



# Newsletter

January 2018

**Dear Fellow Guides,**

***Welcome to this special edition of our newsletter, in which we are seeking your views on some important changes that the Committee is proposing.***

***These proposals are our response to the recent fall in our visitor numbers. As you probably know, attendance has dropped by 40 percent over the last four years, not least because of increased competition from commercial tour companies. On most days during the 2017 season, at least one guide had to go home without taking a group out. This can be demoralising, especially in view of the huge effort that we all put into delivering a high-quality service.***

***To deal with this situation, the Committee is putting forward a number of suggestions for your consideration. Please read what follows carefully and let us have your views. For contact details, see page 2.***

**The EFVGA Committee**

## Your opinions please ....

### **Free tours?**

It has been suggested that the fact that our tours are free might actually be putting visitors off. Some people equate 'free' with 'of no value', while others assume that an offer of something for nothing indicates some sort of scam. We are not proposing that we charge a fee for our tours. What we are suggesting is that we de-emphasise the word 'free' in our publicity (fliers, Fringe brochure, website, etc); and, going further, perhaps add the phrase 'donations welcome', to emphasise the voluntary nature of what we do. What do you think of this idea?

### **Length of tours**

Is it possible that we are losing customers because our tours are too long? After all, two and half hours is quite a large chunk of your day when you have other Fringe events to go to. We always stress that visitors are free to leave our tours early. But that itself might be off-putting, with some customers feeling 'short-changed' or that they will be missing something interesting or valuable. Would our tours be more attractive if they were only, say, one and half hours long?

### **Start times**

The Committee is considering a small but important change to our tours' starting times. Instead of tours going out at intervals during the two daily half-hour slots, we are proposing that all tours will now start at either 10 am or 2 pm. As well as simplifying our publicity, this will make it easier to organise visitors into groups, as we will know at the outset how many visitors and guides we have in each slot. This should result in less waiting around for customers, less time on pole duty for guides, and much less risk of guides having to hang around for half an hour or more only to go away empty-handed.

### **City Chambers**

Over the last few years, we've received feedback from guides – much of it negative – on the use of the City Chambers as our base. The location is far from ideal – not least because the area is particularly crowded and noisy. Several alternative sites have been suggested, all of which have been carefully investigated by the committee, but none has proved suitable. Although we would still welcome any *new* ideas for a base, it is likely that we will remain at the City Chambers for the immediate future.

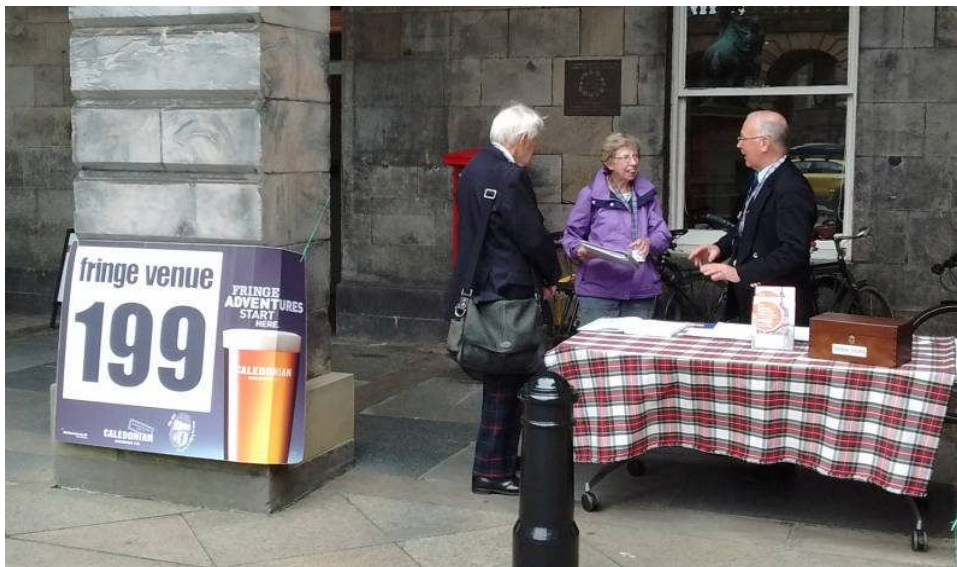
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## Presence on the street

Given that we will be staying at the City Chambers, we would clearly benefit from a more visible presence on the street (as opposed to the forecourt). We would welcome ideas for how we might achieve this – keeping in mind the need to get permission to erect notices or to place furniture on the pavement.



## Leaflet distribution

In the past, we have distributed our publicity material through companies such as Edinburgh Arts & Entertainment (AEA) and Landmark Press. This has not been a success. Our research shows that the leaflets rarely appear at the sites where visitors are likely to see them, and few customers mention the leaflets when asked how they found us. The Committee is therefore considering dropping these services and instead increasing our advertising in the Fringe brochure, which has proved a better source of business.

## Social media

The Association has a successful website and an active presence on TripAdvisor. We are also in the process of setting up a Facebook page. We would welcome any further ideas for improving our on-line presence.

## Other news

- The date of this year's **AGM** has been fixed for 21st March.
- The Committee is planning a **summer soir  e** for May or early June, to replace last year's Christmas social event which did not take place.

Look out for more details of these two events in our next newsletter.

## Help wanted

The Committee is looking for a volunteer to help with our publicity.

We have an immediate need for someone with graphic design experience to produce artwork for a display advertisement for the Fringe brochure. We would also like to hear from anyone with experience of a package such as Adobe Illustrator or Corel Draw, who can make some minor changes to our existing flier (which is in EPS format).

If you can help this with, please get in touch using the contact details below.

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

The ideas put forward in this newsletter are only suggestions. Before we make any decisions, we want to hear your views.

Please contact us with your opinions, comments and any other ideas you might have for how we run our tours.

You can send your reply to this special email address:

**2018@edinburghfestivalguides.org**  
or write to us at EFVGA, c/o 33/3 Blackford Road, Edinburgh EH9 2DT.

It would be helpful if we could have your comments by **Friday 2nd February**.