



## **4,000 runners illuminate Arthurs Seat over August as touring offers flood in for NVA's innovative work**

As Edinburgh's iconic mountain says goodbye to the thousands of light suited runners and light staffed walkers who have illuminated its hillsides over the past month, NVA's *Speed of Light* looks set to bring its gentle beauty to some incredible new locations both at home and abroad following its success at the Edinburgh International Festival, with discussions currently taking place with Glasgow 2014 and Rio 2016.

One of Scotland's official contributions to London 2012 Festival and the Cultural Olympiad, NVA's *Speed of Light* saw **4,000** runners activate specially designed light suits at night, creating subtle patterns of light, described as a '*Durational sculpture and human work of art*'. One of the highest profile events in the history of the Edinburgh International Festival it attracted massive international as well as local coverage. **Over 10,000 people** took part in the event, including **wheelchair athletes** in specially designed off-road wheelchairs in partnership with Capability Scotland and the Scottish Government. Each night hundreds of walkers generated their own light through the movement of bespoke walking staffs as they ascended to the summit to witness the quiet moving tableaux below. Thousands more watched from the open hillside and even from their homes in Leith, Portobello and as far away as Fife!

This mass participatory artwork could not have taken place without these athletes and walkers, and it was their experience on Arthur's Seat which made the project such a success, with most citing it as a once in a lifetime opportunity and completely unforgettable. The *SOL runners* facebook page is full of testimonials to what a remarkable experience taking part turned out to be, simply unique in the history of running.

**Katie Philips, runner, said:** '*Speed of Light* was amazing, was truly great to be part of something so monumental.'

**Elizabeth Humphrey, walker, commented:** 'Magical, unforgettable, moving.'

**David Griffith, runner, said:** 'NVA's *Speed of Light* was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was thrilled to participate in this mass public art & sporting event as a runner in last night's performance. It rocked!'

**Rachel Davis, runner, said:** 'Before training for *Speed of Light* I hadn't run for about 20 years, but now I've realised how much fun it is, I'm going to carry on. Who'd have thought running up hills could be so much fun?'

**Pupils from Wallace High School said:** 'During brief pauses in the choreography we were able to gaze around the hill and admire the sheer scale and beauty of the moment that we were privileged to be a part of. From a distance each person created a star-like twinkle that illuminated the entirety of the hill.'

'As physically exhausting as *Speed of Light* was, it was a real once in a lifetime opportunity and a truly unique experience – hopefully the call to perform in Rio will come soon!'

The ambitious project, which was commissioned as part of Legacy Trust UK's Community Celebrations programme, an independent charity set up to build a lasting cultural and sporting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, worked tirelessly to encourage as many people as possible to take part. Schools and community groups took the opportunity to get involved, with pupils from Inverness to Glasgow taking part as runners and walkers.'

**Angus Farquhar, Creative Director NVA said:** 'There have been so many unforgettable and moving moments over the past month which made this one of the most enjoyable things I have worked on in 20 years of practice. I'll personally never forget the joy of the wheelchair athletes taking part or the first time I took part as a performing runner, the sheer sense of fun and beauty of the pattern-making will stay with me for years to come. It is testament to the incredible level of work put in by the 100 strong NVA/*Speed of Light* team. I couldn't have asked for more from so many exceptional individuals who came from all over the UK to make it happen.'

'What has made this project extra special however, is the dedication and great attitude of many of the runners who took part. We have uncovered and established a real community and I hope we have the opportunity to work with this running constituency again in the future, We just could not have done it without them.

'It's hard to believe that this stage of *Speed of Light* has come to its end, but we are very excited about the future and the possibility of taking the project to Rio in four years, partnering with Glasgow 2014 and exploring many other fascinating opportunities such as the Year of Homecoming 2014.'

**Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, Jonathan Mills said** 'Speed of Light made a tremendous contribution to the Festival this year. It was a truly unique and inspiring project which people will talk about for years to come, and we are proud to have been able to present it at such an appropriate moment between the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the context of the world's greatest celebration of culture. Many people came together to make it possible, both physically and financially and I would like to join in thanking all those who played a role. I am delighted that there are conversations around future iterations of the event.'

**Legacy Trust UK Chief Executive Moira Swinbank OBE said:** 'Legacy Trust UK is delighted at the huge success of Speed of Light. This has been the largest and most high profile event we have funded in Scotland and it has certainly lived up to expectations.

'Our funding aims to create a lasting cultural legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Through our support, Speed of Light has been a major part of the London 2012 Festival celebrations and the news that the project could be a part of future major sporting events such as Glasgow 2014 and Rio 2016 is very welcome, and is a great example of the legacy that our projects are leaving across the UK.'

**Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, said:** 'NVA's Speed of Light has been a spectacular addition to the London 2012 Festival and the Year of Creative Scotland 2012. It has created a unique community celebration exploring the interaction between public art and sport, set against Edinburgh's iconic Arthur's seat.'

**Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said:** 'NVA's Speed of Light was literally a 'high light' of the Edinburgh International Festival, the London 2012 Festival and this, our Year of Creative Scotland. I have been truly impressed by the scale and ambition of this highly innovative and creative work, which was a landmark fusion of public art, sport and technology framed by one of our most beloved and iconic urban landscapes.

'Speed of Light was a fantastic experience for both runners and audiences alike and is clearly capturing the imagination of people and festival promoters internationally too. Now, as the world's gaze is firmly fixed on the outstanding achievements of our Paralympians, Speed of Light reinforces just what disabled people can do across Scotland's sporting, cultural and creative sectors.

'I am delighted that by enabling more wheelchair athletes to participate and providing hundreds of free places for secondary pupils as well as training for 100 young event volunteers, the Scottish Government has been able to create a real and lasting legacy from this iconic cultural project.'

Follow the story and get behind the scenes in the BBC Artworks documentary *Running in the Speed of Light* which follows the making of the work. Further commissioned filmmakers/artists responses to NVA's Speed of Light will be presented on [www.thespace.org](http://www.thespace.org) from mid September.

Please go to [www.speedoflight2012.org.uk](http://www.speedoflight2012.org.uk) for more details

Follow us on twitter: @\_NVA\_ #nvasol

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#### **Notes to editors:**

1. **NVA** was established in 1992 by creative director Angus Farquhar. In recent years the organisation has achieved international recognition with a number of incomparable and critically successful works, notably *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape on Skye* and *the HiddenGardens, Glasgow*. NVA is an acronym of *nacionale vitae active*, a Roman phrase describing 'the right to influence public affairs'. [www.nva.org.uk](http://www.nva.org.uk)

2. **NVA's Speed of Light**, a mass participatory event on Arthur's Seat took place between the 9<sup>th</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012. Audience members will generate their own light through the movement of bespoke walking staffs as they ascend to the summit.

3. Based in London, **Resonance Radio Orchestra**, was formed in 2004 by Ed Baxter and Chris Weaver as a vehicle to explore their shared interest in radio

phonic composition and live performance. Together they have written over a dozen pieces including "Overheard," for musicians, actors and boxers, commissioned by Arika in 2010 for Kill Your Timid Notion, Dundee; "Overheard 2," a 48 hour live performance featuring actor Tam Dean Burn in 2010 for Install, Glasgow; and in 2009 the European Cultural Foundation-supported "Suspension of Belief," a five hour broadcast event with live rock climbers on the sheer cliff face of the Penond'lfach in Alicante. The Orchestra adapts itself to each specific context or circumstances, with a floating pool of collaborators – among them Adam Bushell, Fari Bradley, Kay Grant, Ivor Kallin, and Veryan Weston.

4. Featuring world class new and classic drama, opera, music, dance and visual spectacles the **Edinburgh International Festival 2012** ran from Thursday 9 August to Sunday 2 September across the city in theatres, concert halls, opera houses and temporary venues attracting people from around the world to Scotland's picturesque capital and providing the best in international culture to a global audience. The Edinburgh International Festival is supported by The City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland. Scottish Charity (SC004694)

5. **Legacy Trust UK** is an independent charity whose mission is to support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and which will leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the UK.

The Trust is funded by a £40 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund (£29m), Department for Culture Media and Sport (£6m) and Arts Council England (£5m), and is a Principal Funder of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival. [www.legacytrustuk.org](http://www.legacytrustuk.org)

6. **Creative Scotland** is the national development agency for the arts, screen and creative industries, and its ambition is to see Scotland recognised as one of the world's most creative nations. Its vision is:

That Scotland is recognised as a leading creative nation – one that attracts, develops and retains talent, where the arts and the creative industries are supported and celebrated and their economic contribution fully captured, a nation where the arts and creativity play a central part in the lives, education and well-being of our population

2012 is also the Year of Creative Scotland: a chance to spotlight, celebrate and promote Scotland's cultural and creative strengths on a world stage.

7. **Scottish Government** funding of £30,000 enabled more wheelchair athletes to take part in Speed of Light, provided 480 free running and audience places for secondary schools in some of Scotland's most deprived areas, and enhanced the skills of 100 young event volunteers.

8. The **Year of Creative Scotland** began on January 1, 2012 and spotlights and celebrates Scotland's cultural and creative strengths on a world stage.

Through a dynamic and exciting year-long programme of activity celebrating our world-class events, festivals, culture and heritage, the year puts Scotland's culture and creativity in the international spotlight with a focus on cultural tourism and developing the events industry and creative sector in Scotland.

More information about the programme can be found at:

[www.visitscotland.com/creative](http://www.visitscotland.com/creative)

The Year of Creative Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative led in partnership by EventScotland, VisitScotland, Creative Scotland and VOCAL.

9. Founded as a Scottish charity in 1996, **Paths for All** is a partnership of more than twenty national organisations committed to promoting walking for health and the development of multi-use path networks in Scotland.

Our priorities are: to reduce the proportion of the population who are physically inactive through a national walking programme; and to promote an increase in the number, quality, and accessibility of paths for everyone

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