

Winning ideas announced of how to make Edinburgh's Festivals even more amazing

What do flasks, buggies, tents, programmes and smartphones have in common? They all feature in the five winning ideas of the Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge of how to make the Festivals even more amazing?

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge was a public competition that ran for ten weeks earlier this year which invited the public to share their ideas for how to improve the experience of the world's festival city.

The online competition at ideas.edinburghfestivals.co.uk was an initiative of Edinburgh's Festivals Innovation Lab (festivalslab). The Challenge received almost 300 ideas and the top five prize-winning ideas as chosen by the judges were:

- What if listings in the programme had a symbol to show that they were not in an accessible venue?
- What if "Festival Flasks" were available, with refill discounts for users festival-wide therefore saving cups, allowing cheaper drinks and providing marketing opportunities?
- What if there was a mobile app where audiences could leave through a 'knowledge tag' outside the show's venue with a review and suggestions for similar shows?
- What if the Meadows was a camp-site with toilet/cooking facilities, security and low pitch cost for those performers/visitors on low budget?
- What if a content aggregator combined all listings for children's shows and then made them searchable by age range?

The authors of these top five ideas will receive iPads as prizes. Additional prizes were also awarded for the top 25 prizes as voted by the public, which included ideas related to new forms of mobile ticketing, services focussing on parents, wider access to free public wifi, reducing environmental impact and new ways of using technology to discovering events.

Rohan Gunatillake, lead producer of the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab said:

What was especially exciting was that over and above the ideas that people submitted, there was also so much online discussion and debate about them – engaging so many people in our agenda around festival innovation was terrific to see.

Andrew Coulton, judge and chair of the cross-festival Innovation Group said:

It is great that the increasing ease of communicating and sharing information allows us to have a more mature and ongoing conversation with our audiences, staff and participants not only about how they feel about the Festival experience as it is, but also about how they would improve it.

Sue Bruce, judge and Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council said:

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge was a great idea which has generated even more great ideas! It has been a good way to engage with festival-goers and the wider public and will be rewarding for the people who thought of these ideas to see some of them being put into practice.

Lyn Gardner, theatre critic for The Guardian said:

Many brains are better than one, and an open approach such as the Ideas Challenge recognizes that audiences are not just consumers but innovators and experts on the festivals they attend.

Will Sawney, prize-winner for his idea of Festivals Flask said:

The Ideas Challenge, like the best of Edinburgh Festivals themselves, has taken great little ideas and championed them towards big success. It provides stellar example of how social media can reap practical suggestions from big, open discussions.

Clare Hollowell, prize-winner for her idea on accessibility said:

The Ideas Challenge offered a great opportunity to open up thinking about the festivals. Rather than focusing narrowly on the normal issues, we could offer ideas about transforming how people interact with the festivals. It was great to read through the ideas that people had come up with and see the potential for change.

Ben Fletcher-Watson, prize-winner for his idea on children-focussed listings said:

The Ideas Challenge was a great way to engage with the people of Scotland to make the Festivals even better. I'm very proud to live in a city with such thriving and exciting events.

The high volume of ideas means that unfortunately not all of them can be turned into live projects. However festivalslab, with support from the INTERREG programme and the Open Innovation Project, will be looking to pilot and build upon the ideas which can make the most impact. And the ongoing development of these ideas can be viewed at www.festivalslab.com

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge is an initiative of the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab and is supported by the INTERREG IVB North-West Europe Programme and the Open Innovation Project.

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Notes to editors:

The judging panel included:

- Sue Bruce, Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council
- Faith Liddell, Director, Festivals Edinburgh
- Andrew Coulton, Administrative Director, Edinburgh International Book Festival & Chair of the cross-festival Innovation and Environment groups
- Lyn Gardner, theatre critic, The Guardian
- Will Gompertz, Arts Editor, BBC
- Bill Thompson, BBC journalist and technology critic
- Richard Wiseman, Psychologist, best-selling author and Guest Director of the Edinburgh International Science Festival 2011

The judges received a long-list of forty ideas from the near 300 ideas submitted, sorted for the quality and clarity of the idea, its likely impact and the feasibility of delivery with duplicate ideas from the original 300 also having been removed. The top five winning ideas were the result of summing up the seven judges' assessment of the long-listed ideas which were individually scored against the criteria of quality, impact and feasibility.

The Ideas Challenge ran from August 12th to October 31st. Full terms & conditions available at <http://ideas.edinburghfestivals.co.uk>

The **Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab** is Festivals Edinburgh's innovation programme and identifies and develops projects which use new thinking and new technology to improve the festival experience. It enables a variety of projects, including the successful Culture Hack Scotland, is involved in collaborative programmes such as Smart Tourism and manages the Edinburgh Festivals geek-in-

residence. The Lab also supports improvements to core infrastructure, enables the digital distribution of content and supports the exploration of digital programming. The Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab is supported by Creative Scotland and you can find more about the Innovation Lab on www.festivalslab.com

Festivals Edinburgh is the high-level organisation created and managed by the directors of Edinburgh's 12 major Festivals to lead on their joint strategic development. Festivals Edinburgh enables, facilitates and delivers new, significant projects in a number of key areas: joint marketing, programming, sponsorship, innovation, environmental sustainability and professional development. You can find more about Festivals Edinburgh on www.festivalsedinburgh.com

Appendix | The 25 ideas as voted by the public were:

1. What if the Edinburgh International Book Festival teamed up with Book Aid International to add an extra dimension to its celebration of the book?
2. What if there were top-up swipe cards that pay for entry into shows rather than ticketed systems - it's a very green alternative and could cut costs.
3. What if you had a mobile app that allowed you to view and book upcoming performances based on your GPS location and taste?
4. What if there was a chance to meet and speak to the performers afterwards, giving people a chance to compliment them and get photos/autographs?
5. What if the festivals introduced a loyalty card, for example for every 10 shows you book you get a money off voucher or a free ticket?
6. What if residents had a standard 50% reduction?
7. What if there were bins for recycling the unwanted flyers on the Royal Mile, as opposed to normal rubbish bins?
8. What if all 2 for 1 offers were replaced by half price offers making it fair for people attending shows on their own or in groups of uneven numbers?
9. What if each attendee had a unique QR code which they could use to access events rather than tickets?
10. What if there was a marketplace for people selling tickets (at cost price) if they can't make it to a show?
11. What if you get a barcode and every time you buy tickets they are linked to your barcode and its scanned as you go into shows instead of paper tickets
12. What if there was a website to track performers/companies from one year to the next?
13. What if you could wear something that was code for 'no thanks, I don't want a flyer, I am a local & will just be putting it in the bin'
14. What if there were self-service Half Price ticket terminals throughout the city where you can buy discounted shows for any particular time bracket?
15. What if there were umbrellas a-plenty at locations across the city: pick one up, drop it off when you get...there. It's wet in Edinburgh in August!
16. What if ...Fringe Sunday was brought back!
17. What if the rate for being included in the fringe was lower for arts professionals who live here?
18. What if you were allowed to print tickets at home/ in the office as you can for many other events now?? Save queues/ time/ money and travel...!
19. What if listings in the programme had a symbol to show that they were not in an accessible venue?
20. What if more locally brewed ales and lagers were available at festival venues instead of just the mass produced global brands?
21. What if there was a competition for local schools to get a show put on and give tickets to people who live in the margins?
22. What if areas of Edinburgh (e.g. Pleasance, Potterow, Mound, Royal Mile) had free Wi-Fi for the duration of the festival?
23. What if all paper products were abolished - tickets, flyers, pamphlets and the Festival became the first paperless festival in the world?
24. What if they keep the Glasgow/Edinburgh train running till at least 1.30?
25. What if there was a roulette style ticket buying system, so you get to see random comedians you wouldn't of seen normally?