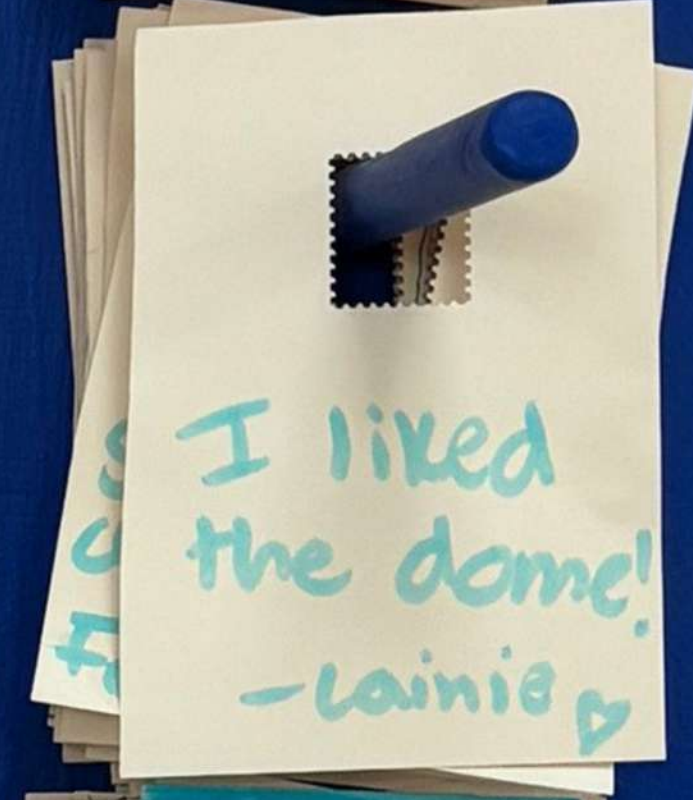
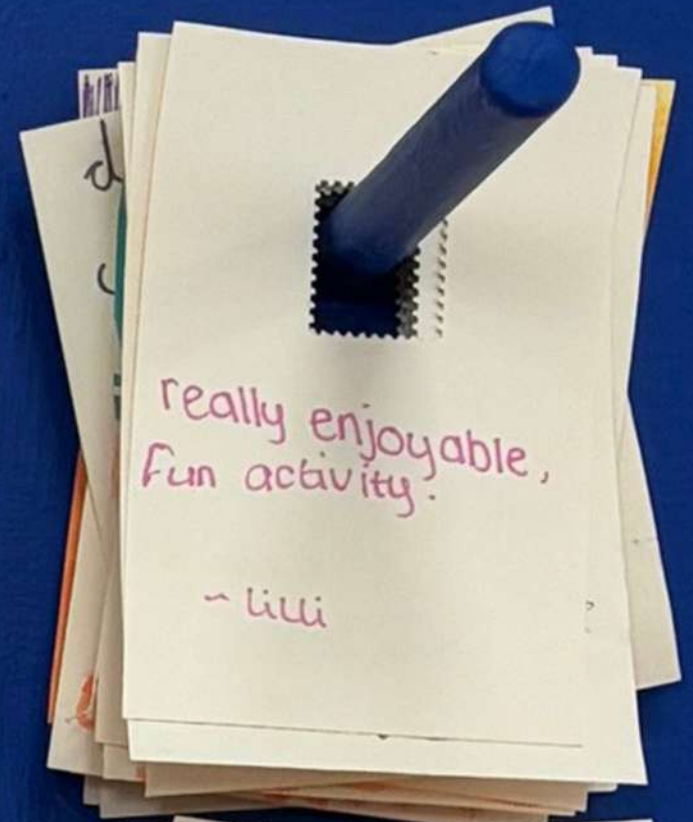
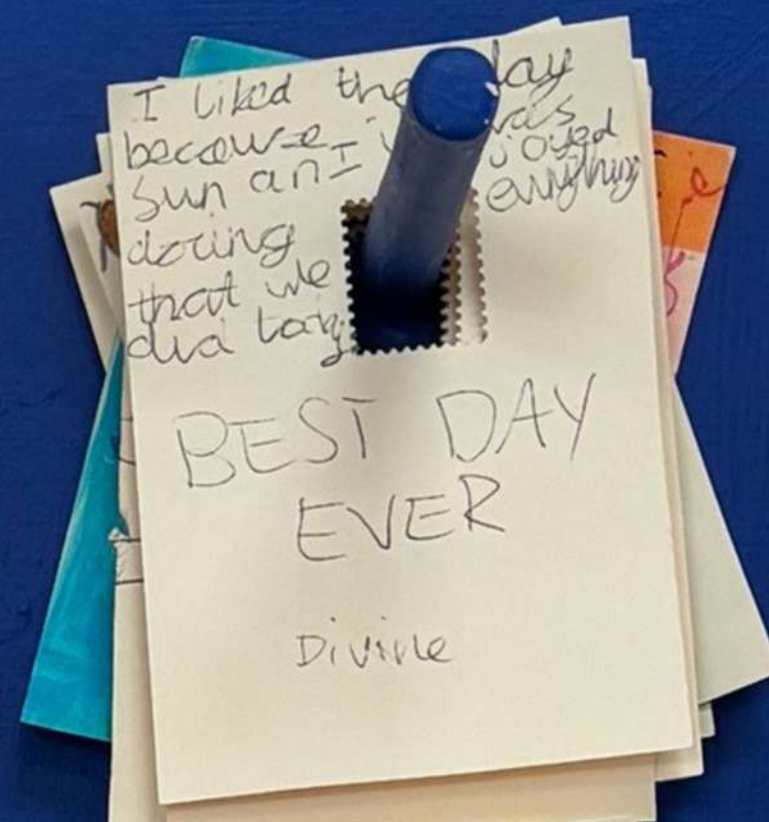
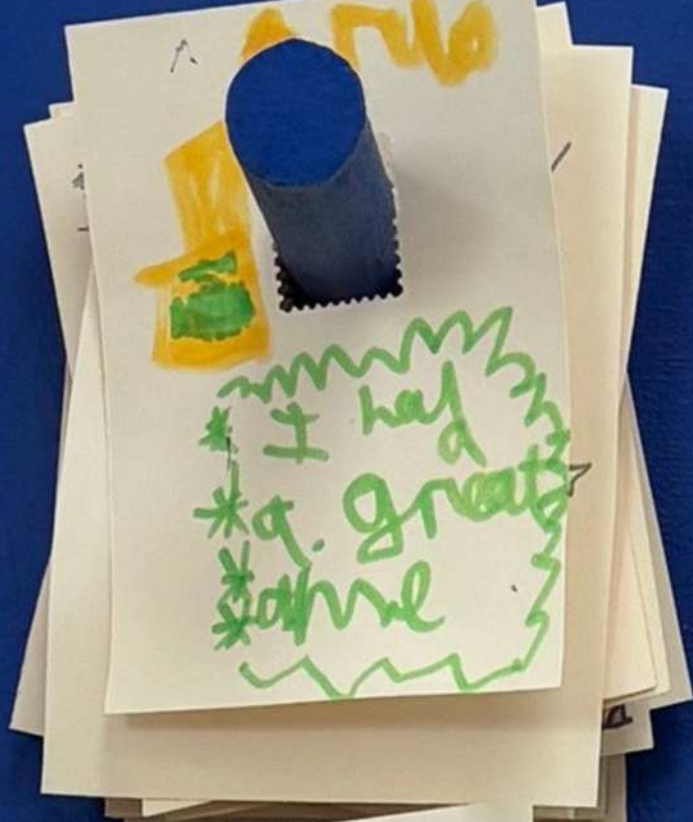




British Ceramics Biennial 2025

Evaluation Report



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Holly McConnell

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(Not) Guilty Pleasures, Jo Taylor, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Holly McConnell



British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) is proud to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and is supported by the Stoke-on-Trent City Council and University of Staffordshire, alongside multiple project-based funders and sponsors.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



City of
Stoke-on-Trent



**University of
Staffordshire**



**Funded by
UK Government**





*One of the best exhibitions I've ever attended
—as good as, if not better than, some of the
recent Tate and V&A*

Visitor feedback

Thoughts From the Evaluation Team

This report marks the conclusion of our evaluation of the British Ceramics Biennial 2025, a process that has been both professionally enriching and personally inspiring. Over the course of our work, we have had the pleasure of collaborating with the dedicated team at BCB, whose passion, resilience and adaptability are remarkable.

BCB operates with a small but mighty team, each member wearing multiple hats and navigating complex demands. Their ability to deliver such an ambitious and multifaceted programme, often under tight capacity constraints, is a testament to their commitment and creativity.

The subject matter of this Biennial has been a joy to engage with. The richness of the programme and its deep roots in Stoke-on-Trent's cultural and industrial history offered us a unique lens through which to explore impact, meaning and transformation. We are grateful for the opportunity to deepen our own understanding of this part of the heritage sector and the contemporary ceramics landscape through this work.

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many participants, artists, partners and respondents who contributed to this evaluation. Their openness, honesty, and thoughtfulness made our job not only easier but profoundly rewarding. Their reflections have shaped the insights in this report and brought the data to life.

Through this evaluation, we have learned a great deal - not only about ceramics and cultural heritage, but also about the power of collaboration, place-based practice, and the role of art in community and identity. Visiting the Biennial and spending time in Stoke-on-Trent has been a privilege and a source of inspiration.

One moment that particularly resonated with us came from a story shared by BCB Chief Executive Clare Wood. Relatively early in the run, Clare gave a tour to a primary school group. Among them was a boy, around ten or eleven years old, who proudly told her this was his third Biennial and recalled works from previous editions. A week later, Clare encountered the same boy in Space C, now visiting with his family. He was leading his own tour, enthusiastically sharing details he had learned during the school visit. This simple yet powerful exchange speaks volumes about the Biennial's ability to spark curiosity, foster learning and create lasting connections across generations.

As an evaluation team, we also want to acknowledge the position from which we approach this work. We are three white British women with longstanding careers in the creative and cultural sectors. This background inevitably shapes our perspectives and we recognise the importance of being transparent about that.

Every care has been taken to mitigate and minimise bias throughout this process, including using each other as critical friends to challenge assumptions and broaden viewpoints. The benefit of working as a team has been invaluable in this regard, allowing us to interrogate our interpretations and strive for fairness.

Evaluation itself is complex. While there is a natural desire to demonstrate positive change and validate theories of change, we have been mindful of the need to remain honest and balanced. This means acknowledging challenges alongside successes and presenting findings with integrity. Our aim has been to provide a report that is both rigorous and reflective, offering insights that can inform future practice while celebrating the achievements of BCB 2025.

Finally, thank you to the BCB team for entrusting us with this work. At our company, we operate at the intersection of communication and rigorous evaluation, striving not only to demonstrate impact but to help maximise reach. This project has exemplified that ethos, and we are proud to have played a part in telling the story of BCB 2025.

Hannah, Holly & Laura
Culture Change Works



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Andrew Brooks

Executive Summary

Attendance



37,855

TOTAL ATTENDANCE



2,200+

EVENT ATTENDANCE



68%

agree

PRIDE IN PLACE



51%

FIRST TIME VISITORS



60

NET PROMOTER SCORE

A NPS of 50 or more is considered excellent, demonstrating a high level of stakeholder loyalty.









97%









OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Proportion of survey respondents that rated their experience as 'good' or 'excellent'.

Programme

 <p>44 DAYS OF EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS</p>	 <p>50+ WORKS & PROJECTS EXHIBITED</p>
 <p>20+ EVENTS</p>	 <p>12 COMMISSIONS</p>
 <p>9 FILMS</p>	 <p>4 INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS</p>

Engagement

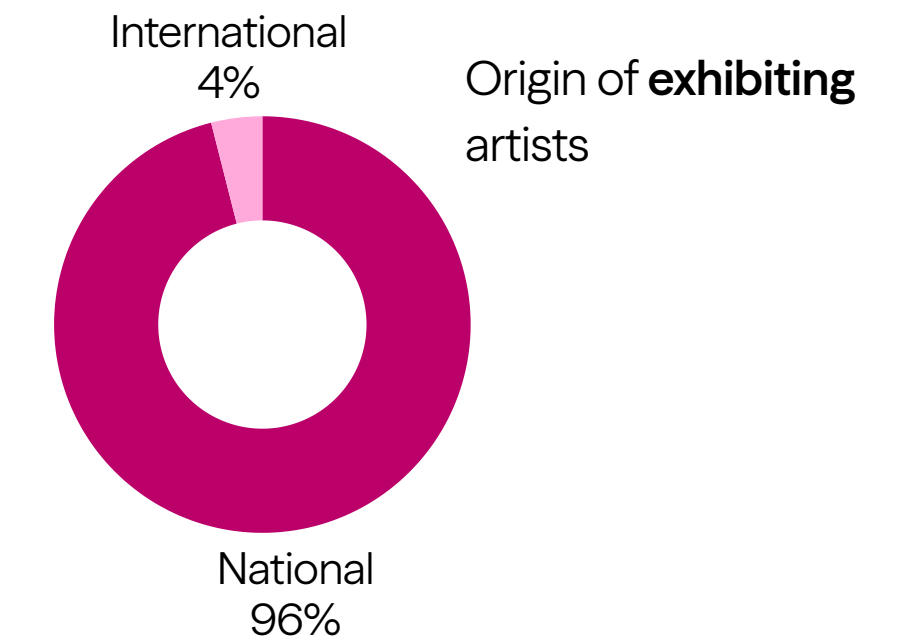
 <p>800+ ARTIST APPLICATIONS</p>	 <p>70+ EXHIBITING ARTISTS</p>	 <p>5 PRIZE WINNING ARTISTS</p>
 <p>70+ TOURS</p>	 <p>35+ SCHOOL VISITS</p>	
 <p>77.9m PR REACH</p>	 <p>70+ PIECES OF COVERAGE</p>	 <p>4.4m DIGITAL REACH</p>

Artist profile

76% of artist **applicants** identify as women;

40% identify as neurodivergent;

16% identify as D/deaf, disabled, or having a long-term health condition



Data collected from artist applicant EDI monitoring n = 523 and 2025 Award and Fresh artists n = 37

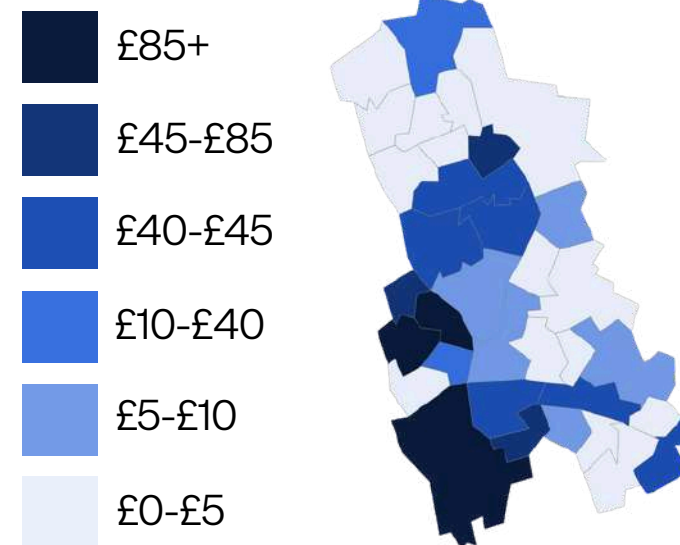
Economic Impact



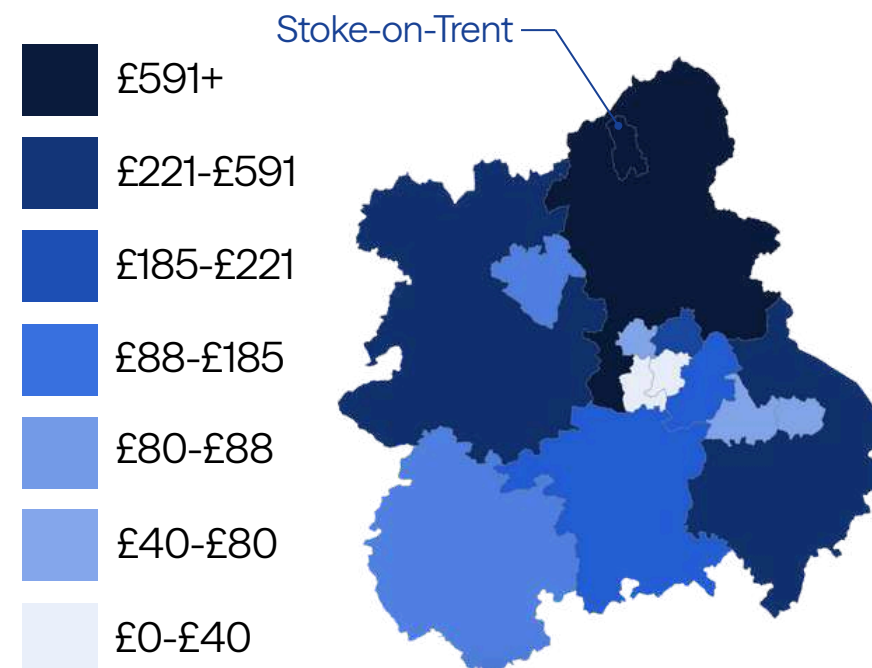
Total Economic Impact incorporates indirect and induced effects. Using a widely cited arts and culture multiplier, £1 of direct spend generates £1.24 elsewhere, a total multiplier of 2.24 is applied (ACE / CEBR).

Respondent spend by postcode

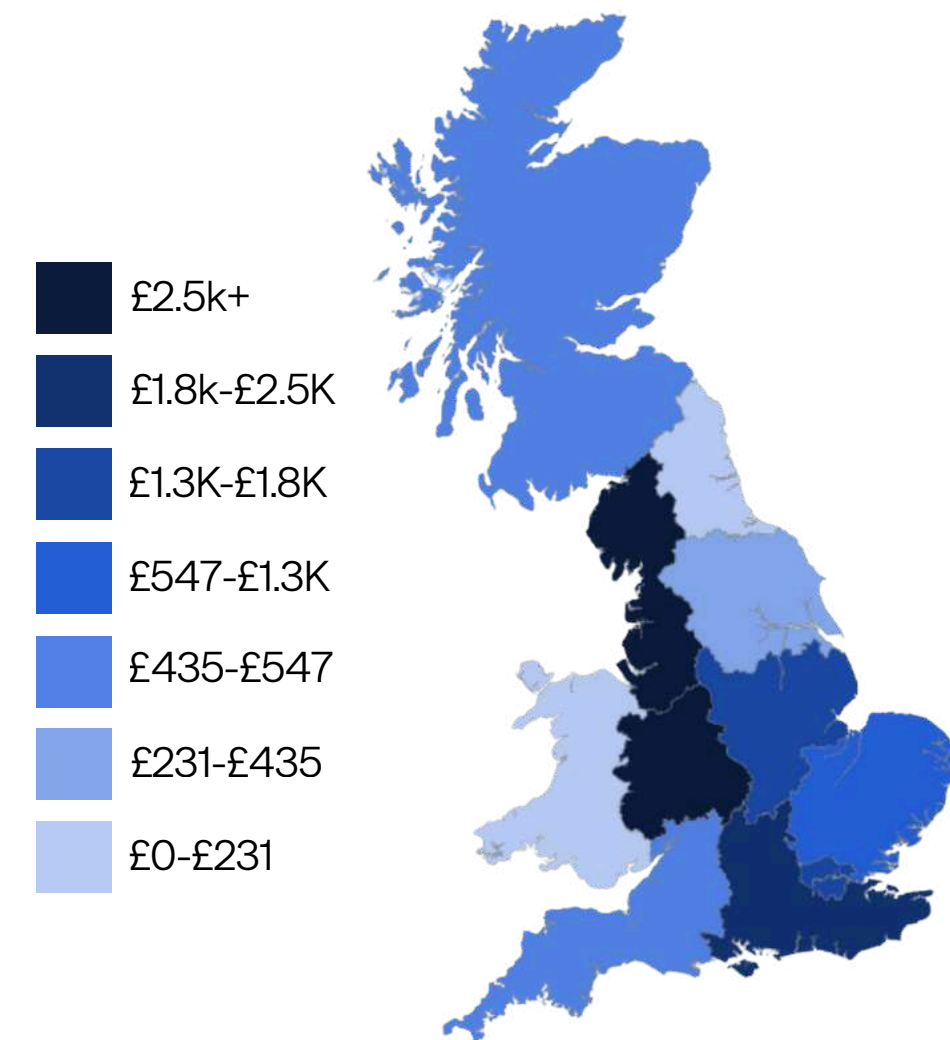
Stoke-on-Trent



West Midlands



England, Scotland and Wales



Economic impact estimates were generated by analysing respondents' reported spend. Median spend per postcode was calculated and projected across the total audience size (n=37,855). This approach reduces the distortion caused by a small number of high-spend outliers and better reflects typical visitor behaviour. Economic impact mapping reflects median spend per postcode sector, not raw respondent counts.



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Methodology

Overview

The 2025 evaluation was designed to build a robust, inclusive, and accurate picture of the Biennial's reach, quality and impact. Using BCB's Impact Framework and Arts Council England's Let's Create principles as our guide, we combined quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the full breadth of activity across the six-week programme.

Our mixed-method approach enabled us to reflect the diversity of exhibitions, workshops, tours, community projects and professional events that shaped the experience of BCB 2025. Visitor survey responses fell slightly below target, but the final sample of 705 remains robust and statistically meaningful for a festival of this scale. Existing demographic data from applicant artists was also used along with existing information ranging from communications analytics to booking information.

Good qualitative evidence from artist interviews, staff insight, multiple community perspectives and structured observations enriched the analysis.



"It's such a brilliant event and I look forward to the next one... we all really enjoyed it."

Visitor feedback

Data collection methods

Visitor survey data, including:

- demographic profile
- motivations
- experience ratings
- access needs
- travel and spend data
- perceptions linked to outcomes areas

Semi-structured interviews, including:

- exhibiting and commissioned artists
- community group leads
- school teachers
- senior lecturers / course leaders (HE/FE)
- BCB staff members

Existing data, including:

- attendance data
- commissions, international projects, exhibitions
- education bookings and group visits
- tour schedules
- PR and marketing reports
- digital metrics and analytics
- EDI monitoring data for artist applicants and volunteers
- notes from the 2025 internal team debrief

Semi-structured observations, including:

- guided tours
- school workshops
- hands-on making activity
- public engagement programming

Programme Profile

Programme Overview

The British Ceramics Biennial 2025 marked the ninth edition of the UK's largest celebration of contemporary ceramics, bringing together more than 70 artists in an ambitious programme. Presented across six spaces across the historic Spode Works site in Stoke-on-Trent, the Biennial transformed the former factory into a dynamic hub of exhibitions, installations, performances, film, learning and community engagement.

BCB 2025 showcased its role as a sector-leading platform for contemporary ceramics, supporting artist development, championing diverse practices and fostering international exchange. Exhibitions, commissions and research projects collectively demonstrated the vitality of clay today, spanning art, craft, design, architecture, film, research and socially engaged practice. The event also included an inaugural, one-day conference held at the Wade Conference Centre.

Running for six weeks (6 September – 19 October 2025), BCB 2025 welcomed audiences from across the UK and internationally, including artists, curators, educators, industry partners, local residents, students and first-time visitors. The programme explored clay as an artistic material, a tool for social connection, a site of heritage and a catalyst for new thinking around sustainability and place-making. Public engagement was central throughout, with hands-on activities, workshops, tours, talks and a flagship conference encouraging visitors of all ages to take part. Tours were offered throughout the Biennial and included guided tours of the event aimed at higher and further education and alternative education groups, school and community groups with hands-on sessions in the Playscape Project Space and weekend 'Walk-up' tours.

Katy West's Artistic Quality Assessment of BCB 2025 praised the Biennial for its exceptional standard, noting that **"in particular, the standard within Fresh 25 and Fresh Talent was comparable to the Award exhibition strength and vibrancy of contemporary ceramics in the UK today."** This consistency created **"an inspiring and rewarding visitor experience across the Biennial,"** while the inclusion of multidisciplinary artists alongside dedicated ceramicists broadened its scope. She observed that promoting the full breadth of practitioners working with clay strengthens the discipline and encourages dialogue across the wider arts, allowing BCB to represent the diversity of contemporary approaches to clay today.

Bringing together world-leading practitioners, emerging makers, community projects, film, and student work within a single site was described as **"a remarkable curatorial achievement,"** though the ambitious scope created **"significant logistical and conceptual challenges."** The event delivered a **"compelling and multifaceted"** visitor experience with interactive elements, scent, sound, and film, but **"some visitors may have found the density of works in certain areas overwhelming,"** underscoring the need for clearer signposting and thematic introductions.

Overall, BCB 2025 reinforced its position as **"one of the most significant platforms for contemporary ceramics."** With a programme spanning artistic excellence, social engagement, material innovation and environmental research, the Biennial reaffirmed its position as a vital cultural platform for the ceramics sector and a catalyst for **"making change through clay."**



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Programme Strands

Award 2025: BCB's flagship exhibition featured ten leading contemporary ceramic artists selected from over 180 open-call submissions, with the winner awarded the prestigious £10,000 BCB Award Prize for (Not) Guilty Pleasures, a vivid exploration of ornament, Rococo exuberance and architectural form. The artist will be invited to exhibit during the 2027 Biennial.

Rare Earth Rising: The BCB 2023 Award Prize winner returned with a new commission examining deep-sea mining, mineral scarcity and environmental ethics.

Fresh 2025: Fresh showcased 25 early-career artists from across the UK and Ireland, selected from more than 380 applications. A panel of four artists, curators and educators were joined by a group of year 10 students from a local school as the Fresh Youth Panel. Four practitioner Prizes have been offered, including residencies with University of Staffordshire, the BCB Studio, Grymsdyke Farm and Guldagergaard International Ceramics Research Center in Denmark.

Fresh Talent: A showcase of the winners of the BCB 2023 Fresh Talent Prize.

University of Staffordshire MA Showcase: Work by the 2025 Ceramics MA cohort, demonstrating new approaches in material, process and contemporary practice from one of the UK's leading postgraduate ceramics programmes



*...the experience made me more confident
in the series of work I presented.*

Feedback from Fresh artist

(Not) Guilty Pleasures, Jo Taylor, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Holly McConnell



Clay Films: Debuting in 2025, presenting six Global Majority filmmakers working at the intersection of clay, performance, technology and cultural identity.

Raverina's Dance Floor: Presented by Portuguese artists, comprising a multi-sensory sound-and-clay installation drawn from the artist's fictional film world.

Sweet Terrain: An insight into a public artwork being created by artists working with Middle Eastern bakers in West London and fabricated at Craven Dunnill Jackfield. The work transformed HS2 construction clay spoil into intricately patterned tiles, an innovative model for sustainable making, community collaboration and industrial heritage.

Ceramic Cities Exchange: A cross-cultural partnership between Stoke-on-Trent and Bolesławiec, Poland, supporting emerging ceramic artists through exchanges, workshops and international collaboration, documented through a new film.

Just Be There: Johnny Vegas and Emma Rodgers present a new body of work addressing the beauty and transience of physical contact and interaction. Created in collaboration with local people, the installation captures fleeting moments – fixing human hugs into permanent form.

The Chimney Princess: People & Place Commission explored the role and visibility of Black women in Stoke-on-Trent, reimagining the iconic bottle kiln as a new goddess for the city, created with local communities.

Slip Tales: A community project, presenting contemporary slipware made by Stoke-on-Trent residents alongside portraits by photographer Adina Lawrence. The project supported newcomers to clay and to the city, building community cohesion, skills and wellbeing.

Playscape: A major collaborative commission led by a BCB Associate Artist, architects, community partners and students. Using rammed earth and recycled clay, including HS2 spoil to create an external installation.

Playscape Project Space: An interactive public space exploring clay's potential as a sustainable construction material. The Project Space offered hands-on experimentation for schools, families and community groups.

Award Voices: Local community representatives offered their personal interpretations of the works selected for Award. This was part of an ongoing programme, Recast, that combines creativity and making with clay for addiction recovery.



We have had a fantastic time. Everything we saw today was new to us. An amazing opportunity for our children who do not get to experience tours and workshops like this!

Feedback from primary school educator

Existing to be Removed, Noor Ali Chagani and Clio Lloyd-Jacob, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper



Event programme

From Waste to Resource Conference: Convened by BCB Researcher in Residence, this one-day conference explored circular economies, construction spoil and material reuse. Bringing together experts in architecture, engineering, soil science, ceramics, policy and environmental design, the event connected festival works like Playscape to live debates on sustainable materials.

Clay and Recovery Knowledge Exchange: This half-day event highlighted UK creative health projects where clay is used to support recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Supported by the Baring Foundation, the event shared the impact of this work and created an environment to share and learn.

Artists Talks and Public Events: Throughout the six weeks, Award artists and invited practitioners hosted talks, demonstrations and conversations, deepening engagement and offering insight into contemporary ceramic practice. A highlight included Just Be There, Johnny Vegas and Emma Rodgers unveiled a new sculptural installation exploring physical touch, transience and creative healing, created with local participants and including a wall of unfired clay for public mark-making.



As a teacher I was inspired to begin to use the school's 'clay spoil' in innovative ways which link to our trust's environmental policies. This has the potential to be rolled out to the wider school community in the summer term enabling students to consider further solutions to environmental concerns.

Feedback from secondary school educator

Playscape, British Ceramics Biennial, 2025. Credit Jenny Harper





British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Tuckey Design Studio

Engagement Profile

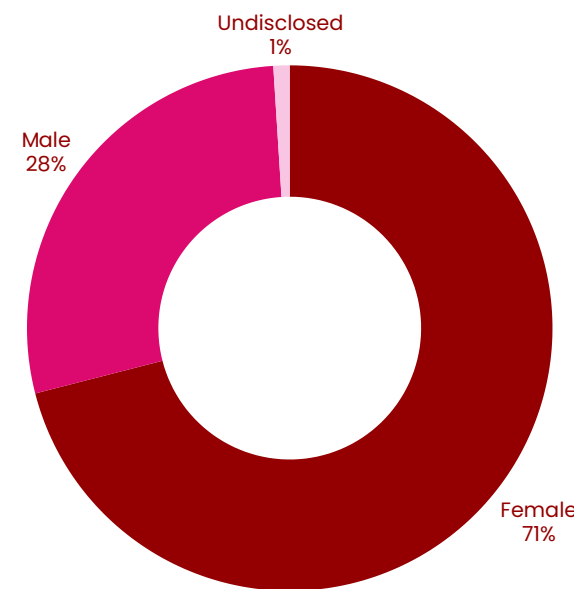
In autumn 2025, the British Ceramics Biennial once again drew together a broad and varied group of people through its exhibitions, workshops, talks and participatory projects. Set within the post-industrial Spode Works site, the festival continued to attract visitors from Stoke-on-Trent and across the UK while also involving volunteers and artists from a wide range of backgrounds. Together, these groups contribute to a fuller picture of who engages with BCB and how the festival continues to reach both existing and new communities.

Across all groups, age representation appeared broad. Based on survey responses, visitors were most strongly represented in the over 60 age range. Older adults also made up a large percentage of the volunteer cohort, although ages spanned from 16 to over 70. In contrast, exhibiting and artist applicants were more likely to be in the 20–39 age range. However, survey data indicated low participation from those under 20. It is important to note that the visitor data only reflects individuals who completed the survey and does not capture young people attending as part of organised school, college, or university visits. Approximately 90 group tours were arranged during the Biennial, and most included young people under 20.

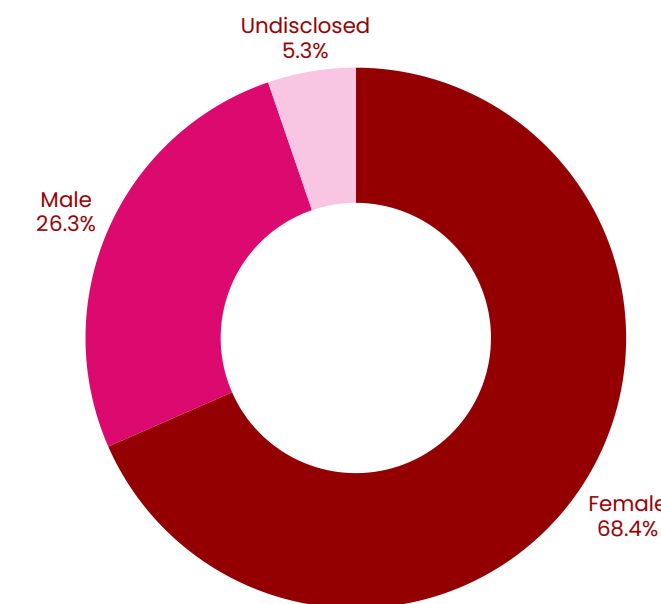
Gender representation was relatively consistent across groups, with women accounting for the majority of respondents. Artists that applied for BCB 2025 were predominantly women, while volunteers showed a more mixed profile that included people who self-described their gender. Non-binary artists were also represented, albeit in small numbers. This pattern reflects wider sector trends but also highlights BCB’s ongoing relevance to women and gender-diverse creative communities.

Gender

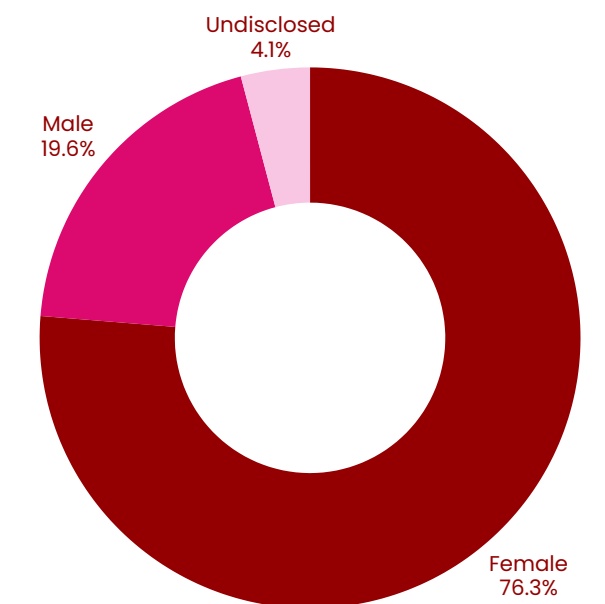
Visitors



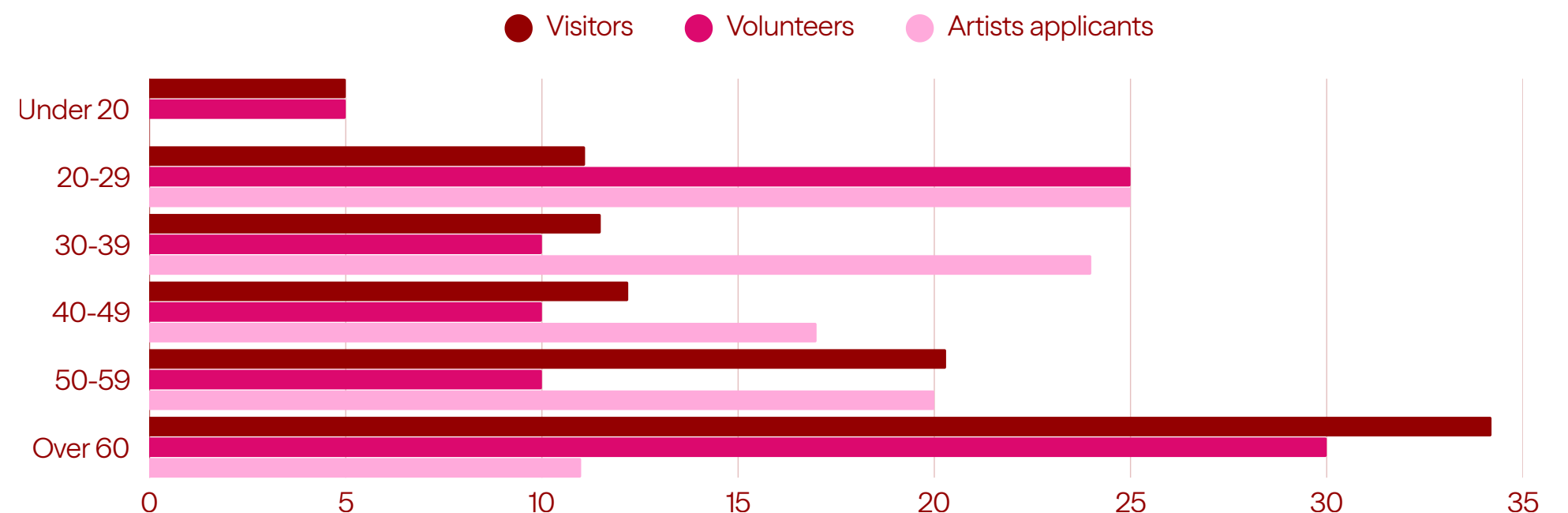
Volunteers



Artist applicants



Age



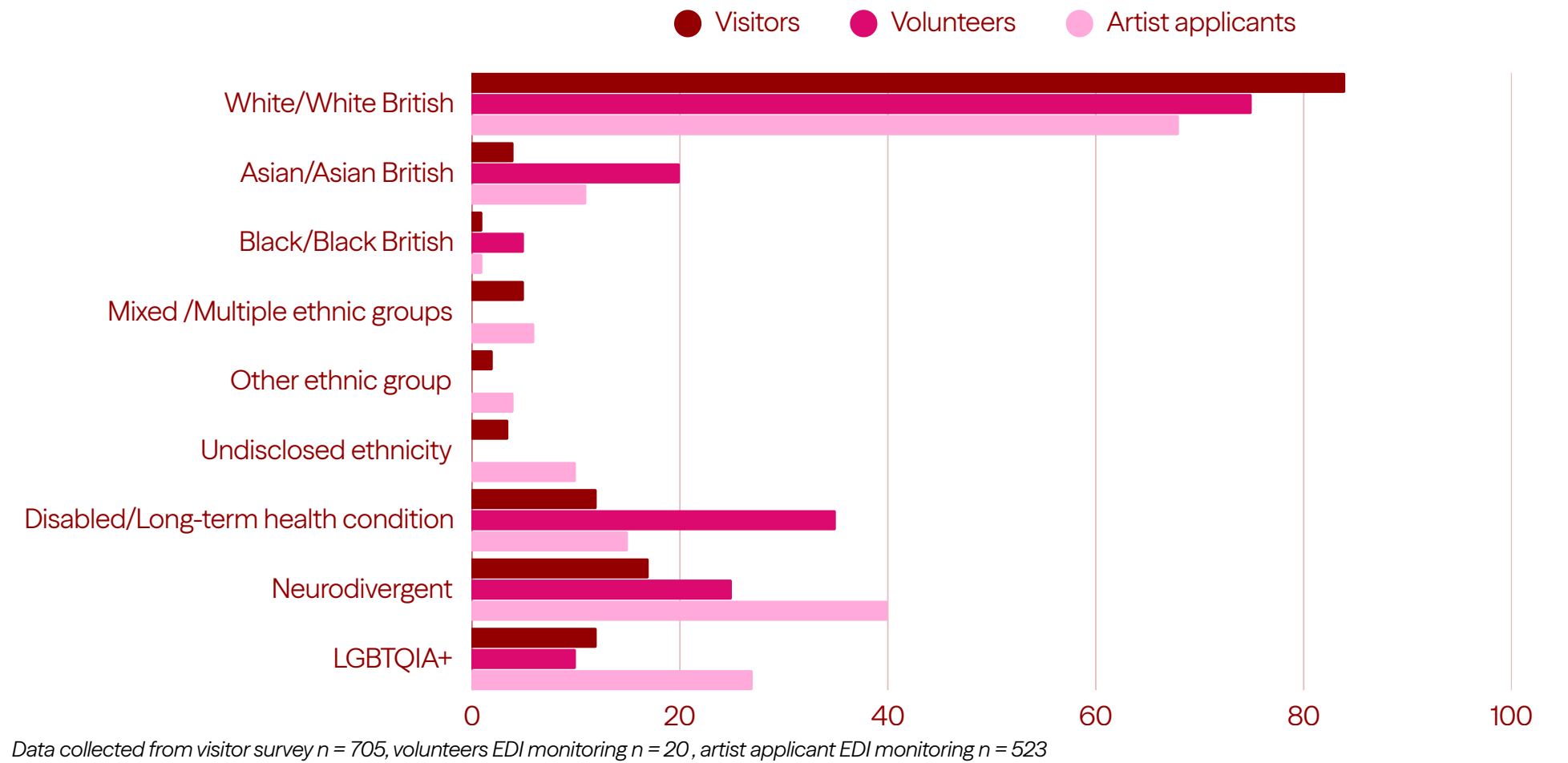
Data collected from visitor survey n = 705, volunteers EDI monitoring n = 20, artist applicant EDI monitoring n = 523

Ethnicity data shows that BCB continues to engage a majority White British audience, alongside contributions from Asian, Mixed and Black communities. Across visitors, volunteers and applicants, Global Majority representation remained modest, which is consistent with the demographic profile of Stoke-on-Trent as well as national inequalities in access to cultural participation. However, the presence of diverse artists suggests that BCB continues to play a role in supporting and platforming underrepresented creative voices.

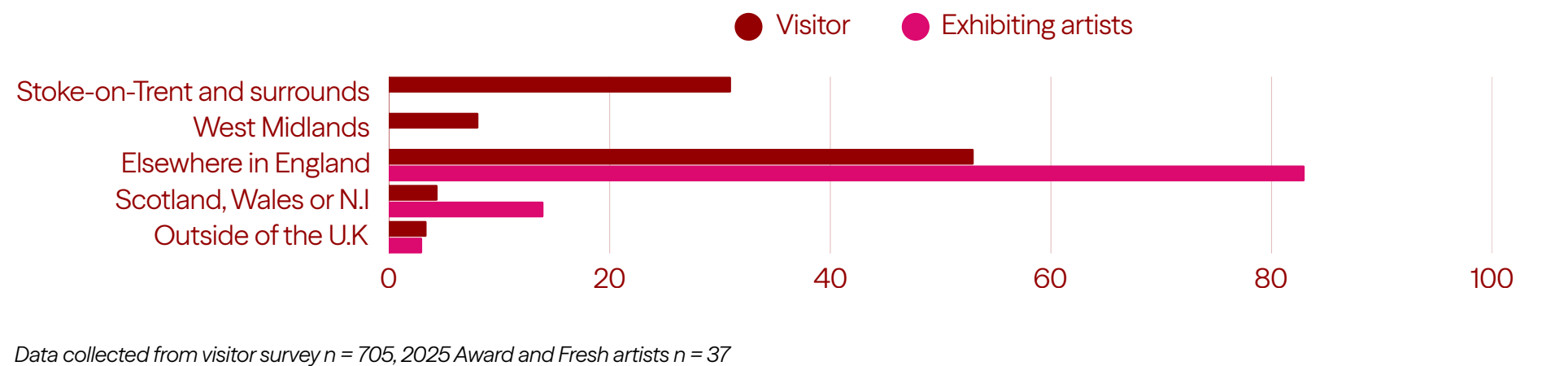
Responses across all groups included people who identify as disabled, neurodivergent or living with a long-term health condition. Volunteers had the highest proportion of disabled respondents, while exhibiting artists had notably high rates of neurodivergence, including dyslexia, ADHD and other diagnoses. The LGBTQIA+ community was also well represented, particularly among exhibiting artists, where over a quarter identified as LGBTQIA+. This suggests that BCB remains a meaningful space for LGBTQIA+ involvement across creative practice and participation.

Taken together, these findings present a picture of a festival that engages a wide mix of audiences and participants while continuing to reflect underlying demographic patterns within Stoke-on-Trent and the wider visual arts sector. Positive indicators include strong representation from women, younger and mid-career adults, neurodivergent individuals, and LGBTQIA+ communities, as well as consistently high visitor satisfaction and a clear sense of civic pride among attendees. At the same time, the limited representation of Global Majority participants and the data gaps in origin and background information for some groups highlight areas where further development could strengthen BCB's reach and equity ambitions.

Identities



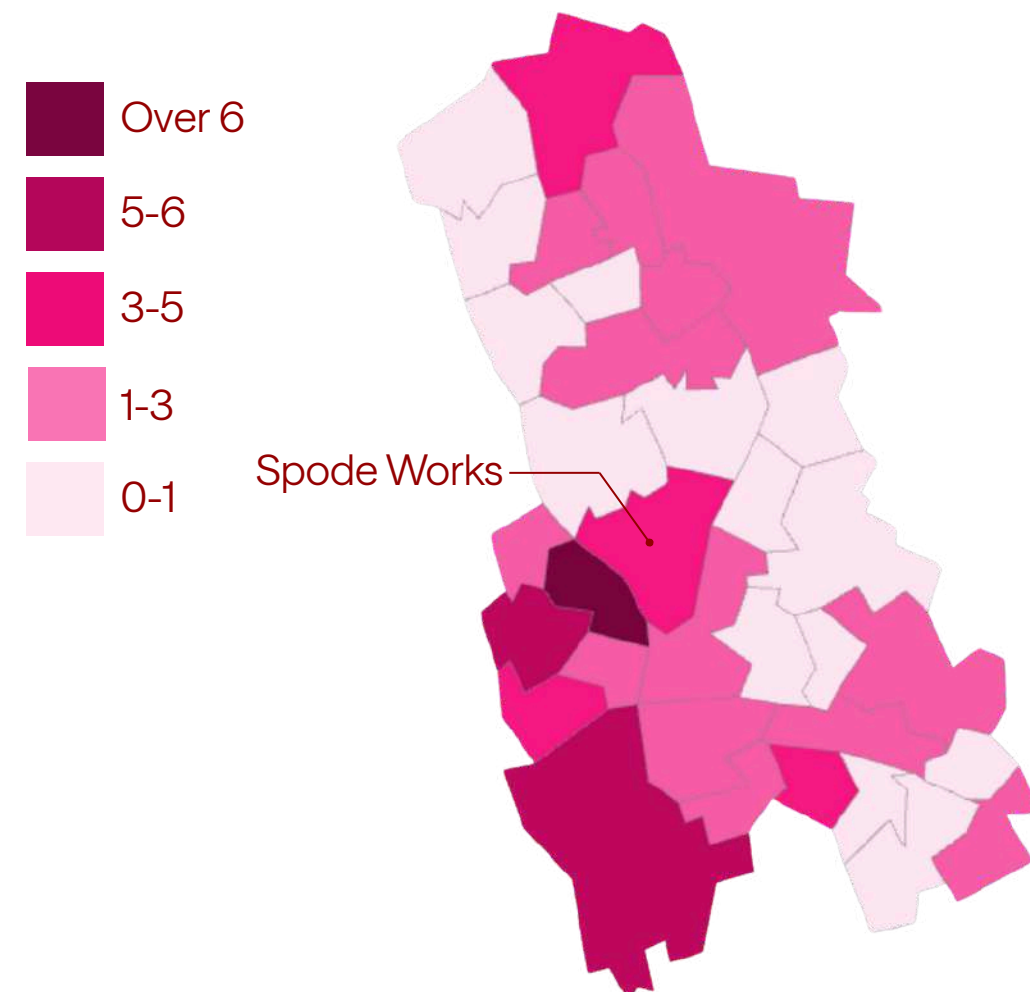
Origin



The 2025 visitor survey reflected a wide geographic reach, with respondents travelling from across the UK. The highest concentration was from Stoke-on-Trent (20%) and the wider West Midlands (40%), demonstrating strong local and regional engagement. Smaller clusters appeared across England, Scotland and Wales, with a small number of respondents located as far as Glasgow, Truro and Margate. Each map uses its own scale, reflecting substantial differences in the number of responses per region.

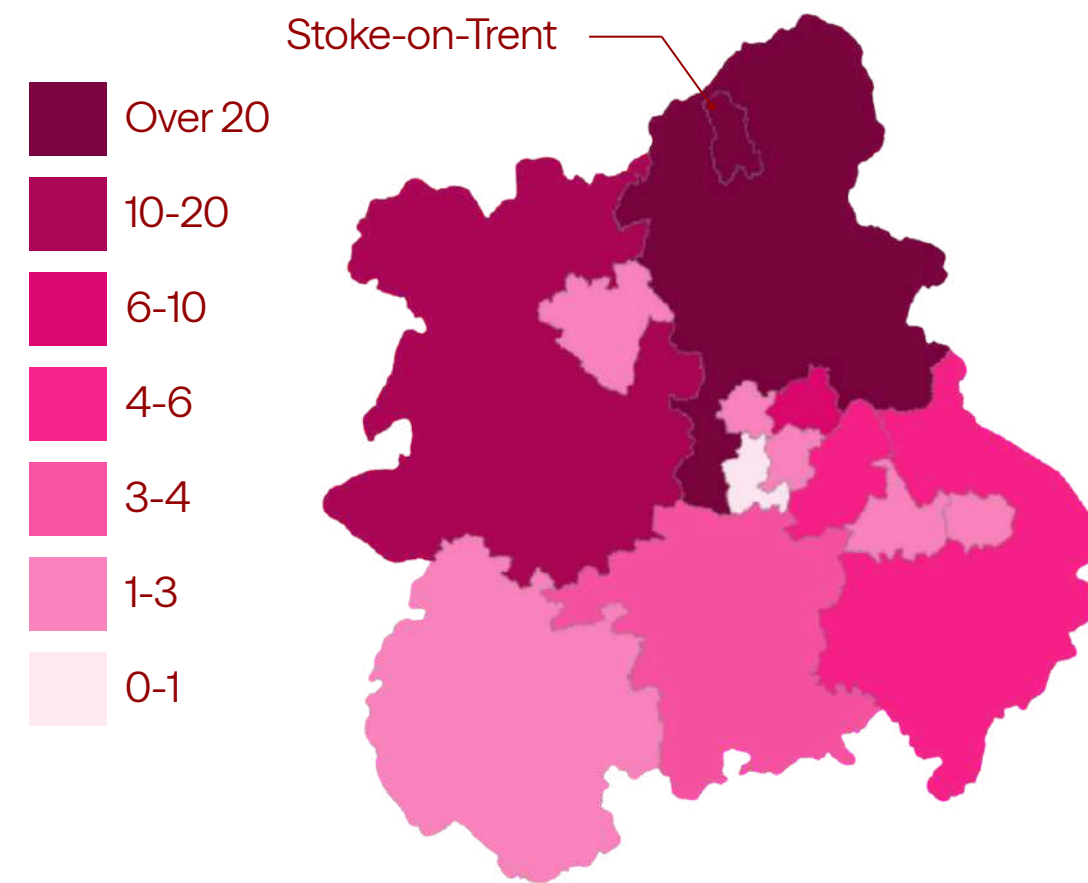
Stoke-on-Trent

Representing 20% of the total number of respondents, postcode count by location.



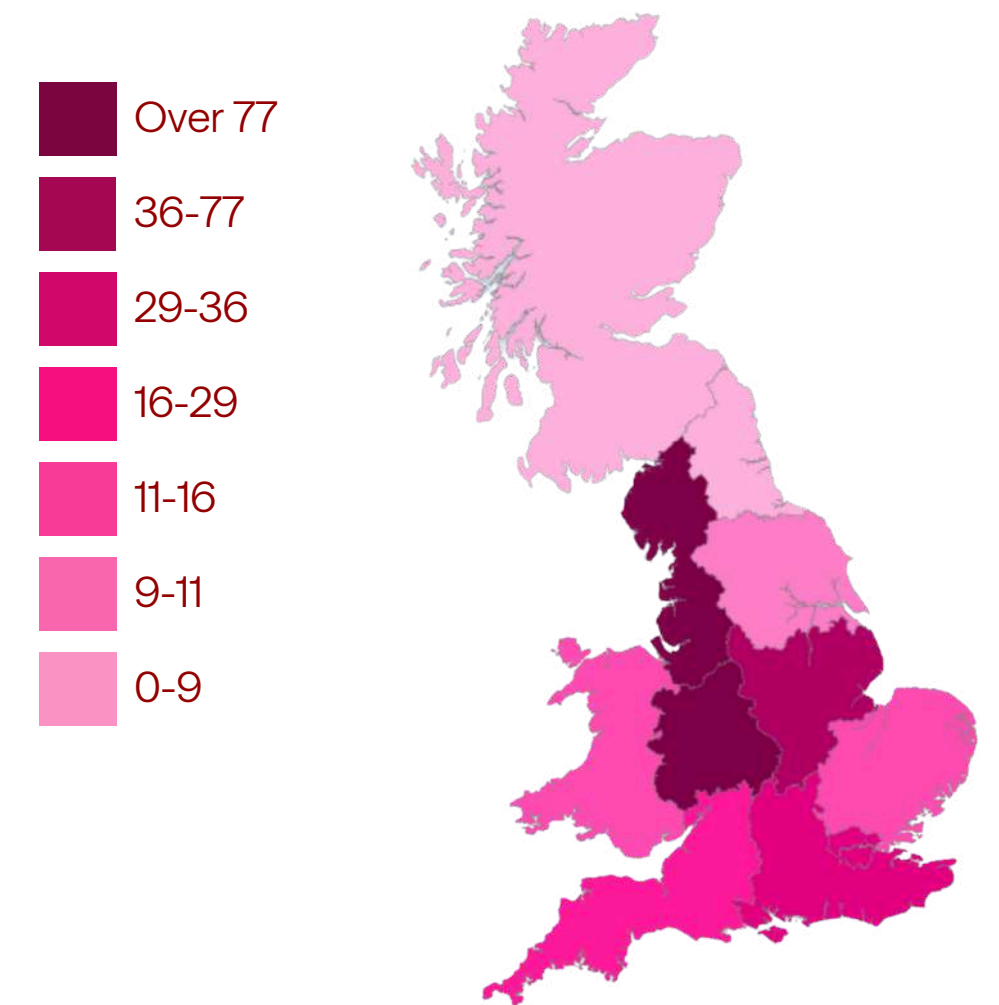
West Midlands

Representing 40% of the total number of respondents, postcode count by location.



England, Scotland & Wales

Representing 97% of the total number of respondents, postcode count by location.



Respondent distribution based on survey postcodes (n=705). Map scales vary by region due to different response volumes.

British Ceramics Biennial



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Outcomes

Outcomes Overview

The British Ceramics Biennial has defined six strategic outcome areas to guide its work and measure impact. These outcomes reflect BCB's commitment to artistic excellence, inclusivity, innovation and sector leadership.

They provide a framework for evaluating how the Biennial delivers on its vision of “making change through clay,” ensuring that programming, partnerships and organisational practices contribute to cultural, social, and professional development locally, nationally and internationally. The following pages summarise outputs from the BCB 2025 that were not assigned to one of the six outcome areas. At the end of this section, we also consider how BCB contributes to Arts Council England's Let's Create Outcomes and Investment Principles.

BCB's strategic outcome areas

- 1. Artists and the sector benefit from creative development opportunities and networks**
- 2. People and communities benefit from opportunities to collaborate, build understanding and improve wellbeing**
- 3. Society and the economy benefit from expanded perspectives of clay**
- 4. Our artistic programme is internationally recognised for its creative ambition and as a catalyst for change**
- 5. Our working methods are seen as best practice and enable the sharing of power and decision making**
- 6. Our approach creates space for innovation and fosters collaborative opportunities with other leading practitioners**

Access and inclusion

BCB was widely praised for its welcoming atmosphere and strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Observations and interviews highlighted how facilitators adapted their approach to meet diverse participant needs, such as engaging younger visitors at eye level and using interactive prompts to encourage participation. Curatorial strategies like Award Voices were commended for integrating multiple perspectives into interpretation, creating space for diverse voices within the exhibition narrative.

Groups supporting people with sight loss noted the positive impact of tactile engagement, reinforcing the importance of multi-sensory experiences. Power-sharing was evident in open discussions where participants contributed ideas for improving accessibility, reflecting BCB's ethos of collaborative practice. Facilitators employed inquiry-based techniques - asking questions like **“What can you see?”** and **“Which is your favourite?”** - to stimulate curiosity and dialogue. This flexible approach shifted from information delivery to interactive engagement, ensuring that participants felt involved and valued.

Despite these strengths, some physical barriers were noted, including the height of displays and tables for certain groups. Educators also highlighted the need for more detailed pre-visit information and SEND-friendly resources to prepare learners effectively. Some visitor feedback highlighted the need for seating options for rest and contemplation, as well as larger font sizes and braille on labels to improve accessibility.



Communications and influence

Overall communication emerged as a key strength of the programme. However, some visitors felt that publicity for the event was limited, with some noting difficulty finding essential details such as opening hours and refreshment facilities even on official channels.

Social media was an important communication channel, with artists noting that BCB's active reposting and online visibility extended conversations beyond the physical event. While informal exchanges were rich, several participants identified missed opportunities for structured networking, suggesting that future events could enhance peer-to-peer connection through dedicated time and clearer identification of artists.

A detailed PR campaign report by Iliana Taliotis accompanies this evaluation and can be referred to for full analysis; its content is not duplicated here. Headlines from the report confirm that BCB 2025 achieved a record level of media engagement, with 71 pieces of coverage spanning local, national, and international outlets, including **The Guardian, The Times, Monocle On Design, and Ceramics Now**. Broadcast features on **BBC Breakfast, ITV News, and BBC Radio 4 Front Row** further reinforced the Biennial's profile. The campaign delivered an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of £168,201 and a calculated **PR value of £504,602**, with an estimated audience reach exceeding **77.9 million**. These figures, combined with critical acclaim describing BCB 2025 as a “**standout edition**” and “**ushering in international collaboration**,” underline the Biennial's growing national and international recognition.



The British Ceramics Biennial manages to bring together hyper local material and examples throughout its programme, as well as ushering in international collaboration and showcasing just how malleable the material clay can be. This year's edition of BCB is one to visit.

Monocle On Design

The communications strategy for BCB 2025 delivered strong results across digital platforms, paid advertising, and direct engagement channels, significantly amplifying awareness and participation throughout the reporting period.

Social Media Performance: Across Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube, the Biennial achieved over **3.8 million impressions** and **2.4 million reach**, marking a **64% increase in reach compared to 2022–23**. Instagram led with **822,000 impressions** and **10,492 new followers**, while LinkedIn saw the **highest growth rate (+367%)**, reinforcing sector engagement. Engagement rates remained healthy (Instagram 6%, LinkedIn 13%), and top-performing posts included artist call-outs and celebrity announcements, driving organic reach and conversation.

Paid Advertising Impact: Meta ad campaigns proved exceptionally cost-efficient, generating **42,000+ link clicks** and **677,000 impressions** at an average cost per result of £0.08, well below UK cultural-sector norms (£0.20–£0.50). Click-through rates ranged from 2–10%, far exceeding typical awareness benchmarks (0.9–1.5%). These results indicate highly effective creative and targeting strategies, ensuring strong visibility without audience fatigue.

Website and Email Engagement: The website attracted **83,000 users and 120,000 sessions**, with top pages including the programme announcement and “Plan Your Visit.” Traffic was driven primarily by direct access and organic search, supplemented by Meta ads. Email marketing delivered exceptional engagement: 24 e-shots and newsletters achieved an **average open rate of 65%** and click-through rate of 23%, a dramatic improvement on 2023 figures. VIP invitations and artist updates were particularly successful, with some achieving **click-through rates above 60%**, demonstrating the value of tailored messaging.

Learning and development

The Biennial provided significant opportunities for learning and creative growth for both artists and audiences. Award artists described the experience as transformative, enabling them to experiment with new techniques, scale up their work and develop curatorial and spatial awareness. Skills gained ranged from advanced hand-building and material innovation to project management and interdisciplinary collaboration. For educators and community groups, hands-on workshops and guided tours fostered critical thinking and broadened understanding of ceramics beyond traditional forms. Hands-on clay activities provided experiential learning, enabling participants to explore materiality and develop creative confidence. However, feedback suggested that practical sessions could be longer or more complex to deepen engagement and digital resources such as virtual screenings or CPD materials would help extend learning beyond the event. Overall, BCB's approach successfully positioned clay as a tool for creativity, cultural dialogue and personal development.

Reflective practice was evident as artists and cultural leaders engaged with curatorial choices, sustainability approaches and exhibition logistics. Critical thinking was encouraged through discussions about language, interpretation and accessibility, broadening understanding of cultural presentation. Many participants described feeling more validated and motivated after the experience, reinforcing its role in professional and personal development.





Slip Tales, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

01: Artists and the Sector Benefit from Creative Development Opportunities and Networks

The British Ceramics Biennial continues to serve as a transformative platform for artists, enabling creative risk-taking and professional progression. Feedback from participants underscores the Biennial's role as a bridge between academic training and professional practice. For many emerging makers, exhibiting at BCB was described as **“a stepping stone into feeling like a real artist in the real world.”** This validation was echoed across interviews, with one artist noting, **“It gave me confidence that my practice is valid and not just a curiosity.”** Several artists highlighted how the experience expanded their technical and conceptual horizons - whether through experimenting with scale, learning installation logistics, or rethinking sustainability.

Residency opportunities linked to the Fresh Talent Prize were pivotal in shaping new work. Artists explored diverse themes - from cultural heritage and identity to material experimentation - while developing technical and conceptual skills. Exposure to large-scale installation processes and curatorial standards strengthened adaptability and broadened creative horizons.

Confidence and visibility

Artists consistently reported increased confidence and visibility following their involvement. Social media engagement and direct inquiries about work reinforced the sense of professional legitimacy. Awards and residencies were described as highly motivating, offering tangible support for future development. One participant reflected, **“This gave me the opportunity to do something I've wanted for years - it wouldn't have happened otherwise.”** These experiences not only validated artistic practice but also clarified career pathways, positioning BCB as a catalyst for long-term development.

For many emerging makers, BCB served as a critical stepping stone from graduation into the professional art world. Several participants noted how curating work in a historic industrial space, rather than a traditional, white-walled gallery, challenged and enriched their approach. This exposure not only inspired new directions but also opened doors to future opportunities, including potential gallery exhibitions. Importantly, the experience was described as a confidence boost, reinforced by social media engagement and direct inquiries about work.



Networking and connectivity

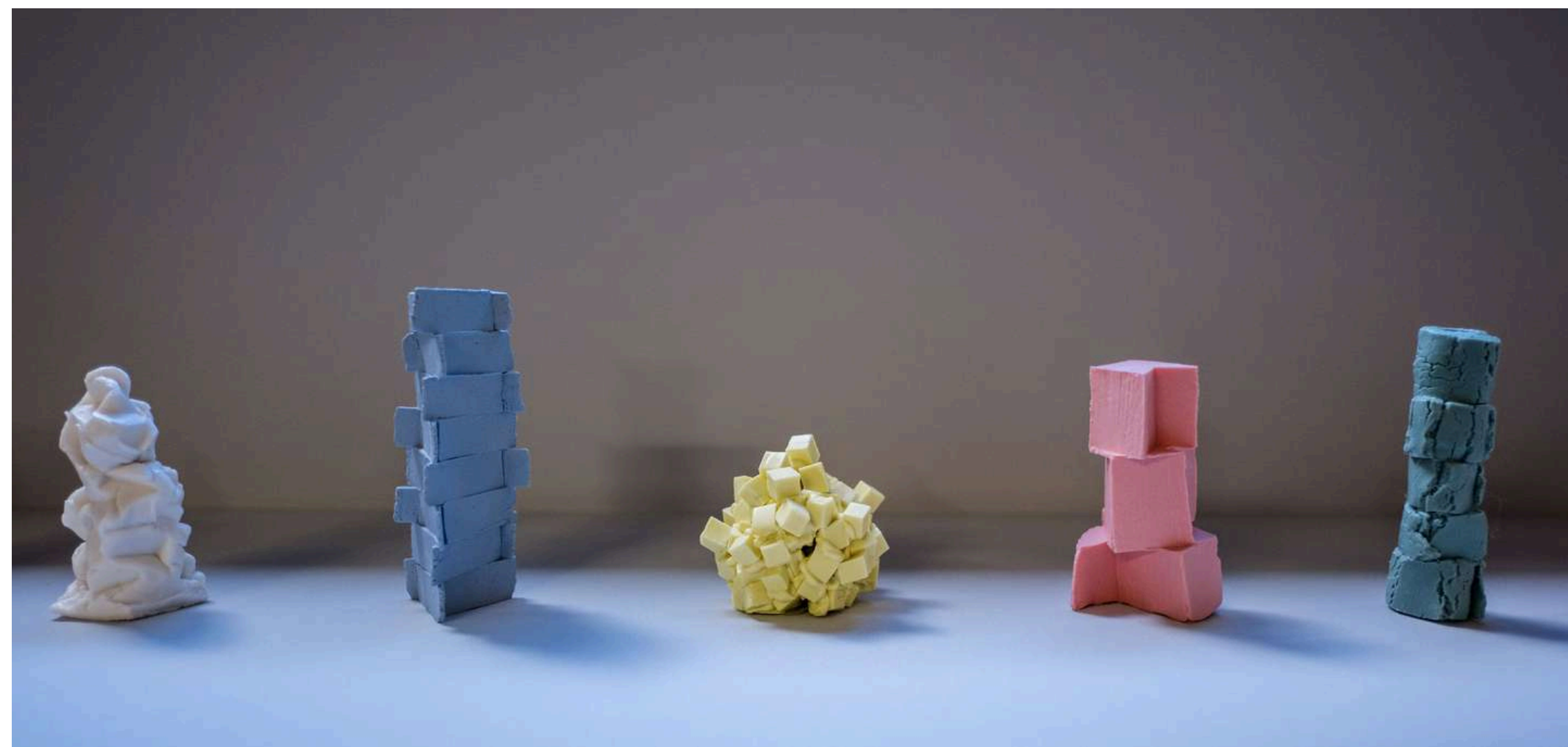
Networking emerged as a central benefit, both for individual artists and the wider ceramics sector. Informal exchanges during opening events and group visits fostered dialogue, collaboration and a sense of belonging. Participants valued opportunities to connect with peers, educators, and industry professionals, describing the opening day as “**magical.**” While some suggested improvements to enhance artist visibility and cohort meet-ups, the overarching sentiment was one of gratitude for the supportive infrastructure provided by BCB staff.

Beyond individual development, BCB strengthened sector-wide networks through partnerships and contributions to national forums such as Ceramic Art London and the Clay Conference. These engagements positioned BCB as a thought leader, amplifying its influence and reinforcing its role as a catalyst for dialogue and innovation within the ceramics community.



The staff we encountered were very friendly and approachable. The exhibits were displayed perfectly with loads of space around them that allowed you to [be] approachable from different angles.

Visitor feedback



Studies , Caroline Gray, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Impact summary

BCB delivers significant benefits by combining exposure, dialogue and practical experience. It empowers artists to refine their practice, expand networks and engage with the full lifecycle of a major exhibition - from selection to installation. The Biennial's commitment to pastoral care and inclusive programming ensures a supportive environment where creativity thrives. As one artist succinctly put it, “**Seeing the breadth of work sharpened my sense of where I sit in the field.**” This outcome demonstrates that BCB not only nurtures individual talent but also contributes to a vibrant, sustainable ceramics sector.



Playscape Project Space, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

02: People and Communities Benefit from Opportunities to Collaborate, Build Understanding, and Improve Wellbeing

BCB consistently demonstrates its role as a cultural anchor, offering inclusive spaces where creativity and wellbeing intersect. Educators described visits as “**grounding**,” rooting participants in local heritage while opening their eyes to contemporary narratives. Higher education groups valued the opportunity to situate learning within a national ceramics conversation, bridging the gap between education and professional practice. These experiences reinforced cultural identity and sparked curiosity, with one participant noting that the Biennial helped students “**feel part of something bigger**.”

Inclusivity and emotional impact

Community groups echoed these sentiments, reporting feelings of welcome and inclusion. Sensory clay activities were particularly impactful for individuals with additional needs and participants emphasised the emotional uplift: “**It lifted their spirits - they felt included and valued.**” Hands-on activities such as brick-making were repeatedly highlighted as moments of joy and connection: “**Creating clay pieces together felt like being part of something bigger.**”

Staff interviews reinforced these findings, citing projects that delivered sustained wellbeing benefits and counteracted isolation. Initiatives like collaborative workshops and interactive installations encouraged participation and sparked meaningful conversations. As one team member put it, “**Shared creative experiences counteract isolation and foster community.**”

Overall, communication and accessibility were praised but it was felt that inclusion requires more tailored provision in future. Addressing these gaps, for example by providing detailed session overviews and quiet spaces, could enhance the experience for collaboration, learning and overall wellbeing.



96% of survey respondents rated the festival as ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’ at making them feel comfortable on site.



Collaboration and cultural understanding

Artists also highlighted the social dimension of their work, with installations and talks sparking dialogue and emotional responses. One artist shared, **“I’ve had messages saying the work resonated deeply - it opened possibilities for community engagement.”** Collaborative projects involving schools and migrant groups fostered inclusion and pride in local heritage. While some noted that engagement was **“positive but brief”** due to time constraints, suggestions for extending artist talks and sharing audience feedback point to opportunities for deeper impact.

Observations during workshops revealed how participants moved from initial nervousness to active involvement, smiling and laughing as they worked together. Facilitators employed inclusive techniques - such as inquiry-based prompts and physical adaptations - to ensure accessibility and encourage curiosity. These moments illustrate BCB’s commitment to creating spaces where collaboration and confidence-building thrive.



Loved the variety and diversity of pieces.

Visitor feedback



Brother’s Horn, Majid Asadi, 2023. British Ceramics Biennial 2025.

Impact summary

Collectively, these accounts confirm that BCB’s inclusive ethos strengthens community bonds, promotes cultural understanding and enhances wellbeing through shared creative experiences - whether through the overall visit and tour, the hands-on workshops or artist-led engagement. Participants left feeling **“more hopeful,”** with feedback citing increased self-compassion and motivation to engage in creative activities. The Biennial’s ability to combine heritage, creativity and social connection ensures that people and communities not only participate but feel valued and inspired. As one participant summed up, the experience was about one word: **“Community.”**



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

03: Society and the Economy Benefit from Expanded Perspectives of Clay

The British Ceramics Biennial 2025 delivered a measurable boost to the local economy, generating an estimated direct spend of approximately **£670,000** by attendees and a total impact of around **£1.5 million** when multiplier effects are considered. This economic contribution extended beyond the festival venues, with local businesses - such as cafés and hotels - reporting noticeable increases in sales attributed to the influx of visitors. These figures underscore BCB's role not only as a cultural event but as a driver of economic activity within Staffordshire.

Challenging perceptions and inspiring curiosity

BCB successfully broadened societal perspectives on clay, reframing it from a traditional craft material to a medium for innovation, cultural dialogue, and sustainability. Feedback highlighted this shift: one educator noted that students moved from seeing ceramics as “pots” to appreciating immersive, conceptual installations. Another participant reflected, **“It was revealing to see what the medium is about - beyond the studio and Instagram.”** These encounters challenged assumptions and sparked curiosity about artistic processes, reinforcing clay's relevance in contemporary culture.

For some, the experience carried deeper cultural resonance. One artist described clay as **“an ancestral craft, akin to a sewing circle,”** linking the material to heritage and collective memory. The historic setting of Spode Works amplified this connection, situating ceramics within both industrial history and modern sustainability narratives.

Cultural and creative economy connections

BCB's programming positioned clay within broader conversations about ecology, identity, and design. Award artists explored themes such as sustainability, colonial histories and social fragility, often reusing materials and limiting firings to reduce environmental impact. As one participant observed, **“It highlights the fragility of how we inhabit space.”** These approaches demonstrated clay's capacity to engage with pressing global issues, reinforcing its cultural significance and stimulating institutional interest.

Corporate engagement through the arranged tours further illustrates this impact. One company reported that the Biennial shifted its perception of ceramics from a purely practical material to one embedded in cultural narratives, inspiring new brand strategies and collaborations. This reframing strengthens links between artistic practice and economic opportunity, positioning ceramics as a dynamic contributor to creative industries.

British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper



Innovation and future ambitions

BCB's initiatives extended beyond the exhibition to include research and design-led projects. Playscape's focus on transforming waste clay into architectural forms showcased clay's relevance to sustainability and urban design. Additionally, research projects supported through the BCB interrogated clay's environmental implications, connecting ceramics with engineering and science. These efforts reflect an ambition to embed ceramics into Stoke-on-Trent's civic identity, exemplified by a vision from BCB staff for a permanent **"Clay Building"** as a hub for cultural and economic activity.



The British Ceramics Biennial is the single arts event that defines Stoke in the modern age.

Feedback from senior local stakeholder



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Impact summary

Through ambitious programming and sector-wide dialogue, BCB challenges narrow views of ceramics, presenting clay as playful, expressive and conceptually rich. Observations of group tours captured this shift succinctly with one visitor describing **"Clay is the collaborator."** By expanding perspectives, the Biennial enriches cultural life, stimulates economic activity and positions ceramics as a material of both heritage and innovation - central to conversations about sustainability, identity and creative futures.



Rare Earth Rising, Mella Shaw, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Image Credit Jenny Harper

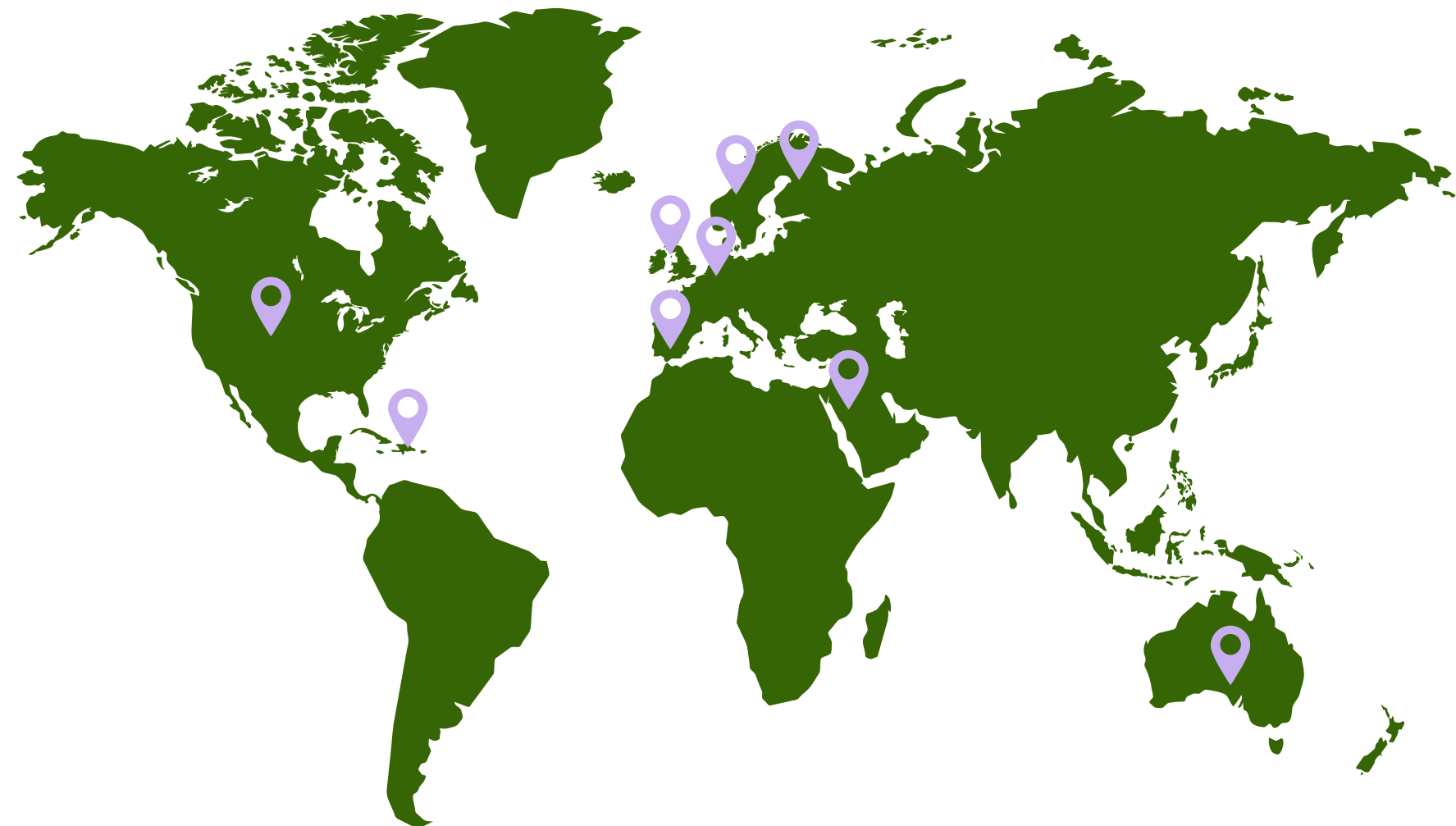
04: Our Artistic Programme is Internationally Recognised for its Creative Ambition and as a Catalyst for Change

The British Ceramics Biennial reinforced its position as a leading voice in contemporary ceramics, attracting attention from across the world. Of those completing the survey around 3% of visitors had come from international locations, traveling from regions as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, Haiti, Europe and the USA.

The Biennial's first Clay Films programme exemplified this global engagement, showcasing work by six artists of African and Caribbean heritage based internationally. Selected through an open call and curated by sector experts, the programme highlighted innovative approaches to clay in film and moving image - an area historically underrepresented in ceramics discourse.

International collaboration extended through the Ceramic Cities Exchange, a partnership between Stoke-on-Trent and Bolesławiec in Poland. This initiative combined digital exchanges, creative workshops, and artist residencies, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and shared exploration of ceramic heritage. Plans for reciprocal visits further strengthen BCB's role in building global networks and positioning Stoke-on-Trent within an international creative ecosystem.

The PR report demonstrates that BCB 2025 achieved significant international recognition through media coverage. A record 71 pieces of coverage spanned local, national, and international outlets, including features in Monocle On Design, Ceramics Now, and Neue Keramik, as well as mentions in The Guardian and The Times. The Biennial was positioned as a **“standout edition”** and praised for **“ushering in international collaboration”** and showcasing the versatility of clay. Broadcast coverage on BBC Breakfast, ITV News, and BBC Radio 4 Front Row, alongside global podcast features, reinforced BCB's profile as a leading international event. This breadth of coverage and commentary highlights the Biennial's growing influence and confirms its status as a platform of global significance within the contemporary ceramics sector.



Creative ambition and sector leadership

BCB's artistic programme was widely praised for its boldness and conceptual depth. Works challenged traditional boundaries between craft and fine art, foregrounding themes such as sustainability, material innovation and cultural heritage. This ambition was reflected in sector commentary and media coverage, which positioned BCB as a progressive and internationally relevant event. One artist captured the transformative impact: **"It's shown me I'm capable of doing things I've been thinking about for ages."**

The Biennial's willingness to embrace experimentation - even partial failure - signals a bold curatorial approach. Initiatives like Playscape, which explored architectural forms using waste clay, exemplify this ethos of risk-taking and innovation. Staff interviews reinforced this perspective, describing BCB as a model for socially engaged arts practice that influences partners and policymakers nationally and internationally.

BCB was invited to contribute to high-profile events and publications, including features in Museums Journal and speaking engagements at national conferences such as Ceramic Art London and the Clay Conference. These platforms positioned BCB as a thought leader in ceramics and cultural innovation, amplifying its reputation beyond regional boundaries. The Biennial's involvement in forums like Stoke Creates Exchange Forum and collaborations with We Are Staffordshire further underline its role as a catalyst for sector-wide dialogue and change.

British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Holly McConnell

Audience and artist perspectives

Community feedback highlighted the programme's ambition and diversity. Visitors described the exhibition as **"contemporary, dynamic and genuinely surprising,"** comparing its quality to major London venues. Others noted its inspirational impact, praising the high standard and variety of work as catalysts for cultural engagement. For emerging artists, BCB was regarded as **"one of the most serious opportunities"** in the field, offering a platform for large-scale installations and global dialogue. As one participant reflected, **"It boosted my ambition and made me think about clay in unexpected forms."**

Impact summary

Observations confirmed the Biennial's reputation for creative ambition through immersive environments, inclusive interpretation strategies and hands-on activities that transformed exhibitions into spaces of discovery and joy. These elements not only elevated Stoke-on-Trent's cultural profile but also positioned BCB as a driver of sector-wide change. By convening talent from across the UK and beyond, the Biennial demonstrates its capacity to inspire audiences, influence practice and shape international discourse around ceramics.





Raverina's Dance Floor, Carolina Garfo, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

05: Our Working Methods are Seen as Best Practice and Enable the Sharing of Power and Decision Making

The British Ceramics Biennial demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity and participatory approaches. Feedback highlighted the organisation's flexibility and responsiveness to diverse needs. One participant commended the team's collaborative style, noting that inclusive language and openness encouraged interpretation and respected individual preferences. These practices reflect best-practice principles, embedding accessibility and equity into the visitor experience.

Katy West's Artistic Quality Assessment of BCB 2025 highlights working methods that align strongly with this. The report praises the Biennial's inclusive approach, noting the open-call process for exhibitions and the Clay Films strand, which brought diverse voices - including Global Majority filmmakers - into the programme. West identifies the Fresh Talent initiative as an exemplary model of best practice, offering prizes, residencies and return opportunities that build sustained relationships rather than one-off engagements. She also commends year-long projects such as Ceramic Cities Exchange for reinforcing continuity and community involvement, feeding directly into the Biennial's exhibitions. The integration of volunteers, students and local participants created a sense of shared ownership, positioning BCB as a platform for exchange rather than a top-down event.



...a brilliantly presented and highly successful event!

Feedback from senior local stakeholder

British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper



Organisational culture and collaboration

BCB's internal culture emphasises democratic decision-making and reflective practice, with mechanisms such as advisory networks, selection panels and weekly team meetings fostering participation and collective problem-solving. Despite capacity pressures during peak periods, the organisation prioritises responsiveness and inclusivity, positioning itself as a model for collaborative working in the cultural sector. Plans for a long-term volunteer strategy, enhanced training and a proposed Volunteer Coordinator role signal commitment to empowering volunteers and integrating them into governance. Regular planning boards and monthly reviews support shared decision-making, while ambitions for accessibility - child-led and BSL-interpreted tours, large-print brochures and ESOL-friendly interpretation - demonstrate best practice in widening participation and ensuring diverse voices shape visitor experiences.

Artist experience and power sharing

Artists praised the BCB team's professionalism and flexibility, describing staff as **"brilliant"** and **"supportive."** Curatorial freedom was valued, with participants noting the opportunity to influence how their work was displayed: **"It was really nice having that opportunity to be in charge."** However, gaps were identified, including inconsistent communication, limited check-ins during production and unclear processes around sales and judging. One artist reflected, **"Emails went unanswered, and photography was shared very late - I had to hire my own photographer."** Recommendations included structured mid-project reviews, clearer timelines and proactive site visits to support planning. Several artists highlighted that the current award structure placed strain on their ability to deliver ambitious work. Limited funding meant that artist collaborators could not fully participate. Similarly, others spoke of being **"incredibly broke"** during production, with costs for accommodation, travel, and materials often exceeding the £1,000 award. These pressures were compounded by the scale and technical demands of the work, leaving some artists feeling **"intensely stressed"** and **"exhausted."** Collectively, these experiences underline the fragility of participation for those without independent resources and point to the need for more inclusive financial models wherever possible.



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Facilitation and co-creation

Observations of the group tours revealed facilitation approaches that exemplify best practice. Guides adapted their style to audience needs, using inquiry-based prompts and encouraging critical dialogue about curatorial choices. Power-sharing was evident in open discussions where participants contributed ideas for improving exhibition resilience and accessibility. As one observer noted, **"Encouragement of other voices into the presentation of the work... can be seen as best practice."** These methods demonstrate BCB's commitment to collaborative and inclusive engagement.

Impact summary

BCB's working methods are widely recognised as professional, flexible and inclusive. By embedding co-design principles, fostering curatorial agency and maintaining openness to feedback, the organisation enables genuine power-sharing and participatory decision-making. While areas for improvement remain - such as communication consistency and resource equity - the overarching approach reflects sector-leading practice. These methods not only enhance artist and audience experience but also position BCB as a benchmark for collaborative cultural programming.



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

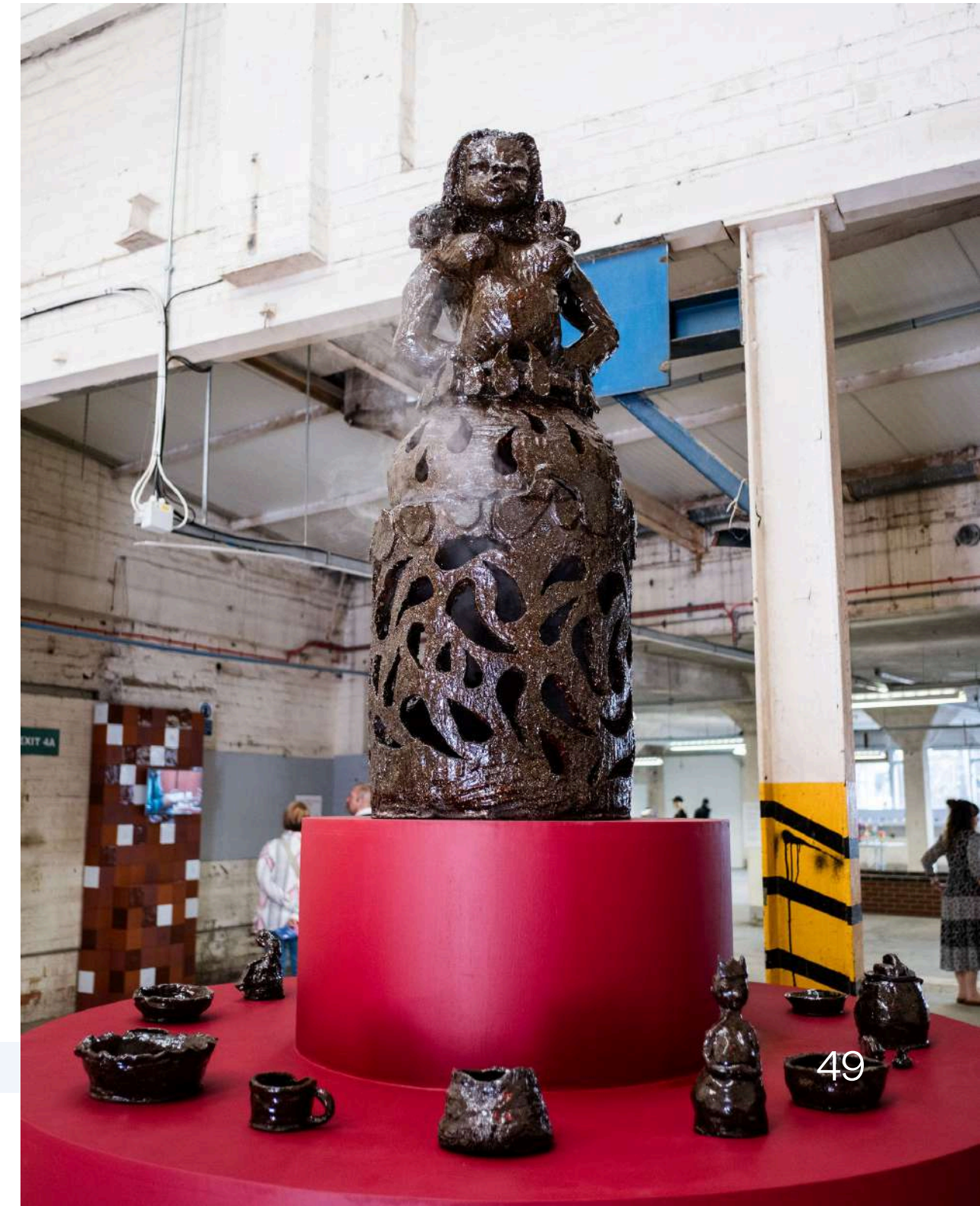
06: Our Approach Creates Space for Innovation and Fosters Collaborative Opportunities with Other Leading Practitioners

Innovation is embedded in BCB's organisational ethos. Staff feedback emphasised leadership that encourages risk-taking and experimentation. Playscape exemplified this ambition, uniting artists, schools and communities in co-creating an evolving installation. Research initiatives extended this spirit of innovation by integrating ceramics with scientific and industrial disciplines, generating fresh partnerships and knowledge exchange. The organisation's vision for a permanent 'clay hub' embedded within Stoke-on-Trent is further signal to BCB's commitment to embedding ceramics within civic identity and fostering cross-sector collaboration.

BCB's influence also extends through sector wide platforms such as the Clay Conference and the Ceramics Cities Exchange, where its collaborative methods and experimental programming are shared as best practice. These engagements amplify BCB's role as a thought leader, positioning the Biennial at the forefront of national and international dialogue on innovation in ceramics.

Innovation and collaboration were evident in both programming and partnerships with community involvement in projects like Just Be There being celebrated. Staff have articulated an ambition to develop further strategic partnerships with local tourism bodies going forward, as well as developing their work with the railway station. This illustrates the intent for more proactive cross-sector collaboration, while creative visitor engagement ideas - such as branded selfie spots and alternative tour formats - signal a willingness to experiment more in future. Operational improvements, including testing CRM-integrated sales systems, also demonstrate an adaptive approach that supports innovation and strengthens collaborative opportunities with practitioners and partners.

BCB continues to demonstrate its commitment to artist development and sector-wide networking. Expansion of the festival's scope beyond exhibitions to include year-round participatory projects such as *Moulding Memories* and *Slip Tales* means these initiatives not only provide creative opportunities for artists but also embed ceramics within social and health contexts, fostering new skill sets and professional growth.



The Chimney Princess, Josie KO. British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Artist perspectives and creative risk-taking

Artists consistently described BCB as a catalyst for experimentation. Participants embraced new materials and interdisciplinary approaches, from rammed earth construction to miniature architectural forms. Collaborative projects were seen as transformative, despite logistical and financial challenges. One artist reflected, **“Collaboration can make anything happen - the physical building of the installation glued everything together.”** Fresh artists echoed this sentiment, citing exposure to diverse practices as a source of inspiration: **“I left wanting to explore colour for the first time.”** Informal exchanges and social media engagement opened doors to future opportunities, including gallery interest and potential residencies.

Collaborative selection processes

The process of choosing artists and award winners reflects BCB’s ethos of shared decision-making. Selection panels include leading practitioners and sector experts, ensuring that curatorial choices are informed by diverse perspectives. This collaborative approach not only strengthens artistic quality but also models equitable practice within the cultural sector.

Innovative media and public engagement

Projects such as Clay Films extend BCB’s commitment to transparency and knowledge-sharing. By documenting artist processes and community engagement, these films serve as accessible resources for audiences and practitioners, reinforcing the Biennial’s role as a hub for creative dialogue.

The observations of visitor tours demonstrated that opportunities for public engagement and sector dialogue were evident. Informal networking emerged as participants shared knowledge and insights, with some taking on guiding roles during discussions. In one session, reflective comments such as **“I’m learning today”** highlighted how the experience prompted critical thinking about curatorial methods and interpretation. These exchanges suggest that BCB’s programming fosters sector-wide knowledge exchange and positions clay as a medium for innovation and collaboration.



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Impact summary

BCB’s approach successfully creates space for innovation and fosters collaborative opportunities across multiple levels - artists, communities and cultural organisations. By embedding risk-taking into its programming, integrating residencies, and contributing to sector-wide platforms such as the Clay Conference and Ceramics Cities Exchange, the Biennial positions itself as a leader in creative exchange. While resource constraints and logistical challenges remain, the overarching impact is clear: BCB acts as a catalyst for experimentation, dialogue and future collaboration, strengthening both artistic practice and sector connectivity.



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Let's Create Outcomes and Investment Principles

In this report, we have considered Arts Council England's Let's Create Outcomes and Investment Principles as an important framework for assessing the 2025 Biennial. While these national priorities provide a valuable lens, our evaluation has been primarily structured around BCB's own outcomes and Theory of Change, ensuring that the analysis reflects the festival's unique mission and impact. Sections on Accessibility and Inclusion, Communication and Influence, and Learning and Development have also been drawn out on pages 30-32 and these areas strongly support and align with the Let's Create Outcomes and Principles. Likewise, the independent Artistic Quality Assessment report by Katy West is referenced in a variety of sections throughout this report providing further evidence in relation to Let's Create. The following section draws these connections together, presenting evidence of how BCB contributes to Creative People, Cultural Communities and a Creative and Cultural Country, while embedding the four Investment Principles across its practice.

Arts Council England's Let's Create framework is:

Outcomes	Investment Principles
Creative People – Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life	Ambition and Quality – Cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work
Cultural Communities – Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture	Dynamism – Cultural organisations are dynamic and able to respond to the challenges of the next decade
A Creative and Cultural Country – England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international	Environmental Responsibility – Cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility
	Inclusivity and Relevance – England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that we support and in the culture they produce



Daphne's Threshold, Charlotte Moore. British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Creative people

Visitor feedback strongly reflects the Biennial's success in inspiring creativity. When asked to describe their experience in three words, responses included **“Creative, inspiring, interesting”** and **“Refreshing, inspirational, educational.”** This language demonstrates that BCB is perceived not only as an exhibition but as a catalyst for creative engagement. The overwhelmingly positive experience ratings - 96.7% rated their visit as good or very good, with 71% selecting 'Very good' reinforce its role in nurturing creative curiosity. BCB provided hands-on opportunities that empowered participants of all ages and abilities to engage creatively. One educator noted, **“The children didn't feel like they were learning - it felt natural and immersive. They didn't want to leave at the end!”** Similarly, community groups described the tactile experience of clay-making as **“uplifting”** and **“inclusive”**, with one participant saying, **“Creating clay pieces together felt like being part of something bigger.”** Adult learners echoed this sentiment, reporting that the Biennial **“broadened their sense of permission and possibility”** beyond traditional pottery.



Over 66% of survey respondents agreed that the 2025 Biennial made them feel proud of their local area.

Cultural communities

The survey shows strong local engagement, with 35.5% of visitors from Stoke-on-Trent and a further 12.6% from the wider West Midlands. Many respondents expressed pride in their area, with 66.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing that BCB makes them proud of Stoke-on-Trent. BCB fosters strong community connections. Local groups spoke of feeling **“proud that such an event takes place in our area,”** while schools emphasised its role in grounding children in Stoke-on-Trent's cultural heritage: **“It grounded the children in their city's culture and history - very elemental, very connected to the place they live.”** Collaborative projects like the Playscape Project Space exemplified this, enabling participants to contribute to a growing installation and reinforcing a sense of shared ownership.

A creative and cultural country

BCB showcased international artists alongside local talent, creating a platform that participants described as **“ambitious, diverse and fresh.”** Visitors valued the opportunity to see work **“you'd expect in London or at the Tate,”** reinforcing Stoke-on-Trent's role in the national and global ceramics conversation. International respondents reported 87% positive experiences and 60% planned their trip specifically for the Biennial, demonstrating global appeal.



Students were able to see contemporary art in a place relevant to them in terms of their own cultural capital. Witnessing the continued re-birth of ceramics within their own communities. They were able to experience for themselves possible solutions to environmental issues making miniature rammed earth models and enjoying exploring the playscapes and learning about the process or testing the objects in the Playscape.

Feedback from secondary school educator

Ambition and quality

The Biennial was repeatedly praised for its high standard and variety of work. A university tutor described the exhibition as **“amazing,”** adding, **“You don’t know what you’re going to get - that’s the beauty of it. It’s always interesting, and it’s always high-quality.”** The Award and Fresh exhibitions were highlighted as benchmarks of excellence, inspiring emerging artists and students to **“think outside the box”** and challenge norms in their own practice. The Biennial’s ambition is evident in its high recommendation score: a mean of 8.86 out of 10. Other visitor feedback evidences high artistic ambition and quality: over half of the 541 analysed three-word reflections connected most closely with creativity and innovation, using phrases such as **“innovative, inspiring, world-class.”** This reinforces BCB’s role as a catalyst for artistic excellence and experimentation. Some visitors suggested improvements, including **“more work on display”** and **“better promotion in town,”** indicating opportunities to enhance visibility and scale and there is evidence of staff reflection and ambition to develop the quality of the experience through wash up meetings and action planning.



Dynamism

BCB’s adaptability was evident across its programme delivery and organisational approach, positioning it to meet future challenges in a rapidly evolving cultural landscape. Educators praised the team’s flexibility: **“Our students have shorter days, so we needed to tailor timings. The team was incredibly flexible and accommodating.”** This responsiveness extended beyond scheduling to include inclusive design and digital ambitions, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement.

Several contributors highlighted the need for digital development to support wider engagement, particularly for schools and educators. One staff member noted: **“Would like wider school engagement - from outside of Stoke and digital development to support wider engagement e.g., CPD, filmed demos.”** This signals a proactive approach to leveraging technology for remote learning, teacher training and resource sharing, ensuring BCB remains relevant in an increasingly hybrid cultural environment.

The Biennial’s leadership also emphasised innovation and experimentation as core values, accepting that partial failure is part of progress.

Feedback from higher education partners reinforced the importance of digital continuity: **“Students wanted to watch the films off-site. Virtual screenings would increase engagement.”** Similarly, educators suggested online CPD sessions and downloadable resources to extend learning beyond the festival timeframe. These insights point to a clear opportunity for BCB to embed digital platforms and content creation into its long-term strategy, supporting both accessibility and sustainability.

BCB is not only adapting to present needs but actively planning for a future where digital engagement, lifelong learning and inclusive innovation are central to cultural participation.

Environmental responsibility

BCB's commitment to sustainability is evident both in its artistic programme and organisational strategy. Projects like Playscape exemplify this principle by transforming waste clay into architectural forms using ancient rammed-earth techniques. As one artist reflected, **“It was the perfect opportunity - using waste, community engagement, and ancient techniques to create something new.”** This approach not only reduces material waste but also reimagines clay as a resource for public spaces, aligning creative practice with environmental stewardship. The Biennial's conference programme reinforced this ethos, foregrounding research on material reuse, circular design and low-carbon processes. Sessions explored reclaimed clay, aggregate blends and sustainable construction methods, positioning BCB as a thought leader in environmentally responsible ceramics. Feedback from delegates described the conference as **“stimulating, educational, uplifting”** and praised its focus on innovation and sustainability. Organisationally, BCB's strategic vision includes embedding sustainability into infrastructure planning - such as the vision for a permanent **“Clay Building”** in Stoke-on-Trent. This facility aims to integrate studios, galleries, and storage with environmentally conscious design, creating a hub for research and practice that prioritises resource efficiency and long-term resilience. Leadership interviews emphasised that sustainability is not an add-on but a core value shaping programme design, partnerships and future ambitions.



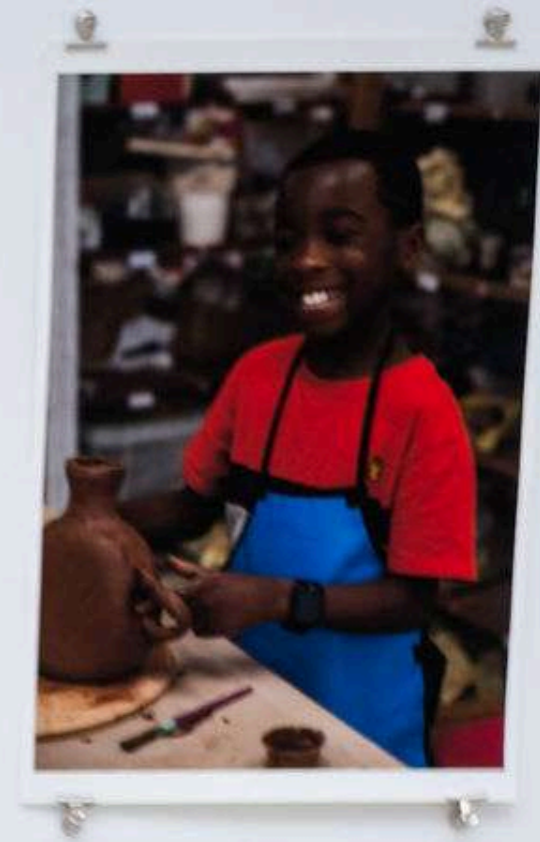
A really interesting exhibit with helpful staff that were happy to answer questions and impart their knowledge. I left inspired and happy.

Visitor feedback

Inclusivity and relevance

BCB demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity through both its audience engagement and artist representation, though the data highlights areas for further progress. Visitor surveys show 71% female attendees and a predominantly White/White British demographic (87%), with smaller representation from Asian (3%) and Black (1.3%) communities. While this reflects the local population profile, it underscores the need for deeper engagement with underrepresented groups. Data for Award 2025 and Fresh 2025 reveal encouraging diversity among exhibiting artists. Across both programmes, artists identified with a range of ethnic backgrounds, including Asian/Asian British (Chinese, Indian, Pakistani), Latin American, Arab and Mixed heritage, alongside White British and European identities. There is also evidence of intersectional diversity, with artists self-describing as non-binary, queer, and neurodivergent and reporting caring responsibilities and disability. Sexual orientation data shows representation beyond heterosexual identities, including bisexual, gay, lesbian and queer artists.

BCB's programme design actively supports inclusive participation. Sensory installations, tactile engagement opportunities and adaptations for neurodivergent learners were praised by educators and community partners. Feedback from wellbeing groups highlighted the emotional impact: **“Participants felt more hopeful... it lifted moods and planted seeds for future creativity.”** Neurodivergent students described the experience as **“joyful,”** while visually impaired visitors valued the tactile nature of clay whilst also making suggestions for practical improvements such as Braille labels and clearer wayfinding. Recruitment and commissioning processes for Award and Fresh explicitly encourage applications from underrepresented groups, and monitoring data is used to inform future outreach. Visitor data suggests that audience development remains a priority, particularly in reaching ethnically diverse communities and addressing barriers linked to socio-economic status.



Slip Tales, British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

Thank You

Core Funders

Arts Council England
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
University of Staffordshire

Programme Funders

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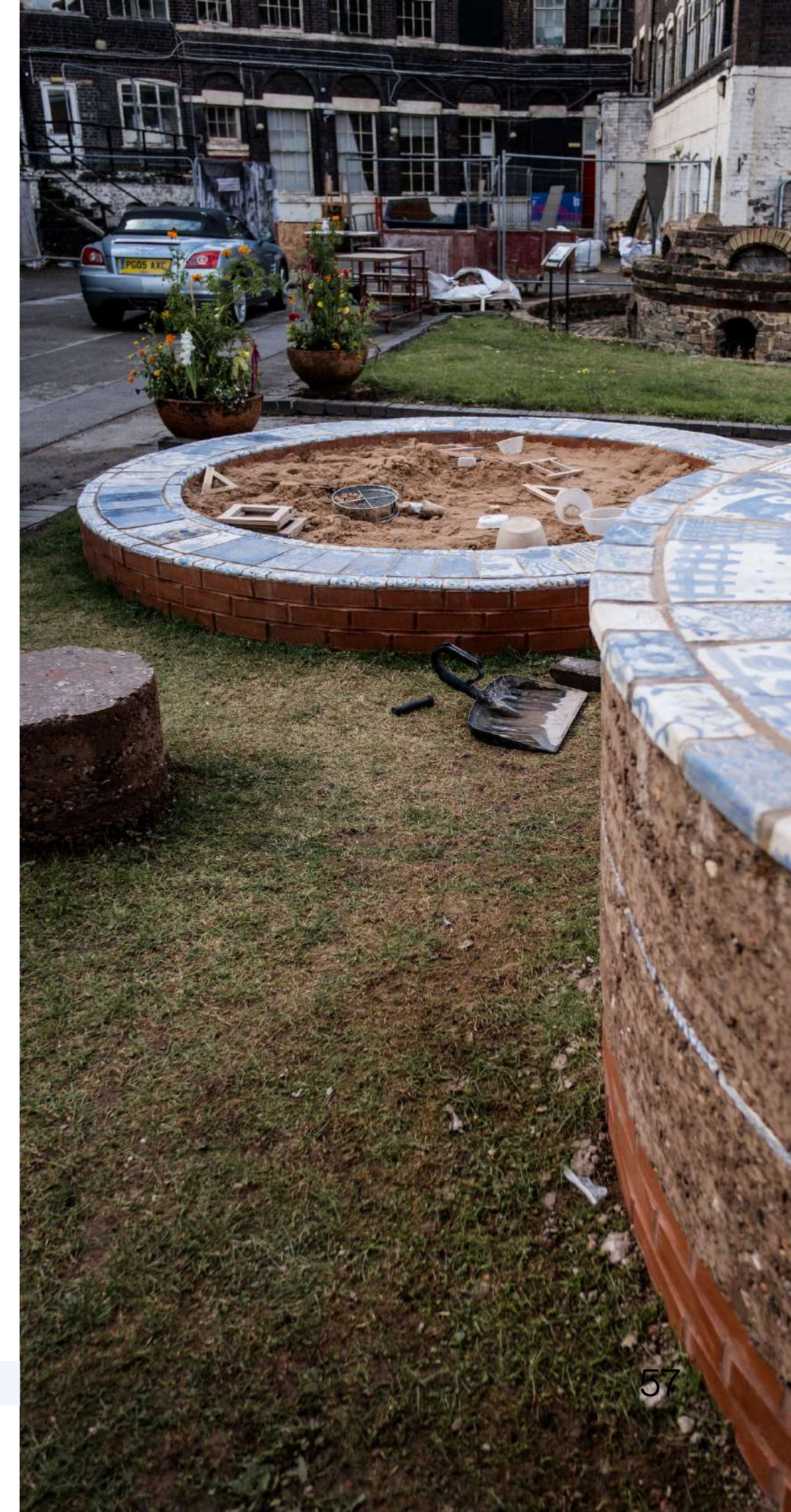
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Iris Gunnarsdottir
Joanna Dawidowska
Joanna Hejmej
Joanne Mills
Kate Royle
Kidda Kinsey
Marie Cooper
Matthew Whiting
Merida Richards
Natalia Kasprzycka
Natalie Armitage
Olivia Azzopardi
Peter Jones
Priscila Buschinelli
Sarah Fraser
Sue Blatherwick
Tom Armstrong
Zeba Imam



Thank You

Partners and Supporters

ACAVA Studios
Adina Lawrence
Alison Rafferty
Alun Graves
Amity Hub
Anderson West
Anna Bober-Tubaj
Appetite
Asha
Ashley Booth
Avanti West Coast
B-Arts
Babylon Project
Basil Olton
BBVS
BCB Advisory Network
BCB Studio Members
BCB Volunteers
Bensham Grove Pottery
Bev Dixon
Bolesławiec Cultural Center
Ceramic Art London
Ceramic Review
Christopher McHugh
Copperbeach
Courtyard by Marriott Keele

Craft Potters Association
Culture&
Culture Volunteers North
Staffordshire
Danny Callaghan
David Cutler
Dena Bagi
Dog and Bone Group
DoubleTree By Hilton
Duchess China 1888
Duncan Ayscough
Elastic Pie Films
Fernanda Cortes
Film Hub Midlands
Framescape
Gareth Higgins
Glen Stoker
Grainne Watts
Grymsdyke Farm
Guldagergaard - International
Ceramic Research Center
Hannah Ault
Harriet Lowe
Hilton Garden Inn
HS2
Ibstock
Instruct
Islam Abohela

James Robertson
Jason Simms
Jeff Nash
Jenny Harper
John Lambert
Joyce Iwaszko
Just Be There huggers
Kevin Millward
KMF Group
Kwanzaa Collective UK
Liam Shepherd
Louise Trodden
M2 Construction
Make It Glasgow
Mary Evans
Matt Smith
Mayer Aggregates
Mella Shaw
Michael Escolme
Michał Czerniawski
Middleport Pottery
Miles Durber
Monica Cru Hall
University of Staffordshire
Municipality of Bolesławiec
Museum of Ceramics in
Bolesławiec
Neil Brownsword

New Designers
North East Museums (ShIPLEY Art
Gallery)
Oficinas do Convento
Partners In Creative Learning (PiCL)
Phoenix Singers
Potclays
RCCG Living Water Parish
Recast Project Participants
Recovery Connections
Rich Miller
Richard Gruning
Rob Hill
St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy
St Peter's CofE Academy
Sam Trotman
Samsoum Studio
Sanctus
Sophia Musa
Spode Museum
Stephen Simcox
Steve Harding
Stoke Recovery Service
Stoke-on-Trent College
Stoke-on-Trent Community Drug
and Alcohol Service
The Art House Sheffield
The Portland Inn Project

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
Thistley Hough Academy
Tuckey Design Studio
University of Staffordshire
architecture students
Urban Wilderness
V&A Wedgwood Collection
Valentine Clays
Venture Arts
Victoria and Albert Museum
Victoria Thomas
Visit Stoke
Wavemaker
World Crafts Council
WoodCast Designs
WSG Fire Safety Consultants



British Ceramics Biennial 2025. Credit Jenny Harper

