fringe society



Unleash your Fringe

Review of the year 2024



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Unleash your Fringe

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Chief Executive's introduction

Congratulations, Team Edinburgh Fringe, on another incredible year. I am blown away by the resilience and creativity of the Fringe community, and I'd like to thank everyone who had a hand in creating the fabulous shows and unforgettable memories.

There is no doubt that the defining moment of this year was the collective rallying cry as the festival ended: that **there is no art without artists.** By extension, **there is no Fringe without art** – and so my primary thanks go to everyone who shared their work and bared their souls at this year's festival, in the most fragile and challenging of funding environments.

At the close of this year's event, I wrote an open letter outlining the challenges we face, both at the Fringe and in the arts more broadly: increasing costs and the availability of affordable accommodation in Edinburgh, set against a dire funding landscape.

As you'll see in the following pages, the Fringe Society is doing what it can to mitigate these issues for artists, venues and audiences, but it takes a cast of thousands to pull this thing off, and collective effort is needed to ensure its future. **The Fringe is far too valuable** – not just to livelihoods and economically, but on a much more profound, human level – **for us to let it decline.**

With that consideration in mind, we've reformatted our review of the year as a launchpad for further discussion. The challenges we're facing can only be overcome with collaborative action; if you are interested in any of our work and want to learn more or get involved, talk to us – you'll find the relevant email address in each section.

On a personal note, this is the last review of the year under my tenure as the Fringe Society's Chief Executive. I'd like to add an extra thanks to the committed and brilliant Fringe Society team and to Benny and all the board for continuing to uphold the vision of the Edinburgh Fringe – **to give anyone a stage, and everyone a seat.**

And my own closing rallying cry: **we deliver an event of Olympic scale, and much wider impact, every single year, but we are doing it without core investment or a supportive policy environment**. Come on Scotland, you can make this right – it's your Edinburgh Fringe and it is exceptional.

Shona McCarthy
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...

Keep it Fringe

Established in 2023, the **Keep it Fringe fund** helps artists make the most of the Edinburgh Fringe by reducing some of the barriers they face in bringing their work.

In 2024 we were able to widen the fund's scope thanks to a **£1Mn investment from UK Government** over two years – so that, instead of supporting **50 artists and companies** to bring work to the Fringe, we were able to support **180 shows** this year, each receiving a **bursary of £2,500.**

The fund is geared towards artists who face greater barriers to participation. **More than a third of this year's Keep it Fringe recipients came from a working-class background, while 41% identified as disabled or having a health condition.**



UK Government
Scotland

With Keep it Fringe 2025 already secured, we can further support artists by opening the application process earlier.
However, despite the project's expansion, demand still far outstrips supply – **nearly 750 artists applied in 2024.**

We're always on the lookout for partners who can **help us grow Keep it Fringe** and secure its future into 2026 and beyond – if you'd like to get involved, please email **support.us@edfringe.com.**



Supporting artists

Accommodation

We continued to work with external partners to secure affordable accommodation options for Fringe artists, including **600 rooms** at the 'Fringe village' at **Queen Margaret University** and additional rooms through **Edinburgh Napier University, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh College** and the **University of Edinburgh.**

Made in Scotland

The 2024 **Made in Scotland** programme once again shone a spotlight on our nation's dance, music and theatre talent, welcoming **14 shows** from across the country.

More than **300 accredited industry** delegates attended Made in Scotland performances.

Registration

Registration fees for artists remained frozen for the 17th year in a row.

Fringe Central



Joining forces with another local charity, we moved our Fringe Central artist hub to the **Grassmarket Community Project** (GCP) this year, welcoming approximately **4,000 Fringe participants** and running **37 artist-focused events.**

By using the space and the cafe this festival, the Fringe community collectively generated a **£10,000 contribution to GCP's crucial community work.**

International artists

60 countries were represented on stage at this year's Fringe, including **13 country showcases.** There were **1,074 international shows overall** – nearly a third of the programme.

Our team issued over **700 welcome letters** to support the travel of **2,381 artists from overseas.**

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

Welcoming the global arts sector

More than **1,800 accredited arts industry members** – including promoters, producers and festival and venue bookers – attended the festival from **64 countries** to buy work and support artists after the Fringe.

This marked a **30% increase** in the number of delegates since 2023.

Fringe Marketplace

Fringe Marketplace is our online platform created to connect programmers, presenters and commissioners with professional artists and work that's ready to be shared beyond the festival. This year it featured more than **600 shows** (a **55% increase on 2023**) and was used by **584 industry delegates.**



Screen Fringe

Screen Fringe continued to support TV, film and streaming executives to interact with the festival – we saw an **88% increase in delegates**, with **548 actively engaging with the programme.**

Emerging professionals

Our Emerging Professionals programme provided mentoring and financial support for **10 early-career arts industry professionals** at the festival, most of whom otherwise experienced barriers to taking part.

Want to learn more about arts industry at the Fringe? Email **artsindustry@edfringe.com.**

Street events



More than **320 performers registered to take part in this year's Fringe street events**, providing amazing and accessible entertainment in the heart of the city with no entry price (of course, generous donations are always encouraged).

Throughout the festival, there were **2,598 performance slots available,** amounting to over **1,688 hours of entertainment** across the Mound Precinct and the Royal Mile.



We arranged **British Sign Language interpretation** for **26 street performances** across three dates in August, offering **19.5 hours** of BSL interpretation.





Daily schedules were arranged via draw – special guests **Phoebe Waller-Bridge** and **Suzy Eddie Izzard** showed up to help on occasion!

Thanks to our partnership with **Who Gives a Crap,** public toilets were available at the Fringe street events on the Royal Mile for the first time – they were used more than **11,000 times!**



Want to learn more about the street events, or get involved? Email **streetevents@edfringe.com.**

... and everyone a seat

Helping audiences



2.6 million tickets were issued across the Fringe on behalf of **3,746 registered shows this year**, staged across nearly **300 venues.**

The official **EdFringe app was downloaded 124,000 times.**

Our **Fringe Friends** continued to make the most of their benefits as the festival's superfans, seeing an average of **26 shows** each. In our Friends survey, **80% of respondents** said they would recommend becoming a Fringe Friend.

In our end-of-Fringe audience survey, **79% of audiences** agreed that the Fringe 'is one of the most important cultural events in the world', and **83% said they are likely to visit the Fringe again in 2025.**

Our engagement work

We want the Fringe to be a force for good in and for our home city, and we work with communities and schools across Edinburgh to make it happen.



Turn the page to see a few examples of the work we did this year

If you'd like to learn more or get involved, contact **communities@edfringe.com** or **learning@edfringe.com.**

Engagement projects



North Edinburgh Community Festival

Community events

We run year-round events with partners based around the city, spreading the joy of the festival while providing paid opportunities to Fringe artists. In May we brought some Fringe street performers along with us to the North Edinburgh Community Festival, where we spread word of our community ticketing projects and drew people of all ages and backgrounds into shared moments of entertainment and wonder.

Care for Carers

Community Ticketing Initiative (CTI)

Fringe artists, venues and companies generously donate tickets to their shows through CTI. We work with the **City of Edinburgh Council,** local charities and community groups – including **Care for Carers** – to distribute these tickets to people who might not otherwise attend.

- **CTI bookings: 10,129 (almost double that of last year)**

Gracemount High School

Learning programme

An estimated **950** schoolchildren (and their teachers) attended the Fringe as part of our schools' outreach work, many visits led by the young people themselves. Among them were those from Gracemount High who took part in our Young Fringe Ambassadors project, giving pupils the chance to explore career pathways in the arts.

ReAct (Refugee Action Scotland)

Fringe Days Out

ReAct was among the **34 local charities, schools and community groups** that took part in **Fringe Days Out** 2024, which provides vouchers to purchase tickets for any Fringe show along with Lothian Bus tickets – a project aimed at residents who wouldn't normally get to experience the Fringe.

- **Total value of vouchers issued: £53,715**
- **Redemption rate: 92%** – our highest to date
- **Approximate number of visits: 3,797** – another record high!

Access at the Fringe



Our **sensory resources** help make the Fringe experience more enjoyable for people who might find it overwhelming – more than **300 resources were given out this year.**



Our **access bookings service** exists to help anyone with an access requirement make the most of what the Fringe has to offer.

More than **10,000 tickets were booked** via the service this year – an **increase of 38%.**



We revamped our **website's listings** for enhanced performances at the Fringe. This year:

- **152 shows** offered captioned performances
- **46 shows** offered audio-described performances
- **60% of Fringe shows** were accessible to wheelchair users.



If you'd like to learn more about our access work, or get involved, we'd love to hear from you – please contact **access@edfringe.com.**

Celebrating the Fringe



Our 2024 Unleash Your Fringe campaign ran from 04 April – 23 August, promoting the festival to audiences across the UK. The campaign utilised dozens of individual icons to represent different aspects of the Fringe and was extremely versatile, running on a variety of platforms from mobile ad banners and YouTube ads to a 30-second spot on STV.

We also worked with the Scotsman, TikTok, Jack Arts and STV on targeted campaigns to raise awareness of the festival and Fringe Society projects such as our access booking service (see page 15) and Fringe Days Out (page 14).

Scottish actor and Hollywood icon **Brian Cox** joined us as a **Patron** this year, **acting as figurehead for our Keep it Fringe US campaign** and inspiring the Fringe artists who follow in his footsteps.



We were able to engage with a massive audience in 2024:

- Emails sent: **3.6 million**
- Social media reach: **23 million**
- Page views on edfringe.com: **30 million**
- Fringe Society media coverage reach: **27.4 million**



‘I think the Edinburgh Fringe... has always been an opportunity to see the range of what we can do. It gives a platform to those people who otherwise would not have that kind of platform... It is one of the most unique performing events in the world.’



If you’d like to hear more about our work to promote the Fringe, please email **marketing@edfringe.com.**

Media representation

Almost **900 professionals** from **27 countries accredited** with our Media Office for this year's festival, an increase on 2023.

Titles included **the Times, the Sunday Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Guardian, the Mail on Sunday, Metro, the Stage, the New York Times, Playbill and RAI.**

We accredited 137 individuals from international media outlets in 2024.

That includes outlets based in **Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Hungary, India, Norway, Pakistan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and the US.**



382 artists attended our annual **Meet the Media event,** designed to support performers without professional PR support.

For the second year this was preceded by a **relaxed Meet the Media session**, providing a quieter, more sensory-friendly period for an additional **128 neurodiverse artists to meet media representatives.**

Our team uploaded an astounding 4,100 reviews to edfringe.com.

Writer Roísin McMullen won the Young Writer's Award – she'll receive one-to-one mentoring from arts writers at the Scotsman and paid work as part of the paper's review team at Fringe 2025.





Want to learn more about media at the Fringe?
Email **media@edfringe.com.**

The Fringe community hub

In 2023 the UK Government announced funding for a new Fringe community hub. Since then, we have developed a business case to ensure the maximum possible benefit for the Fringe and the Fringe Society.

We worked with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to launch the Keep it Fringe fund (see page 05), a **£1Mn**, two-year fund that supports professional artists to realise their Fringe ambitions. This funding was allocated from our capital grant in recognition of both the key role the Fringe plays in the UK's cultural ecology, and that artists are central to our vision to give everyone a stage.



At the time of writing, we're in the final stages of our planning, with an ambition to begin works in late 2024 to open in winter 2025/26.

The hub will be named **Fringe Central**, taking on the role of our annual home from home for Fringe artists (see page 07), and it will be available year-round, with rehearsal and working space for performing artists to develop work, network and collaborate, while also accessing Fringe Society services.

Fringe Central will also be a welcoming and open space to Edinburgh's residents and our partner community groups, providing much-needed space and facilities in the city, as well as a space where people can learn the stories of the Fringe and its rich history.

Our plans have a strong focus on access and sustainability.

Sustainability initiatives will see us de-carbonise this **19th-century** former school, retaining its heritage and history while modernising its services so it's fit for the future: removing fossil fuel entirely, improving insulation and reducing heat loss, and installing efficient lighting, green space and much more.

Access initiatives include level access, a lift, a Changing Places toilet and acoustic and visual considerations to ensure the space is inviting and inclusive.

We want people to feel at home in Fringe Central, which will include an open-to-all green space, public toilets and a warm, dry 'gallery' space open during the day.



Architect's impression of new home

Alongside this, we're modernising and decarbonising our digital home, and working on an ambitious project to enable greater access and insight into our data for the Fringe community – work that also has our access and sustainability pillars at its core.

As of November 2024, we are in the final stages of funding approval and long-term planning to ensure this investment will establish a solid foundation for the Fringe Society to support all who choose to participate in the Fringe. This is central to our business case to DCMS, due for final consideration and approval in winter 2024.

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 has been harder to achieve in recent years as costs have risen exponentially and Scotland's economy has strained. We are encouraged by the Scottish Government's commitment of an additional **£100Mn** investment in the arts and creative industries, and to finding a much-needed mechanism to address the need for core support for the Fringe Society.

We will continue to work with the Scottish and UK governments to build on their shared understanding of the Fringe as a performing arts marketplace and expo that serves all of the UK, as well as being a unique global platform for the business of the arts.

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

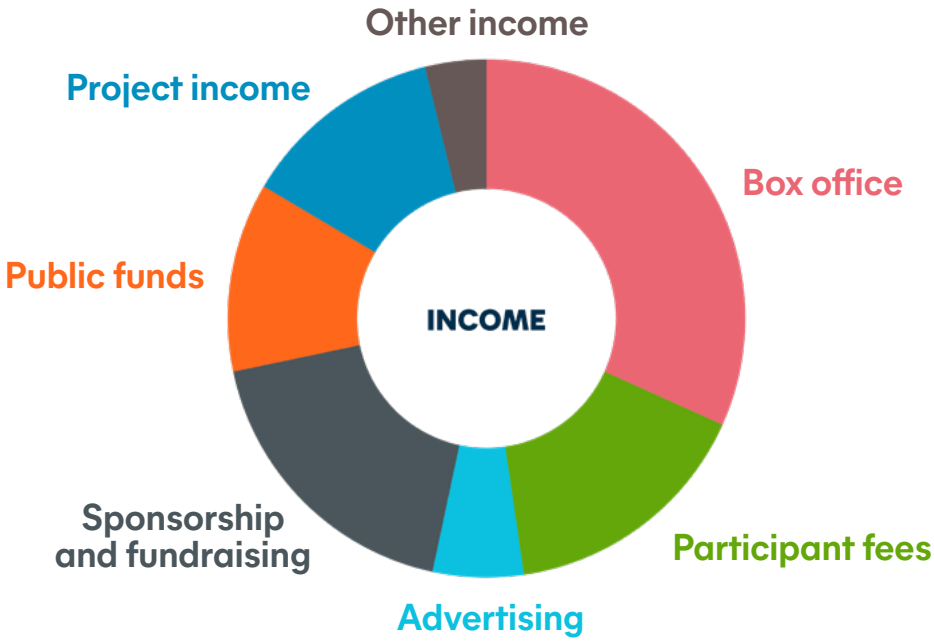
Delivery of street events in 2024 would not have been possible without funding from EventScotland and the City of Edinburgh Council, as well as partners and sponsors. We would also like to thank the Scottish Government for their support via the Platforms for Creative Excellence (PlaCE) programme and their ongoing investment in Made in Scotland through the Edinburgh 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.

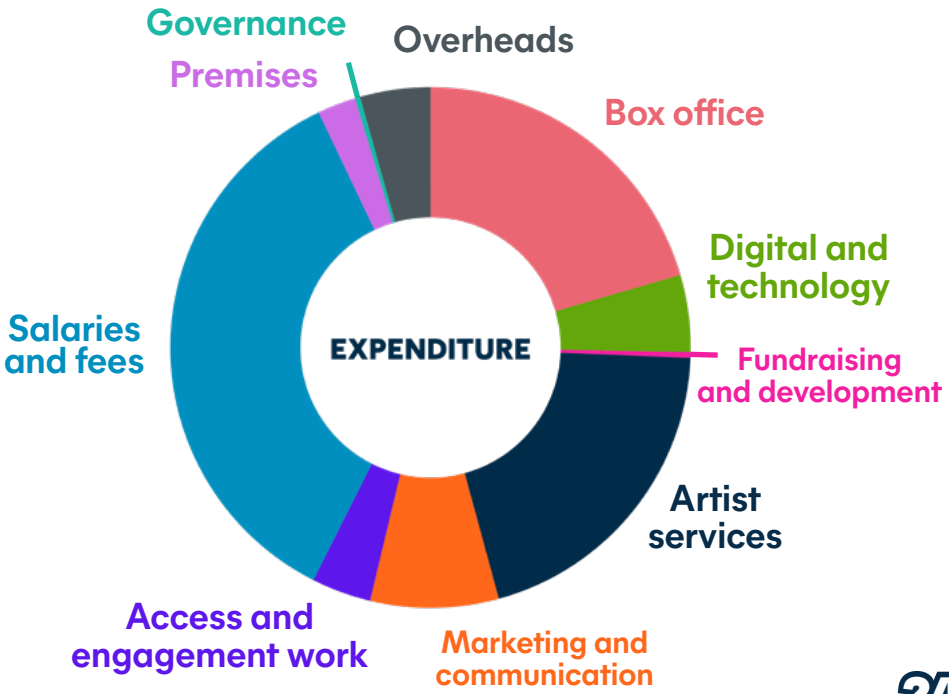
Despite incredible challenges, the Fringe community continues to deliver their best work and we at the Fringe Society are committed to providing the best quality service we can, but – like much of the arts sector – our financial position is perilous, with no funding for our core services.

Please support us in any way you can to keep the festival alive – email support.us@edfringe.com.

Total income
£5,532,678



Total expenditure
£5,759,268



A note from the Chair of our Board

As happens every year, I have been proud to look over the contents of this review and recognise how much has been achieved by this small but dedicated team over the past 12 months.

The Fringe Society's role is integral to the success of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the entire staff for their hard work – particularly Chief Executive Shona McCarthy, who is due to step down next spring after nine years at the helm.



Shona has been an outstanding leader during a period characterised by significant challenges including funding. Her support of the Fringe's renaissance following the pandemic has been extraordinary, and she will be sorely missed.

The Fringe is a unique, wonderful, inclusive celebration of the performing arts, and the importance of freedom of expression stands at its core. It is an essential element of our cultural identity at home and abroad.

I speak on behalf of the Board when I wish Shona the very best in her future adventures; we also look forward to welcoming a successor who shares Shona's passion for this festival and will continue the incredible work she's accomplished.

Benny Higgins
Chair, Fringe Society Board of Directors



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

Thank you!

Sponsors

- Johnnie Walker Princes Street
- TikTok
- Cirrus Logic
- Innis & Gunn
- Playbill
- Indeed Flex
- Edinburgh Gin
- JetBlue
- Who Gives A Crap
- PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited)

Supporters

- UK Government
- Baillie Gifford
- Bloomberg Connects
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Creative Scotland
- Culture and Business Scotland
- EventScotland
- Gaucho
- Northwood Charitable Trust
- Scottish Business Network
- Scottish Government
- Screen Scotland

Patrons

- Geoffrey Arbuthnott
- Jim Mellon
- David Graham
- Elizabeth King
- Tom Neff
- Colleen Jennings-Roggensack
- Graeme and Rachel Baillie
- Stephen and Teresa Graham
- Nancy Gibbs
- Bert Aerts
- Lisa Brindle
- Chris Crouch and Molly Morris
- Jessica Guo
- Greg Lovett
- Alistair McCusker
- Carol Ramsay

Fringe Central supporters

- Grassmarket Community Project
- Health in Mind
- Liquid Death
- MyBliss
- Taylor Leisure
- Tunnock's



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.**



“The Fringe is what we make it. Let’s make something good.”

Mark Watson
Fringe artist address 2024