

ENERGISE GALASHIELS TRUST

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-2024



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INTRODUCTION



FOREWORD BY CHAIR

It has been another eventful and productive year, in which we saw the notional completion of the Build a Better Gala (BBG) 4 project. I say notional because we were fortunate enough to be able to carry over some of our funding into 2024—25. This allows us to concentrate on continuing to build on the great work that has been achieved during the four-year BBG project.



This year I was delighted and honoured to be asked to take over as Chair of Energise Galashiels Trust (EGT) by the outgoing Chair, Mike Gray. Mike has done an enormous amount of work for the town since he set-up EGT 10 years ago. Huge gratitude and appreciation for his work is felt by everyone from the town; he is going to be a hard act to follow!

Of course, nothing stays the same in life and we need to be alive and respond to the changes going on around us.

We have managed to deliver a large number of community projects and initiatives during the year, as detailed below. These culminated in the second annual Heartland awards, which recognise the great work of the businesses and communities that continue to improve the town we live in.

A major achievement for EGT this year was to be recognised nationally for their great work – receiving the award of ‘Creative

Town of the Year' by Scottish Town Partnership as well as the SURF award for the Vibrant Gala Project in the 'Improving Scotland's Places' category. Both awards have helped to raise the profile of Galashiels and the successful developments that have been undertaken and completed. These awards ultimately help in establishing the town as a place to visit and help to encourage new businesses to locate and/or start up here.

Looking to the future, EGT's resources and input are focussed on two potential major developments for the town.

Following an unsuccessful Business Improvement District (BID) application in 2018, a team of local businesses co-chaired by Lewis Roden and Debbie Paterson, with Mags Fenner as Project Manager and Mike Gray as part of the Executive team, are taking forward another BID application in 2024.

The bulk of EGT resource has been and continues to be expended on developing a Place Plan for Galashiels. We have been successful in securing funding from Scottish Borders Council to assist with completion of the Place Plan and its follow-on Investment Plans. This will provide the town with a real opportunity to invest significantly in projects which have been identified during the consultation process.

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed their time and energy over the year;

Ian R Dalgleish

Chair - Energise Galashiels Trust



NEW TOWN POLE BANNERS



New Town Pole Banners

Over the past 12 months, Galashiels benefitted from two new sets of pole banners, each contributing to the town centre's creative aesthetic with decoration and artistic design elements.

Festive Flare

Energise Galashiels launched another community-based challenge in 2023, following the success of previous collaborative design initiatives (the Coulter's Candy project and Galashiels Remembers programme).

The Trust invited pupils from the 11 primary schools within the Galashiels schools cluster area and students from Galashiels Academy to participate in a competition to design a captivating series of Festive banners.

Hundreds of inspirational designs were submitted by the pupils, demonstrating the artistic skills of the town's young people, and making the selection of the final 16 a challenge in itself.



Grace at St Margarets Primary School



Charlotte at Heriot Primary School

The judges made the final decisions and, after a series of school visits to announce the winners, the banners debuted in November 2023.



Alice at St Peters Primary School



Clara at Stow Primary School



Kerryann at Langlee Primary School

The designs will be installed each Festive season for years to come, and the Trust would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit their artwork.



Logan at Galashiels Academy



Lydia at Glendinning Primary School



Rachel at Tweedbank Primary School

Home-grown Talent

The second set of banners celebrated local artistic talent through commissioned artwork by Melissa Learmonth.

Melissa, who earned a First-Class Honours degree in printed textiles from Heriot-Watt University's School of Textiles and Design in 2018, quickly gained recognition for her creative prowess. Selected to exhibit at New Designers London 2018, alongside the country's most promising designers and graduates, Melissa realised that the fast-paced city life did not compare to living in her hometown in the Scottish Borders. Initially working from her parents' spare room, she began designing her first collection, inspired by blossoming blooms and vibrant colours. Melissa has since grown her business and recently launched her fourth collection of kitchen textiles, cosmetics bags, and gifting items.

In 2022, Melissa took a bold step by opening her shop, Honey Be Bright in Galashiels. Affectionately known by locals as the 'Little Blue Shop,' this is where she showcases her creations alongside a curated selection of merchandise from other makers.

Through the banners, the town proudly displayed Melissa's creativity in all its glory.



BIN STORE



Ensuring the town has a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere requires more than just murals, banners, and art installations; it also necessitates maintaining clean and tidy streets. While practical for residential and commercial waste, the wheelie bins in the town centre had become an eyesore in some areas, and there were specific concerns around a collection of wheelie bins on Bank Street. Rubbish often overflowed from the bins, spreading along the street and detracting from the town's positive attributes.

In 2024, responding to community concerns and working with partners, Energise Galashiels Trust commissioned the installation of a bin store on Bank Street. This initiative successfully concealed the bins, significantly improving both the appearance and cleanliness of the upper section of Bank Street.

The bin store project exemplifies the essential but often overlooked work organisations like Energise Galashiels Trust undertake to benefit their communities.



COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT



The community arts programme, 'Art 'n' About in Gala', delivered by Transform Arts CIC and funded by Energise Galashiels Trust, commenced with 'Fantastic Feast!', a family arts event held in Bank Street Gardens on Saturday 23rd September 2023. The event offered an artistic and interactive take on a harvest festival, celebrating food, seasons, and community.

Participants collaborated with volunteers and three local artists to create a collage with recycled materials, food items sculpted from clay, and seasonal natural materials. These were displayed on a banquet table for all to admire.

A music session tent allowed participants to create food- and harvest-themed songs and music, and a play area with large toys, hired from the local toy library Play Borders, entertained attendees of all ages.

Despite occasional rain, the event maintained good attendance, with an estimated 180 participants, many of whom stayed for hours to engage in all the activities.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and further events were held on Market Days in October and November, and to celebrate Hallowe'en on 28th October 2023.



LITTLE ARTS HUB



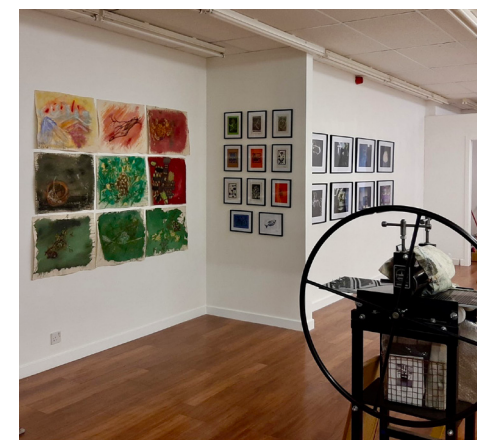
The Little Art Hub, a visionary project initiated by a consortium of small arts organisations and individual artists, officially opened its doors on 21st March 2024.

With an ambitious goal to cultivate a multi-use arts space in the Scottish Borders, Little Art Hub Galashiels' aim is to serve as a vibrant link for creativity and community engagement. This innovative space hosts exhibitions, workshops, talks, and events. This provides artists with a supportive environment to connect and create, with a particular focus on utilising recycled and surplus materials to foster artistic exploration.

Since its inception, Little Art Hub quickly established itself as a beacon of artistic expression and cultural enrichment in Galashiels, hosting five successful exhibitions, engaging drawing workshops, and even a Japanese Tea Ceremony. It also served as a pivotal base for outdoor and arts activities organised by the local cultural organisation, Connecting Threads.

Throughout the summer of 2024, the Hub offered an expansive programme, including free weekly comic-making drop-in sessions for parents and children, an exhibition by the Gala Camera Club, and darning workshops with Flora Collingwood-Norris.

As the Little Art Hub continues to evolve, it remains steadfast in its mission to catalyse positive change and celebrate the creativity thriving within the Scottish Borders. It welcomes proposals for art-related events and remains open to new ideas.



TANGLED FESTIVAL



The Tangled Galashiels Fibre Festival returned for another successful year. A celebration of independent textile artists, crafters, dyers, and spinners, the festival provides an affordable platform for local and independent fibre artists to showcase their products, engage with supporters, and celebrate all things wool.

The two-day festival attracted approximately 1,200 visitors to the town, who enjoyed Galashiels in the glorious sunshine.

The 2024 event included exhibitions, interactive activities, workshops, and a fleece market with over 30 stalls. The organisers worked with venues in Galashiels to host all that was on offer throughout the town, ensuring the visitors took time to walk around and see what else was on offer. The strategy worked well, with several of the town's business owners commenting on social media about their busy trading days as a result of the Festival.

The anticipation for next year's Tangled Galashiels Festival remains high.



AWARD-WINNING YEAR



Energise Galashiels Trust celebrated an award-winning year in 2023, bringing home two national accolades. The group won Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) Award for 'Creative Town', as well as the SURF (Scotland's Regeneration Forum) Award.

SPT Creative Town Award

When applying for the Creative Town Award, the Trust highlighted the range of large-scale murals installed in critical locations throughout the town, which have proven popular with locals and visitors. The Trust also emphasised the collaborative work with the local community in designing the artwork for pole banners that decorate the town centre, as well as the Sculpture Placement project, which placed several pieces of artwork in business premises throughout the town.

These achievements were celebrated at a ceremony at The V&A Dundee in November 2023, where the Trust was announced as the winner of the Creative Town Award.



SURF Award

When applying for the SURF awards, the Trust highlighted The Vibrant Gala Plan, showcasing its support for the remarkable array of regeneration projects involving various community groups that have been delivered over the last three years. These included new events such as The Heartland Market and the Tangled Fibre Festival, and funding business improvements through the Property and Shopfront Grant Programme.

These initiatives, among others, breathed new life into the town and were celebrated at a ceremony in Glasgow in December 2023, where the Trust was announced as the winner of the 'Most Improved' category.

Ian Dalgleish, EGT Chair, expressed pride in the collective efforts that led to winning the Most Improved Place category at the 25th SURF Awards and the Creative Town award at the STP awards ceremony. He acknowledged the dedication of the many volunteers who contributed their time, passion, and commitment over the past decade.

Energise Galashiels Trust is delighted to have received both awards and committed to continuing its work on projects like the Town Team and the Business Improvement District (BID) to further enhance the town.



SHEEP SEATS



2024. Positioned opposite the Interchange, these playful and inviting seats were designed to welcome everyone to Galashiels, adding a touch of artistic flair to the town's square.

The installation marked the completion of the Build a Better Gala project, a town centre regeneration initiative managed by Energise Galashiels Trust and funded by the South of Scotland Enterprise and Scottish Borders Council.

Ian Dalglish emphasised that the installation of the Sheep Seats was a visible and engaging contribution to the town centre. The creative design paid homage to the town's historical association with the textile industry, reflecting Galashiels' commitment to celebrating its past while looking forward to the future.

Energise Galashiels Trust ran an online competition to name each of the four sheep. The winning entries are:

Shaun – Robert (6) under
Alison Ruth Hardie

Dolly – Tracey Kutlol

Daisy – Emma Forrest

Jock – Kate Marsh



HEARTLAND AWARDS



The Galashiels Heartland Awards 2024 was held on the evening of 29th of March at MacArts in Galashiels, proving that community spirit is alive and well in the town.

Around 80 people, including local business owners, dedicated staff members, and volunteers, were in attendance to witness the announcement of the awards category winners, bringing a busy few weeks of voting to an exciting conclusion.

Over 6500 votes were cast in total, evidence of the huge show of support and appreciation for Galashiels businesses. Over 250 businesses were nominated, showcasing the incredible diversity of businesses and services within the town.

A huge 'well done' to every business that was nominated and a huge 'thank you' to everyone who voted – we couldn't have had these awards without your tireless and dedicated voting!



Best Community Group or Company

Best Community Group or Company

Andy's Man Club Galashiels
Borders Pet Rescue
The Lavender Touch



And the winner was **Borders Pet Rescue**

Best Leisure & Entertainment

Gala Rugby
MacArts
Pavilion Cinema



And the winner was the **Pavilion Cinema**

Best Hair, Beauty & Care

AURA Hair and Beauty
Belle Amie Hair & Beauty
Tij Barbers



And the winner was the **Tij Babers**

Best Food & Drink

Baguette N Go
Bulldog Bakes
The Salmon Inn



And the winner was **The Salmon Inn**

Best Retailer & Shopping

Honey Be Bright
Love My Beds
The Wedale Bookshop
Untangled Yarns Ltd



And the winner was **Love My Beds**

Best Service and Repair

Buglass Gas Services Ltd
Ostle's
The Trophy Guy



And the winner was **The Trophy Guy**

Thank you again to everyone who took part.

A NEW BID FOR GALASHIELS



Energise Galashiels Trust was pleased to support the establishment of a new Business Improvement District (BID) project for Galashiels in 2023. As part of this initiative, a volunteer steering group was established, comprising of representatives from local businesses and partner agencies.

The Scottish Borders Council Executive Committee unanimously voted YES to the BID for Galashiels project on Tuesday 13th August. Positive comments were received from several Councillors, who acknowledged the outstanding work carried out within the town over the last few years as part of the Build a Better Gala programme delivered by Energise Galashiels Trust and noted how a BID is now the best approach to continuing the regeneration work within the town centre.



Energise Galashiels Trust wishes the BID for Galashiels every success with the vote and would encourage all who are eligible to vote 'yes' if they would like to see a continuation of the investment in the town centre.



TOWN TEAM



Energise Galashiels Trust was pleased to support the establishment of a Town Team project for Galashiels in 2023. The initiative brings together individuals and organisations from the town, all with a shared interest in developing and improving the town for locals and visitors.

Since September 2023, as a community anchor organisation, Energise Galashiels Trust has convened monthly Town Team meetings, delivered information and consultation sessions at Borders College and Galashiels Academy, and carried out a wide-ranging electronic survey using the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool. A drop-in public consultation event was also held in the Little Arts Hub.

The output from all these consultations will be used, along with other consultations held previously in the town, to create The Galashiels Place Plan.

Energise Galashiels Trust wishes the Town Team every success with its future aspiration to design and deliver projects to improve the town and the surrounding area.





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www.energisegalashiels.co.uk



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