fèisean NAN GÀIDHEAL

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

A' toirt ar dualchais do ar n-òigridh

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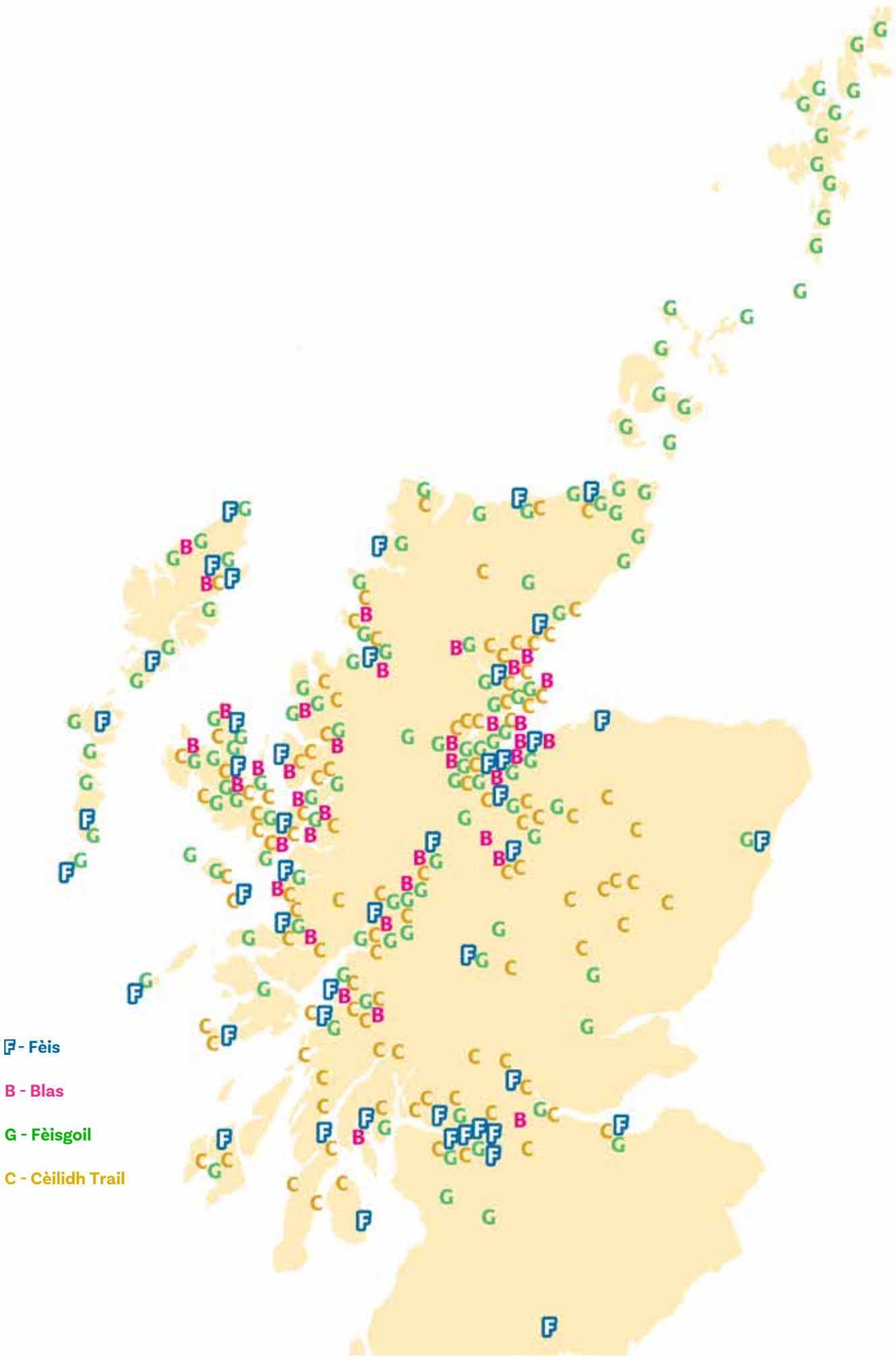
F - Fèis
B - Blas
G - Fèisgoil
C - Cèilidh Trail

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1. CHAIR'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

I am pleased to present Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Annual Report for 2023-24.

I took over as Chair of the organisation in December 2023, following in the footsteps of Anna Murray who stood down at the end of her permitted term as a member of Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Board. I would like to thank Anna most sincerely, as well as the other Board members whose terms came to an end during the year: Anne MacAulay, Colin Sandilands, Sarah-Jayne Shankland and George Stoddart. All gave time voluntarily to Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Board and we are extremely grateful for their stewardship of the organisation through difficult times in the past few years.

During the year, staff delivered a programme of work which encompassed support for Fèisean in communities across Scotland, training for organisers and tutors, the organisation of events such as the Blas Festival and support for Fèis Cèilidh Trails as well as a wide range of educational initiatives delivered through Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Fèisgoil service.

The main body of the Annual Report gives a detailed overview of work carried out, agreed with Creative Scotland and Bòrd na Gàidhlig and I would like to thank our principal funders for their flexibility and support throughout the year. Likewise, all the bodies with which we worked in delivering a range of contracts including The Highland Council, Argyll & Bute Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, High Life Highland, a number of other local authorities and public bodies.

As ever, our main focus was on supporting the Fèisean, now and in the future. We submitted a multi-year funding bid to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the outcome of which was a modest increase in funding for 2024-28. We made an application to the first stage of Creative Scotland's multi-year funding process and were permitted to apply, through its second stage, for three-year funding. The outcome of this is expected later in the year.

In common with all of Creative Scotland's current regularly-funded organisations, Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been in receipt of standstill funding for 6 years. One-off sums from Covid recovery funds were extremely welcome, but the regular funding we receive from Creative Scotland is vital to supporting the work of a wide network of volunteers involved in running Fèisean across Scotland and the artists they employ. It is also important in enabling us to lever funds from elsewhere.

We now know what level of support to expect from Bòrd na Gàidhlig in the years ahead but acknowledge the uncertainty of local authority funding and the impact of standstill funding which has added to the competitiveness in securing trust and philanthropic funds. This is keenly felt.

We are committed to Fair Work and contractually obliged to pay industry standard rates to artists. We have also agreed to reduce carbon use and put in place adaptations to cope with climate change. In order to deliver those initiatives, at the same time as managing rising operational costs, will require a significant uplift in funds from our main supporter, Creative Scotland. If the funding status quo prevails, prioritising those commitments will inevitably mean supporting fewer activities with a corresponding decrease in employment opportunities for freelance artists.

The higher cost of living also impacts the ability of parents to afford Fèis activities for their children. We encouraged Fèisean, once again, to offer free, subsidised or 'pay what you can' places. Some of this activity was funded through our Grants Scheme for Fèisean which, in addition to support from our normal funders, benefitted from an additional grant awarded by the William Grant Foundation, to whom we are very grateful.

During the year, we engaged in advocacy work to ensure support for the Gaelic language and traditional arts. This included providing written evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs & Culture Committee's inquiry on Culture in Communities and pre-budget scrutiny of the spend on culture. Our Chief Executive gave oral evidence to the committee at one of its sessions. We made a submission in response to a call for views on the Scottish Languages Bill. We contributed to discussions held with the UK government regarding ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and met with the Council of Europe committee of experts to discuss UK support for the Gaelic language.

International work was supported with some of Fèisean nan Gàidheal's team participating, last November, in a conference in Connemara marking 25 years of Ealaín na Gaeltachta, joined by young Fèis musicians visiting

through the Colmcille-funded *Turas* project. In partnership with the Black Isle and Highland Refugee Support Network, we supported the organisation of a family afternoon tea event in Munlochy for Ukranian families at which culture - local Fèis participants - was the medium to welcome refugees to the Highlands. We also organised an event with Taigh Sgoile na Drochaide in Cape Breton during Mìos nan Gàidheal and continued our membership of Amateo and the European Folk Network. We had early discussions with a consortium putting together a bid for EC Horizon funding and agreed to participate in the proposed project.

Demand was high for Fèisgoil services. Blasad Gàidhlig sessions were offered to schools in a number of areas through a contract with a consortium of local authorities. YMI lessons continued in Highland schools, in collaboration with High Life Highland. Fèisgoil was contracted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to organise singing lessons in Uist and Barra schools and work was undertaken with An Comunn Gàidhealach and Renfrewshire Council in delivering Mòd Academy. The service bid successfully for a contract with Argyll & Bute Council and went on to deliver the *Tabhaich* programme.

5 Latha was held in Lewis, Fèis Alba in Plockton and the Sgoil Shamhraidh Dràma ran in Portree for one week, rather than the normal two, due to budgetary constraints. A range of drama work was undertaken in schools, for learners and Gaelic medium pupils, along with our annual pantomime, to which schools look forward each year.

The Blas Festival took place in September 2023; a contract delivered for The Highland Council by Fèisean nan Gàidheal. The programme included three performances of a new commission by Ewen Henderson and a *Ceòl nam Fèis* showcase concert among a wide range of events in communities across the Highlands, Western Isles and online.

We continued to collaborate with a wide range of organisations and individuals through Creative Scotland's Traditional Arts Working Group and the Music Education Partnership Group. We supported the Hall of Fame at the MG ALBA Trad Music Awards in collaboration with Hands Up for Trad and we supported FilmG through sponsorship of a prize for young people.

There was unprecedented demand for both Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig, through which we continued to disburse grants with funds devolved from Creative Scotland, the latter scheme augmented by funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig for the first time.

Our Annual Conference was held in Nairn at the end of September 2023 to which we were delighted to welcome Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, as our principal speaker. Sessions were held on the use of Gaelic at Fèisean, climate change and new

PVG legislation. There was ample time for Fèis organisers to converse on a range of issues in discussion groups. Subsequently, guidance was issued to the Fèisean on climate actions and maintaining good relationships with their local authorities.

A new cohort of singers was recruited for our Gaelic song collecting project and their recordings made available on the Fuaran website. Appearing as a useful collection of songs, indexed by Fèis area, these could be used by singing tutors to teach material local to various communities. The Fuaran recordings also featured regularly on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal programmes.

During the year our Western Isles Development Officer, Peigi Ann Shields, left the organisation and we welcomed Calum Fraser to that post. We thank Peigi Ann and are extremely grateful to all staff for their commitment to delivering Fèisean nan Gàidheal's programme of work.

I would like to extend thanks to the volunteers who continue to support the local Fèisean. It is hugely encouraging to see committees so dedicated to Fèis activities. Along with artists, volunteers are the lifeblood of the Fèis movement. In thanking them, I wish them all the very best with their events over the forthcoming year and assure them of Fèisean nan Gàidheal's support.

The Board of Trustees met four times to review the work of the organisation, monitor finance, agree forward plans and receive reports on risk and the implementation of our EDI and Carbon Reduction plans.

I started by thanking outgoing Board members and I would like to end by thanking all those who served on the Board during the year. Following an open call for nominations, Angela Mack stood down early in favour of a new candidate from Fèis Lochabair and we were pleased to welcome Rachel Lincoln, Iain MacAskill, Krisell MacDonald, Tommy MacDonald, Muriel MacKaveney and Gwen MacQuarrie to the Board. In the short time they have been with the organisation, their support has been extremely positive and we look forward to working closely with them in the coming years.

Carola MacCallum
Chair

2. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 23/24

Fèisean	
Total number of individual participants in Fèis activities	5,151
Audience for Fèis concerts	8,083
Grants pledged by Fèisean nan Gàidheal for Fèis activities	£218,074
Total expenditure by Fèisean	£1,740,053

Cèilidh Trails	
Total grants paid by Fèisean nan Gàidheal	£26,300
Artists Supported	31

Fèisgoil	
Participants in Fèisgoil activities	12,924
Audience for Fèisgoil activities	3,924

Blas Festival and showcases	
Audience for Blas and showcases	7,280
Artists Supported	255

Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig	
Grants pledged through Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig	£112,823
Total value of Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig projects	£346,436
Number of participants in Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig projects	2,974
Audience for projects funded through Tasgadh and Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig	29,350

TOTALS	
Total grants pledged in 2023-24	£368,195
Total value of funded activities	£3,199,294
Total number of volunteers involved in funded activities	590
Total number of performers involved in funded activities	1,404
Total number of performances funded	448
Total number of audience members	96,926
Total number of tutors involved in funded activities	1,419
Total number of participants	21,846
Total number of sessions funded	14,574
Total FTEs supported through Fèisean nan Gàidheal's programme	91

3. PROGRAMME OF WORK 23/24

In 2023-24 Fèisean nan Gàidheal delivered an extensive programme of work and continued to support a network of Fèisean in a year which saw a return to pre-covid levels of activity.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal's key aim of supporting the creative development of young people was evident in all aspects of the varied programme that was delivered, nurturing and providing them with invaluable opportunities to further their skills and knowledge within Gaelic arts, culture and language in communities and schools across Scotland.

Our programme of work is delivered across five key areas:

1. Support and Development of Fèisean
2. Enhancement of Skills & Creative Talent
3. Enhancement of Gaelic Arts & Culture in Creative Learning
4. Audience Development and Engagement
5. Governance and Staffing

The following section in the Annual Report provides an overview of the work delivered by Fèisean nan Gàidheal and our member Fèisean.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF FÈISEAN

Fèisean nan Gàidheal exists primarily to support and develop local Fèisean aiming to ensure everyone can access and enjoy experiences in the traditional arts.
We recognise and value the role and immense contribution of volunteers in organising and delivering programmes of tuition and it is one of our main priorities that we ensure that they are well supported and have access to a wide range of services that we provide.

In 2023-24 we supported 46 Fèisean across Scotland who delivered extensive programmes of tuition opportunities in their local communities. As part of their membership of Fèisean nan Gàidheal, member Fèisean receive grant funding, access to an instrument bank, a centrally-run disclosure service, Gaelic language support, a development fund for new and innovative projects, comprehensive insurance and training to support volunteers in delivering their annual programmes.

Our development team continued to work closely with Fèisean, assisting them with a wide variety of tasks to ensure the successful delivery of their events, workshops and classes. This year saw increased levels of activity and participant numbers which is extremely encouraging following the pandemic.

The following is a selection of highlights from Fèisean during the year. We provide regular event information from across the Fèis movement through our quarterly newsletter, *Faileas*, our website and social media channels.

- Fèis Air an Oir established a new Cèilidh Trail which toured successfully across the area and took part in concerts alongside leading traditional music acts.
- Fèis a' Bhaile celebrated their 30th anniversary and established a monthly chanter club, alongside their regular accordion class.
- Fèis an Iar Thuath was re-established and offered a successful Fèis day in September 2023.
- Fèis Òigridh Ìle is Dhiùra held their first event following Covid-19 and were fortunate to secure substantial funding from the Ardbeg All Islay Fund to support their year-round programme.
- Fèis Taigh Dhonnchaidh held a series of workshops in partnership with Wee Studio.
- Fèis Eilean an Fhraoich performed on the Islands Stage at the Hebridean Celtic Festival.
- Fèis Lochabair's step-dance class took part in a workshop led by Kelly MacArthur of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.
- Fèis an Tairbeirt launched a second edition of their *Ceòl Earra-Ghàidheil* book which featured additional notes and a chord index.
- Fèis Innis an Uillt began a series of after school music classes.
- Fèis Phàislig launched their tunebook *The Renfrewshire Collection* and also led workshops as part of the Royal National Mod in Paisley.

- Fèis Tìr a' Mhurain organised weekly lessons which were held at Cnoc Soilleir.
- Fèis Lochabair celebrated their 30th anniversary with a cèilidh in November.
- Fèis Chataibh was established following the pandemic and following their summer week they began a series of follow-on lessons in the new year.
- Fèis na h-Òige commissioned a new Gaelic harmony arrangement for their choir group with support from Tasgadh.
- Fèis an Iar Thuath, Fèis Lochabair, Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan, Fèis Air an Oir, and Fèis an Tairbeirt received support from our development fund to ad new activities.

FUARAN

There were 6 participants in the fourth series of the Fuaran project. Between March 2023 and August 2023, they took part in various workshops to assist them with their research and collection of Gaelic songs. They then prepared these songs with additional support before coming together in Cromarty at the end of the summer to record them professionally. In total, 10 songs were added to the online resource in February 2024, during Seachdain na Gàidhlig.

AGM, CONFERENCE AND GATHERING

Our AGM and Conference was held in Nairn on the 29 and 30 of September 2023.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Jenny Gilruth MSP, attended the conference on the Friday evening and gave a speech outlining the government's support for the work carried out by Fèisean nan Gàidheal.

Representatives from Fèisean took part in several sessions over the two days, discussing aspects of programme delivery, financial support, developing new projects as well as workshops on the Use of Gaelic at Fèisean, Climate Change: Action (led by Sheila Wickens, Community Engagement Officer, Highlands & Islands Climate Hub) and the Changes to the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme (led by Wendy McBeth, Compliance Officer Volunteer Scotland).

ENHANCEMENT OF SKILLS AND CREATIVE TALENT

The Fèis movement has excelled in encouraging participation in the arts and in nurturing talent. Our work has, and continues to have, an influence on the creative, linguistic and social skills of the young people who participate in Fèisean. We recognise the need to continue investing in developing the skills of those delivering our programme so that we can achieve the best possible outcomes.

We provided both online and in-person training for staff, volunteers, tutors and participants.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff members took part in 24 training sessions throughout the year. Topics covered included: Gaelic, equality, diversity & inclusion, first-aid, simultaneous translation, and additional support needs.

FÈIS COMMITTEE TRAINING

Fèis volunteers took part in various training sessions including: first-aid, child protection, Gaelic language at Fèisean and climate change. Over the year we offered 22 sessions with 107 participating.

TUTOR TRAINING AND CLPL

Over the year 19 tutors took part in workshops to develop their teaching skills. In addition to this, we offered 5 online Gaelic workshops with 29 tutors registering to take part.

In partnership with Eden Court, we delivered a training day to 6 young Gaelic drama tutors.

We also supported one Fèis tutor to continue their distance learning studies through Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

YOUTH TRAINING

Fèis Alba provided Cèilidh Trail participants with training to develop their music skills and learn about the music industry, 8 of the participants achieved an NPA qualification. Fuaran participants received ongoing training in Gaelic research and collection and had masterclasses in Gaelic song arrangement and performance ahead of recording their songs.

ENHANCEMENT OF GAELIC ARTS & CULTURE IN CREATIVE LEARNING

Fèisean nan Gàidheal, and member Fèisean, are fortunate to work with a cohort of very skilled tutors across a wide range of projects and events. We realise the potential for tutors' skills to be utilised in the formal education sector, using their knowledge and teaching abilities to deliver work in the arts and Gaelic language to achieve the outcomes required of the Curriculum for Excellence, the Creative Learning Plan, the National Gaelic Language Plan and wider Scottish Government initiatives.

Our Fèisgoil service continues to expand, delivering a variety of projects and services to local authorities and public bodies, including Gaelic language teaching, music tuition, drama performances and tuition, Gaelic awareness training and professional development opportunities.

The vast majority of Fèisgoil work is delivered face-to-face although online tuition is utilised for some projects.

The following section of the annual report provides a summary of the work delivered.

BLASAD GÀIDHLIG – GAELIC TASTER SESSIONS

Although we were faced with a significant funding reduction from the local authority consortium, additional support from the Scottish Government enabled Fèisgoil to deliver 1,260 Blasad Gàidhlig Gaelic language lessons for 2,611 learners, providing employment opportunities to 13 tutors who worked in 27 schools within Falkirk, Glasgow City, Argyll & Bute, Dundee, West Dunbartonshire, South Ayrshire, West Ayrshire and East Ayrshire.

YOUTH MUSIC INITIATIVE (YMI)

We delivered tuition in all Highland Council primary schools for the 21st successive year, as part of a funding agreement with High Life Highland.

45 tutors worked with 168 schools, with 4,324 school pupils taking part in 1,821 sessions.

The programme is organised by a number of Fèisean in order to cover each area and ensure local coordination, as follows:

- Fèis Chataibh: Sutherland
- Fèis an Earraich: Skye & Lochalsh
- Fèis Lochabair: Lochaber
- Fèis Rois: Ross-shire, Inverness & Caithness
- Fèis Spè: Badenoch & Strathspey

We continued to deliver Seinn, Gaelic song sessions in schools throughout Uist and Barra as part of a continued agreement with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, where 2 tutors worked in 6 schools, with 413 children taking part in 339 sessions.

DÌLEAB

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar engaged Fèisgoil to work on the continuation of Dìleab with a project around Lord Leverhulme's legacy in the Western Isles. This involved people from within the community working with schoolchildren across Lewis, Harris and Uist creating plays based on events of 100 years ago whilst Leverhulme was the proprietor of the Isle of Lewis. Public performances took place in several communities and were very well received.

DRAMA

We delivered a programme of drama performances and tuition over the year. The following is a summary of the work carried out during the year, which included newly written Gaelic plays by our drama officer, Angus Macleod.

- Meanbh-Chuileag *Rùn-dìomhair nan Eilean Flannach* toured Gaelic medium schools, exploring the events that happened on the Flannan Isles in 1900. The play was performed on 42 occasions in 29 schools with 874 pupils taking part.

- Sporan A play based on the theme of rewilding, inspired by Donnchadh Ban MacIntyre's poetry toured 9 schools who are learning Gaelic as an additional language. The play was performed on 21 occasions to 489 pupils.
- Pantomime *Calum Anndra a' Chòta Dheirg* was performed in 20 schools in December 2023, to 1,020 Gaelic medium school pupils. An additional public performance took place in Inverness in Eden Court's MacLean Room which was filmed and subsequently streamed online, reaching over 900 people to date.
- Gaelic Drama Summer School Between 3-8 July, the Gaelic Drama Summer School took place in Portree. 10 participants attended with Rachel Kennedy as Artistic Director. They learned a range of drama skills and created a number of films which were submitted to FilmG's short film competition.
- Eden Court Partnership We delivered two drama workshops for young people in collaboration with Eden Court. We also worked with them to offer a training day to prospective Gaelic drama tutors.

BEAIRTEAS

We were delighted to work with a group in Bragar on a project strengthening Gaelic language among primary-age children using the art of storytelling as a tool. This project centred on local dialect with two tutors carrying out 18 sessions for 42 pupils in 2 schools. The project was a great success and a fantastic new resource of videos and a pamphlet with local riddles, rhymes and stories was created and subsequently published on our website.

5 LATHA

5 Latha was held between 3-8 April with 12 taking part. They were involved in a wide range of activities, including Harris Tweed weaving, crofting, peat cutting, baking and much more along with music and Gaelic song sessions. On the Thursday evening a community cèilidh in partnership with Carloway Gaelic Choir was held in the local community hall with over 60 in attendance.

MÒD ACADEMY

In collaboration with Renfrewshire Council and An Comunn Gàidhealach, we supported 979 children as they prepared for mòd competitions. In total 300 sessions were delivered by 5 tutors in 16 schools.

MEANBH FHÈIS

We were pleased to return to Kilmarnock Academy to run a mini-fèis day with 3 tutors providing 5 sessions for 50 pupils.

GAELIC SONGWRITING

Ewen Henderson's *Lèirsinn* Blas commission featured two newly written Gaelic songs. New compositions were also included in Fèisgoil touring plays and the pantomime.

TURAS

With support from the Colmcille fund, we established an exciting new partnership with Ealaín na Gaeltachta. In November 2023, 5 young Gaelic speaking singers and musicians had the opportunity to visit Connemara in the West of Ireland for Ealaín na Gaeltachta's 25th anniversary concert. A return visit from the young Irish musicians is planned for later in 2024.

ADULT GAELIC CLASSES

We were pleased to organise a further series of online Gaelic night classes for employees of Glasgow City Council. 4 tutors were employed to deliver 42 sessions with 89 attending to develop their Gaelic language skills.

UN CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF A CHILD (UNCRC)

Following a tender and interview process in early 2024, we were awarded a contract with e-Sgoil as part of their Creative Catalysts project, exploring the rights of Gaelic medium secondary pupils in the Western Isles. The majority of this work will be carried out in the summer/autumn of 2024.

TABHAICH

We secured a contract for Gaelic language work in Tiree, Coll and Bute following an open tender process. *Tabhaich* featured a series of community, online and school-based sessions with an opportunity for all ages to engage with the Gaelic language and develop their skills at a level suitable to them.

PUBLIC BODIES

We delivered Gaelic Language Awareness training sessions for East Renfrewshire Council, the Scottish Culture & Heritage Group of the William Grant Foundation and Glasgow City Council. Towards the end of the year we were contracted by HIE to deliver a series of sessions for their staff and Board to be delivered early in 2024-25.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Our programme of work enables us to reach out to local communities and visitors offering them the opportunity to attend and participate in a variety of Gaelic arts and cultural events. Each year we strive to reach out to audiences, increase our numbers and support communities to enhance their cultural development. Our events span a wide geographical area, enabling smaller communities to hold and promote events in their own areas without the need to travel to more central areas of population.

CÈILIDH TRAILS

In 2023, we supported Fèis Latharna, Fèis Lochabair, Fèis Phàislig and Fèis Air an Oir to organise Cèilidh Trail groups. We organised Fèis Alba in Plockton to offer training to the young people involved in the various trails as they developed their sets and prepared for their upcoming tours. 24 participants were involved in the Cèilidh Trails, and they played at 72 events over the summer to over 4,000 people across their local areas.

In addition to this they also had the opportunity to perform at the opening of the Edinburgh International Festival in August and some of the participants also took part in the *Ceòl nam Fèis* concert at Blas. Eight of the participants achieved an NPA qualification from West Highland College UHI.

The Fèis Spè Cèilidh Band also played at 6 events as part of a summer tour. We also supported Fèis Rois who offered places for young people with additional needs to participate in their Cèilidh Trails.

BLAS

The festival took place between Friday 1st and Saturday 9th September 2023 with events in communities across the Highlands and also in the Isle of Lewis.

The Highland Council's financial contribution enabled Fèisean nan Gàidheal to lever additional funding from Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Colmcille. With a reduced budget, and in the face of rising costs, the festival was smaller in comparison to previous years but was once again a celebration of our rich Gaelic language, culture, music and heritage with leading traditional musicians, Gaelic singers and tradition bearers performing in communities across the Highlands and Islands.

Over the course of the festival the following events were delivered:

- 25 concerts and cèilidhs
- 2 Gaelic song sessions
- An online Gaelic workshop for all
- 2 school performances from festival artists
- A theatre in education tour of Highland schools where Gaelic is taught as an additional language.
- Music and Gaelic song sessions in Highlands primary schools

Among the festival highlights were the following programme features:

- The annual Blas commission was awarded to Ewen Henderson, who performed *Lèirsinn* across 3 evenings. This also went on to be performed at Celtic Connections in January 2024.
- Concerts were held to celebrate the significant birthdays of Murdo John MacKenzie, Calum Martin, Rita Hunter and Dr Angus MacDonald.
- With support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Colmcille fund Irish siblings, Séamus and Caoimhe Uí Fhlatharta, collaborated with Highland siblings, Donald and Peigi Barker as part of *An Gineal Òg*.
- The festival finale was a *Ceòl nam Fèis* concert, featuring over 50 young musicians from across the Fèis movement who performed under the musical direction of Lochaber accordionist, Màrtainn Skene. This was held at Lochaber High School to mark the 30th anniversary of Fèis Lochabair.

Total attendance figures for the festival were in excess of 7,200 and a survey carried out after the festival showed an overall satisfaction rating of 96%.

In addition to the Fèisean nan Gàidheal staff who worked on delivering Blas, Chrissie Macrae was contracted as Events Co-ordinator while Katie Mackenzie looked after news releases, press coverage and social media.

GAELIC SONG SESSIONS

In partnership with An Comunn Gàidhealach we hosted 2 *Cèilidh mun Chagailt* song sessions and a further 2 song sessions as part of the Blas Festival. The sessions were delivered via Zoom with over 100 participants from across the world taking part.

TASGADH

We administered the Tasgadh grants scheme on behalf of Creative Scotland for the 9th consecutive year. The fund supports artists and organisations to create, perform and tour work with a particular focus on Scottish traditional music, storytelling and dance. The demand for support from this fund was much greater than in previous years, with 101 applications received in total. We were able to award a total of £38,283 to 44 projects which had a total value of £118,144.

MAOIN NAN EALAN GÀIDHLIG

We continued to administer Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig (Gaelic Arts Fund) on behalf of Creative Scotland during 2023-24 and were pleased that Bòrd na Gàidhlig provided additional resouces for this fund. We had two funding rounds during the year for Gaelic arts-based projects. This fund was also in great demand, receiving 72 applications over the two rounds. Awards totalling £75,000 were made to 28 projects which had a total value of £230,250.

SCOTTISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC HALL OF FAME

Fèisean nan Gàidheal continued its sponsorship of the Traditional Music Hall of Fame at the 2023 Scots Trad Music Awards. The performer inductees were Anne Neilson, Eileen Penman, Willie McCallum, Mary Ann Kennedy, Aileen Carr, Brian Miller and Charlie Kirkpatrick. The Hamish Henderson Award for Services to Traditional Music was awarded to Donald Smith, former Chief Executive of TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland).

FILMG

We sponsored the *Best Youth Performer* category at FilmG 2024. This prize was awarded to brothers Finlay and Calum Morrison.

Credit FilmG

NETWORKS AND ADVOCACY

We engaged in a wide range of advocacy work to ensure support for the Gaelic language and traditional arts. This included providing written and oral evidence to Scottish parliament committees on a range of cultural and language related issues. As an organisation we made a submission in response to the Scottish Languages Bill and we took part in discussions with UK government representatives regarding ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. We met with representatives from the Council of Europe alongside colleagues from other Gaelic organisations as part of a follow-up discussion following their visit to Lewis in April 2022.

We continued to work closely with organisations to promote the Gaelic language, culture and traditional arts.

We regularly engage with our funding bodies and, throughout 2023-24, staff attended various conferences, seminars and information sessions organised by them.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal staff were actively involved in a range of promotional work collaborating with networks and organisations across Scotland such as Creative Scotland's Traditional Arts Working Group, the Highland Youth Music Forum, Hands Up for Trad and the Music Education Partnership Group.

Our international collaborations with Amateo, and the European Folk Network and Colmcille continued with meetings and collaborations where possible.

In November 2023, members of the team attended *Ceangal* in Spiddal, a conference held by Ùdarás na Gaeltachta as part of Ealaín na Gaeltachta's 25th anniversary. The conference focussed on best and current practice in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the Isle of Man, exploring potential future collaborations between each place. It culminated in a performance featuring young musicians from the Fèisean alongside those from Ceoltóirí Óga Chois Fharraige.

CÒMHLA

In partnership with the Black Isle and Highland Refugee Support Network, we supported the organisation of a family afternoon tea event in Munlochy in June 2023 for Ukranian families at which local Fèis participants performed.

FÈISTV

During the Blas Festival we streamed 7 events which were free to view online. A public performance of our annual pantomime was filmed and then shown in the lead up to Christmas.

Although it was not possible to add further lessons to our Oide service, we will be doing so in the coming year.

SEACHDAIN NA GÀIDHLIG

The third official Seachdain na Gàidhlig was held between 20 - 26 February 2024. We were delighted to launch the latest series of songs from the Fuaran project as well as *Sgeulachd, Rannan & Tòimhseachain an Taobh Siar* a new resource that was devised as part of our latest Beairteas project. Our Fèisgoil manager delivered a Gaelic harmony singing workshop for young people as part of another collaboration with Eden Court. Several Fèisean also participated in this weeklong celebration, hosting various events and classes.

MÌOS NAN GÀIDHEAL

In May 2023 we celebrated Mìos nan Gàidheal in Nova Scotia by hosting an online Gaelic song session with children at Taigh Sgoile na Drochaide, the Gaelic school in Cape Breton, who joined with children from classes at Sgoil an Iochdair.

GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING

This table shows the attendance of Fèisean nan Gàidheal Board members at meetings held on 26 May 2023, 29 September 2023, 8 December 2023 agus 8 March 2024.

Highland		Attendance
Colin Sandilands (Secretary to 8/12/23)	Fèis Farr	3 of 3
Rachel Lincoln (from 8/12/23)	Fèis Lochabair	2 of 2
Angela Mack (to 8/12/23)	Fèis Lochabair	0 of 3
Kirsty MacDougall (Vice-chair to & Treasurer from 8/12/23)	Youth Representative	2 of 4
Gwen MacQuarrie (from 8/12/23)	Fèis na Linne/Fèis an Earraich	2 of 2
Sarah-Jayne Shankland (to 8/12/23)	Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan	1 of 3

Western Isles		
Anna Murray (Chair to 8/12/23)	Fèis Eilean an Fhraoich	2 of 3
Iain MacAskill (from 8/12/23)	Fèis an Rubha	1 of 2
Anne MacAulay (to 8/12/23)	Fèis an Rubha	2 of 3
Krisell MacDonald (from 8/12/23)	Fèis Eilean an Fhraoich	2 of 2
Tommy MacDonald (from 8/12/23)	Fèis Tìr a' Mhurain	2 of 2
Katie Macinnes (Vice Chair from 8/12/23)	Youth Representative	3 of 4

Argyll and Bute		
Muriel MacKaveney (from 8/12/23)	Fèis an Tairbeirt	2 of 2

Other Areas		
Carola MacCallum (Chair from 8/12/23)	Fèis Obar Dheathain	4 of 4
George Stoddart (Treasurer to 8/12/23)	Fèis Fhoirt	2 of 3
Alistair Paul (Secretary from 8/12/23)	Fèis Arainn	4 of 4

Observers

Mòrag Anna MacLeod Mitchell/Lena Walker	Highland Council	0 of 4
Siobhan Anderson	Creative Scotland	2 of 4
Kirsty Moyes	Argyll & Bute Council	1 of 4
Steven Kellow	Bòrd na Gàidhlig	2 of 4
Cllr John A MacIver	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	1 of 4

Staff Members

Arthur Cormack	Chief Executive	4 of 4
Anne Willoughby	Executive Manager	4 of 4
Calum A Macmillan	Development Manager	4 of 4
Eilidh Mackenzie	Fèisgoil Manager	4 of 4

The table below shows information about staff members in 2023-24.

Staff Member	Contract	Position	Base
Arthur Cormack	1.0 FTE permanent	Chief Executive	Portree
Anne Willoughby	1.0 FTE permanent	Executive Manager	Portree
Calum A Macmillan	1.0 FTE permanent	Development Manager	Inverness
Eilidh Mackenzie	1.0 FTE permanent	Fèisgoil Manager	Inverness
Eilidh Cormack	0.8 FTE permanent	Fèisgoil Administrator	Glasgow
Nicola Simpson	0.7 FTE permanent	Senior Development Officer	Inverness
Abi Reid	1.0 FTE permanent	Development Officer	Inverness
Peigi Ann Shields	1.0 FTE from 30.06.23	Development Officer	Western Isles
Calum Fraser	1.0 FTE from 07.08.23	Development Officer	Western Isles
Angus MacLeod	1.0 FTE permanent	Drama Officer	Inverness
Luke Slater	0.67 FTE from 05.06.23 permanent	Administrator	Portree

YOUNG PEOPLE AS DECISION MAKERS

We continued to involve young people in decision making across several projects. Katie MacInnes and Kirsty MacDougall continue to make valuable contributions to our Board meetings.

FUNDING

We have annual and project-based agreements with several local authorities, public bodies and the Scottish Government. As well as taking advantage of additional funding available from time-to-time.

We entered the final year of our Bòrd na Gàidhlig agreement and we were informed that our agreement with Creative Scotland would be extended once again by a further year as they prepared for a new funding round in 2024.

During the year we submitted a multi-year funding bid to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which resulted in a modest increase for the period 2024-28. Our first stage application to Creative Scotland's multi-year funding process was successful and we were permitted to make a second stage application for three-year funding with the outcome expected in October 2024.

We are grateful to the William Grant Foundation who have supported us over a two-year period with funding for our Fèisean grants programme.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal continues to deliver a wide range of outcomes agreed with the various bodies and they, as well as our trustees, receive quarterly reports detailing progress.

EDI

We developed a new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Plan for 2023-24, which was agreed by the Fèisean nan Gàidheal Board in May and was subsequently implemented through all aspects of our work. Ongoing progress is monitored by staff to ensure targets within the plan were achieved.

CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

We record and report on carbon use and have a Carbon Reduction Plan on which we report annually to the Board of Trustees and Creative Carbon Scotland. As an organisation we strive to reduce our use of carbon, with much-reduced travel and ensuring our office premises are as energy efficient as possible.

Our session on climate change at the annual conference was extremely useful to the organisation and to member Fèisean as they too consider the ways in which they can make positive changes to support our plan. It is clear they do a lot already and guidance was prepared to support them further.

We are now looking at adaptations which may be needed to our programme to deal with climate emergencies when they arise and will produce an Adaptation Plan in 2024-25.

SAFE PLACE POLICY

We continued to support Fèisean with implementation of our Safe Place Policy and provided resources to support young people through our *Bruidhinn rium – Speak to me* initiative.

FAIR WORK FIRST

Fèisean nan Gàidheal is committed to Fair Work First which encompasses fair pay and conditions for all who work for the organisation. We are accredited as a Living Wage Employer. All contractors and freelance artists are paid in line with industry standard rates set by the Scottish Artists' Union, the Musicians' Union and Equity as appropriate. Staff pay increases are in line with those agreed by Unison for local authority workers. Fair Work First is a regular item on the agenda of staff meetings at which anyone can raise points or concerns and staff also have a voice through the organisation's appraisal process.

POLICIES AND RISK

Fèisean nan Gàidheal maintains a comprehensive risk register, which is updated regularly. Staff routinely consider risks in all day-to-day activities and the Board of Trustees receives an annual report on the highest risks faced by Fèisean nan Gàidheal. This is available in the Board papers published online

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2023-24

Under regulations introduced by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the annual accounts of the organisation must be prepared and presented in a particular way and run to many pages. The full audited accounts are available on our website www.feisean.org and only the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2024 is included here along with the Balance Sheet at that date.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.03.24 Total funds £	31.03.23 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and Legacies	449	-	449	100
Charitable activities				
Core activities	638,721	114,000	752,721	897,465
Training	5,000	-	5,000	5,500
Blas Festival	154,439	-	154,439	231,508
Fèisgoil	371,159	-	371,159	525,253
Gaelic residential events	23,000	-	23,000	24,749
Other trading activities	122,987	-	122,987	147,128
Investment income	9,346	(1)	9,345	5,617
Total incoming resources	1,325,101	113,999	1,439,100	1,865,830
EXPENDITURE ON				
Raising funds	3,595	-	3,595	2,307
Charitable activities				
Core activities	789,188	110,670	899,858	975,753
Training	4,962	-	4,962	5,238
Blas Festival	153,585	-	153,585	235,376
Fèisgoil	362,146	-	362,146	528,931
Gaelic residential events	22,145	-	22,145	23,978
Total	1,335,621	110,670	1,446,291	1,771,583
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	(10,520)	3,329	(7,191)	94,247
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	362,235	44,400	406,635	312,388
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	351,715	47,729	399,444	406,635

BALANCE SHEET
AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.03.24 Total funds £	31.03.23 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets	4,545	-	4,545	15,140
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	81,173	54,125	135,298	21,856
Cash at bank	323,116	4,966	328,082	454,551
	404,289	59,091	463,380	476,407
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due within one year	(57,119)	(11,362)	(68,481)	(84,912)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	347,170	47,729	394,899	391,495
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	351,715	47,729	399,444	406,635
NET ASSETS	351,715	47,729	399,444	406,635
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds			351,715	362,235
Restricted funds			47,729	44,400
TOTAL FUNDS			399,444	406,635