Edinburgh International Festival To Be First Charity on Net Zero Pathway

The Hub, photo by Andrew Perry

MEDIA IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE
2025 FESTIVAL PROGRAMME RUNS FROM 1–24 AUGUST 2025

eif.co.uk / @edintfest

- **Edinburgh International Festival** has become the first charity and the first arts organisation in the UK to achieve the **British Standards Institute**'s (BSI) Net Zero Pathway verification, highlighting its commitment to genuine emissions reductions

- Operational progress includes **56% reduction in electricity** and **26% in gas emissions** at The Hub, **42% reduction in general waste** through sustainable concessions and **58% reduction in printed paper** since 2023, with a switch to freesheets and leaner print runs.

- Progress in artistic programme includes the development of an artist residency model for touring orchestras, putting climate-themed works on stage and a sustainable approach to building locally for large-scale productions.

17 July, Edinburgh: Edinburgh International Festival is the first charity, and the first arts organisation, in the UK to achieve the British Standards Institute's (BSI) Net Zero Pathway verification, as part of its commitment to sustainable practice.

This achievement underpins the International Festival's commitment to Net Zero by 2045, in all its activity, from delivering year-round work with workshops, community engagement projects, and support for emerging artists, to an August festival programme that features world-class performers from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre.

Aligning with BSI's Net Zero Pathway's ISO 14064-1 (for greenhouse gas reporting) and IWA 42:2022 (for strategic planning), the Festival has set a clear roadmap to reach Net Zero emissions. A three phased plan involves reaching Net Zero for gas, electricity and staff hired vehicles by 2030, waste, water, coach travel, printed materials and commuting by 2035 and freight, hotels and staff travel by 2045.

Unlike other approaches that rely on offsetting, the BSI Net Zero Pathway prioritises actual emissions reductions, ensuring that organisations are making genuine progress towards Net Zero. Its robust science-based approach is based on international standards, evaluating an organisation's carbon footprint and reduction targets to ensure credibility.

The BSI certification builds upon several initiatives from the International Festival to embrace new models of working with artists, audiences and employees to reduce carbon impact. This includes reducing gas and electricity usage at The Hub, the Festival's HQ on the Royal Mile, by 26% and 56% respectively, as well as appointing a full-time Environmental Sustainability Manager. In 2023, the International Festival was proud to achieve the Green Tourism Silver Award, providing third-party verification that the Festival upholds globally recognised sustainability standards.

In 2024, the number of printed programmes was reduced, and coupled with a switch to freesheets across most events, printed paper amounts reduced by 14% compared to 2023's output. This year, fewer printed brochures and a new highlights leaflet will see a 38% reduction in printed pages from 2024, a 58% reduction since 2023.

Terry Roberts, Edinburgh International Festival Sustainability Manager, said**:** "*Our journey to net zero is an ongoing process, and we are actively seeking new ways and partners to reduce our environmental impact. The BSI certification provides a structure to achieving our ambitions, allowing us to understand where we are and what we need to do progress. We know this will be difficult and we can't achieve anything alone, but by working together with our artists, suppliers, partners, audiences and the wider community, we are confident we can play our part in creating meaningful change.* "

Matt Page, Senior Vice President, Assurance Services EMEA, said: *"Achieving meaningful emissions reduction is a key priority for many in the cultural sector, but turning that ambition into action is a real achievement. The Edinburgh International Festival should be congratulated for this demonstration of leadership and action."*

"BSI's Net Zero Pathway is an independent process designed to build credibility around an organization's journey and ultimately build societal confidence in the progress being made. Edinburgh International Festival's commitment to science-based targets and meaningful

emissions reductions sets a powerful example for how cultural institutions can help shape a more sustainable future, benefiting people and planet."

Across artist travel, the International Festival have used an artist residency model since 2023, offering a more sustainable model for presenting large-scale orchestras. Inviting world-leading orchestras for an extended stay in Edinburgh, featuring multiple performances and moments of community engagement, reduces the environmental impact through scaled-back travel and increases the performers' engagement with Edinburgh - its audiences in the concert halls, as well as its communities. This year's resident orchestras include **NYO2,** a youth orchestra from the United States making its European debut, the world-renowned **London Symphony Orchestra;** and **NFM Leopoldinum,** leading the Focus On Poland programme.

The Festival also takes a sustainable approach to large-scale productions, as seen in this year's European premiere of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, which brings together Australian and Scottish talent. By building the set locally and collaborating with Scottish ensembles like the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the production strengthens local and international artistic ties while significantly reducing emissions.

Each year on stage, the International Festival seeks to challenge and inspire debate amongst audiences through platforming artists who explore climate change and justice in their artistic work. This year's programme features several works that delve into our human connection to the natural world, including Nederlands Dans Theater's *Figures in Extinction, Works and Days* by Belgian theatre collective FC Bergman and William Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company's *Faustus in Africa!.*

Other green initiatives the Festival is undertaking this year include an optimisation of web servers working with Supercool to a cloud-based set up that has resulted in an energy reduction of 2,866kWh, equating to 595.4kgCO2e, and the use of algae ink, a biodegradable and carbon-neutral product, in Festival-branded flags created by GH Digital.

Beyond being the first arts organisation in the UK to be certified by BSI standards, the International Festival also plays a key role in leading the sector, collaborating with many organisations to share knowledge and experiences, and learn from colleagues. The Festival are members of a number of sustainability groups and panels, including the Edinburgh Festival City Sustainability Working Group, Green Arts Initiative, Edinburgh Climate Compact and the European Sponsorship Association Sustainability Group. The Festival also hosted a Sustainability in Practice event in 2025, welcoming an audience from across the worlds of culture and sustainability that included Creative Scotland, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Festivals Edinburgh and Scottish Ballet. Looking ahead, the Festival is actively seeking partnerships with organisations that share its commitment to sustainability, with the aim of collaboratively achieving meaningful environmental goals.

Tickets to world-class performances across a handpicked programme of music, theatre, opera and dance at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2025 are available at www.eif.co.uk.

For full information about the International Festival's year-round work, visit https://www.eif.co.uk/social-impact.

– ENDS –

Media contact:
Isabella Feros, Media Manager, Isabella.feros@eif.co.uk
Hugo Mintz, Head of Communications and Digital, hugo.mintz@eif.co.uk
press@eif.co.uk

Join the conversation eif.co.uk / #edintfest / @edintfest
For media images – see here

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival
Edinburgh International Festival is the original festival. It's the one that started it all, the igniting spark that established Edinburgh as the world's Festival City.

The next International Festival takes place 1–24 August 2025, under the direction of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti. Benedetti's vision for the International Festival is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality art, for the broadest possible audience.

The Edinburgh International Festival was founded in 1947, the inspired idea of Rudolf Bing, a cultural pioneer and Jewish refugee, working with a group of civic and artistic leaders. Together, they created a festival that transcends political boundaries through a global celebration of the performing arts.

Over the following 77 years the International Festival's hand-picked programme of world-leading dance, opera, music and theatre has continued to bring people of different cultures and viewpoints together every August. Meanwhile, the International Festival's sister festivals have grown up around it – each of them contributing to the atmosphere of unparalleled excitement that transforms the city each summer.

Shining far beyond what you see on stage, the International Festival also offers year-round pathways for people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and participate in live performance. Learn more at **eif.co.uk/about .**

Membership at Edinburgh International Festival
Membership starts from £60 and includes priority booking, plus access to backstage tours and rehearsals during the Festival. For more information visit www.eif.co.uk/membership.