


Push the Boat Out: Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival

# PUSH THE BOAT OUT



Annual Report 2024



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I'm delighted to present our annual report for 2024. This has been an eventful and exciting year, despite some unexpected challenges. Once again we presented a very successful festival, with over a hundred poets, writers, musicians, artists and thinkers from across the UK and beyond, filling the spaces of not one but four venues with poetry in all its glorious forms, and reaching nearly 1,500 audience members. Our year round programme continued to grow, and our festival exhibition which ran for three months reached around 4,700 people.

Our first full year operating as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, saw a great deal of organisational development including growing our board and undertaking a business planning process covering the next three years. This culminated in securing multi-year funding from Creative Scotland offering us stability and the chance to experiment and grow while continuing to support our communities.

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

An event unlike any other, Push The Boat Out (PTBO) remains Scotland's newest poetry and multi arts festival, with a growing year round presence and a strong community ethos. We are inspired by the vibrancy and range of contemporary poetry, hip hop, and spoken word from Scotland, the UK, and further afield.

We give poetry a new platform by creating an environment where all variations of this vital art form are encouraged to grow, evolve and even collide as we bend boundaries across artistic forms. We explore fresh, inventive ways to bring poetry and audiences together by challenging perceptions of what poetry is, how and where it can be enjoyed and who it is for.

As well as our annual festival, we run a year-round programme. This currently features regular online writing workshops with acclaimed poets and special guests from around the world, a bi-monthly podcast, and Rock the Boat, our hugely popular monthly open-mic night.

'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 Edwin's birth and one of the most difficult and unpredictable periods in recent times, our project 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 art forms 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 2024

Push the Boat Out Festival 2024 took place from 22-24 November. Originally planned to take place in our usual home of Summerhall, we unexpectedly had to move to alternative venues at a late stage. While this was challenging, we were overwhelmed with support from the sector and our stakeholders and were delighted to be able to work with not one but four outstanding venues – the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Dovecot Studios, Dance Base and the Pleasance.

As we evolve, we increasingly see our unique contribution in creating a space where poetry comes together in conversation with other art forms 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 100 poets and artists, emerging and established (all paid for their contributions), across 50 events. We offered an eclectic and varied bill of event types including artist talks, installations, readings & discussions, headliners, an exciting range of workshops, music gigs, newly commissioned cross-art form performances, and an artists' development day.

Having spent the first three years of the festival cementing our unique approach to bringing poetry into conversation with other art forms, we took a thematic approach to programming in 2024. We explored three different areas.

## THEMES

- **Disrupting the Narrative** challenged the stories of Edinburgh's heritage, acknowledging how its colonial past has shaped the city, its institutions and people today. The various events under this theme were part of Edinburgh's 900th anniversary celebrations and funded through the Edinburgh 900 Civic Fund.
- **Living Water** was this year's environmental theme supporting work, discussion and understanding of the climate crisis, arguably the most important issue of our time, and broadly explored water (pollution, shortages, rising sea levels, wildlife, weather events, etc).
- Finally **Bearing Witness** examined how creativity endures through global conflict. It included an event curated by Alycia Pirmohamed that brought together artists who have fostered community spaces in Scotland and beyond.



## A few highlights of the programme included:

- A broad range of in-person events featuring some of the UK's foremost poets – Caroline Bird, Imtiaz Dharker, Michael Pedersen, Alexander McCall Smith, Raymond Antrobus, Hannah Lavery and many more - as well as in-person appearances from Oksana Maksymchuk (Ukraine), Hasib Hourani (Australia) and Lorde Fuhl, Christie Kandiwa and Neo Gilson (all Republic of Ireland through our collaboration with Speaking Volumes and their Breaking Ground Ireland project).
- A series of international online events featuring incredible artists from Germany, Kenya, China and the US including Michael Hofmann, Slim Shaka, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jiaoyang Li and more.
- An imaginative programme of poetry in unexpected contexts, including a poetry and tarot workshop, a cocktail hour with RJ Hunter, an interactive AI poetry translator, and an exhibition from Kat Gollock as part of our Disrupting the Narrative theme.
- Embodying our collaborative and collegiate approach we hosted several takeovers by other poetry collectives including Glasgow Women's Library, St Mungo's Mirrorball, GUBSMACKED and Paperboats.
- A beautiful evening of music and poetry in the unique setting of the Dovecot Viewing Balcony with award-winning Scots singer/songwriter Iona Fyfe, supported by local poets and musicians.



## NEW WORK

In meeting our goals to both 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.

One element of this took the form of an open call for new pieces in association with the National Theatre of Scotland (continuing our partnership from 2023). This resulted in our incredible headline performance *Living Water*, featuring three new pieces of work that each explored our theme of *Living Water* (a title taken from a poem by Nan Burns) by combining poetry with another art form.

The resulting newly devised pieces showcased inventive cross-disciplinary work ranging from clowning to electronica with new performances from David McNeish and Ruxy Cantir, Tim Tim Cheng and Alexandra Shrinivas, and Raymond Wilson and Ross Somerville. Thematically they traversed ground from climate change, to flooding to toxic masculinity.



**"Commissioning new work is vital for the health of culture in Scotland and Push The Boat Out's commitment to this is impressive. We really enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate and create something new, a piece of work that wouldn't exist without support from PTBO and NTS."**

**Commisioned Artist 2024**

As part of our funding through the Edinburgh 900 programme to celebrate the city's anniversary, we were also able to commission a further new piece of work, *Disrupting the Narrative*. Building on an earlier project by Edinburgh's then Makar, Hannah Lavery, this theatrical performance of poetry brought together new poetry by Hannah, Jeda Pearl, Shasta Ali, Niall Moorjani, and Alycia Pirmohamed. Directed by Hannah, this was set to music by composer, Niroshini Thambar. It resulted in a piece of theatrical work with the intention of supporting the decolonisation of Edinburgh's historic collections and key heritage sites, and illuminating how colonial history has shaped the city, its institutions, and its people.

The performance was accompanied by new images from photographer Kat Gollock, exploring Edinburgh's physical heritage in tandem with its colonial past. This also formed an exhibition shown across the festival and online. This important and powerful piece opened the festival and had a significant impact on artists and audiences alike.

# AUDIENCE EVALUATION

## REACH AND TICKET SALES

We were delighted to welcome audiences of nearly 1,500 to our events, generating ticket revenue of nearly £10,000. This was a reduction on our reach and ticket income compared with 2023. While this is disappointing, two main challenges contributed to this.

First, we had to move venues two days before our planned launch, meaning our programme launch was delayed by two weeks. This reduced the time we had to market the festival, and may have been confusing for audiences. Attending a festival across multiple venues made it harder for audiences to see as many events.

Second, on the Saturday of the festival, we were caught in a major weather event as an unforeseen snow storm brought all public transport to a halt. As with many arts events, we see a late buying pattern – in all our previous years, around a third of tickets have been purchased during the festival. This weather event undoubtedly reduced sales significantly. In the circumstances, the fact that we had larger audiences than in 2022 when we saw 1,420 attendees is still very encouraging.

We once again sold festival passes allowing holders to get free or discounted tickets to all events. A total of 229 tickets were booked through the festival pass. This represents an average of 7 per holder which is an increase on last year even with the drop in ticket sales and bad weather.

Our Disrupting the narrative photography exhibition by Kat Gollock ran for three months at the Scottish Storytelling Centre reaching an audience of around 4,700.



## AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

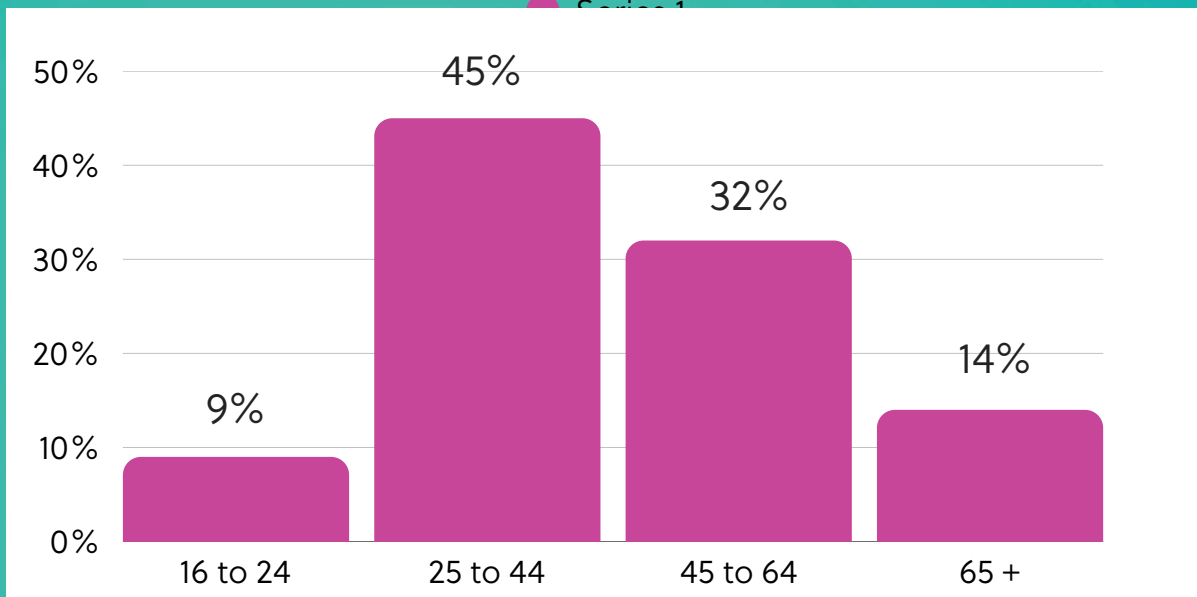
Our move to a new box office provider allowed us to capture much more information about those purchasing tickets. 75% of all ticket buyers completed information about their age, location, and previous engagement with the festival.





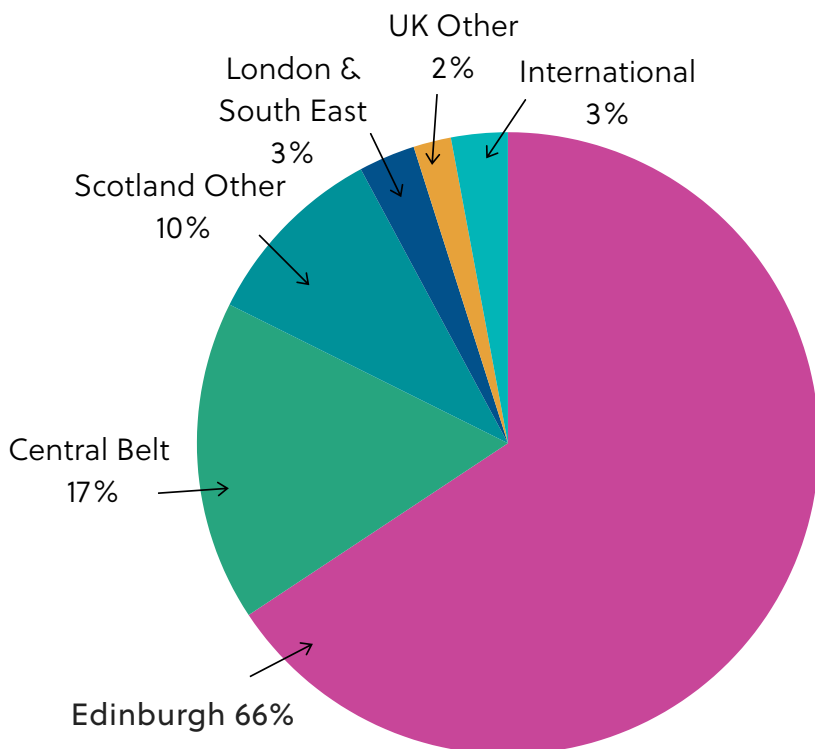
We had a slightly younger audience profile than might be expected for a poetry festival, which we believe reflects the brand, programming and our goal to bring poetry to new audiences. Indeed, while 40% of audience members had attended Push the Boat before, 60% were new to engaging with us, showing an excellent increase in reach.

## AGE SPREAD



**"The experimentation across art forms was exciting and nurtured a more mixed audience than is common at poetry/writing events."** Audience member

## GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD



In keeping with previous years, our largest audience numbers were from Edinburgh (67%) and the Lothians (7%), followed by Glasgow (7%) and the rest of the Central Belt (3%). 10% joined us from the rest of Scotland with visitors from as far afield as Orkney, Lewis, Islay and Dumfries and Galloway.

The remaining 8% came from outside of Scotland, with people joining us from London and the South East, the North East and North West, South West, Midlands and East Anglia. We also had online attendance from Europe and the US. Note figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

## AUDIENCE EVALUATION - PERCEPTIONS

**"Excellent selection of writers, especially because I have been living in Edinburgh for a while and this was the first time I've had a chance to see some of them read." Audience member**

Our post-festival survey, incentivised through the opportunity to win a £100 voucher for Lighthouse Books, was completed by 182 attendees, a return rate of 12% and an increase of 25% on 2023.

Over 90% of respondents felt that the ticket pricing was appropriate or even that they would have paid more, despite a small increase in average price this year. We also strove to maintain affordability, with a wide range of inclusive prices for our events. We sold 204 free tickets and 183 were paid for through our pay what you can scheme.

Audiences once again were very positive about their experience of the festival, and many acknowledged how pleased they were that it had gone ahead despite trying times. 64% of 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 10, 93% of respondents rated it as 7 or above. Similarly, 95% of respondents rated the likelihood of recommending the festival to others as 7 or above.

**"I was blown away by Friday night's performance 'Disrupting the Narrative'. It is still very much on my mind, which to me is the sign of a truly inspirational and creative performance. Thank you."**

**Audience member**

**"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**







All respondents were asked to tell us the three words they most associated with the festival. These are shown in this word cloud.



Most respondents felt that staff and volunteers were knowledgeable and welcoming. Audiences were very understanding about our last minute changes in venues, and while there was some feedback regarding the suitability and proximity of certain spaces, over 80% of respondents stated they would be happy to see PTBO return to the venue they had attended.

From our own perspective as organisers, we could not be more grateful to the four wonderful venues who supported us incredibly well at the last minute. Huge thanks are due to Dance Base, Dovecot Studios, the Pleasance and the Scottish Storytelling Centre.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



### SCORESCOTLAND

We believe that working in partnership with other organisations who are already engaging with and trusted by people that we would like to support is vital. This allows us to offer meaningful opportunities based on what people want and need.

This year we were delighted to build on and expand our partnership with SCOREScotland, a charity based in Wester Hailes, one of Scotland's most deprived areas. SCOREScotland works with the community to support people facing discrimination and develops programmes to address the causes and effects of racism and promote racial equality.

Once again we supported their young people to engage with poetry and creative writing. This year, we expanded the programme to last 10 weeks and added a new partner, Tinderbox Collective, who supported the young people to set their words to music. The young people performed their work at the festival and also created a music video which was shown at our opening reception and is now hosted on our website.

This was presented as a further strand of the Edinburgh 900 funded Disrupting the Narrative programme (see above) and seen as a highlight of the year by the young people involved.

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.

**"I loved the opportunity to be creative and perform in front of people. It boosted my confidence."**

**Young person, SCOREScotland**



### OPEN BOOK

Open Book runs weekly shared creative writing sessions all across Scotland for a diverse range of participants. We have partnered with them in each instalment of the festival.

This year we were delighted to host an in person presentation of their new pamphlet No Such Thing As Lost. These new collaborative poems were created over 2023 and took audiences on a tour of Scotland: from Shetland to Stranraer, Portree to Perth and many other places in between, touching on protest, postcards, heritage and hope.



## ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

An important ambition for PTBO is to support the development of artists, poets and other creative practitioners in Scotland. Along with providing high quality and well-paid opportunities to platform their work and paid commission opportunities, the festival also included a development day for emerging and mid-career artists completely free of charge, and a new programme ConVERSE to support emerging event chairs.



## DEVELOPMENT DAY

On Friday, we delivered a free development day which offered several panels and workshops to support aspiring and emerging poets to develop their practice. This included sessions on how to develop your own workshops, how to take the next step from aspiring poet to professional and how to practice self-care as artists.

The day was attended by 110 artists, who were also offered networking opportunities over a catered lunch. We received 28 evaluation forms (a 25% response rate).

Over 90% of people agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were enjoyable, enabled them to learn something new and were well run and of good quality. Everyone said that it was crucial that free practice development opportunities were available through Push the Boat Out and that what the development day already offers meets that need.

**"Very accessible with diverse perspectives."  
Development Day Participant**



## DEVELOPMENT DAY - CONTINUED

Last year we had feedback that a number of people wanted more opportunity to network with their peers as part of the development day. We addressed this by offering a catered lunch and emphasising that people should consider attending all three sessions. This was well received.

We asked what sessions would be helpful in future, which generated suggestions such as building community, pitching to journals, navigating a creative career as a disabled writer, overcoming writer's block, and feminism in writing.

Nearly 70% of development day respondents were in the 18 to 44 age group (compared to 54% of all ticket buyers) showing that this is a particularly important part of extending our reach.

## CONVERSE: EMERGING CHAIRS PROGRAMME

This year we created a new partnership with the University of Edinburgh, which saw us working with their Literature and Languages department and writer in residence, Michael Pedersen, to develop the ConVERSE: Emerging Chairs programme.

This offered training in chairing literature events to their students along with paid opportunities to chair events at the festival. 15 students took part in the training, with five selected for festival events giving them valuable experience to bring to their future careers.

**"I liked the ConVERSE programme chairs! Seeing students take an active role in the festival was really cool, and offered a different perspective from the more experienced chairs."**  
Audience member

**"LOVE the development day for those of us who are new poets - especially valuable for me as someone making a career change, because similar experiences aren't readily available."**  
Development Day Participant

**"It's a great way to feel part of the broader community of artists."**  
Development Day Participant

**"I feel inspired by other artists to continue my own practice."**  
Development Day Participant





## YEAR ROUND PROGRAMME

In 2024 our year-round programme included our much loved monthly open mic, Rock the Boat. This event has a regular and loyal following and offers us a clear link to the grassroots of the poetry community as well as supporting artist development and providing routes into the festival for audiences and artists.

Ten Rock the Boat events took place in 2024 including an edition at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) and one during Push the Boat Out festival.

Our regular events had an average attendance of 50, with 170 people in the audience at EIBF and a record attendance at our 2024 festival. 12 poets were featured as paid performers, and over 100 people shared their poetry with our audiences, many for the first time.

We also continued to offer our bi-monthly podcast programme, A Break in the Waves, and initiated a new quarterly programme on online international workshops with some of the most exciting poets working across the globe.

The first of these workshops featured Tony Birch and was delivered in partnership with Melbourne City of Literature.

Each spring, we conduct an annual survey of people who engage with Rock the Boat.

In 2024, respondents told us that the opportunity remained important to them. 30% of respondents had read their poetry for the first time at the event, and over 50% said it encouraged them to write and edit more.

**"A welcoming and safe opportunity for writers to read / perform their work and it's good to hear the work of published poets. RtB also gives us the opportunity to encourage and be encouraged by each other. I look forward to further involvement."**

**Rock the Boat Survey Respondent**



## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We continue to enshrine diversity, inclusion and access in our programming and delivery.

Accessibility was seen to be better than 2023. Only 3% of survey respondents thought it needed to be improved compared to 7% last year. This mainly related to difficulties of travel due to the snow and some issues around accessing online events.

Improved equalities monitoring processes saw over half our artists completed an equalities form. One third of the programmed artists came from ethnic backgrounds other than White British (British to include Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities).

10% of the programme also explicitly 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.

We know that financial barriers are one of the biggest challenges in widening access to arts festivals. We therefore offered free tickets to the groups directly involved in our engagement programme and to the other people supported by our partners in that programme. We ensured that we had a wide range of concessionary tickets (for under 26 year olds, over 65's, people on low incomes, students and disabled people) and offered free companion tickets for anyone attending as a carer.



We also welcomed many students from Creative Writing and other relevant courses from the Universities of Edinburgh, Queen Margaret and Glasgow via free tickets to the festival.

Following excellent feedback in 2023, we continued to offer free and Pay What You Can pricing for a selection of events. In total 16 events (or nearly one third of the programme) were included in these pricing structures.

We also continued to offer a festival pass, which allowed those who wanted to attend higher numbers of events to do so in a more affordable way. As described above, uptake of the festival pass increased compared with 2023.



All events took place in fully accessible venues, and over 10% of our events were BSL interpreted or captioned.

A further 25% of events were offered online or hybrid, including via our continuing partnership with EHFm community radio.



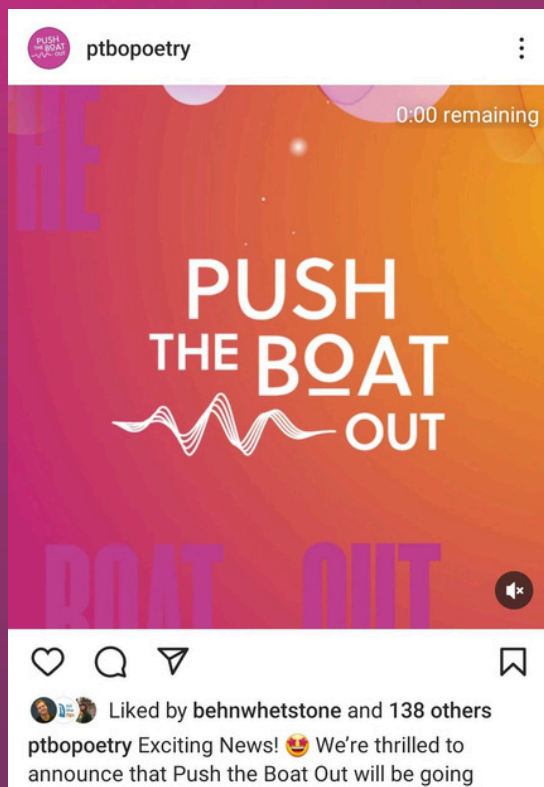
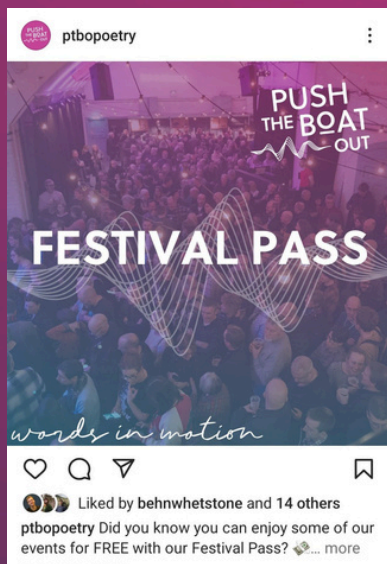
# COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

This year's campaign focused on print, digital and network marketing. Below we've provided an overview of different aspects of our campaign as well as details and analysis of our spending and strategy.

According to our research, digital media (41%) and word of mouth (31%) are the key ways that people find out about the festival. However, as detailed throughout this report, the campaign was significantly disrupted by the late venue change and as a result our print and advertising distribution was delayed. We will broaden the reach of our campaigns and the efficiency of campaign collateral as we strive to further develop and diversify our audiences in the future.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

- Twitter/X
- Instagram
- Facebook
- MailerLite
- Bluesky
- LinkedIn



## SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

Social media channels remain an important part of our promotion and positioning strategy and accordingly we spent time and resources cultivating our online presence. In 2024 we established a new presence on LinkedIn and Bluesky, with LinkedIn quickly developing a supportive community and providing a good platform for corporate messaging. Given our ethical concerns about the future of X, coupled with a significant loss of impact on the channel, we have decided to pause posting on the site. Bluesky has been established and we will monitor its impact through 2025.

Our biggest online reach came from major announcements – the disruption to our launch and subsequent rescheduling of the programme and venues brought us a great deal of online attention. Collaborative posts continue to perform well, as do reels and reshared content. The new venue partners were very supportive on social media, regularly sharing our posts and programme on their own channels.

Our social media adverts reached a new audience, reaching 72k with 1,322 link clicks. We ran general ads promoting the full festival and targeted ads to drive audiences for events like Sir Alexander McCall Smith. Post-festival social media content continued to receive very high levels of engagement with particular success on the recent announcement of multi-year funding from Creative Scotland.

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS:

897

(+11%)  
↑ since  
2023

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS:

2,554

(+34%)  
↑ since  
2023

X FOLLOWERS:

1,900

(-6%)  
↓ since  
2023

:LinkedIn Followers:

128

(+100%)  
↑ since  
2023

Bluesky Followers:

118

(+100%)  
↑ since  
2023



Our Facebook following is made up of 73% women and 27% men. This is spread across 25-65+ age demographics with the highest audience segment falling into the 35-44 segment, very closely followed by 45-55. 75% of our Instagram followers are women and 25% 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 still being the highest followed by Glasgow.



**"Edinburgh's innovative and eclectic festival dedicated to all things poetry and spoken word"**

**The Skinny**

**"...it deserves an even wider audience than the enthusiastic packed house it drew to the Scottish Storytelling Centre on Friday night"**

**\*\*\*\* Joyce McMillan, The Scotsman on Disrupting the Narrative**

## PARTNER PROMOTION

We understand the value and impact of our partnerships and work closely with programme partners, artists and media partners to broaden the reach of the festival. This is a cost-effective strategy but relies on internal resources to ensure success. We collaborated with Edinburgh International Book Festival, StAnza Poetry Festival, the National Theatre of Scotland and Edinburgh City of Literature to promote events. We received a great deal of support from artists in the programme and performers like Iona Fyfe and Michael Pedersen used their platforms to share information about the festival.

We continued media partnerships with The Skinny, The List and EHFM to secure coverage and support through media spend. We ran a competition through The Skinny offering a prize of gig tickets and a gift from festival supporters Crafty Distillery. The relationship with EHFM allowed us to broadcast and record events and reach remote attendees through online broadcasts and podcasts.

## PRESS COVERAGE

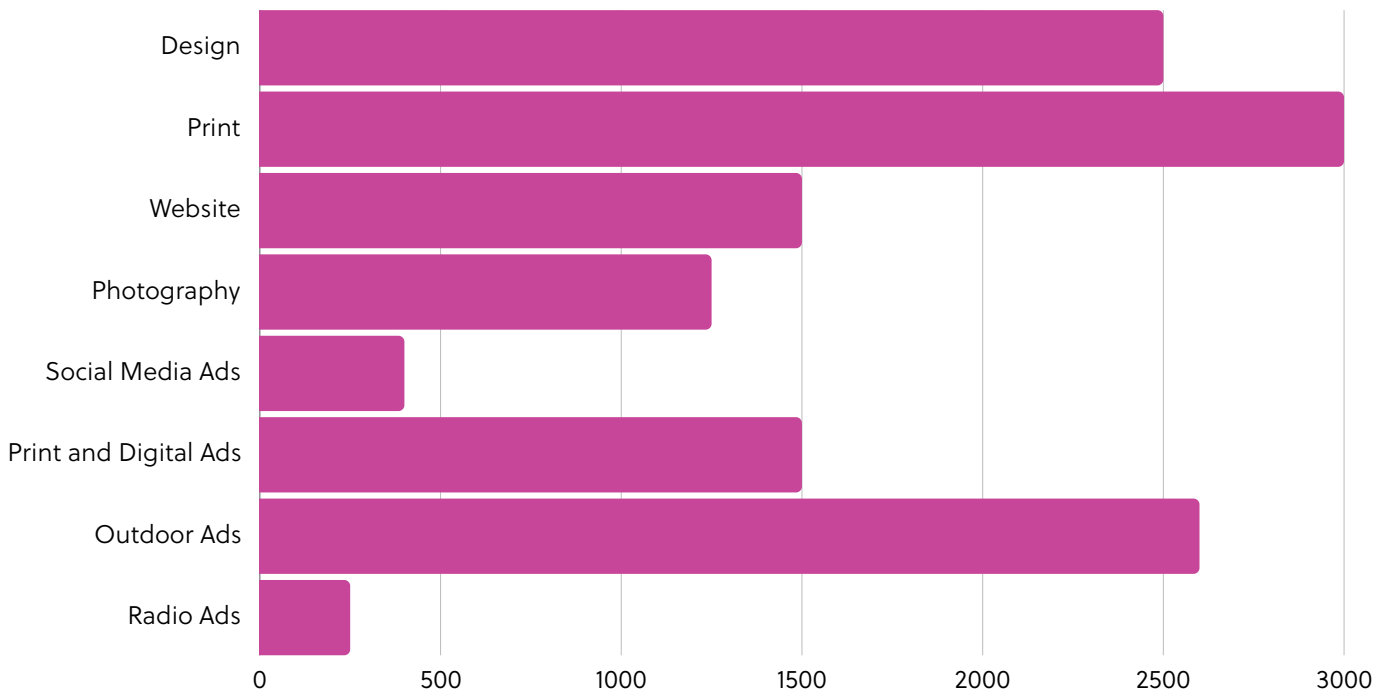
- Art Mag
- BBC Radio Orkney
- BBC Radio Shetland
- BBC Radio Scotland
- Edinburgh Minute
- Edinburgh Culture Minute
- Edinburgh Reporter
- EHFM
- MSM UK
- North Edinburgh News
- Scotsman Arts
- Snack Magazine
- STV News
- The List
- The Skinny
- The Times

## PR CAMPAIGN REPORT

- 24 Online mentions with a combined reach of 57,915,722
- 5 Broadcast mentions with a combined reach of 2,815,438
- 3 Print mentions with a combined reach of 23,120
- Total mentions 34 | Total reach 60.8 million



## COMMS SPENDING BREAKDOWN



## FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

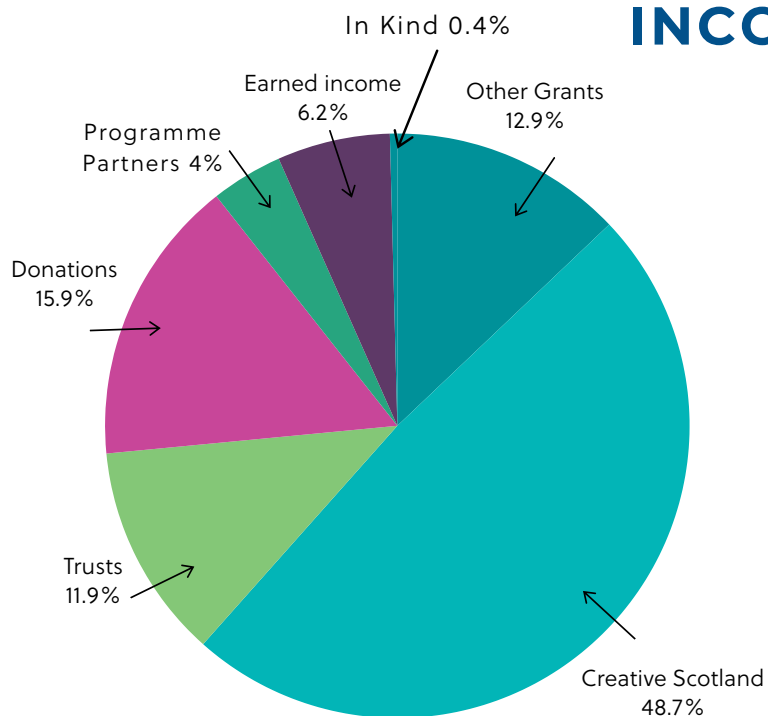
- Increase our print distribution and presence around Edinburgh to attract audiences beyond our existing online networks.
- Work closely with our PR Agency to increase coverage and reach.
- Rework our launch and on-sale moment to build momentum and buzz.
- Improve the quality of media partnerships to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



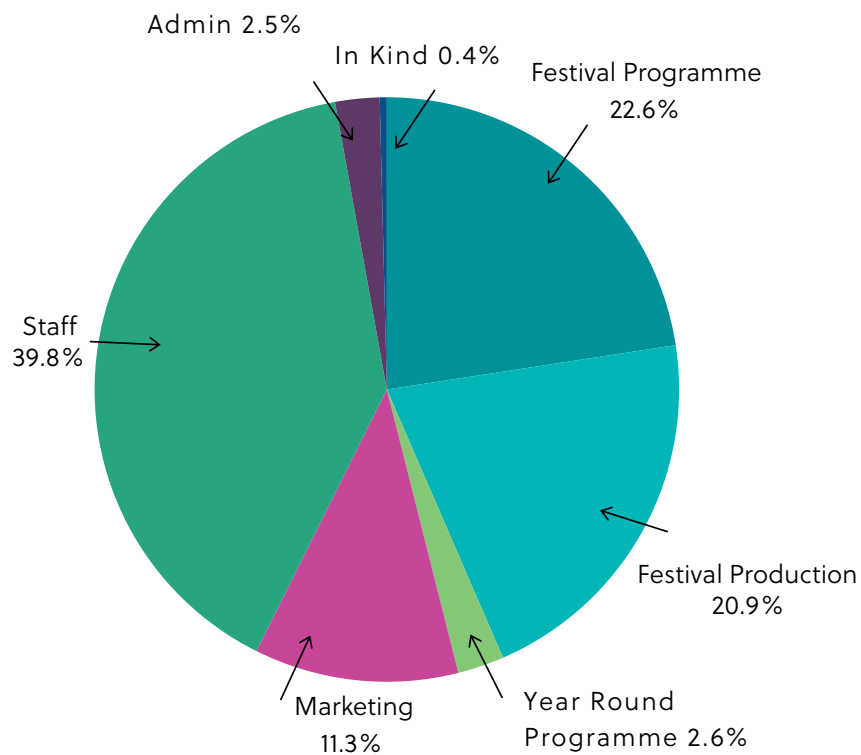


# FINANCIALS

## INCOME



## EXPENDITURE



## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



As this was our first full year operating as a SCIO, it was a time of significant organisational development. Across the summer we undertook open recruitment for board members following a skills audit, which brought total board members to seven. In December 2024, we were sad to say goodbye to our founding chair Anne Diack and welcomed Helen Chomzcuk to take on the role. We also developed a number of policies and action plans to support our work and a business plan covering the period 2024 to 2028.

We were also delighted to secure multi-year funding from Creative Scotland, offering us the stability to develop our work and support our community over the next three years.

## SUCCESSSES

- Despite our various challenges (see below) we delivered nearly every event that had been originally planned in the festival and reached audiences in greater numbers than in 2022.
- We developed new partnerships with venues across Edinburgh, increasing our profile amongst different audiences and allowing us to envision the festival in different spaces and contexts.
- Our strong and diverse programme was well-received by audiences and artists alike and resulted in a 4 star review in the Scotsman for two events, amongst a range of other positive press coverage.
- We have built a recognisable brand with a playful and engaging visual identity. Our online presence continues to expand across social media, driving high levels of engagement and interaction with our audience.
- We improved our accessibility from an audience perspective and improved our equalities monitoring processes, which showed that we are achieving our goals in terms of diversity of programme.
- We developed a long term business plan and strategy, secured multi-year funding from Creative Scotland for the next three years and began to diversify our other income streams.
- 





## SUPPORTING POETS, AUDIENCES & WORKERS



• We generated more than £33,500 in fees for artists - an increase of nearly 17.5% on 2023. We commissioned new 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.

- We created book sales, and opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development and social connection. We introduced people to new work and forms.
- We created seven meaningful jobs, including moving a further two staff to year round positions (making a total of 4), and contracted web designers, production support, box office and front of house staff, and other skilled freelancers.
- We continued to work with a programme committee, ensuring that a range of voices were included in our planning and that this time was fairly paid.

## CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge related to the delivery of this year's festival was that we discovered that we had to move the festival to a new location only two days before our planned launch. We could not be more appreciative of the support from our artists, audiences and Edinburgh's creative sector during this crisis. In particular, the venues who at very short notice accommodated us and in doing so made it possible for the festival to go ahead. We are immensely and eternally grateful to the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Dance Base, Dovecot Studios and the Pleasance.

While our team rose to the challenge and delivered a very successful festival, it involved considerable extra staffing and financial resource. We had to find new venues and put in place the infrastructure to support box office and delivery across not one but four venues, as well as delaying our marketing campaign by two weeks and redoing all associated collateral.

Additionally, on the Saturday of the festival, we were caught in a major weather event as an unforeseen snow storm brought all public transport to a halt.

Both of these factors were undoubtedly important in the reduction rather than expected growth of both audience numbers and box office revenue. It also illustrates the risk associated with a late buying pattern, which we continue to experience.

## FUTURE PLANS

With the stability offered by consistent funding, we are looking forward to implementing our three year business plan. This will see us work towards 8 ambitious aims across three categories.

### **Programme & Artist Development**

1. Showcase the best of contemporary poetry, spoken word, hip hop, rap and related art forms 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 art forms 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 are very proud to have delivered a successful festival against a very challenging backdrop. Out of a planned 53 events, only three had to be cancelled due to the venue change and weather conditions, and despite the many difficulties facing our audiences, attendance numbers remained strong and exceeded those seen in 2022.

Our reputation for offering something unique and important in Edinburgh and Scotland's cultural calendar, and for high quality poetry-led cross artform programming was enhanced. We received excellent feedback from artists and audiences alike. We continue to support the creation of exciting new work, including through our ongoing collaboration with the National Theatre of Scotland and to support artists in a range of valuable ways.

We once again improved our accessibility, and we have implemented enhanced equalities monitoring, which enables us to track our approach to DE&I for artists and audiences. The baseline evidence gathered this year shows that we are already offering a diverse programme and reaching new audiences.

Our partnerships were strengthened through adversity, and we are delighted to be part of such a supportive arts community.

Our success in securing multi-year funding through Creative Scotland, is a critical achievement in this period. It will offer long term stability for the festival to achieve our strategic aims as we develop and continue 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:

info@pushtheboatout.org  
www.pushtheboatout.org



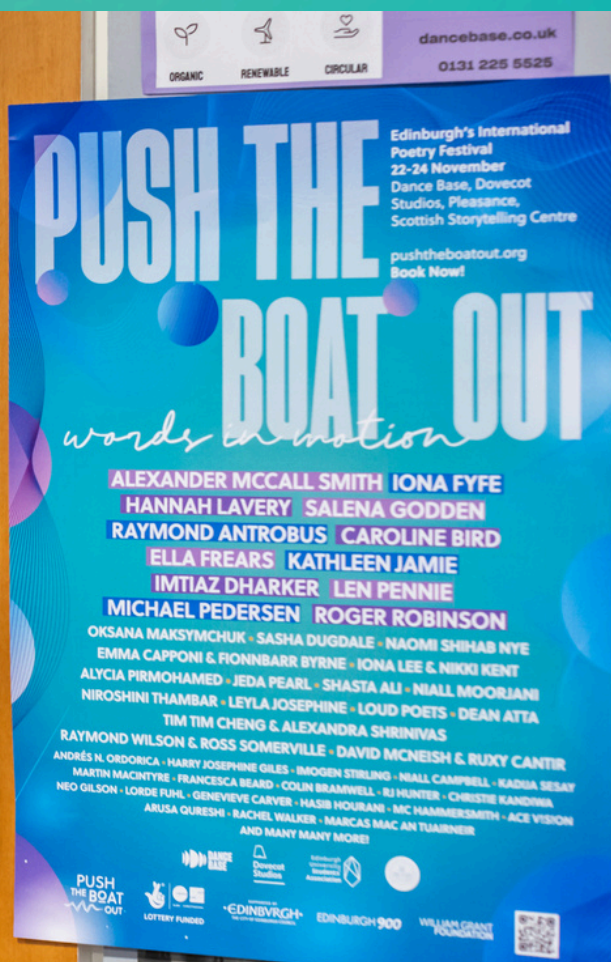
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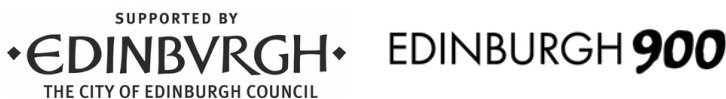
Push the Boat Out Festival



# 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



## Funders



## Programme Partners



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