

# Beltane 2025

## Members Survey report

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## Summary

Overall, this seems to have been a pretty successful festival, with several scores being significantly higher than the average of the previous two Beltanes. The scores report particular success in the areas of groups being highly organised, awareness of costs, connection to nature and the performance of the Blues and Board in supporting membership. One slightly concerning figure is that emotional safety was lower than in previous years, perhaps as a result of the various difficult situations experienced by a couple of groups.

Notably, BFS members were very impressed with the Court's performances this year, and how well the new Board did in their roles.

This year's survey was also successful in getting over 120 responses, the highest in many years.

When reading this report, please keep in mind that while we've tried to capture as much input as possible, the response rate was 37.8% so the results may not represent all views. Direct quotes are also subjective opinion.

## Overall Festival Stats - 121 Responses 37.8% Response Rate

Group Specific Questions	All Festival Average
The group was logistically well organised.	8.51
Questions from me or others were adequately answered.	9.1
There was an atmosphere of respect between GOs and the group.	9.44
I enjoyed attending sessions.	9.36
The group's tasks and objectives were clear to me.	8.86
GOs were available for help and guidance.	9.36
The work during the run-up was relevant to our performance on the night.	9.4
Adequate supporting materials were available.	9.18
I felt physically safe.	9.37
I felt emotionally safe.	9.45
Group sessions and events were accessible to me and any special requirements I had were catered for.	9.6
I was made aware of the costs directly associated with the group early in the process.	9.42
I estimate my costs for participating in this group to be...	£92.53
I understood and / or had access to information about where group donations were spent	8.49
<b>GO/Court/Project Leader</b>	



I felt physically safe. (GO)	9.27
I felt emotionally safe. (GO)	7.93
I felt adequately supported by BFS. (GO)	8.43
<b>Festival Related questions</b>	
The overall story-line of this year's festival was clear to me.	8.44
The role of my group and myself within the event was clear to me.	9.26
It was clear how the May Queen and Green Man stories related to my group this year.	8.41
I understood the role of the Blues and how they related to my group this year.	8.98
I felt that the overall Festival was well organised.	8.5
Do you feel from your experience this festival the Board of Trustees are acting in the best interest of BFS and helping ensure it carries out its activities?	9.2
It was clear to me what rights and responsibilities I had as a volunteer/performer, and where I could direct any comments, questions, problems, or other feedback.	9.56
This experience built, strengthened or complimented my relationship to the environment, nature and its seasonal rhythms as well as engaged me with the traditional celebration of the Celtic solar and lunar calendar fire festivals and their relevance to community life and contemporary culture.	8.67
This experience developed and enhanced or complimented my art performing skills in a collaborative environment.	8.81
I'll benefit from this experience beyond the context of this festival.	9.29
Overall happiness with the experience	8.84



# Festival Wide

## Blues

Group Organisers expressed deep thanks to the Blues for their kindness, support, and help in making the festival feel safe, even in tricky moments.

Blues did more than provide pastoral care—some actively participated in group activities. One member wrote: “I LOVED them playing music with us. The connection was so clear from creating something together.”

Each Blue supports around five groups and brings their own specialities, such as ritual or acro. One organiser noted: “They seem to have more clearly defined roles than previously which was helpful and they made a real effort to be known to our group members”

A few minor issues were raised: occasional delays in replies, a desire for more visits, and some uncertainty about the scope of the Blues' role. One organiser remarked: “They’re asked to be spiritual leaders, HR, and history keepers—it’s too much, and many Blues seemed stressed without proper support.”

Group members often only saw Blues during the Festival night or on a group visit, leading to confusion about their role. As one said: “I didn’t fully understand what the Blues do.” Those who had personal contact, however, praised their support.

Despite the challenges, feedback from both organisers and members recognised the Blues' hard work and impact. A typical comment: “We were well supported and felt very much heard. Keep being awesome—thank you!”

## Court

### Interactions with performance groups

Generally, people really enjoyed interacting with both Andrew and Alix when they were present, especially when they joined in with the group’s activities, and worked with them on the rewilding theme.

*“Andrew's history with the society and with Reds in particular built to a really lovely relationship across the run up and the night.”*

*“Alix continues to be the May Queen of my heart, and this year’s concept of Expansive Rewilding was both an excellent hook from which other groups could hang their own concept and also extremely timely and emotive. ”*

Many group members wished they could have spent longer with court with time constraints (both to groups and court) getting in the way. This has led to a couple of suggestions that this interaction is done in a slightly more condensed way:



*"I would recommend, if there are time constraints due to there being many groups, that the Green Man and May Queen consolidate their "This is us, this is who we are and what we're thinking" meetings with multiple groups at the same time."*

In several areas of the form, many group members mentioned especially loving the themes of "Expansive rewilding", and "Rewilding yourself", with a few comments about how they'd enjoyed integrating this into their groups.

### The performance on the night itself

There is very effusive praise for this year's performance, and how well Alix and Andrew worked together. People thought that the dance was especially beautiful, loved the costumes, praised both performers specifically and were delighted to see the addition of acro performance in the stage dance

*"I thought that this year's Green Man was exceptional. Andrew fully understood what the Green Man means to the festival and had a storyline which he cared so very deeply about and the passion to convey this to the society at large."*

*"I really enjoyed the pairing this year. Both excellent people, both giving it their all"*

## Organisation and Contractors

Of the 31 comments about the Contractors, 26 were positive - sometimes brief, like "Bloody brilliant" or "Legends", sometimes with more detail like "All of them were lovely as ever. I don't know if security comes into this but having had a lot to do with them this festival they were fantastic, we should absolutely keep using them, and they have my endless thanks. Same goes for the roaming ambulance staff who were also delightful" or "I'm glad they exist and loved having them there. It made BFS seem competent and accountable".

Some BFS members had more knowledge of what the Contractors' work involved than others, and they were especially positive about the different Contractors. One wrote "They take a lot of strain and don't sit down enough. It's not sustainable if you want to keep them active in BFS. They get a lot of dumb questions that should be shielded by a GO. I get [that] you lead from the front, and it's volunteers. They are more patient than I would be".

There were also a lot of comments of praise for the Contractors leaving - Ella and Rob - and regret at them leaving. Their work was mostly described as "amazing!"

However, there were some more negative comments. Lighting at a night time festival is always a challenge and one comment from the Processional Drummers was that the arc lights were brighter than usual, both making the drummers' cues harder to see and also, perhaps, losing the effect of the torches as illuminators.

There were a couple of comments about the structure of the weekly Group Organiser meetings, suggesting that perhaps they could be better structured and of more value to the Group Organisers themselves. This feedback has been taken on board.



Despite these slightly negative comments which were mostly each presented by one person, the majority of the comments were appreciative of the hard work done by the Contractors, particularly Front of House ("Front of House did incredible work building the festival"). The words "dedication" and "helpful" were mentioned frequently in the group members' comments.

## Board

"Do you feel from your experience this festival the Board of Trustees are acting in the best interest of BFS and helping ensure it carries out its activities?" - (9.2)

### Overall

Feedback on the Board's performance is overwhelmingly positive. There are more than 20 comments praising trustees (often by name) for their excellent work this year, and saying that it was clear just how much work everyone had done.

*"Keep doing what you're doing. I honestly trust that the board cares and has the best interests of the society in mind at all times "*

### Major themes

Particular praise was given for this Board's communications and documentation. The Board's visibility and presence was greatly appreciated. Many members also mentioned how much they enjoyed the Beltane Bugle and Board Seconds. The one dissonant area is that a couple of people said they didn't like the extent to which BFS relied on Discord as a communications channel, see *Your Questions Answered* section for a response to this.

A few Beltaners mentioned how they felt the society's handling of Safeguarding, and the clarity of communication around this had improved. GOs appreciated the fast safeguarding checks.

The membership also largely appreciated the BFS's anti-far-right statement with many messages in support. Praise was not universal though; one member found the tone stressful, and worried that it might be used to target people with different, but not far-right beliefs. Another mentioned that it's a bit light on non-binary representation.

The dreadlocks issue also received mixed support, with most in favour, but concerns raised as to the level of consultation of membership and as to whether it went far enough to discourage dreadlock-like hairstyles.

### Minor themes

A few GOs and members raised concerns about the negativity of discourse within the community at the moment.

A couple of people mentioned feeling that costuming rules were inconsistent this year.



There were a couple of requests for a few more year-round BFS activities, and also a few requests for more Blethers, which several members highlighted as being both important and enjoyable.

### Other Bits and Pieces

- *“Definitely continue the Community Organiser role!”*
- *“I have ideological objections to there being a board at all. I don't think the BFS community is strengthened by existing as and/or being organized by a registered charity. So long as there is a board, however, my suggestion now and always is that it do more to promote the Gaelic language within the Festivals”*
- *“Board should have conflict resolution training of some sort.”*
- *“More celebration of the board and appreciation opportunities! Thank you so much for all you do!”*

## Charitable Aims

Environment, nature, seasonal rhythms and the Celtic solar and lunar calendar

Special mention was given here to May Queen's expansive rewilding theme here, how it integrated into the community and helped members “rewild themselves”, as well as countless comments about how the festival made them feel closer to nature.

A number of people said that Beltane feels sacred to them, and gives them a spiritual connection to nature or to the Divine, with others commenting on how nice it was to get some connection to a cultural heritage which they feel disconnected from.

There were also a couple of people who suggested that Beltane strengthen its environmental commitments, by connecting with other organisations, improving its environmental commitments, or adding a specific environmental commitment to its Charitable aims.

Quotes:

*“I always feel enlivened and closer to nature when doing Beltane”*

*“For a long while I have been meaning to engage more with my own cultural heritage and this has been a fantastic start to that journey. In recent years I've been feeling more and more that it's a shame that we are so disconnected from our culture in this way, and now I feel like I have a foothold to bring it into my life in a big and meaningful way”*

Developed and enhanced art performing skills in a collaborative environment

Lots of learning appears to have happened in this festival. Numerous commentators said they've learned more about teaching and leading performances, and there a great many people who said they'd learned, improved or refound skills in all sorts of artistic skills, examples included: costuming, character, acro, photography, fire and face painting.



It's worth noting that 4 respondents didn't think this question was for them, as their skills weren't directly performance (tech, photography, stewards). See survey comments below for more information.

These gains also come with a real impact on people's lives, as many commentators said they'd gained increased confidence and self-esteem, and expanded their comfort zones and even improved their job prospects.

Quote:

*"Being a BFS member has been invaluable to building my confidence and self-esteem in areas outside the festival and has had a massive impact on my life."*

*"I learn new things at every festival, and get to give expression to my creative/performing side in a way that I would never otherwise do in my "normal" life."*

## General / Other Feedback

### Accessibility

Several comments across groups highlighting positive accessibility and reasonable adjustments made with care.

### Health and Safety

There were several comments from different groups about negative experiences with members of the public - one comment stated that "There were a couple of practices in the Meadows on particularly warm/sunny days that made me feel a bit uneasy (there were a group of kids on dirt bikes intimidating us), but the GOs handled it well" and the Processionals reported members of the public throwing stones at them while they approached the hill.

During the Festival, there were several comments about one or more drunk people who tried to disrupt proceedings including entering performance space and before the Festival more than one group reported receiving unwanted attention from people making comments to the extent that there was a suggestion that security should be extended to outside Calton Hill.

The weather was unusually hot for the days before, during and after the Festival. Before the Festival, at the second walkthrough, people were unprepared with sunscreen protection and during the Festival, there were several comments about performers overheating.

More seriously, though, there were several comments about lack of water for performers. Not everyone is able to carry drinks with them during the festival, and so the water at the Bower was especially welcome and necessary.

There were few negative comments about physical safety. Most group members praised their group organisers for looking after them and taking heed of their physical needs - for example,



providing transport when needed, not only on Festival night, but also at other times, such as when going away for the weekend.

Other health and safety issues to be considered were to remind groups of their own safe word (as opposed to the Festival safe word), to have ear plugs, especially if near the drums and, if singing was involved, to make sure that everyone had adequate vocal warm ups.

## Deselection

Only 2 deselection forms were filled in. The value of this form will be reviewed moving forward.

## Survey

There were many helpful suggestions for review for the next festival. These will be incorporated into the survey for Samhuinn 2025. For example:

- ❖ “Developed and enhanced art performing skills in a collaborative environment”: Many people reported that this question wasn’t relevant to them as they were not performing. The question is based on one of our charitable aims which is to *“to advance the performing arts through the development of skills in professional performance and production within a cooperative and collaborative environment.”*
  - We will adjust this to “Developed and enhanced my skills in a collaborative arts environment, whether performance, tech, photography, stewarding or otherwise”
- ❖ “There's no obvious place to put feedback for things that happened during the run-up, especially if they're not group-specific. Maybe clarify the difference between this feedback for the board, and the group/GO feedback process.”
- ❖ I felt adequately supported by BFS - “I do not understand this question. Does this mean EC, contractors, Board, Blues or membership as a whole? Maybe clarify this question for next time.”

## Your Questions Answered

Space for asking questions was added to the survey this festival to enable the community to find out specific information. There are also some safeguarding related questions below.

- ❖ What's the best way to donate to BFS the charity?
  - [Information on donating to BFS found here](#)



- ❖ Most of the [survey] numbers seem to go into a black hole; it would be good to get a summary of why the numbers change and what factors the board thinks have fed into them.
  - This is that summary. It takes a lot of time to collate and organise all this data. Perhaps we could do more data analysis with this information but there are also limits on time available and skillset. It might be possible to look into this more in the future.
- ❖ Please feed the anonymised survey result headlines back to the community so people don't feel like they're shouting into the void.
  - This is that summary. This is the second time that we are sharing anonymised survey feedback to the community, the [first was Samhuinn 2024](#).
  - Even if there is a festival where the feedback is not shared back to the community due to any number of conflicting priorities, please rest assured that you are not shouting into the void and all feedback is considered.
- ❖ I'd be interested in helping out the Tech GOs on the admin side, but without the full pressure of being a Tech GO (running build crews, figuring out how to fulfil Tech requests etc); Is there any way to do that?
  - This could be really great! Why not email into [board@beltane.org](mailto:board@beltane.org) or come along to the next Pre-GO meeting where potential GOs or Deputy GOs can discuss ideas and you can declare interest in helping with the administration of Tech. The date for the next Pre-GO meeting will be confirmed via email or blog shout out in due course (probably early August).
- ❖ The actual story of the May queen and green man 😊 or at least where to look
  - The Green Man shows up in a lot of early Christian architecture and was almost certainly a pre-christian symbol. He also appears in traditional May Day celebrations; these vary, but typically, an old, respected man of the village would dress in shredded green fabric "leaves" and accompany the young May Queen on a procession.
  - Our Beltane story changes year to year, but there are some notes that are the same. As a starting point, [this description from around 2005](#) is as good as any.
- ❖ "Is there scope to make skill shares between festivals so our society can do stuff before festivals to get more ready for their groups ?
  - This has happened before, to greater or lesser extents, and if you'd like to run such a project please email [board@beltane.org](mailto:board@beltane.org) with your proposal.
- ❖ "Do groups need to be closed ? It sucks when you think "I'd like to be red" and the group is closed."
  - We know it can be hard to find that a particular group is closed. As a general rule, we don't accept closed groups without very good reason, usually



because it's not possible to find volunteers to run a particular group as open, which places much more demands on GOs. In the case of Reds, there used to be a tradition of Reds always being a closed group at Samhuinn, open only to those who did Reds at Beltane, but we have tended to move away from that in previous years (Samhuinn 2024 being a notable recent exception).

- We also draw a distinction with closed projects: projects usually involve only one or two people (although it can be more) and are often too small to be run in an open fashion. But anyone can apply to run a project!
- ❖ “Please can we have Samhuinn on Calton Hill too? Are there reasons why not?”
  - We are returning to Calton Hill for Samhuinn 2025, so yes!
  - This has happened in the past and was not well received by the community at the time, so we tried a number of other venues. Calton Hill has a number of natural performance points, each of which now has strong associations with the Beltane ritual, and moving Samhuinn to Calton Hill was jarring for many. Also, Samhuinn was intended to get us closer to our goal of street theatre, being strongly rooted in the traditions of galoshan plays.
  - Following a community blether on the 25th of January 2025 about the Future of Samhuinn, there was a strong consensus that Calton Hill is the best option we have available for all of our needs.
- ❖ What do we have to do in order to get the Samhuinns back into the streets of the city, preferably the Old Town? Street theatre is an important origin of our festival and doing it in a field somewhere loses that aspect.
  - We would need to find a place that can safely support the crowd sizes that Samhuinn now draws. We would then need to get approval from the council to use that space (or from the landowner, if it's a private road). The last time we were on the Royal Mile, we came uncomfortably close to a serious crowd crush. It may be possible to do a set stage performance on a street square without a procession, but it's doubtful that the community would accept that.
  - Many options have been explored but were unfortunately not possible for one reason or another these include George Street with Charlotte Square and St Andrew's Square, the Meadows, the Royal Mile.
- ❖ Which slope is 'Charge Slope'? - I have heard conflicting reports
  - “Charge Slope” is the name given to the slope where the reds charge down towards the procession, and are repelled by the characters in white (this year, Sìth Nam Banrigh, the Pixies). This has most often been the slope to the North of the observatory (“New Town Slope”), so when someone says “Charge Slope”, that's usually what they mean. The slope to the south, with the cannon, is called “Red slope” (or “Old Town Slope”).
- ❖ I'd love to know more about the alchemical and history of the BFS



- Please explore [the archive](#) at your leisure.
- ❖ Why are the stage steps so high? They're not suitable for short legs or bad knees.
  - The immediate answer is: We can't build out sideways, because there needs to be space for performers to move around, and there isn't space to add more steps (sadly, stage steps come in standard sizes, multiples of two feet/61cm wide). So making the steps shorter will make the stage lower. But we hear your point, and we do consider accessibility in the stage design; we'll continue to review this to see if we can improve.
- ❖ Why was there no re-entry to Caves after 3am?
  - Edinburgh Council issues late licences for club events on a very tight timescale. This year, the condition for no re-entry after 3AM was added without any warning or explanation, days before the event. We can only assume that it was an attempt to curb neighbour noise from the venue, but it was very frustrating, especially as we had no time to make any alternate plans, and the effect was that many people crowded round outside the venue from 3AM. We'll be aware of the possibility of this happening next time, and try to plan some mitigations if possible (suggestions welcome! - Please email [board@beltane.org](mailto:board@beltane.org) )
- ❖ How many seeds germinated from our seed planting efforts run by Pillywiggins. On a serious note the progress of this area growing would be really nice to see.
  - This project was an idea of the May Queen, who asked Pillywiggins to carry it out. At present, It's a bit early to tell the progress of the project. There are likely to be results in a few months. Pillywiggins were assisted by people from other groups, including Stewards and the Board, plus an author who specialised in rewilding, and members of the public who were passing also contributed in scattering the seeds, so it was a success in raising at least a bit of awareness of the Beltane rewilding theme.
- ❖ I'm really concerned that Beltane is under serious threat, from the increased Council levies. Could we have more comms about that, and the situation as it stands?
  - The current situation is that the extra levy the council were imposing was not added to our site license as we had expected, although it has now been invoiced (we are questioning the legal basis of this invoice). We are therefore as much in the dark as you are about what this levy looks like for this festival and in the future. We did collect the levy on top of ticket sales, and we intend to make sure that the money goes to the improvement of Calton Hill one way or another.
  - The biggest threat from levies and council fees isn't to established groups like BFS: Beltane started as a small local community arts project, and it would already be prohibitive for a similar small project to pay for a licence on Calton Hill. Imagine, we used to pay for the festival purely through donation buckets!



- ❖ This year I learned that we'd banned drinking on the hill completely. Back in 2004/5, "the Beltane" had a legal battle with the council specifically to allow alcohol, on the grounds that a toast to the May Queen and Green Man was an integral part of the festival - and won. The compromise was to ban glass bottles (which had stood since). I understand that the ban was because of a single group who was drinking before bower, already against the rules. Was this ban proportionate, and is it worth reviewing?
  - 2004 saw a complete alcohol ban for both witnesses and performers which was lifted in 2005.
  - Lore has found some newspaper articles that shed some light on this. In particular, one article says that there was a complete alcohol ban in place, along with the curfew, when the festival returned in 2004. Solicitors were employed to cite a human rights violation, and the booze ban was dropped in 2005. Edinburgh Evening News [Apr 15, 2005]: "However, on the day of last year's celebration, it emerged that solicitors had been hired to argue that an alcohol ban was a breach of human rights, forcing the council to reverse its ban."
  - When it stopped being a free festival, performers were prohibited from alcohol due to licensing and insurance.
  - Now, witnesses may drink but if a punter shows up to the hill with a slab of tins, they will be sent away. For this festival, a few people were sent away from the queue to sober up before going in.

## Safeguarding Related Questions

- ❖ How to report an audience member.
  - If it's an incident on the night, please report them to Stewards. If you can't find a Steward, ask any Tech with a radio to pass on the message.
  - If it is after the event, it's best to make a report to [safeguarding@beltane.org](mailto:safeguarding@beltane.org) (or [board@beltane.org](mailto:board@beltane.org) if it's not a safety issue) and we'll take whatever action is possible (which may include investigating or reporting to the police or may include changes to how things are done).
- ❖ Are feathers as costuming banned?
  - Feathers are highly flammable and should not be used in costuming, even if treated to make them "fire safe".
- ❖ Who to approach? Blues or Safeguarding? It's not clear how long something will take to be handled, or what feedback you'll get once the issue is handled.
  - This doesn't have to be either/or; if in doubt, email the Blues and CC Safeguarding about an incident that causes concern.



- Safeguarding and Blues have different approaches: Blues will generally aim to mitigate situations, give pastoral care to members, and support you to find an informal resolution. Meanwhile Safeguarding is more often looking for patterns of behaviour over time. Safeguarding is also interested in handling more serious incidents that threaten mental or physical safety, where stronger interventions are necessary.
- Blues will sometimes escalate an issue to Safeguarding and vice versa, so it will not matter if you tell the wrong team. But you should be kept informed. And if you don't get a resolution for your report, you can always ask for an update!
- Active discussions are taking place around creating greater opportunities for Board/Safeguarding and Blue collaboration.
- ❖ Some clarity on what is and isn't considered acceptable to post on social media and consequences if things breach the rules? There was quite a hurtful post on an unofficial group right before the festival and I found it difficult to be civil with the person during the build and event but I also wasn't sure I had a responsibility to ignore it/they had broken any responsibilities in posting it since it was an unofficial group.
  - All BFS members are expected to follow the [Social Media Policy](#). If you feel that someone may have breached this policy and caused emotional distress, please contact [safeguarding@beltane.org](mailto:safeguarding@beltane.org). The policy applies to all online spaces, not just official BFS channels.
- ❖ A couple of members mentioned that they would like more clarity and consistency about rules for new relationships between people in different parts of the Society. For example: are or should the Board be subject to the same rules with Court members as the GOs with their group members? Should the Court be subject to the same rules as GOs with regular society members?
  - There are currently two rules in place.
  - The "don't screw the crew" rule is a narrowly-scoped rule introduced to deal with a specific issue that safeguarding were encountering, where some GOs were felt to be manipulating their group members into unwanted sex. It is literally that GOs agree not to initiate new sexual relationships with members of their group (and we include closely-related groups in that too).
  - For board members, there is a confidential register of relationships (which can include financial, sexual and other relationships), for the purpose of identifying conflicts of interest, so that board members are excluded from decisions where they may have a bias. This register doesn't restrict trustees from entering into new relationships, but does require them to disclose it.
  - We are aware that this is controversial, patchy, and generally not ideal. It would be wonderful if it wasn't necessary at all. But it is also practical and more workable than it was before these rules were in place - when Board



members were sometimes called to look into the intimate details of a relationship and judge whether it was consensual or not. If you have any suggestions for further improvements, please feel free to contact [board@beltane.org](mailto:board@beltane.org).

There were a couple of additional questions that refer to subjects that are currently being looked into within the Safeguarding Team.

NOTE: Some survey responses referred to rumours circulating in the community. Please remember that what you might hear on the rumour mill from an acquaintance of a friend is not the full picture. Treat all information you hear with grace and a pinch of salt. If you hear something concerning, the best course of action is to pass it onto the Safeguarding Team.

## Other Bits of Feedback to Address

- ❖ Several people mentioned the Board's dependence on Discord for communications.
  - The board does not depend on Discord for communications but does use it as one of the forums for spreading information alongside the blog posts, Bugle newsletter and official Facebook groups.
  - The Unofficial BFS Discord is just that, unofficial. This is one of many ways to contact many people but you can rest assured this is never used as the only way for communicating with the membership.
- ❖ Why does the D need to be held by people i.e. Stewards ritually? Many stewards reported not understanding why they needed to hold this space. Some had to be there for over 2hrs.
  - The reasoning for this stems from past ritual and tradition. It doesn't mean it necessarily fits with the current way the festival works.
  - Having stewards be the human barrier between the witnesses and the start of the ritual performance rather than a hard physical barrier was meant to encourage the feeling of more than just performance, the connection between performers and audience sharing in witnessing the May queen rising from behind the acropolis as a ritual moment together.
  - This is the one point of the night where there is nothing physically separating the audience members from the otherworldliness we're bringing off the acropolis, and that lack of boundary between us and them has been very ritually important.
  - Perhaps this is something to consider going forward within Steward groups.
- ❖ This year there was a lot of English spoken on the hill during performances. This pulls some people out of character and can be jarring. Especially for core groups which are traditionally non-verbal.
  - This is an interesting topic for wider discussion within the community.



## Individual Groups

Individual Group feedback including survey numbers and comments have been collated and sent to Group Organisers.

## Feedback about Projects

Few comments were received about projects, here are some notable ones:

### Fabric Sharing

*"a lifesaver", "a brilliant idea", "I found brilliant fabric there"*

A few comments that people loved this, and that it reduced member's costuming costs.

### Front of House

*"Front of house in general was wonderful",*

*"Being part of the front of house minions is a lot of fun, and means I can join in things and feel useful without having to be available 3 times a week in the run up"*

Plus lots of praise for Lisette and Ella

### Tell it to the Bees

*"OMG the BEES <3", "Great fun!"*

### Town Foxes

*"The foxes were fantastic. Big light up puppets YES. Something a bit random, YES. Something just for the audience, YES. Something accessible and affordable to the Glasgow contingent YES YES YES. I hope we can see more geographically diverse projects coming together on the hill."*

Blue feedback: Town Foxes are a shining example of a single concept done well.

### Wishing Tree

*"Wishing tree held the space beautifully and in character"*





## Appendix 1 - Festival Comparisons

Here the scores for the last two years Beltanes have been taken and this festival has been compared with the averages. If the score was more or less than 0.4 different, it has been marked in green or red.

As you can see, the only area in which this festival scored significantly less than average was on "Emotional Safety".

Question	B2025	B2024	B2023	Average 2023,2024
The group was logistically well organised.	8.51	7.51	8.64	8.075
Questions from me or others were adequately answered.	9.1	8.3	9.09	8.695
There was an atmosphere of respect between GOs and the group.	9.44	8.55	9.66	9.105
I enjoyed attending sessions.	9.36	8.79	9.36	9.075
The group's tasks and objectives were clear to me.	8.86	8.28	9.14	8.71
GOs were available for help and guidance.	9.36	8.64	9.39	9.015
The work during the run-up was relevant to our performance on the night.	9.4	8.81	9.49	9.15
Adequate supporting materials were available.	9.18	8.07	9.16	8.615
I felt physically safe.	9.37	9.28	9.64	9.46
I felt emotionally safe.	9.45	9.23	9.55	9.39
Group sessions and events were accessible to me and any special requirements I had were catered for.	9.60	9.2	9.76	9.48
I was made aware of the costs directly associated with the group early in the process.	9.42	8.15	8.86	8.505
I estimate my costs for participating in this group to be...	£92.53			
I understood and / or had access to information about where group donations were spent	8.49	7.62	8.18	7.9
I (GO) felt physically safe.	9.27	9.1	9.67	9.385
I (GO) felt emotionally safe.	7.93	8.8	8.78	8.79
I (GO) felt adequately supported by BFS.	8.43	8.2	8.89	8.545
The overall story-line of this year's festival was clear to me.	8.44	8.54	8.48	8.51



The role of my group and myself within the event was clear to me.	9.26	8.98	9.26	9.12
It was clear how the May Queen and Green Man stories related to my group this year.	8.41	8	8.83	8.415
I understood the role of the Blues and how they related to my group this year.	8.98	8.66	8.43	8.545
I felt that the overall Festival was well organised.	8.5	7.87	8.72	8.295
Do you feel from your experience this festival the Board of Trustees are acting in the best interest of BFS and helping ensure it carries out its activities?	9.2	8.76	8.63	8.695
It was clear to me what rights and responsibilities I had as a volunteer/performer, and where I could direct any comments, questions, problems, or other feedback.	9.56	9	9.52	9.26
This experience built, strengthened or complimented my relationship to the environment, nature and its seasonal rhythms as well as engaged me with the traditional celebration of the Celtic solar and lunar calendar fire festivals and their relevance to community life and contemporary culture.	8.67	7.75	8.62	8.185
This experience developed and enhanced or complimented my art performing skills in a collaborative environment.	8.81	8.75	8.72	8.735
I'll benefit from this experience beyond the context of this festival.	9.29	8.68	9	8.84
Overall happiness with the experience	8.84	8.57	8.9	8.735

## Appendix 2 - Contractor Report

### Beltane Fire Festival 2025

*Some notes taken from the Festival Coordinator's Report by Tom Watton:*

#### Overview

Beltane Fire Festival 2025 can be considered a success. The glorious summer weather presented both an unseasonal cheer and merriment, but it also had some serious ramifications;

- A first ever serious concern of Wildfire as early as April
- An audience who were dehydrated and had been imbibing booze under hot conditions on the day
- Crew Fatigue levels from working in heat

There are some things for learning and our Group Organisers fed into a positive redesigned debriefing process which will guide some of this report.

Financially Costs are up and sales are down, which isn't great, but the festival will have contributed to the annual core costs, and with a new format Samhuinn with clear financial objectives, I think that we can make up the shortfall in autumn.

#### Ticket Sales

In 2025 we sold 6160 Full Price tickets (of which 557 were on the day). We sold 400 low income tickets and 153 children's tickets.

This is down on previous few years sales, and is more in line with the expectations (which were surpassed last year in the days before the event).

Ticket sales were roughly on track with the past few years, but we didn't see the last-minute surge in ticket sales that we have experienced historically

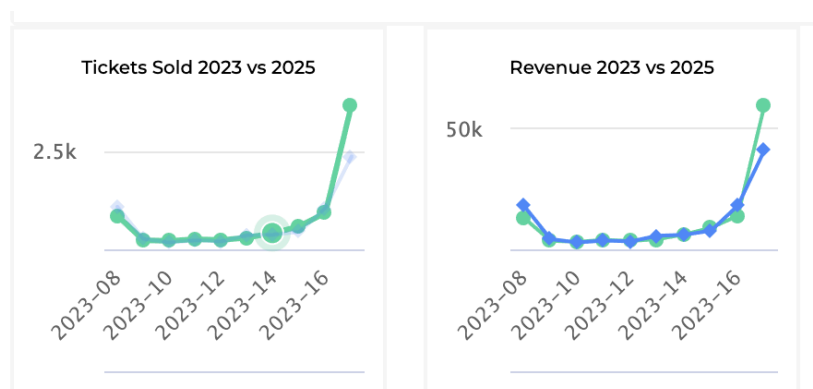


Fig 1 - Blue is 2025 - Green is 2023

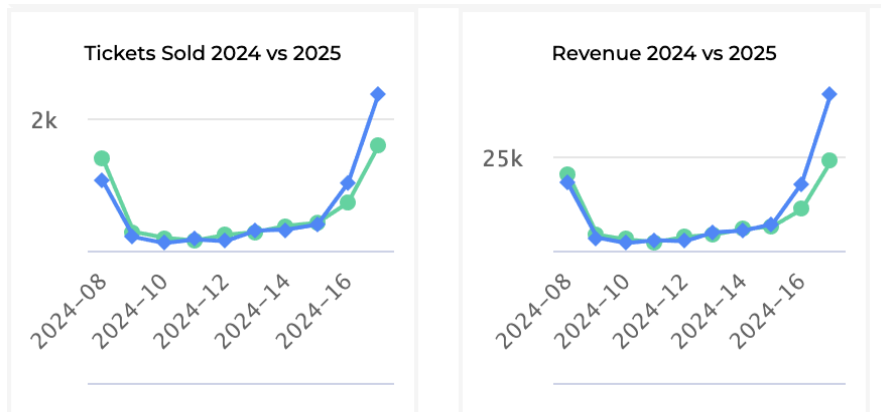


Fig 2 - Green is 2025 and Blue is 2024

## Finance

Neil's report will more accurately reflect the financial understanding of where the festival is, but it seems that the festival managed to raise a surplus of around £30K, which considering the poorer than anticipated ticket sales is good.

The headline to take away from the festival's finances is that the festival costs have increased substantially over the past five years; partially due to the sector-wide inflation of event services.

We have seen an increase in minimum wages and NI Contributions along with a generally inflated events services sector (sitting around 40%)

Our Council costs have increased, as have all of our expenditure headline figures and the total cost of the festival had increased 31% (or £20K) in the year, with a 28.7% of the increase attributable to the Council, 29.59% to Production and 14% to Site and Operational budgets. 16 % of the increase is attributable to room booking cost increases and I will discuss that later.

## Attendance

On the hill we had 7200 people, which included participants, security and all attendees, which is 1000 down on the previous year. Notably we had a higher number of participants.

## Hot Weather Contingency

- Grass and Gorse Fire Risk - hose access point required in the main park - we had to use the Collective Gallery's water point (which we had been informed didn't work (but does work))
- Additional Drinking Water - would be addressed by the installation of a drinking water station and hose access point for filling ballast.
- Overheating performers! - All the prep and hand warmers went out the window as it was too warm to wear cloaks on the evening of the festival.
- Temperatures on the hill did not fall below 13° C on the night which is way too warm!



### Meeting Venue Hire Costs

- Currently we are spending a much larger proportion of our budget on Meeting Spaces
  - with rooms per hour costing a fair whack (compared to past use of St Margaret's House and other community meeting spaces).
- Cheap or Free Options at the Gyle are probably too far out of town to make it viable, but we could save money on this front - if we feel that we no longer are in need of airy spacious halls (which was a decision from 2022 onwards (due to COVID security)).
- Notably with Drum rehearsal spaces, Open Meeting Spaces, GO Weekend Space and GO Meetings I believe our total cost has risen 3-fold.

### GO Facilitation and Comms

I felt that generally the festival run up was smoother than at previous festivals and overall the changes to the GO Drive and the maintenance of Action Points and minutes worked well.

We need to streamline message channels and look again at how GOs communicate.

The GO Meeting processes felt quite one way traffic, and while I tried to facilitate conversational discussion to pull out the information, quite often that didn't happen or wasn't engaged with.

*Board note: This feedback has been taken on board and is an issue that is felt by all.*