



Annual Report 2023

Aithisg Bhliadhna 2023

For the period August 2022 - December 2023

Fèis Phàislig

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Overview // Os-sealladh

Fèis Phàislig was established in November 2014 to provide traditional music opportunities for young people in Renfrewshire. I'm happy to present the Fèis Phàislig Annual Report for 2023 which outlines another successful year for the organisation. The board has worked throughout the year to build our existing programme of activity and maximise opportunities for young people across Renfrewshire. Through our 2023 programme of events, we have managed to reach over **15,000 young people** across Renfrewshire.

The board was successful in securing funding from a number of organisations including Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Renfrewshire Council. The support of these organisations have allowed us to deliver a number of fantastic opportunities for young people and I would like to emphasise the board's thanks to them for their support over the past year.

The board wishes to thank all the tutors who have worked with us over the past year. Their work with our young people ensures all participants receive a fantastic experience and we appreciate their continued work across a range of projects.

Detail on our 2023 activity is included in this report. I would encourage anyone looking for further information to get in touch at any time.



Grant McFarlane

Fèis Director

January 2024

Fèis Week // Seachdain na Fèise

Our seventh annual Fèis Week delivered another successful week of music-making and arts workshops for four days from 18th-21st July. We welcomed **166 participants** across the following levels:

- **Fèis Bheag** (Wee Fèis) - 5-7 years - introductory workshops with music, Gaelic, art, dance and more...
- **Main Fèis** - 8-18 years - workshops across a range of disciplines
- **Advanced Fèis** - S1-S6 pupils - a programme of targeted workshops to develop existing skills for players at an intermediate / advanced level

After a successful week in 2022, the event returned to Johnstone High School. We would like to thank the staff, especially the janitorial team, for their support and help during the event. As in previous years, Renfrewshire Council kindly agreed to cover the costs of the venue hire and I'd like to pass on thanks on behalf of the board for their ongoing support.

Our Fèis Bheag workshops, for 5-7 years, returned this year led by Tara Rankin and Grace Morton, with support from Cameron Duff and Rachel Hopkins. We were able to accommodate 55 young people across two sessions: an English-medium session from 10.00-12.00 and a Gaelic-medium session from 14.00-16.00. Participants took part in a variety of activities including instrument making, singing and using Gaelic. In a departure from previous years, and to help ease the business of our afternoon concert for the Main Fèis participants, we successfully delivered a Friday morning concert for our Fèis Bheag participants to showcase what they had been learning.

Our Main Fèis Week had 12 choices for participants led by our team of professional tutors and musicians. We also built in capacity for previous participants or early-career musicians to 'shadow' our main tutor team. The full list of choices and tutors for 2023 was: **accordion** with John Somerville and Yuan Wong; **art** with Sandra Steele; **chanter / pipes** with Calum MacCrimmon; **circus skills** with Kit Rodman-Orr; **clarsach** with Becky Hill and Emily Fraser; **dance** with Ainsley Hamill; **drumming** with Stevie Fivey; **fiddle** with Sally Simpson

and Emma Loney; **filmmaking** with Anna Garvin; **guitar** with Ron Jappy and Steven Gallagher Fraser; **singing** with Joy Dunlop; **whistle** with Calum MacCrimmon.

Our Advanced Fèis Week gives participants in S1-S6, who are of an intermediate/advanced level on their instrument, the opportunity to take part in a series of workshops aimed at developing new and existing skills. In 2023, this was delivered by two tutors; Daniel Thorpe and Gillian Fleetwood. Participants worked on a performance for the end-of-week concert, as well as on targeted workshops including harmony / chord chart reading, tune 'hunting' and wellbeing and technique. We will continue to evaluate and build on feedback from our older participants to ensure we are delivering an event that suits their needs.

Our annual school visits tour, 'Stramash for Schools', returned in April, with support from the Royal National Mòd Local Organising Group. Visits took place across 15 days in late April / early May and aimed to bolster participant numbers and raise awareness of Fèis activity that young people can get involved in. The participating schools for 2023 were:

Auchenlodment Primary School	Johnstone High School	St Fergus Primary School
Bargarran Primary School	Kilbarchan Primary School	St James Primary School, Renfrew
Bishopton Primary School	Kirklandneuk Primary School	St John Bosco Primary School
Brediland Primary School	Langbank Primary School	St John Ogilvie Primary School
Bridge of Weir Primary and ELCC	Langcraigs Primary School	St Mary's Primary & ELCC
Bushes Primary School	Lochwinnoch Primary School	St Peter's Primary School
Dargavel Primary School	Mossvale Primary School	St. Anne's Primary School
East Fulton Primary School	Newmains Primary School	St. Anthony's Primary School
Fordbank Primary School	Our Lady of Peace Primary School	St. Fillan's Primary School
Gallowhill Primary School	Ralston Primary School	Thorn Primary School
Glencoats Primary School	Rashielea Primary School	Todholm Primary School
Gleniffer High School	St Benedict's High School	Wallace Primary School
Houston Primary School	St Catherine's Primary School	West Primary School
Howwood Primary School	St Charles' Primary School	Williamsburgh Primary School
Inchinnan Primary School	St Davids Primary School	Woodlands Primary School

The school visits tour proved to be hugely successful once again, reaching approx. **12,500 pupils** across the schools listed above. A huge thank you to our team of tutors - Josie

Duncan, Joy Dunlop, Grant McFarlane, Morag Currie, Ron Jappy and Sally Simpson - for providing these inspirational experiences for young people and an opportunity to learn about traditional music and Gaelic, many for the first time. We would also like to thank all of the participating schools for hosting a visit from our tutors and to all the pupils who took part.

Grant McFarlane, in his role as Fèis Week Coordinator, managed the day-to-day running of the Fèis Week. This was supported by the work of a number of board members, parent volunteers and, for the first time, two additional coordinators - a volunteer coordinator and tutor coordinator. This additional support helped ensure the smooth running of the week and support our large team of tutors and participants.

Additional activities during the week included face painting, a Gaelic treasure hunt, celtic art, ceilidh dancing and a 'carnival' theme day with a visiting ice cream van. Our Tutors' Ceilidh returned on Wednesday night and was a fantastic evening of music, song and dance. Introduced in 2015 as an opportunity for participants to hear their tutors performing together, the event continues to be a huge success and is now an integral part of our Fèis Week.

An audience of over 250 family and friends joined us for our finale concert at the end of the week which showcased the incredible work of our participants and the hard work our tutors had put in.

As we look ahead to 2024 and our eighth annual Fèis Week, we aim to build on the success of our 2023 event and continue to provide new and exciting opportunities for participants.



Participants and tutors at Fèis Week - July 2023

Weekly Lessons // Clasaichean gach Seachdain

With continued support from Renfrewshire Council and Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the organisation has delivered a seventh successful year of our weekly instrumental lessons for young people aged 5-18. Classes take place at West Primary School, Paisley on Saturday mornings during term time across the following levels:

- **Fèis Bheag** - 5-7 years - introductory sessions in music, song, arts and crafts and more.
- **Instrumental classes** - 8-18 years - tuition in accordion, fiddle or guitar.
- **Advanced Band** - S1-S6 pupils - 'build-a-band' style workshops to develop skills.

Participants in our Fèis Bheag sessions receive a 50 minute session each week. Sessions are led by guitarist and singer, Kaitlin Ross, who worked with participants on singing, arts and crafts, dance and more.

Young people participating in our instrumental classes receive a 30-minute instrumental class and a 30-minute mixed instrument groupwork class. Our core tutor team for the 2022/23 session was: Chloe Bryce - fiddle; Grant McFarlane - accordion; Ron Jappy - fiddle. We introduced a new 'Advanced Band' option for our older participants who are of an intermediate / advanced standard. This element was introduced to accommodate smaller participant numbers at high-school level age and has worked successfully, offering high school pupils an opportunity to socialise with those of a similar age and develop their skills.

The 2022/23 session ended in June 2023 with 72 participants attending weekly - 54 in our instrumental classes and 18 in our Fèis Bheag sessions. Participants numbers for each subject were as follows:

Accordion: 17	Fiddle: 19	Guitar: 10	Fèis Bheag: 18	Advanced Band: 9
(2022: 14)	(2022: 17)	(2022: 13)	(2022: 33)	*New for 2022/23
(2021: 12)	(2021: 15)	(2021: 12)		
(2020: 13)	(2020: 10)	(2020: 9)		
(2019: 15)	(2019: 15)	(2019: 19)		
(2018: 11)	(2018: 10)	(2018: 19)		
(2017: 9)	(2017: 9)	(2017: 17)		
(2016: 6)	(2016: 6)	(2016: 14)		

We continued to offer theory classes for participants alongside their instrumental classes. The classes proved popular in the previous academic year and give participants the opportunity to work through the ABRSM Grade 1 workbook. For those participants who completed Grade 1 in the previous year, we were able to offer a Grade 2 class. A total of 17 young people took part in these classes: 8 in Grade 1 and 9 in Grade 2.

Participants are offered opportunities to showcase their skills at our end-of-term concerts. These take place twice a year in December and June and are now a firm fixture in our year round programme of events. The concerts are a fantastic opportunity for our young learners to showcase their skills but are also a fundraising opportunity for the organisation, raising vital income that goes back in to our programme of events. We would like to thank all the families who attend these events for their ongoing support.



Weekly Lessons Concert - June 2023

YMI: Introduction to Scottish Music

In partnership with Renfrewshire Council, and as part of the government's Youth Music Initiative scheme, the Fèis delivers traditional music sessions to schools across Renfrewshire throughout the year. Schools are offered a block of 8 sessions with one of our tutors and, alongside a broad introduction to traditional music and Gaelic, schools are able to choose to focus on Tin Whistle or Gaelic Song.

The schools participating in our 2022/23 sessions were:

Name of School	Number of Pupils
Inchinnan Primary School	17
St John Ogilvie	59
Todholm Primary School	57
Kirklandneuk Primary School	73
Bushes	54
St. Anne's Primary School	27
Rashielea Primary School	32
St John Bosco Primary	32
Bishopton Primary	59
Lochwinnoch Primary School	82
Our Lady of Peace Primary School	52
Bridge of Weir Primary School	80
St David's PS	36
St James' Renfrew	78
West Primary School	50
St Catherine's	27
Mossvale Primary	29
Glencoats Primary School	28
Wallace Primary School	42
19 Schools	914 Pupils

The project delivered to a total of **914 pupils** with feedback from pupils and staff being positive. Liaising directly with staff, we continue to build links with each of the schools and are actively working on new ways to build and support our current offering. For those classes with a focus on Tin Whistle, all pupils get their own instruments to take home at

the end of a year and across all sessions, pupils are given the opportunity to perform at the end of their block.

Our tutors for this session were Seán Gray (tin whistle) and Katherine MacDougall (Gaelic song) and Suzanne Houston (tin whistle). The board would like to express their thanks to both tutors for their ongoing work and giving pupils across Renfrewshire an inspiring experience of traditional music and Gaelic.



YMI Tutor, Katherine MacDougall - May 2023

Ceilidh Trail // Cèilidh air Chuairt

The Fèis Phàislig Ceilidh Trail gives young musicians and singers aged 16 to 25 the opportunity to take part in a professional summer tour. With support from a team of musicians and specialist tutors, participants are given a unique opportunity to develop core skills required for a career in the creative industries and in music in particular. Our 2023 group delivered **23 performances** across **14 days** to over **900 audience members**.

The musicians were recruited by audition in March 2023. The group comprised of 6 musicians:

- Anna Morrison (fiddle)
- Ava Martin (fiddle)
- Chloe Strathdee (clarsach)
- Emily Fraser (keys, accordion)
- Rory Carter (bodhran / mandolin)
- Steven Gallagher (guitar)

Prior to commencing the tour, the group attended the Fèis Alba training week in early July in Plockton, facilitated by Fèisean nan Gàidheal for all of the Cèilidh Trail groups across Scotland. The group also rehearsed periodically from May, preparing their sets for public performance. Rehearsals were a mixture of self-directed sessions and those facilitated by Fèis Phàislig tutors.

The tour ran from July 31st - August 13th. Events were sourced and booked by the Trail Coordinators, Grant McFarlane and Morag Currie. The bulk of the tour events were community-based, and free to enter. There were both public events, and private events targeted at specific groups. Free events included:

- 4 early-years sessions in libraries throughout Renfrewshire
- 6 sessions at ROAR for Life-, a voluntary organisation running befriending and social events for older people within the community.
- 3 performances at UCI Cycling Worlds Championships events.

- 2 open performances at Riverside Museum, Glasgow.
- A collaborative performance with over 300 artists at the Edinburgh International Festival.
- A busking performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with accompanying lunchtime concert at the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

Larger events that required a ticket included:

- Performance at the Reeling Festival, Glasgow
- Concert and ceilidh with Erskine Arts
- Afternoon concert with The Folks Music Project, Neilston
- Joint concert and ceilidh with Argyll Ceilidh Trail in Lochranza Hall, Arran
- Finale Concert at The Wynd Centre, Paisley

The group also performed at the Royal National Mòd as part of the 'Ar Cànan 's Ar Cèol (Our Language, Our Music)' concert in October. We also continue to build links with Renfrewshire Council to offer additional performance opportunities for the group on an ongoing basis.

The board would like to thank the Glasgow Airport Flightpath Fund, as well as the Renfrewshire Council Local Partnership Groups, for their support and grant funding.



Ceilidh Trail Performance at The Reeling Festival, Glasgow - June 2023

Gaelic Choir // Còisir Ghàidhlig

With support from Renfrewshire Council Music Service, the Fèis delivers a year round Gaelic Choir with around 10 young people attending weekly. Sessions are free for all participants and run at Castlehead High School on Tuesday evenings.

I am happy to report the choir has now successfully been reinstated after initially facing challenges to recruit enough participants post-Covid. For 2022/23, the weekly sessions have been delivered by Mairi Mcgillivray who has been a huge asset to the project.

With the Royal National Mòd being hosted in Paisley in 2023, the choir worked across the year to prepare for their first-ever competition. I'm delighted to share they placed 2nd in their section - a huge achievement for the group and a testament to the work Mairi has done to get the group running successfully again.

The full list of performance opportunities across 2023 include:

- **Saturday 25th February** - Seachdain na Gàidhlig Family Ceilidh
- **Wednesday 22nd March** - Renfrewshire Council Spring Concert
- **Saturday 10th June** - The Reeling Festival, Glasgow
- **Saturday 17th June** - Fèis Phàislig Showcase Concert
- **Thursday 28th September** - Full Council Meeting, Renfrewshire House
- **Saturday 14th October** - Ar Cànan 's Ar Ceòl concert, Mòd Phàislig



Gaelic Choir Performance at The Reeling Festival, Glasgow - June 2023

Other // Puingean a Bharrachd

ASN Project

We successfully initiated, and are currently delivering, traditional music sessions for two schools for pupils with additional support needs. Our ASN Traditional Music project provides year-round tuition for pupils with additional support needs in Riverbrae School and Mary Russell School. The project, designed for up to 180 young people in three blocks throughout the year, consists of 8 weekly sessions, offering sustained engagement with traditional music and Gaelic culture. The project was developed based on the success of a pilot with multi-instrumentalist Seán Gray and has garnered positive feedback from participating schools who have emphasised Seán's impactful contribution. The initiative aims to bridge educational gaps, promote inclusivity, and positively impact mental health, contributing to a more inclusive cultural landscape.

Mòd Phàislig 2023

The Royal National Mòd, a premier celebration of Gaelic language, music, and culture, was successfully hosted in Paisley in October. The nine-day festival featured traditional competitions as well as a diverse fringe programme, aimed at encouraging local Gaelic speakers and newcomers to participate. Over 780 individuals engaged in activities and we were delighted to deliver some of the activities before and throughout the week, including:

- **Composition competition to compose the soundtrack to the Mòd**
- **Ar Cànan 's Ar Cèol - performances from 2023 Ceilidh Trail & Gaelic Choir**
- **Cluicheamaid (Mòd Kids Club) - daily sessions in Paisley and Renfrewshire**
- **5 Bookbug sessions in local libraries**
- **2 children's ceilidhs**
- **Cèilidh Fàilteachais - a multicultural exchange at the Tannahill Centre**
- **Spooky Samhain Family Cèilidh**

Renfrewshire Collection

We successfully delivered 'The Renfrewshire Collection,' a notable project that culminated from our Treòir Musician-in-Residence initiative. This resource, curated by Ron Jappy, showcases the rich tapestry of Renfrewshire's traditional music scene through 50

compositions and songs. The collection, partly funded by Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Renfrewshire Council, was unveiled ahead of the Royal National Mòd and featured the winning composition, 'Fàilte gu Pàislig', written specifically for Mòd Phàislig 2023. Available for free download on feisphaislig.com, the collection aims to break barriers, inspire local musicians, and promote the vibrant traditional music scene here.

News & Newsletter

The organisation delivers a monthly newsletter on the first Friday of the month (#FèisPhàisligFriday). It contains updates on our projects, new opportunities, a tutor spotlight and a new Gaelic phrase each month. The newsletter has allowed us to keep in touch with our mailing list and promote some of the opportunities available to young people in a new way. A big thank you to Joy Dunlop for her monthly Gaelic phrase contributions. You can sign up to receive the newsletter here (<http://eepurl.com/hsaYcH>)

External Events

The organisation continued to provide musicians and tutors for a number of events throughout the year including:

- Ceilidh band for Fèisean nan Gàidheal Conference
- A performance from our 2022 Ceilidh Trail for GFW (Glasgow Fiddle Workshop)
- Musicians for a performance for Lochwinnoch Arts Festival
- Background musicians for Renfrewshire Council event at Paisley Abbey
- Musicians for a one-off assembly as part of Seachdain na Gàidhlig at West Primary
- Ceilidh band for Seachdain na Gàidhlig Ceilidh
- Musicians for Renfrewshire Council 'Wee Spree' event
- Musicians for SURF events throughout the year