

2023 Moffat Eagle Festival Report



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Introduction:

Following two successful festivals in September 2021 and September 2022, the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project once again teamed up with the town of Moffat to plan and deliver a 3-day festival celebrating Golden Eagles and nature-based tourism opportunities in the south of Scotland. The community of Moffat, its hospitality providers, retailers, businesses and stakeholders embraced the festival and once again supported the event with great enthusiasm.

The town of Moffat

Often described as the ‘mini-highlands’ due to its stunning scenery and rich wildlife the Southern Uplands are the home to the growing population of golden eagles boosted by the conservation translocation project the [South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project](#). The town of Moffat situated centrally in the South of Scotland and less than a mile from Junction 15 on the M47, the town of Moffat was ideally placed to become Scotland’s very first ‘Eagle Town’. Moffat community embraced the opportunity to host the first ‘Eagle Festival’ and put Moffat on the map as the place to visit to

Leys Geddes chair of Visit Moffat said;

“Our community has truly taken the fantastic South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project under their wings and played an important role in helping the first 27 golden eagles settle into their new southern home. The aim of this venture is to firmly establish Moffat as a premier destination for nature-based tourism”.



Leys Geddes awarding the first-place trophy for the Eagle Hill Fell Run 2022.

Aims of the Moffat Eagle festival

- To raise awareness of and support for the plight of Golden Eagles in the South.
- To raise awareness of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project.
- To inspire a sense of ownership between the town of Moffat and their local Eagles, connecting them not only to their landscape but identifying the positive impacts the presence of these birds can have both economically and geographically.
- To establish Moffat as Scotland's first 'Eagle Town' and as a premier nature-based tourism destination.
- To promote Moffat as one of the first places to see Golden Eagles in Southern Scotland geographically; for anyone travelling from England or Wales, the Southern Uplands now offer a real opportunity to engage with this iconic Scottish species and encourages tourism that may have headed further North in search of this species to utilise the facilities and opportunities closer to home.
- To build upon the successes of the 2021 and 2022 Golden Eagle Festival and deliver an enjoyable, informative, inclusive and engaging program of activities during the Moffat 2023 festival.
- To inspire Community involvement and engagement.
- To inspire local business involvement before, during and after the project.
- To promote and inspire a sense of pride in, and ownership of the local Golden Eagles.
- To leave behind a lasting legacy and eagle identity for the town and encourage a future commitment which benefits the Eagles, the town of Moffat and the region in a sustainable, economically beneficial and productive way.
- To work towards community management of the festival.

Summary of events

Date	Event Title	Location	Time	Overview
Friday 22nd September 2023	Raptor ID Course	The Buccleuch Arms Hotel	12.30pm – 2pm	A beginner's guide to Raptor identification with SSGEP.
	Welcome Piper	Old Well Theatre	6pm – 7pm	A local junior Piper plays guests in to Evening Talks - Ryan
	Evening Talks: Duncan Orr-Ewing / Des Thompson & Chris Rollie	Old Well Theatre	6.30pm – 9.00pm	NatureScot's Des Thompson and Raptor enthusiast Chris Rollie teamed up to deliver a talk on Derek Radcliffe's life and work with birds of prey in Southern Scotland. RSPB's Duncan Or-Ewing kindly stepped in for Jim Crumley who sadly was forced to cancel at the last moment.
	Live Music	Annandale Arms Hotel	9pm - Late	Live Music from Clan Blues.
Saturday 23rd September 2023	Enviro-Day	Moffat Town Hall	10am – 4pm	Exhibitors from various environmental and local groups from across the South of Scotland share their work with visitors. Event sponsored by Moffat Town Hall
	Meet a Golden Eagle Eagle	Buccleuch Arms Hotel, Moffat High Street	10am – 4pm	A chance to get a close look at a falconry Golden Eagle courtesy of Kielder Bird of Prey Centre. Event Sponsored by Belhaven Brewery.
	Blood Bike 'Eagle Ride-Out' – Motorcycle Eagle Tour	Buccleuch Arms Hotel	10am – 3pm	Join the Blood bikers to explore 'Eagle Country' on this specifically tailored motorcycle route.
	Book Corner – Moffat Library	Moffat Town Hall	10am – 2pm	Author appearances from Duncan Orr-Ewing, John Miles and Polly Atkin.
	Corehead Guided walk with Borders Forest Trust	Devils Beef Tub	Pick up from Moffat Town Hall – 11am / Drop off 1pm	Tour of Devils Beef Tub with Borders Forest Trust staff.
	Scottish Power Pipe Band	Main Stage – Moffat High Street	1pm / 2.30pm / 4pm	Performance from members of the pipe band, ranked 3 rd in the world!
	Festival Addresses and Live Music: David & Oliver Mundell, Head Prefects from Moffat Academy and P7's from Moffat Primary.	Festival Main Stage, Moffat High Street	4.30pm – 5pm	Note of thanks from David and Oliver Mundell and the head prefects from Moffat Academy. Moffat Primary P7's perform their Eagle song 'Mighty Wings, Coming Home' which was written for the festival.
	Welcome Piper	Old Well Theatre	6pm – 7pm	A local junior Piper plays guests in to Evening Talks – Ryan
	Evening Talks: Iolo Williams and Ewan Miles	Old Well Theatre	6.30pm – 9pm	Keynote speaker Springwatch presenter Iolo Williams and Ewan Miles of Nature Scotland Wildlife Tours based on the Isle of Mull.
	Live Music	The Balmoral Hotel	9pm – Late	Live music from The Djooks and Rick & Yiota

Date	Event Title	Location	Time	Overview
Sunday 24 th September 2023	Family Fun Day	Moffat Town Hall / High Street	10am – 3pm	Face painting / Chainsaw carving demonstration / Kids activities
	'Eagle Hill' Fell Race	Start @ The Main Stage	Race Start – 11.15am	10.5km Fell race sponsored by VisitMoffat.
	Corehead Guided Walk with Borders Forest Trust	Devils Beef Tub	Pick up from Moffat Town Hall – 11am / Drop off 1pm	Tour of Devils Beef Tub with Borders Forest Trust staff.
	Entertainment Sunday Lunch, Eagles and Entertainment	Moffat House	Food served 12.30pm – 1.30pm / Eagle Presentation 3pm / Live Music 4pm	Hospitality, food, Eagle talk from project staff and live music from Clan Blues.

Additional festival offers from local producers

During the Moffat eagle festival local businesses have traditionally provided additional offers to visitors to celebrate the festival and encourage engagement with the event attendees. Reports from businesses were positive with most benefitting substantially from the increased footfall in town. This year many local businesses sponsored certain events which was a step in the right direction to ensure the longevity of the event in future years (see List of Supporters – pg 20).

Dark Sky Spirits, the local whisky distillery, provided a limited edition bottling of 'Moffat Eagle Festival' single malt Scotch Whisky specifically for the festival, as it has done since 2021.

Friday 22nd September 2023

Raptor Identification Course

Time: 11am – 1pm

Location: The Buccleuch Arms, Moffat High Street DG10 9ET



SSGEP staff delivered a beginner level course aimed at helping visitors and locals to recognise the many species of birds of prey that they may encounter in the Southern Uplands.

The course was fully attended with 26 people, covered everything from identification to correct use of binoculars and was enjoyed by all. Following the course, the Buccleuch Arms Hotel has invited the project to deliver the course regularly for their guests.

Duncan Orr-Ewing Des Thompson & Chris Rollie

Location: The Old Well Theatre DG10 9HJ

NatureScot's Des Thompson and Ex-RSPB raptor enthusiast Chris Rollie joined forces to present a highly entertaining and informative talk focusing on the life and work of the late Derek Radcliffe and his immense contribution to raptor conservation in southern Scotland.

Sadly, scheduled speaker, author Jim Crumley had to cancel on the morning of his talk due to a family emergency. RSPB's Duncan Orr-Ewing graciously stepped in at the last minute to deliver a fascinating and highly entertaining and informative talk on his work with red kites. A huge thank you to Duncan!!!



Above: Chris Rollie, Duncan Orr-Ewing and Des Thompson after their talks at the Old Well Theatre.

Live Music: Clan Blues

Time: 9pm – Late

Location: The Annandale Arms Hotel, Moffat High Street (Hotel Bar)

Clan Blues played a selection of blues and country music and features the fantastic slide guitar playing of Dave Dick, retired wildlife crime officer, author and raptor worker. The bar was packed and, as always, the band were a very popular addition to the festival programme.



Saturday 23rd September 2023

Enviro-day

Time: 10am – 4pm

Location: Moffat Town Hall, Moffat High Street

The Enviro-Day offered visitors and locals the opportunity to find out about the fantastic work being undertaken by a host of organisations to protect, improve and promote wild places across the south of Scotland.

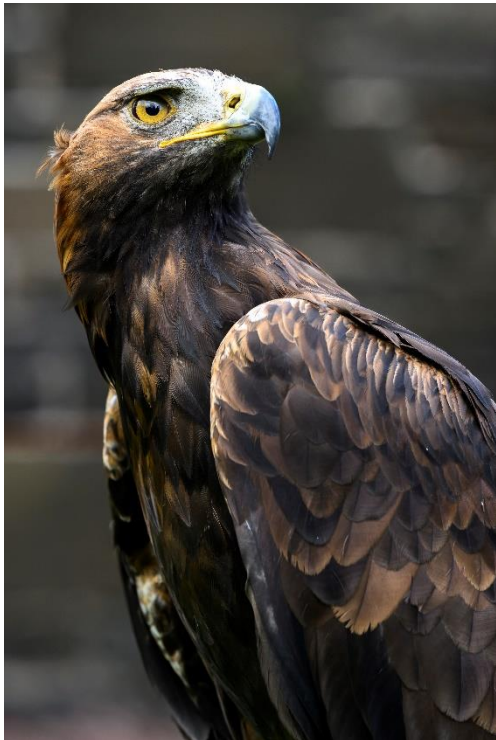
The event was very well attended by both visitors and exhibitors with a steady stream of people visiting and chatting with the various representatives from 18 different organisations, projects and retailers.



Enviro-Day Exhibitor List

South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project	Southern Uplands Partnership
Borders Forest Trust	Visit Cruck Cottage
SW Scotland Environmental Information Centre	D&G Bat Group
WWT Caerlaverock	D&G Blood Bikers
Dark Sky Spirits	RAW – Restoring Annan’s Waters
Kayantics Wood Fire Pizzas	Galloway Biosphere
Scottish Sea Bird Centre	Meet an Eagle (Kielder Bird of Prey Centre)
Charles Brodowski Sculpture	Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels
Funky Faces Face Painting	Scottish Land & Estates

Meet an eagle with Ray Lowden – Kielder Bird of Prey Centre



Time: 10am – 4pm

Location: The Buccleuch Arms, Moffat High Street

Ray Lowden of Kielder Water Bird of Prey Centre joined SSGEP staff and volunteers to offer the fabulous opportunity to meet a male falconry Golden Eagle and learn about the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project’s award-winning work to restore the small and fragmented population of these iconic Scottish birds to southern skies.

Over **600 people** engaged with this event on Saturday 23rd, with around **250** attending on Sunday 24th.

Live Music: The Scottish Power Pipe Band Members

Time: 1pm / 2:30pm / 4pm

Location: The Main Stage by The Ram, Moffat High Street.



Ranked 3rd in the world, 4 members from the Scottish Power Pipe Band entertained festival-goers throughout the afternoon. All three performances were very well attended with over 100 people lining the roadside at 1pm to watch the band on the main festival stage.

Festival Address:

Time: 4:30pm

Location: The Main Stage by The Ram, Moffat High Street.

Preceded by the final Scottish Power Pipe Band performance of the day, the festival address opened with local MSP's David and Oliver Mundel giving a vote of thanks to all of the festival visitors, contributors, the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project and the town of Moffat itself. Next, the Head Prefects from Moffat Academy spoke to promise to carry the message of the importance of their local Golden Eagles forward to future generations. The vote of thanks closed with the P7's from Moffat Primary performing their song, *Mighty Wings, Coming Home*; an original composition written for the festival to welcome the return of Golden Eagles to southern skies.

Evening Talks: Iolo Williams / Ewan Miles

Time: 7pm – 9pm

Location: The Old Well Theatre DG10 9HJ

The Old Well Theatre was packed to capacity to enjoy talks from Springwatch presenter, conservationist and tour guide Iolo Williams and Ewan Miles of Nature Scotland Wildlife Touts based on the Isle of Mull. Both talks were extremely entertaining and very well received. After the festival Iolo got in touch to say: *'It was my pleasure. Lovely theatre, great audience and all topped off with Indian restaurant staying open until 11pm for us. Well done to you and the team. Iolo'*



Live Music: The Djooks / Rick & Yiota

Time: 9pm – Late

Location: The Balmoral Hotel, DG10 9DL

A fantastic night of live music from two acoustic duos who entertained a lovely audience all night.

Sunday 24th September 2023

Family Fun-Day

Time: 10am – 3pm

Location: Moffat Town Hall (originally Hope Johnstone Park)

Due to adverse weather conditions and high winds, we moved the family fun-day from Hope Johnstone Park to Moffat Town Hall. This afforded festival-goers and exhibitors a degree of shelter from the inclement conditions. However, four exhibitors did cancel on the morning of the event.

Families enjoyed a variety of activities from 'Meet an Eagle' to face-painting and children's activities but, due to the weather, it was not as well attended as previous years.

Family Fun Day Contributors

South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project	Project info stand and activity
Pete Bowsher Chainsaw Carving	Chainsaw carving demonstration
DG Funky Faces	Face painting
Ray Lowden of Kielder Bird of Prey Centre	Meet a Golden Eagle
Unique sweets and savouries	Food and Drink

Activities

Moffat 'Eagle Hill' Fell Race

Time: 11.15 am start

Location: Meet at Main stage by The Ram, Moffat High Street for registration before 11.15am start.

The grueling 10.5km 'Eagle Hill' Fell Race returned for its third year with an increase in runner from previous years.

32 runners set off at 11.15am, supported by Moffat Mountain Rescue, to tackle the terrain around Moffat.



A huge thank you to Hart Fell Running Club and Moffat Mountain Rescue for all of their assistance and expertise in organising and supporting the event!

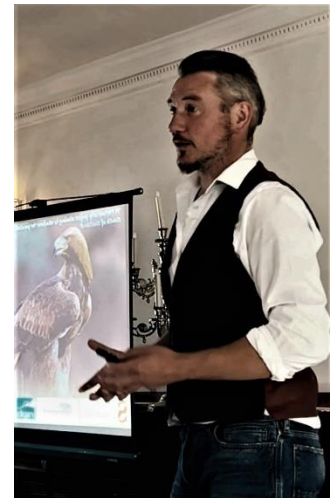
Entertainment

Sunday Lunch, Eagles & Entertainment

Time: Food served between 12.30pm – 4pm

Location: Moffat House, Moffat Main Street.

Festival goers and locals had the opportunity to enjoy the fabulous food and hospitality of Moffat House before reclining to enjoy an update from the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, followed by some relaxing acoustic music from Clan Blues. The event was fully booked and feedback from both the hotel and the public was unanimously positive.



Media coverage

Through a program of proactive PR for the Moffat Eagle Festival, we secured over 100 items of media coverage achieving millions of opportunities for people across the UK (and beyond) to see or hear about the 2023 Festival across broadcast, print and online channels. This included Channel 5 News, ITV News, BBC Radio Scotland (news and Scotland Outdoors), BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, BBC News Online, STV News, Countryfile Magazine, Country Life Magazine, Bird Watching Magazine, The Times, The Independent, The Scotsman, Daily Record, The National, Country Living Magazine Edinburgh Evening News, Border Telegraph, The Press and Journal, People's Friend, Dumfries and Galloway Standard, DNG 24, DGWGO, Border Telegraph, Southern Reporter, Edinburgh Live, The Scottish Banner (distributed in the US, Canada and Australasia), Greatest Hits Radio (Borders) and more. The festival was also promoted by a range of partners and supporters via their digital channels, this included NatureScot, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, VisitScotland and the South of Scotland Destination Alliance.



Visit Moffat

September 26, 2023 · 🌐

Wonderful to receive the letter below. Everyone involved in this year's Moffat Golden Eagle Festival should read it - that's the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, the many skillful performers and entertainers, our businesses, Belhaven Brewery, our unpaid volunteers, all the people of Moffat and everyone who attended the festival:

'We heard about the Eagle Festival whilst listening to Scotland Outdoors on the radio. We live in the South of Cumbria and have, like many others, driven by and not stopped off before. Having heard Rick on the radio, we planned a day trip with the kids. We were not disappointed, what a friendly town Moffat is. The events and activities at the Eagle Festival were brilliant. It was fantastic to meet Stan the Golden Eagle. We had a good craic with everyone we met, locals and visitors. We even went on a swan pedalo on the boating lake. We are already making plans to return to Moffat for a longer visit as it is such a nice spot.

Thanks everyone

Nick, Rhona, Erin and Ross'

Examples of Media links:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKgGMilcu5g> (5 News Piece)
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0gdz563>
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/id/podcast/geese-sculpture-a-modern-stone-circle-and/id261779480?i=1000628086578> (the Podcast produced from the BBC Radio Scotland, Scotland Outdoors episode referenced above. Starting at 38:51).
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-66706913>
- <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-09-04/number-of-golden-eagles-in-southern-scotland-soars-to-highest-in-300-years>
- <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/golden-eagle-population-of-southern-scotland-at-300-year-high-jpclfr3hb>
- <https://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/soaring-success-for-return-of-golden-eagles-to-southern-scotland-4280239>
- <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/number-of-golden-eagles-in-southern-scotland-soars-to-highest-in-300-years>
- <https://planetradio.co.uk/greatest-hits/borders/news/golden-eagle-project-new-chicks-record-high/>
- <https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/number-golden-eagles-southern-scotland-27653148>
- <https://www.dgwo.com/out-and-about-in-dg/iolo-williams-revealed-keynote-speaker-pioneering-south-scotland-eagle-festival/>
- <https://www.scottishfield.co.uk/outdoors/wildlifeandconservation/number-of-golden-eagles-in-southern-scotland-soars-to-highest-in-300-years/>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/dumfries-bbc-iona-scottish-highlands-perthshire-b2404834.html>
- <https://jerseyeveningpost.com/morenews/uknews/2023/09/05/number-of-golden-eagles-in-southern-scotland-soars-to-highest-in-300-years/>

Budget

Detail	Cost
Clyde Fund £2,200 grant	
Banners	£1,070.00
Banner erection/removal	£300.00
Programme printing (1000 units) – Solway Print	£200.00
Stage & PA Hire (Moffat Promotions)	£200.00
Venue Hire – Moffat Town Hall	£80.00
Musicians Fees and Accommodation	£350.00
Subtotal	£2,200.00
A&NCBC £5,000 grant	
Iolo Williams – Keynote Speaker	£3,600.00
Iolo Williams - Accommodation	£90.00
Iolo Williams – Travel Expenses	£238.14
Chris Rollie – Travel Expenses	£45.00
Ewan Miles – Speaker Fee	£200.00
Ewan Miles - travel expenses	£167.40
Venue Hire – Old well Theatre	£152.50
Graphic Design	£200.00
Promo stickers	£112.00
Face Painting	£180.00
Sub total	£4,985.04
Buccleuch Arms £1,900	
Pipe Band Meal	£180.00
Golden Eagle – Falconer x 2 days	£970.00
Accommodation The Djooks	£80.00
Blood bikes donation	£250.00
Photographer	£330.00
Sub Total	£1,810.00
Total	£8,995.04

Festival Participants

The table below shows a record of the number of tickets sold through Eventbrite. Also included are the number of tickets that remained unsold, the number of ticket buyers who attended and a measure of attendance and non-attendance against the number of tickets sold.

Not all events were ticketed. Evening music events, visitors to the Enviro-Fair, Family Fun Day and entrants in the Eagle Hill Run are also not included. We could have sold many more tickets but were restricted by available venue capacity. A new venue has opened in Moffat with a capacity of 300. We will utilize this new resource in 2024.

Date	Event	Tickets Sold	Tickets Unsold	Attended	% Attendance	% Non-attendance
Friday, 22 Sept 2023	Raptor Identification Course	25	0	25	100	0
Friday, 22 Sept 2023	An Evening with Jim Crumley, Des Thompson and Chris Rollie	57	3	44	77.19	22.81
Saturday, 23 Sept 2023	Walk with the Borders Forest Trust - Corehead	14	2	11	78.57	21.43
Saturday, 23 Sept 2023	Book Corner @ Moffat Library	12	28	12	100	0
Saturday, 23 Sept 2023	An Evening with Iolo Williams and Ewan Miles	76	0	63	82.89	17.11
Sunday, 24 Sept 2023	Walk with the Borders Forest Trust - Corehead	16	0	7	43.75	56.25
		200	33	162	81	19

Testimonials

We have included a selection of testimonials from visitors attending the event.

"The Moffat Eagle Festival is a vibrant conservation event, supported by the local community, which I have had the pleasure of attending for three consecutive years, since it's infancy in 2021.

The festival is organised by the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project, with the primary aim of raising the profile of conservation work involving the reinforcement of the golden eagle population in the area.

Every year, during the festival, this quaint little Scottish town is filled with visitors, interesting talks about wildlife conservation delivered by prominent personalities in the field, as well as events and activities suitable for both children and adults.

Some of my personal highlights included seeing Ray's eagle in its full real-life glory, which one would say was a life-altering experience for the non-initiated, a fascinating and informative talk delivered by the amazing wildlife photographer, Laurie Campbell, as well as the nighttime entertainment organised by the project, which I have had the honour to perform at.

The Moffat Eagle Festival is definitely the place to be for wildlife enthusiasts, as well as members of the general public who wish to engage in this beneficial to Moffat event."

Yiota Giannakopoulou

'In 2020 Kate and I were fortunate enough to move to Southwest Scotland i.e. Dumfries. Since a child I have always had a fascination for birds and other wildlife, but my ultimate favourite was always the elusive Golden Eagle.

Once settling in Dumfries we made several pilgrimages up to the Highlands and Islands where it is renowned to be the home of the Golden Eagle. We soon found out how elusive and seclusive the 'Goldie' can be, nevertheless a distant glimpsed figure high above was most rewarding and a wonderful experience to be within the remote landscapes they call home. Then to our complete joy we then became aware of the Golden Eagle Reintroduction Project in Moffat which also featured a September eagle festival event which we have attended since its inaugural opening.

We met Rick and the rest of his amazing team who excel in making the public experience a most special and memorable occasion. Not only are the Golden Eagle Project lectures invaluable for anyone wanting to learn about eagles and other natural history subjects they are engaging and have afforded us to meet notable speakers where we would never have had the wonderful opportunity to engage in their experiences at any other time.

To top it off the Eagle festival also offers the most fantastic opportunity to see a real-life Golden Eagle up close through the careful management and care of Ray Lowden Kielder Forest

This project run by Rick and his team has not only provided educational information but also the opportunity for the people in the South of Scotland to experience the Golden Eagles beauty whilst gracing our skies, it has also opened new opportunities for people further South who are now at last likely to see this majestic bird possibly making territories in the North of England and beyond.

We can't thank the project team enough for the hard work and dedication and respect they have shown in helping reintroduce this wonderful iconic bird who we now can call our dearest neighbour.

Thank you to all for making this happen'.

Vinny & Kate

Supporters/ Sponsors

The following organisations and businesses sponsored or supported events at the 2023 festival:

- The Buccleuch Arms Hotel
- Moffat Town Hall Regeneration Trust
- The Old Well Theatre
- Moffat House
- The Balmoral Hotel
- The Annandale Arms Hotel
- Moffat Taxis
- Borders Forest Trust

A Golden Eagle legacy in Moffat



This year, in addition to the permanent signage and carved Eagle Bench installed in 2021, Dave Smith of the Buccleuch Arms Hotel commissioned a 2-metre tall Golden Eagle carved statue for the balcony of his hotel, overlooking Moffat High Street.

As a renowned motorbike tourist destination, he has also established two 'Eagle routes' across the south of Scotland and adopted and named 'Buccy', a young Golden Eagle from the 2022 release.



We believe that this festival can grow and attract visitors to Moffat and the South of Scotland for years to come and for the life of the project we will offers as much support as possible to ensure that the Moffat Eagle Festival is a lasting and beneficial legacy for the people of Moffat and a reminder of the work undertaken by the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project to return a legacy of Golden Eagles to their ancestral home southern skies.

