



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



The Village Storytelling Centre's vision is for a world where people and communities are inspired, connected and heard.

Our mission is to improve and enrich lives across Scotland through the power of story.

Strategic Aims

- To increase access to storytelling and creative opportunities for communities
- To provide platforms for people to share their voices
- To promote the artform of contemporary oral storytelling across Scotland and beyond

Outcomes

- People will have improved mental health and wellbeing
- People will feel better connected to each other and their communities
- People will actively shape their communities and influence decision makers
- The diversity of voices in contemporary oral storytelling will be improved
- Audiences for contemporary oral storytelling will be increased and diversified

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INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to introduce our annual report for the period April 2024 to March 2025. This was perhaps our busiest year ever!

Our work in Greater Pollok and neighbouring ward of Newlands Auldburn continued to thrive through our Community Stories programme. As well as our successful weekly programme of activities we supported artists residencies, created new partnerships, held several community events, further developed our Citizen Storyteller approach and explored a new Community Performer model! It has been a joy to see so many of our regular participants take the lead as performers, artists, story gatherers, story bearers and leaders – it is our privilege to work alongside them as a place-based organisation.

In June 2024, we held the fourth edition of our Village Storytelling Festival in which community and professional performers were brought together for a week-long celebration of oral storytelling. This year we were delighted to deliver our festival in conjunction with the annual FEST (Federation of European Storytelling) conference. Held in Scotland for the first time, we were honoured to host delegates from around the world, for a diverse programme of workshops, presentations and performance.

As ever, we were very fortunate to work with wonderful partners, both new and long-time collaborators. This included partnership projects with Wheatley Care, GCVS, Sanctuary Housing, Capability Scotland, Say Women and our exciting residency with the Burrell Collection.

There were some fabulous new additions to our team throughout the year with the inclusion of two Paid Work Placements, funded by Glasgow City Council. Hart Tucker joined us on a temporary basis as Step Up to Net Zero Project Coordinator, supporting us to make valuable changes with regards to environmental sustainability within both our office and delivery. Hart's final contribution before heading off to Australia for their PhD was to support our young people to apply for funding for an environmentally themed project. Romi Sarfaty joined us as Creative Administration Assistant, proving to be such a valuable asset we asked her to join us permanently! And finally, we welcomed Andrew Wilson, recent Emerging Voices in Storytelling 'graduate', as our new Storyteller for Children & Young People as we said a fond farewell to Isobel who moved onto a new chapter in Settle, England in October.

My personal highlight of the year was our festival launch event, at the Our Stories Our Voices exhibition in Glasgow School of Art. This event placed our community members and our work in applied storytelling at the heart of the festival, bringing an audience of participants from across the city, artists, funders, elected members and conference delegates together in celebration.

I wish to thank all our funders and partners for their wonderful support throughout the year. And I thank our fantastic staff members, associate artists, volunteers and trustees for their amazing contributions and achievements across our programmes.

Helen Mill, Executive Director

OUR IMPACT



6524

People engaged in our
events, performances
and workshops or
recieved resources

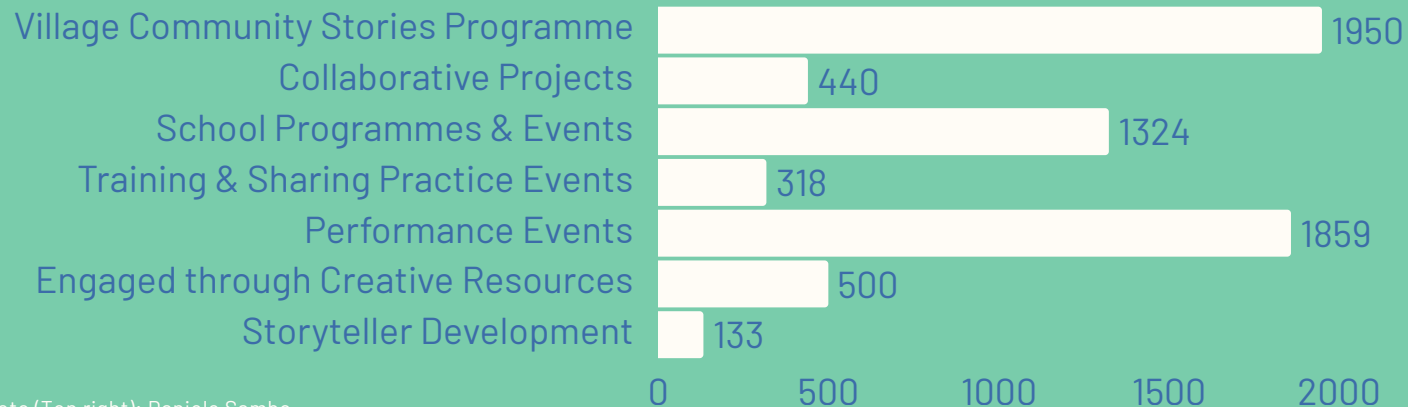


Photo (Top right): Daniele Sambo



6024

direct beneficiaries

3344

adults

2494

children &
young people



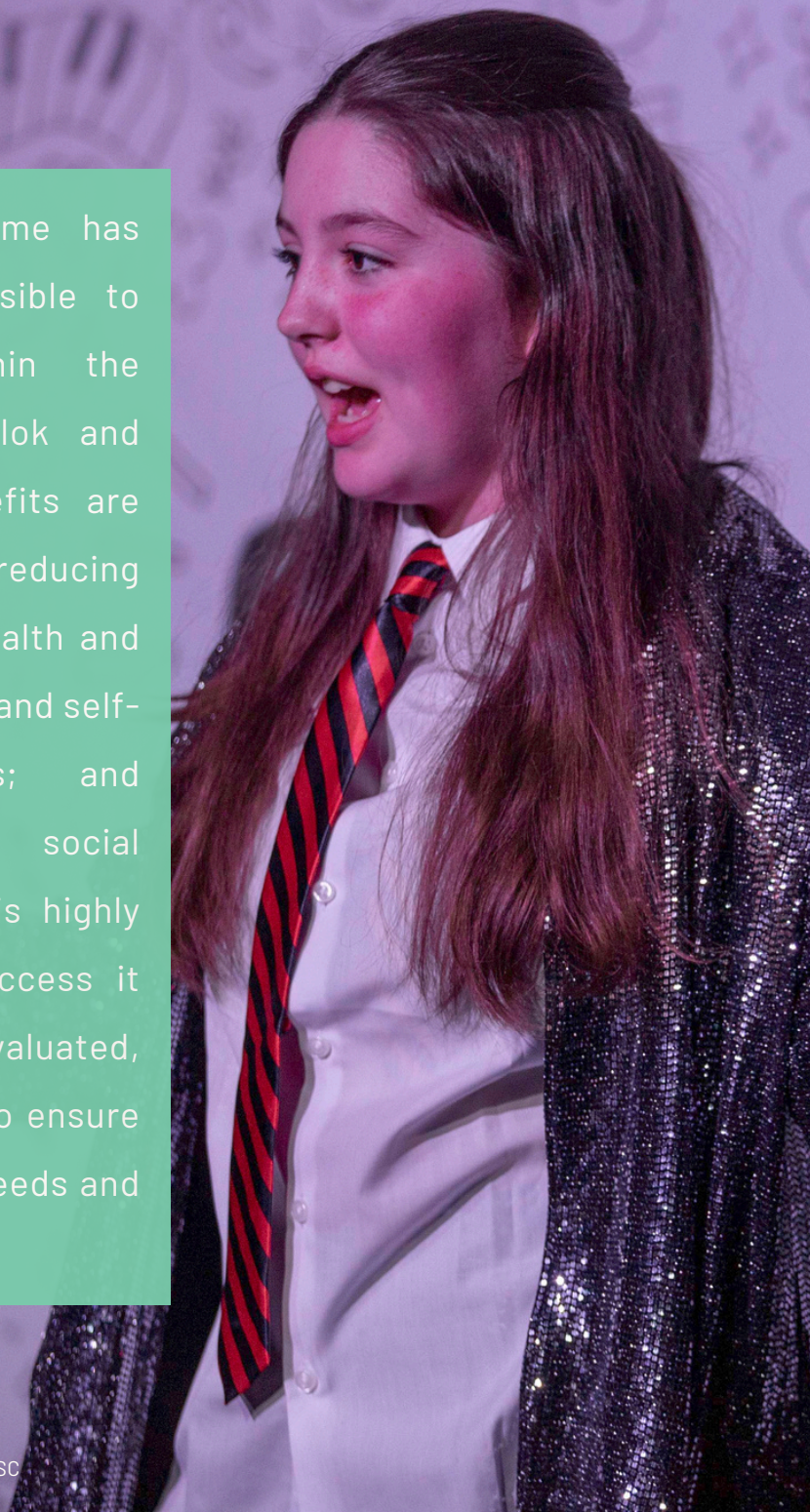
*"It's like my mind forgets
about the problems and
worries I have, I feel
relaxed and happy"*

-Adult participant



COMMUNITY STORIES

This story-led arts programme has been designed to be accessible to people of all ages within the communities of Greater Pollok and Newlands Auldburn. Its benefits are wide-ranging and include: reducing isolation; improving mental health and wellbeing; building confidence and self-esteem; developing skills; and providing opportunities for social connection. The programme is highly valued by the people who access it locally and it is continually evaluated, both formally and informally, to ensure that it responds to changing needs and wants.





Imagine Lab & Connecting Stories

Our Early Years programme for pre-5s and their adults included outdoor and indoor provision of story-led play and movement. This year we continued our Artist in Residence model, working with two new artists to work with our Early Years Storyteller and families and create resources.

Ishbel McFarlane completed an extended residency exploring multilingualism in the home, culminating in a performance and workshop at the Village Storytelling Festival and a short film.

Florence Logan undertook a 3-month residency exploring movement and the theme of water which culminated in the development of postcards which offer fun and accessible ideas for families to try at home.



Story Clubs & Story Makers

Story Clubs and Story Makers continued throughout the year, both at The Village and local venues. The groups focussed on stories of Crookston Castle, creating artwork through story, which was shared at several of our community events including Kite Fest and Doors Open Day. During Gaelic week, the groups also explored Gaelic Stories and learned Gaelic songs, connecting cultural heritage with creative expression.

"I wish this was on every day"
-Story Club participant, VSC



Young Storytellers

Both Young Storytellers groups enjoyed a busy and creative year, packed with weekly storytelling sessions, specialist masterclasses, performances, trips and events. Our group based at the Village created an impressive graphic novel and accompanying storytelling performance titled 'Break a Leg' which had its debut performance at VSF2024, exploring and celebrating Neurodiversity and themes of Language and Identity. The group enjoyed a summer trip to Edinburgh Festival Fringe, visiting the Museum of Childhood and experiencing a professional storytelling performance at The Scottish Storytelling Centre - 'Odin's Eye and the Art of Seeing' - followed by a Q&A with storyteller Alice Fernbank. This experience enabled the young people to gain a deeper knowledge and insight into the wider storytelling sector. Three of our group members finished the year by developing original writing for the 'Connecting Pollok, Past Present & Future' publication and performed their work live at the final celebration event in March 2025. Our group based at Mansewood Community Centre very much enjoyed exploring 'Peter Pan (The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up)' by Scottish novelist J.M. Barrie. The young people created costume pieces, visual art and their own stories inspired by the original book. They celebrated the success of their weekly sessions with a visit to the Tron Theatre to enjoy the pantomime 'Peter Panto and the Incredible Stinkerbell'!

COMMUNITY STORIES PROGRAMME



Early Years, Children & Young People



Our Stories, Our Voices

We were exceptionally proud of our community adult groups this year as they prepared artistic outputs for the Village Storytelling Festival, exploring the theme of "Language and Identity".

Pollok Voices created their performance "The Things We Keep", telling personal stories of objects that were valuable to them. The other groups contributed with their audio, video stories and art pieces for an exhibition presented at the Glasgow School of Art as the VSF Launch event, called "The Stories We Are". The digital version of the exhibition can be viewed [here](#).

From September 2024 to March 2025, we worked in collaboration with The Tenement House, exploring the theme of "Home and Hope". Our groups visited the museum which sparked stories on what home meant to them. Each group began to work on different artistic outputs for an exhibition which would take place in May 2025 at The Tenement House.



“ Participant Quotes ”

"Sometimes feel a little anxious about activity when first introduced, but when taken gently through it was so rewarding"

(This Woman's Voice participant)

"I feel I belong to this group"
(Pollok Voices participant)

"We would love to tell stories in public, to perform"
(Voices of Peace participant)



"It is good for my mental health, it is my place I can go out and be among people"

(Participant of Voices of Peace)

Connecting Pollok: Past, Present and Future

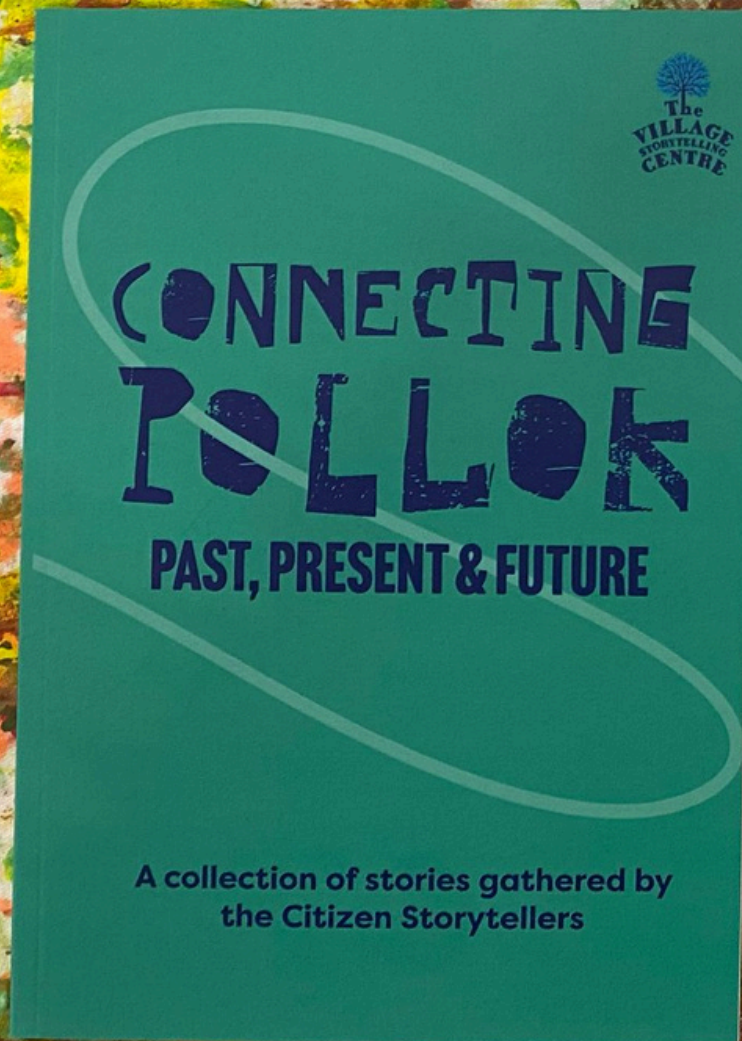
We completed the first phase of our new project Connecting Pollok: Past, Present and Future. The project piloted a new community led approach to story gathering with our Citizen Storytellers programme. This pilot programme saw local people trained in applied storytelling so they can gather shape and share the stories of the wider community ensuring greater inclusion in decision making and celebrating Pollok's Past Present and Future. We also held several events including: Kite Fest, MiniFest, Glasgow Doors Open Day Festival, Christmas Fun Day, St Paul's Damshot Woods performance and zine launch and Connecting Pollok Celebration.

The project also enabled our support of the Youth Café, led by Spider Arts ensuring young people's involvement in both the Citizen Storytellers and events programme.

Connecting Pollok also brought together a range of partners, artists and creatives living and working in the local area to develop a new arts and creativity strategy for the community.

Throughout the project we have worked closely with several key partners, including Spider Arts, Urban Roots, Greater Pollok Services, St Paul's RC High School, Paratha in the Park, Glasgow City Council's Centre for Civic Innovation, exploring community led service design and how to involve the most marginalised community member's voices in decision making.







COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Photo: Eoin Carey

The Village's programme of Collaborative Projects has two facets, each using approaches of applied storytelling: (a) it supports people to reflect on and reframe their stories, build their skills and confidence, and imagine more positive futures; and (b) it supports public and third sector organisations to explore strategic change through gathering and sharing stories of lived experience with an ethical focus. The following pages highlight of some of the projects we delivered from March 2024 - April 2025.

Our Stories, Our Voices - Wheatley Care

We continued the extension of our adult programme across wider Glasgow, in partnership with Wheatley Care. We delivered a series of Story cafes across Wheatley Care's services and two 6-10 week projects. We worked with the Maryhill Self Directed Support Service for adults with complex disabilities for a second time following their fantastic contribution to the exhibition 'The Stories We Are' for the Village Storytelling Festival, and worked with a new group from Barmulloch Housing Support and Care at Home Service for adults who have either a learning disability, enduring mental health problems or who experience issues of alcohol dependency.

GCVS Community Connectors

We were invited to collaborate with the GCVS Community Connectors team and their clients to explore and share the story of the service. This included training and development sessions with staff members and story gathering sessions, including clients. A book and film developed throughout this project will be finalised later in 2025.

Capability Scotland: Not Words But Meanings

This 11-week programme with participants and staff from Junction 52 in Penilee and pupils from Corseford School culminated in a public performance of an interactive immersive storytelling piece, performed at the Village Storytelling Festival 2024. Based on a quote that the language of friendship was based on not words but meanings, this was used to explore how language and communication can work in a complex learning needs context.

Maryhill Burgh Halls Trust

Following on from our collaboration to bring the HerStory of the eponymous Mary Hill to life, Associate Storyteller, Shona Cowie collaborated with Magic Torch Comics to further develop the story of the community into a graphic novel.

Sanctuary Housing Association

We were invited by Sanctuary Housing Association and their partners, Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership (Health Improvement) to gather and share the stories of their work in developing Pollok as a trauma informed community. We explored the story of organisations who had been supported by their work and developed a series of short podcasts and a book, both to be finalised in 2026.

Say Women

We were delighted to once again work with a cohort of participants, the Say Women team and artist Nic Dickson. Together with Storyteller Shona Cowie, they developed a zine which explored the stigma around mental health and discrimination.

We also delivered short programmes with Flourish House, Grassmarket Community Project and Children's Health Scotland among others, and began projects with Collective Resonance and Hemat Gryffe which will be completed in the next financial year.

EDUCATION



This year our focus has been on local schools and we have enjoyed a range of connections with schools across our community. From taster sessions and performances delivered in local nurseries and primary schools to projects with Crookston Castle Primary and St Paul's RC High School, it has been our privilege to connect with so many children, young people and dedicated staff. Our work has also extended to Further Education with our storytellers invited to deliver masterclasses at Glasgow Kelvin College.

Crookston Castle Primary

We worked with Primary 2 classes at Crookston Castle Primary and their 'Junior Friends of Crookston Castle group' to create flags and new stories inspired by the castle. Together in collaboration with the Friends of Crookston Castle, the children presented their work at a special event and their artwork has been combined into banners which will be used at future events at the castle.

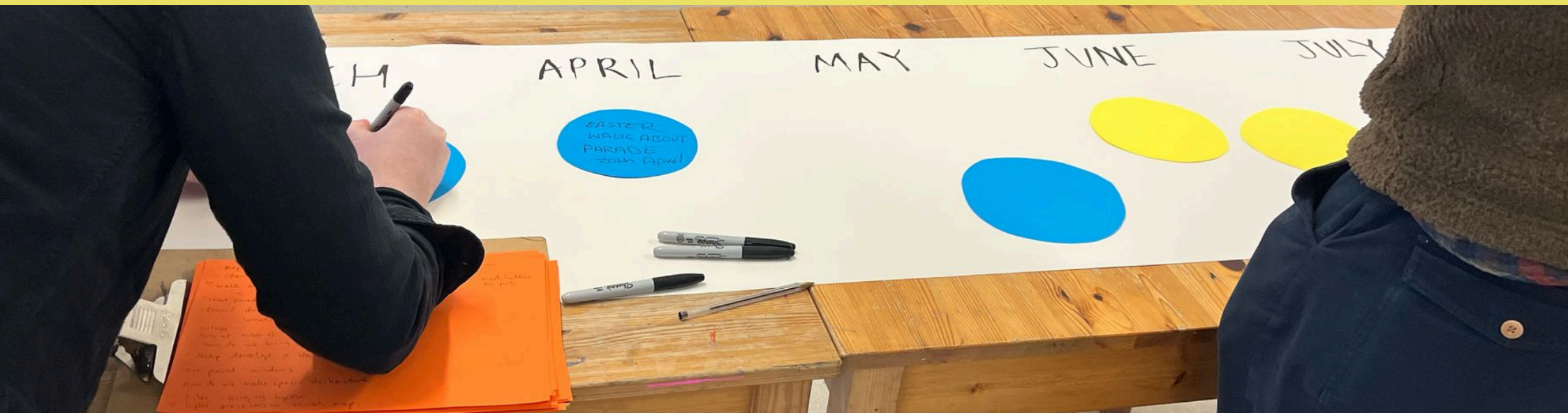
SHARING PRACTICE: APPLIED STORYTELLING

Our expertise in Applied Storytelling has led us to develop and provide courses for a range of organisations nationally and internationally in recent years. Bespoke training this year included:

- Turning Point Scotland
- Scottish Storytelling Centre
- Perth & Kinross Council
- Wheatley Care
- Burrell Collection
- Inspiring Scotland Creative Communities

We were also invited to share our experience and expertise at several conference events and networks including:

- Impact Funding Partners: Wellbeing For Longer Celebration
- Urban Sustainability Directors Network: presenting our work to U.S. and Canadian Climate practitioners
- Glasgow Teachers Nurture Conference: Nurturing our Children & Young People



ARTFORM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

This key programme supports the development of a diverse range of storytellers to develop their practice, build networks, to create new work and to have multiple opportunities to perform. In turn, this enables us to reach new, diverse audiences and to create a vibrant storytelling scene in Glasgow that reflects the diversity of its people.

This year we:

Delivered our second Emerging Voices in Storytelling programme

Provided training for Performing Arts Students at Kelvin College

Provided informal support and mentoring for aspiring, emerging and established storytellers

Held Story Lab, our in-house development week for our team

Began a 9-month residency at the Burrell Collection

Began a 2-year research programme exploring the impact of our work in developing contemporary storytelling in Glasgow

Provided speakers for two Casglu events for storytellers primarily from Wales

Delivered our 4th edition of the Village Storytelling Festival, in tandem with the annual FEST* Conference

Emerging Voices in Storytelling



Our Emerging Voices in Storytelling placement had its second cohort move through the work. Performing at the Village Storytelling Festival Frankie, Bryce and Andrew produced a fantastic 75 minute show that told a series of contemporary, ancient and reworked folktales.

All three went on to continue their development within storytelling, Frankie and Bryce receiving funding to deliver 4 new storytelling nights called Wildcard Stories in a Southside venue that regularly drew in significant audiences. The third member of that cohort, Andrew, went on to join our team. He became the children's storyteller in January '25, demonstrating how a commitment to this programme can secure the future of the organisation by training and developing future staff and freelancers. Each have gone on to take on freelance storytelling roles with a variety of organisations, from Govanhill Festival to Platform in Easterhouse, demonstrating the wider impact of developing storytellers not only for the scene in general but also for the presence of the artform in the city. These performers also held a performance in Edinburgh as part of the finale of their placement by taking over the Guid Crack Club, Scotland's oldest regular storytelling night. Thus increasing our links with TRACS and the Scottish Storytelling Centre.



VILLAGE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2024

Between 25–30 June, we presented our biennial festival, mainly at Glasgow’s CCA, with an exhibition at Glasgow School of Art and a closing community event at St James Church, Pollok.

We featured an exciting line-up of acclaimed storytellers, including Linda Williamson, Tamar Williams, Gauri Raje, Niall Moorjani, Story Jam’s **Women Who Gave No F*cks**, Amsterdam Storytelling Centre, and Vicky McFarland’s innovative **Story Dome**. We also supported new work by Emery Hunter, Lorna Callery Sithole, and emerging voices like Eilidh Inara, Frankie Regalia, Bryce Drennan and Andrew Wilson.

Our resident storytellers — Dan Serridge, Daiva Ivanauskaite, and Sarah Wedderburn Ogilvy — presented their own work, while Sarah and Daiva joined Isobel O’Donovan and Trinidad Cabezon Droguett to create *Against the Current*, which opened the festival to a sold-out audience.

Seven community performances and events were developed with local groups including Village Young Storytellers, Dunterlie Community, Capability Scotland, Wheatley Care, and LGBTQ+ participants, sharing equal billing with professionals.

The festival concluded with the Pollok MiniFest, a community arts day in the heart of our local community featuring performances, circus skills, visual arts, face painting, and food—celebrating creativity and collaboration across Glasgow.

VILLAGE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2024

IN NUMBERS:

**25 individual
performances
and events**

**28
Storytellers**

**26
additional
artists**

**124
participants
involved in
creating work**

**1139 tickets
booked**

**Approx. 350
Exhibition
Attendees**

**200 MiniFest
attendees**

"I just really like the way the Village (Storytelling Festival) is programmed in terms of just a variety of voices being heard, a variety of styles of storytelling and that's very exciting for me so, I'll be back"

VILLAGE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2024



Photos L-R from top: Tiu Makkonen, Tiu Makkonen, Tiu Makkonen, Eoin Carey, Tiu Makkonen, Eoin Carey, Eoin Carey





FEST CONFERENCE 2024

Replacing the symposium usually held as part of our festival, the annual FEST (Federation of European Storytelling) Conference took place in Scotland for the first time! We co-hosted the event alongside our Four Nations partners, Adverse Camber (England), Armstrong Storytelling Trust (Northern Ireland) and Tamar Williams, representing the Welsh Storytelling Community. Welcoming 128 delegates representing 25 countries the conference included:

- 1** Launch event at the City Chambers with a welcome from Baillie Linda Pike and an exciting story-led welcome delivered in English, Scots, Irish Gaelic and Welsh.
- 3** Keynote Speeches from Dr Amadu Khan (Royal Conservatoire Scotland and the Village Storytelling Centre), Dr Stephe Harrop (Liverpool Hope University) and Steve Byrne (TRACS).
- 15** Workshops exploring a range of themes delivered by storytellers and storytelling organisers from across Europe including Dougie Mackay, Paola Bilbi, Colin Unwin, Cara Silversmith, Shona Cowie and Lina Teir.
- 14** Presentations/provocations exploring themes of diversity, innovative formats, heritage and future thinking.
- Many More** Additional events including coaching, plenary sessions and an Open Space session.

FEST CONFERENCE 2024

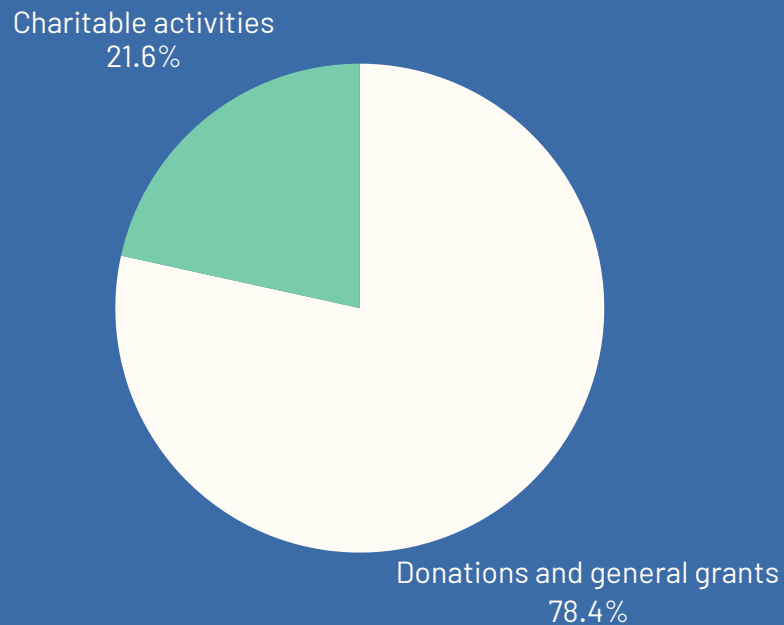


"I've had an amazing time, I arrived on the Tuesday for the opening performances welcomed with a wonderful reception with storytellers in many different languages from here in the UK. I then went on to spend several different workshops, some fascinating discussions went on, ranging the topics from LGBTQIA+ Storytelling to environmental storytelling and stories about homes."

Finances 2024/25

£382,959

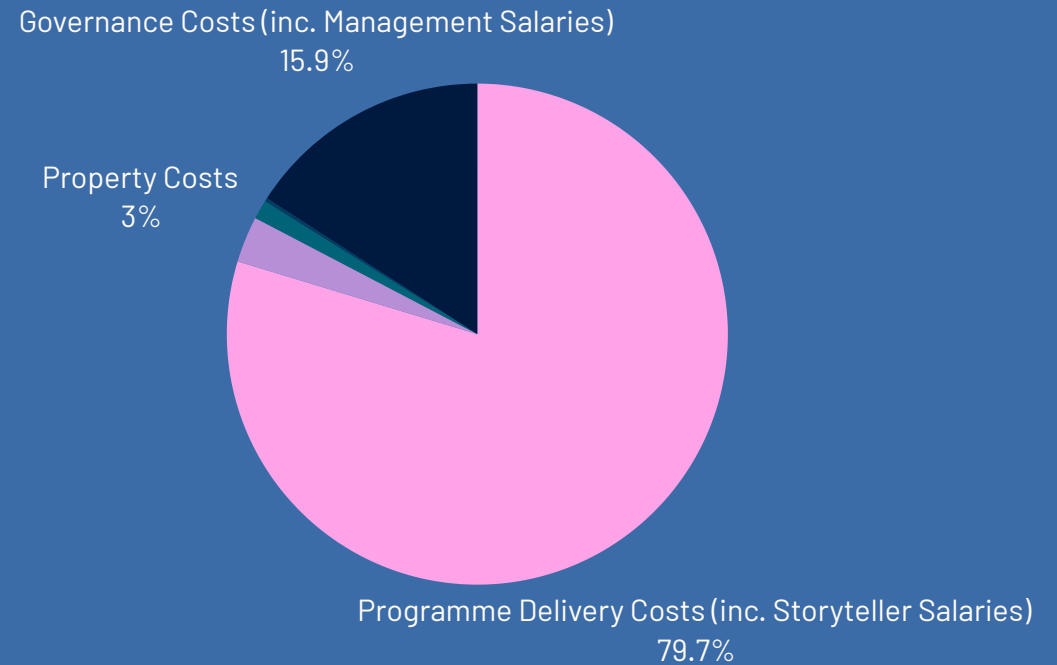
Total income



Income sources

£451,800

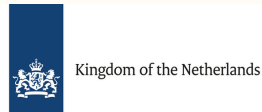
Total expenditure



Expenditure

Funders

We are grateful to each and every one of our Funders, Partners and Supporters who enable us to deliver and expand our services. Thank you for your support.



AAB
Hands Up For Trad
Glasgow University
Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

GCVS Paid Work Placements
Scottish Book Trust
Scottish Refugee Council

staff team

Helen Mill, Executive Director
Alison White, Operations Manager
Colin White, Storyteller - Community Stories Lead
Dan Serridge, Storyteller - Artform Development Lead
Sarah Wedderburn-Ogilvy, Community Storyteller - Early Years
Isobel O'Donovan, Community Storyteller - Children & Young People (until Sept 2024)
Andrew Wilson, Community Storyteller - Children & Young People (From Jan 2025)
Trinidad Cabezón Droguett, Community Storyteller - Adults
Daiva Ivanauskaitė-Brown, Community Storyteller - Adults
Naomi O Kelly, Accessibility Co-Ordinator
Romi Sarfaty, Creative Administration Assistant
Barbara Morrison, Cleaner
Hart Tucker, Step Up to Net Zero Coordinator (Placement)

trustees

Fiona Rich (Chair)
Cinzia Ciaramicoli (until April 2024)
June Couper
Gladys Dumashie
Rebecca Dunne (Treasurer)
Amadu Khan
Elizabeth Morrison
Elizabeth Scott
Dina Sidhva



associate artists, freelancers & volunteers

Gaynor Barradell
Lauren Bianchi
Hannah Brackston
Daniel Calvert
Shona Cowie
Bryce Drennan
Miriam Doren
Emma Greer
Andy Gunn
Hannah Justad
Steph Morris
Fiona Moon
Jillian Mendoza
Florence Logan
Cat Major
Ishbel McFarlane
Josafinni Porter Chambers
Greer Pester
Frankie Regalia
Sam Rowe
Daniele Sambo
Kate Seaton
Neil Wood
Lababa Naqvi
Eilidh Traynor

partners

We would like to express our thanks to all the partner organisations we work with from third and private sectors and to our amazing local community. We couldn't run our amazing projects without you!

Staff team

Trustees

Associate Artists Freelancers Volunteers

Partners



Photo: Eoin Carey

the village storytelling centre

www.villagestorytelling.org.uk



At The Village Storytelling Centre, we use the power of storytelling to bring people together and to provide a space for creativity and connection.

We use storytelling to support people to increase their confidence and self-esteem by fostering the belief that each of us has stories to tell and that they are worth hearing. We offer people the opportunity to look at their lives differently, to understand that the stories we have always told ourselves or been told about ourselves aren't set in stone – we can change and shape them.

