



# Notice of the Annual General Meeting Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society 2025

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society Limited, which is a Scottish charity (company number SC046605, charity number SC002995) ("the Society"). The meeting will be conducted for the following purposes:

1. To receive and consider the Directors' report and accounts
2. To elect Directors to the Board of the Society.
3. To consider and vote on the following resolutions, proposed by member Peter Buckley Hill, which will be proposed as ordinary resolutions of the Company (further to the introductory statement):

## **Motion**

This AGM recognises that the principle of open access remains at the heart of the Edinburgh Fringe. It follows that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society Ltd does not have the power to discriminate positively or negatively in ways that advantage one show over another or one venue over another. It further follows that the Society should have no part in distributing monies donated by third parties, where such monies are given to some shows but not others, or some venues but not others. The Society has no power or mandate to distinguish between the artistic quality of shows, nor between the value of venues.

## **Proposed Resolution**

"Therefore this AGM mandates the Society:

- (1) To encourage the donors of any monies for the support of shows not to vet shows for artistic quality before choosing recipients, but to donate to all shows equitably;
- (2) Should donors choose not to conform to (1) above, to recuse itself from any process which makes an artistic-quality judgement on shows. This should include declining responsibility for selection criteria and or the selection of assessors in the evaluation of applications;
- (3) To behave in a similar manner if monies are donated for venues, ensuring a distribution proportionate to the number of shows staged by each venue.

## **Additional Documents**

[Annex 1 – Statement in support from a group of members, as contained herein](#)

[Annex 2 – Statement in response from Fringe Society, as contained herein](#)

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 19 August 2025 at 12 Noon, at Maclaren Stewart Room, Old College, University of Edinburgh, South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 9YL (access from Chambers Street)

**This is an in-person event only and will not be recorded or live streamed.**

By order: Tony Lankester, Company Secretary.

Registered Office: 180 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1QS



## Papers

The below papers will be published for all members to review prior to the AGM:

1. 2025 Notice of AGM, as contained herein
2. 2024 AGM Minutes – unconfirmed
3. 2024 Statement of Accounts
4. [Annex 1 – Statement in support from a group of members, as contained herein](#)
5. [Annex 2 – Statement in response from Fringe Society, as contained herein](#)

## Notes

1. A member of the Society is entitled to appoint another person as his/her/their proxy to exercise all or any of his/her/their rights to attend and to speak and vote at a meeting of the Society.
2. A proxy appointed to attend and vote at the above meeting in place of a member shall have the same right as the member who appointed him/her/them to speak at the meeting and need not be a member of the Society.
3. An instrument appointing a proxy shall be in writing and shall be signed by the appointor or by the appointor's attorney - the directors may, but shall not be bound to, require evidence of the authority of any such attorney.
4. An instrument appointing a proxy must be left at the registered office or e-mailed to [membership@edfringe.com](mailto:membership@edfringe.com) not less than **forty-eight hours** before the time for holding the meeting and in default shall not be treated as valid (Sunday 17 August, 12 noon)



## ANNEX 1

### STATEMENT IN SUPPORT FROM GROUP OF PROPOSING MEMBERS

The custom and rule of the Edinburgh Fringe was: if you can get a venue, you can perform at the Fringe. The Fringe Office had no role in the selection of who performed and who did not. That was the venue providers' job.

The playing field was never level: money always talks. But the principle of a Fringe is to keep the field as level as possible. You can bring your show. Once you have a venue, you're equal. Only the public can judge you.

But this has changed since COVID.

A system of grants has been introduced, giving £2000 to the successful applicants and nothing to the others. These are adjudicated by people ("experts") recruited by the Fringe Office.

In my view, this is a violation of the Open Access principle of the Fringe.

If Show X gets a £2000 grant and you do not, you are at a big disadvantage. Even before you start. It's biased against you, and somebody has made that judgement.

I think this is wrong. The Fringe Office was not put in place to discriminate in favour of one show and against another. It doesn't have the mandate, and it doesn't have the expertise.

With no violation of privacy, simply by talking and listening, I know that grants have been applied for, and have succeeded, which suggest the grant money will be used for extra publicity, and/or for hiring help, such as producers or writers, to improve the artistic quality of the show.

That is not a level playing field, in either case.

And even if the whole grant is used for accommodation, you'd have to get accommodation anyway, so it's still money in your pocket that others do not have.

If money is to be given to support shows, then it should be given fairly. Equally or equitably.

You could say that a show with a 23-day run needs more than a one-off, and that's a reasonable point. That's why I say 'equitably'. But to give Show A thousands and Show B nothing; that's not equitable.

You may say: but what if some philanthropist wants to give money to support performers from the poorest and most discriminated-against classes in Society? Surely that's a good thing? Yes indeed it is. But imagine the philanthropist asking the Fringe Office to list who's poor and who isn't? Not their role. They don't have the information. It's the philanthropist's money; he/she should choose.

We all, I hope, want to see the Fringe represent all groups and classes in Scotland, the UK and the world. And perhaps these grants might have been intended to help the poorest. But that's not how they're being used. How much better it would be to make it easier and cheaper for all, across the board?



A similar situation occurred in the distribution of the COVID recovery money to venues. I cannot pretend to be neutral on this. Despite being, at the time, the largest provider of Fringe shows, my organisation received nothing and others received six-figure sums. And yet our needs for COVID recovery were as great as theirs. Well, that is past. But the motion I propose would stop such inequitable distribution in the future.

And it would stop some other performer or company getting a grant where you get none. It would stop people judging your show as being of inferior artistic merit before you've even started your run.

Level playing fields. As far as possible. And no judgement by the Fringe Office, or anybody appointed by it, on shows' artistic merits. Equal treatment.



## ANNEX 2

### FRINGE SOCIETY STATEMENT TO MEMBERS

The purpose of this paper is to outline the Fringe Society's response to the proposed resolution. It will also outline the impact on the Society's current activities should the resolution be passed.

### CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Fringe Society's [Articles of Association](#) include the objects of the charity; relevant to this resolution is the stipulation that the Fringe Society is entitled:

*4.2.6 to accept, whether or not subject to any trust purposes or conditions, subscriptions, donations, legacies and bequests of any heritable or moveable, real or personal property and to receive, allocate and administer grants, gifts or bequests made available to the Society for any or all of its objects whether from public funds or from private sources under the terms and conditions referable to such grants, gifts or bequests;*

The proposed motion states that *"the Society should have no part in distributing monies donated by third parties, where such monies are given to some shows but not others, or some venues but not others"*

It is the Society's assessment that the motion is in contradiction to the objects of the charity, and that the action of disbursing funds for the wider benefit of the community is core to the Society's aims and objectives.

### FUNDING PRINCIPLES

The Fringe Society has, both historically and currently, found itself in a position where a funder or donor has made funds available for wider disbursement, and has attached certain conditions or criteria for such disbursement – typically this is public sector investment. This has included the venue PLaCE fund in 2022 (funded by Scottish Government and the City of Edinburgh Council), as well as the Keep it Fringe Fund (funded by DCMS) and Made in Scotland showcase (funded by Scottish Government, through Creative Scotland).

The Fringe Society acts, in all these instances, as an impartial, arms-length administrator of the available grants. In each case it puts in place rigorous principles, signed off by the relevant funder, to ensure that the Society itself is not making artistic or other subjective assessments of requests for support. Specifically the Society's process includes:

Agreeing, with the funder, criteria for the grant in question and conveying those criteria to applicants, as well as the panel to use as they assess and score applications

Convening an external, independent panel and/or assessors to review funding requests

Once the panel has made the funding allocations, to administer the disbursement of the funds in accordance with the levels of governance and processes required by the funder



This objective process has enabled the Society to pass significant support on to the broader Fringe community in a way that is, we believe, fair and defensible. The actual amounts distributed are detailed in the “Impact” section below.

## IMPACT

Two current and future Fringe Society projects would likely be impacted should this resolution be passed, both of which support artists:

### Keep It Fringe

The Keep It Fringe fund, launched in 2023, has now provided £1Mn of grants through 410 awards (from almost 2,300 applications) to UK-based Fringe artists.

The application information states that “funding will be prioritised to artists who don't have an existing high profile and artists who face barriers to funding / the arts more generally”. The criteria for KIF can be found [here](#), the assessors and application stats for 2025 are [here](#) and some stats for KIF UK are below.

	2023	2024	2025
<b>Award amount</b>	£2,000	£2,500	£2,500
<b>Applications</b>	677	749	848
<b>Awards</b>	50	180	180
<b>Assessors</b>	23	30	28

	2023	2024	2025
Successful applicants identified as disabled or with a health condition	48%	41%	33%
Successful applicants who came from a working-class background	33%	33%	30%

The 2023 grants were funded by donations to the Fringe Society and with support from Phoebe Waller-Bridge's Fleabag for Charity campaign, and in 2024 and 2025 through a grant from the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Assessors were selected from a broad range of industry with a focus on knowledge of the Fringe and the different pathways and models for artists. Any UK based professional artist is eligible to apply, for any genre of live performance work.

In 2025, we also launched the Keep It Fringe US fund, through support from private donations, awarding US artists five grants of \$2,500. This received 130 applications.

### Made in Scotland

Made in Scotland is a showcase promoting work from Scotland to international promoters and audiences at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It was established in 2009 and is funded by the Scottish Government's Festivals EXPO fund through Creative Scotland. It has supported 299 shows at the Fringe to-date and over 130 international onward touring opportunities. Made in Scotland supports Theatre, Dance and Music productions from Scotland and £400k was distributed to artists for the 2025 programme.



In 2026 the showcase will distribute £500k to Scotland-based artists to support their presentation at the Fringe and/or their onward international touring. The showcase is curated by a [panel of industry experts](#), selected by the Made In Scotland partners (currently the Fringe Society, Creative Scotland, Scottish Music Centre and the Federation of Scottish Theatre).

## **Conclusion**

The Fringe Society acts as a convening body for the Fringe. Affordability is widely agreed to be the biggest risk to the Fringe's success and accessibility, and arguably the greatest issue facing artists and venues. In 2025 the Fringe Society will have facilitated £850k in cash directly to artists – benefitting them directly and the wider festival infrastructure indirectly. The Fringe Society's aim is to ensure limited funding for culture is directed to the Fringe by any means possible, and for the Fringe Society to use its fundraising skills and capacity to support all artists and venues who take part. Funders would be very unlikely to support investment without criteria, and if funding was secured directly by the venue or artist, those who have greater capacity and experience in securing public investment would likely benefit more, creating greater inequality.

The Fringe Society recognises, however, that there is also more that can be done to ensure the artists and venues who make the Fringe happen are engaged and can inform the processes and criteria, and would welcome conversations and workshops on how we ensure any influence over funding or decision making is in the best interests of the widest range of artists.