IMPACT REPORT 2026

WEST FEST

1-28 June 26

Glasgow's biggest community led, cultural festival.

300+ events in 60+ venues across the West End









300+ events · 63 venues · 133,000 people.
How Glasgow's biggest community-led festival continued to grow, and what it achieved.

Glasgow City Council · Kelvin Hall · University of Glasgow · West End · Community Fund · Glasgowlife · CODA Estates · dementia heroes









THIS IS WHAT IT'S ABOUT

A month of free live music, theatre, street festivals, comedy, exhibitions, talks and workshops. Packed streets and green spaces filled with happy families every weekend.

Local artists paid properly, local groups given a platform, and a West End that felt like it belonged to everyone.

THE FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE

Glasgow's biggest community-led festival

WestFest 2026 was our fourth festival and by far our biggest. Between 1 and 28 June, a small team, a large community of volunteers and partners, and more than a hundred organisations and artists filled the West End with events — most of them free.

304

EVENTS

Counting events that ran over several nights or recurred.

63

VENUES

Indoor and outdoor, from libraries and halls to parks and streets.

133,000

ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

Across the full programme, including 24,000 at the Big Sunday.

58,000

COMMUNITY EVENT ATTENDANCES

At festival-produced community events.

24,000

BIG SUNDAY ON KELVIN WAY

Our flagship free event.

2,518

EDUCATION & OUTREACH REACH

Talks, walks, workshops and school events.





Free & accessible

A wide range of free and accessible events open to all, keeping cost from being a barrier to culture.

Community-led

Shaped by ward steering groups, volunteers and 33 community groups who took part.

Fairly paid

Artists and crew paid at or above industry-standard and Real Living Wage rates.

A NOTE FROM THE FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Thank you

WestFest started in 2022 because the West End had lost its festival and people told us they wanted one back! Since then, that's what it's been all about: listening to and being led by our community, and keeping local people at the centre of everything.

Back in 2022, Covid had halted almost every opportunity for people to come together and for artists to work and innovate. Our festival started with the aim of meeting those needs, and four years on, WestFest has grown every year, from 80,000 attendees in 2023 to an estimated 133,000 last June.

In 2026 there were 304 events under the festival umbrella, across 63 venues. The Big Sunday on Kelvin Way brought around 24,000 people, becoming our biggest outdoor community event to date, with stages, street theatre, stalls, and more than 60 community groups, charities, housing associations, performers and artists taking part. Our education, outreach and heritage programme was the strongest and furthest reaching we've run, with attendance at our Kelvin Hall talks programme growing by 22%.

We delivered all of this without Creative Scotland funding, thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, last-minute support from the Commonwealth Festival Fund, and the generosity of our partners, volunteers and community. It says a lot about the people involved: the artists, venues, partners, funders and the team. It also leaves us convinced of what is possible. With future Creative Scotland investment alongside our existing supporters, we feel WestFest can keep growing and be all that it can be, moving towards our ultimate goal: bringing back a Mardi Gras parade to Byres Road.

This report sets out what we achieved, who it reached and where we can go next. I hope it shows why WestFest is worth backing.

Brendon McIlroy

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR, WESTFEST



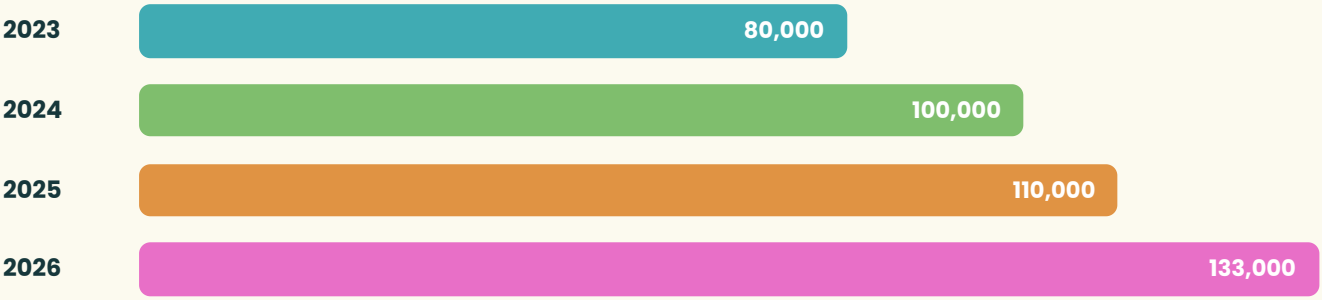
> *"We loved working with the WestFest team again this year on another well attended and worthwhile partnership which saw free activities almost every day in Kelvin Hall, from heritage talks and workshops to cinema screenings. We're already looking forward to next year."*
>
> JADE GRAHAM · MANAGER, KELVIN HALL

GROWTH

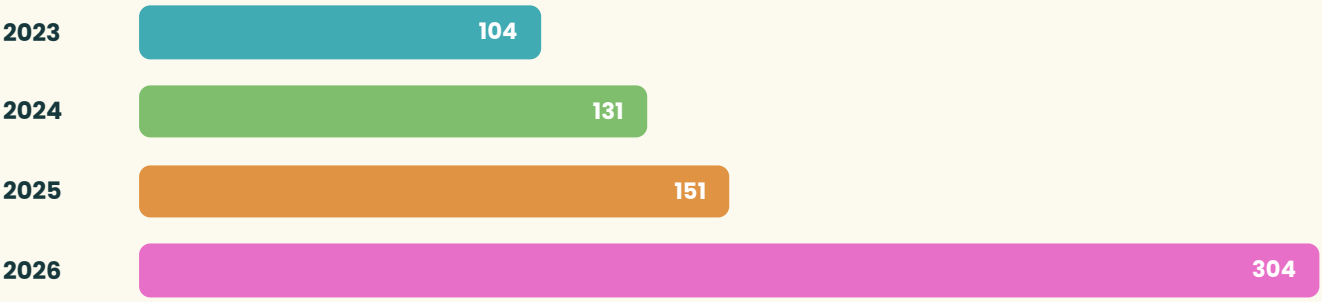
Four years of growth

Every edition has been bigger than the last — in events, venues and audiences — while staying community-led and mostly free.

Estimated attendance



Number of events



Reach beyond the month

More than 360,000 attendances had been recorded by January 2026 across the first four years. Adding June 2026 takes the running total to around 490,000.

How we count

Attendance is an estimate based on event counts and organiser returns. The 2026 figure of 304 events counts every event that ran over multiple nights or recurred, and includes the curated programme of partner-delivered events listed under the WestFest banner.



THE PROGRAMME

Something for everyone

From a ceilidh on the steps of Kelvingrove to Bard in the Botanics, comedy at The Stand, jazz, film, heritage walks and wellbeing sessions. The programme ran across three strands.

1 · Festival-produced

Our free outdoor community events, produced and funded by WestFest, with paid artists and crew:

- Vinicombe Street Gala
- Kelvingrove Outdoor Ceilidh
- Dear Green Music Scene
- Midsummer Fire Show
- The Big Sunday

2 · Partnership events

Co-produced with partners and externally funded, e.g.

- Dear Green Music Scene
- ARCeilidh
- Arlington Baths Commonwealth Gala
- Make Music Day
- Isla's Beatson Bash at Nostrana
- Dementia Festival

3 · Curated partner programme

Events run by local artists, production companies, venues and groups under the WestFest banner, supported by our listings, marketing and infrastructure. The WestFest team are there every step of the way from idea to delivery, and our WestFest hub workshops offer support with marketing, logistics, health & safety and more.

Festival highlights

30–31 May	Opening Street Party, Ashton Lane & Vinicombe Street
6 Jun	Vinicombe Street Gala
7 Jun	Outdoor Ceilidh at Kelvingrove Galleries
10–14 Jun	Glasgow Jazz Festival · Glasgow Science Festival (4–14 Jun)
13 Jun	Dear Green Music Scene, University of Glasgow ARC
20 Jun	Midsummer Solstice Fire Show by Think Circus
21 Jun	The Big Sunday on Kelvin Way · Make Music Day on Byres Road & The Lanes
24 Jun	Stand Up for WestFest at The Stand · Bard in the Botanics from 24 Jun
27 Jun	Arlington Baths Commonwealth Gala · House of Raptor: Drag and Beyond
28 Jun	West End Bus Fest

Music · **Theatre & cabaret** · **Comedy** · **Children & families** · **Youthworks** · **Film** · **Exhibitions & open days** · **Talks & heritage** · **Walks** · **Food & drink** · **Mindfulness & wellbeing** · **Dementia-friendly events**

SPOTLIGHT

The Big Sunday on Kelvin Way





Sunday 21 June. A fully pedestrianised Kelvin Way, free to everyone, with live music, choirs, brass and samba bands, circus performers, face painting, street play, a community stage and a community zone. It was staged as part of Glasgow's Commonwealth Games celebrations, with funding from The National Lottery Community Fund.

The team, our board and the North West steering group all agree it was the strongest event in WestFest's history.

24,000

PEOPLE ATTENDED

60+

GROUPS, CHARITIES, HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS, PERFORMERS & ARTISTS TAKING PART

100%

FREE ENTRY

£0.61

COST PER ATTENDEE

£14,670 final cost ÷ 24,000

> *"The Big Sunday has become our flagship event: a free celebration of the West End, its people and its culture. Ultimately it's a platform for local artists, groups and charities, and it's all about the community."*
>
> FESTIVAL DIRECTOR





EDUCATION, OUTREACH & HERITAGE

Reaching further than ever

Our education, outreach and heritage work reached 2,518 people through talks, walks, workshops and school events — our strongest and furthest-reaching programme yet.

Illustrated Heritage Talks

Free talks at Kelvin Hall, Mondays to Thursdays in June, with Friends of Glasgow West. Volunteers choose topics and speakers. In 2026, 1,164 people attended 16 talks and a film screening.

Schools & author programme

Professional authors and storytellers in local primary schools, with free public events at Hillhead Library, University of Glasgow ARC and The Children's Wood, supported by Scottish Book Trust.

WestFest Youthworks

Free arts workshops for ages 5–16 at Kelvin Hall and local venues, with Halo Arts and Glasgow Life, plus carnival arts.

Community steering groups

Residents across the West End wards shape the festival through monthly steering groups and open meetings.







1,164
ATTENDEES AT ILLUSTRATED HERITAGE TALKS & WEST END WALKS

409
ATTENDEES AT STORYTELLING & AUTHOR EVENTS

187
ATTENDEES AT YOUTHWORKS WORKSHOPS

~700
PUPILS & ATTENDEES AT SCHOOL SESSIONS

58
STEERING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

16
WORKSHOP & OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS

"I can't praise these sessions enough. My three have been every week and made t-shirts, masks, wrote songs and made a mess of all their clothes right enough :)"

PARENT

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Community Roots

The heart of WestFest 2026: a programme that puts local people, community groups, volunteers and young people at the centre, shaped by community feedback and focused on skills, participation and creativity.

Illustrated Heritage Talks

WITH FRIENDS OF GLASGOW WEST · KELVIN HALL

16 free talks and a film screening on Glasgow's history, heritage and architecture, with local historians and partners. Volunteer-led, and free thanks to in-kind support from Kelvin Hall via Glasgow Life.

1,164
PEOPLE ATTENDED

16
TALKS AND FILMS





WestFest Youthworks

WORKSHOPS & AUTHOR STORYTELLING EVENTS

19 free sessions for 5–16 year olds in local venues, from drama and street dance to circus skills, graffiti art and samba, plus author storytelling. No booking needed, and every workshop was well attended, with some at full capacity.

19
FREE SESSIONS

4
COMMUNITY VENUES





WHO WE REACH

An audience that reflects the West End

Our audience surveys show a festival that is rooted in its neighbourhood and open to the wider city. Our 2026 audience survey (171 responses) gave a very similar picture to 2025, with consistent results across who attends and what it means to them.

68%

LOCAL RESIDENTS

32% from the wider Glasgow area and beyond.

42%

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

4.7/5

AUDIENCE SATISFACTION

37%

SAID IT'S THEIR ONLY CULTURAL ACTIVITY ALL YEAR

62%

WOULDN'T HAVE GONE WITHOUT FREE OPTIONS

18%

SAID ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO TAKE PART

Diversity

13% of survey respondents were disabled people or had additional needs and 14% were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. We also see strong engagement from LGBTQ+ communities, students and older adults.

Cultural discovery

31% of respondents visited a cultural venue for the first time.

Environmental sustainability

WestFest is a signatory to the Culture for Climate Green Arts Charter, and our board-adopted Environmental & Sustainability Policy guides how we plan and deliver. In 2026 we were guided by the Theatre Green Book, with a focus on reuse, less waste and sustainable choices at festival-produced events.

Local first. Local artists, suppliers and venues, with audiences walking, cycling or taking public transport.

Less waste. Reusable and recyclable materials, fewer single-use items and waste separated at produced events.

Measuring progress. A carbon baseline from 2026 will set reduction targets for 2027 onwards.





PEOPLE & THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Paying artists fairly, building skills

WestFest's funding goes to people: artists, technicians, freelancers and volunteers who make the festival happen.

52

PAID ROLES ON PRODUCED EVENTS

34 artists and creative practitioners plus 18 technical crew.

100+

MORE PAID ARTISTS AND PERFORMERS

In the curated partner programme, supported by WestFest infrastructure.

14 days

PROMPT PAYMENT

All invoices paid within 14 days, under written agreements.

Fair pay: our commitment

- **Real Living Wage employer:** the minimum for every paid role
- Artists and creative practitioners paid at or above **Scottish Artists Union (SAU)** rates
- Technical and production crew paid at or above **BECTU** rates, with Equity guidance for performers
- Union rates treated as a floor, not a ceiling, and reviewed every year
- Formal Fair Pay Policy and board-adopted Fair Work Statement, in line with Fair Work First

MINIMUM RATES WE WORK TO (2026)

SAU · artists & creative practitioners

Entry level	£248 / 8-hr day
3+ years' experience	£296.80 / 8-hr day
5+ years' experience	£366.40 / 8-hr day

BECTU · technical & production

Crew	£15 / hr
Technician / operator	£270 / day
Project / production manager	£350 / day

Volunteers & skills

- **43 volunteers** across the core WestFest programme: community events, partnership events, outreach and talks
- Significantly more across the curated partner programme, an estimated **150+ volunteers** across all WestFest events
- Volunteers trained each year, many moving into paid roles
- Volunteers are heavily involved in steering and coordinating the festival

Artist & performer payments

Almost £30,000 was invested in community events, artists and performers across the festival's core community events and outreach programmes.

In 2027 we are aiming to increase that figure, and the number of creatives and staff, by at least 25%.





PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

Built with our partners

WestFest works because of the organisations that fund it, host it and take part in it.

Funders & sponsors

- Glasgow City Council
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Hugh Fraser Foundation
- Commonwealth Festival Fund
- GCVS
- Visit West End (Byres Road & The Lanes BID)
- Coda Estates

Festival partners

- University of Glasgow
- Kelvin Hall
- Glasgow Life
- The Stand
- Glasgow Jazz Festival
- Nostrana
- Arlington Baths Club
- Dementia Heroes
- Operation Play Outdoors

Also with us

- Pat's Guide to Glasgow's West End
- Pro Sound Services
- Think Circus CIC
- Scottish Book Trust
- Rock Steady
- Children's Wood / North Kelvin Meadow
- Scotsman Group

Charity partner

Dementia Heroes, with dementia-friendly events across the West End venues in June.

Commercial & community support

Sponsorship from Visit West End (£4,000), Coda Estates (£5,000) and the University of Glasgow, and fundraisers including Stand Up for WestFest at The Stand.

The 2026 festival team

Brendon McIlroy
Festival Director

Malcolm Thomas Harley
Festival Coordinator

Frankie Miller
Senior Event Manager

Miranda Ralston
Digital Marketing

Gavin McCourt
Graphic Design & Photography

Ann Laird & Rion McKerron
Talks Programme

Teresa Lowe
Author Programme

Julia Jack
Education Programme

Selma Rebus
Paintings on Railings

Casey Cochrane
Event Support & Distribution

Alan Beattie
Head of Security

Bob Jackson, Colin Bell & Jackie Murphy
Event Support

Brett Nicholls & Associates
Financial Services

VALUE FOR MONEY

A lot from a little

WestFest runs on a lean team and a mixed funding model: local authority support, National Lottery funding, trusts, sponsorship, earned income and community fundraising.

£79,761

TOTAL 2026 INCOME

Grants, sponsorship, earned income and fundraising.

£79,260

TOTAL 2026 EXPENDITURE

Delivered within budget, with a small surplus.

≈60p

COST PER ATTENDANCE

£79,260 ÷ 133,000.

The funding challenge

WestFest 2026 shows what a community-led festival can achieve with resourcefulness and goodwill. Our Creative Scotland Open Fund application (£29,508) received positive feedback but wasn't funded, so we had to go to plan B, with a reduced number of festival-produced events and the necessity to build the festival around other support. Despite our funding challenges, WestFest grew from 2025 in every measurable way and met all its aims and objectives, with new support from Coda Estates and the Commonwealth Festival Fund alongside our existing funders, partners and sponsors. Earned income from the brochure and community fundraising did the rest.

Delivering a festival of this scale on this budget relied on a lean team and a great deal of goodwill. WestFest has achieved a great deal despite its challenging funding position and the reality of funding insecurity year on year. Creative Scotland or similar investment in core costs would allow more paid work for artists, stronger production, wider reach and a festival that can grow with confidence.



Income: £79,761

- Grants: **£47,892** · 60%
- Earned income (brochure): **£18,485** · 23%
- Sponsorship: **£11,944** · 15%
- Fundraising: **£1,440** · 2%

Expenditure: £79,260

- Fees and wages: **£32,152**
- Community events, artists and performers: **£29,779**
- Marketing, publicity & PR: **£10,357**
- Other (access, hire costs, insurance, materials): **£6,972**

Figures are from the WestFest 2026 income and expenditure summary and include VAT. Draft, subject to final accounts.

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

Voices from the festival

Words from our audiences, artists and partners.

"I met neighbours I've never spoken to in 10 years living here."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"Joyful, uplifting and great for all ages."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"As a single parent on benefits, I can't afford to take my kids anywhere. WestFest gives us precious family time."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"Variety of stalls was fantastic. Really well organised, and loved the social media!"

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"The BSL interpretation meant I could actually enjoy theatre for the first time in my life."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"Life is better with WestFest."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"As an emerging artist, WestFest gave me my first properly paid professional gig."

ARTIST

"Always a great time: meeting people, happy atmosphere and entertainment. Just a good day out."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT WESTFEST

Atmosphere, people, variety | There's something for everyone | The music | Plenty to see, plus great weather | The variety and friendly community atmosphere

"Keep up the great work. More street performers please, and I wish they would close Byres Road like they used to!"

AUDIENCE MEMBER



WHERE WE GO NEXT

A festival with more to give

WestFest 2026 showed what a community-led festival can do with limited resources. With the right investment, it can be all that it can be.

WestFest 2027

5–30 June 2027. We are planning another year of growth, with investment in staffing and core costs helping WestFest develop, and events increasingly supported by commercial and partnership income.

Winter community programme

A free programme at Kelvingrove in the week of 14 December: a winter gala, candlelit carols, an outdoor ceilidh with LED projections and an LED and fire show by Think Circus — with permissions in place and partners being sought.

Return of the Byres Road Parade

We have been consulting, seeking advice and engaging with the community and local authority around the return of the famous festival parade, which ceased in 2015. With the regeneration of Byres Road and the completion of the university campus on the horizon, we have plans to bring back the parade in 2028, perhaps with a smaller initial version next year, funding permitting.

The return of this important, unique cultural event is our ultimate goal.

Year-round connection

Steering groups, schools work and community partnerships continue between festivals, strengthening the festival's roots and keeping us engaged.

This year we are also working with partners on a winter community events and outreach programme, with the aim of providing free, accessible events and activities over the winter months.

How you can support and get involved

- Fund core costs: staffing, production and fair pay for artists
- Sponsor a flagship event or the winter programme (partnerships from £1,000)
- Partner with us on education, outreach and heritage work
- Volunteer, perform or host an event in 2027





GET IN TOUCH

Let's do it again.

Brendon McIlroy · Festival Director, WestFest

brendon@westfest.uk · www.westfest.uk · @westfestgla

WestFest Ltd is a Scottish Charity (SC054109) and company (SC696090), The White House, Dowanhill Park, Glasgow G11 5JE. Photography includes work by Gavin McCourt Photography. Attendance figures are estimates.