



Media release

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Record breaking Celtic Connections delivers message of hope and unity to the world

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Celtic Connections has celebrated a stunning festival packed with live performances, record-breaking ticket sales and unique events, sending a message of hope and unity around the world about the power of music, cultural identity and collaboration.

Delivered by **Glasgow Life** in partnership with **Innis & Gunn**, the festival recorded attendances of 114,000 across 18 days - with the highest ever number of tickets sold in the event's 33-year history - cementing its place as the biggest winter festival of traditional, roots and world music on the planet.

More than 1,600 artists featured as part of the internationally renowned festival which hosted over 300 events at 25 venues across in Glasgow - Scotland's largest live music city. This year's event recorded over 200 sell outs, compared to 125 in 2025.

Artists and participants spanned more than 35 countries, including Palestine, Iraq, Ukraine, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Sweden, Norway, Ireland and the United States.

A stand-out **Showcase Scotland** event also shone a spotlight on participants from **Quebec**, along with a wealth of homegrown talent, welcoming six Québécois acts, with international delegates attending from 24 nations for five days of top performances and networking opportunities.

Celtic Connections Creative Director Donald Shaw said: "Such a unique coming together of performers as a global family sends a powerful message about the strength of music, cultural identity and collaboration, especially at a time when the world can feel more fragmented than ever.

"From the Drygate to Donbas, Byres Road to Baghdad, Candleriggs to Palestine, these past incredible days have been forged in friendship, fortitude and the freedom to express ourselves through song, dance and performance, filled with hope, inspiration and togetherness.

"From unforgettable headline moments to seeing artists step onto a Celtic Connections stage for the very first time, we have been united by the music and that is a legacy that will thrive long after the lights have dimmed. With the extraordinary support of our funders and partners, colleagues, venues,

audiences and incredible volunteers, this is a festival built by passion and people, celebrating a rich cultural tapestry, musical pioneers and songwriting greats.

“To see audiences turn out in such record numbers through a cold and wet winter month is the most fitting tribute we could hope for, and I would like to thank everyone involved for making our 33rd edition so memorable, as we already begin the exciting work of looking ahead to what comes next.”

The festival sold its highest-ever number of exclusive **Celtic Rover** memberships, with 684 purchased, while uptake of under 26 tickets was particularly encouraging, achieving 3,000 sign ups. It proved thirsty work too, with Innis & Gunn pouring tens of thousands of pints across the festival period.

Ceilidhs and family events provided popular, fun-filled ways for hundreds of people of all ages to take part, with a further 637 participants taking part in music and song workshops. Dementia-friendly concerts also saw 127 people get involved.

Four free concerts welcomed almost 7,000 children and young people from across Scotland into the main auditorium of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Pupils from nursery age to S6 classes experienced live performances by the likes of Sian, DLÙ, Celtic Fandango and Ímar. Since 1999, more than 300,000 children and young people have benefited from the festival’s learning programme.

Last night’s programme, including the **BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year** final, the **Danny Kyle Open Stage**, **Transatlantic Sessions** and a performance from three-time **Grammy** winner **Lucinda Williams**, concluded the first major event in a busy year for Glasgow in 2026. The city will also host **WOMAD** for the first time in July, the **2026 Commonwealth Games** and the **Royal National Mòd** in October.

Chair of Glasgow Life, Bailie Annette Christie, said: “Celtic Connections has launched Scotland’s cultural calendar – and a landmark year of international events in Glasgow – in spectacular style. Our much-loved, world-renowned festival has shone the global spotlight on Glasgow, highlighting why its UNESCO City of Music status is so richly deserved.

“This 33rd edition of Celtic Connections boasted an outstanding, diverse programme featuring an exceptional line-up of home-grown and international talent. A resounding success, this year’s festival has been a joyous celebration of music’s power to connect people – bringing together audiences from near and far to share memorable, enriching experiences. That really sums up the ethos of both Celtic Connections and our city, and what makes Glasgow’s cultural events so incredibly special and invaluable.”

Celtic Connections is supported by the **Scottish Government’s Festivals EXPO Fund** and **Creative Scotland**.

Alan Morrison, Head of Music at Creative Scotland said: “Scotland’s trad and folk artists were at full strength every single day during Celtic Connections 2026. Tradition bearers were honoured, new stars were born, and Scotland’s music proved yet again that it contains the very best the world has

to offer. This was a particularly strong year for international artists too, as the festival celebrated different global cultures, bringing voices together in harmony, not discord, and creating music without borders.”

A specially commissioned survey of 1,000 people, conducted by market research specialists Opinion Matters on behalf of headline sponsors **Innis & Gunn** ahead of the festival, also revealed a sustained and growing trend of new audiences discovering traditional music and valuing live performance.

One in five people (20.4%) said they are actively listening to more traditional music than a year ago. Among Gen Z audiences, a third of those aged 18 to 28 reported increased listening. The survey also found that Gen Z (52%) and Millennials (55%) believe live music makes winter nights better.

Innis & Gunn Master Brewer and Founder, Dougal Sharp, said: “Celtic Connections has always been about bringing people together around great Scottish music, and this year we were proud to make that feel even more immediate by welcoming the festival right into our Glasgow taproom. Trad on Tap became the heart of our activity, turning our West Nile Street venue into a space where live traditional music, good beer and busy city life all met under one roof.

“Being able to host Celtic Connections in the centre of town helped us reach new audiences and share a quality Scottish product with people who might not otherwise have crossed our path. Alongside an extra Emirates Arena show, it meant more moments where people could connect with the festival in an informal, welcoming way.

“This partnership is about more than numbers. It’s about backing Scottish culture, supporting live music, and creating places where people feel part of something bigger. Trad on Tap set the tone for a brilliant year of celebrating key cultural moments, and we’re excited to keep building on that.”

Next year will mark the third of a five-year headline sponsorship partnership with **Innis & Gunn**, with **Celtic Connections** returning from **14 – 31 January 2027**.

Ends

For further information, images, or to request an interview:

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Notes to Editors

Celtic Connections began in 1994, when it offered 66 events at one venue. It has since grown more diverse, adventurous and experimental each year, offering hundreds of events in locations across Glasgow.

Renowned internationally, and Europe's biggest winter music festival, it has an unwavering ambition to showcase the very best traditional folk, roots, Americana, jazz, soul, indie and world music and nurture unique local, national and international cultural partnerships.

Celtic Connections is delivered with funding from Glasgow City Council through Glasgow Life. Creative Scotland and The Scottish Government Festivals Expo Fund continue to provide invaluable support to Celtic Connections.

Glasgow Life is a charity working for the benefit of the people of Glasgow. We believe everyone deserves a great Glasgow life and we find innovative ways to make this happen across the city's diverse communities.

Our programmes, experiences and events range from grassroots community activities to large-scale cultural, artistic and sporting events which present Glasgow on an international stage.

Our work is designed to promote inclusion, happiness and health, as well as support the city's visitor economy, in order to enhance Glasgow's mental, physical and economic wellbeing.

For more information, see www.glasgowlife.org.uk.

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports culture and creativity across all parts of Scotland, distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery. Further information at creativescotland.com. Follow Creative Scotland on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

Innis & Gunn, since its establishment in 2003, has been determined to do things differently in the world of brewing. Starting with innovative oak cask maturation for award-winning flagship beer 'The Original', Innis & Gunn has gone on to create a whole line up of boundary-pushing beers, including distinctive, limited edition and rare beers, and the Innis & Gunn Lager Beer which recently won gold at the World Beer Awards for the second year running.

Innis & Gunn is now one of the UK's most successful beer brewers. Still pioneering, still innovating and still doing things differently, to excite and intrigue beer lovers all over the world. Innis & Gunn is the official beer sponsor of many iconic events including The Edinburgh Fringe, Royal Highland Show, Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Celtic Connections and Belladrum Music Festival.

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