

Press release embargoed until 10am, 13 November 2018.

Edinburgh's Christmas 2017 boosted Scotland's capital city generating £113.2m in economic impact.

Incredible satisfaction rating among residents and visitors: 98% of those surveyed said that Edinburgh's Christmas was very good or good.



Underbelly today announces that **Edinburgh's Christmas 2017**, which it produced on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, generated an **economic impact of £113 million** in additional output in Edinburgh, **equating to 2,260** full time jobs in Edinburgh making it **one of the most beneficial single events for the city year round**.*

Underbelly recently released BOP Consulting's impact assessment for **Edinburgh's Hogmanay** which showed an economic impact for Edinburgh from the festival in 2017/18 of £39m.

Edinburgh's Christmas attracted 919,344 unique visitors over 6 weeks in 2017, (up 3.7% from 886,651 in 2015), demonstrating the scale of Edinburgh's Christmas when compared to the combined total of 1,070,954 unique attendees counted at Edinburgh's 12 festivals (2015 BOP Consulting, 'Edinburgh Festivals Impact Study').

Footfall to Edinburgh's Christmas three main sites was counted at **4.653 million** and City Centre footfall was counted as 20.7 million for the November and December period (for Essential Edinburgh).

Retail sales from 2015 to 2017 also show that Edinburgh during the Edinburgh's Christmas period of November and December had **bucked the trend** with sales growth of 3.1% against Scotland (-0.2%) and UK (1.3%) trend.

A record-breaking 771,007 tickets were snapped up for Edinburgh's Christmas rides, attractions and shows: a 11.6% increase on 2016's 690,878 tickets sold.

98% of people surveyed rated the quality of their experience at Edinburgh's Christmas as very good or good (76% very good) which tallies with why there is such a **high level of repeat visitors** (71% of all people surveyed having visited Edinburgh's Christmas in previous years, an average of 6.6 times).

65% of attendees came from outside Edinburgh and the Lothians; 36% came from other parts of Scotland, 22% from the rest of the UK and **7% were international coming from 47 different countries** including Australia, Ireland, USA, Holland, Spain, Canada, France, Germany and New Zealand.

And Edinburgh's Christmas is a major reason for people to come to the City at this time of year with 64% of people travelling to Edinburgh saying it was the main or only reason for visiting. Similarly, of those coming to Scotland, for 46% it was their only or main reason for visiting the country. This demonstrates the enormous value of the event to Edinburgh and to Scotland in terms of growing the city's and the country's global profile as a winter destination.

The most popular attraction and reason for coming to the festival was the Christmas Markets, which are known around the world and which 85% of people visited, 66% saying it was their main reason for coming. **The Ice Rink was the next most popular which 49% of people visited.** People visited an average of 2.9 paid attractions.

Edinburgh's Christmas once again showed it has a very loyal Edinburgh following with EH postcode holders booking 142,333 tickets with their 20% discount - up 9% on 2016. The level of repeat visits increased with 92% of Edinburgh and Lothians residents attending previous years, an average of 7.7 times. **And 69% of Edinburgh residents said that Edinburgh's Christmas was the main or only reason they had come into the city centre that day.**

The attractions appealed to a wide range of ages, 83% of visitors were between 16 and 54 with around 20% for each decade therein.

The economic impact for Scotland was calculated as £88.2 million in additional output.

2017 marked the fifth year of Underbelly producing Edinburgh's Christmas for the City of Edinburgh Council and the biggest ever year for the city's six weeks long festive celebrations.

Edinburgh's Christmas's East Princes Street Gardens Christmas Market was also named as the best in UK (in a survey conducted by McCarthy & Stone).

1,290 children from Edinburgh schools submitted their stained-glass artworks with the theme of 2050 Edinburgh City Vision to the **Winter Windows** competition with the 44 winners from 33 schools displayed in 5 different locations around Edinburgh.

In 2017, Edinburgh's Giant Advent Calendar, a free outdoor attraction created by Underbelly and Double Take Projections, counted down the days on General Register House revealing one exciting glimpse into Edinburgh's winter history every day for the enjoyment of the passers-by. **The Ice Adventure: A Journey Through Frozen Scotland** attracted crowds to the west end of George Street, to admire over 200 ice sculptures charting Scottish history and mythology, including Robert The Bruce, Mary Queen of Scots, Kelpies, and the Loch Ness monster. And Festival Square Spiegeltent hosted the one and only **La Clique Noël**, an outrageous and unforgettable night of cabaret and burlesque.

Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam, directors of Underbelly who produce Edinburgh's Christmas on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council, said:

"It's fantastic to get this independent research and to read its finding of the vast economic impact that Edinburgh's Christmas brings to the city and to Scotland. We're very proud that Edinburgh's Christmas is now firmly on the map as a global winter destination with sky high levels of customer satisfaction and return visits, and visitors who consistently rate the event as their major reason for coming to Edinburgh. The research shows that the event supports thousands of jobs in the city but it's great to see how many residents also come and enjoy its attractions. This year, we're adding Silent Light, a significant new attraction which will raise funds for Edinburgh's One City Trust, dedicated to fighting inequality and exclusion in the city."

The Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, Frank Ross, said: "There is no better place in the world to celebrate Christmas than here in Edinburgh and this report highlights just how valuable the event is to the city.

"As part of our Winter Festivals programme, Edinburgh's Christmas supports the staging of our Hogmanay celebrations, while bringing in an estimated economic impact of £113.2m. The events are clearly a huge draw for visitors, but they are also for and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of local people. Over 142,333 tickets were snapped up last year by Edinburgh residents with their 20% discount, and 69% of citizens said Edinburgh's Christmas was the main or only reason they came into the city centre that day.

"These findings are clearly good news for our city centre retailers, for local jobs and for our winter economy too."

Roddy Smith, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh, said: "Edinburgh's Christmas delivers huge footfall gains and economic impact for the city centre every

year and we expect this year, especially with Silent Light - with its combination of spectacle and fun - to be no different.

“We are delighted to be a partner in the creation of what promises to be the most fun and exciting attraction yet for George Street this Christmas.

“2017 was fantastic for the city centre and we are looking forward the attractions this year.”

Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport, said:

“Edinburgh’s festivals and major events are internationally renowned and we should all take great pride in the fact they are recognised and enjoyed by visitors from countries all over the world, bringing significant benefits to the economy. More than 1.8 million people passed through Edinburgh Airport last November and December and we expect to see that rise this year as more people fly into the capital to experience Edinburgh’s Christmas and the other festive events.

“A big part of the success of all of our other festivals is our warm and welcoming hospitality which invites people to celebrate with us and the festive season always brings good memories for people. We want to help create new ones by showing off Edinburgh at its very best, and there’s no better time to experience that than at Christmas.”

John Donnelly, Chief Executive at Marketing Edinburgh, said: “The value that Edinburgh’s Christmas brings to Scotland’s capital is undeniable. Not only does it deliver a positive economic impact for the city through the millions of global visitors that it attracts, our residents also get to experience the ‘UK’s best Christmas Market’ on their doorstep. The success of events such as Edinburgh’s Christmas continues to position the city as a world leading destination in which to live, work, study, visit and invest”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Facebook: facebook/edinburghschristmas

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Tickets for Edinburgh’s Christmas 18 (16 November to 5 January 2019) are on sale now at www.edinburghschristmas.com / 0844 545 8252

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- * The research for Edinburgh's Christmas 2017 was undertaken by BOP Consulting who used the same methodologies and measures as they used for its impact assessments into Edinburgh's 12 Festivals in 2015 and Edinburgh's Hogmanay in 2017/18.

The economic impact of Edinburgh's 12 festivals as measured by BOP Consulting in 2015 generated £279.65m for the city, equating to 5,660 FTE. The economic impact created for Scotland was £312.66m, equating to 6,021 FTE.

The economic impact of Edinburgh's Hogmanay as measured by BOP Consulting in 2017/18 generated £39.2m for the city, equating to 826 FTE. The economic impact created for Scotland was £39.8m, equating to 920 FTE.

In 2015 the total number of unique attenders at Edinburgh's 12 festivals was 1,070,954. In the same report, created by BOP, the satisfaction level among the attendees at the 12 festivals was calculated as 95% rating them as very good or good.

Information in this release was compiled from data provided by BOP Consulting, Essential Edinburgh and Edinburgh's Christmas ticketing data. BOP Consulting's sample size for their survey was 1,512 face to face interviews.

About Underbelly

Underbelly is a UK based live entertainment company the beginnings of which are rooted in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2000. Its events and festivals division now operates one of the largest operations at the Fringe, selling over 460,000 tickets for over 200 shows in 22 venues over 25 days in 2018.

2018 is the sixth Edinburgh's Christmas that Underbelly has produced for City of Edinburgh Council (2017/18 saw a record breaking 781,520 tickets issued to visitors from 47 different countries), and the second Edinburgh's Hogmanay also on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, which in 2018 welcomed 160,000 over 3 days.

Elsewhere Underbelly also produces Underbelly Festival on the Southbank in London, this year in its 10th year and one of the biggest multi-arts offerings in London, Christmas in Leicester Square, Underbelly Festival in Hong Kong, West End Live in Trafalgar Square for Westminster City Council and the Society of London Theatre.

Through its Underbelly Productions arm it produces and promotes live shows in London's West End at the Edinburgh Fringe, and throughout the UK and on tour internationally.

In 2017 Underbelly sold over 1.4 million tickets to its various events.

www.underbelly.co.uk

About BOP Consulting

BOP Consulting is an international consultancy specialising in culture and the creative economy. With offices in London, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Shanghai, BOP delivers over 100 projects each year covering research and evaluation, strategy, and buildings and regeneration. For over 20 years, BOP has partnered with cities, cultural organisations, and policymakers to reshape the way culture is experienced and delivered locally, nationally, and internationally.

BOP also founded and convenes the World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF) in partnership with the Mayor of London's Culture Team. WCCF is a network of over 35 cultural affairs departments and cultural sector leaders from world cities around the globe collaborating on shared research and policy solutions.

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