

OUR  
STORIES  
YOUR  
CITY



Impact Report  
April 2024





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# Foreword

Welcome to the 'Our Stories, Your City' Project Report, 2024.

We're celebrating our 2nd birthday and fantastic 'firsts' for our project:

- **Fife day trip.** A full minibus of GCP members enjoyed a day trip to Fife including mini-golf at Pittenweem and ice cream in Anstruther to escape a busy Edinburgh in August.
- **Storytelling workshop.** The craft of storytelling can unlock your voice and confidence. 10 GCP members had great fun in a 1/2 day workshop to find their own words and style.
- **Storytelling over supper.** For the first time GCP relaxed over a meal and shared a tale with Mercat Storytellers.
- **Schools.** 4 local schools with young people most likely to suffer from lack of opportunity in Edinburgh benefited from 5 star tours free of charge.

This progress is thanks to our visitors' belief in the power of storytelling to make connections. As the donations continue to grow so does the strength of our promise to use storytelling to benefit those who need it most.

Thank you for your trust and belief in 'Our Stories, Your City'

Kat Brogan, MD Mercat Tours, April 2024



# Where it Began

This story was borne in three chapters;

- **2012;** Mercat Tours and Grassmarket Community partnership established.
- **2017;** Mercat Tours team refreshed our 'WHY', what bonds our work and our team -  
*'to make meaningful connections through storytelling'*
- **2020;** the profound experience forced on us all by the COVID 19 pandemic gave a far deeper understanding of 'exclusion' - from life, choices, opportunities and connections.

This led to an innovative idea! That Mercat Storytellers can reconnect vulnerable communities with their city through storytelling tours to beat exclusion - paid for by visitors' donations and supporting local Living Wage jobs in the process.

With the hard work of our exceptional team it was made possible through Scottish Government funding - our project launched in April 22.

Emerging from the pandemic into war in Europe and a cost of living crisis made it very difficult to know what to expect.

2 years on, the incredible results show that our project inspires visitors to reconnect the disconnected in a dignified, human way where all receive a 5 star experience equally.



# Our Vision

## Reconnecting the Disconnected

***Stories can help people heal,  
can rebuild confidence and pride,  
restoring a sense of 'home'***

Stories are powerful. They make connections between people, places and the past. With this project, we are helping reconnect people isolated and cut off from their city and culture.

Through an innovative new digital function, visitors buy their own 5 star tour and donate money to enable the most vulnerable in Edinburgh to enjoy the exact same experience. GCP Members are supported to explore their city's attractions on equal terms - building their confidence and self-respect guided by Mercat's storytelling.

We believe that - through our work and visitors' buy-in - we can break down barriers, promote respect and equity, reduce harm, and improve social wellbeing through ethical, responsible tourism.

This project creates a lasting bond between visitors, Edinburgh and GCP members through sharing and owning the stories of Edinburgh. It supports Living Wage jobs in 5 star attraction. It proves the power of storytelling, culture and tourism to create and restore connections with heritage and sense of self.

This demonstrates that tourism and culture is inclusive and responsible – a force for good.

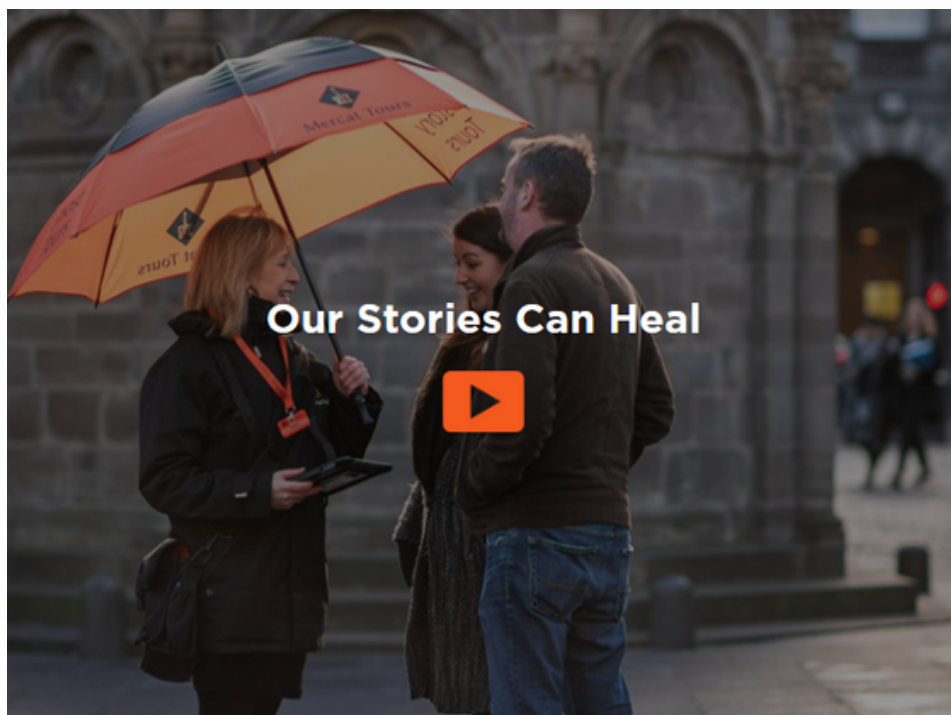


# Our Goals

- 1) Develop **new digital function to 'pay forward'** a walking tour and heritage attraction visit to benefit local vulnerable community as equals
- 2) Offer unique value-add proposition to **attract sales** to benefit attractions in recovery
- 3) Promote **responsible, sustainable, inclusive tourism** to benefit all
- 4) Deliver **high quality 5 star experience** to benefit visitors, GCP members and reputation of destination
- 5) Grow **digital visibility of city** through audience development
- 6) Support **local Living Wage jobs and upskilling** to benefit retention and future recruitment
- 7) Align with VisitScotland & STA **'Tourism is a Force for Good'** and **'Year of Stories'** campaigns

# Our Values; Evidence

Quality	Responsible/ Fair Work	Sustainability	Inclusivity
Walking tours promote wellbeing	Living Wage employers only	Low-carbon impact walking tours	GCP members receive 'pay forward' experience/donation on equal terms
VisitScotland accredited 5star attractions only	'Good to Go' accredited attractions	Green Tourism 'Gold' accredited attractions only	Tourtalk audio devices to support hearing impaired
CV-19 compliant small group experience	Grows sales to secure LW jobs and further recovery	'Pay it forward' benefit to GCP members	Euan's Guide provide accessibility audit and advice for attractions
Award-winning storytellers delivering experience	Grows income to allow investment in CPD/upskilling	Spread footfall beyond city 'hot spots' to avoid overcrowding	Accessible tour routes to support physical needs



**Our Stories Can Heal**

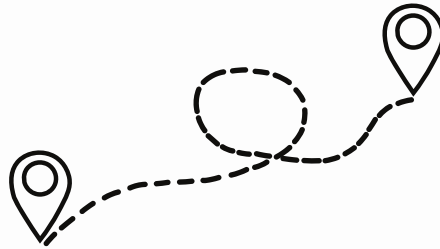


*Click to watch campaign video*

# Impact; Headline Results



**£5,673**  
donated



**56**  
tours funded



**840 GCP**  
Members benefit



# Our Impact; People

**100% of GCP members agreed  
'the experience was inclusive and my needs were met'**



£1,005 GCP retail sales in new pop-up shop at Mercat Tours

Nicky, Mercat Storyteller Tour Guide delivering OSYC tour for GCP members, March 2023

**'Calum was incredibly friendly, knowledgeable and had time for everyone's needs. He was also very generous by getting the group ice cream before we headed home from our Fife day trip!**

**Sean, GCP Member**

**It was great to visit a place out of Edinburgh, to be calmed by the sea.**

**GCP Member**

**"I love telling stories and having a chatty group. The Grassmarket crowd today were really interested and attentive. It was great to share stories together."**

**Nicky, Mercat Tours Storyteller**



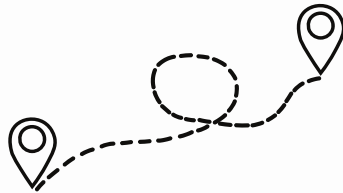
Perry GCP Support Worker and GCP members on tour, March 2023

# Our Impact; Partners



**£59,536**  
income

=



**2,344**  
tickets

=



**Living Wage jobs**  
supported

## Observations:

- **£8** average donation; *max £100, min £1.*
- **97.5%** of donations were in combination with a tour ticket purchase.  
> *Visitors and GCP share the same 5 star tour, on equal terms*
- **38% / 62%** donations made in combo with history/ghost tour ticket purchase. 118 donations in combo Edinburgh Castle and Palace of Holyroodhouse tickets
- **100%** donations made direct via webpage
- **highest value donations** made as one-off amounts
- **£1,005 sales** of GCP retail, launched in Mercat Tours reception

## Actions:

- continue to collect GCP & Storyteller tour feedback survey and action
- track GCP sales and cross-donations via QR codes in MT reception
- target online subscription
- encourage Storytellers' to promote QR codes to donate post-tour
- nurture '*couthie fowks*' comms to grow audience and donations
- increase cross-partner activity across social channels where possible
- further analyse data; *does project inspire ticket purchase or the reverse?*



# Phase 2 Launch 2024

## Reconnecting the Disconnected 2023; SCHOOLS

We believe in the power of shared cultural experiences to enhance wellbeing. Storytelling can make human connections between people, their past and their home which are crucial to understanding our environment and sense of identity. We believe this should be accessible to all.

We see the grip that both the pandemic and cost of living are having on the budgets of schools and households. This creates barriers between young people making connections with their city and stories.

Costs prevent students from accessing off-campus activities, and their development, life-experience, learning and connection with their city all suffer.

### **Mercat Tours and our visitors have a plan to help.**

The success of 'Our Stories, Your City' demonstrates that our visitors share the same belief in storytelling. This project, launched in Jan 2023 supports young people most likely to suffer from lack of opportunity in Edinburgh.

Visitor donations fund:

**1hr history tour  
linking with curriculum subjects;  
history, social subjects, drama**

**The educational experience is free of charge  
to the school and students.**



# Phase 2 Launch 2024

***100% of students would NOT have been able to access the experience without OSYC funding.***

## Skills and Ambition

***'Not only will it provide an opportunity to enjoy the wonderful cultural sites which our city has, but we feel it will go some way in raising their aspirations and developing the skills and confidence to become engaged in society as the new young workforce of the future.'***

**James Campbell, Senior Development Officer**

*Click to watch campaign video*



## Inclusion and Equity

***'The 'Our Stories, Your City' initiative provides an opportunity for our pupils to enjoy the rich cultural experiences our city has to offer with no cost barriers to consider.***

***This provides a real sense of equity for accessing school excursions making them accessible for all.***

**Joan Daly,  
HT Holy Rood High School**

*Click to read and apply for OSYC Schools*

**OUR STORIES, YOUR CITY - SCHOOLS**

Mercat Tours

Supporting young people most likely to suffer from lack of opportunity in Edinburgh.

- 1hr 5-star history tour
- FREE to students & school
- reflects curriculum subjects
- [click for more](#)

Launching 2023

- [Social media assets \(click\)](#)
- [Stakeholder Toolkit \(click\)](#)
- [Project video \(click\)](#)
- [Project press images \(click\)](#)

**Edinburgh Castle** is one of the most exciting historic sites in Western Europe. It is alive with exciting tales of its time as a military fortress, royal residence and prison of war. When you climb Castle Hill, you will walk in the footsteps of soldiers, kings and queens – and even the odd pirate or two. <https://www.edinburghcastle.scot/>

**National Museum of Scotland** is the UK's most popular attraction outside of London. It works with other museums and communities across Scotland which allows it to share the National Collections widely.

It achieves this through loans, touring exhibitions, learning, outreach and digital programmes as well as offering advice, acquisition funding and training programmes to other museums. <https://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>

**The Palace of Holyroodhouse**, is the official residence of the Monarchy in Scotland. Founded as a monastery in 1128 at the end of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, the Palace of Holyroodhouse has a close association with the History of Scotland. Today, the Palace is a close focus for national celebrations and events in Scotland, most notably The Queen's 'Holyrood Week', which usually runs from the end of June to the beginning of July every year. <https://www.royal.uk/royal-residences-palace-holyroodhouse>

**Gladstone's Land** has been a commercial and social hub for more than 500 years. It has witnessed momentous social and political change as well as war, fire and disease. It hosts a new immersive visitor experience that takes you through three centuries of Gladstone's Land history. <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/gladstones-land>

**The Georgian House** was built in the Georgian era, which produced some of Scotland's most distinctive architecture. In the late 1700s, this grand townhouse was at the heart of Edinburgh's New Town development. The house was designed by acclaimed architect Robert Adam and was a true statement of luxury in an era of enlightenment, for those who could afford it. It cost the first owner John Lamont (18th Chief of the Clan Lamont) £1,800 in 1796. The house has been magnificently restored to show a typical Edinburgh New Town house of the late 18th and early 19th century. The fine collections of period furniture, porcelain, silver and glass reflect the Lamonts' lifestyle, including lavish entertainment for guests, as well as the social and economic context of the time. <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/georgian-house>

# OUR STORIES YOUR CITY

