



OUR
STORIES
YOUR
CITY

Impact Report: 4 years: 2026



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Foreword

This story was borne with a prologue:

- **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 of the COVID19 pandemic gave a far deeper understanding of 'exclusion' — from life, choices, opportunities and connections.

This led to an idea! That Mercat's Master Storytellers can beat exclusion by restoring and reconnecting vulnerable communities with their city through storytelling. Paid for by visitors' donations, this bonds visitors and locals through a shared experience whilst supporting local Living Wage jobs in the process.

Building meaningful connections and positive impact for visitors and communities, equally and mutually, is regenerative tourism in action.

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

The response has been remarkable. Visitors understand and **believe** in the power of storytelling to connect and heal, giving a sense of belonging. And so the project has expanded, reaching far beyond the impact of 2022, by launching three new chapters:

- **2022:** Phase 1: Grassmarket Community Project Members
- **2023:** Phase 2: Schools in low-income areas
- **2025:** Phase 3: New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers

After four years the results show that our vision inspires visitors to donate to help vulnerable communities in a dignified, human way where all receive a 5-star experience equally. Pals, Donors, Partners, Mercat Team — thank you.

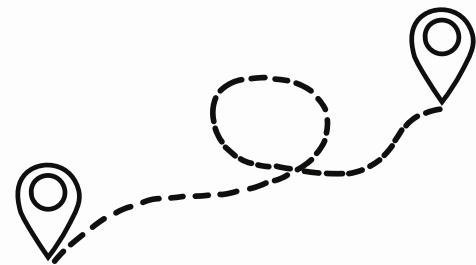




Our Impact: Headline Results



**£10,530
donated**



**105
tours funded**



**1605
OSYC pals
benefit**



**1911
OSYC donors**





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, who deserve to belong.

Through an innovative new digital function, visitors enjoy their own 5-star tour and donate money to enable the most isolated in Edinburgh to enjoy the same experience. In 2022 this welcomed GCP Members to explore their city's attractions on equal terms — building their confidence and self-respect through Mercat's storytelling. This became Phase 1, quickly followed by 2 and 3...

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, regenerative tourism.

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

This project is evidence — tourism is a force for good.





Our Impact: People



"In 4 years of guiding thousands of visitors, this audience has to be the most important — it was a privilege."

*Margaret-Ann,
Mercat Master
Storyteller*



"I cannot thank Mercat enough. It blew my mind."

Sean, OSYC Pal



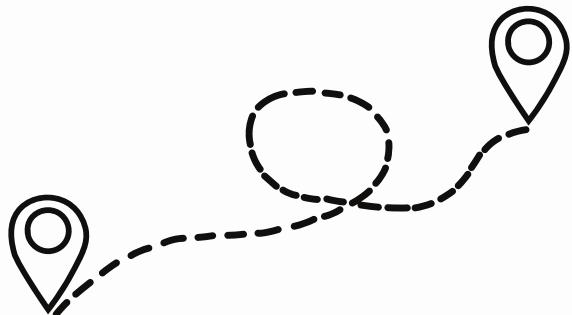
**100% of OSYC Pals agreed
"the experience was
inclusive and my needs
were met."**



**Perry GCP Support Worker,
(click for video), 1st July 2022**



Our Impact: Partners



4605
tickets bought
by OSYC donors
for 5-star
partner attractions



**Living Wage jobs
supported**





Phase 2: 2023

Reconnecting the Disconnected: SCHOOLS

Stories make connections between people, their past and their home which are crucial to understanding our environment and sense of identity. We believe that this should be accessible to all.

We see the grip that the pandemic and cost of living are having on the budgets of schools and households. This creates a barrier for young people, making it difficult to forge crucial connections with their city and stories — with their identity.

Costs prevent students from accessing off-campus activities, and their development, life-experience, learning and sense of belonging all suffer.

**Visitor donations
will fund:**

1hr history tour

**linking with
curriculum subjects;**

**history, geography,
politics, modern
studies, English**

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

Mercat Tours and our visitors have a plan to help.

The success of 'Our Stories, Your City' project proves that our visitors share the same belief in the power of storytelling. Phase 2 of this project, launched in Jan 2023, supports young people most likely to suffer from lack of opportunity in Edinburgh in deprived, low-income communities.



Our Impact: Phase 2: 2023

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



240 students from
4 schools hosted on
12 tours

Click to read and apply for OSYC Schools



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



Phase 3: 2025

Reconnecting the Disconnected: NEW SCOTS

We believe in the power of shared cultural experiences to enhance wellbeing and foster deep connections with people and place.

Edinburgh has become home for New Scots who have arrived from across the world, often against their will.

For New Scots, we see their desire to build confidence and pride in a new, safe home. Rather than restoring a lost sense of identity with a native home, we're helping to nurture new roots through sharing stories and a welcome to belong in their city.

Visitor donations will fund:
1hr tour

National Museum of Scotland
Palace of Holyrood House
Edinburgh Castle

Georgian House and Gladstone's Land

covering:

history, culture, music, art, poetry, tradition, language

**The cultural experience will be free of charge to
New Scots via The Welcoming organisation**

Our Impact: Phase 3: 2025

Confidence, Comfort and Safety

'Edinburgh offers a warm welcome to everyone. That greeting is all the more important for those forced from their homes, settling in a new city.'

Enabled by our visitor's donations, we're deeply privileged to share our stories and help build trust for New Scots to connect with their new home - to belong.'

Kat Brogan
Managing Director



**120 New Scots
hosted on
6 tours (so far!)**

Inclusion and Equity



 The Welcoming Association
534 followers
4mo • 

As part of [Mercat Tours | Certified B Corp](#) inspiring Our Stories, Your City project, members of The Welcoming Association took part in their third guided tour – this time uncovering the rich history of Edinburgh's Royal Mile and Edinburgh Castle.

From hidden closes to sweeping views from the Castle, participants had the chance to explore key parts of the city's heritage, brought vividly to life by guide Mally's engaging storytelling (a special thanks to Mally!)

These tours offer more than just a cultural experience – they create a sense of connection, belonging and local knowledge that is invaluable for New Scots settling in Edinburgh.

A heartfelt thank you to the Mercat Tours team for partnering with us to make these powerful experiences possible.

#OurStoriesYourCity #TheWelcomingEdinburgh #NewScots
#togetherwithrefugees



Our Impact: Platforms

Scottish Tourism Industry Conference 2022, EICC Edinburgh Nov 22; 500 delegates

ST Alliance
@st_alliance

Kat Brogan explains that while @MercatToursLtd had worked with the @GCP_Edinburgh for 10+ years, the pandemic highlighted what it was like to be excluded. In line with @MercatToursLtd 'why' to tell inspirational stories, the 'Our stories, your city' initiative began.

ST Alliance @st_alliance · Nov 9

Delighted to welcome Scott McArdle, Kat Brogan & @JonnyKinross for the final panel discussion on day one of #STIC22!



ST Alliance
@st_alliance

Jonny Kinross explains the impact on the initiative - it has given some of the most marginalised of society a helping hand to connect with attractions, that they may have felt anxious and excluded from before.



KAT BROGAN
Managing Director, Mercat Tours

SCOTLAND'S
TOURISM
INDUSTRY
CONFERENCE
2022





Our Impact: Awards



UKINBOUND
2022 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE
INDIVIDUAL ATTRACTION OF THE YEAR

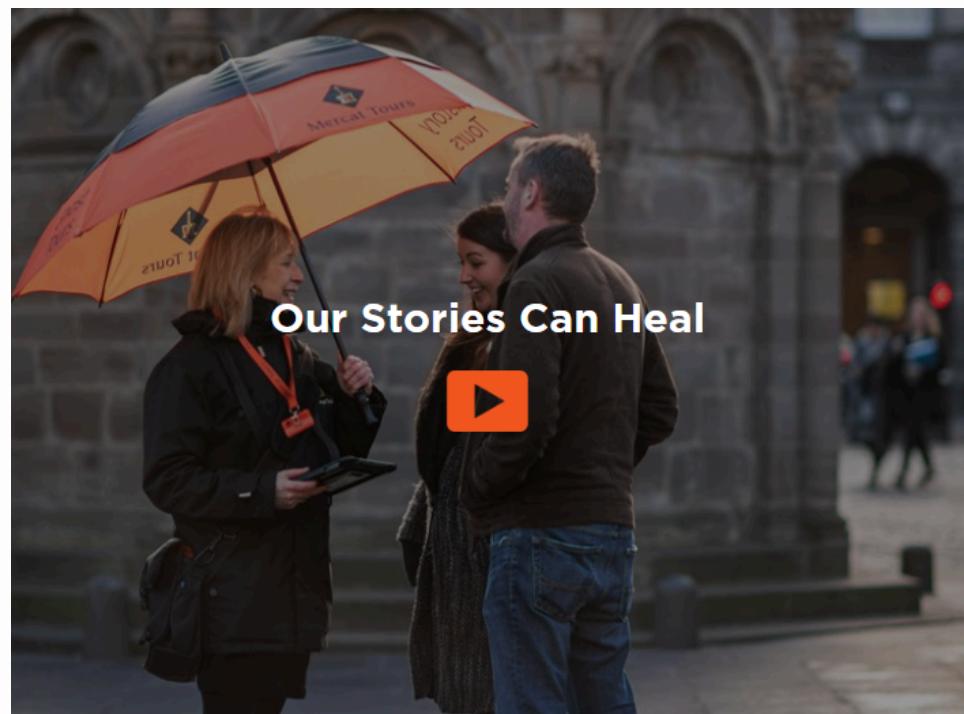


Our Goals

- 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 Edinburgh
- 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 5-star 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



Click to
watch
campaign
video



Our Partners

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

