

Alongside its hybrid events, Hay Festival runs a series of digital initiatives to expand its global audience, including the Hay Festival Podcast in English and Spanish, the Imagina el Mundo film series, and the Hay Festival Book of the Month offering. Meanwhile, thousands of audio and film recordings from the Hay Festival archive can be enjoyed on Hay Player (hayfestival.org/hayplayer).

A wide programme of education and outreach work runs alongside all of the Festival's events, earning multiple awards over the years, including Festival of Sanctuary status from refugee charity City of Sanctuary UK and, in 2020, Spain's Princess of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities.

Coming up...

Hay Forum Dallas, USA
(9–10 September)

Hay Festival Querétaro, Mexico
(7–10 September 2023)

Hay Festival Segovia, Spain
(14–17 September 2023)

Hay Festival Arequipa, Peru
(9–12 November 2023)

Hay Festival Winter Weekend, Wales
(23–26 November 2023)

Hay Festival Jericó, Colombia
(January 2024)

Hay Festival Medellín, Colombia
(23–25 January 2024)

Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias, Colombia
(25–28 January 2024)

Hay Festival, Wales
(23 May–2 June 2024)

WITH THANKS

Hay Festival Foundation is a charity and we rely on the support of our sponsors, funders, partners and audiences to sustain the organisation and enable us to create the Festival in Wales each year.

We were grateful, once again, for the support of our valued principal partners, investment managers Baillie Gifford and Visit Wales, the Welsh Government's tourism organisation. The Baillie Gifford Stage and Llwyfan Cymru – Wales Stage are two of our biggest venues and both organisations contribute a significant amount of support to the Festival, not only in Hay-on-Wye, but also internationally. We are extremely grateful to them both for their continued commitment and support.

The Festival is a convener of writers, readers and – crucially – creative opportunities. Arts Council Wales supported our Writers at Work programme, enabling us to offer a fully-programmed week of creative development opportunities for Welsh writers, and funded the Hay Festival International Fellowship, which this year was awarded to Hanan Issa. Arts Council England's support gave us the opportunity to work with Early Years children from Herefordshire for the first time and to engage young people who otherwise might not be able to attend the Festival.

The Welsh Government's Education Department provided vital support to our Programme for Schools, and our year-round outreach offer to young people across Wales. Our university partners – Aberystwyth, Birmingham, Cardiff, Swansea and Worcester – all provided essential sponsorship and specialist academic speakers, and we worked closely with Hereford College of Art students on performance and visual arts opportunities.

The Festival has a global reach and we were delighted to receive support from a diverse range of international partners, including: the British Council, the Eccles Centre for American Studies, Culture Ireland, Open Society Foundations, Acción Cultural Española and the Embassies of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Ireland.

Each year the Festival is amplified across the world through our media partnerships and this year we were delighted to welcome back the BBC, TikTok and Sky Arts. *Prospect*, *TLS*, *Magic Radio*, *Juno* and *The Welsh Agenda* all provided valued sponsorship and support, and we worked with bookshop.org as our online bookshop partner.

Our Project Partners for 2023 included national institutions such as the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Royal Society of Arts, the British Library, the National Trust



and the National Library of Wales, who all contributed to the Festival's diverse and eclectic programme.

Other important Project Partners included Hive Energy, who helped create a fabulous new venue and support our Planet Assembly initiative, Accenture, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, the Elmley Foundation, Eurovision, English Pen, GWR, Hawthornden Literary Retreat, Institute for Human Sciences, the Booker Prizes, Keystone Positive Change Investment Trust, Lloyds Register Foundation, Nature, the Rivers Trust and Rural Media.

Many businesses support, sponsor and exhibit at the Festival each year: our huge thanks to all of them for their support, encouragement and backing, which helps brings a truly eclectic flavour to the 11 days of the Festival, and creates a very special sense of place.

Lastly, a huge thank you to all of our audiences and Friends, Patrons and Benefactors. We are forever grateful for all their kind and extremely generous support.

With warm thanks from the Hay Festival Foundation Ltd Board and team



PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



FUNDERS



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GLOBAL PARTNERS



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for American
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