



Press Release: Embargoed to 6, August 2024

Enjoy A Feast Of Delights

Pam Ayres, Coinneach MacLeod and Alan Cumming to Bookend Wigtown Festival

- **Hebridean Baker hosts ‘festival-within-a festival’ of food**
- **Climate-change and environment take centre stage**

The 2024 Wigtown Book Festival will feature legendary performance poet **Pam Ayres**, much loved Scottish actors **Alan Cumming** and **Forbes Masson** and a “festival-within-a-festival” of food hosted by The Hebridean Baker **Coinneach MacLeod**.

Tickets go on sale today (6 August) for the 10-day festival which takes place in Scotland’s picturesque National Book Town in Galloway from 27 September to 6 October.

There will be more than 250 events for all tastes and ages, with a host of well-known faces.

They range from naturalist **Kate Humble**, comedian **Janey Godley** and singer and songwriter **Cerys Matthews**, to novelist **Irvine Welsh** and Channel 4 International Editor **Lindsey Hilsum**.

Children’s authors include **Frank Cottrell Boyce**, *Strictly Come Dancing* champion **Hamza Yassin**, and the winner of the Waterstones Children’s Book Award 2024, **Pari Thomson**.

New this year will be the introduction of a “festival-within-a-festival” dedicated to food, featuring three days of talks, interviews and demonstrations (4-6 October).

Guest programmer **Coinneach** will be joined by among others *Masterchef* finalist **Sarah Rankin** and *Great British Bake Off* winner **Peter Sawkins**.

The Food Festival includes cooking demos and well as special events like Tea with the Hebridean Baker, a cake decorating demo with Peter Sawkins and a demo with Café Canna chef Gareth Cole.

Coinneach, who will also be launching *The Hebridean Baker: The Scottish Cookbook* at Wigtown, said: “Hosting the food festival-within-a-festival at the Wigtown Book Festival is incredibly exciting! This is a unique opportunity to bring together foodie lovers and book enthusiasts and I can’t wait to celebrate the people and stories behind our rich culinary traditions.”

Also taking part in the festival will be Coinneach’s partner **Peter MacQueen**, author of *The Art of Hutting*, a guide to and celebration of living off grid in which he shares his knowledge of everything from foraging and places to stay, to fire-making and building solar panels.

Peter said: "I am thrilled to take the folk of the Wigtown Book Festival offgrid to explore Scotland's rich cabin culture. Who knows, we might even discover some budding Felicity Kendal and Richard Briers ready to embrace The Good Life!"

This fits with another major festival theme – the environment.

A central strand will be **Change the Stories** which looks at new stories to tell about climate change, and then there's the **Coastal Fringe** which will invite visitors to experience for themselves the beautiful Solway shoreline around Wigtown in the company of speakers.

The festival will also be launching a new sustainable transport initiative, encouraging visitors to share transport and providing extra bus links.

Other highlights from the non-fiction programme include:

- **William Dalrymple** on how ancient India transformed the world.
- **David Baddiel** (*My Family*) – a searingly honest family memoir.
- **Helena Kelly** on *The Life and Lies of Charles Dickens*.
- Historian **Kathryn Hughes** on how Britain fell in love with cats.
- Former Home Secretary **Alan Johnson** on Harold Wilson's legacy
- **Jessica Hepburn** on becoming the first woman to swim the Channel, run the London Marathon and climb Everest.
- **Russell Jones** (*The Decade in Tory*) on the implosion of the Conservative party.
- **Graeme Parker**, The Hoof GP (*Bruised Soul*) - meet the man behind the 100million-viewers-a-month agricultural YouTube channel.
- **Ian Simpson** (*Forever Playboy*) one of Scotland's greatest motorcycle racers recalls the thrills of competition.

This year's Magnusson Lecture, in honour of the broadcaster and academic Magnus Magnusson, will be given by **Tessa Boase** on Etta Lemon, the extraordinary woman who co-founded the RSPB.

Lee Randall, Festival Programmer, said: "Nothing makes me happier than bringing readers and writers together. I hope this year's programme, with all its range and reach, proves a hit with our regular visitors while also enticing first-timers into the fold. We make sense of our world through the stories we tell one another, and this year's crop of authors have amazing, fascinating, even hilarious tales to share."

The James Mirrlees Lecture, which marks the life of the locally-born Nobel Prize-winning economist, will be given by **Sophie Yeo**, author of the acclaimed *Nature's Ghosts*.

The festival will also see the announcement of the winners of the annual international **Wigtown Poetry Prizes** for poems in Scotland's three indigenous languages (English, Scots and Gaelic). Former BBC Scotland political editor **Brian Taylor** will present the third Anne Brown Essay Prize for Scotland.

Last year's winner, **Rodge Glass**, will return to the festival with his memoir *Joshua in the Sky*.

As ever the festival strongly represents Scottish writing, including appearances by **Andrew O'Hagan** (*Caledonian Road*) and **Abir Mukherjee** (*Hunted*), as well as acclaimed debut novels from **Ali Millar** (*Ava Anna Ada*), **Tom Newlands** (*Only Here, Only Now*) and **Elle Machray** (*Remember. Remember*).

Wigtown Book Festival takes place across the small rural market town in some of Scotland's most beautiful countryside. From the traditional opening-night fireworks and pipe band to the final weekend ceilidh, the event aims to create an atmosphere of celebration.

As well as author talks, the programme includes music, theatre, topical debates, workshops and walks, including a tour of the dozen and more bookshops, led by *Diary of a Bookseller* author **Shaun Bythell** and Ben Please of **The Bookshop Band**, both Wigtown-based.

WBF aims to be accessible to all. An accessibility guide is available on the website and concessions include free tickets for carers and for young people aged 15-25.

The full programme will be announced and go on sale on Tuesday 6 August 2024.

-Ends-

Notes

- For more about Wigtown Book Festival see www.wigtownbookfestival.com

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