

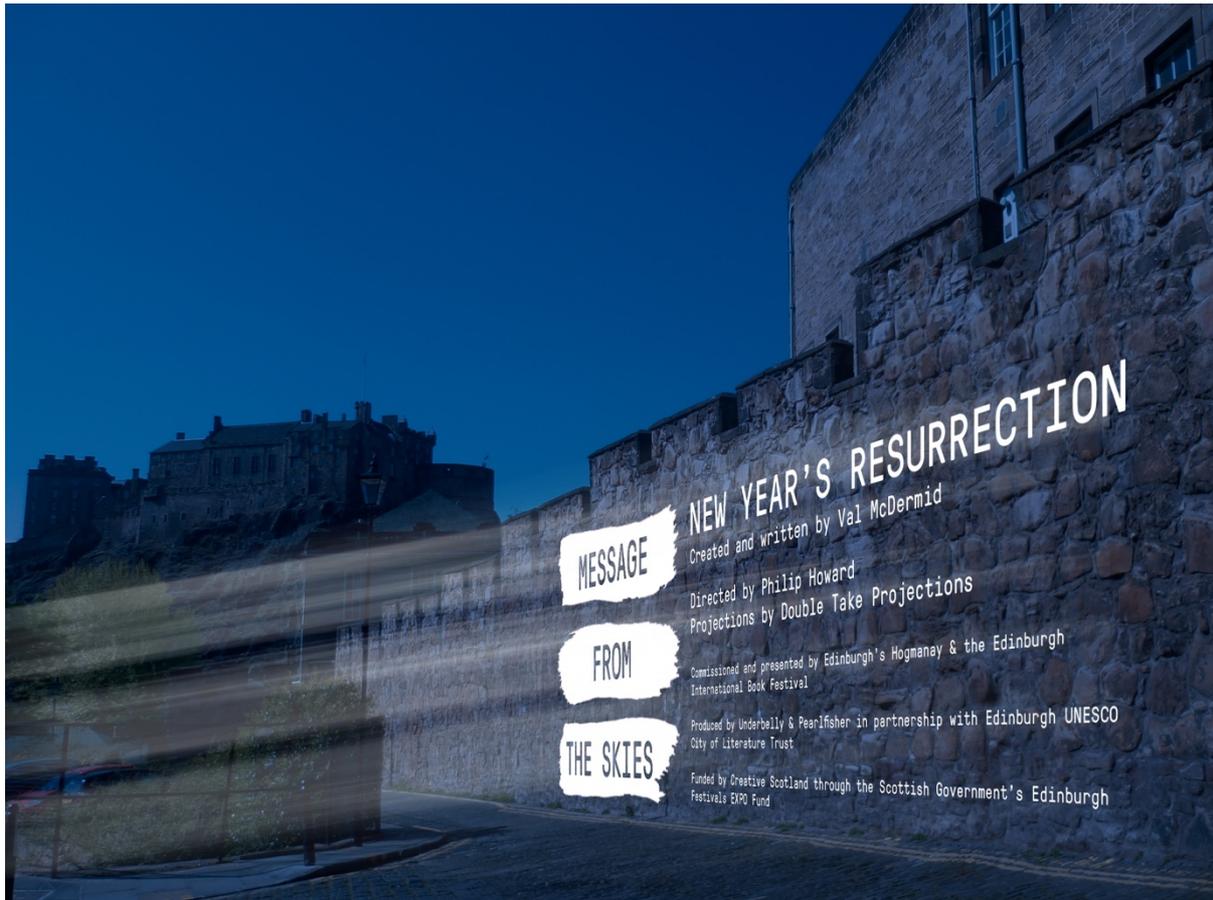
# EDINBURGH'S HOGMANAY 18

Press release for immediate use, Wednesday 27 December 2017

## Val McDermid Brings Susan Ferrier Back To Life In *New Year's Resurrection*

Message from the Skies, 1 - 25 January, Edinburgh City Centre

- Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrates Edinburgh's and Scotland's rich literary heritage and its young people with the launch of the innovative and collaborative new project *Message from the Skies* co-commissioned with the Edinburgh International Book Festival - a story told chapter by chapter on 12 buildings and landmarks across Edinburgh
- *Message from the Skies* opens on 1 January at dusk and runs until 25 January, with one Scotland's greatest contemporary novelists, Val McDermid, leading a collaboration of Scottish artists
- Val McDermid reveals she will bring Edinburgh's 19<sup>th</sup> Century novelist Susan Ferrier back to life in *New Year's Resurrection*.
- In this unique collaboration, McDermid is joined by leading artists from across both Scotland and a multitude of art forms including: Philip Howard of Pearlfisher, Edinburgh based projection company Double Take Projections, some of Scotland's finest soundscape artists; Michael John McCarthy, RJ McConnell and Pippa Murphy, graffiti artist Elph and actors Sandy McDade and Phyllis Logan.
- Marking the Year of Young People 2018 the project includes short stories by three young writers who won a short story competition and which will be projected onto three buildings from 4pm - 5pm each day from 2 January.



Launching at dusk on New Year's Day 2018, *Message from the Skies* runs until Burns Night on 25 January. Inspired by a line from Robert Burns' poem *Sketch New Year's Day. To Mrs Dunlop (1790)*, Edinburgh's Hogmanay and the Edinburgh International Book Festival have commissioned Val McDermid to write a short story, *New Year's Resurrection*, which will be told in a series of chapters through projections and other art onto buildings and landmarks around Edinburgh.

Val McDermid collaborates with director and dramaturg Philip Howard of emergent theatre company Pearlfisher, Edinburgh based architectural projection mapping specialists Double Take Projections, and three of Scotland's finest composers and sound designers; Michael John McCarthy, Pippa Murphy and RJ McConnell, graffiti artist Elph and actors Sandy McDade and Phyllis Logan to bring the story to life.

Val McDermid has revealed that in *New Year's Resurrection* she will resurrect Susan Ferrier an Edinburgh born and bred novelist in the nineteenth century.

"The most remarkable thing about the nineteenth century Scottish novelist Susan Edmonstone Ferrier is that she has all but disappeared from our consciousness. In her lifetime, her novels were wildly popular, earning her significantly more substantial publisher's advances than Jane Austen. And yet now almost nobody knows her name. Susan Ferrier deserves better than this." said Val McDermid.

***Message from the Skies*** encourages residents and visitors to explore Edinburgh's iconic locations in a new light: streets and buildings which have inspired some of the world's finest authors over the centuries - from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Robert Louis Stevenson to J K Rowling and Muriel Spark, and the streets and buildings which McDermid and her other collaborators have been inspired by and to which all the artists respond in this unique piece of work, made especially for Edinburgh. The project is inspired by the nineteenth century tradition of publishing novels chapter by chapter: readers must go from location to location to read the whole story, simultaneously exploring both this piece of new work and the city.

The starting point and the site of the first chapter is **Parliament Square**, off the Royal Mile in Edinburgh's Old Town. From there, readers can navigate by using the app or following the signage leading to the next instalment.

The **app** is filled with additional content about the story and locations, and will translate Val's story into seven languages - French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Polish and Spanish, making the project equally accessible to visitors to Edinburgh. The app will also read the text in English to visually impaired audiences.

**Virago** re-publish Ferrier's first novel *Marriage* on 28 December to coincide with this project, with a new forward by McDermid.

Three talented young local writers have also won the opportunity to see their works projected nightly on buildings across Edinburgh's city centre in a competition which saw over 200 entries sifted through by the expert judging panel of **Ali Bowden**, Director, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, **Janet Smyth**, Children & Education Programme Director, Edinburgh International Book Festival, and **Boogie and Arlene** from Forth 1's Breakfast Show.

**Primary school winner:**

**Lucy Hutcheon, age 11:** 'I'm so happy! I can't believe my story was chosen. It feels great to know that people enjoy what I write.'  
Davidsons Mains Primary School

**S1-S3 Winner:**

**Maisie Dalton, age 12:** 'I'm in shock, I never expected to win. I can't stop shaking with excitement!'  
Balerno High School

**S4-S6 Winner:**

**Jemma Glover, age 16:** 'I am delighted, it means a lot that other people will be able to read my writing. I hope I have made my city, my home proud.'  
Balerno High School

***Message from the Skies*** is commissioned and presented by Edinburgh's Hogmanay and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, produced by Underbelly and Pearlfisher, in partnership with Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust and is

developed with support from Creative Scotland through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund.

Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam said: "Message from the Skies is the moment of contemplation in Edinburgh's Hogmanay, running through to Burns Night on 25 January and celebrating Edinburgh's and Scotland's literary heritage and a powerful collaboration of some of Scotland's most exciting artists. We're looking forward to the new year resurrection of Susan Ferrier."

**Director Philip Howard said:** "Message from the Skies celebrates Edinburgh's built environment and its status as Unesco World City of Literature. It is a story and a walking tour but also a quasi-theatrical experience and we have quite a few tricks up our sleeves. Susan Ferrier's is a remarkable story, and Val asks some very topical questions about why as a female Scottish writer Ferrier has been excised from the literary history of the nation.

"It's a beautiful piece of storytelling but Val has had a lot of fun with it as well. We're treading a course between honouring Susan's legacy and restoring her voice and having a little bit of a crime caper along the way."

**Councillor Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said:** "This year Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrates its 25th birthday so it's fitting that it will be the biggest party ever staged in Scotland's great capital city. The fireworks display is being extended with new events like *Bairns Afore* and *Message from the Skies* plus favourites such as the Torchlight Procession and Loony Dook. There will be something for everyone not just to see but to take part in. Come along and experience what Edinburgh's Hogmanay is really about!"

**ENDS**

Download the *Message from the Skies* project video [here](#).

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**Notes to Editors**

**Credits:**

**Edinburgh's Hogmanay Message from the Skies presents**

**New Year's Resurrection by Val McDermid**

**Director Philip Howard**

**Projection Designers Double Take Projections**

**Composers/Sound Designers Michael John McCarthy, RJ McConnell, Pippa Murphy**

**Graffiti Artist Elph**

**With actors Sandy McDade and Phyllis Logan**

And featuring **Janis Claxton (dancer)**, **Karine Polwart (vocalist)** and **Andrew Rothney (actor)**

Assistant Sound Designer **Erin Kelly**

Costume Supervisor **Sara Hill**

Equipment Supplied by **Catalyst Event Production Services**

**Commissioned by Edinburgh's Hogmanay and Edinburgh International Book Festival**

**Produced by Underbelly and Pearlfisher**

**In partnership with UNESCO City of Literature Trust**

*Message from the Skies* writing competition was developed with the support of Creative Arts and Learning, City of Edinburgh Council

McDermid has written the following forward for the republication of the novel *Marriage* by Susan Ferrier, by publishers, Virago.

The most remarkable thing about the nineteenth century Scottish novelist Susan Edmonstone Ferrier is that she has all but disappeared from our consciousness. In her lifetime, her novels were wildly popular, earning her significantly more substantial publisher's advances than Jane Austen. Her work was formally translated into French at a time when only pirated editions of rival novels were available there. Critics said her books were the Scottish equivalent of England's Austen and Ireland's Maria Edgeworth. Sir Walter Scott called her his 'sister shadow' and claimed that of all his contemporaries she was 'the most worthy to gather in the large harvest of Scottish fiction.'

And yet now almost nobody knows her name. Not for her Scott's Gothic pinnacle dominating Princes Street, nor the impressive statue of Conan Doyle that broods over one of Edinburgh's busiest traffic junctions. The only memorial to Susan Ferrier is a small stone with a faded inscription of her name, her dates and the single word, 'writer', on the gatepost of the house in Morningside, Edinburgh, where her family spent their summers.

But Susan Ferrier deserves better than this. Her three sophisticated and worldly novels are observant, witty and throw wide a window on Scottish social life of the period. She has a shrewd eye, is sharply satirical of pretension and sentimentality and has no hesitation in expressing trenchant views about the value and importance of educating women. The Scottish Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution had brought significant change to Edinburgh, transforming it from a dirty provincial backwater to an elegant and intellectually lively European capital, and Susan Ferrier was one of several novelists who leapt at the challenge of writing about it.

Susan was born in 1782, the ninth of ten children. Her father rose from humble beginnings to become a prominent lawyer whose social circle included Robert Burns, James Hogg, Dr Johnson and Walter Scott. He also believed that girls should be

educated; the evidence of this is clear from the literary and philosophical allusions in Susan's work.

James Ferrier was for a time lawyer to the Duke of Argyll and Susan would accompany him to the ducal seat at Inveraray Castle. The experience gave her an insight into the reality of Highland life. She knew from her own visits that there was nothing romantic about that Spartan way of life and it provided the perfect foil to the intellectual and convivial life she knew in Edinburgh.

Susan also suffered from poor health, and she made several visits to London to stay with her married sister to enjoy a more clement climate. As with her Highland sojourns, these trips gave her an insider's view of a different social world. When the time came to begin her literary career, she had a broader understanding of the world than most Scottish women of her time and class.

She began writing *Marriage* as a *jeu d'esprit* with her friend Charlotte Clavering, the niece of the Duke. But she revised it extensively over several years and when it was published anonymously in 1818, it was an immediate success. The first edition of 1500 copies sold out inside six months at a guinea a time – an achievement most authors took years to accomplish. At first, it was attributed to 'the Author of Waverley' – Walter Scott himself. Susan had read the manuscript to her father from behind a screen so he couldn't see what she was reading from, and he pronounced it 'the best book you've ever brought me.'

However, Scottish society was a small community and even though the entire Ferrier family strenuously shuffled off the suggestion that Susan was the author of *Marriage*, gossipy speculation about the original models for the characters was rife. Like Austen, Susan was a keen observer, a maiden aunt who could constantly gather raw material for fiction without attracting attention. In a preface to the 1840 edition of the book, she wrote, 'That some of them are sketched from life is not denied; but the circumstances in which they are placed, their birth, habits, language and a thousand minute particulars, differ so widely from the originals as ought to refute the charge of personality.' It is, after all, what writers of fiction do all the time.

Of course, the reason for Susan's anonymity went beyond the mere desire not to offend the neighbours. In the early part of the nineteenth century, a strong whiff of impropriety clung to women who wrote fiction. If they wanted their work to be taken seriously, they had to hide behind anonymity or, like the Bronte sisters, adopt male pseudonyms – Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. And it's clear from the strong morality that runs in a seam through Susan's work that she would have hated to be thought improper. She understood what happened to women like that.

*Marriage* covers two generations of families whose histories become intertwined. The good do not always end well, but the bad generally pay the price of their sins. The book is equally unsparing in its portrayal of Highland privations and London indulgences and there is a definite twinkle in Susan Ferrier's eye as she describes her cast of characters. Her occasional descents into sententiousness are worthy of the

Rev Collins himself, while her puncturing of the affectations of the genteel recall Austen's treatment of Mrs Bennett.

That Susan Ferrier was aware of Austen's work is clear. The opening sentence of her second novel, *The Inheritance*, is an obvious tip of the hat to the Englishwoman: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that there is no passion so deeply rooted in human nature as that of pride.' Like Austen, her plots are relatively humdrum and broadly predictable but artificial plots were the fashion of the time. Her heroines have less spiritedness than those of Austen, but her canvas is broader. Susan Ferrier's world includes the servants and much more of the domestic detail than Austen, and this makes for a richer portrayal of the period.

Reading *Marriage* now, the wit still hits the mark, the struggle between romance and expediency still rings true, and the characters still have resonances for the contemporary reader. It's hard to understand why she fell from view so comprehensively unless her Scottish settings made her unfashionable.

Two hundred years after its first publication, I think it's time we gave *Marriage* the attention it deserves.

#### **ABOUT EDINBURGH'S HOGMANAY** EDINBURGH'S HOGMANAY 2018 [TRAILER](#) [HIGH RES IMAGES AND FILMS FOR DOWNLOAD](#)

Edinburgh's Hogmanay is the UK's (if not the world's) leading New Year Festival lasting 3 days in Scotland's stunning capital city drawing an estimated 150,000 people from Scotland and around the world.

- Edinburgh's Hogmanay is refreshed, re-energized and better than ever before!
- The Home of Hogmanay invites the world to party for its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.
- The iconic Torchlight Procession blazes a new path to culminate in #ScotWord: a spectacular visual moment marking the beginning of 2018 as Scotland's Year of Young People.
- New for this year, *Bairns Afore* will welcome families and young people to celebrate New Year early in Princes Street Gardens.
- The re-booted Street Party will create a carnival, animating Princes Street with DJ's, bands and street dancers, hosted by Sanjeev Kohli, with Martin Green, CEO and Director of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Head of Ceremonies for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, joining as Executive Producer.
- Rag'n'Bone Man headlines the Concert in the Gardens.
- An extended fireworks display lifting from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle to see in the New Year.
- Innovative new project *Message from the Skies* will run from 1 - 25 January 2018 as part of Edinburgh's Hogmanay to showcase Edinburgh's and Scotland's literature in a unique collaboration between Val McDermid and

other Scottish artists and co-commissioned with the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

- Edinburgh's Hogmanay renews its charity partnership with Edinburgh's One City Trust.

Underbelly will deliver an ambitious Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2018, working with an internationally renowned creative team, on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council. Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2018 is supported by City of Edinburgh Council, developed with support from Creative Scotland through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, EventScotland International Events Programme and Scotland's Winter Festivals Fund and the Year of Young People 2018 Events fund, all working together to create a bold new Hogmanay for Scotland.

## **About Underbelly**

Underbelly is a UK based live entertainment company, its festivals and events division produces a number of events annually, including Underbelly at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Underbelly Festival on London's Southbank, Udderbelly Festival Hong Kong, Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council, Christmas in Leicester Square, Pride in London and, West End Live in Trafalgar Square on behalf of the Society of London Theatre and Westminster City Council.

2017 marks their fifth year producing Edinburgh's Christmas for the City of Edinburgh Council, and their first year producing Edinburgh's Hogmanay (also for the City of Edinburgh Council), one of the world's leading New Year Festivals lasting three days in Scotland's stunning capital city drawing an estimated 150,000 people from Scotland and around the world.

Through its Underbelly Productions arm it produces and promotes live theatre in London's West End, throughout the UK and on tour internationally. Focusing on revivals of plays and musicals as well as commissions, their credits to date include, a revival of Clarke Peters' Five Guys Named Moe in association with Cameron Mackintosh and directed by Clarke Peters' himself, performed in a specially constructed theatre at Marble Arch.

In 2016, Underbelly sold 1.3 million tickets to its festival events and shows.

[www.underbelly.co.uk](http://www.underbelly.co.uk)

## **Val McDermid**

Val McDermid grew up in Fife. Edinburgh was her first city and most of the world has been a disappointment since.

Val has been dubbed the Queen of Crime and her 31 novels have been translated into over 40 languages and have sold more than 15m copies worldwide. Among her

many awards are the Gold Dagger, the Diamond Dagger, the LA Times Book of the Year Award, the Theakston's Old Peculier Outstanding Contribution to Crime Fiction, and the Grand Prix des Romans d'Aventure.

Her series featuring psychological profiler Tony Hill and police officer Carol Jordan was adapted for the TV series *Wire in the Blood*, which has been shown in over forty countries.

Val is also a regular broadcaster on BBC radio and TV, as a commentator, a documentary writer, a presenter, and a radio dramatist. A keen quizzier, she captained the St Hilda's College, Oxford team to victory in the Christmas alumni series- the first ever all-woman team to take the crown.

Her latest venture is as the singer in a rock and roll band - Fun Lovin' Crime Writers. They perform cover versions of an array of murderous songs. Their debut wowed the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2017.

**Double Take Projections.** Edinburgh based Steven and David McConnachie are part of a new generation of emerging Scottish projection artists who have built up an extraordinary catalogue of work in a very short space of time (*Spectra* - Aberdeen Festival of Light, Merchant City Festival and *On the Massacre of Glencoe* for NLS).

### **Pearlfisher**

**Pearlfisher** is Scotland's new theatre company that specialises in talent development and the touring of new work. Writers and their development are at the centre of our vision, but all our work includes apprenticeships in varied disciplines, for investment in future talent. Our portfolio includes new plays and reimaged classics, and bespoke event management of literary projects.

**Pearlfisher** are Mike Griffiths, Philip Howard and Caitlin Skinner

### **Philip Howard**

Philip Howard is a director and dramaturg. He trained at the Royal Court Theatre, London, before becoming Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, 1996-2008, and, more recently, joint Artistic Director of Dundee Rep Theatre. Also a script editor and adaptor, Philip has edited three collections for Nick Hern Books, including the *Collected Reviews* of Joyce McMillan. He is a director of emergent theatre company **Pearlfisher**.

### **RJ McConnell**

*RJ is a composer and sound designer based in Fife, working in theatre and film. His work combines the use of transformed recorded sounds with a minimalistic composition style to create a homogeneous blend of both disciplines. He has created music and soundscapes for a vast array of theatre productions for Dundee Rep, Tron Theatre, Pilot Theatre, The Arches, Pitlochry Festival Theatre and others - creating complex and layered atmospheres whilst evoking an emotive audience reaction through music. His recent work in film has been a natural progression where he has enjoyed constructing meticulous compositions. RJ has also created seven soundtracks for the multi award-winning *Enchanted Forest* in collaboration with Jon Beales, contributing to the growing popularity of the event that celebrated 70,000 visitors in 2016.*

### **Michael John McCarthy**

MICHAEL JOHN McCARTHY is a Cork-born, Glasgow-based, composer, musician & sound designer. Recent work for theatre includes August: Osage County (Dundee Rep) Jimmy's Hall (Abbey Theatre), Futureproof (Everyman Cork/Project Arts Dublin) Glory on Earth & A Number (Lyceum Edinburgh). As a musician he has recorded & toured internationally with Zoey Van Goey, Aidan Moffat & Lord Cut-Glass, as well as performing on albums by RM Hubbert, Emma Pollock, Alasdair Roberts & Trembling Bells/Bonnie Prince Billy amongst others. Work for film includes Pitching Up (dir. Maurice O'Brien/Guardian Documentaries) & Where You're Meant To Be (dir. Paul Fegan). He is lead artist on Turntable, a participatory arts music project in association with Red Bridge Arts.

### **Pippa Murphy**

Pippa Murphy is an award winning Scottish composer and sound designer who writes for theatre, dance, film and orchestras. She has written music for BBC 2, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, Scottish Opera, Edinburgh's Hogmanay, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, St Magnus International Festival, and numerous theatre companies including The Lyceum Edinburgh, Stellar Quines, Dundee Rep, Birmingham Rep, Grid Iron, Tron Theatre, Eden Court, Traverse Theatre, 7:84, Dogstar, and Fire Exit. Recent projects include; string arrangements for Celtic Connections' with Karine Polwart and the BBC SSO; original songs for *POP-UP Duets* with Janis Claxton Dance Company performed in National Museum of Scotland; music and sound design for Alice Munro's *View from Castle Rock* in the Edinburgh International Book Festival; Sound Design for *Wind Resistance* in the Edinburgh International Festival. She won the CATS award 2017 for best Music and Sound for *Wind Resistance*. Pippa completed her BMus, MA and PhD in composition at Birmingham University. She lectures at Edinburgh University and guest lectures at RCS, Aberdeen and St Andrews University. She was Artist in Residence at the Scottish Parliament 2014. She composed *Anamchara* with writer Alexander McCall Smith performed by Scottish Opera as part of the Commonwealth Games 2014.

### **Year of Young People**

- The Year of Young People 2018 will be the next of the Scottish Government's series of themed years, following the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017.
- The Year of Young People (YoYP 2018) will inspire Scotland through its young people aged 8 to 26, celebrating their achievements, valuing their contributions to communities and creating new opportunities for them to shine locally, nationally and globally
- Central to YoYP 2018 will be a celebratory events programme that puts young people at the heart of its development and delivery, creating new and valuable experiences for young Scots and the wider public, with links to the inaugural 2018 European Championships.

- Over 200 young people throughout Scotland are currently being recruited to become YoYP 2018 Ambassadors. Ambassadors will ensure that people and organisations in their communities know about what's happening and will lead on projects and activities to create events and opportunities to celebrate young people.
- The Year of Young People will have six themes which were developed in co-production with young people themselves:
  - Participation - looking at how young people can influence public services and decisions which affect their lives
  - Education - creating a stronger role for young people in shaping their learning
  - Health and Wellbeing - supporting young people to lead healthier, active lives and have opportunities to learn about and improve their mental health and resilience
  - Equality and Discrimination - broadcasting the value of young Scots, challenging negative perceptions of young people, and supporting young people to take leading roles in challenging discrimination in all its forms.
  - Enterprise and regeneration - celebrating young people's role in innovation, entrepreneurship and the Scottish economy as well as making Scotland a greener and more pleasant place to live
  - Culture - celebrating young people's talent and contribution to Scottish culture and arts.
- Further information on what's happening and how people can get involved can be found on the new website [www.yoyp2018.scot](http://www.yoyp2018.scot) or @YOYP2018 on Twitter.