

HippFest

Summary Report 2025



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Executive Summary

The 15th anniversary of HippFest marked a significant milestone, delivering the most adventurous programme of screenings and events yet, all centred and inspired by the beautiful Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness. While we narrowly missed matching last year's ticket sales, this year still represented a remarkable 15% increase compared to our previous record year in 2019. Our events and programming has so far reached an audience of 4,954 people in-person, online and year-round, narrowly exceeding our record highest audience in 2024.

HippFest remains a cornerstone of Falkirk Council's placemaking and cultural strategy, playing a key role in broadening access to the arts and cementing Falkirk's reputation as a vibrant cultural destination for both local communities and visitors. This year we launched our exciting new rebrand with local designer Stretch Bros, updating the HippFest look for a future-facing but familiar and friendly brand identity, formally adopting our new name, "HippFest", by which the Festival has been affectionately known for some time.

This year's edition featured our most ambitious in-person programme yet, with 21 screenings across 11 venues throughout the Falkirk District. One standout event was the UK premiere of a live score commissioned in partnership with the Tromsø Silent Film Festival, described by one audience member as "a little bit of Glastonbury in Bo'ness". We also enhanced our HippFest at Home online offering, presenting four as-live on demand screenings and three insightful pre-festival presentations. We successfully piloted a new method of online delivery for the programme, where audiences could tailor their viewing experience to watch with or without the musician/s visible onscreen. A major first for the Festival was the commissioning of a new artist-led archival moving image film, accompanied by an exhibition at Bo'ness Library. Another major highlight of the year was our accessibility pilot using Audio Description. In a UK-first for a silent film festival, we collaborated with Polly Goodwin of Polly Sensory Access to produce both online and in-person Audio Description for blind and low-vision audiences. This service premiered with the newly restored 'The Pride of the Clan' at our Friday Night Gala screening.

Beyond the cinema, HippFest engaged audiences of all ages—from 3-years to 65+—through a rich programme of public events, including six workshops, two excursions, and two behind-the-scenes tours. Our monthly podcast: [HippCast](#), continued to keep audiences informed and connected year-round, and we developed our audience review award to include a promising new partnership with Letterboxd.

We deepened our engagement with the local community, fostering a welcoming and dynamic "Festival Village" atmosphere in Bo'ness, with the welcome addition of the newly opened Bo'ness Barrel, which hosted our first—and very popular—HippFest Pub Quiz. We also maintained our long-running New Found Sound project, showcasing inventive new scores by three school-age bands. In a step toward the future, we piloted a Young Programmers initiative, offering four young people the opportunity to shape elements of the Festival programme while gaining valuable insights into the cinema industry.

Falkirk Council's **vision** is that HippFest is a world class Festival for silent film, cultivating an international community with an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema.

Mission: HippFest is Scotland's first and only festival of silent film with live music, centred in and inspired by Scotland's first and oldest cinema, featuring exceptional screenings, commissions, workshops, community events and touring.

Inclusive

Our Team are friendly and approachable.
Our programmes embrace a multitude of styles, genres and nations.
Our programmes can be accessed and enjoyed by all.
We value equally the overlooked and the celebrated.

Exceptional

We ensure the highest presentation standards.
We capture and act on feedback from our community.
Our programmes celebrate discovery.
We innovate, evolve and embrace new platforms and activities.

Collaborative

Our cultural, academic, industry and archive partners invigorate our practice.
Our bold, high-profile partners complement our ambitions.
Our recruitment, artist commissions and volunteering opportunities are mutually rewarding.
Our tailored activity engages schools, FEs, universities and community groups.

Sustainable

We have a positive impact on community regeneration.
We champion Responsible Tourism.
We are committed to identifying and prioritising opportunities to cut carbon emissions.
We use our resources efficiently whilst ensuring the highest quality.

Background

The 15th edition of HippFest (19th - 23rd March 2025), a project of Falkirk Council, is made possible through additional core funding from Screen Scotland and the British Film Institute's Film Audience Network, distributed by Film Hub Scotland.

Through a cohesive strategy of community engagement, dynamic partnership working and high-quality programming, the HippFest project delivers on Falkirk Council's priorities as articulated in The Falkirk Council Plan 2022 - 2027:

- Supporting stronger and healthier communities
- Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities
- Supporting a thriving economy and green transition

Based in and inspired by the Hippodrome in Bo'ness, HippFest celebrates silent film – films made without synchronised sound – roughly from the first four decades of film production. This focus marries the heritage of the Hippodrome as Scotland's first, purpose-built cinema with that of the medium itself. Through online HippFest at Home screenings, exhibitions, national touring, workshops, excursions and community screenings, the Festival opens up many other places to experience silent film with live music, particularly in locations where this cultural provision is rare. While the local audience remains a core focus, the exceptional standard of programming and online platform means that we have a strong international reach as well – this year, 6% of the in-person audience and 18% of the HippFest at Home audience was from outside of the UK.

"It's a really special festival that encompasses the whole town. Everyone is amazing, friendly and welcoming. Its content is like a major international festival but the experience is intimate and personal."



Lisa Evans

2025 key figures

563,426

People watched our cinema ad funded through a partnership with DCM (Digital Cinema Media)

20
Screenings

Programme reach:

5,034

1,222+

Views of our HippFest at Home on-demand features, and online pre-Festival presentation

85

Press stories over the course of the press campaign, with a potential reach of 35.7 million

6
Workshops

4
On demand online feature screenings

3
Online pre-Festival presentations



6,343

Total followers across social media platforms (at close of campaign)

9%

Audience were under 26

3,050

In-person & online tickets purchased



“Attending the annual silent film festival HippFest has become the highlight of my year so far, especially as this year I attended as a Young Programmer, helping to run events such as the HippFest Pub Quiz. It was so incredible to see such an amazing lineup of silents and performers from all over the world, get to know the behind the scenes of running a festival, and gain useful insight into the coming preparation required for the programme of silents that myself, Eve Jeffreys and Helen Jockel are curating and organising for the Hippodrome this coming autumn!”

— Alanna Steel, Young Programmer (via LinkedIn)



In this year's Festival, 704 of the ticket sales were concession classed sales. Additionally, 1% of the audience made use of our standby ticket offer. 1% purchased tickets through the 16–25-year-old pricing scheme. 80% of our surveyed audiences agreed that HippFest is 'very good' value for money.

Reported use of accessibility provisions saw a significant increase compared to the 2024 edition. Last year, 36% of the in-person audience and 32% of the online audience reported using accessibility services. This year, those figures rose to 58% for in-person attendees and 66% for online viewers.

Originally, our accessibility plan for **Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences** focused on British Sign Language (BSL) provision. However, after reviewing evaluation data from previous years and recognising that international Deaf/signing audience members are unlikely to use BSL (using American Sign Language instead for example), we chose instead to offer **live captioning**. This change ensured that all spoken introductions and talks at the Hippodrome were live-captioned. All online presentations and on-demand broadcasts included captioning as well.

For audiences who are **blind or have low vision**, we worked with Polly Goodwin of Polly Sensory Access to develop a comprehensive range of **accessible materials** for the Friday Night Gala presentation of the newly restored 'The Pride of the Clan'. This provision was made available both in person and online and included:

- Live Audio Description (AD) via headset at the venue
- Synchronous braille descriptions delivered in venue—a unique attempt to capture the essence of silent film without voice, synchronised with live music
- Remote access to AD
- A downloadable AD script for use with Braille devices at home
- A silent film primer tailored for blind and low vision audiences
- A background briefing note about the film

Although uptake of the in-venue audio description headsets was modest—used by just five bookers—this represented 2.7% of the total audience, a relatively positive outcome for this type of access provision.

Due to the way we structured the online content for HippFest at Home—with togglable audio tracks for versions with and without AD—we are unfortunately unable to determine how many remote viewers used the AD and braille features. Despite this limitation, the project represents groundbreaking work; to our knowledge, no other silent feature film presentation has included this level of access provision. We see this as a valuable step forward and intend to explore and share our learnings further, as they may be of significant interest to festivals and venues presenting silent cinema globally. Our presentation will feature in a paper to be presented at the **2025 DARCI Conference** (Disability, Accessibility and Representation in the Creative Industries) in September in York.

Community

Festival Village

The 2025 edition of HippFest saw the continued growth and success of our Festival Village concept, designed to enrich the visitor experience, provide key Festival information at accessible and welcoming points, strengthen connections with local businesses and cultural venues, and boost the local visitor economy. This year, the Festival Village expanded to include a new partner venue: **The Bo’ness Barrel**, a recently opened establishment that hosted our opening night Pub Quiz Mixer. This event not only provided a welcoming social space for attendees to connect but also marked a valuable addition to our network of local partners. With more food, drink, and retail options now available in Bo’ness, audiences were able to enjoy a fuller Festival experience between screenings. Local businesses provided a warm welcome and generous support—contributing prizes for competitions and treats for the passholder goody bags such as books from **Inkspot & Silverleaf** and fudge from **Sweets n Things**.

The positive impact of this collaboration was felt on both sides. According to our audience surveys, 85% of attendees visited a café or restaurant as part of their Festival trip—an increase from 75% in 2023 and 68% in 2022. Feedback from business partners was equally encouraging: 50% reported an increase in customer numbers during the Festival, while 80% noted improved visibility and broader customer reach within the local community.

Returning partners played a vital role once again. Keith and his team at **Food@34a**, our Festival Hub, provided discounted and delicious meals that kept both the Festival team and audiences well-fuelled throughout the event. **The Collective** offered local produce, handcrafted gifts, and a comfortable space for audiences to relax between events including a special ‘late night’ event with complimentary drinks and nibbles —celebrating the creativity and community spirit that defines the town’s independent business scene.

Tours

Our popular **Behind-the-Scenes Tours**, expertly led by the Hippodrome venue team, once again offered Festival-goers the chance to explore the history and workings of Scotland’s oldest purpose-built cinema. These two tours continue to be a highlight of the programme, with 50 attending this year. It holds great value in deepening audience appreciation for the venue and the heritage it represents.

New for this year, we partnered with **RSPB** Scotland who led a foreshore Birdwatching Walk—a screen-free moment of calm for both locals and visitors. This initiative was aligned with our growing sustainability commitments and provided a refreshing counterpoint to the busy Festival schedule, encouraging engagement with Bo’ness’ natural surroundings.

We also offered our audiences a **Rosebank Distillery Tour** (see Partnership Activity pg. 14), providing another diversion from the screen. This tour gave insight into the rich heritage of the recently revived Rosebank Distillery, a key player in the region’s visitor economy, and of course a delicious nip of whisky. The tour created a memorable experience for the visiting delegation from Tromsø International Film Festival:

“Thank you so much for a wonderful tour of the distillery- great storytelling and fantastic to see how you preserve the history. It’s also inspiring to witness that perfect synergy between cultural event and local industry. And of course, thank you, HippFest to facilitating this.”

Community Screening

This year’s Community Screening took place at our long-standing partner venue, **The Barony Theatre** in Bo’ness, featuring ‘The Constant Nymph’ as part of our special focus on the work and legacy of Alma Reville. We remain grateful to The Barony Players for their ongoing support in making this screening possible. Their collaboration helps us to anchor HippFest in the heart of the Bo’ness community and ensures that our programme continues to reach and reflect local audiences.



Sustainability



At HippFest, we are committed to championing **Responsible Tourism** by actively promoting low-carbon, sustainable travel options and encouraging deeper connection to the local environment.

This year, we provided audiences with practical guidance on green transport choices, including information on bike routes, train and bus connections, and car-sharing options. To further support sustainable travel, we successfully secured **UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund** support to offer a daily **shuttle transfer service** between Linlithgow—the nearest train station—and Bo’ness. This service was designed to make public transport a more viable and attractive option for Festival-goers.

The initiative proved effective: 53% of surveyed attendees reported using public transport to reach the Hippodrome—surpassing, for the first time, the percentage of those relying solely on private cars. The shuttle service saw strong uptake, with 108 journeys booked, up from 95 in 2024. Audience feedback highlighted the popularity of the service, with some respondents requesting increased provision/additional services throughout the day. We are continuing to seek sponsorship and in-kind partnerships to expand this offer in future years.

We worked to increase overnight stays in Bo’ness with our Accommodation Partner the Richmond Park Hotel. Overnight visitors reduce the number of long-distance journeys and, once in town, guests are able to move easily between their accommodation and the venue on foot. This year, **30% of surveyed audience members included an overnight stay as part of their HippFest experience**—up from 29% in 2023 and 23% in 2022—marking continued progress in this area. The single hotel in Bo’ness is nearing capacity so we are keen to identify additional accommodation partners in Linlithgow.

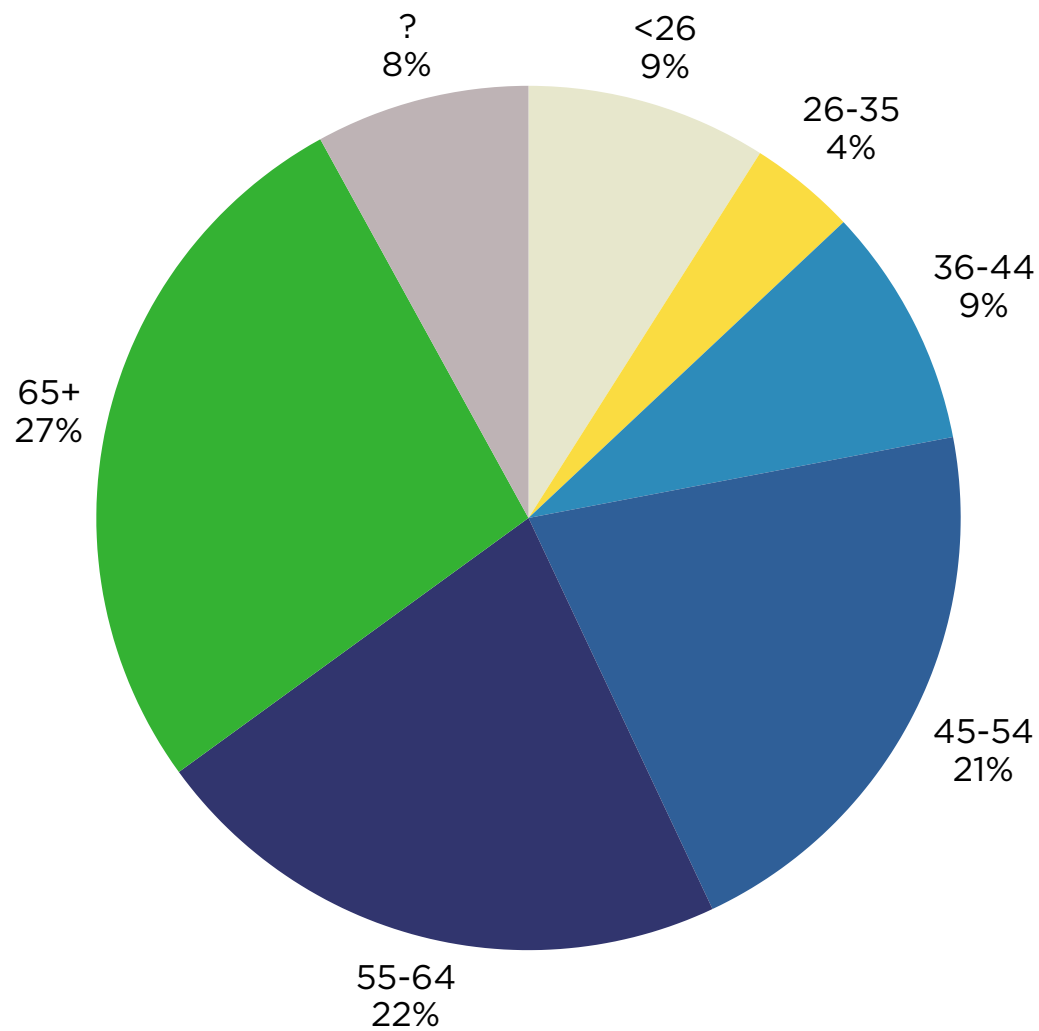
Through our expanded programme of workshops and non-cinema events, we encouraged the use of local green transport corridors, particularly the scenic canal network and Firth of Forth foreshore. These routes provided an environmentally friendly way for attendees to explore the area while engaging with its natural and cultural heritage.

We hosted two community-based workshops—one for adults and one for children—which incorporated guided walks and cycle routes along the canalside. Additionally, we partnered with the RSPB to deliver a free birdwatching walk as part of the official Festival programme. These initiatives not only promoted walking and cycling as sustainable travel modes but also invited participants to actively observe and engage with the local wildlife and natural environment.

By encouraging audiences of all ages to slow down, notice, and appreciate the natural surroundings, we fostered a sense of environmental stewardship and helped deepen the connection between culture, place, and sustainability.

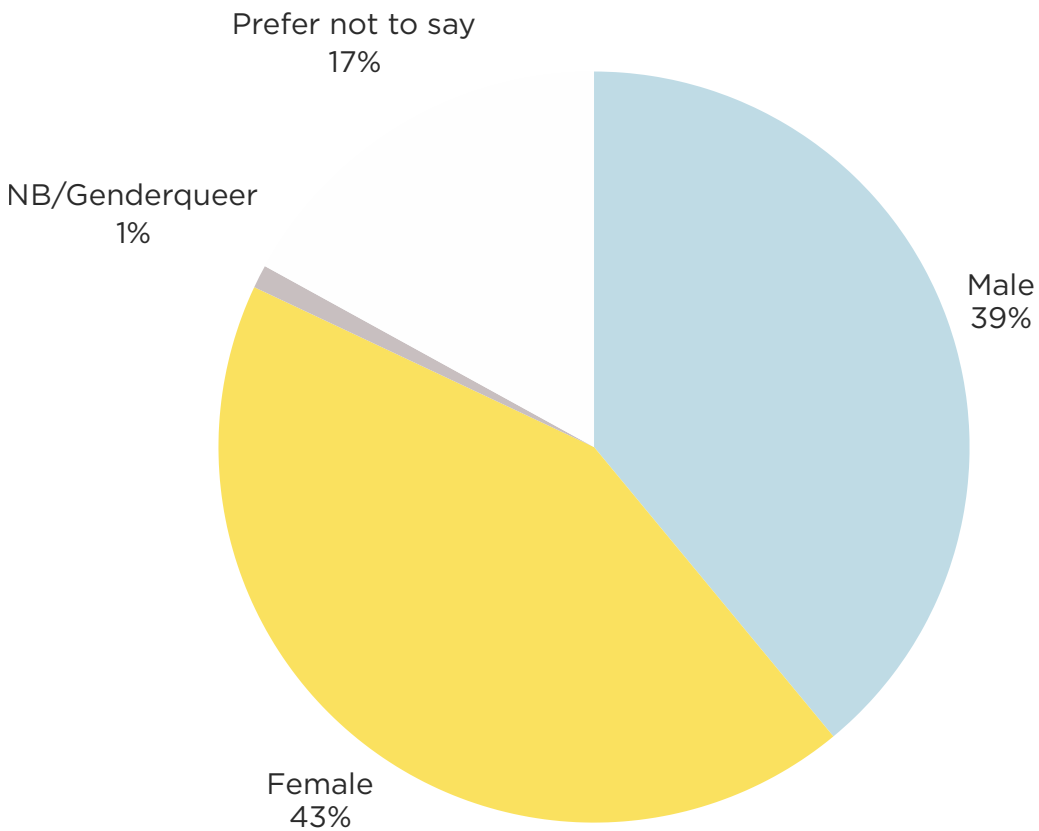
Audience Profile

Age



*in-person audience, self-reported

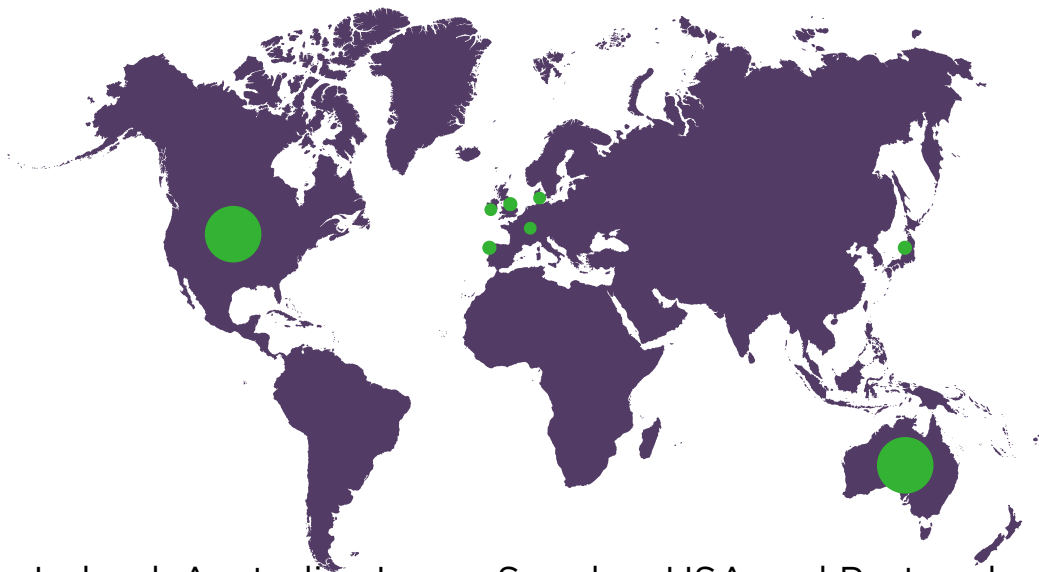
Gender



Location (in person)

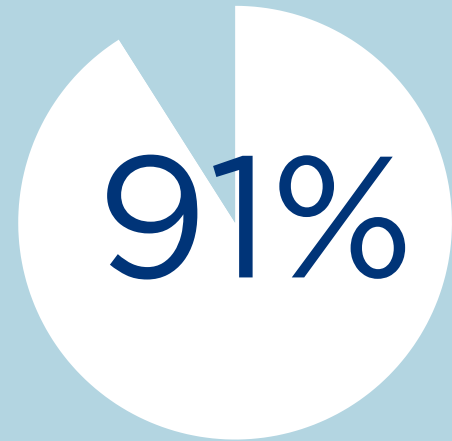
- 32% of our audiences are local
- 62% come from the rest of Scotland
- 12% come from the rest of the UK
- 6% of our audience is international
- 4% did not state where they came from

Online Audiences

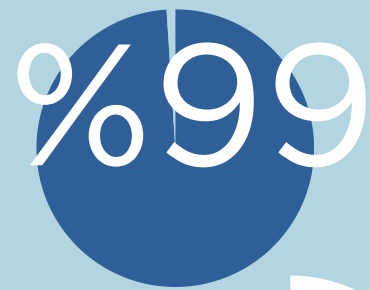


Audiences tuned in from UK, Ireland, Germany, Ireland, Australia, Japan, Sweden, USA and Portugal

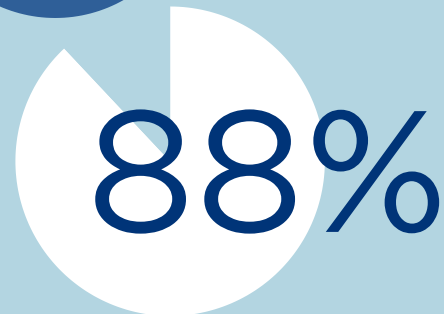
Capturing Feedback



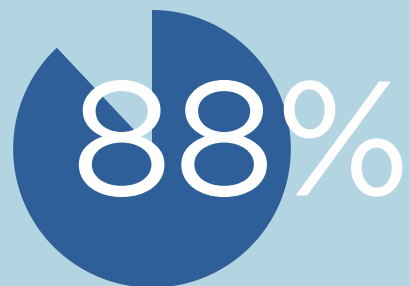
of audiences rated HippFest as 'Very Good' overall



in person audience very likely/likely to attend again (1% don't know)




giving 4 star or 5 star Audience Award rating



of the online audience said they would attend an event like this again.





“This was my first time visiting the Hippodrome. Most joyous cinema experience I’ve ever had. Until this festival I had genuinely been considering never going back to the cinema. Even at many art-house cinemas I have found audiences to be disruptive and end up spoiling the viewing experience of so many wonderful films. What a delight to come to this event and experience a fantastic selection of films surrounded by people who all love the cinema just as much as me. The live music really added to the spectacle. Really made me reconsider my outlook on what the cinema-going experience can and should be. Thank you to everyone involved in the running of the event. I will be back next year !”

“I love the variety of the programme. The talk before/after and the live music gives going to the cinema a sense of occasion. I love the research that goes into choosing the films and the little back stories behind them.”

“It’s a really special festival that encompasses the whole town. Everyone is amazing friendly and welcoming. Its content is like a major international festival but the experience is intimate and personal.”

“First time at the festival, first time in Bo’Ness, felt like it was my hundreth visit. Such an incredible programme of quality and unusual films with the most wonderful, sympathetic and emotive live music. The volunteers were amazing - as was the merch (I got one of everything!). Roll on next year.”

“Hippfest is truly a magical experience. The opportunity to sit with people enjoying films a century old connects us all in the cinema in a very special way not only to each other but to those actors and creatives that made the films. The musicianship elevates this experience to something that is only created in that moment, never quite to be repeated in the same way again.”

“I absolutely love HippFest! I’ve made so many friends through the festival and have really enjoyed every screening - especially the live music component! I also love how modern everything is - having more experimental music, modern jokes and activities etc.”

Audience Profile

According to the 2025 audience survey and evaluation slips, the typical **HippFest in-person attendee** identifies as a woman. In terms of age, individuals aged 65 and over represent just over a quarter of the audience (27%), while those aged 55-64 and 45-54 make up slightly under a quarter each (22% and 21% respectively). Attendees under 45 years of age account for a similar proportion at 22%. Audience motivations reveal a healthy appetite for new experiences, with 11% stating that their main reason for attending was to experience something new. Additionally, **9% indicated that it was their first time experiencing silent film with live music**—down from 15% in the previous year—which suggests that new audiences are returning for future screenings.

The data also indicates a growing trend in audience retention, as only 14% of respondents had never attended the Hippodrome before, compared to 15% in 2024 and 17% in 2023. This supports HippFest's objective to encourage repeat visits to the Hippodrome. When asked about their motivations for attending, 37% of respondents said they come because they enjoy silent films, while 11% cited the desire to experience something new, and a significant 54% said they attended because they had enjoyed the Festival previously. This suggests that HippFest is successfully cultivating an audience that embraces adventurous cinema and values new cultural experiences, while also placing trust in the Festival's programming. The Hippodrome itself remains a key attraction, with 60% of audiences strongly agreeing that they feel positive about having the venue in their community. The cinema's historical significance is also recognised, as 10% said their main reason for attending HippFest was a desire to connect with history and heritage. This aligns well with HippFest's objective to celebrate and engender pride in the unique identity of the Hippodrome as Scotland's oldest cinema and a venue "where silent cinema is at home".

Engagement with the **Festival's online offering** further underscores the reach and impact of HippFest. Of the online audience, **12% had never experienced silent film with live music before**, suggesting the digital format is introducing new viewers to the medium. Additionally, 47% of online participants had never attended the Hippodrome or HippFest in person, a slight improvement from 53% in 2024. Encouragingly, 85% of last year's online audience said they were either attending in person this year or planning to do so in future, indicating a strong crossover between online and in-person audiences. Although travel and accommodation were cited as the main reasons for choosing the online option, 18% of online viewers said they were likely or very likely to attend the Hippodrome in person, showing that the quality of the online content is inspiring audiences to overcome these barriers. Furthermore, 12% of in-person attendees had also participated in a pre-festival talk online, demonstrating further overlap in engagement.

Finally, 82% of online audiences reported they were likely or very likely to attend future HippFest at Home events, while 55% of in-person attendees said they were likely or very likely to return for year-round screenings at the Hippodrome. These figures strongly support the Festival's aim to inspire audience loyalty to the Hippodrome year round.

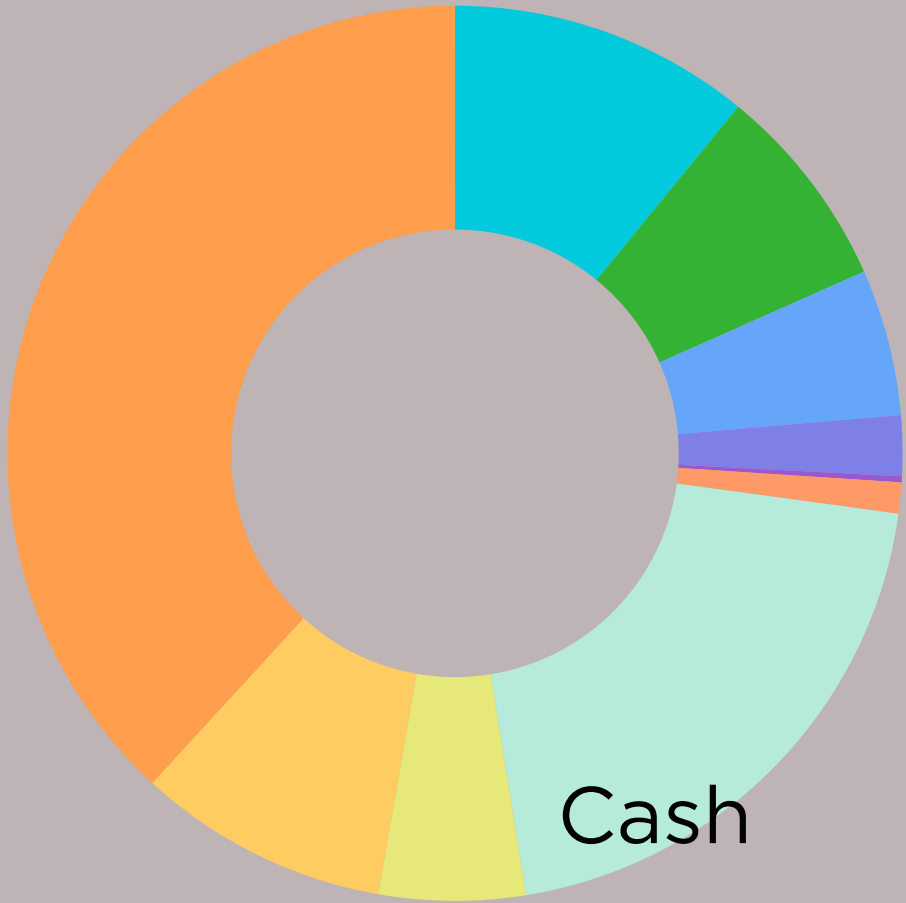
Funding & Income

34 funders and programme partners supported delivery of the Festival including Media Partners The Skinny and Letterboxd, Advertising Partner Digital Cinema Media (media value £36,623), and Accommodation Partner the Richmond Park Hotel.

Core funding was secured from Film Hub Scotland and Screen Scotland (Creative Scotland) to support programme activity for HippFest, with support for three further years now guaranteed by the successful application to Creative Scotland’s new Multi-Year funding stream. Through their Open Fund for Organisations, Creative Scotland also supported the commission of the new archival moving image film ‘The Dark Mirror’, premiered at this year’s Festival, in partnership with Flatpack Festival, whose commission of a new live score for the film was supported by PRS. Government funding in the form of the UKGOV’s Shared Prosperity Fund contributed to subsidising our shuttle bus. Programme and Archival partnerships such as the Irish Film Institute and the Finnish Cultural Institute bolstered the programme notes, the presentations of silent film and our HippFest at Home programme. Cultural Institutions such as Goethe-Institut Glasgow and the Confucius Institute at the University of Edinburgh continued to fund elements of our programme that platformed German and Chinese culture respectively to our audiences.

In-kind and cash sponsorships were awarded from local groups and businesses including the Barony Players, Braes Travel, Rosebank Distillery. Local trusts and Foundations such as the Agnes Watt Trust and the Schools Community 2008 Fund supported our Education and Engagement activities. We strengthened our earned income through box office sales, merchandise sales and donations, as well as through services, talks and tours with HE institutions and film societies, and curated touring package fees to venues across Scotland.

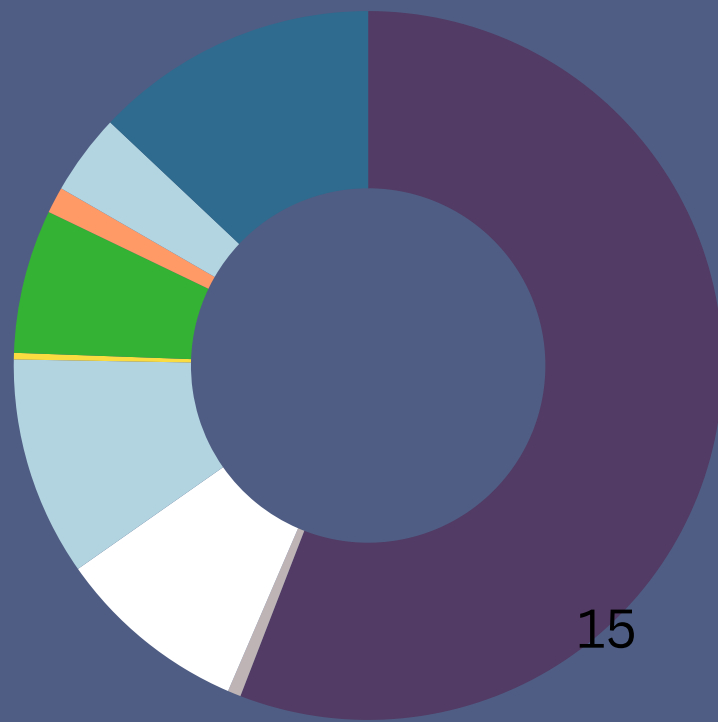
- Falkirk Council - £20,000
- Creative Scotland - £13,638
- Film Hub Scotland - £9,700
- Trusts and Foundations - £4,000
- Societies, HE Institutions - £400
- School & Other Gov. Funding - £2,050
- Earned Income (NET) - £37,224
- Cultural Institutes - £9,695
- Archive and Festival Partnerships - £16,640
- Screen Scotland - £70,000



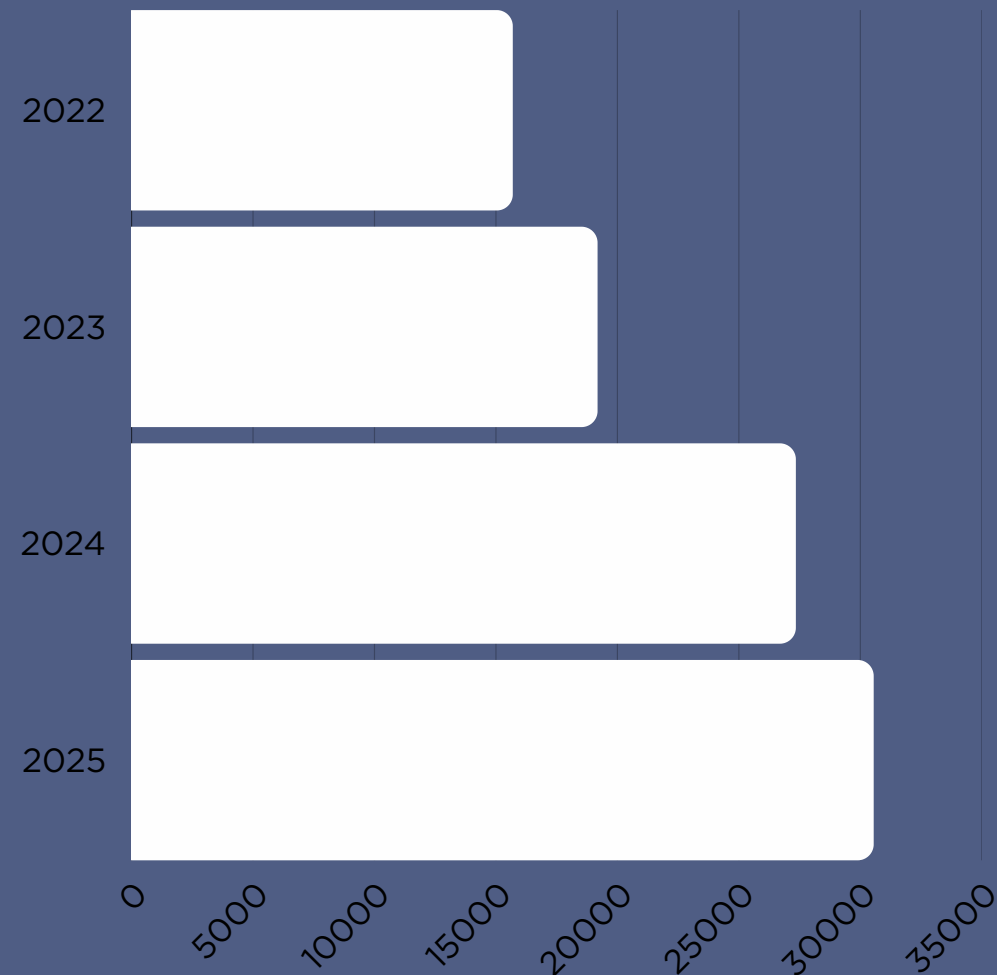
Cash

In-kind

- Falkirk Council - £27,932
- Local Societies - £300
- Local Businesses and Partnerships - £4,400
- Digital Cinema Media - £5000
- Cultural Institutes - £150
- Corporate Sponsorships - £3,278
- Richmond Park Hotel - £600
- Glasgow University - £1850
- Other Festivals and Archives - £6,485



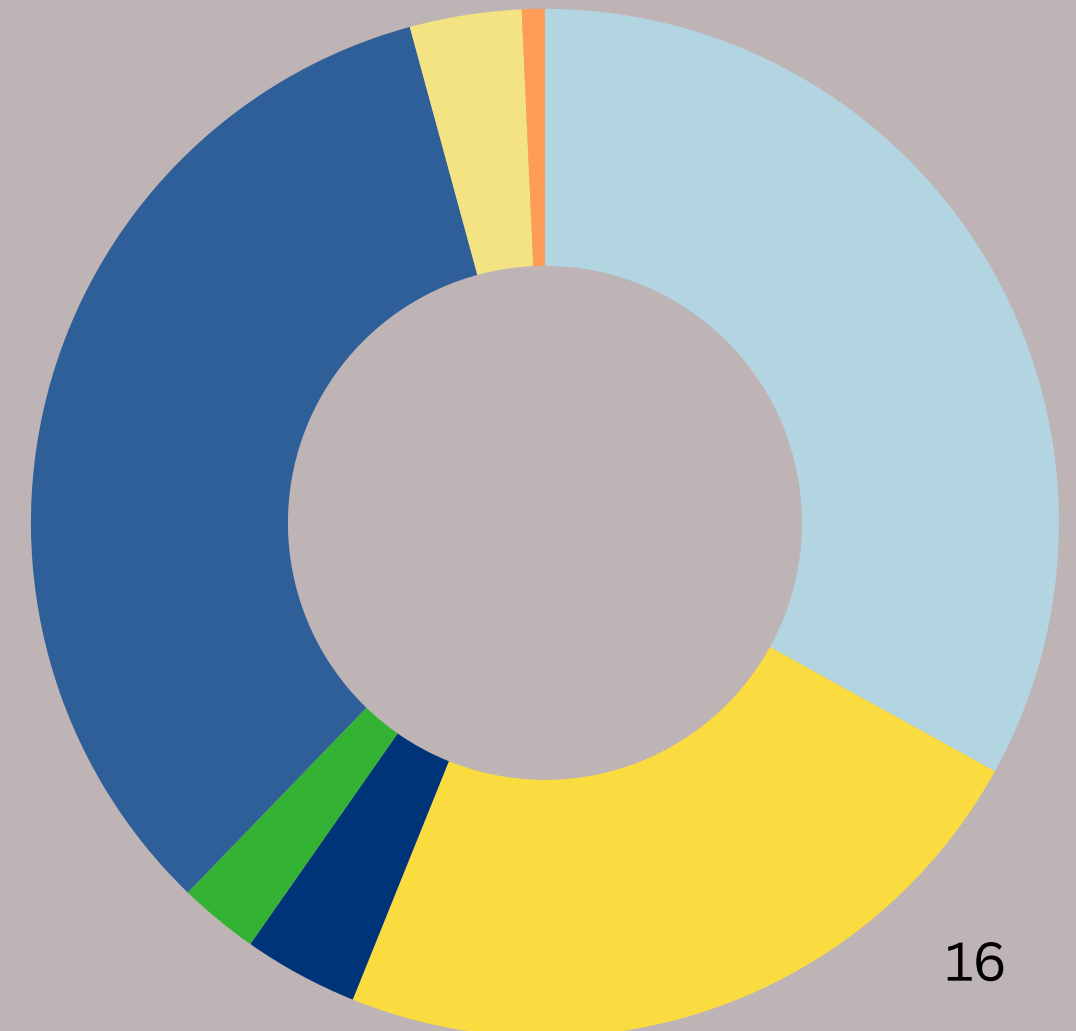
● Box Office Income



Gross Box-Office Income increased by 12% from 2024 and 37% from 2023 - with the inclusion of donations

Expenditure

- Programme - £61,368
- Administration - £42,874
- Outreach & Education - £6,720
- Access Measures - £4,667
- Marketing & Promotion - £62,322
- Monitoring & Evaluation - £6,530
- Sustainability - £1,338



Economic Impact:

- **90% of audiences surveyed cited HippFest as the main reason to visit Bo'ness**
- **85% (up from 78% in 2024) visited a café/ restaurant in Bo'ness**
- **30% of those surveyed included an overnight stay to attend HippFest (increased from 29% in 2023 and 23% in 2022)**
- **Leveraged £6.30 through fundraising and £1.86 of earned income for every £1 of Falkirk Council cash investment**

Looking Forward

HippFest is proud to be one of 13 screen organisations in Scotland to have secured Multi-Year Funding from Creative Scotland, providing greater stability and enabling long-term planning. This funding aligns with our ambitious strategic business plan for 2025-2028. As we look ahead, the team will be evolving, with structural changes and a new round of recruitment beginning in July to support our future direction.

With funding in place for core activities, we're pleased to confirm that the 16th edition of HippFest will take place from 18-22 March 2026, preceded by online programming from January to March that year.

**The 16th edition of
HippFest will take place
18th-22nd March 2026**

In the meantime, 2025 continues to offer exciting opportunities to tour HippFest commissions. Our 2024 commission 'The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric' will tour across Scotland this autumn, with five venues confirmed so far, including the Glasgow University Advanced Research Centre, Eden Court (Inverness), An Lanntair (Lewis), Mareel in Shetland, and Newcastle University, plus a provisional booking as the Opening Night film at the Sea Change Festival (Tiree).

Looking further ahead, our *Taste of Silents* season will return in autumn 2025, featuring a HippFest at Home reprise of the popular 'Key Notes' presentation by Neil Brand, extending the HippFest presence throughout the year. We are especially excited to be collaborating with our inaugural group of HippFest Young Programmers on this season, as part of our commitment to embedding youth voices in the Festival's development.

Our online engagement programme also continues to grow, with a monthly podcast and regular blog helping to maintain year-round audience connection and visibility. We also plan to repeat the successful animation workshop in the school summer holidays.



Kat Gollock

Among the crowd is a clear sense of community. A family of returning audiences and fresh faces. People of all genders, skin colours and whatever else coming together and being accepted by one another, all for the same thing – a love of silent cinema and a trust in the festival to provide some damn good films and a safe space to enjoy them.

Mark Carnochan, Filmhounds



Lisa Evans

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Appendices:

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[2.Digital Activity Report](#)

[3.Press Report](#)