



**FORTH PORTS PLC**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Mela Festival 2008: New Location, New Sponsor, New Director**

A bigger and bolder week-long Mela Festival based in Leith, Edinburgh, and sponsored by Forth Ports was unveiled today. <sup>(1)</sup>

The sponsorship package from the property developer and port operator will help support a long-term ambitious vision for Scotland's leading celebration of cultural diversity through the arts.

As a lively event for all the family, supported by the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Arts Council, the Mela Festival has grown in recent years, helping to attract tourists and contributing significantly to the local economy. <sup>(2)</sup>

Building on this success, the Mela will now be a week-long festival - running this year August 25-31 - rather than the weekend event of previous years. It is also to move to a more spacious new site at the Waterfront, beside Ocean Terminal, including the Waterfront Plaza (the area in front of Ocean Terminal shopping centre) and Ocean Terminal itself.

The Edinburgh Mela is increasingly seen as a central part of Edinburgh's Festivals offering. The 2008 festival is the debut for new Director, Liam Sinclair, previously of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. <sup>(3)</sup>

Liam Sinclair said, "This year marks a step change in the Mela Festival experience. It will still have all that regulars know and love – a carnival atmosphere, a vibrant and exciting mix of theatre, dance and music – but it will be bigger and bolder than ever before, and will include a world premier. Moving to a larger site and extending the event to a full week marks the start of a new and ambitious era for the Mela Festival."

Chair of the Mela, Cllr Steve Cardownie, said, "This is a key stage in the Festival's growth, and it's extremely exciting to see it flourish at such a pace. The partnership with Forth Ports will enable the event to continue to develop in coming years, and the location move will help attract visitors to a part of Edinburgh that is fast-becoming a centre for culture and leisure."

Nathan Thompson, Managing Director of Forth Ports, said, "The Edinburgh Mela adds to our established track record of hosting events at the waterfront. We are delighted to welcome the Mela Festival as a signature event that can continue to grow as our own waterfront developments take place. We look forward to supporting its continued success."

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### **Notes to editors**

<sup>1</sup> The Edinburgh Mela Festival was founded in 1995 by members of city's minority ethnic communities, and one of its key objectives was to reflect and celebrate Scotland's cultural diversity. Photographs of a Bollywood dancer from a press conference held April 21 will be available for use free of charge – please contact Pagoda PR, details above.

<sup>2</sup> A report in 2005 revealed the Mela's contribution to the local economy was £1 million (see p7 of [http://efaextra.efa-aef.eu/efadoc/11%5Cfestivals\\_exec\\_summary\\_final\\_%20edinburgh%2004-05.pdf](http://efaextra.efa-aef.eu/efadoc/11%5Cfestivals_exec_summary_final_%20edinburgh%2004-05.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Liam Sinclair took the post of Director of the Edinburgh Mela Festival last October following four years as Head of YouthWorks Drama at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD). There he was responsible for the youth and community drama programmes as well as activities that promoted diversity and inclusion within the performing arts. A graduate of the RSAMD he has also worked as a Programme Manager for Common Purpose and Education Development Officer for The City of Edinburgh Council. He sits on a number of Boards, including The Board of Birds of Paradise Theatre Company of which he is Chair.

<sup>4</sup> Forth Ports PLC owns and operates the Ports of Grangemouth, Leith, Rosyth, Methil and Burntisland on the River Forth, the Port of Dundee on the River Tay and Port of Tilbury on the River Thames. Forth Ports PLC is also a significant landowner with extensive property interests and a number of high profile developments. These include the Scottish Government offices and Ocean Terminal shopping centre – home to the former Royal Yacht Britannia - at Leith, the Western Harbour, Granton Harbour and Leith Docks developments on Edinburgh's waterfront, and the City Quay development at Dundee.