



Aithisg Bhliadhna 2024

Annual Report 2024

For the period January - December 2024

Fèis Phàislig

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Os-sealladh // Overview

Fèis Phàislig is a Scottish charity promoting traditional music and Gaelic culture for young people in Renfrewshire through year-round programmes, workshops, and projects. I'm pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report, highlighting another successful year. The board has worked to strengthen our activities and expand opportunities for young people, reaching over 14,500 participants across Renfrewshire.

A significant milestone this year was our transition from an unincorporated association to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This change strengthens the organisation's legal structure and ensures a more sustainable future for our work. Our previous charity number (SC045342) has now been replaced with our new OSCR registration number: SC053367.

The board was successful in securing funding from a number of organisations, including Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Renfrewshire Council. The support of these organisations has 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 also wishes to thank all the tutors who have worked with us over the past year. Their dedication ensures all participants receive a fantastic experience, and we deeply appreciate their continued work across a range of projects.

Details of our 2024 activity are included in this report. I encourage anyone looking for further information to get in touch at any time.



Grant McFarlane

Fèis Director

January 2025

Fiosrachadh Coitcheann // General Information

Registered Charity Address:

Flat 2/2, 1 Mansionhouse Road, Paisley, PA1 3RG

Charity Status:

Fèis Phàislig is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), registered with OSCR under charity number SC053367.

Trustees

The following individuals currently serve as Charity Trustees for Fèis Phàislig:

- Karen Anderson – Chair, Child Protection Officer
- Eleanor Whiteford – Secretary
- Lorraine MacDonald – Treasurer
- Joy Dunlop – Board Member, Gaelic Officer
- Jim McFarlane – Board Member
- Sarah Kidd – Board Member
- Joanna Byrne – Board Member

Director

- Grant McFarlane – Director

Seachdain na Fèise // Fèis Week

Our eighth annual Fèis Week took place from 16th–18th July 2024 at Johnstone High School, delivering another fantastic three days of music-making and arts workshops. We welcomed 173 participants, split across the following levels:

- Fèis Bheag (Wee Fèis) – 5-7 years: 47 participants engaged in introductory workshops in music, Gaelic, art, dance, and more.
- Main Fèis – 8-18 years: 107 participants took part in a wide range of music and creative workshops.
- Advanced Fèis – S1-S6 pupils: 19 participants focused on developing their instrumental and performance skills.

As in previous years, Renfrewshire Council generously covered the venue hire costs, and we extend our thanks to them for their continued support.

Workshops & Tutors

Fèis Week 2024 featured a diverse selection of 12 workshop options, led by our talented team of professional tutors and assistant tutors. A new addition this year was Music Production, led by Mark Neal, giving participants an opportunity to explore the technical and creative aspects of recording and producing music.

In the Advanced Fèis, Calum McIlroy and Chloë Bryce developed a series of workshops aimed at providing returning participants with fresh challenges while creating a welcoming environment for new attendees.

Tutor Lineup for 2024:

Accordion: John Somerville, Matthew Duncan (Assistant Tutor)

Advanced Fèis: Chloë Bryce, Calum McIlroy (Tutors), Anna Whiteford (Assistant Tutor)

Art: Choirstaidh NicArtair

Chanter/Whistle: Chris Gray

Circus Skills: Kit Rodman-Orr

Clarsach: Neil Wood, Emily Fraser (Assistant Tutor)

Dance: Claire Frances MacNeil

Drumming: Stevie Fivey

Fiddle: Isla Callister, Ava Martin (Assistant Tutor)

Filmmaking: Hannah Hunter

Fèis Bheag: Ishbel Campbell, Lisa Moyes (Tutors), Anna Morrison, Emma Loney (Assistant Tutors)

Guitar: Ron Jappy

Music Production: Mark Neal

Singing: Joy Dunlop (Tutor Supervisor)

Stramash for Schools

Our Stramash for Schools tour returned in April-May 2024, visiting 42 schools and reaching 10,918 pupils. These workshops were delivered by Calum McIlroy (guitar), Joy Dunlop (singing), and Grant McFarlane (accordion), providing an inspiring introduction to traditional music and Gaelic.

The participating schools for 2024 were:

Arkleston Primary	Houston Primary	St. Charles' Primary
Auchenlodment Primary	Inchinnan Primary	St. Davids Primary
Bargarran Primary	Kilbarchan Primary	St. Fergus' Primary
Barsail Primary	Kirklandneuk Primary	St. Fillan's Primary
Bishopton Primary	Langbank Primary	St. John Bosco Primary
Brediland Primary	Lochfield Primary	St. John Ogilvie Primary
Bridge of Weir Primary	Lochwinnoch Primary	St. Mary's Primary
Bushes Primary	Mary Russell School	St. Peter's Primary
Cochrane Castle Primary	Mossvale Primary	Thorn Primary
Dargavel Primary	Newmains Primary	Todholm Primary
East Fulton Primary	Rashielea Primary	Wallace Primary
Fordbank Primary	St. Anne's Primary	West Primary
Gallowhill Primary	St. Anthony's Primary	Williamsburgh Primary
Glencoats Primary	St. Catherine's Primary	Woodlands Primary

Extra Activities & Events

Building on last year's success, we brought back the Carnival Theme Day on Thursday, creating an exciting and fun experience for all participants.

The Tutors' Ceilidh returned on Wednesday night, once again proving to be a fantastic evening of music, song, and dance. The finale concert format was adjusted this year, with Fèis Bheag holding a separate morning concert. This allowed family and friends to enjoy their performances in a more relaxed setting, without the younger participants having to wait through the entire afternoon concert.

With an audience of over 250 family and friends, the Main and Advanced Fèis Finale Concert showcased the incredible talent of our participants and the dedication of our tutors.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward to Fèis Week 2025, we aim to further develop our workshops, enhance participant experiences, and continue offering exciting new opportunities for young musicians in Renfrewshire.



Clasaichean gach Seachdain // Weekly Lessons

With continued support from Renfrewshire Council and Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the organisation successfully completed its eighth academic year (September 2023 – June 2024) of weekly instrumental lessons for young people aged 5–18. Classes continued to 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 and ensemble playing.

Participation & Tutors

The 2023/24 session saw significant growth, with 97 participants attending weekly, up from 72 the previous year. The breakdown of participant numbers was:

Accordion: 17	Fiddle: 25	Guitar: 13	Fèis Bheag: 33	Advanced Band: 8
(2023: 17)	(2023: 19)	(2023: 10)	(2023: 18)	(2023: 9)
(2021: 12)	(2022: 17)	(2022: 13)	(2022: 33)	
(2020: 13)	(2021: 15)	(2021: 12)		
(2019: 15)	(2020: 10)	(2020: 9)		
(2018: 11)	(2019: 15)	(2019: 19)		
(2017: 9)	(2018: 10)	(2018: 19)		
(2016: 6)	(2017: 9)	(2017: 17)		
	(2016: 6)	(2016: 14)		



Fèis Bheag sessions continued to be led by Kaitlin Ross, who created a positive and engaging atmosphere for our youngest learners. Kaitlin completed her final term with us in June 2024, and we extend our sincere thanks for her dedication and contribution to the programme.

Our core instrumental tutor team saw the addition of Calum McIlroy, who joined to share

guitar and groupwork tuition with Ron Jappy. This addition helped to increase capacity for new participants and strengthen our instrumental programme. Grant McFarlane continued to lead accordion tuition, while Chloë Bryce led fiddle tuition.

Advanced Band & Community Engagement

The Advanced Band continues to provide a valuable space for older participants to develop their repertoire, musicianship, and ensemble skills. A new development this year was the opportunity for the group to deliver community performances, thanks to funding from Renfrewshire Council's Local Partnership Groups. This allowed our young musicians to perform in care homes across Renfrewshire, providing free live music to residents while also developing their stagecraft and giving back to the local community.



Music Theory & Performance Opportunities

The ABRSM theory classes continued to be a popular part of the programme, with 21 participants working across three levels:

Grade 1 – 9 participants

Grade 2 – 6 participants

Grade 3 – 6 participants

Our end-of-term concerts in December and June remain a highlight of the year, giving participants the opportunity to showcase their progress and perform in front of family and friends. These events are not only a celebration of our young musicians but also an important fundraising opportunity for the organisation.

A special thank you to board member Sarah, who led efforts to create bespoke merchandise to help raise additional funds, and to Karen and the wider board members, who organised hospitality, teas, coffees, and delicious home baking to make these events extra special for attendees.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on another successful year, we look forward to building on the success of our weekly lessons and continuing to offer high-quality tuition and performance opportunities for young people across Renfrewshire.



Com-pàirteachadh agus For-ruigheachd sgoiltean // Schools Engagement & Outreach

Fèis Phàislig continues to deliver high-quality traditional music education across Renfrewshire through our Youth Music Initiative (YMI) project and our dedicated ASN Traditional Music Project for pupils with additional support needs.

Youth Music Initiative (YMI)

In partnership with Renfrewshire Council, and as part of the government's Youth Music Initiative (YMI) scheme, Fèis Phàislig delivers traditional music sessions to schools across Renfrewshire throughout the year. Each school receives a block of 8 sessions, introducing pupils to traditional music and Gaelic. Schools can choose between Tin Whistle or Gaelic Song, and all pupils taking the Tin Whistle option receive their own instrument to keep at the end of the programme.

In 2023/24, 989 pupils participated in the project, with sessions delivered by Seán Gray (tin whistle) and Katherine MacDougall (Gaelic song) across 23 schools. Feedback from pupils and staff was overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing the value of traditional music in education.

Participating Schools & Pupil Numbers

Bishopton Primary – 45

Brediland Primary – 45

Bushes Primary – 24

Cochrane Castle Primary – 18

East Fulton Primary – 48

Fordbank Primary – 40

Inchinnan Primary – 25

Kirklandneuk Primary – 75

Langbank Primary – 20

Mossvale Primary – 30

Newmains Primary – 59

Ralston Primary – 59

- Rashielea Primary – 23
- St. Anne’s Primary – 23
- St. Anthony’s Primary – 27
- St. Catherine’s Primary – 23
- St. Fillan’s Primary – 21
- St. James’ Renfrew – 99
- St. John Ogilvie Primary – 36
- Thorn Primary – 22
- Todholm Primary – 61
- Wallace Primary – 106
- West Primary – 60

The board extends its sincere thanks to Seán Gray and Katherine MacDougall for delivering inspiring, high-quality music sessions across Renfrewshire.



ASN Traditional Music Project

Now in its second year, the ASN Traditional Music Project provides year-round tuition for pupils with additional support needs in Riverbrae School and Mary Russell School. This initiative follows the same 8-week block format as our YMI programme but focuses on long-term engagement—allowing pupils to build confidence, develop relationships with their tutor, and experience a consistent learning environment.

Throughout the year, up to 60 pupils participated in the project, engaging in sessions led by Seán Gray. His ongoing presence has been invaluable in building strong relationships with pupils and providing tailored, accessible musical experiences.

Feedback from staff highlights the educational and wellbeing benefits of these sessions. Teachers reported that pupils engaged more confidently over time, learned new songs and Makaton signs, and developed a stronger connection to music. One teacher described the sessions as a highlight of the week, incorporating Scots and Gaelic songs into wider classroom activities.

“Sean has a great relationship with all the pupils, and they enjoy spending time with him. One of my favourite lessons was delivered out in the playground, on a sunny day, under the shade of a tree—a perfect setting for improving our wellbeing.”

The Senior Management Team at Mary Russell School also praised the project’s impact, noting that Sean’s work had been mentioned in pupil reports as a highlight of the curriculum. They highlighted the success of a parent workshop Open Day, where families had the opportunity to experience traditional music in an inclusive and interactive setting.

The board is excited to continue developing and expanding this programme, working closely with schools to explore new ways to support pupils with additional needs through traditional music.

Còisir Ghàidhlig // Gaelic Choir

With support from Renfrewshire Council Music Service, Fèis Phàislig continues to deliver a year-round Gaelic Choir, offering young people the opportunity to engage with Gaelic language and culture through song. Sessions run weekly on Tuesday evenings at Castlehead High School and remain free for all participants.

During the 2023–24 academic year, the choir maintained around 10 regular participants, providing a consistent and high-quality learning experience. Mairi McGillivray has continued as Choir Leader, playing a key role in developing the group and preparing them for performances and competitions.

Competitions & Achievements

In October 2024, the choir competed at the Royal National Mòd in Oban, where they won 1st prize in the Unison section—a fantastic achievement and a testament to the hard work of both the participants and Mairi McGillivray.



To support this performance, Fèis Phàislig arranged transport for participants and a parent/carer to attend the event—a first for the organisation. This was made possible thanks to An

Comunn Gàidhealach, who part-funded the travel costs, ensuring that all choir members had the opportunity to take part in this prestigious national event.

Performance Opportunities in 2024

The Gaelic Choir had a busy and successful year of performances, representing the Fèis and the wider Renfrewshire community at a variety of events:

- Seachdain na Gàidhlig Ceilidh – 24th February (performance)
- Glasgow Islay Association – 16th March (performance)
- Renfrewshire Spring Concert – 19th March (performance)
- Mòd an Òbain 2024 – 14th October (competition – 1st Prize, Unison Section)
- Paisley Halloween Festival – 26th October (performance)

Looking Ahead

The choir continues to grow in strength, with increasing opportunities for performance and competition. As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding Gaelic singing opportunities for young people in Renfrewshire, ensuring that they have access to high-quality tuition and unique musical experiences.

Puingean a Bharrachd // Other

News & Newsletter

Fèis Phàislig continues to deliver its monthly newsletter on the first Friday of each month as part of #FèisPhàisligFriday. The newsletter provides updates on projects, upcoming opportunities, a tutor spotlight, and a monthly Gaelic phrase, with thanks to Joy Dunlop for her ongoing contributions. This continues to be a valuable tool for engaging our audience and promoting new opportunities for young people. Sign-ups remain open here: <http://eepurl.com/hsaYcH>.

Ceilidh Trail

In 2024, the Ceilidh Trail programme did not run, as we focused our limited capacity on other key areas, including:

- Transitioning to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)
- Catching up with wider programme developments following a particularly busy 2023, which included the hosting of Mòd Phàislig
- Strategic planning ahead of Fèis Phàislig's 10-year anniversary in 2025

This decision allowed us to regroup and ensure the organisation is in a strong position for future projects. The Ceilidh Trail remains an important part of our identity, and we will continue to explore opportunities for its return in the future.

Early Years Traditional Music & Gaelic Showcase

Between March and June 2024, Fèis Phàislig successfully delivered a series of Traditional Music & Gaelic Showcase sessions to early years settings across Renfrewshire, fully funded by Renfrewshire Council. This initiative introduced young children to Gaelic culture through interactive music sessions, incorporating traditional songs, movement, and language-learning in a fun and engaging environment.

The project was widely embraced, with 44 early years centres participating, some receiving multiple sessions due to additional capacity. Led by Seán Gray and Katherine MacDougall, the sessions featured:

- Singing and dancing to traditional Gaelic songs
- Interactive instrument exploration
- Basic Gaelic language learning through music

Following each session, centres were provided with online Gaelic resources, including singalong videos and games, to encourage continued engagement. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with educators highlighting the impact of early exposure to Gaelic and traditional music. The success of this initiative demonstrates strong potential for future early years Gaelic and music projects, should additional funding become available.

Local Partnership Activities

Fèis Phàislig received funding from Renfrewshire Council's Local Partnership Programme, allowing us to expand cultural engagement and increase accessibility to traditional music across Renfrewshire. This funding supported a range of activities, including:

- Hosting cultural events in community venues, ensuring that traditional music and Gaelic culture were accessible to all
- Delivering performances across Local Partnership areas, featuring both professional musicians and young learners from our programmes
- Providing live music in care homes, which became a standout success, bringing joy to residents and fostering intergenerational connection

The funding enabled us to reach over 1,400 people across Renfrewshire through the following targeted engagement:

- Renfrew: 175
- Erskine, Inchinnan, Bishopton & Langbank: 180
- The Villages: 145
- Johnstone & Linwood: 290
- Paisley North, West & Central: 290
- Paisley East: 135
- Gleniffer: 340

Feedback from community members was overwhelmingly positive, particularly from care home residents, who described performances as “bringing back memories” and “making

us feel young again". Participants and audiences alike expressed enthusiasm for continued engagement with Gaelic and traditional music in their communities.

Moving forward, we aim to explore opportunities for sustained engagement in these areas, particularly in care home settings, where music has had a tangible impact on residents' wellbeing.

Financial Operations & Organisational Development

In 2024, Fèis Phàislig took significant steps to strengthen financial management processes and ensure long-term sustainability. We engaged Paula Watson from Watson Financial Management, who worked closely with the organisation to:

- Develop streamlined financial processes to improve efficiency
- Implement accounting software to track income and expenditure more effectively
- Enhance financial reporting capabilities to ensure accurate and transparent information for the board

This work was an important step in strengthening our financial management as the organisation continues to grow and expand its programme of activities. By ensuring robust financial systems, we are better equipped to manage future growth and continue delivering high-quality opportunities for young people.

External Events

Fèis Phàislig continues to provide musicians for SURE events, a partnership that has been ongoing for several years. Our involvement in these events highlights the breadth of talented musicians and tutors within our network, who can deliver performances and workshops across a wide range of settings. Whether supporting community events, cultural initiatives, or educational projects, Fèis Phàislig remains committed to sharing Scotland's traditional music with diverse audiences.