Push the Boat Out: Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival

PUSH THE BOAT OUT

Annual Report 2025

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I'm delighted to present our annual report for 2025. This year, we were thrilled to bring the whole of the main festival into one of Edinburgh's most iconic, vibrant festival venues, the Pleasance, while continuing to offer our Poetry in the City events in areas from Holyrood to Portobello. We also introduced a series of "warm up" events, including literally pushing the boat out at the floating Fingal Hotel with an unforgettable event with Michael Pedersen and Hollie McNish.

We welcomed over 120 artists from across the UK and beyond, and hosted more than 60 events, with readings, discussions, music, theatre and visual art filling the building. Once again we were pleased to offer spaces for artists to collaborate, experiment and create exciting new work.

Our engagement programme has gone from strength to strength. This resulted in us extending the programme by a day to host a schools showcase of work by pupils in three Edinburgh High Schools as part of a new partnership with Amnesty International UK. We also continued working with SCOREScotland and collaborated with Simon Community.

As we enter our second year as part of Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funded portfolio, this stablity has allowed us to further develop our team and board and create a range of exciting new plans for the coming years.

Thank you so much to our team, board, artists, partners and funders - and to you for reading!

Emma Collins, Director

ABOUT PUSH THE BOAT OUT

Push the Boat Out (PTBO) is an award-winning arts charity with a focus on poetry, and a unique and vital part of Scotland's arts ecology. Fresh, vibrant and innovative, we strive to increase the diversity of poetry – in form, cross-artform pollination, and voices platformed. We take an inventive approach to showcasing the best of contemporary poetry and related artforms from across the UK and beyond to challenge perceptions of what poetry is, how it can be enjoyed and who it is for.

Our annual festival is an event unlike any other, and one of only two poetry festivals in Scotland. Our year-round programme offers audiences ways to engage with poetry outside of the festival as well as professional development opportunities for artists, including those who are under-represented in literature. A key goal is to bring poetry to new audiences and participants who might not previously have believed it was for them or been able to access it, both within the main festival and through a growing programme of targeted engagement.

'At Eighty', the late great Edwin Morgan's unforgettable poem, is our namesake. The work is forward-looking and progressive; it encapsulates his persistent, indefatigable curiosity for the unknown, whatever it holds, come what may. Launched in 2021, the centenary year of Morgan's birth and one of the most difficult and unpredictable periods in recent times, our work pays homage to his inestimable contribution to poetry and to his restless pioneering spirit.

VISION

A world where poetry in all its myriad forms can grow, evolve, and expand its boundaries as a vibrant and meaningful part of people's everyday lives.

MISSION

Our mission is to bring artists, audiences, and participants together to access, create, celebrate, and make meaning through experiencing the vibrant range of contemporary poetry and related artforms from Scotland and beyond, both at the annual festival and year-round programme.

VALUES

- **OPENNESS** – both to bringing in a wide range of people and perspectives and to the challenge and change that may result, so that poetry and related artforms are genuinely welcoming to new as well as existing audiences and artists.
- **PLAY** – we want to be a place where people look forward to experiencing incredible poetry in innovative ways, and where artists are given space to experiment, develop and thrive.
- **COLLABORATION** – we believe we all have more interesting ideas, make better decisions, champion and create a greater range of excellent artistic work, and achieve better outcomes with those we work with, when we do it alongside others with similar values.

PUSH THE BOAT OUT 2025

Push the Boat Out Festival 2025 took place from 20 to 23 November. We were thrilled to return to the Pleasance, bringing the whole of the main festival into one of Edinburgh's most iconic, vibrant festival venues, while continuing to offer poetry in the city events in communities from Holyrood to Portobello. We also introduced a series of "warm up" events, which included online reading groups and a performance at the floating Fingal Hotel. We also extended the programme by a day, beginning on Thursday, to enable us to host a schools showcase of work created by pupils in three Edinburgh high schools, as part of our partnership programme with Amnesty International UK, Words that Burn.

Across the festival, we continued to develop our unique contribution in creating a space where poetry comes together in conversation with other artforms and offers a place for artists and audiences alike to play and experiment with these juxtapositions.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Our diverse and exciting programme featured over 120 poets and artists, emerging and established (all paid for their contributions), across 61 events, over four days. We offered an eclectic bill of event types including artist talks, installations, readings and discussions, headliners, an exciting range of workshops, music gigs, newly commissioned cross-artform performances, an artists' development day, and community performances.

The festival was shaped by three broad themes:

Poetry is Punk offered a timely reminder that poetry should be accessible to everyone: relevant, raw, subversive and DIY; Anthropocene: The Human-Altered World explored how the things humankind has created have changed our world – and even our bodies – in unanticipated and perhaps irreversible ways; while The Unseen World asked us to consider where we find solace in a challenging world, looking at how we predict the future, make sense of the moment and understand the past.

A few highlights of the programme included:

- A broad range of in-person events featuring some of the UK's foremost poets – Pascale Petit, Anthony V. Caplideo, Karen Solie, Fiona Benson, Nick Makoha, Luke Kennard, Hollie McNish, Hannah Lavery, Michael Pedersen, Peter Mackay, Len Pennie and many more. We also had in-person appearances from Najwan Darwish (a Palestinian poet currently resident in France), Mátyás Dunajcsik (Germany) and Sree Sen, Kemi George Simpson, Jessica Traynor and Dean Browne (all Republic of Ireland).

- A series of international online events featuring incredible artists including Victoria Chang, Noor Hindi, Vidyan Ravinthiran and more.

- An imaginative programme of poetry in unexpected contexts, including a poetry and perfume workshop in partnership with Lush, a wine tasting with Leena Norms and Great Grog, a taster workshop with the Scottish Poetry Choir, a poetry and yoga workshop with Spencer Mason, poetry walks on Portobello beach with clare e. potter and through Holyrood Park with Anthony V. Capildeo and an incredible exhibition of the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) supported by his estate as part of his Centenary celebrations.

- Embodying our value of collaboration we hosted several takeovers by other poetry and arts collectives. These included: a night of Gaelic poetry and song with Bothan Dhùn Èideann; the launch of Magma Poetry Magazine's Liberation edition; takeovers by Glasgow City of Poets and Shore Poets; the Loud Poets Edinburgh slam heat; and an incredible festival finale by Tinderbox Orchestra with rappers, poets, singers as Tinderbox launched their first spoken word single.

- A Saturday night gig with a dreamy soundscape of synths, loops, poetry, pedals and an immersive visual backdrop from poet Ellen Renton and legendary DJ Lord of the Isles, supported by Acolyte.

- We were thrilled to literally push the boat out with a sold out festival warm-up event with Hollie McNish and Michael Pedersen. This took place in the luxurious surroundings of the historic Fingal Hotel, a 5-star floating hotel in Leith and a refurbished former lighthouse tender, the last ship to be built by the Blythswood Shipbuilding Company.

- Scratch performances of new spoken word shows from RJ Hunter and Gray Crosbie alongside a performance from Harry Josephine Giles and the Edinburgh Trans Choir. We also hosted a scratch performance from Karen McCarthy Woolf and Kerensa which set to music the voices of the antique dolls from novel-in-verse Top Doll.

- As well as supporting these artistic experiments, we commissioned and supported other work that embodied our value of play, with a literary treasure hunt from More Fun With Games, who invited us to experience the Autonomous Poetry Zone through a specially created mobile web app game. We also worked with Tinderbox Collective's games club, whose young people created a playable video game installation inspired by the poetry of Edwin Morgan.

NEW WORK

In meeting our goals both to create opportunities for poetry to be in conversation with other artforms and to create paid opportunities for poets to experiment and make new work, we continued to commission new and unusual work and collaborations.

We worked with new theatre collective What Now? to commission three plays by Hannah Lavery, Zinnie Harris and William Letford specially for the festival. An exciting mix of new work, works in progress and adaptations, these short pieces offered an urgent response to the geopolitical cultural moment we're living through.

We also commissioned new work from Marjorie Lotfi and Najwan Darwish which explored the uniquely challenging experience of creating art from afar when your homeland (Iran and Palestine respectively) is in conflict.

We were also really pleased to continue our collaboration the National Theatre of Scotland. This took the form of an open call for new pieces investigating the theme of 'Anthropocene: the Human-Altered World', each performance paired poetry with a different artistic discipline. The newly devised pieces showcased inventive cross-disciplinary work ranging from film and theatre to electronica and therapeutic sound with new performances from Iona Lee and Nikki Kent, Garry Mackenzie and Sam Firth, and Scots Scriever Taylor Dyson, Craig Aitchison, James Wyness and Calum Kelly.

"I was delighted to have got the commission, and to have taken part in the festival. The collaboration has definitely pushed my work in a new direction, is going to result in a more sustained collaboration [...], and has produced work that will also be published in print form."

Commissioned Artist 2025

AUDIENCE EVALUATION

REACH AND TICKET SALES

We welcomed audiences of just over 1,820 to our events, generating ticket revenue of over £14,300, a healthy increase in our reach (25%) and ticket income (44%) compared with 2024. We were particularly pleased with this increase in ticket income, despite the fact that we held ticket prices at the same level as 2024 and offered even more free or pay what you can (PWYC) events.

We once again sold festival passes allowing holders to get free or discounted tickets to the majority of events. We sold 48 festival passes, through which a total of 386 tickets were booked. This represents an average of eight tickets per pass holder which is an increase on last year.

"[The festival pass] was great! Value for money and encouraged me as a visiting writer to attend as many events as I could within the timeframe of the festival."

Festival Pass holder

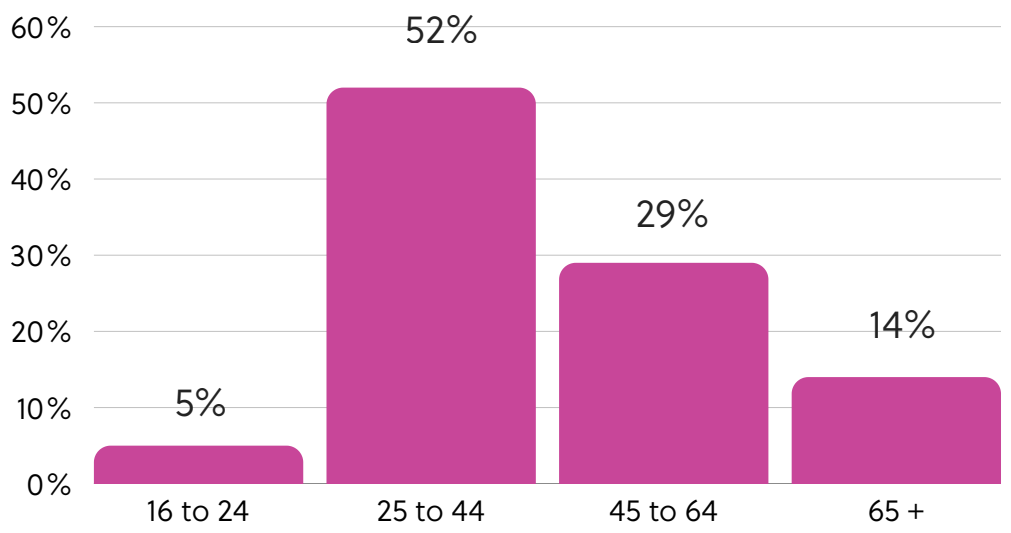
"The pass offered the flexibility to take risks with shows I might otherwise have missed."

Festival Pass holder

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Through our box office, 68% of all ticket buyers completed information about their age, location, and previous engagement with the festival.

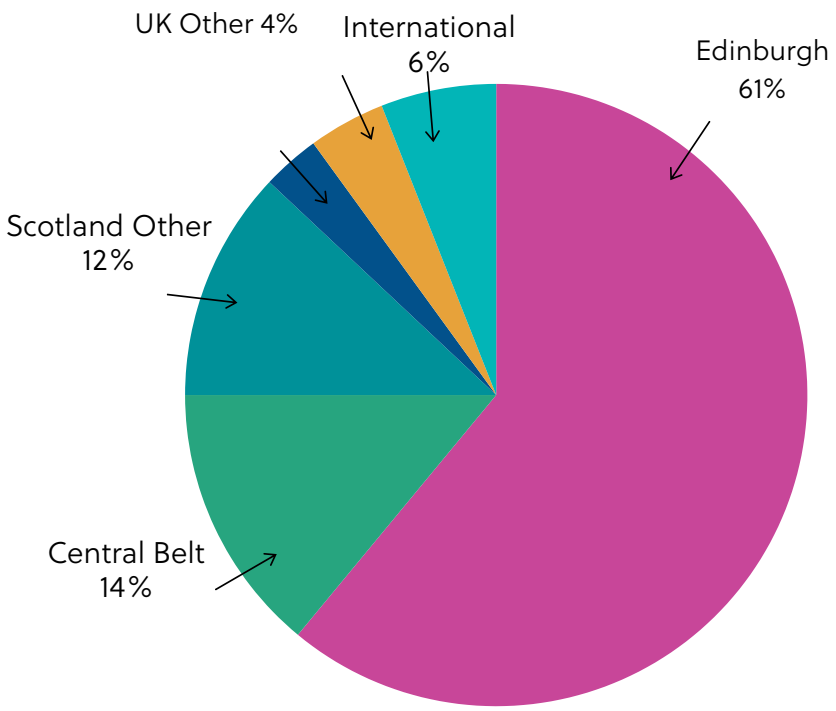
AGE OF TICKET BUYERS



"I would not normally have attended something like this but so glad I did. The events were definitely varied but the pass made it accessible and I loved everything being over the same weekend."
Audience member

We continue to attract younger audiences, with 57% under the age of 45. This is a younger audience profile than might be expected for a poetry festival, which we believe reflects the brand, programming and our goal to bring poetry to new audiences. Indeed, while 35% of audience members had attended Push the Boat before, 65% were new to engaging with us, showing an excellent increase in reach.

"I really loved the festival – it felt like a really special gathering of poets descending upon Edinburgh for the day. I loved running into different poets, going to events, taking notes, buying books, having a coffee on site, and everything about it. Really excellent festival."
Audience member



GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD

In keeping with previous years, our largest audience numbers were from Edinburgh (61%). 6% joined from the Lothians, and 7% joined from Glasgow. 13% joined us from the rest of Scotland with visitors from as far afield as Orkney, Lewis, Islay, Aberdeenshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

The remaining 13% came from outside of Scotland, including Northern Ireland and Wales, as well as London and the South East, the North East and North West, South West and East Anglia. We also had attendance, both online and in-person, from Europe and the US, as well as Australia, Saudi Arabia and India.

AUDIENCE EVALUATION

"The festival punches above its weight and is a much needed and welcome addition to the cultural landscape in Scotland."
Audience member

"I love the festival and congratulate you on another provocative and successful year!"
Audience member

Our post-festival survey was again incentivised by a draw to win a £100 voucher for Lighthouse Books. It yeilded a robust return rate of 20%.

Audiences once again were very positive about their experience of the festival. More than 7 in 10 attendees agreed that Push the Boat Out offers something unique and necessary in Edinburgh and Scotland's busy arts scene.

Audiences again felt the programme offered choice and a variety of high quality events where they could both be confident of finding something they knew they would enjoy and take risks and see something new. The quality of events was seen as very high – on a scale of 1 to 5, 82% of respondents rated it as 4 or above. Similarly, 90% of respondents rated the likelihood of recommending the festival to others as 4 or above.

Most respondents felt that staff and volunteers were knowledgeable and welcoming. The new venue was also popular - 86% of respondents ranked the Pleasance as a venue as 4 or more on a scale of 1 to 5.

"The programme had so many high profile poets at events – I find it much less common to be able to see people like this in Scotland so it was really exciting."
Audience member

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We believe that poetry and the arts should be a meaningful part of people's everyday lives. It is a key goal for PTBO to broaden audiences for poetry and contribute to removing some of the barriers that marginalised groups face in accessing and enjoying poetry and other creative experiences.

Expanding our engagement programme to do this more effectively has been a long held goal, and something we were able to move towards in 2025. We sustained our partnership with SCOREScotland and introduced new relationships with the Simon Community Scotland and Amnesty International UK. We also continued to host an event by Open Book during the festival.

"I liked performing and hearing the audience laugh"

Young person, SCOREScotland

SCORESCOTLAND

SCORE is based in Wester Hailes, one of Scotland's most deprived areas, where they work with the community to support people facing discrimination and develop programmes to address the causes and effects of racism and promote racial equality.

This year we took our collaboration with SCORE into Wester Hailes High School, offering two lunch time taster sessions to build interest followed by 8 after school workshops to support young people to create work that was subsequently performed at the festival. We worked with 36 young people in total, with 6 performing at the festival. The workshops enabled the young people to develop creative skills and to enjoy working with poetry which they hadn't done before. They also enjoyed the opportunity to socialise without social media, and to form friendships with new people.

The participants said the project made them feel better about school, with some specifically mentioning it helped with their attendance. They all reported a greater sense of belonging from taking part, working together and a sense of achievement through representing their school in front of an audience at the festival.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK – WORDS THAT BURN

In spring 2025, we were delighted to be approached by Amnesty International UK (AIUK) to be the partner for a Scottish pilot of their Words that Burn project. This is a project that trains teachers in using resources to support their students to explore and understand human rights through poetry, getting excited about both in the process.

The collaboration enabled us to engage with young people and schools, working with Leith Academy, Portobello High School and Boroughmuir High School. In total seven teachers were trained to use AIUK's Words that Burn resources, which were delivered to over 200 young people across in class lessons.

Across the schools more than 70 young people came to the festival, where they were offered workshops to support them to share their work by Kevin P. Gilday and Imogen Stirling. In the evening, a Schools Showcase saw them performing their poetry to friends, families and their peers. Their work was incredibly moving and covered issues that were important to them such as their families, gender equality and the climate crisis.

40 of the young people took part in an external evaluation commissioned by AIUK. This found the partnership demonstrated how poetry can support confidence-building, community formation, emotional and critical expression, and emerging social awareness among young people. The project shifted pupils' perceptions of poetry from something distant or analytical to something accessible, meaningful, and expressive. It also supported them to cultivate their voices, criticality, empathy, self-belief, and confidence: foundations the young people repeatedly framed as things they will carry forward in writing, learning, using their voice, and how they engage with the world.

THE SIMON COMMUNITY – BEYOND THE MARGINS

The Simon Community Scotland believes that everyone deserves a safe place to live and access to the support they need. Every day they support people impacted by homelessness or at risk of losing their home.

In early 2025, they approached us to work with them as part of their Streetreads project. Streetreads is a physical library in Edinburgh that has grown into an integral part of the community, serving as a hub for learning and connection.

Poet, Julie McNeill, worked with a group who attend Streetreads over 11 weeks to inspire them to get interested in poetry and to create their own work for a zine that explored their hopes and stories. The group also worked with Kevin P. Gilday to hone their performances, and with Typewronger Books to create the zine. It was launched at a sold out event at Push the Boat Out 2025 with a digital version to follow.

The project was really meaningful for the participants, helping them to explore issues through poetry that they hadn't been able to talk about in other ways, and building their confidence. Up to 15 people attended each workshop session, with 20 coming to the launch event.

Some of the feedback included:

- **"I've really enjoyed this, it's been fun"**
- **"I'm here just thinking about life. Life does get better, my life is so much better now"**
- **"After this I'll try to write a book, this poetry notebook is full of ideas now"**
- **"I have learned more here than I ever did at school"**

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

A key ambition for PTBO is to support the development of artists, poets and other creative practitioners in Scotland. We do this in a range of ways.

DEVELOPMENT DAY

Our free development day offered several panels and workshops to support aspiring and emerging poets to develop their practice. This included sessions on starting your own project or event, how to succeed as a creative freelancer and skills for hosting or compering events.

We also offered two opportunities to attend a session run by Amnesty International UK about how to use their Words that Burn resources – see above– in their own practice.

The day was attended by 104 artists, who were also offered networking opportunities over a catered lunch. 100% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were enjoyable and enabled them to learn something new and to network with their peers. They also agreed that the workshops were well run and of good quality.

We asked for suggestions for future helpful sessions, which generated suggestions such as starting writing groups, funding, and managing performance anxiety.

"Really valuable sharing of expertise, done so well – with humour, a light touch, and embodying the values they were sharing & imparting."

"Thanks so much for these events – free and even catered!!! I'm really grateful for these amazing opportunities."

"It has encouraged me to start my own open mic and begin my own facilitating journey."

CONVERSE: EMERGING CHAIRS PROGRAMME

Following excellent feedback from its first year, we continued our partnership with the University of Edinburgh, to run and further develop the ConVERSE: Emerging Chairs programme.

Working with the Languages and Literature Department and Writer in Residence, Mary Paulson-Ellis, we offered training in chairing literature events to post-graduate students along with a clear selection process for real paid opportunities. Five students chaired events at the festival, giving them valuable experience to bring to their future careers.

SUPPORTING ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Across 2025, PTBO generated over £42,000 in fees for poets and other artists. This is an increase of 25% on our reported fees for 2024, but note that we have also included the fees paid through our year-round and engagement programmes this year. We commissioned work from 13 poets, artists and musicians, adding to an exceptional body of work by the Scottish poetry community and offering opportunities to collaborate and experiment.

As well as providing a platform for work to reach audiences including introducing people to new work and forms, we created book sales, and valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development and social connection.

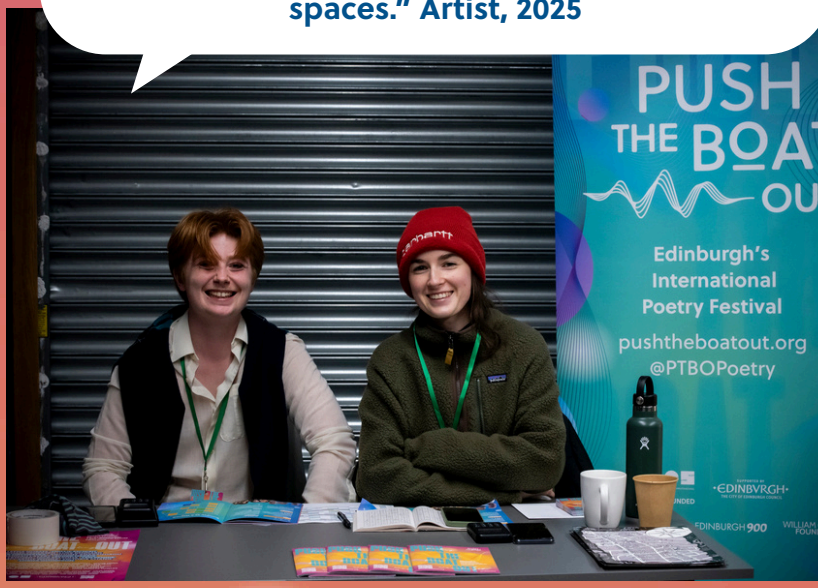
"Really lovely welcoming atmosphere for the participants, and so well organised. Audiences were really attentive too." Artist, 2025

Our staff team now provides year-round paid work to 4 creative professionals, including a new PAYE position at Director level. We also provided a further 2 longer term temporary contracts of several months around the time of the festival and contracted a range of skilled freelancers including web designers, production support, technicians, box office and front of house staff.

We also support volunteers with training, experience, opportunities to develop skills and free festival access. In 2025, 15 volunteers provided 123 hours of event support.

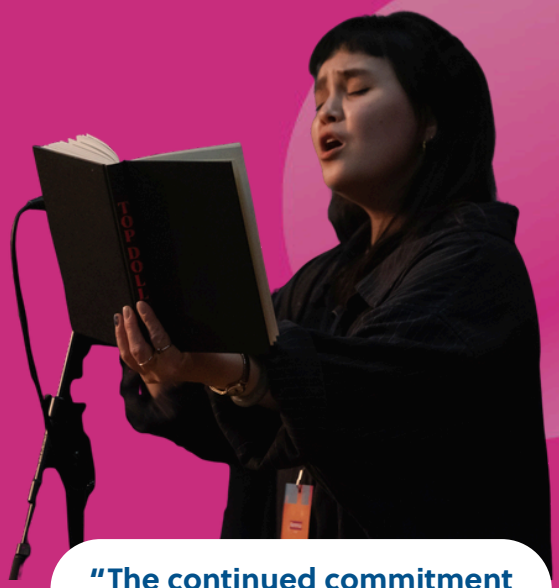
We continued to work with a paid Programme Committee, ensuring that a range of voices, perspectives and expertise were included in our planning. Many thanks for their contribution to this year's committee go to: Hannah Lavery, Niall O'Gallagher, Jazmine Linklater, Sharmilla Beezmohun and Jamie Pettinger.

"I really enjoyed this festival both as a visiting writer and as a festival goer. The festival managed to create a real festival community feeling. I loved the hub area and the green room as they made it easy to get together largely all in one place event spaces." Artist, 2025



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We know that financial barriers are one of the biggest challenges in widening access to arts festivals and we address this in multiple ways. We offered free tickets to the groups supported by partners in our engagement programme, held prices at 2024 levels with a wide range of concessionary tickets available and offered free and PWYC pricing for 23 events (up from 16 in 2023). We sold 161 free tickets and 258 via the PWYC scheme. Our festival pass allowed those who wanted to attend higher numbers of events to do so in a more affordable way. Over 92% of post festival survey respondents felt the ticket pricing was appropriate or that they would have paid more.



Almost all events took place in fully accessible venues, and over 10% of our events were BSL interpreted. More than one third of events were offered online or hybrid, including via our continuing partnership with EHFM community radio. We increased the number of live-streamed events to five this year, up from one in 2024.

"The continued commitment to cultural and racial diversity within the programme is important. [Some festivals] programme mono racially, with only two or three Black writers – that didn't happen here which is important."
Artist, 2025

62% of our artists completed an equalities form (an increase from 50% in 2024). Around one third of the programmed artists came from ethnic backgrounds other than White British (taking British to include Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities), and over 60% identified as women or non-binary.

Over 10% of the programme also platformed Scotland's indigenous languages of Scots and Gaelic. Once again we convened a programming committee with people from a range of backgrounds, ages and genders to support an inclusive, collaborative approach to programming the festival.

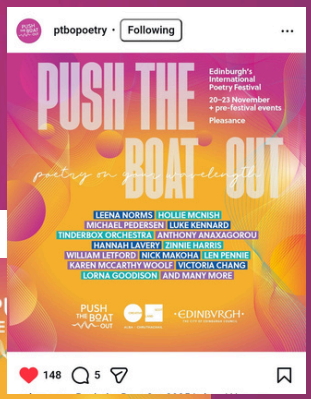
Over 90% of survey respondents said that access was adequate or excellent, with 7% saying that access could be improved. Most comments on possible improvements related to the stairs in the Pleasance and the need for a keyholder to operate the lift, which we will act on next year.

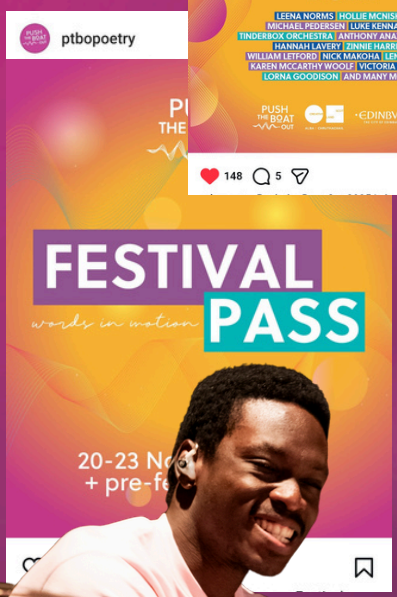
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Overall, this year's festival campaign received a positive response, helping to drive increased sales and engagement. The design was an evolution of 2024, highlighting a different part of our brand palette and introducing some new stylistic changes. The campaign was focused around print, distribution, digital content and network marketing.

According to our audience research, our audience found out about the festival in the following ways:

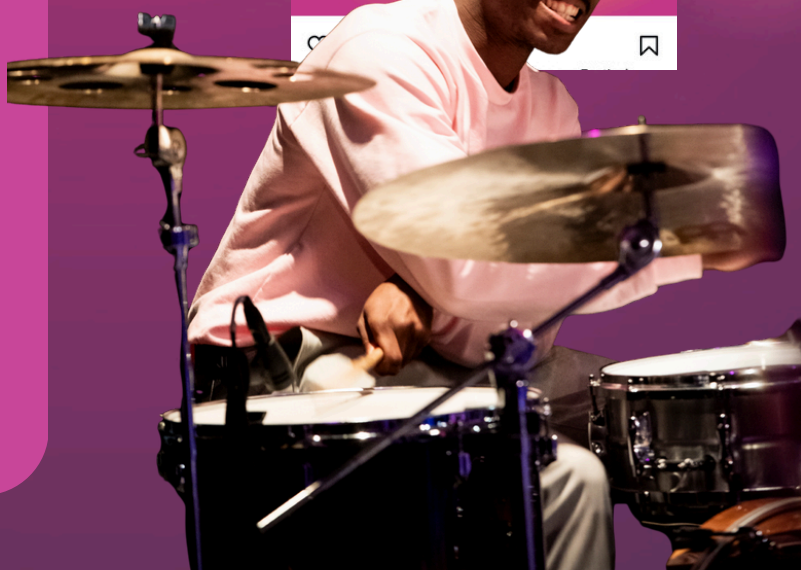
- Word of mouth: 38%
- PTBO digital media: 19%
- PTBO marketing campaign 12%
- Previous attendee 12%
- Partner digital channels 11%
- Other 8%





Building on results and feedback from 2025, we had identified and worked towards the following priorities for our campaign in 2026

- Increase print distribution and presence around Edinburgh to attract audiences beyond our existing online networks.
- Work closely with our PR Agency to increase coverage and reach.
- Rework our launch and on-sale moment to build momentum and buzz.
- Improve the quality of media partnerships to get the best value from advertising spend.
- Deepen relationships with partners and programme participants to develop mutually beneficial promotional campaigns.



"Some of the most exciting voices from Scotland and around the world can be heard at this year's Edinburgh International Poetry Festival."
The National

"★★★★ Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival has a new home at the Pleasance this year, and the venue was buzzing despite the chilly weather with a packed weekend programme."
The Scotsman

"Push The Boat Out has an experimental, collaborative ethos"
The Scotsman

MEDIA COVERAGE

This year we worked with Miriam Morris to deliver the PR campaign. This was a successful relationship resulting in coverage across over 20 major media outlets. Highlights included the front page of the Scotsman with our Fingal Hotel photocall and appearances on BBC Radio Scotland for Tinderbox Orchestra and Peter Mackay. The National also ran a large feature on our outreach project with the Simon Community.

The festival received coverage across the following outlets:

- The Skinny
- The List
- Snack Magazine
- Kick up The Arts with Nicola Meighan
- The Times
- BBC Radio Scotland
- That's TV
- The Scotsman
- The Herald
- The National
- The Edinburgh Evening News
- Edinburgh Guide
- Quintessential Review
- Reviewsphere
- North Edinburgh News
- Edinburgh Reporter
- The Art Mix
- Edinburgh Minute
- Edinburgh Napier Student Media
- Aithris Na Maidne (BBC Gaelic Radio)

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING – CONTINUED

As part of our festival campaign we held a launch event, which we led with a strong image tying in to our Poetry is Punk theme. This helped to generate buzz and gave us strong materials for promotion throughout the campaign.

Partnership marketing remained a strong focus and we continue to benefit from successful and supportive relationships with city and sector partners to help promote the programme through their own networks and mailing lists. In particular, this year we built a strong partnership with the Fingal Hotel, co-promoting events and using the venue for a successful photocall, which resulted in a front page cover in the Scotsman promoting the festival launch. We also worked with artists and programme partners on collaborative posting, which boosted our digital campaign.

Finally, we prioritised students as an area for audience growth. We worked with the Skinny to establish a presence in their student guide and so were promoted through their appearances at Fresher Fairs across the Central Belt. We also took advantage of the Pleasance connection to promote activities across EUSA's spaces at the University of Edinburgh.

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS:
964 ↑ (+30%) since 2024

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS:
3,322 ↑ (+8%) since 2024

LinkedIn Followers:
237 ↑ (+85%) since 2024

Bluesky Followers:
250 ↑ (+111%) since 2024

Our social media advertising was focused on two campaigns – awareness and events. The combined reach of these adverts was 143k accounts with 306k impressions. During the festival we captured video and photography across a variety of events, providing content for the coming year.

Our digital presence continues to grow. Instagram remains our priority channel and gained the most followers during the campaign. In the month leading up to the festival we shared 210 pieces of content across stories and our grid, resulting in 218k views and 8k interactions.

Our best performing posts continued to be those in collaboration with prominent artists, as well as our launch announcement and headline events.

Our newsletter has 2,170 subscribers an increase of 35% on 2024, and a high open rate of 45%

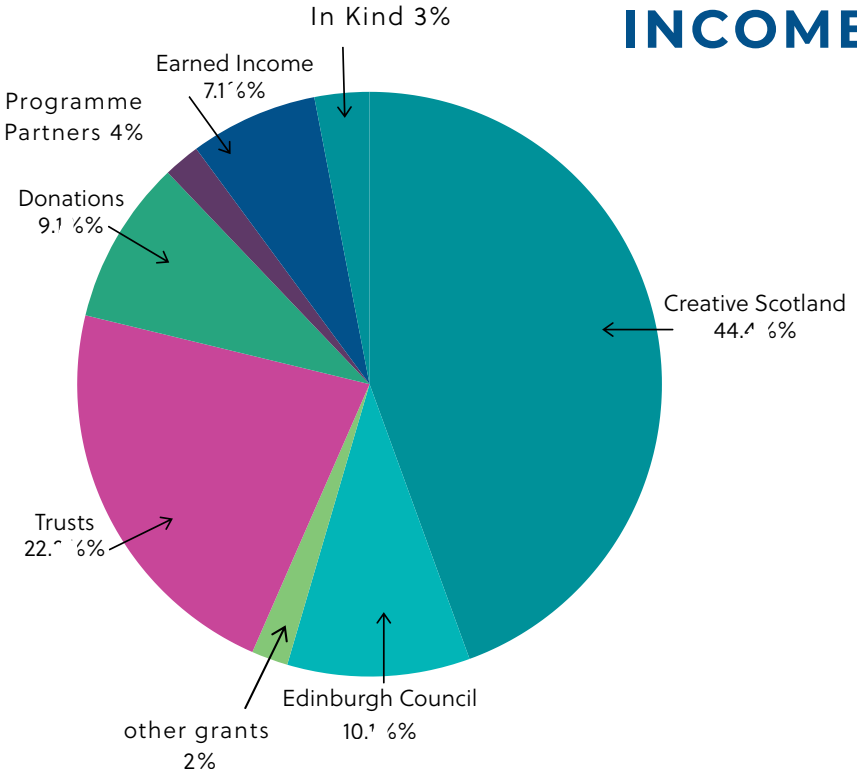
Our Facebook following is made up of 73% women and 27% men. This is mostly spread across the 25-65+ age demographics with the highest audience segment falling into the 45-54 segment, very closely followed by 35-44.

66% of our Instagram followers are women and 34% are men, with a younger dominant age range of 25-34.

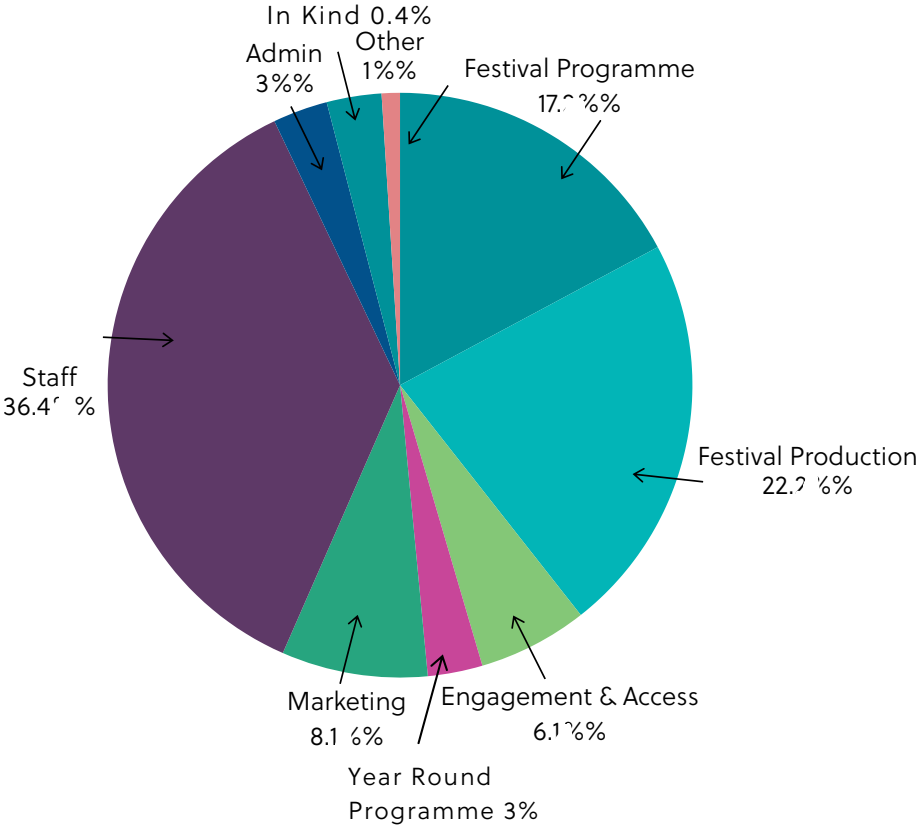
The vast majority of followers who have location data available are based in the UK, with Edinburgh the highest followed by Glasgow.

FINANCIALS

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We have continued to develop robust governance to support us as we grow. This included another round of board recruitment bringing our total board numbers to 9, with new members including poets, creative industries professionals and non-profit experts.

We were delighted to welcome Ola Wojtkiewicz as our new chair person, replacing Helen Chomczuk, to whom we are very grateful for her incredible dedication and support as she took on the role as an interim position.

FUTURE PLANS

We continue to work towards our key strategic goals outlined below. This year we are also excited to begin offering a year-round professional development programme for poets and related artists, which we have been consulting on across 2025. Funding dependent, we are also planning to introduce a residency programme and other writer support measures.

Programme & Artist Development

1. Showcase the best of contemporary poetry, spoken word, hip hop, rap and related artforms from Scotland and beyond, promoting an expanded definition of what poetry can mean, via a diverse and representative programme
2. Support the creation of new work, particularly via opportunities for experimentation. play and development of work that brings poetry into conversation with other artforms
3. Support artists (aspiring, emerging and established) to develop their practice and careers
4. Create partnerships to connect Scottish artists and audiences to poetry internationally and similarly Scottish artists to international audiences and collaborators

Audience & Engagement

5. Bring audiences together to celebrate and enjoy contemporary poetry and related artforms at the annual festival and year round
6. Increase and widen access to poetry (for audiences and participants) and especially welcome and support people who may experience barriers to access

Business & Resourcing

7. Consolidate and build a successful, environmentally sustainable, and equitable organisation
8. Diversify and build income ensuring financial resilience and minimising financial risk

CONCLUSIONS

We were proud to deliver a successful festival at the Pleasance, one of Edinburgh's most vibrant and iconic festival venues. We delivered more events than ever before, including warm-up reading groups with Open Book and a unique performance on board the historic, floating Fingal Hotel in Leith. In keeping with our goal to bring poetry to people, we offered events in a range of locations across the city and engaged with participants in our engagement programme from Portobello to Wester Hailes.

We were delighted to see our audiences grow by 25% and ticket income by 44% compared with 2024, despite the fact that we held ticket prices steady and offered even more free or PWYC events.

We continued to cement our reputation for offering something unique and important in Edinburgh and Scotland's cultural calendar, and for high quality poetry-led cross artform programming. Our diverse programme achieved our aim of being inclusive and platforming under-represented voices and we supported the creation and platforming of new, experimental and exciting work as well as bringing internationally acclaimed poets to read on our stages. This strong and diverse programme was well-received by audiences and artists alike and resulted in a 4 star review in the Scotsman, amongst a range of other positive press coverage.

Our engagement programme went from strength to strength with highly successful pilot programmes taking place with Amnesty International UK – allowing us to engage with high schools in Edinburgh for the first time – and with the Simon Community Scotland.

Having established ourselves as a SCIO we were able to build relationships with a broad range of new trusts and foundations. We also introduced a Friends scheme to enable more of our community to support us. We are incredibly grateful to the individuals, trusts and foundations, programme partners and public sector bodies who have so generously supported us this year.

As we enter our second year of our funding agreement with Creative Scotland, with a strengthened board and staff team, we are continuing to work towards our strategic aims. We look forward to further developing our artistic and engagement programmes, and as funding allows offering more artist development support. As we move into 2026, we are excited to work with even more artists, freelancers, communities and audiences as we support and celebrate poetry in all its glorious forms.

Are you interested in the future of Push the Boat Out? Contact Us:

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@PTBOpoetry

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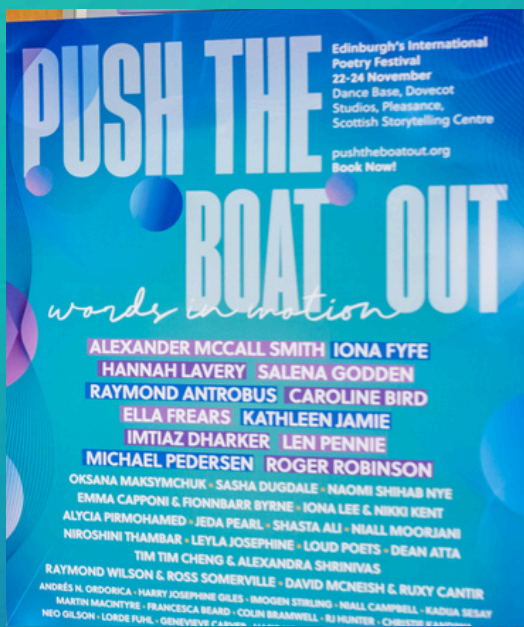
Push the Boat Out Festival

Push the Boat Out Arts SCIO is a registered charity: SC052742



FUNDERS & PARTNERSHIPS

We were delighted to receive support from a range of wonderful partners. The festival would not be possible without their help.

Principal Funders

Creative Scotland – Alba | Chruthachail
Supported by Edinburgh – The City of Edinburgh Council
Hugo Burge Foundation
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Funders

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Programme Partners

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Supported using public funding by Arts Council England – Lottery Funded
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With thanks to

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