

COMMISSION OPPORTUNITY

Festival Programmer Wigtown Book Festival 29th Edition



Fee: £26,000 for 10 months, part-time, freelance (£39,000 FTE)

Expenses: £1,000

Location: Remote

The 29th Wigtown Book Festival will take place **24 September–3 October 2027**. We are looking for an experienced, senior-level Festival Programmer to curate and deliver an outstanding 10-day event. The Festival, which takes place in Scotland's National Book Town, is one of the UK's best-loved cultural events. More than a straightforward book festival, Wigtown is an innovative, quirky and characterful celebration of literature, stories and storytelling in all its forms. In addition to a multitude of guest speakers, there is music, performance, art and more. With deep community roots, it is a celebration of Galloway and its rich literary culture.

We anticipate the Festival Programmer will work remotely with regular visits to Wigtown, and then be situated in Wigtown immediately before and during the festival in late September–early October. Accommodation will be made available.

Reporting to: Chief Executive Officer

Start date: 5 January 2027

End date: 31 October 2027

This role is for an initial 10-month contract with the option to renew.

Role description:

Founded in 1999, the 10-day Wigtown Book Festival is one of the UK's best-loved literary events, delivering more than 250 events, including music, theatre, film, walks, talks, and visual arts. The festival grew from the development of Wigtown as Scotland's National Book Town and has played a central part in the successful regeneration of the town as a vibrant and welcoming community and travel destination.

Our mission is to produce the UK's most exciting book festival and develop the literary and cultural wealth of Scotland's National Book Town and its environs. In doing so, we will also deliver social and economic benefits for the people of our region. We firmly believe that a community of books changes lives.

Wigtown Festival Company is looking for an experienced literary programmer with an ambitious and creative track record to lead the programming of the 2027 Wigtown Book Festival (not including events for children and young people). The successful applicant will be responsible for the curation of a diverse and varied festival, taking a holistic approach to programming and working with the existing team, and will be public-facing during the festival.

The successful applicant will be able to recognise, respect and build upon the 28-year history of the Wigtown Book Festival and of Wigtown's designation as Scotland's National Book Town, whilst bringing fresh perspectives and thinking to the 29th edition.

We encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates and understand the value that people from diverse backgrounds can bring to our organisation. If you are disabled or have any specific access requirements, we aim to meet those needs.

Main responsibilities:

- Work within the structure, parameters, systems, and budget outlined by the Chief Executive Officer and Wigtown Festival Company's Board of Trustees.
- Adhere to Wigtown Festival Company's code of conduct, policies and procedures.
- Become an integral part of the Wigtown Festival Company team, working alongside them on the planning, curation, marketing, production and delivery of the Wigtown Book Festival.
- Incorporate speakers and programme partners already engaged and pick up ongoing conversations already underway with publishers and agents.
- Research, curate, plan and deliver a high-quality programme of events working with publishers, artists, agents, partners, funders, and community organisations, ensuring that the programme represents and cherishes the history and identity of the local community and brings the world to Wigtown.
- Adhere to the following timeline of key dates to deliver a programme of events for the 29th edition of Wigtown Book Festival:
 - Agreement of festival shape and themes – end March 2027.
 - Confirmation of any strands and/or programming partnerships – end April 2027.
 - Confirmation of Festival Marketing Plan – end April 2027.
 - Delivery of Early Ticket Release for 16 May 2027.
 - Confirmation of event content including confirmed performer bookings for circa 180–200 events (actual number to be agreed) – middle of June 2027 (with all details ready for programme and listings copy).
 - Delivery of Programme Launch for 21 July 2027.
- Ensure that the programme delivered is within budget, scaling activity accordingly.
- Ensure that appropriate chairs/hosts for each event are booked and confirmed by the start of w/c 9 August 2027 and work with the team to ensure books and charring information are provided at least 4 weeks in advance of the event/s.
- Liaise with the wider Wigtown Festival Company team to ensure enough venue space is available for the programmed events and to ensure that every event is booked into an appropriate space and time slot.
- Work with the wider Wigtown Festival Company team to ensure they have all the information required to contract and make timely travel and accommodation arrangements for visiting authors and chairs, in order to confirm details with authors within a suitable time frame.
- Work with the Wigtown Festival Company team and external freelancers as required on the development of digital and print versions of the festival programme and marketing materials for the festival launch. This includes copywriting for the programme listings.
- Work with the marketing and PR team to develop and deliver a communications strategy to promote the event at a regional, Scottish, UK and international level. This will involve ensuring that PR and communications are built into the planning process from the start. This may also include providing contributions to our blog, to press articles, and helping to signpost events and authors to our marketing team for promotion.
- Be a public-facing part of the Wigtown Book Festival team from programme launch until the completion of the festival, including:
 - Be prepared to contribute to press or publicity interviews to explain, promote and drive excitement for the Wigtown Book Festival programme;
 - Help welcome and host authors to the festival, making sure they are comfortable, orientated and confident about their engagement with Wigtown Book Festival;
 - Liaise with partners and local organisations commissioned to put on events during the festival to make sure they are included in the programme.
- Provide regular updates to the Board of Trustees.
- Support programming for future festivals by maintaining relationships and ongoing conversations with publishers and agents.
- Work with the rest of the Festival Company team on impact and evaluation reporting after the festival and support reporting to funders.

Person specification:

- A passion for books, literature, arts and culture, and a commitment to and belief in the role of book festivals, with a particular excitement and ambition for the 29th Wigtown Book Festival.
- A proven track record of programming literary events and festivals, particularly with care and consideration to their distinctive local context, community and history.
- Evidenced experience of developing and delivering high-quality, engaging events.
- Evidence of established, trusted professional relationships and networks across the literary sector including a broad range of authors, publishers and agents.
- A calm and articulate communicator, able to interact effectively with the full range of Wigtown Festival Company partners and stakeholders and embrace working collaboratively and supportively within a small team and a wider community.
- A strong understanding of and commitment to the role of book festivals in delivering social, economic and developmental benefits to their host communities.
- An effective planner experienced in anticipating and circumnavigating the challenges that arise when programming a book festival, who reacts quickly and calmly, responding creatively to solve problems.
- Evidenced experience of managing budgets.
- Experience of contributing to the development and delivery of physical and digital marketing materials, including copywriting.
- Evidence of effective management of multiple priorities and deadlines, with excellent organisational skills, self-direction and motivation.
- Experience of the challenges of producing events within a rural context would be ideal, but is not essential.
- Good IT skills – experience of project management software and systems would be advantageous.

How to apply:

Please send a two-page CV with a covering letter to Isla Rosser-Owen (Chief Executive Officer) at recruitment@wigtownbookfestival.com.

The covering letter should respond to the opportunity brief and provide details of:

1. Why you are interested in this opportunity.
2. What you can bring to the role.

Closing date: Sunday 18 October 2026 at 23:59.

Shortlisting and interview process:

- Candidates being invited for interview will be informed by 30 October 2026.
- First round interviews will be held online w/c 9 November 2026.
- Second round interviews will be held in Wigtown w/c 23 November 2026.
- Candidates will be informed by 4 December 2026.

Wigtown Festival Company is committed to being an inclusive employer. If you require any reasonable adjustments to support you through the application process, please contact us by email at recruitment@wigtownbookfestival.com or by phone on 01988 402036.

Wigtown Festival Company is a Fair Work Employer.