

folkestone
fringe

FLINT+
CLAY

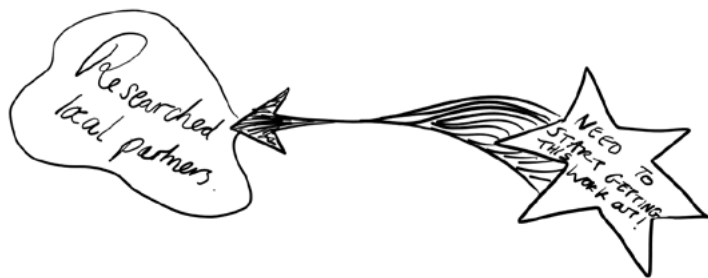
IN SUMMARY

A summary of learning from *Flint & Clay* and a reflection on what Folkestone Fringe is, what it does, and why it matters.
(Title page with full page image)



Conclusion

How *Flint & Clay* 2025 inspired conversation, translation and exchange across Folkestone



Anonymous Artist exploring the journey from research to reaching local audiences.

Key words and phrases

Artists / Fringe Artists In this report, ‘artist’ refers to anyone who contributed artistic content to the programme. This includes visual artists, performers, curators and others whose work may not fit traditional definitions. Their works in the programme are referred to as projects.

Creative Facilitators Those working on projects who invite audience participation and translate artworks into accessible experiences, creating opportunities for making and exchange.

Creative Practice The artistic processes and methods used by individual artists, consciously developed and grounded in criticality. Practice implies active engagement with one’s own learning and with the world — it is more than making art.

Meaningful Engagement / Participation / Meaningful Opportunities Experiences that enable agency, contribution, connection and growth — rather than passive consumption. Opportunities that are meaningful both personally (supporting development of practice, skills or experience) and civically (contributing to the life of the town).

Place-Based Practice / Place-Based Art Rooted in a specific geography, responding to its histories, assets and communities. In this report, projects are inextricably linked to Folkestone and its past, present and future.

Relational Practice Describing artistic approaches that are built on relationships — between artists, communities, places and ideas — rather than on individual production or passive consumption.

Socially Engaged Art Practice Creative work that centres participation, relationship and social context as both method and material, where the process of working with people is as significant as any outcome.

Folkestone Fringe 2025:

Flint & Clay is a public art festival positioned within a socially engaged, relational field of practice—one concerned not only with producing a trail of artworks for the public realm, but one that is held by a community-driven framework of questions and grassroots commissioning, igniting translation of ideas experiences across the town, and encouraging dialogue and conversation as both method and outcome.

From September to October 2025, the town of Folkestone witnessed the international Folkestone Triennial (which launched in July 2025) and the locally rooted *Flint & Clay* festival at once, where hyperlocal, national and geo-political ideas and issues were explored through creative acts.

Amidst far-reaching cultural and artistic attention that the Triennial brings, the *Flint & Clay* programme exists to champion local pride.

Artists working in dance, film, performance, photography, ceramics, installation and music brought the streets alive responding boldly to the questions of what connects us, what divides us, and what futures might yet be imagined.

Collectively their work revealed an expression of people, place and shared experience and they facilitated deep conversation, translation and exchange through a layering of creative invitations, questions, interventions and inclusive approaches.

Translation emerged as a key purpose. *Flint & Clay's* artists translated Folkestone's landscape, histories and tensions into creative form; facilitators translated those forms into invitations to engage through; and participants translated the experience again into personal meaning, memory and further conversation.

This process did not move in one direction, it was reciprocal and iterative: audiences influenced artists in real time, reshaping conversations and sometimes altering the trajectory of the work itself. Each layer extended the work beyond its physical site, creating chains of interpretation that travelled through the town—into homes, workplaces and social networks.

This approach demonstrated significant strengths. The Fringe enabled inclusive participation and activated familiar spaces, and conversations indicate that it generated a sense of belonging and local pride.

Artists also acted as facilitators, embedding themselves in local contexts and facilitating dialogue and exchange with care and curiosity. The result was engagement that reached families, schools, residents and visitors to the Triennial. Meanwhile the artists described gaining confidence, testing new methodologies and forming lasting collaborations.



Fearless Threads, community spinning workshops with artist Nikki Tompsett, photo cc Katy Casey

The research undertaken by the artists, facilitators and creative producers was remarkably rich and deep, relational and grounded in an ethos of social practice.

Through their observations, reflections, interviews and feedback they documented what happened, how people responded and generated nuanced insight into the conditions that enable meaningful participation.

This depth of enquiry is vital to Folkestone Fringe's learning, revealing the subtle relational, spatial and conversational dynamics that shaped connection, inclusion and exchange.

The research points to the Fringe's next phase of evolution. By building on creative invitations, asking quality questions, continually navigating discomfort and challenge and sustaining an inclusive approach that recognises those on the edges, the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (while present in spirit) will strengthen.

Through continually reflecting within the ecology on the five key learning ingredients, practice will attend to inclusive priorities and remain locally rooted: place/space, audience/participation, community/local context, collaboration/partnerships and artistic process/creative practice.

The Role and Value of the Fringe

Thinking into the future of Folkestone Fringe

“A Fringe gives the chance for emerging artists and local artists to be seen by visitors to an international arts festival, to enrich that festival. In agile delightful eccentric surprising ways, to act as a segue between the place and the festival and deliver an ambitious program with and for the community.”
(Artist)

Key words and phrases used in this section

Local Creative Ecology / Ecology The interconnected network of artists, organisations, spaces, communities and systems across Folkestone that enable creative practice to emerge.

Ecology-Building Intentional actions to strengthen relationships, capacity and shared imagination within the creative ecology — creating platforms and opportunities for artists to be active and to develop their practice.

Cultural Production The systems, infrastructures and labour that enable art to exist and circulate — and the people or activity that results in artwork being made, shown or discussed.

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Holding, shaping and catalysing the creative ecology

Folkestone Fringe's greatest value lies in its ability to hold and catalyse a local ecology of practice. It creates the conditions for ideas to surface, relationships to form and meanings to circulate across social and geographic boundaries.

The Fringe does not simply produce a festival; it helps generate an appetite for dialogue, for collaboration and for collective cultural authorship.

As it continues to evolve, its role will remain vital: not only reflecting the identity of Folkestone, but actively shaping how the town listens, connects and imagines its future together.

Across artist reflections, the value of Folkestone Fringe emerges with striking clarity. It is not simply a producer of events, and far more than a partner to the Folkestone Triennial. It is both catalyst and container: sparking ideas into motion while holding the fragile, complex ecology that allows those ideas to take root.

For many artists the Fringe festival provides the permission structure that enables experimentation:

- "A framework and a focus — something to aim at." (Artist)

- "A testing ground... somewhere you can try work in public and see what shifts." (Artist)

Importantly, it also shifts power and bridges the hyper-local and the international. By offering visibility, resources and legitimacy, it redistributes voice across the town.

Emerging artists stand alongside more established practitioners. Community activists and first-time participants share space with professional creatives.

As two artists put it, the festival allows them to “be seen” and plays an important role in “sensitising and focusing attention.”

Artists spoke of the effects across the town: cross-pollination between practices and renewed energy generated in dialogue with the Triennial.

But the catalytic role of Folkestone Fringe is not limited to its Fringe festival. Like flint, the organisation creates sparks of local energy, sharpens the cultural atmosphere and generates creative momentum.

**It disrupts
inertia
and it sparks
possibility.**

Yet sparks
alone do
not sustain
an ecology.
Holding
and shaping
practice does.

Like clay, the organisation moulds practice. It attends to networking needs and sees gaps in provision. It observes local rhythms and tensions across a wide landscape of venues, schools, businesses, coastal paths and public spaces.

It coordinates activity, supports workshops, communicates invitations and ensures that artists can simply carry on, supported by the vast knowledge of Folkestone's cultural history and infrastructure that the Fringe contains.

Artists repeatedly emphasised the value of this holding function:

“The Fringe provides ... a sense of community, and the feeling that there are other people struggling with the same issues.”
(Artist)

“It enables all involved to venture into realms of shared dialogue and thought which are so important at the moment, but so easily avoided.” (Artist)

The Fringe functions as an audience of peers: sympathetic, knowledgeable and deeply invested. This peer community fosters belonging, solidarity and cultural exchange—offering reassurance that others are “struggling with the same issues,” and creating space to share ideas, failures and ambitions.

“the most valuable and sympathetic and interesting audience are the other creatives.”
(Artist)

The Fringe fosters belonging, solidarity and exchange, ensuring artists feel supported, understood and connected as part of an ecology of creative practice.

Maintaining space for emerging artists, underrepresented voices and community activists ensures that the ecology remains dynamic. In doing so, it strengthens the town's long-term creative capacity, scaling up what individual artists or partners could not achieve alone.

The Fringe's grassroots position is central to its effectiveness supporting local pride, identity and a sense of continuity.

“More [opportunities] for Folkestone artists and projects to hone their hosting and engagement methodologies”

(Facilitator)

But place-based, cultural stewardship carries great responsibility and demands resource, and Folkestone

Fringe has always operated without core funding or a permanent staffing team. It acknowledges the pressures it faces: limited funds and resources, an expanding and transforming demand for culture across the town.

The very qualities that are a strength of Fringe — its responsiveness, its grassroots embeddedness, its relational approach — require time, care and stability, but these are hard won.

Looking ahead, the value of Folkestone Fringe lies in deepening its role within Folkestone's creative ecology to work more intentionally with other major cultural partners, while maintaining its distinct grassroots offer.

At the same time, its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion must remain active and ongoing — a sustained focus embedded in partnerships, programming and leadership.

In doing so, the Fringe can continue to model a locally rooted, outward-looking ecology that evolves and transforms with its community.



edge states 2 by cutaway collective, Image of Farida Yasmin, cc Chloe Osborne

In times of rapidly shifting sands, what feels solid is Folkestone Fringe's key offer: being on the ground and from the ground up.

Key priorities for future Fringe programmes

An overview of priorities has been gathered across the feedback from artists, facilitators and cultural producers. **These recommendations are intended to support the development of future Fringe festivals.**

- Continue to embed equity and inclusion

While the festival demonstrated strong inclusive intentions, a more explicit, sustained and strategically embedded focus on diversity, equity and inclusion will be essential to ensure that future programmes more fully reflect and centre the breadth of communities they seek to serve. Efforts are ongoing and take time to embed.

- Continue to invest in facilitation as a core part of artistic programme

Those overseeing artworks in the public realm significantly deepened engagement and enabled richer conversations.

They also strengthened the depth and consistency of research by undertaking observation and reflection in moments where artists are focused on delivery and cannot hold both roles simultaneously. This is a vital role in building creative and social engagement.

- Strengthen invitations and visibility

Artists fed back that they needed clearer signage, earlier promotion, and more accessible entry points to help more people recognise when and how to participate. However, in times of stretched capacity and resources for Fringe, how might the ecology of collaborators and artists be leaned upon as a communication partner, increasingly responsible for communications across the full programme? Might a strategy be co-designed with collaborators meeting the needs of the artworks and utilising different communication channels?

- Deepen engagement with local context and difficult themes

Continue creating spaces and opportunities where complex issues can be explored safely, working closely with local groups and lived experience. Feedback indicated this was important and a growing priority.

- Support connectivity, continuity and ecology-building

Continue to strengthen links between projects, partners, and other key organisations such as Open Art Folke, while maintaining the Fringe's grassroots role as a connector and catalyst. Resourcing is a challenge, but this role is vital.