

FINDHORN BAY ARTS
BUSINESS PLAN
2025 - 2028



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan lays out the purpose and direction of Findhorn Bay Arts (FBA) and our creative programme and ambitions for 2025 - 2028.

Since our founding in 2012, we have delivered award winning, innovative, place-based and participatory cultural events across Moray that celebrate the creative life and unique character of this part of North East Scotland. Our work responds to the challenges and opportunities that exist within our communities and seeks to make a positive difference to people and place.

As an organisation, in everything we do, we are guided by our values. These values determine how we programme, how we connect with audiences and participants and how we operate as a team. They demonstrate our deep commitment to addressing social and environmental concerns in what we do as well as the importance of participation, partnership and co-creation in how our activities are realised.

Our programme of activities for this period is set out across three themes: FBA Produces, FBA Supports, FBA Connects.

FBA Produces centres around the sixth edition of our flagship biennial Findhorn Bay Festival in 2026, as well as preparations for a large scale community production in 2028. We also reaffirm our commitment to initiating imaginative community events that are rooted in people and place.

FBA Supports grows our year-round programme of community embedded

creative residencies and builds on the engaged practice approach we established through our recent Combine to Create residencies (Culture Collective). Our plans include sustained engagement for artists working in different locations and with target groups of participants to build meaningful cultural outcomes and social benefits. For the first time, this area also includes an international creative exchange. Engaged practice is an increasingly important and foundational strand of our work that feeds and cross-pollinates with other programme areas, including festival.

FBA Connects continues our commitment to partnership working and supporting creative practitioners based or working in Moray. We also plan to grow our exchanges and collaboration with other rural regions in Scotland to celebrate and learn from each other.

This plan is resourced by a strong core team which expands to meet the growing requirements and profile of our activities. We also demonstrate our ambitions to widen our programme delivery further through targets for fundraising and earned income, and include appropriately skilled staffing resource to lead on this objective.

Overall, this plan affirms our belief in and commitment to the transformative power of creative activities. We seek to be an organisation that can both learn from and inspire those we work with and that our activities can positively contribute to Moray as a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

Board of Directors, Findhorn Bay Arts

OUR WORK

What We Do

Findhorn Bay Arts (FBA) is an award-winning creative producer of cultural events and activities rooted in the communities of Moray. We have grown from our first Culture Day celebration, held in 2013, to establish a year-round programme of high quality arts and cultural activities across the region, including the flagship biennial Findhorn Bay Festival.

We enable creative experiences across a wide range of artforms and genres, encouraging artists and communities to take expression in whatever form is most appropriate to them. We are also committed to presenting work in site specific, outdoor and unusual locations that explore and celebrate the possibility of cultural activities to surprise and delight audiences.

Our programme has always had community participation, environment and regeneration at its heart and this has led to an increasing focus on engaged practice and co-production. We develop projects that place local communities and people at the heart of the creative process, through participant-led activities and projects which amplify the voices and respond to the needs of those who are frequently unheard, isolated or marginalised.

It's important that our activities are accessible and diverse to meet the needs of different audiences and participants. This is reflected in both our programming and communications which target the most marginalised of Moray residents and supports them to explore their creativity, improve their confidence, health and wellbeing and become more socially connected.

Across our programme we seek to harness and enhance the skills of the current, and ever growing, creative sector in Moray as well as provide key development and employment opportunities that help to attract, maintain and develop the people who help to make this part of Scotland a creative place to live, work and visit.

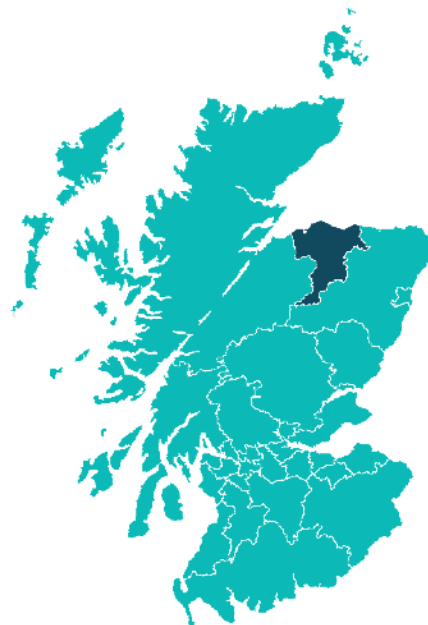
As our work has grown, we understand that our activities bring proven cultural, economic and social benefits to individuals and communities - through transformative creative regeneration projects that resonate locally and inspire nationally.

“ Volunteering was fun, social and entertaining. I met new people, worked in a team, connected with performing artists, was inspired and enjoyed being part of a wonderful cultural arts festival.”

Festival Volunteer

Where We Work

The work of Findhorn Bay Arts was established in the communities around the bay of Findhorn. Our office is situated in Forres and since 2012 our work has responded to people and place. Rooted in the local community, our work has grown over the years to reach and engage with people across Moray and beyond and as such is deeply informed by the people, resources, challenges and opportunities of this region of Scotland.



Moray occupies a triangle of rural north east Scotland between the Cairngorms and the Moray Firth - an area renowned for natural beauty and a growing destination for tourism. Although the population here is steadily growing, the region has a declining birth rate and experiences a consistent net migration of young people between 16-29 years of age. The resulting demographic profile is becoming increasingly older, placing distinct challenges on service provision, infrastructure and economic prosperity. Approximately 45 % of the population live rurally, scattered beyond the five main towns. This pattern of low density population distribution creates significant challenges in access to services and in particular public transport and connectivity. The rurality of the region masks significant levels of multiple deprivation.

In all our work, we seek to respond to the challenges and opportunities that exist across our communities - and provide ways in which cultural activities can bring benefit and contribute to making a positive difference to people and place.

We want Moray to be a vibrant place to live, work and visit; one that its residents are proud to shout about and that visitors want to discover - bringing economic growth and social benefits to residents across Moray.

“ FBA has carved this area into a place where the arts are respected, integrated and vibrant.”

UHI Lecturer

“ FBA has an excellent track record in engaging all sectors of our community to produce successful events and festivals

Fiona Robb, Head of Strengthening Communities, HIE

Who We Work With

Through our work we aim to make art, culture and creativity accessible to all. We work to reach a wide and varied audience and create opportunities to participate whenever possible. We are committed to engaging with people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and walks of life to introduce them to opportunities to develop their involvement in arts and culture. Through all that we do, we foster a working environment of openness and inclusivity. We work to ensure no one is disadvantaged by a condition or requirement.

Our programme connects with:

Audiences

Audiences engage with us primarily through festivals and events - the happenings and spectacles which connect with a broad range of local residents (young people, families, older residents across a varied and broad socio-economic groups), visiting audiences (regional, national & international).

Their needs include access to a rich and diverse programme of events; programming that connects with and takes place in diverse communities and settlements; open access, low-cost and low-risk opportunities to engage, accessible venues, strong communications and event information and ongoing awareness of and trust in our programming and delivery. Over the years we have demonstrated a strong ability to attract and retain audiences, with high-levels of audience loyalty amongst local groups.

Participants

Participants and volunteers are at the heart of programme delivery - contributing to and supporting events and festival production, and participating and shaping creative practices and residency programmes. Our FBA Supports programme places specific focuses on working with participants from targeted groups including people with disabilities - particularly those with poor mental health and/or who are neurodivergent; those experiencing poverty, who are on low incomes, unemployed or under-employed; young people and their families - particularly those who are care experience; LGBTQIA+ community - particularly those under the age of 26; those experiencing social isolation, whether as a result of their age or location.

Their needs include free and accessible opportunities to engage with trusted deliverers; opportunities to develop skills and confidence as co-creators, rather than 'receivers'; creative opportunities within their own communities, where transport and access are not real or perceived barriers.

Artists and Creative Practitioners

Across all our programmes of work we seek to engage and support creative practitioners working across artforms and genres based within and beyond Moray. This is achieved through residencies and commissions; creation, performance and exhibition opportunities within our events and festival; creative learning opportunities; professional skills development and showcasing opportunities.

As we continue to expand our year round activities of socially-engaged practice and artist-community co-creation, we will actively seek to increase the diversity of the work, and diversity of identity among the creative practitioners we programme and commission.

Engaging with practitioners through both open application processes and invitation, creative practitioners are able to connect with new audiences within and beyond Moray; challenge perceptions about work emerging from rural locations; build sustainable creative practice; access support and continual development through fair work opportunities and properly supported professional developments.

Partners

We build strong connections and work in close partnership with a range of other creative, third-sector, developmental and community groups to create activities and events with a greater depth and quality of experience that is relevant and of value to audiences, participants and communities.

Our partnerships strengthen the creative community in Moray as a result of collaboration and mutual support enabling us to more effectively identify needs, improve outcomes, share skills, embrace learning and raise the profile of our work at local, regional and national level.

Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are those who invest in our programmes through financial or in-kind resources. They come to us from across the public and private sectors and share our interests in developing and celebrating our creative places. Their needs include clear alignment of aims and shared values; an understanding of the impacts and outcomes arising from their investment; strong communications which highlight their role as stakeholders; opportunities to amplify and raise the profile of their investment, as well as the impacts & outcomes arising at a local, national and international level.

Recent Awards & Recognition

Findhorn Bay Arts has a strong track in delivering successful projects and our work has been consistently recognised and endorsed through many regional and national awards since our inception. Recent highlights include:

2022	Nomination: SURF Creative Regeneration Award 2022
2020	Winner: Social Enterprise Scotland Award (for COVID-19 pandemic response)
	Winner: Scotland's Small Towns Partnership High Street Hero Award
2018	Winner: SURF Creative Regeneration Award
2017	Winner: Creative Scotland Creative Place Award
2024	Winner Best Large Festival: The Scottish Event Awards

Programme Highlights

Findhorn Bay Arts produces a year-round programme of cultural events and activities. Some key achievements during the previous plan period (2021-2024) include:

Source to Sea (2021)

A programme of events and activities to celebrate Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 20/21, set in the rural and coastal towns and villages of the Moray Firth Coastline. Highlights included over 2,000 people gathering to see the Vision Mechanics STORM puppet walk through Burghead.

Unexpected Gardens (2021-2022)

A 12-month, Moray-based creative growing initiative (programmed as part of the Scotland-wide Dandelion programme), attracting over 250 participants and audiences of more than 1,000 to share ideas, make connections and inspire new ways of thinking about being growing through a programme of creativity and engagement.

AMP: Music (2021-2022)

A creative programme of music making, industry workshops and artist mentorship for young music makers in Moray which built on our previous work delivering in this area. Working with 13-25 year olds, the project offered the opportunity to engage in music making initiatives in collaboration with professional practitioners.

Findhorn Bay Festival (2024)

The fifth edition of the festival saw a 10-day festival with over 10,000 attendees. Set in unexpected spaces and scenic locations, the Festival brought together a vibrant mix of outstanding Scottish art, theatre and performance, storytelling and live music, alongside celebrations of food and drink, family-friendly events and a whole host of open and accessible creative activities.

Combine to Create (2021-2024)

An innovative three year programme, supported by the Culture Collective fund, exploring sustained collaborative and collective working between 14 artists and over 1,400 participants from communities across Moray. This multi-stranded project saw community based residencies, village hall gatherings, public art programmes and artist exchanges - all deeply embedded in the creation and exploration of shared values and outcomes between those involved.

OUR VALUES

As an organisation, across all we do, we are guided by a set of values and priorities. These values provide a framework that underpins all areas of our programme and operations. They guide and demonstrate what we care about; how we work with others; how we make decisions; what principles we operate by. Each value should not be seen in isolation from another; each informs the other. All are integral and core to us. Findhorn Bay Arts will work:

with **Openness and Exploration**

- We are open and honest with those we work with and for.
- We encourage new ways of thinking and seeing the world.
- We support, test and inspire new ways of working.
- We consistently strive for creative excellence.
- We are a learning and developing organisation.
- We provide learning opportunities for our participants and audiences.
- We develop and grow through learning and development which is embedded in our practice.

in **Partnership and Collaboration**

- We work through socially engaged, participatory practice and co-production.
- We work in collaboration and partnership with individuals, creatives, organisations and communities. We listen and are open to new ways of thinking to inform and evolve our work.
- We uphold values of respect, openness and connection.

with **Connection and Hope**

- We are rooted in Moray and provide opportunities and programming for those living and working in the region.
- We present work that delights and inspires and creates meaningful connections between people and place.
- Our work emerges from, connects with and engages with our region's diverse landscapes, towns, villages and communities.
- We work to ensure social, economic and cultural benefits are felt by Moray residents and attracts, and is attractive, to those from beyond Moray.
- We strive to build wellbeing, skills, knowledge and understanding, and raise aspirations and achievements amongst those with whom we connect.

- We respect, acknowledge and believe that the arts are an integral part of everyday life and that every person should have access to creativity.
- We work with others, to advocate for, and promote the multiple and positive impacts arts and creativity, (particularly in a rural context), brings to people, places and society as a whole.

to **Conserve and Foster**

- We recognise that people, place and planet are parts of a dynamic rather than static ecosystem; culture is a living thing, it stays this way through being constantly recreated.
- We seek and work with sustainable practices that address and combat climate change and the climate emergency.
- We achieve great things with minimal impact to the environment and conserve our natural, built and social heritage.
- We foster an appreciation of our natural world, our place in rural Scotland, as well as an appreciation of the language and culture held within Moray.
- We acknowledge the challenges faced by the communities and residents of Moray due to dramatic demographic shifts.
- We play an essential role in ensuring Moray's communities are thriving and are sustainable places in which to live and work.

with **Equity and Respect**

- We work to directly address and tackle the wide-reaching inequalities experienced by all those we work with and for. This includes, but is not limited to: levels of income; class; race and background; ethnicity or nationality; gender and gender identification; religious affiliation; age; hidden and visible disabilities; sexuality; care experience; english language ability.
- We believe in ethical practices, fair work and fair pay for all those we work with - whether contracted, freelance or subcontracted.
- We treat each other with respect, kindness and transparency and consider how our actions, language and behaviour might impact others.
- We do not make assumptions about a person's identity, background or experiences and we use a person's preferred pronouns.
- We acknowledge visible and hidden barriers experienced by those we work with and for.
- We will seek to respond to individual access needs and/or access riders.
- Our policy and practice are evolving and developed as a result of listening, questioning and benchmarking against best practice. We consistently strive to do better and be our best.

STRATEGY

Vision

Moray is a place of exceptional creative opportunities.

Mission

To connect, engage and celebrate people and places through exceptional and diverse creative opportunities in Moray and beyond.

Aims

AIM 1

Produce high quality cultural events that inspire and nurture opportunities for local, national and international artists, connect people and places and bring value to Moray, its communities and residents.

AIM 2

Provide equitable experiences for audiences and participants through long term creative projects and activities forged through collaborations and strengthened networks.

AIM 3

Curate and deliver a range of local, national and international exchanges, commissions and residencies that connect with, enhance and support Moray based creative practitioners.

AIM 4

Maintain a sustainable and effective organisation that is sufficiently resourced to effectively deliver all our activities.

AIM 5

Build awareness, engagement and recognition of our work at local, national and international level.

ACTIVITY

FBA Produces

We will deliver a culturally-rich, year-round programme of events which spark the imagination and enrich the lives of those living in, working in and visiting our communities.

Findhorn Bay Festival (2026)

Findhorn Bay Festival 2026 will be a 10-day event, hosting performances staged in unexpected spaces and scenic locations. The festival boasts a vibrant mix of theatre and performance, exhibitions and live music, visual art and photography, talks, tours, and education programmes and lots of free activities for people of all ages to enjoy. We will continue to ensure that the ethos of the festival remains firmly rooted in the community - inviting people from elsewhere to share with us the vibrancy, joy and talent of our places and community.

As the sixth edition of the festival, the 2026 delivery will be strengthened by our extensive experience as a producing organisation, and will be underpinned and informed by deep interaction with our year-round learning and participation programmes to ensure that it connects with and reflects the people, priorities and needs of the communities we work within.

Programming will include a high proportion of free and open access events, a high-quality range of international, national and local performers and companies through programming which aligns with our core organisational themes and concerns. We will also showcase work and outcomes from our residencies, exchanges, micro-commissions and networking programmes.

The festival will also focus on building our sector support partnerships and networks to firmly establish it as a key gathering opportunity for those working in rural and marginalised communities.

Festival 2024 in numbers

119

Events

10,565

attendances

260

artists &
creatives

36

community
partners

34

volunteers

Research and development for the festival will happen in 2025 and includes; developing local, national, and international partnerships, development of marketing and communication plans, fundraising and programming.

Community Events (Ongoing)

We will continue to develop locally-rooted events which activate our streets, landscapes and buildings to create open, accessible and creative experiences to meet the evolving needs and interests of our local communities and most marginalised residents. Decision-making around this programming strand will be led by, and directly respond to, engagement needs identified in conjunction with community partners

Current programming under development includes:

Beach of Dreams / For 2025, we are building a partnership with designers, Kinetika, to bring their community engagement project, *Beach of Dreams*, to Moray's coastline - highlighting impacts and responses to climate change. We will explore producing this on an annual basis in other coastal communities across Moray.

Culture Day / For 2026, due to hugely popular demand from our local community we are bringing back Culture Day. A fun, free, family day out, showcasing the talent, creative, cultural and heritage sector of Moray through exciting exhibitions, interactive displays, performances, talks, tours and more. Culture Day will happen as part of the 2026 Findhorn Bay Festival, and we will explore how this could be resourced and produced annually.

Large-scale Community Co-Production / Commission (For 2028)

Building on the legacy of our hugely successful community co-productions, *Macbeth: the Remix* (2014) and *The Buke of the Howlat* (2018), and on our long-standing partnerships with outdoor arts producers, we will identify and develop co-producing partnerships with other creative and local partners. In doing so, we will provide opportunities for innovative, experimental and ambitious new work which is locally-rooted and provides rich participatory opportunities for local residents, particularly those experiencing multiple barriers and/or who are from marginalised groups. The work would be scheduled for public presentation at Findhorn Bay Festival 2028.

Creative Production Services

In response to increasing local demand and building on our production for projects such as *Dandelion* and *Remembering Together*, we will position ourselves to deliver and produce events, engagement and activities on behalf of others. Commissions will be led by partners who align with our ethos and activities - creating an income stream for the organisation, whilst allowing us to use our extensive experience in community arts delivery and event production to support others to meet community objectives.

FBA Supports

We will build on our established methodology and track-record of delivering deeply embedded participatory creative activities - led by socially-engaged artists and practitioners, supporting harder to reach groups and building creative skills and opportunities.

Small Halls Artist Residency Programme

We will support two artists to take up residency within two rural communities and focus around the community halls where activity will take place. Working in partnership with local residents, cultural practitioners will use socially engaged practice to explore ideas, issues, ecologies and stories that matter to local people and their unique heritage and culture. Artists will be focused on invigorating these community spaces as places of gathering, connection, creativity and learning. Each residency will conclude with a community sharing and celebration to showcase creative responses from the creative practitioners and/or the community participants. Those engaging during Year 1 will be showcased at festival 2026.

International Artist Exchange (2025-2028)

We will develop a facilitated programme of international creative exchange, based on developing relationships with international partners that have synergies with our own context and priorities - particularly those working rurally and with programmes responding to themes of environment and climate.

From 2025 we will explore partnership opportunities within Ireland with the view of co-commissioning a project for 2028.

For 2026 we will place a spotlight on, and showcase a programme of artists from Ireland as part of the festival and facilitate up to two artists to connect, build relationships through exchange.

Associated Artists (Ongoing)

As part of our continued investment in supporting creative practitioners and interest in exploring collaborative and co-producing working models, we will establish and develop long term relationships with selected artists who are experienced in participatory work and whose practice focuses on working with clearly identified, marginalised or harder to reach groups. Together, and in collaboration we will be actively seeking to secure additional resources to support work within and with communities, and development and delivery of activities.

“ ...to actually engage with a community in a participatory way has given value to my work and inspired me to continue”

Local Creative Practitioner

“ We saw familiar faces return to the hall & many new people. Thank you Findhorn Bay Arts for kickstarting & inspiring this; we are now going to run regular art activities as a result”

Village Hall

HOW WE WORK

Events & Festivals

Producing community-led events and festivals is at the heart of our programme - animating our streets and spaces, and connecting with the broadest range of audiences through creative activity. Across our flagship festival, large-scale productions, community events and partnership programmes, the delivery is underpinned by core themes which underline our approaches to programming and partnerships:

Open to All

Almost every strand of event production includes a high proportion of free and open access events - reducing barriers to access and warmly inviting our communities to join us in celebration. During festival 2022, one in every three events activities was free and many of our ticketed programmes were offered on a pay what you can basis.

Everywhere is a Stage

We prioritise programming that happens outwith traditional event spaces - using our towns and landscapes as a canvas for creativity. Many of our free events take place outside, in our streets and spaces, where audiences can join us with fewer barriers to access, or simply have unexpected encounters with creativity in their communities.

Celebrating Spectacle

We're not afraid of scale! We know that seeing large and ambitious events within your community can be a significant and positive experience - even more so if you can be involved in creating them. Our long-term commitment to outdoor arts is driven by the accessibility and diversity that these kinds of spectacles of music, theatre, movement, light and sound can deliver.

Made by Many

Delivering events requires plenty of hands. Our events provide extensive opportunities for people from across our communities to develop skills, build their confidence and broaden their social or professional interactions through extensive volunteering and participation opportunities.

Listening to our Communities

From festivals to new commissions, the communities we work within are integral to how events come to life. Much of our events programme is shaped by conversations and collaborations within other parts of our programme - artistic residences, exchanges, and participation projects. Our large scale community productions engage with groups over a number of months, or years - engaging people throughout delivery - from idea and conception, through creative development to ambitious delivery.

Cultural Exchange

Our events are a site of cultural exchange, between local and visiting creatives, artists and audiences, participants and partners. Our programming is underpinned by opportunities which arise from bringing together multiple groups - and the learning that emerges from this.

FBA Connects

We will nurture and support creatives, practitioners and peers to provide opportunities to develop new work, test out ideas and share learnings - particularly amongst those working in rural and isolated communities.

Creative Learning Exchange: The Space Between (2025, 2027)

We will deliver a biennial creative learning exchange in September. In 2025 this will be underpinned by the theme *the space between*. The event will bring together artists and creative practitioners, local organisations, community groups and the third sector. Underpinned by the theme of *the space between* will include workshops, discussions, presentations and training to facilitate the sharing of ideas & methodologies, how we support and inspire new ways of working within and between ourselves, creative practitioners and communities and the active role of creativity in place-making.

Rural Connections (Ongoing)

Every two years we will build relationships with another rural region and at least one rural-based arts organisation in Scotland, and through conversation, exchange, and peer-to-peer learning consider outcomes beyond urban practice and explore options for rural based creatives to have routes to showcase, exchange and collaborate.

In 2025/26 we will partner with The Stove Network and Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival, and facilitate opportunities to spotlight rural talent through the festival programme.

Creative Networking (Ongoing)

Culture Café / Culture Café brings together those working in the arts who are interested in networking, sharing ideas, developing partnerships and peer support. In 2025, we will support the delivery of three Culture Cafe events in Moray to happen. We will deliver one of these and provide the finance and support for up to two others to happen.

Out to Lunch / This programme will provide an opportunity for local art and cultural organisations to meet and support peer to peer learning, explore and develop ideas, and to connect with each other through a quarterly lunch time meet up.

Advocacy (Ongoing)

Key to our mission is the amplification of our work, the outcomes achieved and the creatives behind this. We are committed to our role as a strong sector voice, amplifying and highlighting how creativity can support local and national economic, regeneration and wellbeing agendas. We are frequently asked to share our experiences, provide evidence and case studies, give talks and attend cross-party meetings on the role of culture within regeneration and more. We recognise the importance of developing ideas, building relationships, sharing best practice and making our work visible.

RESOURCING

Findhorn Bay Arts was established in 2012 as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Having traded as a social enterprise since inception, in 2020 we became a charity registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. We adopted this model as it better reflected the organisational structure and approach; highlighted the outwards facing, social nature of the business; allowed us to attract funding and promoted a culture of transparency and good governance.

Governance

The organisation is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are responsible for:

- the strategic direction of the company
- supporting staff
- setting and monitoring progress and achievement against our objectives
- overall financial responsibility for the company
- maintaining company policies and procedures

The Board meets on a quarterly basis, as well as at least once a year for a development or planning day with the staff team and external facilitators if appropriate.

At each board meeting the organisational finances are scrutinised alongside an overview of project achievements, progress, challenges or obstacles, presented through papers and verbal reports. Meetings also include consideration of KPIs against a SMART activity plan to ensure that achievements can be tracked against goals.

The chair of the Board also offers bi-monthly support to our Creative Director and the Treasurer meets every two months to review and support the work of the Company Secretary. Together, they produce financial reports for the Board.

The skills balance and diverse representation of the board is monitored on an ongoing basis, with skills audits or board recruitment undertaken as required. In line with our governing document, we will keep the number of Board Members to between five and seven.

Our aim is to further strengthen the board over the next period of our growth, to support our vision and trajectory away from open project funding. Priorities include ensuring the Board is more diverse, bringing on knowledge and experience around disability, climate and sustainability and beginning to ask ourselves the question 'what does the governance of the future look like?' and 'how can the connection between the Board and those that the organisation intends to benefit be strengthened?'. .

Current Board Members and Biographies can be found in [Appendix 5.2 - Board of Directors](#).

HOW WE WORK

Engaged Practice

Findhorn Bay Arts has always been motivated by the power of art and creativity to make meaningful positive impacts on place and people. As a learning organisation we are consistently exploring how we support and inspire new ways of working within and between ourselves, creative practitioners and communities; as well as how non outcome focused activity can support this.

Inevitably this has placed increasing focus on how individuals and communities can actively participate in creative activities - not just as audience members or formal participants, but as co-creators of creative activities and outcomes. Equally it has drawn attention to the development and support needs of creatives when working in an engaged context.

With an attention to the most marginalised communities, the Combine to Creative programme (2021-23) funded by the Culture Collective Fund, provided us with the opportunity to test and explore, over a sustained period, what engaged creative practice might look like in this specific context. How, through residencies and in partnership, socially engaged creatives and communities would work when responding to different needs, priorities and values; and what creative expression would manifest.

“ My two autistic children have gained in confidence & learned many new skills. It's an inclusive space; no judgment, and lots of love.”

Local Parent

The learnings that we have taken as an organisation from this project - and from the invaluable input and feedback from those who participated highlights:

- The deep and enhanced social cultural and health benefits for individuals
- The increased confidence, skills and sustained practice amongst practitioners
- The importance of long term, embedded approaches when seeking to enhance benefits and outcomes for both communities and creatives.
- The value of shorter-term, intensive, approaches as a way to support initial engagement, ideation and benefits to both communities and creatives
- We believe that engaged practice delivers real and lasting value for those who participate across our communities.

In doing so we recognise that this area of activity speaks more widely to the priorities of the Moray Employability Partnership, identifying and responding to gaps and opportunities through creative activity that increases the skills, confidence, ambitions and wellbeing of participants and supports a shared vision for the region that -

- Builds a better future for our children and young people in Moray
- Empowers and connects communities
- Improves the wellbeing of our population

As this element grows in scale and significance within our overall programme, we increasingly recognise that it feeds also into other areas of our programme - through widening the diversity of people, the range of places and the breadth of references and partnerships that we engage with on an ongoing basis.

Staffing

We have maintained a flexible approach to staffing based throughout our history, allowing us to grow and contract as the scale of our programme delivery requires. We supplement a small core team with additional team members as well as freelance contractors. This has been particularly important for festival years and major productions that require considerable resourcing to happen.

We take our responsibility as an employer and contractor seriously. We benchmark our pay scales to appropriate comparator levels and are a Real Living Wage employer. For staffing or creative contracts we pay at least an industry standard rate (or to equivalent if no standard exists). We have strong policies and procedures to ensure good practice when working with volunteers.

We strive to be an inclusive organisation that supports employees, regardless of their background or circumstance, to thrive at work. We maintain robust HR policies and procedures to ensure we achieve high standards of inclusion in recruitment, team management and staff support. We actively encourage our staff to progress in skills, experience and professionalism and support them with time and budget to help make this happen.

Staff Team

We are led by our Creative Director, and founder, Kresanna Aigner. This role is currently supported by three part-time positions equating to 2.5 FTE - including Company Secretary; Marketing and Communications Lead and Administrator.

In 2024, in order to boost our capacity we identified the need for an Community Engagement & Events Producer who holds responsibility for the development and delivery of our increasing number of outreach and participation programmes. We also aim to strengthen our core operational management with a new Business Development Director role, which will provide greater internal resource and capacity for our fundraising and audience engagement strategies. This will grow our core team to six roles, equating to 3.8FTE.

Contractors

In festival years we also engage additional highly skilled and experienced freelancers, without which delivery of this event would not be possible. These include temporary roles in Operations and Production Management; PR Support, Production Assistants, Venue and Event Managers and contracted production services as required.

Volunteers and Placements

For each festival we also train a team of up to three young people to have paid work experience at events.

Festival delivery is further underpinned by a strong network of local volunteers, who play a vital role in many aspects of our year round project delivery and without whom we could not deliver our activities.

We also have an ongoing ambition to provide more employment opportunities for young people and will explore routes to support recent graduates and emerging talent through an annual graduate scheme during the life of this plan.

Premises

We have been based in the centre of Forres since 2014, moving to larger and more flexible premises in 2018 and again in 2023.

We offer hybrid and home working for our team, but continue to place value on the importance of a central workplace for the team to gather, work together and host others.

Our current premises comprises an open plan office including dedicated meetings space located very centrally and just off Forres High Street.

The location of this space will continue to allow us to operate an in-person festival box office. It offers improved accessibility (level access) and is better configured and sized for project meetings with collaborators and partners.

There are under-developed spaces within this building that may enable it to support wider areas of programme delivery in the future with modest capital investment. This is an area we will be further exploring during the life of this plan.

Communications & Systems

The core of our external communications is delivered by our online presence and associated external and internal digital communications -

External Communication

We operate two main websites -

findhornbayarts.com

Our organisational online home was refreshed in 2021 with a redevelopment that significantly expanded the audience facing elements of the site and enabled it to grow into a dynamic and media rich archive of our projects.

findhornbayfestival.com

A programme specific site that provides detailed event and venue information for our biennial festival. The current site and festival visual identity was refreshed in 2016. In 2018 we integrated ticketing provided by the TicketSource service to the site - enabling us to have significantly more control of and access to our ticketing and associated audience data.

The websites are supplemented by a presence across the most prominent social channels and networks.

We recognise that these can be an effective route to connecting with many sections of our audience - particularly around local events and activities as well as sharing updates and documentation of what has been happening in an immediate and informal way.

These channels also help us to more widely connect with creative people and organisations across Scotland and beyond - and have significantly assisted raising the profile of the organisation within our peers.

We also connect with our audiences via regular email newsletters, with mailing lists grown from our audiences, participants and supporters. For specific audience-facing activities, these are supplemented by a targeted print and advertising strategy which is designed in particular to reach those less in contact with our year round activities.

We place high value on strong documentation of all our projects and outcomes, and have a large media and documentation library which we draw on for many of our external communications. We continue to value the contribution of creative and media professionals to help us capture and share our programme.

Internal Systems

We continue to progress work with strengthening our internal digital systems and associated skills to effectively manage these and train others within the staff team.

We consolidated our existing systems into the Google Workspace suite as a single place to manage email, shared calendars, file storage and have committed staff training to the ongoing management of this.

We use a custom CRM and project/festival management system which sits at the core of our workflows across the team. We actively maintain and develop the functionality of this system to help to build efficiencies and resilience within our operations.

Future Considerations

We continue to monitor the effectiveness of all our communications assets in effectively reaching our audiences and participants. During this plan period, we plan to give further consideration to our core brand identity and the accessibility and environmental performance of all our core digital assets.

Finance

Findhorn Bay Arts has always been a producing organisation - making creative projects happen and securing the necessary resources to make these possible. As the organisation has grown and evolved, we have progressed from managing discrete and short-term project budgets to larger complex multi-year and multi-strand programmes of delivery.

Expenditure

During this plan period, we aim to maintain and grow our year-round ongoing delivery of community engaged creative practice. This delivery will be punctuated by our flagship festival event in 2026 which will also include a major original co-commissioned production. We will also be growing public outcomes outwith festival throughout this period.

Income

Our delivery requires income from a variety of sources, including continued support from Creative Scotland multi-year funding. As a charity, we also work to raise additional funds from a variety of sources, including trusts and foundations as well as partnerships, commissions and earned income. Our fundraising plan is based on income trends and PESTLE analysis and is a vital area of focus for our team in making our programme possible.

Financial Management

We have strong and established procedures for budget management at both project and organisational level.

Oversight

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the correct allocation of public funds and the Company Secretary and Creative Director reports to the Treasurer every two months basis and include profit and loss of the whole company, balance sheet and variance analysis of individual projects.

We work to a master and individual project budgets with areas of responsibility devolved to individual staff members. The organisation uses real time book-keeping to manage project budgets, which feeds into the overall company budget.

Reporting

We produce real time spend against budget on a weekly basis - or as requested by project leads for monitoring purposes. Produce variance reports for the Board on a quarterly basis - and also for quarterly management finance meetings with the Treasurer.

Budgets

We have three scenarios for budget forecasts - best, middle and worst case which allows us to respond to income variances and the re-designing of projects to fit within these constraints. We ensure that our total variances in spend against budget are within 10%.

Where project spend lines are, or predicted to be 10% over that within the budget, the Project Manager will speak with the Creative Director to explore how this is managed within the overall budget and what remedies need to be put in place.

Payments

Payments to creditors are actioned when presented with a valid invoice and are signed off by the Creative Director and paid by the Company Secretary; we aim to have a 3-week maximum payment schedule in order to minimise cash-flow problems of our creditors, many of whom are sole-traders rely on a quick turnaround of income.

Cash spends are used only when absolutely necessary and are recorded on a 'cash expenditure sheet' and receipts matching spends will be attached to the sheet. This will then be given to the Finance Manager to feed into the overall budget. All bank accounts are reconciled within two weeks of any month end period.

“ FBA are.... an inspiration and testament to what is possible when communities are empowered and proactive in shaping their own futures.

Aileen Campbell MSP, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities

Managing Risk

Findhorn Bay Arts has a successful track record of developing high quality projects and activities that deliver beyond our targets and to well documented social, cultural and economic outcomes. We understand that risk is both organisational and project based; and that against all our activity there are different risks that need to be considered.

We maintain an overall risk register which is considered quarterly by the board - with controls being actioned appropriately. Project or programme specific risk assessments are understood to be a key part of project planning by the staffing members responsible. Risks are considered under the following key headings and a risk assessment for this project plan can be found in our Risk Management Strategy.

Programme Delivery

We know that scheduled activities may take longer than expected due to operational delays, or resourcing challenges - and that this can increase the costs and decrease the impacts of a project. In order to mitigate against these risks we ensure there is contingency not only in budgets but in project timelines. Our project management systems and management and reporting structures ensure that delivery related issues are highlighted early, ensuring that, where needed, any remedial action can be made promptly.

Staffing

We strive to attract, develop and retain a strong team to deliver our work. However, we recognise that many factors may affect our staffing provision. We aim to create a positive working culture in all areas and ensure that our recruitment offer is attractive and competitive.

Safeguarding

The safety and wellbeing of all our audiences and participants is of primary importance in everything we do. We ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers comply with any statutory requirements for project delivery. We also make sure that appropriate training and effective management are in place for all those who help deliver our work. We have clear policies and procedures in place that outline the conduct we expect from everyone we work with as well as internal and external processes to address issues should they arise. See Safeguarding Policy for more detail.

Safety & Security

Each project and performance has its own individual risk assessment carried out which considers weather, equipment, hazards, audiences, artists et. to ensure that all aspects are mitigated against and that are covered by relevant policies, procedures, licences and insurances.

Financial

We have systems to actively monitor budgets throughout project planning and delivery. We have a low tolerance to risk relating to finance, ensuring that expenditure never exceeds income targets, and that we have scenarios planned for situations where these targets are not met.

Legal

We are committed to understand the legal frameworks in which we operate as a result of engagement with support organisations within and beyond the creative sector and that cover HR, contractual and licensing law. We are quick to evolve our policies and procedures in response to any changes, and to communicate these to all staff and board members.

Environmental

We have undertaken and continue to evolve our climate impact risk assessment. In response we have increased the budget available for relevant insurances and evolved projects in a manner that anticipates any adverse consequences of climate change. As a predominantly outdoor arts festival we also have an outdoor risk assessment and mitigate against all risk contained within - ensuring the festival can operate in the worst of environmental conditions (even a pandemic!)

Monitoring and Evaluation

With a substantial track record on delivering well evidenced, high quality creative projects, we track our delivery against our aims, objectives and associated KPIs. We achieve this as a result of robust monitoring and evaluation techniques that include the collation of qualitative and quantitative data, our continual feedback loop (from participants, audience, staff and Board), and as a result of the active listening that the creative practitioners we work with undertake and respond to. In order to effectively present emerging findings we produce case studies, project reviews, end of project reports and continually evolve our practice as a result of the learning that emerges. Some of our measurements include (but are not limited to):

EDI & Demographic Monitoring

- data collection for all staff, board and associated team members;
- EDI monitoring for participants and artists;
- EDI monitoring for audience members through box office data.

Economic Impact

- data collection from festival and other events.

Participant Surveys

- access needs and how well they have been responded to;
- participant satisfaction;
- baseline and ongoing skills development;
- length of engagement (and repeat engagements);
- reductions in social isolation;
- increases in confidence, health and wellbeing - CHIME indicators;
- increases in skills;
- increased social cohesion / reduction in social isolation.

Artist Surveys

- access needs and how well they have been responded to;
- increase in skills and confidence;
- increase in peer and professional networks and local, national and international levels;
- how engagement has increased work related opportunities and pay;
- career sustainability;
- engagement with and adherence to our climate action plan.

Box Office Data

- spend per visitor;
- multiple and group purchases;
- EDI & demographic data;
- audience satisfaction;
- how they heard about us;
- access needs and how well they have been responded to.

Financial Data

- variance budgets;
- monitoring of income streams.

Audience Engagement Data

- website statistics;
- social media network and channel analytics;
- print distribution.

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findhornbayarts.com