

**Festival Sustainability Symposium: Facing the Sector's Headwinds**

**Presented by Edinburgh Napier University’s Tourism Research Centre**

**Edinburgh Napier University, Craiglockhart Campus, Thursday 29 June 2023**

**Call for Contributions**

The “**Festival Sustainability Symposium: Facing the Sector's Headwinds**” is a one-day event, bringing together researchers and tutors of all career stages, industry practitioners, artists, producers, and other individuals with an interest in festival sustainability. Registration to the symposium is free to all, and available via [this Eventbrite link](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/festival-sustainability-symposium-facing-the-sectors-headwinds-tickets-584897292547). This call for contributions is open to anyone attending the event, though you are not obliged to submit a contribution: everyone is welcome!

We are particularly keen to extend this welcome to research students, those in the relatively early stages of their festival careers, and freelance workers. You have important experiences to share, whether by submitting a response to this call for contributions, or by attending the various sessions on the day.

**Structure and format**

There will be 90-minute parallel sessions in the morning and afternoon, with the same sub-themes repeated. We ask that you nominate one of these sub-themes for your work, but we are happy take a broad and open interpretation of how you choose to do so. You are not expected to appear in both sessions of a particular sub-theme, but equally you are most welcome to request this. (Please see below for the day’s full programme.)

The sub-themes are:

1. **Festivals and austerity: financial threats and cultural values**
2. **Festivals and community: maintaining local relationships**
3. **Festivals and the environment: current challenges and opportunities**

Each parallel session will feature a “led” component, shaped by members of the Tourism Research Centre at Edinburgh Napier, and designed to generate discussion. The “open” elements of each session are over to you. We welcome submissions of all kinds, such as the following formats:

* Academic conference-style papers
* Presentation of report findings, from academic, industry, governmental or other sources
* PhD students are very welcome to present their work (at whatever stage)
* Panel discussions or dialogues
* Outlining of potential research projects, if you are looking to develop your ideas in a friendly environment
* Pitches for collaboration, if you are looking to work with interested parties
* Case study presentations of your work, such as sustainability projects or organisations that you have been involved with

**Contribution timings**

We anticipate a maximum time limit of 15-20 minutes for each contribution, but please contact us to discuss extending this and we will try to accommodate your plans depending on levels of interest. Equally, you can request a shorter slot, such as five minutes for a case study that we can place between longer items. If you just want to say hello to the room, and see if there are people in attendance with shared interests, that would be fine! As noted above, please let us know if you would like to appear in one or both sessions of a particular sub-theme.

Due to the structure of the parallel sessions we do not anticipate much movement between parallel sessions on the day.

**Themes and questions**

We are keen to take a broad view of festival sustainability. The [UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals) range from range from “sustainable cities and communities” (SDG 11), to “decent work and economic growth” (SDG 8), and “climate action” (SDG 13). In Edinburgh, a number of festivals co-authored the “[Taking Action on Climate Change](https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/environmental-policy)” report, which highlights the necessity of working with partners and communities to achieve positive change. Recent academic publications have asked: [*Events and Sustainability: Can Events Make Places More Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable?*](https://www.routledge.com/Events-and-Sustainability-Can-Events-Make-Places-More-Inclusive-Resilient/Smith-Mair/p/book/9781032322858) (Smith & Mair, eds, 2023). It is never too soon, nor too late, to reflect upon the importance of festival sustainability in all its forms. Likewise, there is much to be revealed about the contribution of festivals to wider discussions on the sustainability of communities, places, organisations, and habitats.

With the three sub-themes in mind, questions you may wish to reflect upon in your contributions include:

* How is sustainability defined within different festival communities, stakeholder groups and networks?
* What impact did the Covid-19 pandemic, and the widespread cessation of festival activity, have on our understanding and pursuit of sustainability?
* How can festival producers and partner organisations best understand and address their relationship with sustainability themes and goals?
* What sustainability expectations and value do today’s festival audiences and employees hold, and how should the industry be responding?
* How is sustainability relevant to the creative content and programming of today’s festivals?
* What challenges must festivals tackle if faced with public and media concerns over a perceived disregard for sustainability?

This list is indicative, not exhaustive, and we welcome all contributions that connect with the symposium’s themes. As noted, we are keen to include contributions in a range of formats, so please embrace this opportunity for creativity.

**Opening panel and keynote**

The day will be bookended by two plenary sessions. The opening panel session will focus on the day’s main theme: “Festival Sustainability Symposium: Facing the Sector's Headwinds”. Panellists will include:

* **Dr Afiya Holder** (Edinburgh Napier University, [LinkedIn profile](https://www.linkedin.com/in/afiya-holder/))
* **Prof Gayle McPherson** (University of the West of Scotland, [LinkedIn profile](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gayle-mcpherson-10a14280/))
* **Hazel Johnson** (Hidden Door Festival, [LinkedIn profile](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hazel-johnson-70a31745/))

**Instructions for submissions**

Please follow the following guidance to submit your proposal(s) for the symposium:

* Please submit a short abstract / proposal (250-300 words) for your contribution to [tourismresearch@napier.ac.uk](mailto:tourismresearch@napier.ac.uk) by Thursday 11 May 2023.
* Be sure to note your preferred sub-theme, from the three listed above.
* Please give some indication of the time you would like available to you, up to 20 minutes.
* Include guidance as to the format of your contribution, and any other relevant details. We anticipate that each of the parallel sessions will have an audience of up to 25 people.
* Let us know if you wish to contribute to both the morning and afternoon sessions on your chosen sub-theme.
* A decision about your submission will be emailed to you by the end of May 2023.

This **in-person only symposium** is supported by Edinburgh Napier University’s Researcher Development Fund and there will be no cost or fee to attend. It will be held at our [Craiglockhart Campus in Edinburgh](https://www.napier.ac.uk/about-us/our-location/our-campuses/craiglockhart). Lunch and light refreshments will be provided.