



# Traverse Theatre Annual Report:

*Scotland's National New Writing Company*

**2024 - 2025**

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The Traverse Theatre (Scotland) Limited exists to promote, maintain and advance education through the encouragement of the arts, with a particular focus on new writing. As a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, the organisation commissions, develops and presents innovative theatre that reflects contemporary life in Scotland and beyond. Guided by its 2024–2028 Business Plan, the Traverse continues to pursue artistic excellence, creative collaboration and financial resilience, ensuring new work remains accessible, relevant and sustainable.

### AN OVERVIEW FROM THE CHAIR, HELEN SCHOFIELD, OF TRAVERSE THEATRE (SCOTLAND) LTD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024-25

This year has been another defining chapter for the Traverse Theatre, a period of transformation, reflection and renewed ambition. Building on the resilience and creativity shown throughout 2023/24, we have continued to evolve as Scotland’s National New Writing Company, reaffirming our belief in the power of bold storytelling to connect communities, challenge perspectives and imagine better futures.

The Traverse’s strength continues to lie in its people and partnerships. Across every strand of our work, from the artists who shape our stages to the educators, community leaders, funders and audiences who share in our vision, we have been reminded that collaboration and care are what make this organisation thrive. This year has been marked not only by creativity and ambition but also by a renewed sense of purpose and solidarity.

The outcome of Creative Scotland’s Multi Year Funding has been a vital milestone this year, initially placing the Traverse within a Development Stream for year 1 of the funding period, a now with a confirmed increased grant for years 2 and 3 as the organisation moves into the main Multi-Year Funding stream in 2026-27. This commitment and additional support from our core funder both strengthens our organisational progress and reinforces the foundations on which we continue to evolve around our key purpose. At the same time, the wider theatre sector remains under significant pressure, with rising costs, economic uncertainty and continued strain on public funding. Against this backdrop, the Traverse has remained resilient, refining its artistic vision, strengthening its financial base and adapting its operations to secure a sustainable and equitable future. The Board of Trustees has worked closely with the Senior Management Team throughout, offering guidance, expertise and oversight as we navigated an evolving funding landscape, ensuring the Traverse remains a confident, forward-looking organisation ready to meet the opportunities ahead.

Artistically, the Traverse continued to push boundaries. Our year-round programme brought together some of the most exciting voices in contemporary theatre, from emerging playwrights to established artists exploring new ideas and forms. Co-productions with partners including **Dundee Rep, Citizens Theatre and Raw Material** reaffirmed our commitment to collaboration and to ensuring that new Scottish work reaches audiences across the country and beyond. This year, that reach included three touring productions and one touring engagement, taking Traverse work to **Dumfries, Mull, Glasgow, Inverness, Dundee, London and Llanelli in Wales**.

**Festival 2024** was a standout moment, presenting eight Traverse productions alongside international work that spoke to the world around us. These plays explored identity, inequality, joy, loss and hope, reminding us all why the Traverse remains a home for stories that spark dialogue and reflect the complexity of modern life.



Beyond the stages, our Creative Learning and Talent Development programmes continued to grow in impact and reach. Through **Class Act, Positive Stories for Negative Times** and a growing portfolio of community-led initiatives, we engaged around **2,500 participants** across Scotland and beyond, including young people, teachers, emerging artists and community groups. These programmes nurture creativity, confidence and connection, reinforcing our belief that everyone's voice deserves to be heard.

This year also saw the Traverse invest in its future creative leadership with the appointment of four new Associates. Director **Bryony Shanahan**, immersive experience specialist **Adrian Hon**, playwright **Michael John O'Neill** (our 2025 IASH/Traverse Creative Fellow), and researcher **Emma Dorfman** (our collaborative doctoral award recipient) each bring vital expertise to the organisation. Their work will help shape how the Traverse discovers new stories, deepens artistic research and explores new forms of storytelling, strengthening our creative engine as we move into 2025/26.

Financially, 2024/25 was a year of prudent stewardship and stability. The Traverse generated **£2.7 million in income** against **£2.7 million in expenditure**, closing the year with **£1.09 million in reserves**. This performance reflects both the enduring value of public investment and the success of our efforts to diversify income through partnerships, fundraising and trading activity.

As we look to the future, we do so with optimism and determination. The Traverse's purpose remains clear: to discover, nurture and present the most exciting voices in Scottish theatre. Our focus for 2025/26 will be on deepening creative partnerships, expanding opportunities for participation and ensuring that the Traverse continues to play a vital role within Scotland's cultural life; locally rooted, internationally connected and artistically fearless.

We owe our deepest thanks to everyone who has contributed to this year's success: our artists, staff, volunteers, audiences, Board of Trustees, funders, sponsors and partners. Your dedication, creativity and belief in the Traverse make all that we do possible. Together, we are ensuring that this theatre remains a beacon for new writing, connection and creativity, now and for generations to come.

**Helen Schofield**

*Chair, Traverse Theatre Board of Trustees*

## OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

Producing, Discovering, Presenting and Connecting through New Work and ambitious creativity. For - and from - Scotland (and beyond) for over 60 years. Our strategic priorities place Audience, Community, Cultural Democracy and Art at the heart of our work, for widest public benefit.

The objectives of the charity are to promote, maintain, improve and advance education particularly by the encouragement of the arts.

### **Vision**

To be an inspiration for artists, audiences, participants and communities, instilling a lifetime of memorable experiences that empowers a cultural voice through storytelling.

### **Mission**

To nurture and strengthen engagement in trailblazing new writing creativity, to develop shared experiences that bring joy, explore the world around us, connect with the lives of others, and spark a vital curiosity in what it is to be human.

We aim to –

- Continue to be a vital part of Scotland and the UK's new writing movement, contributing to our world leading culture of theatre and the performing arts.
- Create extraordinary experiences through bold thought leadership, surprising, inspiring and exciting people through our programme and partnerships.
- Be the difference we wish to see through a thought provoking, accessible and relatable programme that inspires, excites and entertains - both in our building and beyond our spaces.
- Be an essential cultural institution that Scotland can be proud of, can relate to and feels represented by – expanding theatre's audience demographic through cultural democracy.
- Be the international platform for Scottish produced theatre and new writing talent that Edinburgh offers.
- Build on the strength of the brand of the Traverse with our world stage partners, enhancing our strong international reputation through partnership and co-commissions.
- Support the showcasing of Scottish talent throughout the year, and to an international audience in Edinburgh in August.
- Provide access to creativity through our overarching programme of engagement, through our commitments to EDI and socio-economic inclusion.
- Be a leader in how new work is created and supported, providing consistency of quality and "a good night out", underpinned by sustainable practice and Fair Work.

2024/25 IN NUMBERS



52

Productions presented



558

Performances  
in-house



42

Performances on tour  
*(beyond our Edinburgh home)*



2,500+

Participants in engagement  
programmes



8

Traverse Theatre  
productions/co-  
productions/in Association



783

Creatives supported through  
workshops, dramaturgy, &  
development



£1.09m

reserves carried forward (designated and unrestricted), securing stability for the  
year ahead



65,000+

Audience members, from  
24,000+ bookings



## Awards

- 5 x The Scotsman Fringe Firsts
- 1 x CATS (Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland) award for "So Young"
- Filipa Bragança Award
- The Besties - The Heart Award
- Best Musical Award - Musical Theatre Review for "A History of Paper"
- The Stage Fringe Five for Virginia Gay
- Holden Street Theatre Award
- The List Award for Best Show
- Mental Health Foundation Fringe Award for BATSHIT
- Entertainment Now's WoW Award for Outstanding Theatre



## Digital

- 6-part podcast series
- 6 Immersive Creatives events with Traverse Associates Adrian Hon & Emma Dorfman



3

New plays published



5

Artist Residencies completed



27

Post-show discussions and panel events



441

Creatives supported in-kind  
*(e.g. use of free space)*

## ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS & YEAR IN REVIEW

2024–2025 was a remarkable year for new writing and live performance at the Traverse. Across our stages, we presented an ambitious mix of homegrown work, co-productions and partner company performances that celebrated the diversity, imagination and creative excellence of artists from Scotland and around the world.

**TravFest24** was a vintage season, hailed as one of our most successful to date. Across August we welcomed over **34,200** audience members, garnering **46 five-star reviews**, and saw **five of the ten productions on our stages receive The Scotsman Fringe First Award** – an unprecedented recognition of the strength and originality of our programme. Highlights included **So Young** by Douglas Maxwell, a Traverse, Raw Material Arts and Citizens Theatre co-production directed by Gareth Nicholls, described as “masterful” by *WhatsOnStage*, and Traverse commission **Same Team** by Robbie Gordon and Jack Nurse, created with the women of Street Soccer Scotland and directed by Bryony Shanahan, praised as “unmissable” by *All Edinburgh Theatre*.

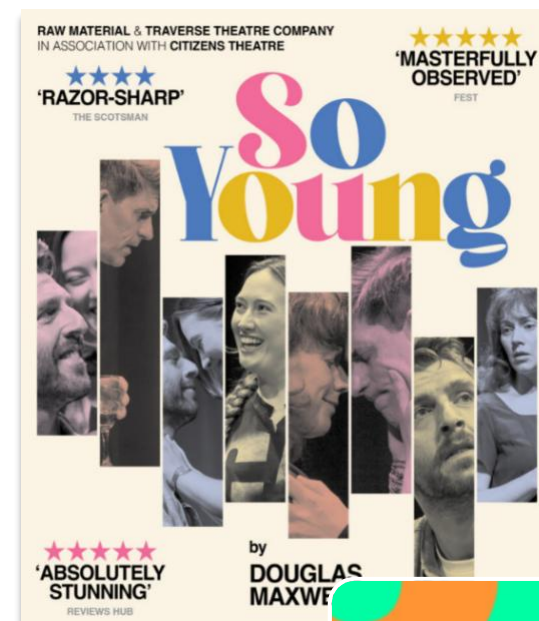
Our partnerships were central to the year’s success. We collaborated with **Dundee Rep, Tron Theatre, Lyceum Theatre, Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Birds of Paradise, Sleeping Warrior** and **Dogstar Theatre**, among others, to bring powerful new stories to Edinburgh audiences. Co-productions including **A History of Paper** and **My English Persian Kitchen** quickly sold out, while other TravFest24 favourites such as **Cyrano, Natalie Palamides: WEER, In Two Minds and A Knock on the Roof** continue to tour nationally and internationally, with productions heading to London, Bristol, Belfast and New York in 2025.

The Traverse also continued its long-standing collaboration with **A Play, A Pie and A Pint**, presenting twelve new plays across our Spring and Autumn seasons. Among these was **Jack** by Liam Moffat, first developed through our Breakthrough Writers programme, now brought to full production under Gareth Nicholls’ direction. The partnership with PPP remains a vital platform for Scottish playwrights, blending bold new ideas with the warmth of a shared theatre experience enjoyed by 4,688 audience members throughout the year.



Beyond our own seasons, the Traverse hosted six major specialist festivals, including **Manipulate, TradFest, Edinburgh International Children’s Festival, Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival, Soundhouse Winter Festival** and our own **TravFest**. This also marked the second full year of *Music at the Traverse*, our in-house programme that has expanded audiences and broadened our creative impact. Together, these festivals brought artists from across the globe to Scotland’s renowned festival city and reinforced our year-round role as a home for Edinburgh’s creative community and a hub for collaboration across the arts.

From the sell-out success of TravFest24 to the development of new Scottish work and international touring collaborations, 2024–2025 reaffirmed the Traverse as a home for bold storytelling, artistic risk and creative excellence.



## COMMUNITY & TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Alongside our on-stage success, 2024–2025 marked a year of major growth and innovation in our creative learning and artist development work. The Traverse continued to nurture new voices, inspire young people, and provide platforms for artists and communities across Scotland to experiment, learn and connect.



**Class Act**, our flagship education project, reached record levels of participation this year. Through **129 workshops across 18 schools**, the project supported **255 young people and their teachers** to write **129 original scripts**. Building on our work across 2023/24, Class Act on Tour expanded to Aberdeenshire, Ayrshire, the Highlands, Mull and Dumfries & Galloway, widening access for young people across Scotland. This endeavour led to new partnerships with Aberdeen Arts Centre, Aberdeen Performing Arts, The Gaiety Theatre, Eden Court, An Tobar and Mull Theatre, and Theatre Royal Dumfries, enabling participants to form meaningful connections with their local theatres and, in some cases, see their own work performed professionally on those stages. We also proudly launched Class Act Ukraine in Scotland, working with displaced young people to express their experiences through theatre.

Our partnership with **Wonder Fools** on **Positive Stories for Negative Times** continued to flourish. Now in its fourth season, the project has reached over **14,000 young people in 24 countries**, offering schools and youth groups free access to newly commissioned plays and creative resources. The **Positive Stories Festival** at the Traverse brought together hundreds of young people from across Scotland to share their work, exchange ideas and celebrate creativity. Teachers described the weekend as transformative, with one from **Beath High School** reflecting that:



*“The weekend sparked valuable conversations... I hope it will help our young people become lifelong theatregoers and, hopefully, theatre makers.”*

We were also proud to continue our partnership with the **Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH)** at The University of Edinburgh through the **IASH/Traverse Creative Fellowship**, which received **62 applications** this year. This unique residency invites playwrights and theatre-makers to explore urgent social, political and cultural themes through research and collaboration with both the Traverse’s artistic team and the University’s academic community. Following this process, playwright **Michael John O’Neill** was appointed as the 2025 IASH/Traverse Creative Fellow.

Across all of these initiatives, our focus remains consistent: to make creative opportunities accessible, meaningful and ambitious for artists and audiences alike. Whether developing a first script, performing on stage for the first time, or creating work that pushes the boundaries of form, we continue to champion new work and voices to nurture Scotland’s next generation of artists and audiences.

## AUDIENCE & REACH

The Traverse welcomed more than **65,000 audience members** across **24,000 bookings** during this reporting period, reflecting both steady recovery and a renewed appetite for bold, original theatre. Our distinctive blend of new writing, artistic ambition and social relevance continues to draw people in – reminding us that the appetite for live storytelling remains strong.

While audience behaviour across the sector remains unpredictable, the Traverse continues to perform strongly. We are supported by a loyal core of regular attendees and a growing community of new visitors, many of whom first discover us during the Festival and return year after year for fresh perspectives and unexpected stories. Our audience surveys and conversations show that people come to the Traverse because they trust us to surprise them – to present work that is both artistically daring and emotionally resonant.

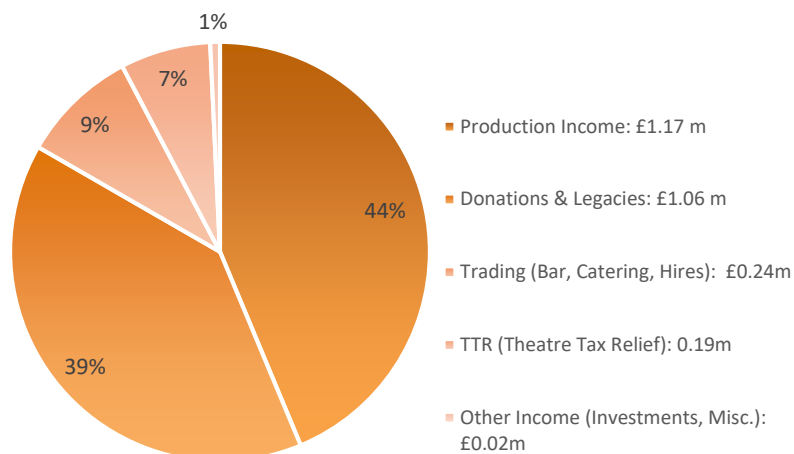
We remain firmly committed to strengthening diversity, inclusion and access across all areas of our audience experience. Most tickets are now booked online, reflecting ongoing investment in digital access and ease of use. Initiatives such as **£1 Tickets**, **low-income concessions** and **community partnerships** help ensure that cost is never a barrier, while **relaxed performances**, **captioned shows** and targeted outreach continue to open our doors to a wider range of people. This work was further strengthened through partnerships with organisations such as Vintage Vibes, as well as production-specific collaborations like our work with Street Soccer Scotland on Same Team.

Although shorter booking patterns remain common, feedback consistently highlights the Traverse as a **trusted cultural home** – a place where audiences come to be surprised, challenged and inspired. Looking ahead, our focus is on **broadening reach and deepening connection**: nurturing loyalty among returning audiences, welcoming new voices into the Traverse community, and ensuring that everyone who visits feels part of a shared creative journey.

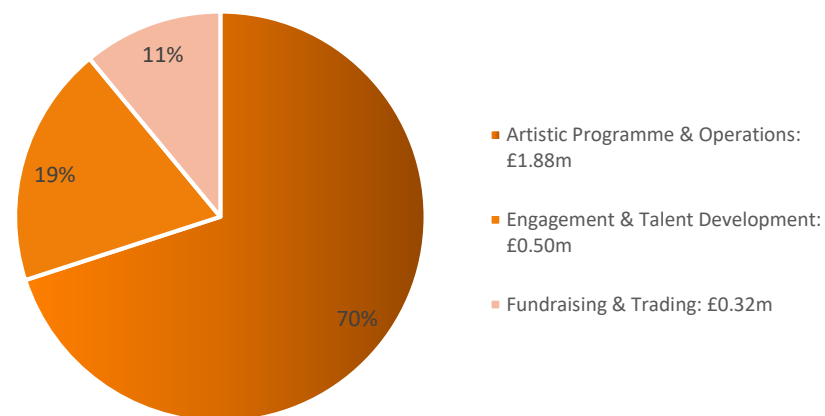


## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

### INCOME 2024/25: £2.7M



### EXPENDITURE 2024/25: £2.7M



### YEAR-END POSITION (AS OF MARCH 2025)



**£488,430**

unrestricted \*

**£0**

restricted

**£600,000**

designated (Programme, Art & Building)

\* Equivalent to 6 months operating costs, as per charity governance rules.

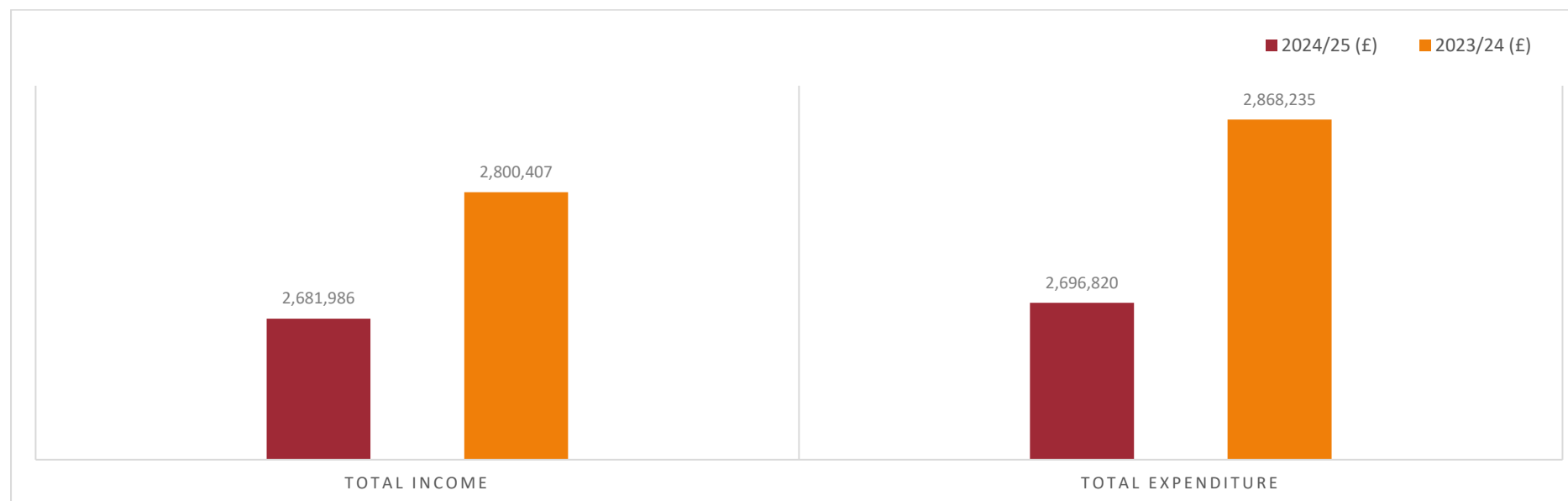
Despite sector-wide pressures, the Traverse closed the year with stable reserves and a strong platform for future growth. Careful management, combined with continued public and philanthropic support, enables us to plan ambitiously and sustainably for the years ahead.

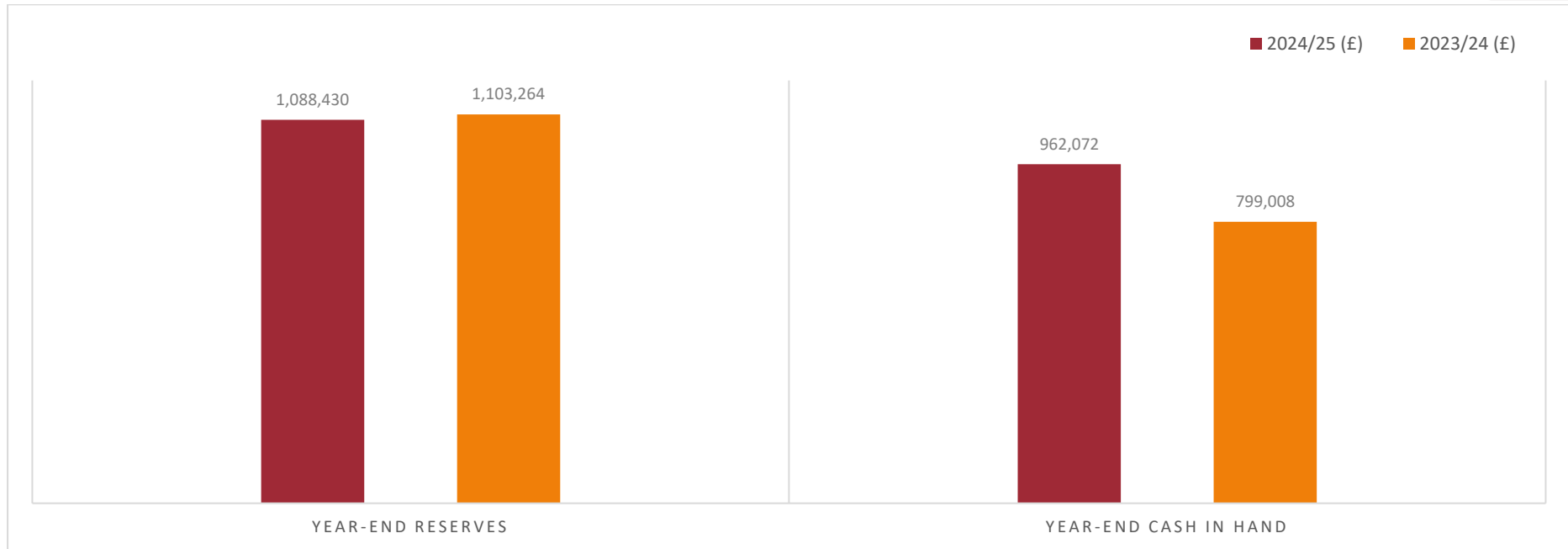
The Traverse Theatre Trustees are committed to holding meaningful reserves to meet known funding requirements and possible unforeseen expenditure essential for the continued needs of the business. The Trustees deem that unrestricted funds and reserves should be in the region of six months operating costs, in the region of £450,000, to cover any breaks between earned income, fundraising or realisation of tax credit claims. In addition, the Trustees deem that an unrestricted designated reserve of £600,000 to support the Programme, Art and Building is prudent to further support business continuity and ambitions of the business plan.

As per the accounts, the year-end shows a reserves deficit of £14,834 with a cash flow of £962,072.

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#### YEAR-ON-YEAR FINANCIAL COMPARISON: 2023/24 VS 2024/25





## GOING CONCERN

The Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements, supported by stable reserves, strong liquidity and confirmation of future Multi-Year Funding from Creative Scotland.

Further detail is available in the full statutory accounts published via [Companies House](#).

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The Traverse Theatre is a registered Scottish charity and company limited by guarantee, governed by a Board of Trustees who provide strategic oversight and ensure the organisation meets its legal, financial and charitable responsibilities. For full details on governance structures, risk management, please refer to the statutory Annual Report and Accounts filed with [Companies House](#) and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Traverse enters 2025/26 with renewed ambition, optimism and purpose. As we look to the year ahead, our focus is on creating extraordinary new work, deepening our relationships with audiences and communities, and celebrating the remarkable talent that defines Scotland’s new writing landscape. We do so with a sense of confidence, energy and curiosity about what lies ahead.

We are also beginning an important chapter supported by Creative Scotland’s Multi Year Funding outcome. Following initial engagement through the Fund’s Development Stream, accompanied by an uplift in support, the Traverse now has confirmation of funding for 2026-28 and a commitment in principle to further uplifts in funding for year two and three. Having worked closely with our core funder to strengthen and refine our vision, mission and values - ensuring they remain robust, sustainable and future facing – we now welcome this renewed stability and opportunity for future growth. At a time when the wider cultural sector continues to navigate significant challenges, this investment offers a vital foundation for the Traverse to evolve and progress with clarity, creativity and a renewed sense of possibility.

Artistically, this year we presented **TravFest25**, a landmark Festival programme featuring **12 productions**, including **10 premieres**. Together, they showcased the breadth and vitality of contemporary new writing, offering audiences the chance to experience some of the most original, daring and imaginative voices in Edinburgh this August.

The programme featured bold world premieres from **Lucie Barât**, **Johnny McKnight**, **Karis Kelly**, and phenomenal new works from **Hannah Moscovitch**, **Gabriel Jason Dean** and **Khalid Abdalla**, all exploring themes of our times from family and identity to climate, conflict and resilience. It also marks the highly anticipated return of **Gary McNair’s** beloved solo fable ***A Gambler’s Guide to Dying***, ten years after its sell-out, award-winning debut at the Traverse and subsequent international tours. Together, these productions reaffirm the Traverse’s place at the heart of Edinburgh’s August Festivals, celebrating the power of new writing to reflect, provoke and inspire.



Moving to the Autumn, we produced bold new plays such as Traverse commission ***Black Hole Sign*** by **Uma Nada-Rajah**, a former Traverse Writer in Residence, directed by **Gareth Nicholls**. This production, in co-production with the Tron and in association with National Theatre of Scotland, continues our commitment to nurturing long-term relationships with writers and supporting distinctive, writer-led stories that engage with the world around us. Also programmed was the remount of the multi-award winning ***So Young*** by **Douglas Maxwell** continuing our relationship with independent producers Raw Material and the newly opening Citizens Theatre, where it will form part of their opening season. For December we are proud to commission stellar writing duo Stephen Christopher and Graeme Smith with their heartfelt story of male friendship and overcoming addiction, in our production ***Dancing Shoes***. And in spring 2026 we will premiere the new Traverse commission of ***GUSH*** by Jess Brodie, directed by Becky Hope-Palmer – a thrilling debut from the Edinburgh born-and-bred writer.

Beyond our stages, we expanded Class Act and our community partnerships across Scotland, ensuring that young people and underrepresented voices have opportunities to create, collaborate and be heard. With activity planned in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Mull, the Traverse will continue to play an active role in shaping Scotland’s



theatre ecology, contributing to national transformation processes and sector-wide discussions aimed at building a more equitable, sustainable and inclusive future for the arts.

We also plan to strengthen international touring and partnership opportunities, ensuring that Scottish stories and artists are shared with audiences around the world.

Our vision remains clear: to be an engine for new writing that reflects the world we live in, inspires empathy and imagination, and helps to build a more connected, creative and confident Scotland.

## THANK YOU

Our deepest thanks go to everyone who has supported the Traverse throughout 2024/25: our audiences, artists, staff, volunteers, donors, funders and partners. Your creativity, energy and belief in what we do make everything possible.

Together, you have helped sustain a theatre that exists to discover new voices, spark conversation and connect communities through the power of live storytelling. Every ticket purchased, partnership formed, and act of support contributes directly to the Traverse's ability to champion bold new writing and nurture the next generation of talent.

We extend particular thanks to Creative Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government for their continued investment and belief in our work, as well as to the many trusts, foundations, sponsors and individual donors whose generosity enables us to bring new stories to life on our stages and in our communities.

To everyone who has shared in our journey this year, whether on stage, behind the scenes, in classrooms, rehearsal rooms or in the audience, thank you. Your support ensures the Traverse remains a space for creativity, collaboration and imagination, now and for the years to come.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Finance Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Traverse Theatre (Scotland) is a Limited Company (Registered Number SC076037) and a Scottish Charity (Registered Number SC002368) with its Registered Office at 10 Cambridge Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH1 2ED.

