Film Hub South West

Reflections Report 2025 - 2026



Ramble (BTS) dir. Alice Panerai

Introduction

Film Hub South West works towards a thriving and inclusive film sector...

...enabling more people to show, watch, and make films where they are – thanks to the support of National Lottery. We are at the heart of the BFI 2033 strategy which aims to build a diverse UK screen culture that benefits everyone.

Led by internationally renowned cultural cinema **Watershed** in Bristol, a UNESCO City of Film, Film Hub South West is part of the UK wide BFI Film Audience Network (BFI FAN).

We are also home to **BFI NETWORK** and **BFI Film Academy South West** which nurture the region's new wave of filmmaking talent.

As the 2025-26 year ends, we reflect on the impact of BFI FAN, BFI NETWORK and BFI Film Academy here in the south west on audiences, talent, and the film sector over the past 12 months.



Archaeo-Heritage Film Festival 2025

Film Hub South West, BFI NETWORK South West and BFI Film Academy South West are part of the BFI Film Audience Network, supported by the National Lottery.



Actionism, The Cornish Bank - 99p Films, 2025

More films, to more people, in more places.

Impact On Audiences In 2025-26

Overview

- Total amount invested in audience facing activity: **£167,333**
- Total admissions: **86, 773**
- Number of screenings: **2,983**
- **62%** number of specialised screenings

Audience Breakdown

Film Hub South West is committed to working towards a more accessible and inclusive sector. To that end, we are monitoring how well our members are connecting with specific audience groups.

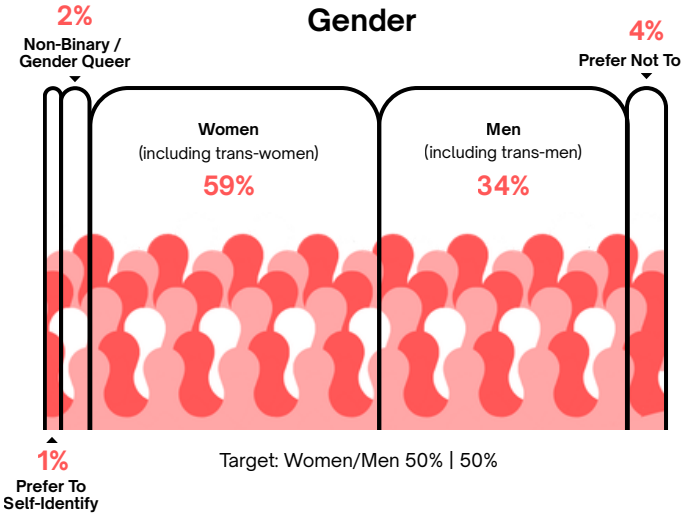
The figures above are based on 2,556 surveys / 3% response rate.



Bristol Palestine Film Festival 2025

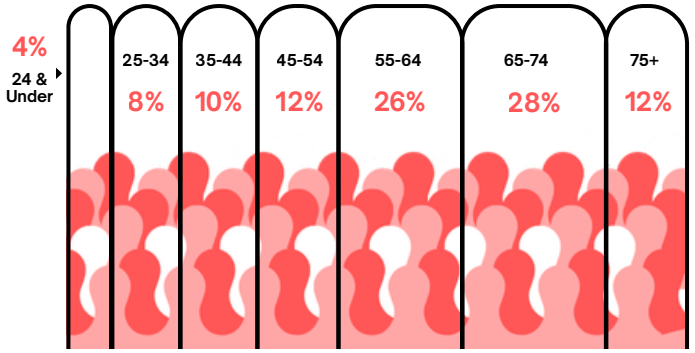
Audience Survey

Gender



Target: Women/Men 50% | 50%

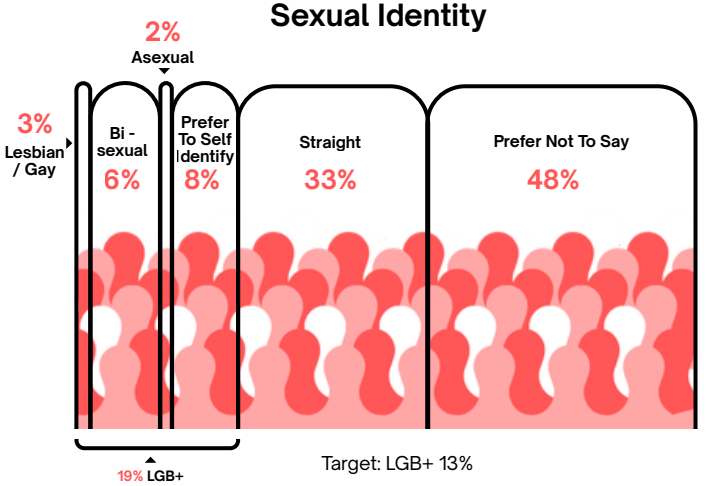
Age



Target: Under 25s 25%

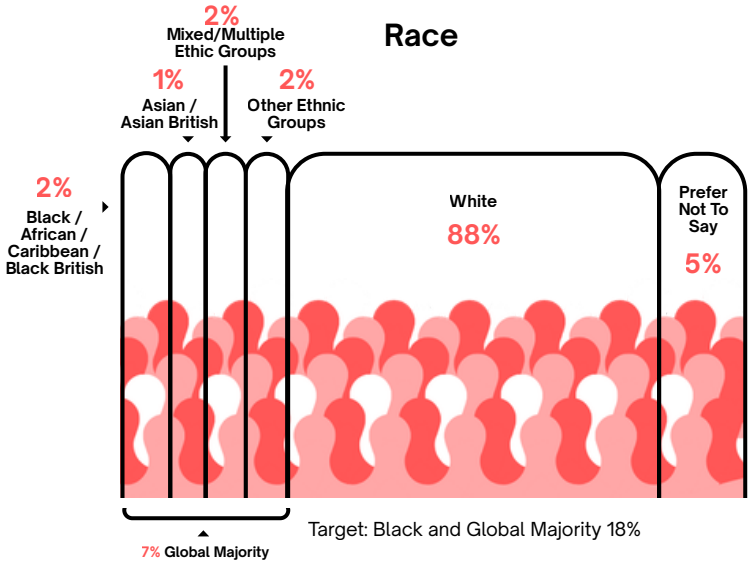
(Please note: Survey respondents aged 16 and under were not required to input their demographic data.)

Sexual Identity



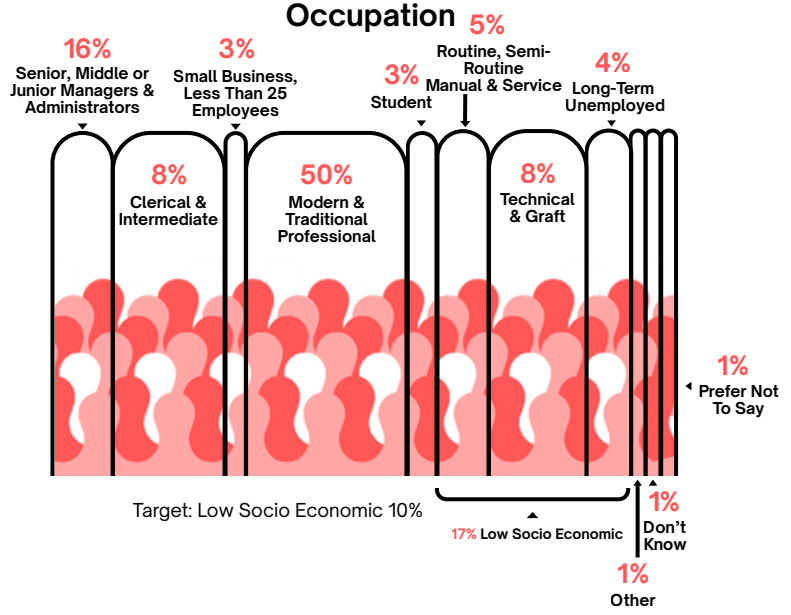
Target: LGB+ 13%

Race



Target: Black and Global Majority 18%

Occupation



Target: Low Socio Economic 10%

Supporting Exhibition Sector Growth

"Stimulating events and screenings in person as well as the regular online meetings; the Hub network and the facility to contact other members with a range of questions or ideas...

The sharing of good practice by other Hub members is fantastic."

Members' Survey Participant



St Austell Festival of Children's Literature Film Festival 2025

Membership & Networks

- **18 eligible members joined** our regional network of 235 members organisations.
- **Over 250 participants** engaged with our 10 monthly members' meetings.
- **11 members received bursaries** (a total of £2,063) supporting access to industry events and professional development opportunities.
- **30 members attended our Annual Members' Advisory Forum** provided a chance for them to feedback on strategy, be involved in a policy discussion with BFI, and share best practice in presenting immersive works.
- **15 attended our Regional Marketeers' Meet-up** – bringing marketing and communications colleagues together to share practical approaches to audience development.

"I was able to network with distributors and meet other festivals and venues to share best practice and creative approaches to audience development."

Reframing Film Attendee

Sector Development

- **115 industry practitioners attended the Reframing Film Sessions at Cinema Rediscovered,** with **100% of respondents** reporting that they gained fresh ideas and inspiration and that the sessions improved their ability to reach audiences for a wider range of film.

"Getting out of the office and being in a space where exhibitors collide with distributors, that is so rare!"

Reframing Film Sessions Participant

Members

- **94%** of organisations surveyed indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied as members as part of our Members Annual Survey.

We asked what FAN members found beneficial/most beneficial about the Hub:

- **100%** Being part of a network and feeling more connected
- **88%** Accessing Bursary support
- **71%** One-to-one support with the Film Hub team, Training opportunities and Opportunities for getting involved in UK wide FAN initiatives

"Great to see so many members doing innovative events - provides great inspiration for us going forward."

Members' Survey Participant

Organisational Impact

For members who had accessed our support in 2025-2026:

- **100%** learned something new relevant to their role or organisation.
- **88%** made useful new contacts
- 88% gained fresh ideas and inspiration.
- **75%** participated in UK-wide FAN initiatives such as Art of Action.
- **63%** became more confident as an exhibitor.

"I find the weekly Watershed emails on independent cinema's box office experience for screening current titles useful to alert me to ones to look out for when we plan our future season's films."

Members' Survey Participant

Film Hub South West: Audience Reach

Impacted by programme	Reach
FAN Exhibition Fund	**37,227**
Audience Pitch Pot	**4,935**
Cinema Incentive Scheme	**35,849**
Spotlight	**6,086**
Too Much: Melodrama on Film season (South West)	**2,676**

Film Exhibition Fund

- **17** Film Exhibition Fund projects supported through open call, including Purbeck Film Festival, Encounters Festival, FilmBath and Afrika Eye Festival.
- **£83,500** total invested.

"Film Hub South West and BFI FAN support has been invaluable in recent years. Through three rounds of Film Exhibition Fund support (2023–26), we've been able to deliver community cinema programmes across Cornwall, reaching rural audiences who would otherwise have limited access to independent film."

C Fylm Touring Cinema / Community Screen Network Film Exhibition Fund Recipient

Cinema Incentive Scheme (CIS)

- **12** independent cinemas shared a **£43,600** investment incentivising the programming of British Independent and Specialised titles.
- **1,913** screenings supported with **35,849** admissions.

The scheme also supported a more connected approach to programming, with two **dedicated meetings for theatrical exhibitors** providing a space to share intelligence, discuss individual title performance and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Audience data from CIS activity included:

- **9%** from Black & Global Majority communities.
- **18%** identifying as LGBTQ+
- A significant contribution from audiences from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

"As an independent rural cinema membership enables us to feel part of the bigger picture with inspiration, support, advice and guidance, from the very accessible HUB team. Thank you."

Cinema Incentive Scheme Participant

Small-Scale Projects



Falmouth Feast, Princess Pavilion - 99p Films, 2025

Audience Pitch Pot

- **13** Audience Pitch Pot projects supported through open call.
- **£12,120** invested in targeted and locally responsive audience activity.
- Projects tackled PTSD, grief, children's literacy, archival film and African diaspora cinema.

"The [Audience Pitch Pot] allowed us to take the concept out of Falmouth and explore how a social cinema event worked beyond the comfort and familiarity of our home town. We learnt so much from this, taking our model to Plymouth, Helston and St Ives. Since then we have maintained a consistent monthly screening in Helston and are building that community nicely."

99p Films – Pitch Pot Recipient

Too Much: Melodrama on Film

(UK-wide BFI FAN season)

"The audience engagement felt very different and much more social and connected across different audience groups.

We also saw a change in attitude towards what was considered an "old fashioned" film with people saying they were really moved by it in ways they were totally not expecting."

Anna Navas, Plymouth Arts Cinema

Overall, the South West put on **94 events** across **15 FAN member venues** for a combined **audience attendance of 2,676.**



The Shape of Water & The Monsters Wedding Interactive Screening - Screams By The Sea, 2025

In 2025-26, BFI FAN presented the UK-wide season – Too Much: Melodrama On Film – celebrating the visual excess and dramatic potency of a form of cinema which champions emotional intensity over propriety and 'good taste'.

The season was produced by Watershed Cross FAN Programme Producer Timon Singh in partnership with BFI Southbank and FAN partners across the UK.

-

Regional highlights included **Screams By The Sea**'s immersive screening of *The Shape of Water* where **50 attendees engaged,** not just with the film, but also with the fringe activities, including a monster themed-cabaret event.

"Amazing time! So creative and so much fun :)"

Audience Comment

Spotlight: Create Studios / Swindon 2025–26

Highlights include:

- **Overall admissions of 6086** incl. a twice-weekly independent film programme established at Sofa Screenings, creating a regular cinema offer where none previously existed.
- **Attendees surveyed came from a whole range of backgrounds in libe with BFI priorities** (27% under-25 audiences, 22% LGBTQ+ audiences, 21% working class socio-economic group and 20% Black and Global majority audiences.
- **Reel25 established as a young programmers' group**, alongside paid/developmental opportunities in programming, marketing, events and projection.
- **Partnerships developed** with Swindon Borough Council, Harbour Project, City of Sanctuary, Swindon Pride, Swindon Museums, Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and multiple local festivals and cultural organisations.

Create Studios in Swindon was awarded a £147,000 grant over 3 years (led by project lead Louise Norbury) to run BFI Film Audience Network initiative Spotlight across Swindon, Wiltshire, and South Gloucestershire.

The investment resulted in **210 screenings** delivered across the three-year Spotlight programme reaching **9,000+ audiences**. Spotlight turned a town with no regular independent cinema audience into a sustainable, regularly sold-out independent cinema programme, while bringing together, a network of community, cultural and local authority partnerships and a new generation of young programmers.



Marlborough Festival 2025 - Create Studios

"Fabulous venue and a fascinating selection of films. You can tell that it is run by people who really know and love the big screen... it doesn't matter if you know the film or not... you're in safe hands with Louise and the Create Studio team. It's a brilliant way to spend a Friday evening."

Sofa Screenings Audience Feedback

"Sofa Screenings is such a brilliant addition to Swindon. There really isn't anywhere else locally offering such a different and interesting range of films. It's not just the usual blockbusters – you get independent films, classics, documentaries and films you might never otherwise get the chance to see on the big screen. It feels like a real cinema for people who love film."

Sofa Screenings Audience Feedback

Keeping 35mm cinema alive in Dorset.

Case Study: Dirt In The Gate

Dirt In The Gate continued to develop its distinctive 35mm exhibition programme at the Regent in Christchurch, with Film Hub South West support towards their annual GRINDFEST.

The organisation champions cult, genre and repertory cinema, creating opportunities for audiences to experience films on the format they were originally intended to be seen on.

Its work involves sourcing rare prints through archives, distributors and private collections, alongside introductions and other events that connect audiences with the history and wider culture of cinema.

In 2025–26, Dirt In The Gate delivered:

- **23** Screenings including **20** archive screenings.
- **3,970** Admissions (Target: 2,550)

GRINDFEST

GRINDFEST was the standout success, with audiences travelling from outside the area to attend and a strong response to the opportunity to see films projected from 35mm.

The festival has continued to grow in profile, and in 2026 secured Arrow Video as a sponsor and welcomed filmmaker Mark Jenkin as its patron, strengthening its connections with the wider filmmaking, distribution and genre cinema community.

> "The Dirt in the Gate Festival is a welcoming and inclusive event designed to showcase a love of film.
>
> It is expertly programmed and run and highlights rarely seen films all shown on 35mm. It is an outstanding and important event."
>
> **Dirt In The Gate Audience Member**



Grindfest 2025 - Dirt In The Gate

Through BFI NETWORK, We Support The New Wave Of Filmmakers

We Support Filmmakers

- In 2025-26, the Short Film Fund supported **4 short films**
- In 2025-26, the Early Development Fund supported **5 feature projects**
- The total BFI NETWORK award amount of both funds in 2025-26 was **£115,000**

The BFI NETWORK team is here to nurture south west based filmmaking talent and support writers, directors and producers who have original stories to tell and inspired approaches to their craft. Thanks to National Lottery funding, Film Hub South West is home to two BFI NETWORK Talent Executives and a Talent, Comms & Outreach Coordinator to support this ambition.

"As a producer...having access to these funds is absolutely vital for career and skills development. We made our short film *Choked* through FHSW and the experience could not have been better.

The care and on-hand access from the experienced and lovely team made us feel completely supported while we were making the film, and they continue to champion it and us long after we'd delivered the final cut."

Isabella Bassett, Producer



Choked dir. Travis Alabanza (BTS) - Ezekeil

Our films have travelled from the South West to...

Frameline (San Francisco)
BFI Flare (London) Iris Prize (won Best British Short)
Aesthetica (York)
Glasgow Short Film Festival
Cornwall Film Festival
London Short Film Festival
Galway Film Fleadh
Inside Out 6 (Toronto)
Roze Filmdagen LGBTQ+ Film festival (Netherlands)
Fantastic Fest (Texas, USA)
...and beyond

...the films we've supported are seen across the world!



We're committed to inclusivity.

"As a neurodivergent writer-director structuring development/redrafting time is really challenging, so having distinct deadlines really helped. Working with a script editor was unbelievably useful – I could feel myself becoming a clearer and more intentional writer/filmmaker over such a short period of time"

New Voices Participant

"Thank you to the South West Film Hub team, who are extremely welcoming, approachable and just seem like lovely people."

Event Attendee

"The overall tone set is one of inclusivity, respect and listening, which feels quite rare. I got a strong sense that the creative process was deeply understood by all programme leaders/experts – there was an appreciation that, for quality work to develop, people need time, space, encouragement and gentle accountability, rather than a strong sense of competition or urgency. It felt an extremely safe creative environment"

New Voices Participant



Director Lab participants & crew, 2025

We train talented professionals in the region.

- **98%** of participants achieved what they hoped out of our events.
- **100%** of participants would recommend our events to others.
- **65%** of feedback responses stated that they had made useful contacts.
- **60%** said learned something new of relevance to their role or career aspirations.

During the 2025-26 period we held or took part in **33 events** across the south west (a mix of online and in-person sessions) reaching **896 participants**.

Our programmes this year included:

- The fourth edition of **New Voices**, in partnership with Blak Wave Productions, Little By Little Films and Bristol AF Productions.
- **Beyond Shorts** in partnership with NFTS Wales.
- Our third **Director Lab** with Bournemouth Film School.
- A **Working-class Producers Forum**.

We also supported Screen Cornwall and Exeter Phoenix's **New Writers' Network** and Peninsula **Producers Lab**, as well **Scream Queens**, a genre writing scheme led by Terror Arcade.

"If I had to say one thing I think it's the inclusive, honest, open and beautifully supportive atmosphere that was created throughout. It made me take risks and embrace mistakes and allowed a deeper level of creative exploration that I've not felt in any other environment"

Director Lab Participant

"The programme helped me identify skills gap and biases specific to working-class individuals. Sophie Reynolds was honest, practical and genuine with her approach to the work, her recommendations and advice were very helpful."

Working-Class Producers' Forum Participant

We work collaboratively with partners

We worked with amazing partners, both in the region and beyond, such as: Screen Cornwall, Exeter Phoenix, Ffilm Cymru, NFTS Cymru Wales, Bournemouth Film School, Screenskills Animation Fund, Channel 4, Bristol School of Acting, Undershed, Queer Vision, Bristol AF Productions, Film Bath, Exit 6 Film Festival, Bigger House Film, Encounters Film Festival, Bristol Film School, Rising Arts Agency and Screen Cornwall.



New Voices session with Bristol School of Acting © Charley Williams

Case Study:
Beyond Shorts

We rebranded this flagship scheme (previously known as ‘Shorts2Features’) for its second iteration; the new title was selected to reflect the diversity of options for progression from making short films into longer-form work, including TV, and we continued our partnership with NFTS Cymru Wales.

Four producers and **four directors** benefitted from specialised NFTS training, online masterclasses, mentoring with industry professionals, BFI London Film Festival digital passes, a tour of Bottle Yard Studios and access to industry experts such as producers, agents and commissioners.

Mentors included Charlotte Regan, Emily Morgan, Sebastian Thiel and Georgia Goggin.

“ Amazing opportunity to be connected to anyone we asked for (for mentoring). Felt like this was the major benefit of the programme as when the BFI knocks, people answer.

I had been trying to connect with my mentor for the last few years but never heard back. My mentor has been great, really generous with their time and connections.”

Beyond Shorts Participant

“I thought the programme was brilliantly run. The lectures were hugely useful and I learned so much that you don't get insight to at earlier levels of your career. I learned things I will take with me on all productions”

Beyond Shorts Participant



Beyond Shorts participants at the Bottle Yard Studios



Fishguts dir. Robyn Egan

Spotlight on BFI-backed projects 2025– 26

“ This year we enjoyed developing and supporting four varied shorts from amazing filmmakers, who come from backgrounds such as advertising, acting and performing, TV and of course, short film production.

These films conveyed important messages with humour, horror and nuance, and boasted great actors and pumping soundtracks!

The five features we have developed include two animated projects that uniquely push the boundaries of their medium, two gut-wrenching psychological dramas and a queer, pastoral tragi-comedy about bellringers. Something for everyone!”

Nadia Attia & Jess Wheeler, BFI NETWORK Talent Executives

BFI Film Academy South West

As Lead Regional Partner for BFI Film Academy South-West, we ran and supported five short filmmaking courses, plus multiple events and talent development activities at Watershed and across the region.

1,297 participants took part in our offer in 2025-26.



Martha Redfern talks to the audience at Inside Screen

Highlights of the 2025-26 year period include:

- Year round activities including our **Roaming Reporters** scheme giving young people access to Cinema Rediscovered and Encounters Festival for free and learn content creation skills.
- We worked with young programmers to curate and produce a screening event **'Chronically Online: A personal History of the UK Internet'** in partnership with BFI Our Screen Heritage and Creative Nonfiction Film Weekend.

Inside Screen

Our annual flagship event, Inside Screen, attracted over 100 young people age 16-25 and included a showcase of BFI Film Academy's Short Course films, and a panel around the role of the Producer with Bex Rose, Lily Woodcock and short course alumnus Martha Redfern, plus networking hosted by Ella McDonald - see a short film about the day here.

"It's great to meet young people and future filmmakers, leading to lots of questions and conversations."

Liping Pan, BFI NETWORK-backed Producer & Inside Screen Panellist

"Having your work be celebrated, it motivates you to do more, create more."

BFI Film Academy Course Participant

Get in touch

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Film Hub South West, BFI NETWORK South West and BFI Film Academy South West are part of the BFI Film Audience Network, supported by the National Lottery.