

East Ayrshire Voices Celebrated Through Digital Storytelling

Events showcasing East Ayrshire voices have been held at the Dick Institute as part of the Scottish Book Trust's nationwide Digital Storytellers in Residence programme. East Ayrshire Leisure Trust was one of five local authority areas across Scotland who successfully secured funding from Scottish Book Trust to host a nine month residency culminating in two events where the films were screened on 13 June and 4 July.

Chair of EALT Board Cllr Elena Whitham and Vice-Chair of EALT Board Robin Hume attended the Digital Storytelling celebration events and thanked East Ayrshire's newly-fledged filmmakers for sharing their fascinating stories on the big screen in the Dick Institute's new state of the art cinema space. Groups attending on the day included Residents of Hamilton Gardens in Stewarton, St Maurs Gardens in Kilmaurs, Ross Court in Galston as well as participants from Auchinleck Day Centre, Kilmarnock YMCA, Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust, Carers Centre (Dalmellington), iDance, Auchinleck Academy and Onthank ESOL Learners.

Statistics show more than one in five adults in Scotland are inexperienced in the digital world¹. The project focused on working with those who aren't currently digitally-confident, to introduce them to online culture in a way that builds skills and emphasises the personal relevance for them.

Local filmmaker Taylor McInroy was appointed to facilitate the *Story Threads* project across the region via partnerships with Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust and East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities services. Taylor was appointed to the project because of his extensive film based experience and his evidenced commitment to local communities.

Taylor worked with groups identified by *Story Threads* partners to create their own digital stories about personal experiences important to them. Taylor introduced participants to digital technology such as tablets, microphones and editing software to produce a narrated story, accompanied by photographs and visual footage. Each story was narrated and edited by its creator, making each story uniquely personal and diverse.

The new library of local film stories includes one from participants of iDance, a mixed ability dance company who tell their stories through dance, and another story from a member of Kilmarnock YMCA's drop-in who particularly wanted to make their film so it could be shared with members of their family. All of the stories from the project are available to watch at digital-stories.scot

Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust, said: "Congratulations to all of those who participated in the Digital Storytellers in Residence programme. It's wonderful to see so

many local stories from East Ayrshire documented digitally and shared with the wider community. Taylor has helped to showcase these important voices and experiences, and has also provided necessary training that is sure to have a long-lasting impact on the library and community as a whole.”

Taylor McInroy, East Ayrshire’s Digital Storyteller, said: “I have really enjoyed my role as Digital Storyteller, it’s been fantastic hearing everyone’s stories and sharing experiences within the groups. We’ve had people gaining skills, confidence and new friends from the project, it’s great to come together and celebrate what an amazing project it has been. We’ve been very fortunate in East Ayrshire to have many enthusiastic partners who have taken up the Digital Storytelling process.”

Following a successful pilot of the project in 2017, in Ayrshire and Fife, Scottish Book Trust was funded by the Scottish Government to support Digital Storytelling residencies in five library locations: Leisure and Culture Dundee, East Ayrshire Leisure, Falkirk Community Trust, Inverclyde Libraries, and Orkney Library and Archive.

Ends

Notes to editors

¹ 21% of the Scottish population lack basic digital skills. (Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations report, ‘Tackling Digital Exclusion in Scotland’. August 2017)

Interviews with Taylor McInroy, East Ayrshire’s Digital Storyteller, are available on request.

Contact Daisy Bartlett, Media Officer at Scottish Book Trust:

daisy.bartlett@scottishbooktrust.com or 0131 524 0160.

Scottish Book Trust

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- Gifting books to every child in Scotland to ensure families of all backgrounds can share the joy of books at home.
- Working with teachers to inspire children to develop a love of reading, creating innovative classroom activities, book awards and author events.

- Supporting Scotland's diverse writing community with our training, awards and writing opportunities.
- Funding a range of author events for the public to enjoy and promoting Scottish writing to people worldwide.

In addition to the funding we receive from the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland, we need the constant support of trusts and foundations, corporate sponsors and individual donors.

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