

Impact Report



2025–26

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Reflections on 2025–26

Edinburgh Science's year has been defined by a shared belief in the power of curiosity and collaboration; one we share with everyone who helps make our work possible.

Across all our programmes, from our world renowned Edinburgh Science Festival to the hands-on inspiration delivered directly into schools through *Generation Science*, we have worked alongside partners, supporters, educators, and communities to make science feel exciting, relevant, and accessible to everyone.

This collaborative spirit sat at the heart of our 2026 Festival theme, *Going Global*, which celebrated science as a collective human endeavour shaped by many voices and carried forward across borders and generations into today and beyond.

Highlights of this year's Festival included headline speakers **Hamza Yassin** and **Helen Sharman**, and a spectacular artistic commission from **Dr Gayle Chong Kwan** displayed in the National Gallery of Scotland. Festival audiences were invited to see STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) not as an abstract discipline, but as a living, evolving story that they are part of.

That same commitment to collaboration, access and opportunity also powered our outreach work throughout the year. *Careers Hive* marked 10 years of opening doors for young people, giving hundreds of students the chance to explore future pathways in STEM through hands-on activities, industry conversations, and inspiring real-world stories from early career professionals.



Meanwhile, in its 35th year *Generation Science* continued to bring high quality, joyful STEM learning into schools across Scotland, ensuring that curiosity can spark anywhere, not just in major cultural venues and city centres. Alongside this, our year-round community engagement programme strengthened relationships with schools and community groups across Edinburgh, offering free workshops, Festival visits, and locally delivered mini-Festivals that help broaden access to STEM for audiences who might otherwise face barriers to participation.

Together, these programmes form our mission driven framework for engaging the public with STEM, inspiring young people into STEM, and supporting STEM educators across Scotland. None of this happens without people who believe in it.

This Impact Report reflects the reach and resonance of that work, and every part of it was made possible thanks to the funders, sponsors and Catalysts who stand behind us. We are deeply grateful to you, and to everyone who shares our belief that STEM belongs to us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hassun El-Zafar'.

Hassun El-Zafar

Director and CEO, Edinburgh Science

Edinburgh Science Festival

Festival in numbers

FESTIVAL ATTENDEES

161,000

TICKETS SOLD

11,306

TOTAL
VENUES

TEMPORARY STAFF
EMPLOYED 70

TOTAL
EVENTS 111

25



"Fantastic events to introduce kids to science... I found these events so well made and so beneficial. I cannot think of anything better to do at the Easter break."

FAMILY PROGRAMME





"AI is not as smart as women yet!"

TECH DECODED

"First class. Well presented to a wide age range. Informative, engaging, inspiring, comical ... pretty perfect!"

HAMZA YASSIN'S ADVENTURES IN NATURE

What is science capital?

Everything we do is designed to build our audience's science capital – the sum of all science-related knowledge, attitudes and experiences a person accumulates throughout their life. Research shows that people with higher levels of science capital are more likely to feel confident engaging with science in their everyday lives and to consider science-related education and career pathways later on. We track science capital through audience feedback surveys and it is an important metric across all our programmes.

Reference: Archer, L, Dawson, E, DeWitt, J, Seakins, A. and Wong, B. (2015) "Science capital": A conceptual, methodological, and empirical argument for extending Bourdieusian notions of capital', *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 52(7)



Strategic objective 1

To increase science capital among our audiences



"I liked how interactive it was because it made everything easier to understand and kept me involved the whole time."

THE FUTURE OF LIVESTOCK FARMING

"Excellent – very impressed. Well organised and brilliant teams helping the kids. Has absolutely ignited a burgeoning love of science."

SPLAT-TASTIC

"Fantastic! The right mix of entertainment and science education."

**GIANTS IN THE KITCHEN:
BIG SCIENCE, UP CLOSE**

Over half of our visitors have a low or medium level of science capital, indicating that the Festival reaches those who traditionally don't engage with science. By showcasing STEM through the lens of a cultural celebration, we break down barriers and challenge expectations that science isn't for everyone.

We create a broad programme of events that appeal to different levels of science interest – from the opportunity to deep-dive into a loved subject, to offering a low-pressure first step to explore a new topic.

We take a pedagogical approach when designing our events, focusing on hands-on opportunities and interactive elements. Visitor feedback showed that 74% of children found out something new, over half agreed that our events brought science alive for them.

Overall, families had a positive experience at the Festival, rating their visit 4.5 out of 5. Creating positive associations with science at a young age is integral to building the confidence needed to pursue STEM subjects and careers in the future.

Key metrics

**CHILDREN
WITH LOW
OR MEDIUM
SCIENCE
CAPITAL** **55%**

**ADULTS
WITH LOW
OR MEDIUM
SCIENCE
CAPITAL** **58%**

Strategic objective 2

To champion accessible and equitable participation in science, particularly with underserved audiences

Our mission is to ensure the wonders of science are accessible and enjoyable for all, particularly groups who may not have felt that STEM is 'for them'.

Our Opening Gala event *First Women of Science*, chaired by former First Minister **Nicola Sturgeon**, celebrated the often-overlooked histories of women in STEM. Championing women in STEM is core to the Festival, and this year 61% of the speakers taking part in the Festival identified as female.

This year, we expanded our commitment to accessibility by providing live captioning at 18 events and ensuring that every venue was fully accessible for physically disabled visitors. At *AI for Over-50s*, researchers helped older visitors get to grips with the technology that's rapidly transforming our lives.

Meanwhile, at the National Museum of Scotland, interpretation panels for *Science Under the Lens* were translated into three languages, and visitors could access social stories, sensory backpacks, and a dedicated quiet morning designed to create a more comfortable experience for neurodivergent guests.

We're proud to say that 78% of our visitors enjoyed the Festival free of charge. In addition to running events that were free to the public, we welcomed 150 people from community groups including LGBT Health – Rainbow Families, Kinship Carers, and members of the Sudanese Community of Edinburgh, helping ensure that people from a wide range of backgrounds could take part.

Post-Festival, we ran three School Days at the National Museum of Scotland, where we welcomed pupils who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the Festival. 907 pupils from 19 primary schools joined us for these specially-curated visits designed to inspire curiosity and confidence in STEM.

Key metrics

SCHOOLS IN
ATTENDANCE **19**

28

FREE
EVENTS

FREE ATTENDEES
125,906

10 COMMUNITY
GROUPS ENGAGED

18 EVENTS LIVE
CAPTIONED

"It made me want to learn more about science in general, maybe attend an evening course (at age 73)."

LICENSE TO STRESS

"My child has dyspraxia which means he can struggle to process multiple instructions at a time. The staff kept instructions short, clear and demonstrated first, helping children when needed but allowing them to try it for themselves first. I'd highly recommend this session and so would my son!"

SPLAT-TASTIC

Strategic objective 3

To foster public dialogue and engagement, highlighting the global impact of science and creativity

The 2026 Festival brought together leading figures from across science. At the Usher Hall, **Helen Sharman**, the UK's first astronaut, and **Hamza Yassin**, BBC presenter and wildlife cameraman, shared the remarkable experiences that shaped their careers. We also honoured the life of Jane Goodall with a special panel featuring speakers from the Jane Goodall Institute and Jane's Roots & Shoots Foundation.

To mark the University of Edinburgh Medical School's 300th anniversary, we supported a striking photo exhibition showcasing the faces and stories of graduates across three centuries. And as part of the Association for Science and Discovery Centres' *Demystifying AI* project, we presented pop-up activities in the National Museum of Scotland exploring the science behind machine learning.

We attracted significant media coverage, with features in The Scotsman, The Herald, The Times, The Sunday Post, The National, BBC Radio 4, and BBC Radio Scotland. Combined with a social media reach of over 4 million impressions, the Festival ensured that the global importance of science and technology remained firmly in the public spotlight.

"Brilliantly informative, thought-provoking and entertaining."

FIRST WOMEN OF SCIENCE

"Really good, both informative and thought-provoking... inspiring about science and how much the public needs to back it."

POSITIVE TIPPING POINTS

Key metrics

55

TALKS &
DISCUSSIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH
4,098,673

Press coverage

59
PRINT
ARTICLES

40
TV
PIECES

158
RADIO
PIECES

111
ONLINE
ARTICLES



Strategic objective 4

To celebrate the intersection of science, art and culture

The intersection of science and art took centre stage this year with a major new sculptural installation by **Dr Gayle Chong Kwan**. *The Great Instauration* transformed the National Museum of Scotland's Grand Gallery, exploring the scientific histories of colonialism and exploitation. The exhibition was supported by a talk from the artist and *Science Under the Lens* – a collection of hands-on family activities that explored the scientific instruments that inspired the art piece.

Our longstanding collaboration with Edinburgh College of Art's Performance Costume course also returned, with students modelling their sustainability-inspired designs in a flash-mob fashion show in the Museum.

Choreographer and dancer **Madeleine Squire's** *Drift*, performed by students from the University of Edinburgh's Dance Science and Education MSc, used movement to explore marine sustainability and the urgent impact of ocean pollution. The prestigious Edinburgh Medal was awarded to **Prof Kay Redfield Jamieson** for her work on bipolar disorder, with her address reflecting on the condition's influence on the life and writing of American poet Robert Lowell.

Key metrics

8

SCIENCE NIGHTS
OUT EVENTS

15

SCIENCE & ART
EVENTS

"A brilliant interpretation and collaboration of science and dance to explore and explain the marine crisis."

DRIFT

"I like the inclusion of people outside the 'traditional science' world being paired with a science specialist... more of these please!"

BAKE IT GLOBAL: THE SCIENCE OF
SCOTLAND'S FOOD & DRINK

"This was a warm and friendly talk and a look into a world I have never considered."

HISTORY DISSECTED



Generation Science

Since 1991, Generation Science has brought hands-on science shows and workshops to primary schools across Scotland. Each spring, our trained science communicators travel all over Scotland, delivering our unique approach to learning directly into classrooms.

This year, we reached 16,871 pupils and their teachers in 275 schools across 25 Local Authorities.



Key metrics

16,871
PUPILS

**WORKSHOPS
DELIVERED 531**

**617 HOURS OF
SCIENCE**

**SCHOOLS
275**



"The children were interested, challenged and engaged throughout. They had so much fun and talked about it all day."

TEACHER

"High quality and diverse resources. Plenty opportunities to be hands-on and clear, enthusiastic explanation."

TEACHER



Strategic objective 1

To increase science capital among our audiences

The Generation Science programme delivers hands-on learning experiences that spark curiosity and build confidence in STEM. At a time when Scotland's STEM skills gap demands urgent action, the programme plays a vital role in fostering lifelong interest in science and boosting pupils' science capital.

Research shows that the greater a young person's science capital the more likely they are to continue with post-16 studies in STEM, so we design and measure our *Generation Science* experiences to ensure they add to the science capital of both pupils and teachers, with a focus on maximising impact.

Our feedback indicates that *Generation Science* is creating engaging, positive experiences of STEM, building children's science capital.

"The activities and resources used for Electric Explorers were fantastic. The children were interested, challenged and engaged throughout. They had so much fun and talked about it all day."

TEACHER

"Pupils were fully engaged the full time and really enjoyed the experiments they took part in themselves, as well as the experiments and reactions that they watched."

TEACHER

"It was very funny and helped us learn at the same time."

PUPIL

100%
WOULD
RECOMMEND
IT TO
ANOTHER
TEACHER

96%
WOULD
BOOK AGAIN

100%
AGREED
THAT PUPILS
ENJOYED THE
ACTIVITY

100%
AGREED THAT
PUPILS WERE
ENGAGED

100%
AGREED THE
ACTIVITY
BROUGHT
STEM TO LIFE



Strategic objective 2

To champion accessible and equitable participation in science, particularly with underserved audiences

We know that Scotland's geography presents unique challenges for remote and rural communities, who often face barriers to accessing educational resources such as science centres or recruiting experienced science teachers*. We commit to delivering to schools irrespective of their location or size, ensuring that every school receives the same great Generation Science experience. 39% of this year's tour was delivered in remote and rural primary schools, including Strathconon Primary School, which only has 5 pupils across the whole school.

90% of teachers we surveyed say they face significant funding barriers to providing STEM engagement activities. With the generous support of our funders, 72% of our shows and workshops were delivered entirely free of charge, with the remainder provided to schools at a heavily subsidised rate.

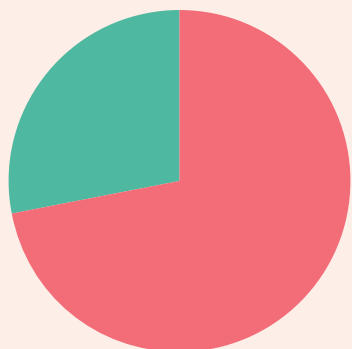
* Reference: Scottish Government (2024) Strategic Board for Teacher Education: Meeting 28 – Workstream 1 Paper (Workforce Planning and Increasing Diversity of the Profession)

"The people presenting it were super engaging and very understanding for the needs of my class. They adapted everything to ensure inclusion and were very responsive to the children."

TEACHER



Key metrics



FREE/PAID

72% FREE

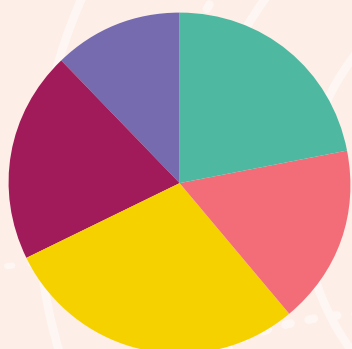
28% HEAVILY SUBSIDISED

"My ASN pupils loved the characters and interactive element".

TEACHER

39%

WORKSHOPS DELIVERED IN SIMD 1&2* AREAS



SIMD BREAKDOWN:

SIMD 1 – 22%

SIMD 2 – 17%

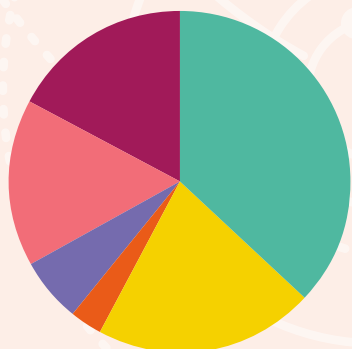
SIMD 3 – 29%

SIMD 4 – 20%

SIMD 5 – 12%

"We're a small rural school so it's great to have people come to visit. The children love science so I was just hoping for another experience for the children to broaden their horizons, which it did!"

TEACHER



REMOTE/RURAL BREAKDOWN

LARGE URBAN AREAS 37%

OTHER URBAN AREAS 21%

ACCESSIBLE SMALL TOWNS 3%

REMOTE SMALL TOWNS 6%

ACCESSIBLE RURAL AREAS 16%

REMOTE RURAL AREAS 17%

**LOCAL
AUTHORITY
AREAS
25**

* Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles 1 and 2, representing the 40% most deprived communities in Scotland

Strategic Objective 3:

To support delivery of science topics in the Curriculum for Excellence

Many primary school teachers lack confidence in teaching STEM topics due to limited training or knowledge – only 34% of teachers whose classes we visited have a high level of science capital. To support teachers in the classroom and help fill this knowledge gap, each *Generation Science* experience has been created to deliver learning outcomes directly linked to the Curriculum for Excellence science framework.

100%
OF TEACHERS
AGREED
PUPILS
UNDERSTOOD
THE TOPIC

100%
OF TEACHERS
AGREED
PUPILS
LEARNED
NEW THINGS

Activity	Curriculum for Excellence links
Body Builders	Biological systems
Electric Explorers	Forces, electricity and waves
Fizz, Boom, Bang	Materials
The Green Machine	Planet Earth
Our Changing Climate	Topical science; people, place and environment

We send teachers notes with every *Generation Science* booking, which provides the teachers with easy to digest information on the science covered within the activity so they can confidently talk to their classes about what they learned.

We also provide a number of follow-on experiments and activities that can be done in the classroom tied to the learning outcomes of the topic, to ensure teachers are empowered to continue teaching the subject after our science communicators have left the school.

"I always hope to get some ideas of how I could teach more abstract concepts in my own classroom."

TEACHER



92% OF TEACHERS
LEARNED
SOMETHING NEW

99% SAID THE
CONTENT FELT
RELEVANT
OF PUPILS

100% OF TEACHERS
FELT THE VISIT
SUPPORTED
THEIR TEACHING

99% OF CLASSES
DISCUSSED THE
EXPERIENCE
AFTERWARDS

94% OF TEACHERS
AGREED THAT
THE EXPERIENCE
MADE PUPILS
WANT TO
EXPLORE THE
TOPIC FURTHER



"Our Changing Climate [had] great resources and props which captured their imaginations. The concept is really hard for such young children but they all left with some kind of knowledge and have all been inspired to start a class project to help 'protect the planet'"

TEACHER



Careers Hive

10 Years of Careers Hive

In 2025, we proudly marked the 10th anniversary of *Careers Hive* – a decade of inspiring pupils across Scotland with the breadth of opportunities a STEM career can offer.

Careers Hive takes a distinctive approach to STEM careers education, offering immersive, hands-on experiences and meaningful interactions with STEM professionals, all completely free to attend.

Since launching in 2016, the programme has built strong partnerships with secondary schools nationwide, introduced innovative new activities, and adapted to major challenges, from economic pressures to the global pandemic. Thanks to the generous support of our funders, more than 21,500 young people have benefited from our vision of a world where STEM careers are accessible, appealing and engaging for all.

"This is my third time attending Careers Hive and I am so impressed with how organised and engaging the event has been each time. The pupils love both sections and gain so much from the experience."

TEACHER



Careers Hive 2025

Between 27–30 October 2025, 1,950 pupils from P7 to S3 explored a wide range of STEM career pathways at *Careers Hive*.

During their *Careers Hive* visit, pupils experienced:

- Experience STEM Exhibition – four themed zones where they met STEM professionals and tried hands-on activities linked to real jobs
- The Think Tank – an informal space for one-to-one conversations with STEM professionals, giving pupils the chance to ask the questions that matter most to them
- Life After Leaving School – a panel discussion where early-career STEM professionals shared their education and career journeys

Teachers also accessed online resources to deliver our Skills and Strengths workshop at a time that suited their class. In partnership with the National Museum of Scotland, we also introduced a dedicated STEM trail, enabling pupils - many visiting the Museum for the first time - to explore one of Scotland's key cultural institutions in a structured and meaningful way.



Key metrics

1,950
STUDENTS

34 SCHOOLS

47%
OF SCHOOLS FROM
SIMD QUINTILES 1&2

70
VOLUNTEERS

TRAVEL
BURSARIES FOR
12
SCHOOLS

33
ORGANISATIONS

11
LOCAL
AUTHORITIES

91%
OF PUPILS ENJOYED
THEIR VISIT

100%
OF TEACHERS
WOULD VISIT
AGAIN



Strategic objective 1

To increase understanding and interest in STEM professions in young people.

Careers Hive encourages pupils to explore and imagine what a future in STEM could look like for them. Our STEM professionals who volunteer are trained to spark meaningful conversations that help pupils think differently about their options, and we ensure a wide range of career paths is represented. This year, we welcomed 70 volunteers from 33 organisations, offering activities spanning AI, construction, life sciences, and more.

The time pupils spend at *Careers Hive* has real impact: more than half of attending pupils said they were more likely to consider working in a STEM-related job or industry following their visit to *Careers Hive*.

"The curiosity kids have about science is fascinating. It really inspires me to continue doing what I am doing on tough days. Incredibly fulfilling experience and a good reminder of why I started doing science!"

VOLUNTEER

"The pupils loved the hands on experience, getting to try different activities that they didn't know were STEM based helped them to further their knowledge and understanding of the careers on offer."

TEACHER

"How fun it is engaging with kids as they communicate so differently and openly. Enjoyed such a variety of interactions – both challenging, thoughtful questions in the ThinkTank and also just trying to engage younger kids with the activity and seeing them enthuse at it was really lovely. I also really valued engaging with other volunteers and hearing about their career was really inspiring."

VOLUNTEER

Key metrics

80% OF PUPILS AGREED THEY HAVE GAINED A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE TYPES OF JOBS AVAILABLE IN STEM

54% OF PUPILS AGREED THAT THEY ARE MORE INTERESTED IN WORKING IN STEM RELATED JOBS OR INDUSTRIES



Strategic objective 2

To champion accessible and equitable participation in science, particularly with underserved audiences.

Careers Hive shows young people from all backgrounds that STEM is a space of opportunity. We encourage pupils to look beyond traditional pathways, highlighting college courses, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. Our *Life After Leaving School* panels featured 8 speakers who shared their own routes into STEM, helping pupils see that there is no single 'right' path.

We recognise that pupils from areas of high deprivation often face reduced access to science engagement. We're proud to share that 16 of the 34 participating schools came from communities in SIMD Quintiles 1 and 2, and to support equitable participation we provided travel bursaries to one third of all attending schools.

"I liked the lecture part because it showed everyone has different stories and that's OK!"

PUPIL

100%
OF TEACHERS
AGREED
THAT IT WAS
IMPORTANT
THAT THE
EXPERIENCE
WAS FREE

80%
OF STUDENTS
AGREED
THEY COULD
HAVE A
CAREER IN
STEM IF THEY
WANTED TO

"I think one of the best parts of careers hive is the showcasing of all the different routes into STEM roles, not just the traditional route through university."

TEACHER



Strategic objective 3

To increase science capital among our audiences.

Scotland faces a growing STEM skills gap: a scientifically literate population is essential for the country's STEM and digital industries, yet fewer pupils are choosing these subjects in school and higher education*.

Careers Hive reaches P7 and S1–3 pupils at the crucial point when they make subject choices, helping build their science capital and confidence. By creating positive and engaging experiences of STEM and showcasing a broad range of STEM-related careers, we help our young visitors understand the many opportunities available to them and feel more assured in the decisions they make about their future.

*Skills Development Scotland; Skills Assessment Report: Scotland 2023.

"I was blown away by your support and how well the event was run. The displays did a great job of showing STEM subjects and careers in a meaningful, engaging way."

TEACHER

59%
**OF STUDENTS
ARE MORE
INTERESTED
IN STUDYING
STEM
SUBJECTS AT
SCHOOL**



Year-Round Science Engagement

Alongside our main programmes, we work year-round with partners and communities to collaborate on events and projects that make science accessible to everyone.



Climate Co-labs

We're proud to deliver round-table discussions for senior business leaders, focused on generating practical, realworld responses to climate challenges. In 2025-6, we delivered 2 Climate Co-labs, bringing together 32 senior leaders from 23 organisations for informed discussion and networking.

Highlights included our *Sustainable Cities and Communities* event at North Edinburgh Arts, where attendees heard directly from City of Edinburgh Council representatives about the Council's 2030 Climate Strategy, and *Adapting to a Changing Climate* with **Dr Susannah Fisher** and BBC science broadcaster **Caroline Steel**.



Community

Edinburgh Science has longstanding relationships with schools and community groups across the city, with a particular focus on engaging young people and families who traditionally have fewer opportunities to access positive STEM experiences.

During the Edinburgh Science Festival, we invite pupils from schools facing social and economic barriers to enjoy our interactive workshops and lively science shows, and welcome a wide range of community groups to attend Festival events free of charge. This year, that included arranging a meet-and-greet opportunity for the Sudanese Community in Edinburgh with Sudan-born wildlife photographer Hamza Yassin.

To reach families who cannot easily travel to the city centre, we also run mini-Festivals in community centres and libraries – traditionally during the summer months when many community groups have active holiday programmes. This recently included Craigmillar and Wester Hailes libraries and, this summer, we will deliver a mini-Festival for the Citadel Youth Centre in Leith.

Across all our programmes, we prioritise engaging groups who may feel less able to participate in STEM, building sustained relationships and broadening access to inspiring science experiences.



An Evening with Carlo Rovelli

In September 2025, we brought the ‘poet of physics’ **Carlo Rovelli** together with broadcaster **Sally Magnusson**, artist **Katie Paterson**, and Scottish musician/composer **Mike Vass** to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Rovelli’s groundbreaking *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics*. Accompanied by readings and a musical performance by talented young violinist **Rhea Fitzgerald**, we welcomed an audience of almost 600 guests to McEwan Hall to celebrate the intersection of science and art.

Children’s Classic Concerts

In March 2026 we joined forces with Children’s Classic Concerts to deliver two one-hour *Weird Science* concerts at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and the Music Hall in Aberdeen. Pairing classical music with live science experiments, attendees enjoyed a musical tour of the weird and wonderful world of science.

Training with the James Hutton Institute

As experts in the field, we’re well-placed to support other organisations in sharpening their science communication skills. This year we delivered 4 days of science communication training for the James Hutton Institute in Dundee and Aberdeen, working with their staff to develop their skills and confidence in presenting science to public audiences, both in-person and through short-form video.



Thanks to our 2025–26 supporters

Principal Funding Partners



Major Funding Partners



Funding Partners



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Invest in tomorrow's innovators

Partner with us to bring transformative STEM experiences to communities across Edinburgh and Scotland.

Connect with our Development team at development@scifest.co.uk to find out more,

or visit edinburghscience.co.uk