

A NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL IN BRISTOL, FOR THE FUTURE ✦ A NEW MUS



# FORWARDS

**OUR 2023  
SUSTAINABILITY  
REPORT**

THE FUTURE ✦ A NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL IN BRISTOL, FOR THE FUTURE



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## FORWARDS





# Introduction

**WE ARE DELIGHTED TO SHARE WITH YOU OUR FORWARDS 2023 SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT REPORT!**



At FORWARDS, our goal is to play a valuable role in implementing the forward thinking changes and initiatives that will support local businesses, the creative industries, and wider society to take action on the climate change emergency already in motion.

We aspire to have a lasting positive impact, harnessing the power of live events to bring people together for incredible music moments and inspire change; by creating a space for community, connection and debate. Continuing a conversation on the place of festivals as agents of change and key to creating social connections in the current socio-cultural climate.

Part of our commitment to our attendees, alongside throwing a weekend of collective joy, is to transparently share our values and report on our initiatives.

We recognise that our event will inevitably have an impact on the environment. However, our ambition is to mitigate these impacts, innovate, and ultimately protect our local environment and festival spaces so that future generations can experience them.

# Introduction

## WHERE ARE WE?

Despite a spectacular 2023 edition, behind the scenes, like the rest of the industry we have been facing huge challenges since 2020. Did you know that the night time economy industry makes up 6% of the UK's GDP - making it one of the most important sectors in the country for employment? But it is under threat....

- Production costs for festivals and live events have risen by over 40% in the last 2 years
- 28 festivals have gone out of business permanently since the start of the 2024 <sup>1</sup>
- Over the last 3 years the number of clubs in the UK has dropped by an alarming 39.5%

Despite the challenges, we want to further our commitment to producing a financially sustainable festival, not only to protect our future as a company, but also for our attendees to continue to experience the joy of community and live music, and to maintain our support of the local economy. More than ever, it is essential to keep social and climate justice at the forefront of our event alongside our economic sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/feb/22/uks-position-as-live-music-leader-at-stake-nine-festivals-cancel-amid-rising-costs>

## DID YOU KNOW THAT FORWARDS WAS A BRISTOL LOVE-AFFAIR?

### From Bristol

**CREW** **83.72%**

**CONTRACTORS** **58.82%**

**TRADERS** **75%**

**ARTISTS** **34.65%**



# Introduction 2023 MILESTONES!

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## SUSTAINABILITY

This year, we also decided to bring **A Greener Future** to FORWARDS to have our overall sustainability practices externally assessed and our full carbon footprint calculated. We're very pleased to announce that FORWARDS is successfully certified as "Commended" which signifies a well-managed, environmentally aware festival going beyond expectation to make positive change.

We also received some exciting nominations at their International AGF Award show in the following categories:

- **Community Action**
- **Pied Pier (Communication)**

To be assessed is a big step for us and we are looking forward to improving & growing our sustainability credentials based on the learnings & recommendations from the assessment. For 2024, we are implementing and embedding specific improvements before being re-assessed in 2025.

*"For a first-year assessment, it was great to find a festival already with such high regards and efforts for the local environment and communities. There was very good protection of naturally sensitive features, and considerations for the groups of people who live nearby and who use the beautiful park the event takes place in.*

*Beyond the festival, it was evident to see that the team behind FORWARDS are incredibly passionate and enthusiastic about both the social and environmental sustainability of their events and the wider industry, with involvement in a multitude of engagements related to innovation and projects, to educate and support others to live and work more green!" (AGF)*



# Introduction 2023 MILESTONES!

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## ACCESSIBILITY

We conducted a world-first trial to help visually impaired people experience the sights, as well as the sounds, of a festival through [Give Vision](#) headsets. The headset beams footage from the cameras around the stage directly into the user's vision. The headset stimulates the photoreceptor cells in people's eyes to help them regain some vision.

The trial was a resounding success with access customers and even made one participant cry with joy. We intend to implement more of these headsets at our future shows.

*"I am so proud of how far we as a team have come. To be able to have launched an exclusive on what could potentially be a new reasonable adjustment with Give Vision is incredibly exciting. To see so many of our returning customers year after year and watch the community they form within themselves is what I get out of bed for. This year **FORWARDS** was the show I was most proud of. The team worked incredibly hard throughout the year to keep up to a high standard, and we are holding our breath to finally get the email through about attaining Silver on the AIE Live Events Charter"*

*Harry Jones,  
Team Love Accessibility Coordinator*



# 2023 Targets

## How well did we do?

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### FORWARDS assessment by A Greener Future

We are excited to say we were certified "commended" by AGF.

### Focus on improving energy efficiency

We've introduced a hybrid generator for our production area helping us save 220hrs of fuel usage.

### Increased our shuttle bus usage by 10%

With the option for our audience to take different bus routes to the festival, our shuttle bus usage has stayed low meaning we did not hit this target. However, in good news, 30% of our audience decided to walk or cycle!.

### Increased compost loos in public arena by 20% across all shows

All toilets in public arenas are compost loos.

### Carried out trader supplier audit

Our sustainability volunteers spoke & audited all our traders this year & we've gathered important supplier information.

### Continued work towards inclusive line-up

We've booked 51.5% Female & Gender Minority acts, 43.5% Male acts, and 4.95% acts with multiple genders in the group at FORWARDS.





### Increased our recycling rate by 10%

Unfortunately we don't know if we reached this specific year-on-year target as we had issues with capturing our waste impact in 2022. However we're happy to say that over 50% of waste was recycled and zero waste to landfill was achieved in 2023.

### Continued work and training to make our workspaces and team more inclusive

Capture FORWARDS, our project in partnership with Big Team, brought 4 aspiring photographers on a unique festival photography media placement at the event. Alongside this, we offered 8 paid Big Team work placements at FORWARDS, in various roles across site. We also continued our work behind the scenes including outreach sessions, undertaking crew surveys, demographic data collection and ongoing staff training.

### Raise climate awareness with attendees & stakeholders

Our audience raised £3,094 for [EarthPercent](#) and enjoyed some amazing messaging & videos in between acts from [Climate Live](#) & [Music Declares Emergency!](#)

### Worked on strategies to keep our events as affordable as possible

We did our best not to pass on price increases to our audience and keep the cost of tickets affordable. This included having a tiered ticket system in place to allow cheaper tickets to be sold early on. We also had a specific low income scheme in place through which 81 tickets were sold. Alongside this 1,532 discounted tickets were sold to NHS workers.





# 2023 Audience Survey

## OUR AUDIENCE CARES!

When asked, our audience cared most about (in order):

1. Protecting the local environment
2. Reducing waste
3. Diversity & Inclusivity
4. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
5. Supporting charities and/or local communities
6. Regenerative or low-carbon food options
7. Raising climate awareness





# Environmental Impact

## OVERALL CARBON FOOTPRINT

TONNES OF CO<sup>2</sup>E

|                             |        |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| AUDIENCE TRANSPORT          | 282.24 | 59.70% |
| FOOD & DRINKS               | 106.46 | 22.52% |
| PRODUCTION & VEHICLES       | 56.24  | 11.90% |
| ARTIST TRANSPORT            | 16.36  | 3.46%  |
| OTHER THIRD PARTY EMISSIONS | 4.78   | 1.01%  |
| CREW TRANSPORT              | 3.75   | 0.79%  |
| SERVEWARE                   | 2.08   | 0.44%  |
| WASTE & RECYCLING           | 0.32   | 0.07%  |
| FUEL PURCHASE               | 0.39   | 0.08%  |
| SUPPLIES & MATERIALS        | 0.11   | 0.02%  |
| WATER USE                   | 0.02   | 0.00%  |
| WASTE WATER & SEWAGE        | 0.01   | 0.00%  |

TOTAL 472.76 TONNES OF CO<sub>2</sub>

## TRANSPORT

AUDIENCE TRANSPORT IS OUR BIGGEST IMPACT AND REPRESENTS UP TO 60% OF OUR CO<sup>2</sup>E EMISSIONS

### WHAT WORKED

30% of our audience surveyed decided to walk or cycle to our event!

Thank you to all the attendees that took part in a focus group on audience transport, led by Adam Corner & Briony Latter. You can find their research findings on ["Engaging Live Music Audiences On Climate Change Through Travel Campaigns"](#)

We continue to work with local businesses, freelancers, artists and organisations which helps reduce our transport emissions while supporting the local economy.

### FROM BRISTOL

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| CREW        | 83.72% |
| CONTRACTORS | 58.82% |
| TRADERS     | 75%    |
| ARTISTS     | 34.65% |



## AREAS FOR

## IMPROVEMENT

- Work on our bus offering for people coming to the festival from outside of Bristol
- Increase our public shuttle usage, under 10% of our audience chose to travel with our shuttle bus
- Encourage & facilitate public transport for our crew

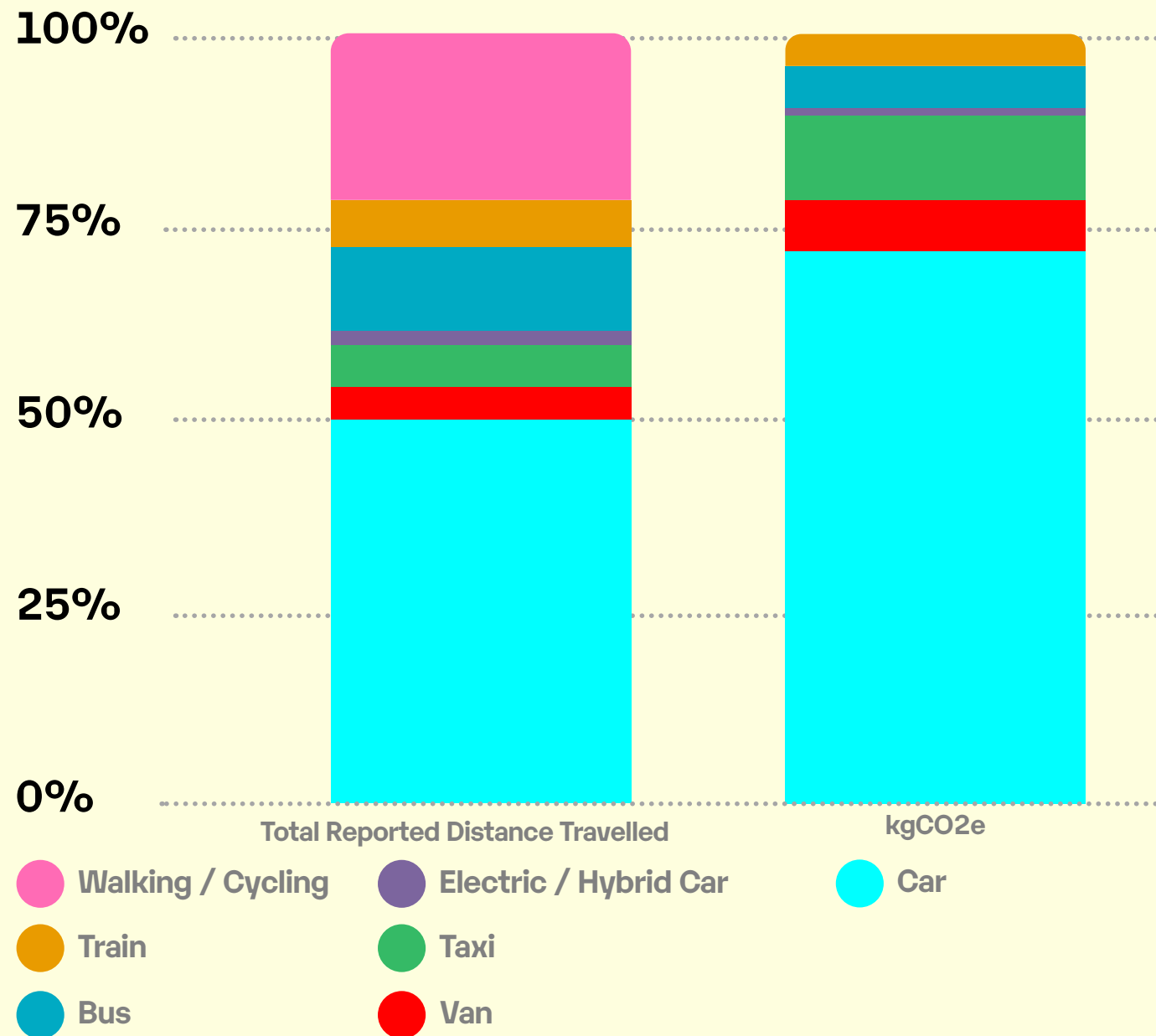




## CREW

### CREW & STAFF TRAVEL & ASSOCIATED EMISSIONS

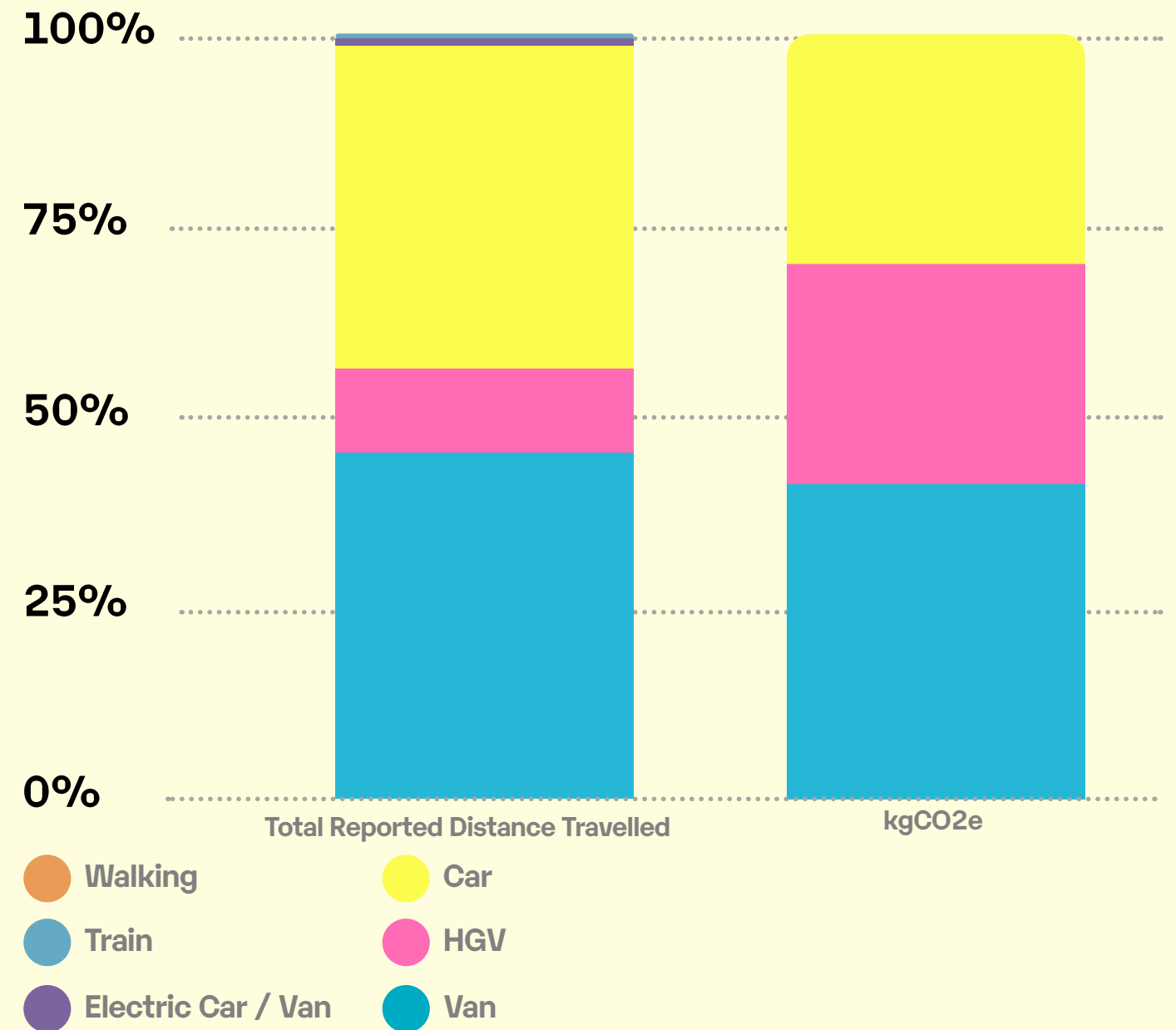
\*Table showing primary mode of transport used by crew to travel to site



## CONTRACTORS

### THIRD PARTY METHOD OF TRANSPORT & ASSOCIATED EMISSIONS

\*Table showing primary mode of transport used by our contractors to travel to site





**21.64 TONNES OF WASTE WAS GENERATED THROUGHOUT THE EVENT, WITH A 52% RECYCLING RATE**

## WHAT WORKED:

- Thanks to our recycling bins around site, there was a 52% recycling rate at the festival
- All general waste went to energy recovery, meaning that none whatsoever went to landfill
- Old film pots were reused as free ashtrays which reduced the amount of cigarette butts dropped on ground at The Downs
- Disposable vapes collection points, for batteries to be reused in social projects
- Reusable cable ties introduced for site use
- Only 6.5% of our entire artist rider drinks order contained plastic
- Staff and crew brought their own reusable water bottles and mugs for back of house areas, meaning no single use plastic bottles and hot drink cups were supplied!
- Procurement & sourcing practices were highly commended by AGF



**THANKS TO GREENBOX EVENTS, JACK'S LAB, RE-BLOOM, RAW FOUNDATION AND FRANK WATER FOR HELPING US REDUCE OUR WASTE!**



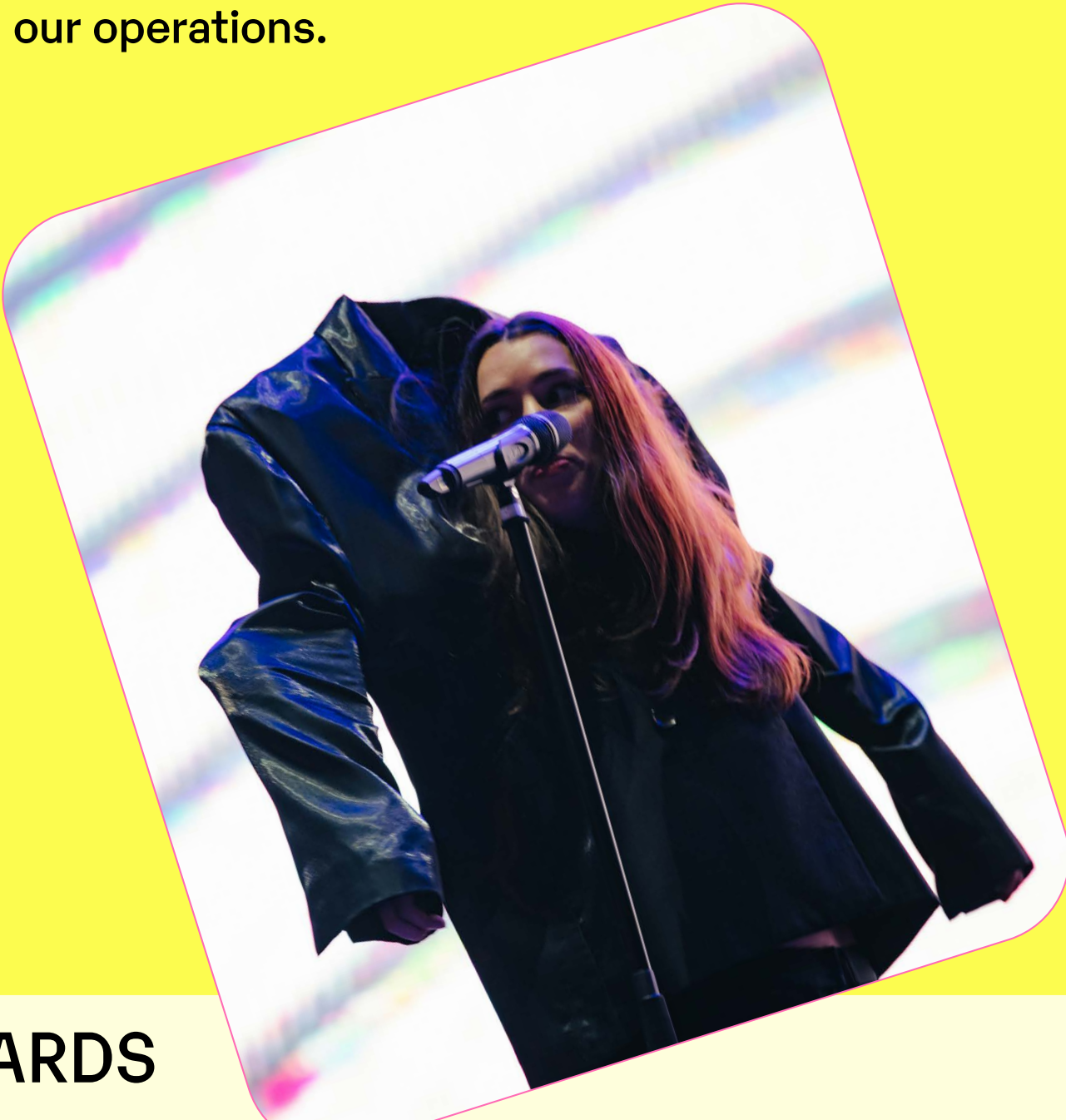
# Environmental Impact

# WASTE

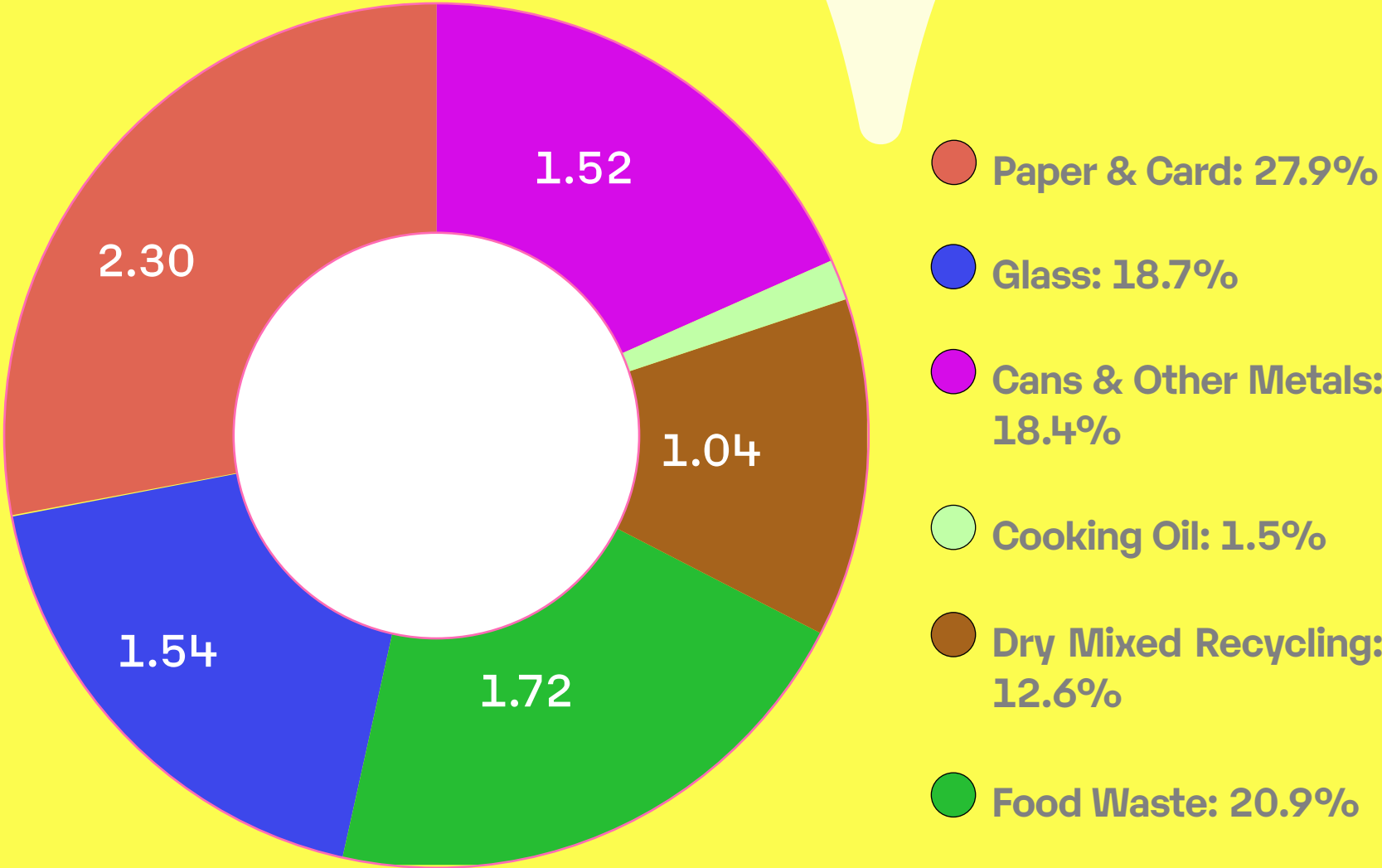
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## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Increase our recycling rate by 8%
- Update our waste strategy to improve recycling rate
- Grow our understanding of our procurement in order to capture what is being re-hired, reused or discarded through our operations.



## WASTE TONNAGE





**GENERATORS AND PLANT  
MACHINERY CONSUMED  
10,978L HVO FUEL, EMITTING  
3.05 TONNES OF CO<sup>2</sup>E**

## WHAT WORKED

- 100% powered by renewable energy e.g HVO Fuel
- 220hrs of HVO fuel usage saved by using a hybrid generator in our production area
- HVO fuel used in all generators
- HVO fuel used in plant machinery & tower lights
- All buggies electric & HVO fuel

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Better data monitoring throughout the event to help us separate generator HVO fuel & plant machinery HVO fuel consumption
- Deepen our understanding of energy usage per area to improve energy efficiency e.g traders, bars, stages etc
- Work with our power contractor to collaboratively develop further improvements & reduce our emissions
- Continue to work with Bristol City Council towards installing grid power for events at The Downs



**FOOD & DRINK IS OUR SECOND BIGGEST ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND IT REPRESENTS 22% OF OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT, EMITTING 106.5 TONNES OF CO<sup>2</sup>E.**



## WHAT WORKED

- This year, 75% of our traders were from Bristol
- 48% of meals sold were vegetarian or vegan
- We surveyed all our traders to capture their food standards
- We audited their suppliers to understand who they buy from

**Our crew catering serves healthy vegetarian and plant-based food, and provides reusable serveware!**

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Make recommended onsite food standards compulsory
- Increase our veggie & vegan sales by 10%
- Create trusted local supplier directory for our traders
- Introduce compulsory requirement for all cleaning products to be bio-based
- Create a two year plan with targets to reduce our impact in the area of Food & Drink.



## OATLY x TEAM CANTEEN

This year Oatly partnered with Team Canteen, by bringing their best oat-based products to our on-site café, and serving up free oat-based ice cream to festival-goers. We also worked together to assess FORWARDS's relationship to dairy, from audience to crew.

Here's our findings, our audience is:

- Super curious about trying new food & products at festivals
- Loves oat milk, and by looking at the data, most of our audience would be ready to have only oat milk on-site
- However, they're not quite ready for plant-based ice cream at the moment!

**PARTNERSHIP  
SPOTLIGHT**







We slightly increased our compost loos on-site to 51.4% in 2023

Most of our taps had an auto-stops feature to avoid wasting water

108 m<sup>3</sup> were consumed over the 2 days, emitting 0.02 t CO<sub>2</sub>e



# Environmental Impact

# 6 DEGREES & THE HAYES PAVILION

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6° at The Hayes Pavilion harnessed the interconnective power of mushroom roots - the underground network known as mycelium - and investigated the potential adoption of this biomaterial in the creative industries. It was exhibited at FORWARDS festival, giving the audience a chance to discover & interact with this new regenerative material.

6° aimed to demonstrate the opportunity to move away from environmentally harmful materials, to a more sustainable fungi future. When mycelium is fed with agricultural waste it forms a construction material, with properties potentially similar to polystyrene, foam and plastics, but is entirely organic and biodegradable. In the 6 week period leading up to its first installation the creative collective of practitioners tested, manipulated and challenged what is possible with mycelium as a practical material.

The Hayes Pavilion also played host to specially commissioned immersive sound art compositions by academic and musician Brian d'Souza (Auntie Flo) and rising star Or:la, in collaboration with harpist Roisín Berkeley. The music highlighted the ties between people and communities that emulate the connectivity of mushrooms.



6° BY TEAM LOVE & RE:RIGHT WON THE GREEN INNOVATION AWARD AT THE GREEN EVENTS AND INNOVATIONS CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY!



## At the heart of our festival is **FORWARDS THINKING.**

The Information is a dedicated space for activism, debate and understanding on pressing current affairs and cultural issues. We programmed 2 days of debate and offered stall space for activists, organisations and charities to exchange ideas with our audience.

Our programme of talks at The Information tackled topics such as inequality in the media, the housing emergency, intersectional environmentalism, the ethics of consumption, sexism in storytelling, diversity and positive discrimination, and politics on TikTok.

Thank you to our speakers for these thought provoking discussions - Munroe Bergdorf, David Olusoga, Liv Little, Vicky Spratt, Tori Tsui, Dominique Palmer, Claire Farell, Danny Price, Grace Campbell and more...

If you would like to listen to some of our panel discussions, please head to [The Information Archive](#).





Part of our mission is to ensure the experience of festivals and live music are accessible to future generations. Our kids area is dedicated to children between 0-12 yo featuring immersive shows and exciting workshops, theatre, ball pool, skate ramp, arts & crafts, music.

We invited Campus Skateboarding, founded in 2011, the non-profit organisation has utilised the positive energy and the influence of skateboarding to engage with children and young people. They brought a team of dedicated instructors, who were on hand to support any kids who wanted to try skateboarding, along with providing safety and skateboarding equipment.

The Eastside Community Trust and Felix Road Adventure Playground unleashed complete creativity, with the children designing artworks to display as installations at the festival. The young artists were invited to attend the festival with their families to see their work decorating site.





## MUSIC DECLARES EMERGENCY

We have an ongoing partnership with Music Declares Emergency and during our 2023 show raised awareness of the current climate, biodiversity & political crisis by playing their campaign film on the Main Stage in between acts.

You can join No Music on a Dead Planet by becoming a member, more info [here](#)



## CLIMATE LIVE

We invited Climate Live, a youth-led climate group, to raise awareness in our Guest Bar and take some time to talk to our artists. We're lucky to not only program incredible talent, but also have artists who care about the environment. Climate Live also ran a stall in our Information area and Frances Fox, their founder, took part in our Intersectional Environmentalism talk! Follow Climate Live [here](#)





## TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

We partnered with Tony's Chocolonely to raise awareness of our partner CIC's, Big Team & Team Canteen, alongside our work in sustainability by creating a chocolate bar for our artist riders which featured a QR code. You can find more information [here](#)



## EARTHPERCENT

This year we gave you the opportunity to add an additional pound on your ticket to raise money for EarthPercent - you raised £3,094 to support organisations fighting for climate & social justice around the world! You can find more information [here](#)





We conducted a world-first trial to help visually impaired people experience the sights, as well as the sounds, of a festival through Give Vision headsets. The headset beams footage from the cameras around the stage directly into the user's vision. The headset stimulates the photoreceptor cells in people's eyes to help them regain some vision. The trial was deemed successful and we will be looking to work with Give Vision at future events.

FORWARDS Festival took part in a groundbreaking case study from A Greener Future on the intersectionality of accessibility and sustainability - helping in the creation of a new sustainability toolkit - **No Climate Action Without Us!** The data collected helped to feed into how to make accessible toilets less open to abuse through a more sustainable locking system of RADAR padlocks. Harry Jones, Team Love's Accessibility Lead, was also invited to join a panel discussion on ways we can implement small changes through the toolkit and provide other live on-site solutions.

Our Diverse Sensory Calm Space returned and provided a welcomed calm space for our attendees. This facility has a growing customer following who have stated that now this provision is available has meant that they can now attend events. We had a wheelchair accessible buggy to support our artists, crew & attendees.



## Facilities provided at our festival as standard:

- Personal assistant / Companion ticket provision
- Viewing platforms / areas
- Accessible parking
- Accessible toilets
- Lowered bar areas
- Induction hearing loops
- Assistance dogs welcome
- BSL interpreters (on request)
- Accessible map
- Wheelchair accessible buggy
- Accessible box offices
- A dedicated accessibility team

## Areas for Improvement:

- Better data gathering for crew & attendees feedback
- Make changes to improve the arrival and exit process for customers who have a disability
- Further increase staff training through Attitude is Everything
- Focus on crew & artist accessibility

Furthermore, we have signed up the Attitude Is Everything Beyond the Music Programme which offers volunteering and work opportunities to the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent communities.



Big Team actively works to diversify the people who create, contribute and attend festivals. They support 18-30 year olds from groups that are currently under-represented to forge their paths in the industry and work with industry partners to develop more inclusive festival environments

This year we worked with Big Team on the following projects:

We hosted 8 placements, giving participants the opportunity to gain experience in roles such as social media & marketing, accreditation, artists liaison, production and site crew. Big Team also partnered with [Saffron](#) to coordinate placements in stage management and sound tech.

More than half of participants gained further work in the industry after their placement at FORWARDS.

23 young people attended our site tour of FORWARDS, through our Elevate Us series.

Six acts who participated in Big Team's Next Level artist development programme (delivered in partnership with Bristol Beacon) performed at FORWARDS.



## CAPTURE FORWARDS

Big Team and FORWARDS, in partnership with [Films@59](#), brought 4 aspiring photographers on a unique festival media placement at the festival. Capture FORWARDS offered the successful applicants hands-on experience in the world of live music and professional festival shooting, an industry workshop with a professional photographer, behind the scenes access, on-site live photography.

The team went on to shoot at Waterworks in London as part of the social media roaming team a couple of weeks after FORWARDS!



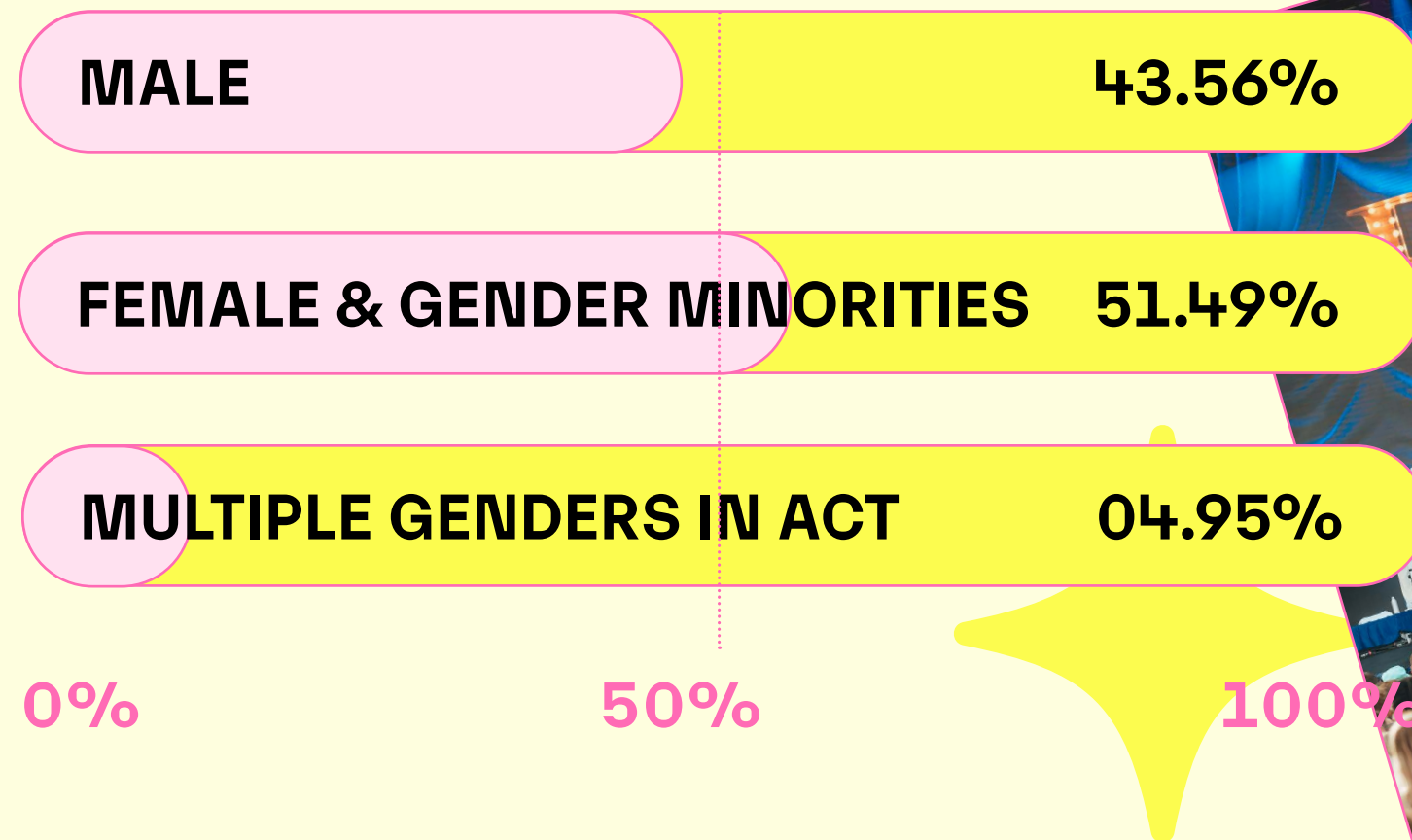


We were thrilled to bring two incredible headliners to FORWARDS 2023, Erykah Badu & Aphex Twin.

We're also extremely proud to say that over 50% of our artists were female or from gender minorities.

We continue to work towards more equitable programming practices. In 2024 we are focusing on improving our data capture to be able to represent the social identities of our artists further. We acknowledge the limitations of the categorisation used and we will be working towards aligning our data collection with ONS categorisation for the future.

## Line-up balance by gender





We believe that everyone should be, and feel safe, at FORWARDS. Which is why we have an ongoing partnership with **Safer Spaces Now** and the **Bristol Drug Project**. Both charities help promote a safe, kind and judgement free environment for our attendees to receive advice on how to take care of themselves and report anything that doesn't feel right.



This year, we offered a number of different schemes to help make our event more affordable. As our overall costs increase, we are working really hard to not pass on the costs to our customers and provide alternative pricing for those in need of a little support.

- Various payment plan options to allow attendees to split the cost of their ticket
- Low income tickets available on request - 81 sold
- Free personal assistant /companion tickets for eligible attendees that may require them
- Discounted tickets available for local residents
- Discounted NHS tickets available - 1,532 sold





## My Cause

£1,985 raised by My Cause volunteers to organisations such as Aid Box Community Alzheimer's Research Society, Caring in Bristol, Dogs Trust, Mind, Surfer Against Sewage and more...



## Fundraising

Through our guestlist donation scheme we raised £15,490 in 2023 that has gone towards supporting the work of Big Team CIC.

Our partnerships levy system has helped us raise another £17,345.80 towards Big Team, Capture FORWARDS and The Hayes Pavilion projects.

We also hosted the Team Canteen coffee stall on site that generated £1,525 profit to fund projects aimed at alleviating food insecurity in Bristol.





# Conclusion

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Thank you for taking the time to read our impact report, we hope this provides more insight to our social, environmental and economic activities. We strive to continue cultivating a relationship of transparency and accountability with our attendees, suppliers and partners, along with our home city - Bristol - and the events & music industry as a whole. This is our way of working towards a fairer and better future for us all, so that the next generation may enjoy festivals and collective joy for years to come.



## What we will be focusing on in 2024

- Increasing our food sustainability credentials & the creation of a green trader award
- Exploring ticketing schemes to increase our event's affordability
- Capturing our energy impact in more detail
- Growing The Information stage by introducing an Interactive & Imagination area
- Increasing & standardising our charity income
- Improving demographic data collection with a specific focus on artists
- Growing our Big Team on-site placements & our Capture FORWARDS project
- Focusing the Kids Area on themes of imagination, creativity, local communities & building a better future



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