

WILTSHIRE CREATIVE

SALISBURY
ARTS CENTRE

SALISBURY
INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL

SALISBURY
PLAYHOUSE

Impact Report

April 2025 -
March 2026

Our year in numbers

200,658

people engaged with our venues,
performances, events and
activities

347

shows and events in our venues

96%

audience rating of 4 or 5 stars

10,637

school students attended
productions and events

664

engagement and learning
sessions delivered by our Take
Part team

40

free performances in community
settings

18,617

subsidised or free tickets given to
those who wouldn't otherwise be
able to attend



Invigorating our venues and city spaces with diverse creative experiences that deliver surprise, delight and wonder.

March 2025 -
April 2026

Thank you for all of your support in 2025 from us here at Wiltshire Creative. This year has seen us deliver an ambitious programme to over 200,000 people, inspire 15,000 Take Part participants and create many moments of connection with our community here in Wiltshire and beyond.

At the heart of our organisation is the extraordinary skill and creativity of our in-house teams, working in close collaboration with a vibrant freelance creative community. From our workshops to our wardrobe department, sets and costumes are designed and built here in Salisbury, sustaining vital craft skills and creating employment and development opportunities for artists and technicians at every stage of their careers. This year, that collective expertise was recognised nationally, with *Sleeping Beauty* earning the award for Best Costume Design at the UK Pantomime Awards 2025. It is a testament to the talent nurtured within our organisation and across the wider creative community that we are proud to work with.

We place great importance on education and skills development. From young people stepping onto a stage for the first time to those training in production and technical roles, we are committed to supporting the next generation of theatre-makers. This year saw our largest ever cohort on the Wiltshire Creative Academy Level 3 Performing and Production Arts course, delivered in partnership with Wiltshire College and University of the Arts London, with more young people building skills, confidence and pathways into the creative industries.

We believe the arts should be open to all. Creating welcoming, inclusive spaces remains central to our work, and we are committed to removing barriers wherever we can. During this period, our annual Christmas Appeal, supported by local individuals and businesses, enabled more than 1,000 people to experience the joy of pantomime who might otherwise have missed out. Working with local charities and community organisations, we reached those who might not otherwise attend, offering a chance to come together and enjoy live theatre.

Our work also plays an important role in the wider life of the city. It supports jobs, develops skills, attracts visitors and contributes to Salisbury's cultural and economic strength. This year, Salisbury Arts Centre was named Best Salisbury Music Venue, and Wiltshire Creative received the award for Best Visitor Experience at the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards, reflecting the value placed on our work by the community we serve.

Looking ahead, 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of Salisbury Playhouse. Alongside this celebration, we are focused on the future. The £3 million investment from Arts Council England will support a capital transformation of the Playhouse, helping to ensure it remains a vital and welcoming place for generations

Thank you for being part of this story and for helping us shape the future of creativity in Salisbury.



Rosa Corbishley
Executive Director

Gareth Machin
Artistic Director

Photo credit L to R: Manuel Harlan, Alastair Muir, Manuel Harlan, Pamela Raith



I've been coming to pantos at the Playhouse for many years and this is the best yet. Fabulous!

Audience feedback, *Jack and the Beanstalk*



Photo credit: Pamela Raith

On our stages and beyond

Across the year, Wiltshire Creative brought Salisbury Playhouse, Salisbury Arts Centre and spaces across the city to life through a rich programme of live performance. From theatre and music to comedy, family fiestas, youth performance and festival spectacle, our work reflects a belief that culture should be joyful, ambitious and rooted in place.

At Salisbury Playhouse, our in-house productions showed both the range and confidence of work made here in Salisbury. From the wit of *Blithe Spirit* to the scale and energy of *Rock & Roll Man*, its European premiere and one of the largest musicals staged at the Playhouse in over a decade, the year demonstrated a strong appetite for bold, high-quality work.

Our award-nominated pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, was again a highlight of the year, celebrating the craft and theatricality that defines this much-loved tradition, which for so many people has become an integral part of their Christmas festivities.

Alongside this, the Playhouse welcomed an exceptional visiting programme, offering audiences a rich breadth of work on their doorstep.

205

freelance Artists and Creatives engaged through our productions

960

hours of free rehearsal space supporting local artists and theatre companies' R&D work

3

UK Pantomime Award nominations 2025 - Set, Costume, Best Panto 500 seats

At Salisbury Arts Centre, the programme remained distinctive and much loved, with *Moscow Drug Club*, *Limehouse Lizzy* and *The Deloreans* bringing musical flair, Geoff Norcott drawing audiences for sharp comedy, and Kristina Stephenson's *Charlie Stinky Socks* delighting families. It remains one of the city's most valued cultural spaces, with participation work now beginning to flourish once again.

The Salisbury International Arts Festival once again brought wonder into the heart of the city, transforming public spaces and historic settings through unforgettable live experiences. *Gorilla Circus'* breathtaking *UNITY* filled Market Square with exhilaration, while the Thomas Hardy-inspired *A Beautiful Thread* at Stonehenge offered a performance of rare atmosphere and beauty. Elsewhere, audiences encountered work of originality and emotional depth, from Aakash Odedra's *Songs of the Bulbul* to *Shoulder to Shoulder* from Swansea City Opera, created in collaboration with Salisbury Men's Shed. Welcoming over 15,000 visitors and more than 200 performers, the Festival demonstrated how culture can animate the city and create shared moments of joy, pride and awe.

This year also marked the 60th anniversary of Stage 65 Youth Theatre, a milestone of enormous significance for one of the oldest youth theatres in the country. Celebrated with a Main House production of *The Jungle Book*, involving more than 100 young people, it was a vivid expression of creativity, confidence and collective imagination, and a reminder that supporting local artists and future creative voices remains central to the life of this city.

Amazing story, production and performances! It rivals anything we've seen in the West End!

Audience feedback, *Rock & Roll Man*



Photo credit: Pamela Raith



Creative learning

In 2025 we worked with 16 local schools to provide creative routes into the curriculum. Six local schools performed as part of our annual Beginners Please Primary Education project and three local SEND schools received specialist support in building interpersonal skills and confidence through drama.

We provide a vital contact for local schools for insight into the creative industries, training and employment pathways and we took part in 19 careers events, talks and mock interviews reaching over 2000 students. Our Take Part team engaged 1631 young people in our youth arts programme and community workshops.

Our skills programmes develop the future skills of the creative industries. Through our Academy, in partnership with Wiltshire College, 33 young people gained a qualification with us. We trained 10 young technicians and recruited another 10 to our scheme to develop young talent in technical theatre. Harnessing the skills needed to ensure the future of our industry and bright futures for the people we work with is at the core of what we do.

565

school students reached via in-school curriculum linked drama workshops

52

sessions in direct support of SEND education

49

careers and work experience placements

We work to support communities who experience barriers to accessing our venues and creative opportunities. In 2025 this included supporting the Ukraine Festival at Salisbury Playhouse, working with Dance 6-0, Silver Salisbury and through our Mind the Gap programme to provide opportunities for adults of all ages. We work as a partner in Well-City to provide courses connecting people with creative ways to support their own mental health.

We also work to embed ourselves in key communities where additional support, opportunities and resources can make a meaningful difference. Through this work, we reached 183 young people and 300 families.

Case study: Bemerton Heath



We have a continuous, year-round presence in this vibrant and resilient community, building strong relationships with local schools, community groups and families to bring access to culture and learning directly into the heart of the estate.

This work includes a free weekly after school Drama Club at Sarum Academy, free holiday activities at St Michael's Church and our annual free family event, The Family Fiesta at Harlequins Football Club. We also worked with residents and Wiltshire Council on the Bemerton Heath sign project connecting the ideas and aspiration of residents with a professional artist. The community-designed signs now welcome people to the estate.

Working with partners who really spend time here and bring families together is really important in building community resilience.

Wiltshire Creative has a huge influence on events and projects like the Bemerton Heath sign project, letting families and residents have their say using creativity.

The Family Fiesta has had huge success and it's definitely in everyone's diaries and conversations. Lots of smiles and fun!

Jenny Bolwell,
Chair of Bemerton Heath Residents Association



“Sustainability is becoming part of how we make and create, not just what we say we want to be.”

Dan Gent, Deputy Head of Workshop

Our culture

Wiltshire Creative employs 60 permanent staff across 9 departments: Artistic Planning, Communications and Sales, Development, Executive, Finance, Operations and Commercial, People and Resources, Production and Technical and Take Part.

We are supported by an additional 96 casual and freelance staff, providing opportunities from entry-level employment to specialist skills. We provided paid employment to 131 people from Wiltshire, with 60% of our total paid workforce living in Salisbury.

In 2025:

- We welcomed over 40 new people to our paid workforce.
- 14 of our permanent staff gained additional career development experience or promotions.
- We launched our technical apprenticeship to develop a new opportunity for specialist career development within the sector.
- We partnered with Zoo Co to deliver neurodiversity awareness training for our line managers.
- We were awarded Disability Confident Committed status as an employer.

We have a team of 113 volunteers who gave 7,936 hours of their time in 2025. Our volunteers are crucial to our mission, supporting ushering, ice-cream sales, fundraising, access support and sustainability goals.

Our Board is made up of 12 dedicated professionals who give their time to champion and guide us. We are incredibly grateful for their support!

Over the past year, Wiltshire Creative has taken meaningful steps to embed sustainability more deeply across the organisation, with our commitment to net zero by 2030 increasingly shaping production, operations, buildings and governance.

A major milestone was our Stage 65 Youth Theatre production of *The Jungle Book*, which achieved Theatre Green Book Basic standard and became a practical model for more sustainable making through re-use and circular design.

This progress has been driven by growing shared responsibility across the organisation, from sustainability volunteers and Julie’s Bicycle training to everyday operational changes. Our future capital transformation at Salisbury Playhouse will be vital to delivering deeper environmental improvements in the years ahead.

6

sustainability volunteers supporting re-use and stock cataloguing

2

Trustees taking part in Julie’s Bicycle climate and environmental governance training

£40k

of LED lighting installed in Main House

82%

of audiences reported that the organisation’s engagement with sustainability mattered to them

Sustainable theatre making

Access and Inclusion



Photo credit: Martin Jones

Access and inclusion is a core part of our work across the organisation. We have developed our access to our fantastic professional programme with 21 access performances including Captioned, Audio Described, BSL signed and Relaxed performances.

All of our youth arts offers offer an inclusive process for people with additional needs with a specialist inclusion practitioner working in the Take Part team and developing bespoke access plans for members of Youth Theatre, Young Technicians and Young Ambassadors for those who need it.

We also worked with Separate Doors to offer staff, local creatives and young people training in the Silent Approach, and inclusive rehearsal room practice.

Our audiences



Utterly brilliant, moving and an extraordinary experience. An occasion to remember forever.

Audience feedback, *A Beautiful Thread: Thomas Hardy in Words and Music*

Photo credit: Kin Ho

Wiltshire Creative exists to make creativity accessible, ambitious and rooted in community and that means our income model must do more than simply cover costs. Of our circa £6 million turnover, around 30% comes from public grant funding, while approximately 70% must be generated through ticket sales, commercial income, sponsorship and philanthropy.

As a charity, we intentionally subsidise many of our ticket prices, workshops and creative opportunities so they remain affordable and inclusive. The price someone pays to attend a show or take part in an activity rarely reflects the true cost of creating and delivering that experience.

That is why both philanthropy and earned income are so important. Income from space hire, food and beverage sales, and pantomime merchandise support a wider programme of free and subsidised work, while support from donors, trusts and, ever more importantly, gifts in wills, helps secure this work for generations to come.

This year, Wiltshire Creative has also continued to contribute to the wider economic life of Salisbury supporting local suppliers, attracting audiences and visitors into the city, and helping drive footfall, local spend, tourism and employment. We recognise that the value of culture extends well beyond our stages, strengthening Salisbury's wider economic and civic resilience.

Such a valuable source of culture at affordable prices. The level of plays we get at this theatre, both home & co-produced is astonishing.

Audience survey feedback

Salisbury Playhouse is my happy place! It has many happy memories spanning some 30 plus years. Personally, I'd be lost without it and everyone at the Playhouse has been SO welcoming and SO supportive most especially when my other half was losing himself to dementia he still LOVED coming to the playhouse.

Wiltshire Creative volunteer

From first-time visitors to loyal theatre goers, audiences, participants and visitors continued to choose our venues, events and activities as places to gather, reflect, celebrate and be inspired.

Through our diverse range of activities, in both our own and in venues across our city, we warmly welcomed people into shared cultural experiences that connected communities through creativity.

Our mission is to break down barriers to culture and the arts. We want everyone to feel invited, and no one to feel left out. We pride ourselves on creating spaces where people from all walks of life can feel a sense of belonging.

In 2025, audiences travelled as far as 229 miles to attend our events, booking a total of 102,867 tickets. An impressive 27% of those bookers were visiting us for the first time.

4,029 audience members completed surveys, rating their experiences on average 4.4 out of 5, a testament not only to the quality of our performances, but to our staff and volunteers who go above and beyond to ensure visitors feel well looked after and leave with happy memories.

Our charity model



Photo credit: Kin Ho

Thank you

‘The Playhouse has brought us fifty years of joy, friendship, and unforgettable experiences. Long may it last.’ Paul and Sue Halliden

Trusts & Foundations

A W Gale Charitable Trust, Earl of Chichesters Charitable Trust, The Gunter Charitable Trust, The Verdon-Smith Family Charitable Trust, Salisbury Area Board, Sherlock Charitable Trust, Wiltshire Community Foundation, Wiltshire Council Community Conversations Programme, Wiltshire Music Connect CIC Legacy Fund, Arts Society Sarum, Noel Coward Foundation, Salisbury Almshouses, The Golsoncott Foundation, Wiltshire & Swindon Community Foundation

Legacies

The Late Mrs Brenda Ashenden, The Late Mrs Elizabeth Batten, The Late Mrs Joan Doreen Boys, The Late Ms Audrey Catford, The Late James (Jim) Douglas, The Late Ms Madeline Edmonds, The Late William Ellaby, The Late Mr John English, The Late Miss Victoria Grayson, The Late Caroline Greenway, The Late Mr Richard Griffin, The Late Sue Halliden, The Late Ms Audrey Heron, The Late Keith Miller, The Late Lucy Norbury, The Late Mrs Eileen Pinniger, The Late Mr David Quayle, The Late Mrs Enid Smith

Investors - gifts of £1000+

Jane Barker, Helen & Simon Birchenough, Gerry & Susie Blundell, Doric & Sara Bossom, Stuart Cannell, Chris Carnegie & Roger Price, Rory Carter & Dame Elizabeth Neville, Ann Coward, Tom & Rosie Clay, Prof Dick Clements & Jenny Taylor, Jack and Jane Deverell, Campbell Edgar, Paul Halliden, John Hawkins, Nick & Judy Humby, Simon Inch, Fraser & Rosemary Macdonald, Anne Marlow, Mike & Birthe Moody, Alison Payne, Paul and Joanna Pearson, Jane Podkolinski, Susan Roller, Jo Seaton, Robert Stiby, Jack Stone, Eve Tytherleigh, Christopher & Frances Wain, Janet Watford

Support from Funders



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CITY COUNCIL**



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To find out more about how you can play your part, get in touch with our Development Team
Helen Taylor & Justine Holmes - development@wiltshirecreative.co.uk

Sponsors & Partners

Experience Salisbury, Salisbury BID, Wilsons, Quilter Cheviot, Parker Bullen, Panthera Dance, Ramsay Health Care, Tinga, Trethrowans, White Hart, Silver Cloud, Adam Budd

Commissioners - gifts of £500+

Michael & Hilary Bird, Mark & Nicola Elcomb, Jonathan Gaisman, Sue Goddard, Andrew & Sally Gregory, Darren & Lorraine Grinter, Judy Haes, Brigitte Potts, Elaine Roberts, Barbara Tilbrook

Benefactors - gifts of £250+

Richard & Paddy Archer, John & Catherine Avery Jones, Anne Beckwith-Smith, Marjoleine & Simon Butler, Tim Crarer, Michael & Barbara Crow, Peter Edge, Richard Elliott, Gordon & Kay Griffiths, Vicky Hickey, Brenda Hunt, Chris Maguire, Simon McEnery & Jeremy Davies, Lady Newbigging, Valerie Oldrey, Steve Pickard, Andrew Rhind-Tutt, Nigel & Lucy Salisbury, Brian Sharpe, Brian & Angela Sutton, Colin & Sue Taylor, Charles & Francoise Tongue, William & Diana Verdon-Smith, Jonny & Charlotte White, Nigel & Wendy Wingate

Producers - gifts of £180+

Sue Bourne, Graham & Diana Castle, David & Rosemary Chapell, John & Rosemary Cox, Jennifer Hoare, Robert Macnaughtan, Norman & Jane Martin, Christine Mason, B J Morant, Charlotte Pope, Christine Quayle, Alison Rivers, Julian Sims, Barbara Smith, Jeremy Stevens, Roger Thompson & Vanessa Harrison, Sheila Warrander, Jack & Shelia Wills

Thank you to the community organisations we partnered with this year:

- Mencap Music Group
- Panthera Dance
- Friary After School Club
- Friary Youth Club
- Elizabeth House Day Centre
- Salisbury Almshouses
- Salisbury Museum Young Curators
- Exeter House Vocational Centre
- Young Men's MC Project
- Ukraine Refugee Group
- Army Welfare Service
- Happy Café (Rethink)
- Salisbury City Council Fun Days
- Safer and Supportive Salisbury
- Salisbury Foodbank
- Old Sarum & Longhedge Community Fridge
- Tisbury Drama Group
- ArtCare
- Silver Salisbury
- Salisbury Home Educators
- Homestart
- Spurgeons
- Bemerton After School Club
- Kaleidoscope Craft Club
- Wiltshire Council Housing
- Rise:61
- U3A
- WI
- Nomansland Youth Club
- Five Rivers Fostering
- Fear Free
- Young Carers (Wilts Council)
- Alabare
- Blue Sky Fostering