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Chief Executive's introduction

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Welcome to the 2025 Fringe Society Review of the Year.

Looking back at the last 12 months of the work of the Fringe Society demonstrates two things clearly: **More than ever the arts are vital for our world** and, in the context of Edinburgh, the Fringe Society is uniquely positioned to convene our ecosystem and pull together the disparate threads, interests, talents and challenges that converge to deliver the Fringe each summer.

A year ago we were saying goodbye to outgoing Chief Executive Shona McCarthy and, rightfully, thanking her for her stewardship of the Fringe Society during some of the most challenging years of its long history. Now we are poised to build on that work as we prepare to step into our new home in Infirmary Street, and continue to make the case for continued and wider support for the Fringe from our government agencies and public funders.

It's an exciting moment in our history. But as we reflect on 2025 and look ahead, it would be naïve for the Fringe Society to assume that there aren't wider challenges facing the vast collaborative effort that, together, delivers the annual Festival Fringe. Rising costs being faced by artists and venues, the increased cost of living impacting audiences, and the need to continually make and strengthen the case for support from corporates and philanthropists. This is all against a political and economic backdrop that makes the world seem uncertain and perilous.

But we're also reminded of the importance of carrying on, and of the fact that – perhaps now more than ever – the arts remain vital for society and the Fringe is central to responding to that need. There is no better platform in the world for artists to take the stage boldly and tell their stories, share their worlds.

So it's important, as you read this review and see the successes of 2025, you know that behind the scenes we are also grappling with the big questions so that we can build on the work of those who have been driving the Fringe spirit since 1947 and protect, preserve and nurture this asset for the benefit of generations to come. **The Fringe community**

is a passionate, strong and resilient one – and it draws that strength from a focus and common purpose. The Fringe Society is equally committed to that purpose as we revise and refresh our vision and strategic ambition for the coming years.

Tony Lankester

Chief Executive, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society



Our vision and values

The Fringe vision is **to give anyone a stage and everyone a seat**. Rooted in equality and inclusiveness, this is intended to inspire all members of the Fringe community to pull in the same direction.

Our three values are designed to guide the behaviours and decisions of everyone involved with the Fringe, giving us a shared focus and enabling the festival to be the best version of itself:





Celebrate performing arts

Be open to all

Look out for each other





This vision is accompanied by six Fringe development goals.

Each sets ambitious targets designed to ensure the long-term survival and renewal of the festival.

1. Thriving artists

Be the best place in the world for emerging artists to perform and the best platform for talent to emerge.

2. Fair work

Eradicate any remaining unfair or exploitative work conditions at the Fringe.

3. Climate action

Become a carbon net zero event by 2030.

4. Good citizenship

Ensure that who you are and where you are from is not a barrier to attending or performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

5. Equitable Fringe

The Fringe, a force for good in and for the city of Edinburgh.

6. Digital evolution

Enhance the live Fringe experience by ensuring a world-class digital experience.



Giving anyone a stage...



Supporting artists



As part of our work to ensure the festival remains accessible and permit-free to artists from all over the world, we issue welcome letters to support travel arrangements – **922 welcome letters** in 2025.

We provide guidance to support all shows to have the correct legal and licensing paperwork in place; this included processing music licensing charges for over **800 shows** in 2025.

More than 530 participants responded to our end-of-Fringe survey this year. **89% of respondents rated their experience at this year's festival as positive**, with 76% saying it had a positive professional impact.



Want to find out more about our work to support artists? Email artists@edfringe.com.

Aiding artists' professional development





We held **360 meetings with artists** in the run-up to the Fringe, providing advice on professional development, connecting with media and industry and making the most of their time at the festival. Around 63% were coming to the Fringe for the first time and 24% had touring experience.



Registration fees for artists remained frozen for the 18th year in a row. Fringe Connect, our custom-built digital platform for Fringe artists and industry, has increased its reach to 8,732 active users.



Want to learn more about performing at the Fringe? Email artists@edfringe.com.

Fringe Central is our participants' hub, where we offer support on all aspects of taking part in the festival as well as practical services such as printing facilities and free wifi. Find out more about the new Fringe Central on page 24.

We welcomed 2,219 attendees to Fringe Central's programme of artist-focused events, **comprising 47 sessions supported by 52 partners**.

Fringe Central was delivered in partnership with **Grassmarket Community Project** for the second year, contributing £39,000 to their invaluable charitable work in the city.

Cabaret performer Miss Frisky delivered this year's welcome address, sharing her perspective on this amazing festival.

Without question, [the Fringe] broadened my horizons as to the length, breadth, highs, lows, beauty, brilliance, weirdness and idiocy of this global artistic industry.

Miss Frisky

Want to learn more about performing at the Fringe? Email artists@edfringe.com.

Forging strong partnerships

We worked with **13 accommodation providers** to secure affordable accommodation for Fringe artists, with Queen Margaret University and University of Edinburgh offering at least **500 rooms each**.

Mental health charity **Health in Mind** provided wellbeing support to artists at Fringe Central through bookable one-to-one sessions.

We partnered with **Fringe of Colour** to support their continued work in highlighting and supporting Fringe shows that centre people of colour.





For the third year running we supported Dion Owen's Bike Project, which loaned free, refurbished bikes to more than 100 artists in partnership with Bike Station and the Counting House.

We supported Every Stage to deliver a reboot of the **Staged for Life youth employability project** for the first time since the pandemic, opening up career pathways in the arts for young people in Edinburgh. This included financial support and providing in-person advice to group participants.

We're always looking for new partnerships to help us further support artists. Email artists@edfringe.com if you'd like to get involved.

Funding initiatives

Our **Keep it Fringe** fund helps reduce some of the financial barriers that prevent artists from bringing work to the festival. We received more than 850 applications for Keep it Fringe funding this year; the **180 successful applicants each received a grant of £2,500,** thanks to funding from the **Department of Culture, Media and Sport**.

We also expanded the fund internationally for the first time, introducing a pilot Keep it Fringe US edition to support five shows from the US with grants of \$2,500 each.

FringeMakers is our long-running partnership with Crowdfunder, providing a low-cost digital platform to help artists fund their shows. The platform has helped Fringe shows collectively raise more than **£860,000** in **donations** since it began, with 141 projects supported in 2025 alone.

Email support.us@edfringe.com if you'd like to get involved with supporting artists at the Fringe.





The world-famous Fringe Street Events welcomed a total of **326 performers, artists, musicians and community groups** in 2025, representing 38 countries around the world.

The largest single group to participate was a **choir** of 200 who sang their hearts out on the Mound.

130 participants made their debut at the Fringe Street Events this year.

In partnership with **Deaf Action**, we arranged **British Sign Language interpretation for 28 performances** on West Parliament Square across three dates in August, offering a combined 24 hours of BSL interpretation.

Our Community Stage on the High Street, in partnership with Totally Sound and Balfour Beatty, invited local groups and schools to showcase their talents as part of this internationally important event.

Over two days, the Community Stage welcomed **222 participants, including 119 schoolchildren and members of 11 community groups** from across the city.

Want to learn more about the Street Events, or get involved? Email streetevents@edfringe.com.

Exceptional talent, both homegrown and international

Each year, the **Made in Scotland showcase** promotes music, theatre and dance from Scotland-based artists to international promoters and audiences at the Fringe. **The 2025 programme included 16 shows.**

A delegation of 22 international presenters attended the showcase as a whole, while individual performances were attended by more than **550 accredited industry delegates.**

The **Made in Scotland Gigs** contemporary music strand returned for the second year, with eight artists showcasing their work to more than 20 industry professionals. The event was supported by **PPL** and delivered in partnership with **Wide Days Music Convention**.

There were more than **1,165** international shows – around 30% of the programme – with international artists continuing to recognise the festival as a vital marketplace for their work.







Arts industry engagement

1,771 accredited arts industry members from 68 countries attended the festival and sought support from our team this year. More than half came with the primary objective of programming shows from the festival.

During the festival our team engaged with **32 international delegations**, meeting with nearly 300 visiting artists, producers, arts leaders, programmers and city officials from **38 countries**.

Our **Screen Fringe** initiative continued to connect Fringe talent with TV, film and streaming executives, with services throughout August in high demand from the **214 accredited delegates**. Attendance at artist-facing Screen Fringe events rose by 86% compared to 2024, with attendance at industry networking events rising by 12%.

Our **expert Fringe Associates covered almost 700 shows** this year, providing robust context and commentary to accredited industry professionals.

We collaborated with the TV
Foundation and NBC Universal to
present a TV comedy showcase
event for the second year running.
Six Fringe stand-ups performed for
an audience of high-profile screen
executives, opening up potential
future opportunities.

Blues Brothers: Let's Twist Again! (2025), Underb

Fringe Marketplace



Fringe Marketplace helps Fringe producers, artists and companies to connect with industry professionals who can **book work or invest in the development of talent and productions** beyond the festival. It's part of what makes the Fringe such an essential annual engagement for those making careers in the arts.

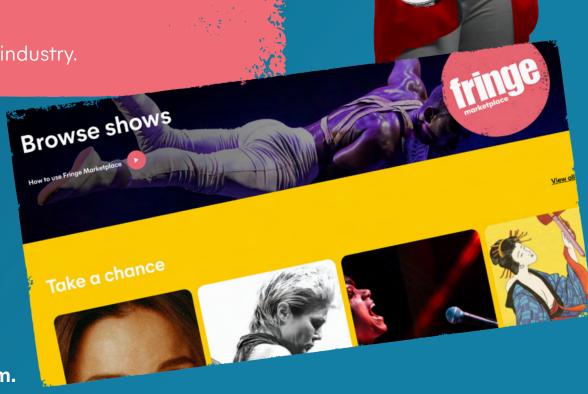
In 2025, Fringe Marketplace:

- facilitated two large-scale networking events
- produced three industry showcases
- connected over 400 shows with interested industry.

In its sixth year, the Fringe Marketplace digital platform (which showcases professional work presenting at the festival) featured more than 680 shows and was used by over 650 industry delegates.



Find out more – email artsindustry@edfringe.com.



Giving everyone a seat

Helping audiences

This year **2.6 million tickets** were issued across the Fringe on behalf of **3,893 registered shows**, staged across **306 venues**.

Our Customer Services team once again delivered a friendly and efficient service while handling a massive level of inquiries, receiving more than **53,000 emails and over 4,000 phone calls** throughout July and August.

Our access bookings service exists to help anyone with an access requirement make the most of what the Fringe has to offer. This year our team helped customers book more than 12,000 tickets, including over 7,000 personal assistant tickets.

The official
EdFringe
app was
downloaded
120,000 times.

Two-thirds of our Fringe Friends surveyed said they plan on returning as a Fringe Friend or Patron in 2026. **The Friends who came this year booked an average of 31 tickets each!**

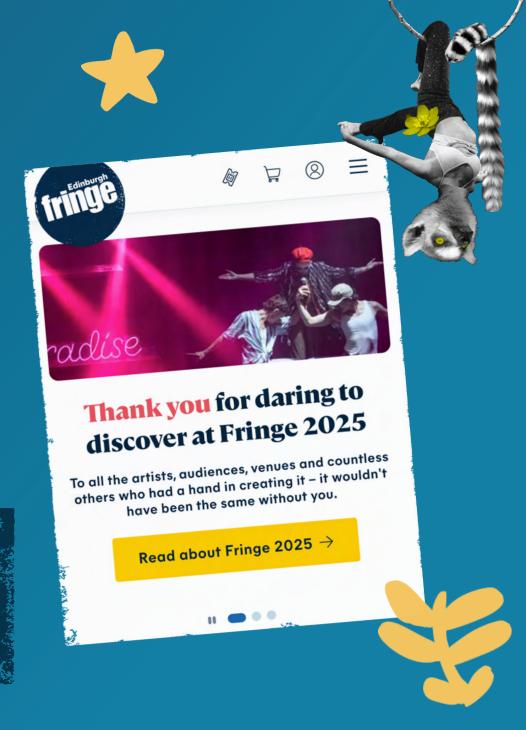
Our end-of-Fringe audience survey received 9,300 responses, with 79% of respondents agreeing the Fringe is **'one of the most important cultural events in the world'**.

Developing our digital tools

At the end of the 2024 festival, our old website had to be retired due to its outdated technological architecture. This meant we had just a few months to build an interim solution that would see us through the 2025 and 2026 festivals while we secured funding to build a **new, user-focused and future-proof website** – one that will meet the diverse needs of the Fringe community.

The interim website launched in December 2024 and we continued to roll out features and make improvements throughout the year in response to user feedback.

In June we appointed **local digital agency Storm ID** to develop our new website; they're currently undergoing extensive research with multiple user groups, and will launch the new site ahead of Fringe 2027. A massive thanks to the **Department for Media, Culture and Sport** and **Bloomberg Philanthropies** for funding.





Improving access

Our Engagement and Access team runs a variety of projects to make the Fringe a more accessible place for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people.

Now you get to see his moves, up close and personal. Give it up for Stirling da Silval



Audio description

- 276 audio-described performances were registered across 29 shows.
- We made two audio description kits available to artists and venues, free of charge. These were borrowed by nine artists and led to 14 audio-described performances across six venues. We also subsidised the cost of an audio describer for four of these performances.
- 18 artists shared audio introductions to their shows.

Captioning can make shows more accessible to d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

- 459 captioned performances were registered across
 69 shows.
- We **supported 40 captioned performances** through use of free kit, funding or both.

BSL interpretation

- 154 BSL-interpreted performances were registered across 46 shows, including six shows at the Deaf Festival as part of the Fringe.
- Nine of these performances were funded via the BSL on Request project, delivered in partnership with Deaf Action. The project allowed us to provide BSL interpretation for performances requested by d/Deaf audiences, rather than them having to attend on a pre-arranged date.
- We also worked with Deaf Action to provide BSL interpretation at the Fringe Street Events
 see page 16 for information.

Sensory resources

The Fringe experience can be overwhelming, so we offer free sensory resources for anyone who needs them during August.





Equalities training

We commissioned Creative Access to provide equalities training for our registration, box office and customer service staff. We also continue to offer free online basic equality training to all Fringe staff, across all venues.

• 41 Fringe Society staff and 688 staff from 27 venues signed up for online equalities training.

Changing Places toilet

Changing Places are accessible toilets with an adult-sized changing bench and hoist, for people who are unable to use a standard accessible toilet.

For the second year running we partnered with the Edinburgh International Book Festival to provide a Changing Places toilet at the Edinburgh Futures Institute from 02 to 25 August.

If you'd like to learn more or get involved with our access work, please email access@edfringe.com.

Part of the community



The Fringe Society runs two programmes to help Edinburgh residents make the most of the festival, particularly those who wouldn't normally get to experience the Fringe.

Fringe Days Out provides access to the festival. offering vouchers to purchase tickets for any Fringe show, along with Lothian Bus tickets and extra support to cover costs like food or support staff. In 2025, we worked with 34 charities and **community groups** in Edinburgh, 12 of whom work within the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.

"Many young people think the Fringe is for tourists and accessing the Fringe through Fringe Days Out helps them realise the festival is a unique opportunity to learn about other cultures and bring Scotland closer to the rest of the world."

Community partner

2,259 tickets were booked -91% of the Fringe Days Out budget, an amazing response.

Our other project, the **Community Ticketing Initiative**, saw an incredible **15.047 tickets booked**. These tickets were generously donated by Fringe artists, venues and companies and distributed via the City of Edinburgh Council, local charities and community groups.

We also took our pop-up box office to events around the city, including the North Edinburgh Community Festival, Craigmillar Community Festival, Broomhouse Street Party and the Grassmarket Project, to help people find shows and book free community tickets. 267 tickets were booked using our pop-up box office.



We partnered with three organisations to offer free Fringe events for people unable to attend the festival. These included **The Yard**, a hub for children with disabilities and their families, and the **Royal Hospital for Children & Young People**, where artists performed for families on the wards who would not be able to go to the festival.

For the second year, we supported the **Broomhouse**Street Party by providing a stage and variety of acts, to entertain the 1,650 attendees. We consulted with more than 150 locals ahead of the event to help us co-design the performance line-up.

Ahead of our move to the new Fringe Central on Infirmary Street (see page 24), we have increased our engagement with Community Councils and local fairs. We've run dedicated projects with Canongate Youth and the Royal Mile Primary School, inviting community members to learn more about the Fringe and how to get involved, and how they might be able to use the new Fringe Central.



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If you'd like to learn more or get involved with our community engagement work, please email communities@edfringe.com.

Youth engagement



Fringe Days Out: Schools

This project offers a budget to three Edinburgh high schools to cover transport, food and tickets to Fringe shows of their choosing, with the schools actively involving their pupils in planning their Fringe trips and selecting shows. Approximately **600 pupils took part** this year.



We offer young people opportunities to explore the arts through this career pathways project. Seventeen young people from three high schools came together throughout the year to explore different sides of the industry in various Fringe venues. They met with industry professionals; experienced talks, shows and workshops; and partook in some work experience.





Fringe in Communities

This project engaged four young people from local organisation **Multi-Cultural Family Base** in a series of spoken word and poetry workshops over the course of eight weeks, leading up to a performance on the **Community Stage** (see page 10). The group worked with a local Fringe artist who guided them through a process of writing and developing their own work and then performing it to an audience. They also went to a Fringe show to gain a greater insight into the festival.



ASN Fringe (formerly Fringe in Schools)

ASN Fringe is a project in collaboration with Oaklands School to create more meaningful engagement with young people with additional support needs (ASN). The school's pupils got to co-create work with a Fringe artist, who was in turn supported by a mentor as part of the project, offering further opportunities to early-career artists.

Find out more about our education outreach (and get involved) by emailing learning@edfringe.com.

Celebrating the Fringe

4.2 million emails sent.

37 million page views on edfringe.com from 3 million users.

Our 2025 **Dare to Discove**r campaign ran from April through August, promoting the festival to audiences across the UK. The campaign featured a playful tarot card theme with bold characters representing different genres in the Fringe programme, paired with the 'Dare to Discover' call to action. This approach resonated strongly with young audiences, encouraging first-time visits while also driving repeat attendance from our core audience.



22 million impressions on social media channels.

Through my chat show I meet and talk to those across the entertainment industry every week, and you'd be hard pressed to find someone on the sofa that hasn't been to the Fringe either to perform or to watch shows at some point in the past. I'm delighted to be announced as an ambassador of the Edinburgh Fringe and look forward to visiting the festival next August.



Fringe Ambassadors Brian
Cox and Suzy Eddie Izzard
joined us during August to
engage with Fringe Patrons
and stakeholders. In October,
broadcaster and Fringe alumnus
Graham Norton was named as
our newest Ambassador, joining
Brian, Suzy and Fringe Society
president Phoebe Waller-Bridge
in cheerleading this amazing
festival around the globe.





Media representation

This year more than **1,100 media professionals from 32 countries** accredited with our Media Office, the highest number on record.

Mentions of the Fringe Society in the media reached an audience of 33.5Mn, with a publicity value of £981,000.

Nearly **630 artists** attended this year's Meet the Media event, which is designed to help performers who don't have professional media support.

The Media team uploaded nearly **4,300** professional reviews to edfringe.com, supporting audiences in navigating the festival programme.

Writer Lilia Foster won the Young Writer's Award, an initiative run by the Scotsman newspaper, where she'll receive one-to-one mentoring from critics as well as paid reviewing work in 2026.

The new Fringe Central

Over the past 12 months work has progressed on the refurbishment of 6 Infirmary Street, the former Victorian schoolhouse that will soon become the permanent home of the Fringe Society: **the new Fringe Central**. The new home will embed the Fringe within the community of Edinburgh, enabling the Fringe Society to modernise our services and work with local artists, grassroots organisations and community groups in a way that has not been possible across our current premises.

Our expert construction and design team has ensured accessibility and sustainability remain at the heart of the project while restoring and preserving an important part of Edinburgh's Old Town. Improvements include:

• a new lift, increasing accessibility throughout the building

• the restoration of a series of Victorian-era wood-and-glass partition panels, which were previously bidden behind plasterboard walls – where possible these have been

hidden behind plasterboard walls – where possible, these have been into grated into our designs for the building

integrated into our designs for the building

• widened doorways, making the building more accessible

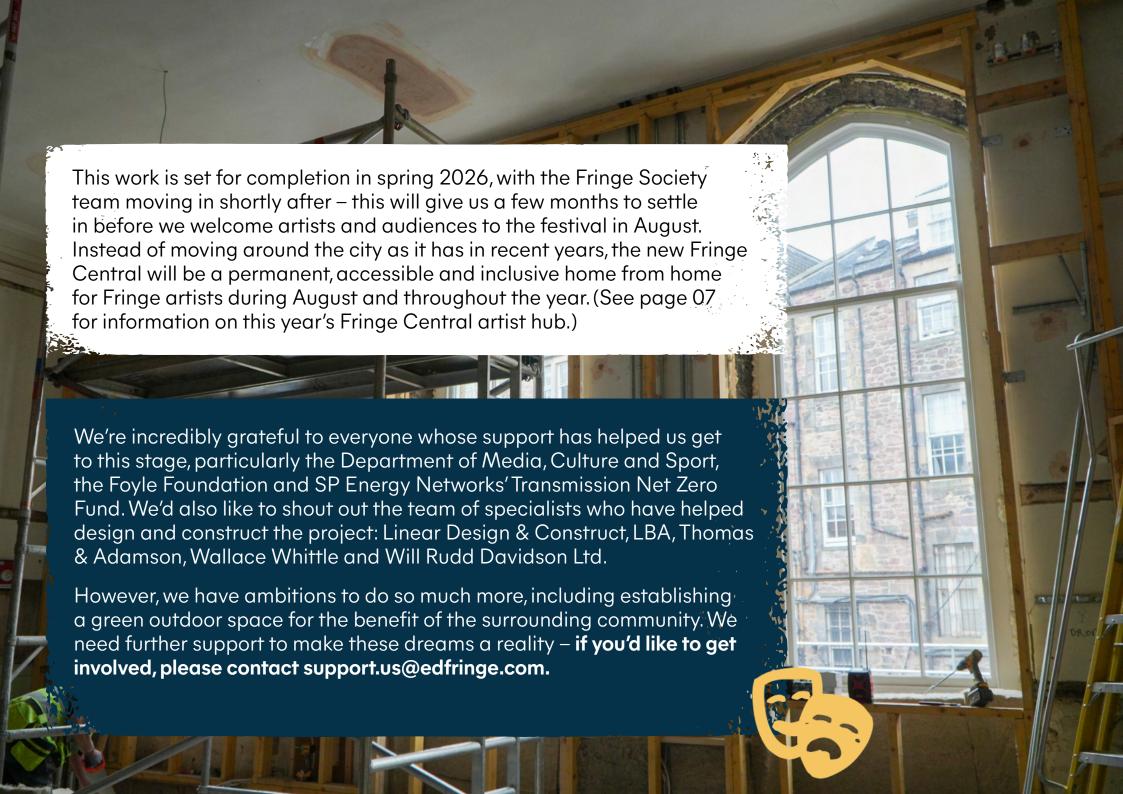
new sash-and-case windows that are better at retaining

heat while remaining in keeping with the original

aesthetic and heritage advice

• new, energy-efficient pipes and radiators, with heating supplied by air source heat pumps, removing the need for fossil fuel.





Income and expenditure



The Fringe Society's income is derived in large part from delivery of the festival, and we are committed to ensuring participation is affordable for artists and audiences. This is only possible with a mixed income model, where the income generated from the festival's artists and audiences is supported by private, public and philanthropic investment.



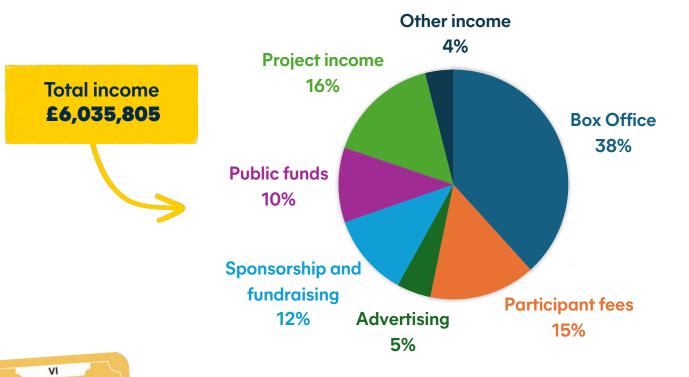
With the Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding announcement in early 2025, the Fringe Society worked with the Scottish Government to make a case for recurring investment in core areas of development and delivery. Funds were awarded in 2025, and we're working together on a long-term solution.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our sponsors, Friends, Patrons, donors and partners, who all help ensure the Fringe Society can continue to provide its necessary services to artists and audiences at an accessible price.

Delivery of the Street Events in 2025 would not have been possible without funding from **EventScotland** and the **City of Edinburgh Council**, as well as **partners and sponsors**.

We would also like to thank the **Scottish Government** for their ongoing investment in Made in Scotland through the **Festivals EXPO fund**.

Other income includes donations, rental income, Gift Aid and a management fee from our trading subsidiary. The majority of our expenditure goes on providing services and infrastructure, staffing the Society, delivering our iconic Street Events, marketing the Fringe in its entirety and a range of services and support offered to artists, industry and media throughout the year.

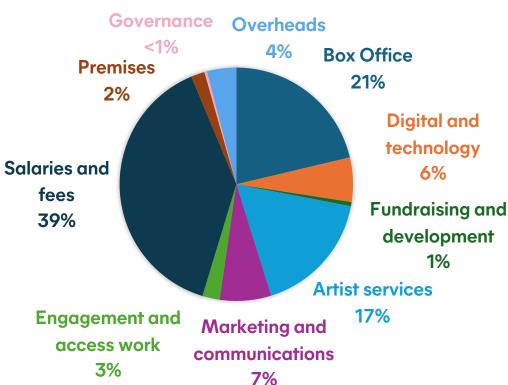










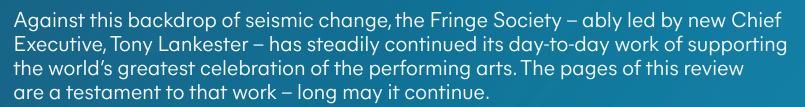


A note from the Chair of our Board



It's a time of exciting change at the Fringe Society. Next spring, the doors will open at the new Fringe Central – a more accessible and sustainable home for the Society. There's a digital element to this transformation too – a new Fringe website is in development, due to arrive ahead of the festival's 80th edition in 2027.

There have also been significant changes among the Fringe Society leadership. Former Chief Executive Shona McCarthy left the Society back in March – the new home, a dream that was born and came to fruition during her tenure, is a fitting legacy. Just as instrumental in making that dream a reality was Deputy Chief Executive Lyndsey Jackson, who's set to make her own departure this December. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank Lyndsey for her 12 years of irrepressible energy and enthusiasm at the Fringe Society, and wish her all the very best for the future.



Benny Higgins

Chair, Fringe Society Board of Directors





Thank you

The vital work of the Fringe Society couldn't happen without the generous support of a broad collective of partners, supporters and patrons – our sincere thanks to everyone who helps keep this incredible festival alive.

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Sponsors and Partners

- Anthropic Official Education Partner
- Balfour Beatty
- Cheesies Official Snack Partner
- Cirrus Logic
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- Hodson Thornber
- Guy Cameron
- Alistair McCusker
- Lisa Brindle
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- Carol Ramsay

Supporters

- The Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust
- Baillie Gifford
- Binks Trust
- City of Edinburgh Council
- EventScotland
- The McGlashan Charitable Trust
- Northwood Charitable Trust
- PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited)
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Government's Festival Expo Fund
- ScreenScotland
- Southside Property Management
- UK Government

Fringe Central supporters

- Cheesies Official Snack of the Fringe
- Grassmarket Community Project
- Health in Mind
- HeyTea
- Irn-Bru



Want to have a hand in supporting one of the world's greatest celebrations of creative freedom? Get in touch via support.us@edfringe.com.

