



www.doorsopendays.org.uk

Event Organiser Handbook

2019

The national coordinating organisation for Doors Open Days is:

The Scottish Civic Trust

The Tobacco Merchants House,

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The national coordinator is **Nicola Godsal**

Nicola.godsall@scottishcivictrust.org.uk

Area coordinator contact emails and organisations are listed on the doors open days website:

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/about/contact/doors-open-days-coordinators/>

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INTRODUCTION

1. Event summary

Doors Open Days is Scotland's largest free cultural festival. It celebrates the built environment in two ways:

1. gives free access to around 1,000 venues across the country. It happens every year throughout the month of September.
2. A range of events, arranged both locally (through regional coordinators) and on national themes (through the Scottish Civic Trust)

The festival **purposes** are:

- to provide free access to sites of historic, cultural, architectural and community interest;
- to increase public appreciation and enjoyment of Scotland's built and cultural heritage;
- to promote inclusion in Scotland's civic spaces and activities.

The festival **aims** to:

- ensure that the Scottish historic environment delivers benefits for its communities by maximising social, cultural and economic opportunities for all
- stimulate and encourage the development of Scottish heritage, cultural and business sectors by creating unique opportunities for insight into Scotland's hidden heritage and world-class architecture
- promote civic pride, community cohesion and to encourage understanding between local and visiting individuals across our regions.
- celebrate the diversity of Scotland's communities by engaging individuals from different backgrounds and abilities through active participation in local cultural heritage

Origins: In 1990 as part of the European City of Culture celebrations, the Scottish Civic Trust coordinated the first ever Doors Open Days festival in the UK, with events in Glasgow and Ayr. The popularity of the event encouraged several other areas in Scotland to take part the following year. In 1991 Scotland became the only country in the UK and one of only 5 European nations to take part in the first ever European Heritage Days.

Today: The event brings together people from all walks of life in celebration of the fascinating places and spaces that surround us and by sharing the stories that only our built environments can tell. 2019 is the 30th year of delivering Doors Open Days in Scotland.

2. Event coordination

Doors Open Days is coordinated nationally by the [Scottish Civic Trust](#) with support from [Historic Environment Scotland](#). Local area programmes are coordinated by a network of local authorities, civic societies and heritage groups who are in turn supported by a large number of volunteers, businesses, community organisations and building owners.

Alongside Scottish Archaeology Month, Doors Open Days forms Scotland's contribution to European Heritage Days, which sees over 25 million people from 50 countries take part annually in around 50,000 events, uniting our communities in a unique celebration of heritage in our own special ways.

The aims of the European Heritage Days are to:

- raise the awareness of European citizens to the richness and cultural diversity of Europe;
- create a climate in which the appreciation of the rich mosaic of European cultures is stimulated;
- counter racism and xenophobia and encourage greater tolerance in Europe and beyond the national borders;
- inform the public and the political authorities about the need to protect cultural heritage against new threats;
- invite Europe to respond to the social, political and economic challenges it faces.

For more information on European Heritage Days

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/about/european-heritage-days/>

TAKING PART

3. How to take part

Any venues or events that wish to take part in Doors Open Days must fit **all three** of the following criteria:

- That the venue/event be of significance/interest in either architectural, design, heritage, ancestry or community aspects, cultural heritage both tangible and intangible.
- Access to the venue/event will be FREE of charge to Doors Open Days visitors during the festival.
- Venue/event is not regularly available for the general public to access free of charge, OR has an additional aspect for the festival duration only.

Each local authority area curates their own specific programmes and communicates directly on local planning, marketing and evaluation.

For more information about getting involved, visit our **How to get involved in Doors Open Days** on the national website:

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/about/contact/how-to-get-involved-in-doors-open-days/>

Contact details for local area coordinators, are listed on the national website

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/about/contact/doors-open-days-coordinators/>

4. The benefits of being part of Doors Open Days

There are both tangible and intangible benefits for the local areas and communities to taking part in the festival.

Tangible benefits

The festival benefits local amenities and businesses, since it is a free festival that attracts local residents interested in their areas and tourists from nearby areas, as well as the rest of the UK and from abroad.

[see the report for 2018](#) for figures on spend and participation, as well as audience participation data

Intangible benefits

The festival benefits local communities as it helps enhance participation and appreciation of local architectural assets while at the same time involving both the public and volunteers in the community's activities. It also helps people identify with, and take ownership of, their built heritage, whatever their background. It encourages broader awareness of diverse heritage and culture, including all groups that make up our cultural heritage in Scotland.

5. Roles and responsibilities

[Local area coordinators](#) manage the programme of events within each local authority area of Scotland. They are the main point of contact for event organisers and venue owners.

Coordinators work for a variety of organisations – local councils, civic societies and heritage trusts.

The Scottish Civic Trust is the national coordinator, responsible for several areas of activity

- Creation and promotion of national themes
- national media and marketing
- event enhancement and programme development

- supporting the work of area coordinators
- development and external liaison
- acting as a single point of contact for the public, via the national website www.doorsopendays.org.uk
- The main connection between the Scottish national programme and the wider European programme.
- Cohesion and brand awareness
- insurance

Local area coordinators are responsible for the following aspects of event management

- Selection and management of local programme events and venues
- Share insurance information with participating events / venues in your programme
- Ensure each event/ venue has all risk assessment information as required by SCT
- Share visitor and venue surveys and support promotion of this throughout local marketing, encouraging events/ venues to promote hard copy and online visitor surveys with their attendees
- Creation and publication of local brochures adhering to the Trademark licence agreement of Doors Open Days, as provided by SCT along with branding guidelines.
<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/hosting/>
- Timely provision of local brochure to SCT (one hard copy, one digital copy)
- Update DOD website with information for the current year's participating venues
- Share marketing materials supplied by SCT (digital and hard copy)
- Share any other participation information as provided by SCT
- Supply SCT with information for online marketing, e.g. early highlights, specific themed events, etc.
- Attend annual wrap, forward planning and focus meetings, where possible. These are held annually in March / April, June and November / December.
- Supply information for us to share via social media to promote local programme and specific events as appropriate

- Prepare and contribute content for press and media to promote local programme / specific events (optional)
- Support SCT in populating competitions (liaising with prize providers, etc) (optional)

ORGANISING THE EVENT – VENUE SPECIFIC

6. Timeline of activities

The application details and deadlines for venues to take part in the festival are set by local area coordinators; if you have not applied yet it is essential that you get in touch with your area coordinator: for contact details, email dod@scottishcivictrust.org.uk and we'll put you in contact with the right person. Or check the website for contact details:

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/about/contact/>

Once applied, the next deadlines to meet are the following:

- Share local area dates with national coordinator, **by May**
- Add your area programme section on website with event / venue information **in July, mid-August latest**
- Complete statistical report on event attendance and participation, then return to regional coordinator **by mid- October**. This will be provided by the regional coordinator, who will provide online links where applicable, and then share the results with the national coordinator.

7. Health and safety

No one wants to be responsible for an accident, whether at work or at home. DOD events are covered by Public Liability Insurance (PLI); however, event organisers must be aware of risk assessment measures to comply with the criteria of the PLI. You should also tell your insurer that you are taking part and what the expected visitor numbers are, as well as giving an event outline.

The Scottish Civic Trust organises **Public Liability insurance** on behalf of Doors Open Days participants. The insurance acts as a backup to your own building, business, organisation or personal insurance.

Risk assessments are simply a process for working out what hazards and risks there are and minimising or getting rid of them. Most of the thinking behind carrying out an assessment is common sense.

Please take some time to read through the risk assessment guide and the insurance information available on the DOD website.

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/hosting/insurance-and-risk-assessments/>

8. Visitors

The main goal of a DOD event is to provide visitors with the best experience possible; there are a few strategies that can be adopted to plan your event, by managing visitor **numbers**, **accessibility** and **troubleshooting**.

Visitor numbers

When planning your event, you should think about how many visitors are expected, and act in ways that can optimise their experience. If your space is limited or you are organising a tour, it might be worth making it a booking-only event; if you decide on controlling access, think about managing a queuing system or consider longer/shorter opening hours based on bookings/venue size/visitor expectancy. A suggested online tool to manage ticketing and events is the free software *Eventbrite*, www.eventbrite.co.uk.

Accessibility

Always make sure the venue of the event is easy to find and the information on the website is accurate: you can use signs, banners, or provide maps to help people navigate.

We try to encourage visitors to travel to DOD venues by public transport. However, you may find that because of your location or personal preference, visitors will arrive by car. Your area coordinator will want to know if you can offer visitors **parking** or whether there is parking nearby. Make sure this information is accurate and stick to the commitment once it is made.

Finally, provide visitors with general accessibility information: is the venue accessible for visitors with different accessibility needs? Is the event suitable/safe for children? Are dogs allowed in the venue?

Coordinators have a general set of criteria and symbols for you to use to signal this to visitors. These will be used to note accessibility information for your venue in the regional programmes, and on the Doors Open Days website entries.

Troubleshooting

In order to prevent hazards, it is important to predict any sort of issue and how it can be avoided. Please visit <http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/hosting/insurance-and-risk-assessments/> to find out the health and safety measures to adopt in these cases. Occasionally, you might come across a visitor who is hard to handle. It is essential to be friendly and patient, and listen to customers' complaints, while still being firm and assertive.

9. Staff and volunteers

It is essential to manage the work of staff and volunteers in ways such that the event runs smoothly. Before and during the event, always provide full support and supervision and plan the rota so that the work of staff and volunteers alike is diverse and proportioned. Always make sure that everyone is familiar with risk assessment, emergency procedures and their role when on duty; always provide your contact details.

EVALUATION – see end of the document

EVENT PROMOTION

There are many ways to make your event more attractive to visitors, and many ways to promote it so that your target audience will be interested and involved in the activities you've planned. DOD events are open to everyone, and there are both offline and online activities to promote the events to all potential visitors.

10. Offline activities

The Scottish Civic Trust plans the event's publicity on the national level; on the local level, however, local newspaper/radio publicity can be organised independently, provided that your area coordinator is informed about your plans.

Press releases are a great offline strategy to attract visitors. When writing a news release, make sure you provide all the necessary information required, including your contact details, venue / event opening information, and photographs when possible. Remember to mention DOD and the DOD website in your release: follow the trademark licence agreement

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/resources/event-organisers-handbook/> and only use logos that can be found under the *Hosting* → *Logos* section of the DOD website, or click on the following link:

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/hosting/logos/>

Banners and **balloons** are a great way both to make it easier for visitors to find the venue and to attract passers-by. The Scottish Civic Trust provides your local coordinator with balloons to place near the venue; the balloons are biodegradable, and should be disposed of appropriately after the event. Regional coordinators have a supply of banners that they share with their venues each year.

11. Online activities

Social media activity is essential to the development of Doors Open Days, and the number of Facebook likes and Twitter followers has risen exponentially in the past few years. Another recommended action when writing press releases is to include the DOD media pages in the article, in order to drive offline audiences online.

Social networks keep our followers updated not only on upcoming events, but also on last-minute changes, surveys, competitions, and many other internal as well as external activities and opportunities. It is therefore essential that you spread the word about our Twitter and Facebook pages, by putting social media buttons on your websites, email and newsletters that link back to Doors Open Days sites.

You can find us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/doorsopendays or find us as @doorsopendays.

You can find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/dodscotland or look us up as “Doors Open Days.”

We recommend you also set up a Facebook or Twitter account for your own venue or a Facebook event to attract more visitors. In these cases, please remember to link your site to Doors Open Days’ and use the trademarked logos, so that the network between us remains strong. Our hashtag for Doors Open Days is **#dodscot**

For our anniversary year the hashtag is #dodscot30

EVENT EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Feedback from our venues and visitors is as essential to the development of DOD as are attendances. There are several factors that make up a successful festival: a rising number of visitors and returning visitors, a high number of volunteers taking part, a rising number of newspaper and online articles, a beneficial financial outcome for businesses, a positive involvement of local communities, and positive feedback from visitors with the quality of the festival.

It is therefore crucial to collect attendance, staff and volunteers statistics during the event and send them to your local authority coordinator. The **deadline** to submit your area stats is the beginning of **October**. DOD also collects qualitative data from visitors. We provide forms for you to complete and return.

We please ask that **as many visitors as possible** per venue complete the paper survey. We also have the survey available as an online resource, which we share on the DOD website.

To have an idea of how we assess the success of the festival, see the evaluation of the previous years, and the *Hosting* section of our website.

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/hosting/>

ENJOY YOUR EVENTS AND THANKS FOR TAKING PART IN DOORS OPEN DAYS 2019!