

Hay
Festival
Hay-on-Wye

Report

23 May —
2 June 2024



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A message from Julie Finch, Hay Festival Global CEO

Thank you, Haymakers, for celebrating a world of different with us this spring. Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye offered something for everyone, with established names and emerging artists joining forces to inspire and provoke, while our free-to-enter Festival village was revitalised with new venues, a family zone and even more free activities.

In a year when more voters than ever in history will head to the polls as at least 64 countries hold their elections, we presented a programme to bring people together, respectfully exploring different perspectives and the power of storytelling to unite us.

As well as the very best new fiction and non-fiction, we offered a range of special projects to dive further into the biggest conversations of the year: Hay Festival Green explored the climate crisis, our Thinkers in Residence hosted deep thinking discussions, there were global exchanges and daily news panels, plus we celebrated this Olympic year with our first ever Hay Festival Sports Day.

New and emerging artists were showcased in a range of Festival initiatives, including The Platform, Writers at Work and our Debut Discoveries series, while headline names filled venues in more than 620 events over 11 days.

As a charity, our mission is to broaden access to culture. For those who couldn't join us in person, there were many ways to come together online, with our Online Festival Pass offering access to select events, free streaming parties in libraries all over the UK, and highlights shared via our media partners, the BBC and TikTok.

**Hay Festival is for everyone.
And we couldn't do it
without your support.**

**Thank you. And see you
again soon!**

Julie Finch

Julie Finch, CEO
Hay Festival Foundation Ltd



The Festival in numbers

days **11**

artists **752**

events **627**

tickets sold **193,679**

increase in footfall **7%**

social media impressions
via Festival channels **54 million**

press mentions **8,481**

opportunities to see and hear **44 billion**

books sold **47,700**

publishing imprints represented **268**

web page views **6.5 million**

pupils participated in free
school events in person **6,315**

schools took part in
person and online **283**

digital event views **17,000**

The programme in detail

Across 627 events, the programme launched the best new fiction and non-fiction books, provoked debate and platformed solutions around the biggest issues of our times. There was 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

A trio of Hay Festival Thinkers in Residence hosted conversations on stage and off throughout the week, questioning norms, finding new perspectives and challenging us to action: writer and campaigner **Ruby Wax** explored mental health, Green Party MP **Caroline Lucas** explored our connections to nature and author **Alex Wheatle** reimagined what a festival can be.

Global

International projects and partnerships crossed borders and opened new bridges of exchange. South to South conversations, with the support of Open Society Foundations, highlighted the shared issues – and solutions – facing the Global South; Ukraine's biggest book festival, Lviv BookForum, co-curated events to spotlight Ukrainian storytelling; plus partnerships with Adelaide Writers' Week, Book Bunk, British Council, Eccles Institute at the British Library, International Booker Prize, BookAid International, Institut Français, and more, brought many world-leading artists to Hay-on-Wye for the first time.

Debut Discoveries

The Debut Discoveries series showcased emerging writers alongside established names, offering opportunities for fresh talent to take part in Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye events for the first time, with the support of The Hawthornden Foundation.

Sports Day

To mark this Olympic year, we presented our first ever Hay Festival Sports Day on Wednesday 29 May. Worlds collided as leading thinkers joined sports stars for a showcase of creative talent, an exploration of the Olympic spirit and interactive free activities all around the Festival site.

Green

The latest environmental science, sustainable policies and creative responses to the climate crisis were brought into focus in Hay Festival Green under this year's theme of Mobilising for the Future, prompting a shared call to action.

Championing Wales

Wales and its cultural impact was championed in events with *Codi Pais*, Urdd, Literature Wales, Wales Book of the Year, National Theatre Wales, Welsh National Opera, BBC Wales, Aberystwyth University, Swansea University, Cardiff University and more.

Celebrating Hay-on-Wye

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

University lectures

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

Programming diversity

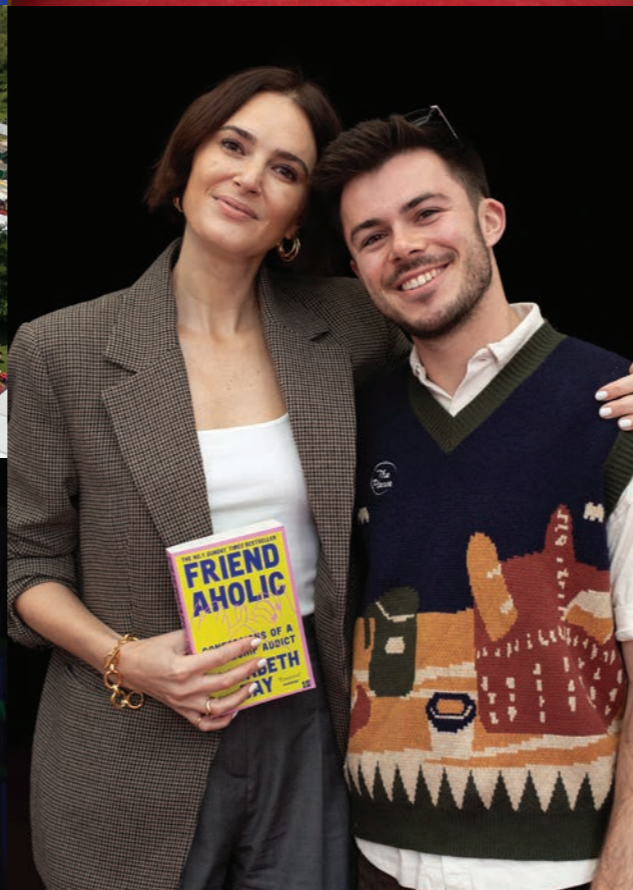
New partnerships strengthened the diversity of programming with unique event formats: Literary Death Match, The Queen's Reading Room, *London Review of Books*, Marcel Lucont's *Cabaret Fantastique*, Robin Ince's Book Club and the West End musical *Hadestown* all collaborated on unique new performance events, plus partnerships with Black British Book Festival, the British Academy, National Literacy Trust, The Reading Agency, The Royal Society, RSA, and scientific journal *Nature* injected dynamism and difference.

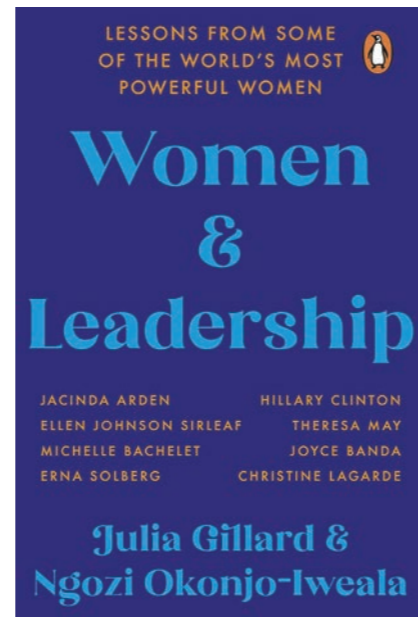
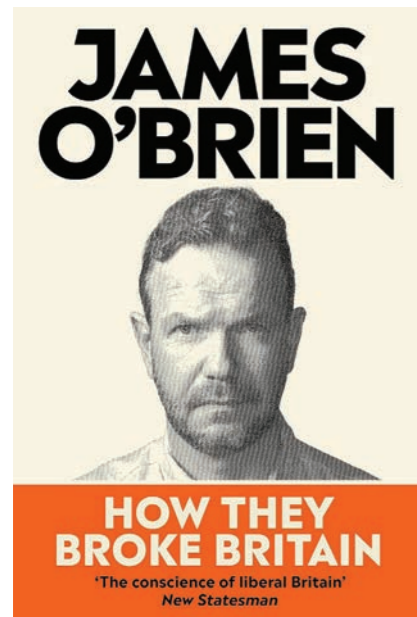
Media partners

The Exchange Marquee brought leading BBC audio programmes and podcasts to the Festival site in free events; journalists, commentators and world leaders took stock in the daily News Review live on stage each morning of the Festival, in partnership with *The Independent*; while additional media partners TikTok, *LRB*, *JUNO* and *The TLS* contributed to programming.

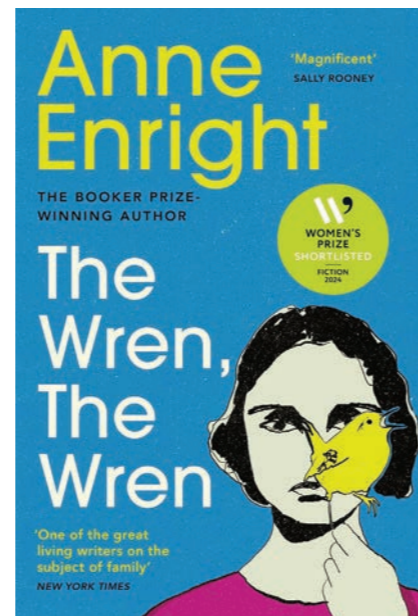
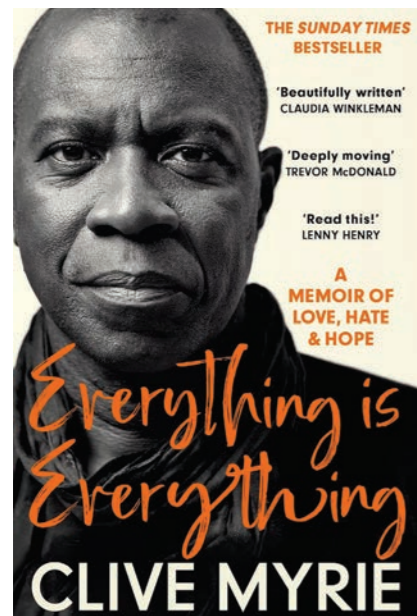
Hay Festival medals

Winners of the Hay Festival Medals 2024 were celebrated: **Huw Stephens** (Music), **Judi Dench** (Drama), **Lemn Sissay** (Poetry), **Gary Lineker** (Broadcast Journalism) and **Laura Bates** (Non-Fiction).

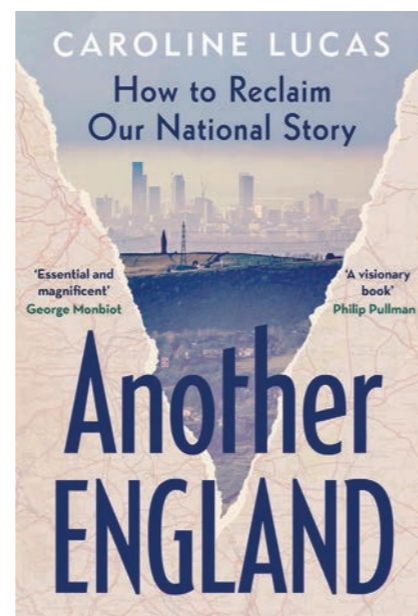
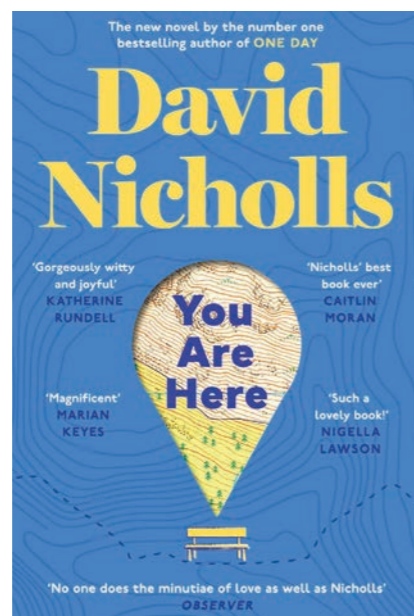
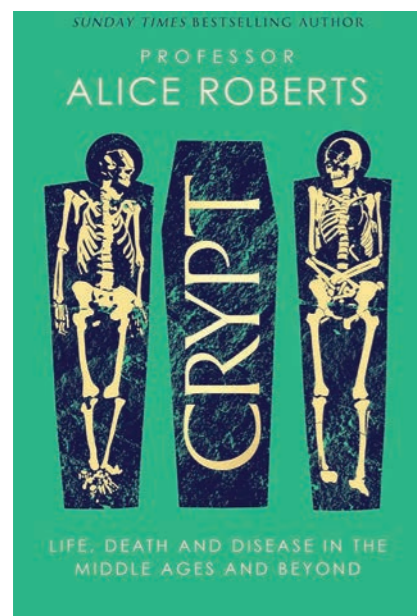




Bestsellers



Overall bestsellers



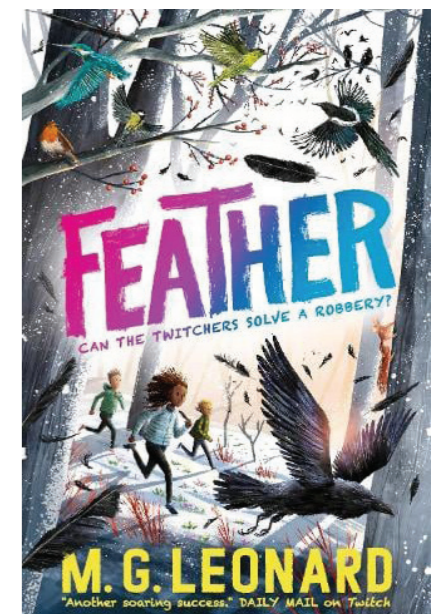
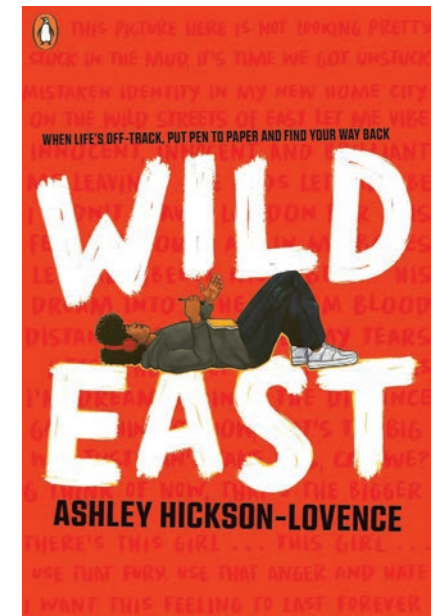
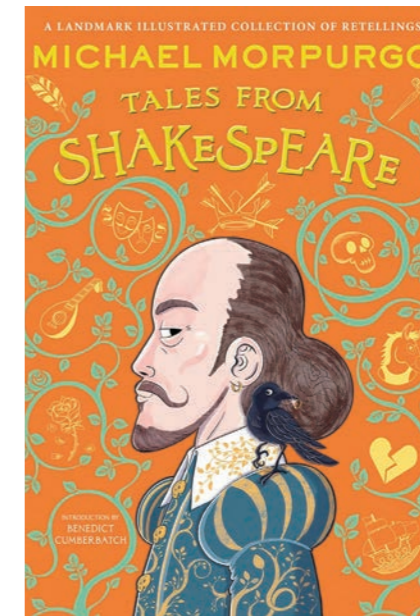
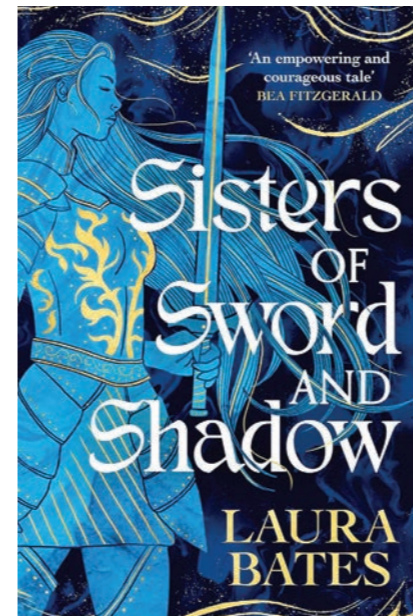
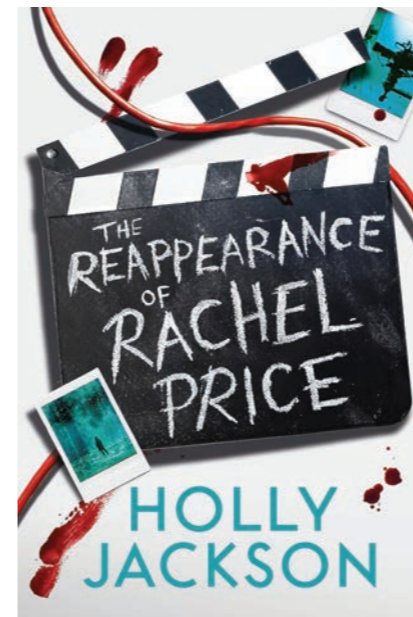
Rory Stewart	1	James Blunt	11
<i>Politics on the Edge</i>		<i>Loosely Based on a Made Up Story</i>	
James O'Brien	2	Clive Myrie	12
<i>How They Broke Britain</i>		<i>Everything is Everything</i>	
Bettany Hughes	3	Elizabeth Day	13
<i>Seven Wonders of the Ancient World</i>		<i>Friendaholic</i>	
Colm Toibin	4	Sara Pascoe	14
<i>Long Island</i>		<i>Weirdo</i>	
Anne Enright	5	David Nicholls	15
<i>The Wren, The Wren</i>		<i>You Are Here</i>	
George Monbiot	6	Caroline Lucas	16
<i>Invisible Doctrine</i>		<i>Another England</i>	
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall	7	Caitlin Moran	17
<i>How to Eat 30 Plants a Week</i>		<i>What About Men?</i>	
Tim Spector	8	Hamza Yassin	18
<i>Food For Life</i>		<i>Be a Birder</i>	
Wes Streeting	9	Alice Roberts	19
<i>One Boy, Two Bills and a Fry Up</i>		<i>Crypt</i>	
Julia Gillard	10	Robin Wall Kimmerer	20
<i>Women and Leadership</i>		<i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i>	



Children & Young People bestsellers

- Jeff Kinney
No Brainer
- Holly Jackson
The Reappearance of Rachel Price
- Ashley Hickson-Lovence
Wild East
- MG Leonard
Feather
- Laura Bates
Sisters of Sword and Shadow
- Katherine Rundell
Impossible Creatures
- Ranger Hamza
Eco Quest
- Kiran Millwood Hargrave
In the Shadow of the Wolf Queen
- Jacqueline Wilson
The Girl Who Wasn't There
- Michael Morpurgo
Tales from Shakespeare

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Education, outreach, widening access and participation

Free Schools Programme

The first two days of Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye 2024 were specially curated days for schools, blending fiction and non-fiction book events and inspiring live performances, offered free to all state schools with support from the Welsh Government and Rothschild Foundation.

In total, 6,315 pupils and 531 teachers from 124 schools and home educators across England and Wales attended in person and there were over 20,147 online attendances.

KS2 events on Thursday 23 May included writers **Maz Evans, Katie and Kevin Tsang, Connor Allen, Yassmin Abdel-Magied, MG Leonard, Kiran Millwood-Hargrave, Lee Newbery, Jeff Kinney, Matt Goodfellow, Adam Rutherford, Tolá Okogwu** and Children's Laureate Wales 2023–25, **Alex Wharton**.

KS3/4 events on Friday 24 May featured writers **Alex Wheatle, Jenny Valentine, Sarah Crossan, Phil Earle, Aneirin Karadog, Ashley Hickson-Lovence, Nicola Garrard, AM Dassu, Anthony Horowitz, Daniel Morden, Frances Hardinge** and **Manon Steffan Ros**.

Plus, a live recording of BBC Radio 4's *Front Row* shone a spotlight on the power of YA literature for a schools audience.

Free Early Years workshops

Hay Festival Education's Early Years project took creative practitioners into schools and brought pupils to Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye 2024 to experience story building and creative expression, delivered with the support of Arts Council England.

A total of 219 pupils from eight schools in Herefordshire and Worcestershire attended Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, 23–24 May, with an additional 218 pupils participating in creative workshops in their schools. Pupils saw poet and performer **Simon Mole** and illustrator and storyteller **Dapo Adeola**, with each child receiving a free signed book.

Free youth group trips

Over three sessions before and after Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, 36 vulnerable children and young people and 15 carers from four youth groups across Herefordshire and Worcestershire worked with creative practitioners to produce spoken word, poetry, illustration, projection mapping, stop-motion animation and light graffiti outcomes.

These trips were delivered with the support of The Family Place in Droitwich, The Marches Family Network, Close House, Rural Media and Safe Connections in Hereford.

Free library events

Thirty-eight public library venues across 15 library authorities all over the UK hosted free live streaming events to watch Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye 2024 events. In total, 143 individual screenings took place, with the support of The British Library's Living Knowledge Network.

HCA student collaborations

Performing arts students from Hereford College of Arts and the HCA choir performed on several occasions throughout the Festival, while HCA Illustration students delivered workshops.

Hay Festival Academy (ages 18–25)

Hay Festival 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 Festival Hay-on-Wye 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 the fields of Events Management, Broadcast Media, Journalism and Press.

Writers at Work

Our creative development programme for emerging Welsh talent saw 10 artists from across Wales take part in a programmed week of workshops and public events at Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye with the support of Literature Wales, funded by Arts Council of Wales. They included: **Dylan Huw, Hammad Rind, Jessica George, Joshua Jones, Katie Munnik, Megan Angharad Hunter, Rachel Dawson, Suzanne Iuppa, Taylor Edmonds** and **Zoë Brigley**.

The Platform

An open call for creatives aged 21–28 to submit new work to be showcased at Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye 2024, The Platform offered new artists the chance to share their work with audiences, plus meet and network with established artists over a three-day visit. It took place with the support of Arts Council England.

Visitor experience

A bigger site allowed for improvements to accessibility and audience engagement with new spaces, including the Family Garden, for free activities where creativity could be sparked.



Green

Sustainability is core to Hay Festival Global, both on stage and in the development of the Festival as an industry-leading charity. This was seen at Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye 2024 in various forms.

Discussion and debate

A sustainability-focused Hay Festival Green series of events ran throughout the 11 days of the Festival, exploring current issues, new developments and technical advances.

Planet Assembly – Mobilise

As part of Hay Festival Green we sought to mobilise audiences to action. Our Planet Assembly workshops gathered community leaders together to explore creative solutions to the crisis.

Action

Ideas were collated throughout the Festival on where we can all make positive changes, resulting in a Hay Festival Global Statement that was shared with political leaders.

Our environment

We continued developing a programme of managing and mitigating the environmental impact of creating a live festival, focusing on energy, waste, transport, procurement and venues. Highlights this year included:

Energy All our mains electricity is provided by Good Energy and is from renewable sources. All site lighting including festoons, sign lights, floods and decorative garden lighting is low-energy LED. We use air-source heat pumps to provide heating in venues when needed.

Waste This year, we became the first business in Wales to be audited and pass compliance with the 2024 Workplace Recycling Act. We recycled or composted 76% of the waste produced on site. At the end of each day, spare food was sent to Hay and Brecon Food Banks, Shrewsbury Food Hub and Hereford Helpers, which saved 550kgs of useable food. A total of 30,493 reusable cups were sent for washing and reuse, plus a successful trial of reusable milk churns from Whole Cow reduced use of plastic milk containers.

Drinking water Water standpipes were available across the site so that audiences could fill their own drinking bottles.

Transport We supplemented the local public transport offer, providing frequent public buses between Hay-on-Wye and the nearest train station in Hereford.





The Festival in the media

Our strategic communications campaign aimed to promote the Festival to the widest possible audience, while emphasising our core charity mission to open access to culture.

A total of 8,481 press mentions created an estimated OTS (opportunities to see/hear) of 44 billion (CisionOne, June 2024), 44x the previous year's campaign, with coverage across the BBC, ITV, 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*, *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 Wales, BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester and BBC Sounds. Meanwhile, further media partnerships with the *Independent*, *The TLS*, *Magic FM*, *Juno*, *Write On!* and *London Review of Books* reached further target groups.

On social media, 54 million impressions were generated on Festival feeds through the campaign period, up 20% on the previous year, including 5 million Twitter impressions, 7 million Facebook impressions and 7 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 34 million views, formed in close collaboration with our Hay Festival Academy of young journalists.

Marketing distribution saw 30,000 print programmes shared in communities nationwide via 540 distribution channels, including bookshops, libraries, supermarkets and cultural centres. Strategic partnerships were developed to reach key audience groups, including collaborations with the Welsh Sports Association, the Reading Agency, Bookshop.org, Great Western Railway, Aubin, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, Hereford College of Arts, Hay Castle and more.

Our After Hours event in Cardiff saw hundreds of festival-goers and speakers gather to launch the 2024 line-up in March, while further promotional activity included **Greg Heffley** (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*) distributing programmes in Hay-on-Wye, a special Easter Book Hunt and a unique collaboration between Shepherds Ice Cream and actor **Miriam Margolyes**.

The Festival in quotes

“Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye is the highlight of my year and I look forward to it every time. It is a privilege to go and I shall forever appreciate it.”

Zawiya, Year 10 pupil

“[Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye] is a gorgeous place to go; to learn, to chat, to eat and drink and listen. What a treat of a town and a treat of a gig.”

Hollie McNish, poet

“I have enjoyed [Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye] for many years and find it one of the most intelligent, engaged thoughtful audiences in the world. In fact, it's one of the only literary festivals that I still go to.”

Rory Stewart, former MP and broadcaster

“I have seen first hand the real impact the festival has on young people, increasing their access to books and nurturing their ambitions. It means a great deal to me to be part of the Hay Festival Global family.”

Laura Bates, writer

“[Book festivals] are important outposts of some presently embattled virtues: serious thought, the reasoned dissemination of ideas, reverence for human creativity.”

James Marriott, *The Times*

“Hay [Festival] is the most influential festival in the world.”

Dylan Jones, *London Evening Standard*

“Every paid/commissioned opportunity as an artist brings with it not just monetary value but also implied confidence in what your art is – it helps to solidify your own self confidence in what you do, as well as to encourage you to continue showcasing and developing your craft. The Platform gave me this and actually a lot more.”

Bradley Taylor, The Platform artist

“There is no better vehicle for cultural capital than the Hay Festival. It really offers something different and special to our students and we'd love to build something more around it. We have been privileged to attend the Hay Festival for many years. It is an iconic event in our reading calendar and there's a huge scramble by students to attend. It really does have a positive impact on reading. The authors we visited this year were absolutely wonderful – the best we've seen. They say everything we want our students to hear.”

Andrew Farrell, Trip Lead, Harbourne Academy





Our funding

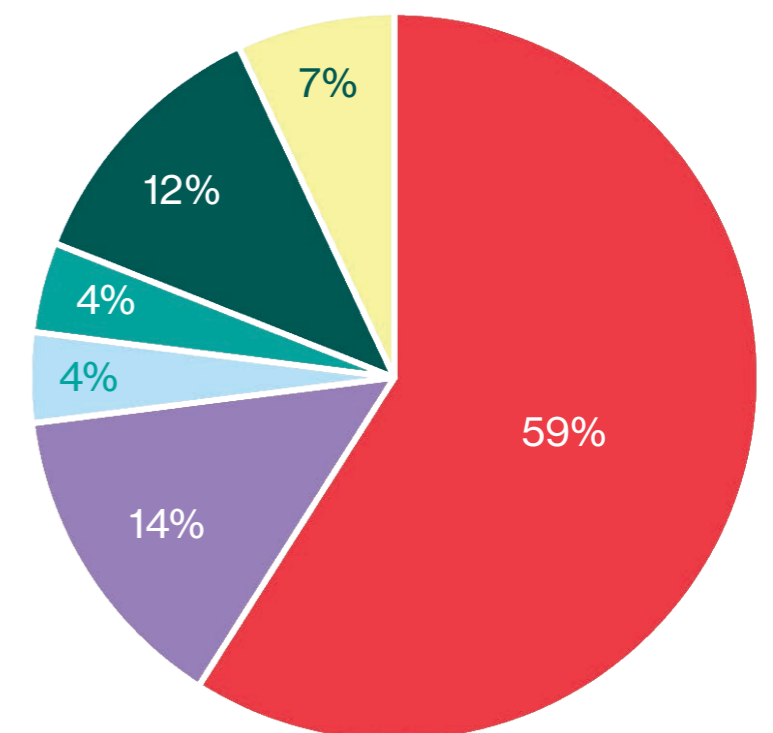
Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye is run by Hay Festival Global, a registered charity (1070073) based in Wales. Our mission is to create open and accessible platforms for the free exchange of ideas.

We rely on a mixed-funding model that includes sponsorship, grant funding, ticket revenue, memberships, and donations, operating under the Charity Commission's rules and ethical guidance. This model of funding enables us to produce impactful events that open access to culture, while running growing outreach and education platforms to support.

In addition to this, we are grateful for the significant goodwill that makes each Festival project possible, from our dedicated volunteers to our partners offering in-kind support.

Income

- Ticket revenue and other trading income
- Sponsorship
- Memberships and donations
- Public funding
- Grants
- Other



With thanks

Warm thanks from the Hay Festival Foundation Ltd Board and team to our partners and supporters.

The continued partnership of Literature Wales and funding from Arts Council Wales towards our Writers at Work programme, enabled us to offer 10 writers from Wales a unique professional development opportunity.

Arts Council England's (ACE) support allowed us to continue to work with Early Years children from Herefordshire and engage young people who otherwise might not be able to attend the Festival. ACE also provided support for The Platform, a new initiative for young, emerging artists aged between 21 and 28 to showcase and share their work and, with the Elmley Foundation, provided funding towards the Family Garden – a new dedicated children's area.

The Welsh Government's Education Department and the Rothschild Foundation provided vital support to our schools programme. Our University partners – Aberystwyth, Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Swansea and Worcester – all provided essential sponsorship and specialist academic speakers, while our ongoing collaboration with Hereford College of Arts brought students onto the Festival site to give acting and singing performances.

Our media partners – BBC, TikTok, the *Independent*, *The TLS*, *Juno*, *Magic FM* and *The Bookseller* – allowed our programme to reach further than ever before.

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 Institute for the Americas, Open Society Foundations, Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) and the Embassy of Colombia.

Our Project Partners including Adelaide Writers' Week and the Australian Government, Bannau Brycheiniog, the Hawthornden Foundation, Institute for Human Sciences, Libraries Connected, National Trust, Nature, The British Academy, The Rivers Trust and The Royal Society brought added depth to the programme of activities.

Many businesses support, sponsor and exhibit at the Festival each year: our huge thanks to all of them for their support – particularly new sponsors Anthropic and With Intelligence – for their encouragement and backing, which helps bring 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, artists and Members, Patrons, Benefactors and Chair's Circle. We are forever grateful for all your kind and extremely generous support.

Thank you

The support of our sponsors and partners is vital so we can continue to celebrate and showcase the best artistic talent, attract the world's most respected thinkers and speakers, and deliver learning and engagement opportunities to inspire the next generation.

More info online: hayfestival.org/hay-on-wye/sponsors

Funders



Global Partners



Thank you

Education Partners

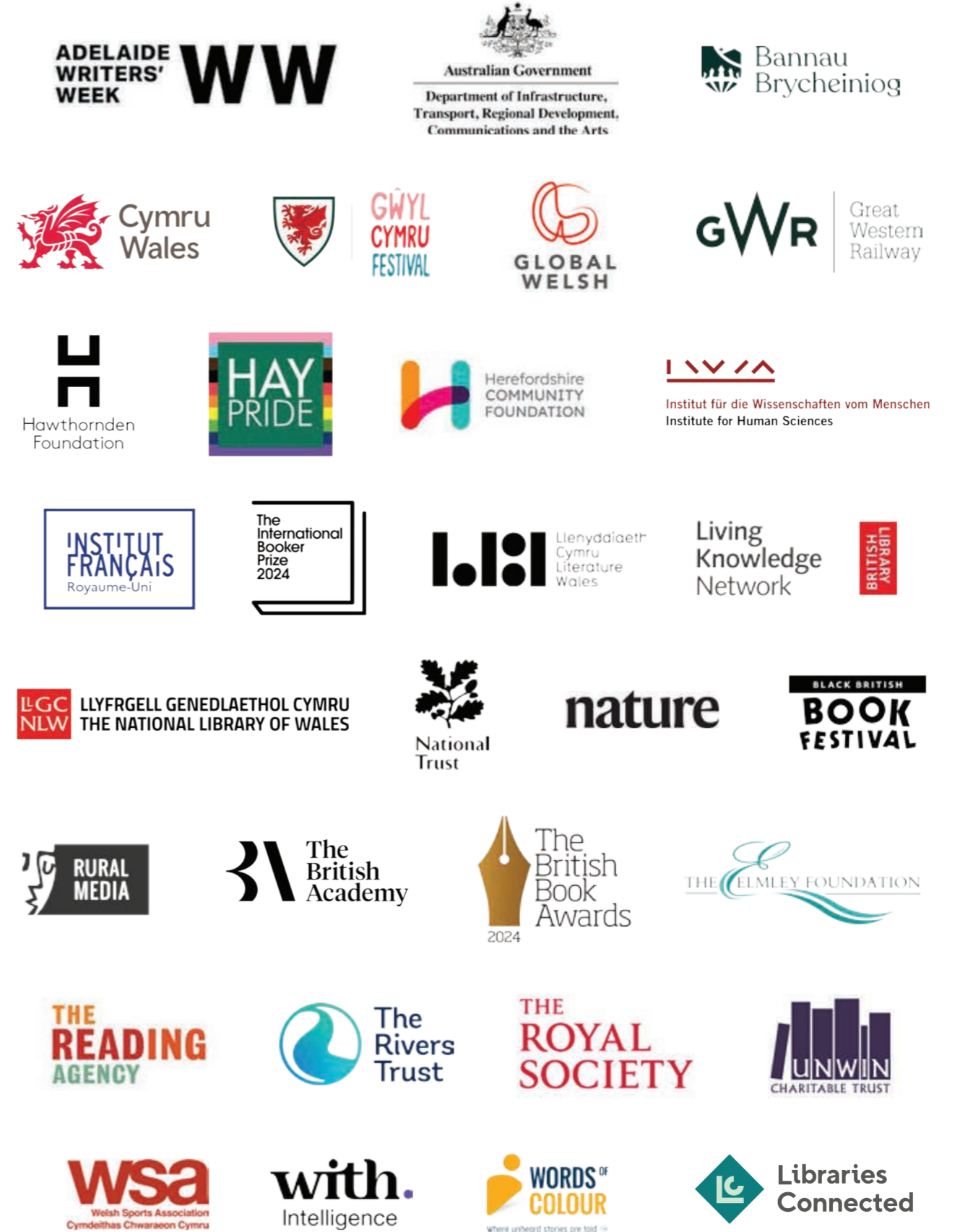


Media Partners



Thank you

Project Partners





Hay Festival around the world

Hay Festival Global is a charity providing global festivals of stories, ideas and new possibilities.

The antidote to polarisation, we bring together diverse voices to listen, talk, debate and create, tackling some of the biggest political, social and environmental challenges of our time. Through one-of-a-kind festivals, in unique locations around the world – plus forums, digital platforms and learning programmes – Hay Festival Global celebrates and inspires different views, perspectives and points of view.

In 1987, Hay Festival Global was dreamt up in the booktown of Hay-on-Wye, Wales. Thirty-seven years later, the charity runs events and projects all over the world, from the historic town of Cartagena in Colombia to the heart of cities in Peru, Mexico, Spain and the USA.

Hay Festival Global reaches an audience of millions each year and continues to grow and innovate, 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...

NBO Litfest, Kenya
(27–30 June 2024)

Hay Festival Querétaro, Mexico
(5–8 September 2024)

Hay Festival Segovia, Spain
(12–15 September 2024)

Lviv BookForum, Ukraine
(2–6 October 2024)

Hay Festival Forum Dallas, USA
(11–13 October 2024)

Hay Festival Forum Moquegua, Peru
(6 November 2024)

Hay Festival Arequipa, Peru
(7–10 November 2024)

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye Winter Weekend, UK
(28 November–1 December 2024)

Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias, Medellín and Jericó
(24 January–2 February 2025)

Hay Festival Forum Panama City, Panama
(28–29 January 2025)

Hay Festival Forum Seville, Spain
(March 2025)

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, UK
(22 May–1 June 2025).

Discover a world of different

ideas

books

perspectives

debates

views

dance

workshops

art

thinking

music

comedy

voices

possibilities

walks

poetry

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