



AGATHA CHRISTIE FESTIVAL 2025: REPORT FOR ENGLISH RIVIERA BID COMPANY



Costumed Parade meets at the Agatha Christie bronze at the start of the literature festival, supported by English Riviera BID Company © Agatha Christie Festival/Emily Appleton)

A 10 minute film of highlights from 2025 may be viewed below

[Agatha Christie Festival 2025 Highlights Showreel](#)

1. CONTEXT AND OUR CASE FOR SUPPORT

Agatha Christie Festival Ltd

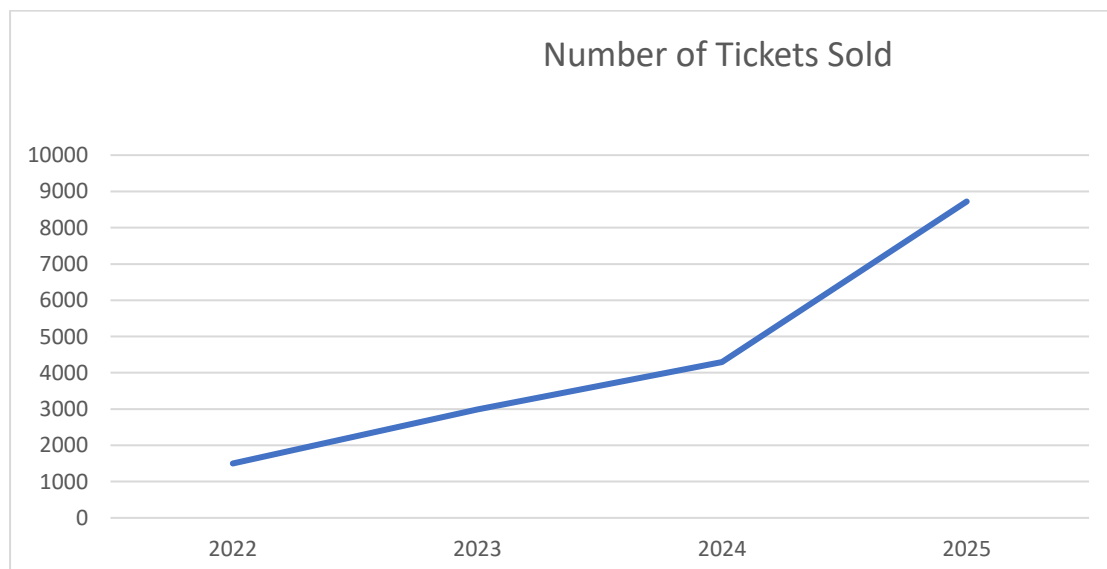
Agatha Christie Festival Ltd, a registered charity, uses the global reach of Torquay-born Agatha Christie's reputation to promote local, national and international engagement in literature and the arts, supporting the cultural ecology of South Devon and delivering value to the visitor economy of our region.

Working in partnership with cultural venues across the English Riviera, community-based charities and civic organisations, we stage the Agatha Christie Festival annually across 9-days in September to celebrate Christie's life and legacy and use Festival ticketing income and other funding, including sponsorship from the English Riviera BID Company (ERBIDCo), to deliver a Festival of literary events and Christie-related activities designed to appeal to a broad and diverse audience, promoting the Festival both internationally, nationally and locally. At the same time we curate a series of creative writing workshops, facilitated by expert partners, to engage children and young people in Torbay with literacy and a love of reading.

This report summarises the outcome of the 2025 Festival which we were able to deliver to budget and scale. It describes how we have invested in full sponsorship funds from ERBIDCo in accordance with your terms and conditions.

We achieved a new record attendance with a total of **8,722 ticket-holders** (forecast was 5,000): 5,937 across the 5-day Fringe and 2,785 across the 4-day literature festival.

Tickets sales exceeded budget by **77%** at **£79,538** (vs 2024 £55,100), reflecting a doubling of the number of tickets sold versus 2024. Notably more literature festival events sold out than previous years. Our turnover (as at end October 2025) was £133,788, including ticket sales, grant funding and sponsorship. Our expenditure (as at end October 2025) was £123,134.



For a second consecutive year we delivered the Festival under the patronage of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, secured in recognition of the Festival's alignment with UNESCO's educational and humanitarian goals.

The Festival would not be possible without the active engagement of all our cultural venue partners including Torre Abbey, Torquay Museum, Palace Theatre Paignton, Brixham Theatre, Torbay Libraries, Kents Cavern, Dartmouth Steam Railway & Riverboat Company, Greenway House, All Saints Church, Torre, The Royal Lyceum Theatre, Livermead House Hotel, The Grand Hotel. This year the Fringe Festival also incorporated excursions to Burgh Island, Moorlands Hotel, Dartmoor and Ugbrooke House.



Lucy Foley and Sophie Hannah in conversation, Torre Abbey, 18 September © **Agatha Christie Festival/Emily Appleton**

ERBIDCo INVESTMENT : AGATHA CHRISTIE FESTIVAL 2025

We were delighted to receive confirmation from the English Riviera BID Company that it would sponsor us in the amount of £10,000 towards the production and staging of a nine-day festival of high quality live performance, cultural excursions and expert insights through talks, panel discussions and 'in conversation' events across the English Riviera 13-21 September 2025.

The first 5 days engaged our audience with opportunities to explore Christie's authentic provenance across the English Riviera and included visits to Burgh Island, Moorlands Hotel on Dartmoor, Greenway and Ugbrooke House. The final 4 days were dedicated to Agatha Christie's written work and her influence on contemporary fiction.

The Festival as a registered charity operating as a not for profit organisation depends upon grant and sponsorship income for its business continuity even as it develops audience participation and grows earned income. We keep our overheads and administrative costs to a minimum and engage just two part-time freelance staff, our Creative Director and an Executive Assistant/Administrator, both working remotely. They are supported by a team of 20 volunteers, chiefly local residents, who return to support the Festival each year.

Over the nine days we delivered a total of 55 events across 30 venues, engaging a total of 36 creative practitioners, including authors, biographers, historians, academics, musicians, theatre performers. A unique inclusion this year was a church service dedicated to the memory of Agatha Christie at the church of her baptism, All Saints, Torre, supervised by the Dean of Exeter. Social events with a cultural flavour included a 'Victory Ball' at the Grand Hotel, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2 featuring the AJ Big Band and a closing event at PierPoint Restaurant with Icelandic Noir author Ragnar Jonasson and American author Kelly Mullen.

The integral four day literary festival focussed on the life and written legacy of Agatha Christie, seeking to illuminate her work in inventive and sometimes playful ways, commissioning speakers from across UK and internationally. For the first time all four events programmed on the opening day of our Literary Festival sold out. Our programme featured crime writers Lucy Foley and Sophie Hannah; crime-writer, show-runner and adaptor of 'The Seven Dials Mystery' for Netflix, Chris Chibnall; Kemper Donovan from USA with a live podcast and David Morris, also from USA, a Christie expert who supported the Festival's exhibition of illustrator Tom Adams work at Torre Abbey with a special preview of the work for our audience at the close of his talk. We delivered a total of 18 live events on stage across the four days, additionally offering our audience and the general public four free lunchtime sessions involving live music or 'book club' style discussions. Spearheading a full house in each case were Christie experts Dr John Curran, Dr Mark Aldridge, Victoria Dowd, Laura Thompson, Dr Jamie Bernthal-Hooker and experts on the Isokon building where Agatha spent her war years, Leyla Daybelge and Magnus Englund.

For the first time we hosted a 'Christie for Kids' day in partnership with Libraries Unlimited at Paignton Library, featuring popular YA crime author, Robin Stevens, and early years author Abie Longstaff. The day enabled us to embrace a young local audience of 113 children – at capacity for the library's space. We plan to include such a day, headed by a popular children's author, as a permanent feature of our programme.



Young audience attending the Festival's first '*Christie for Kids*' day with guest speaker Robin Stevens (photo © Agatha Christie Festival/Emily Appleton)

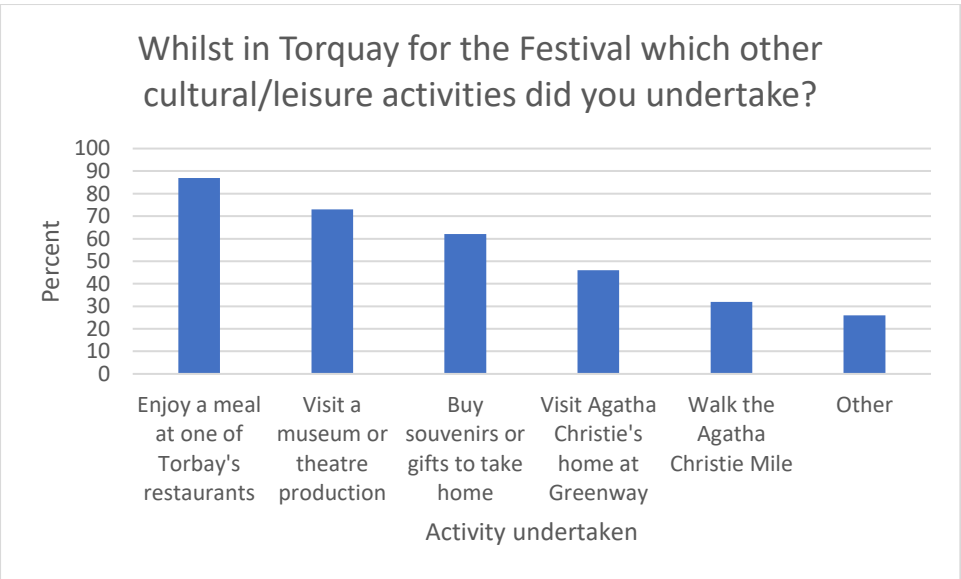
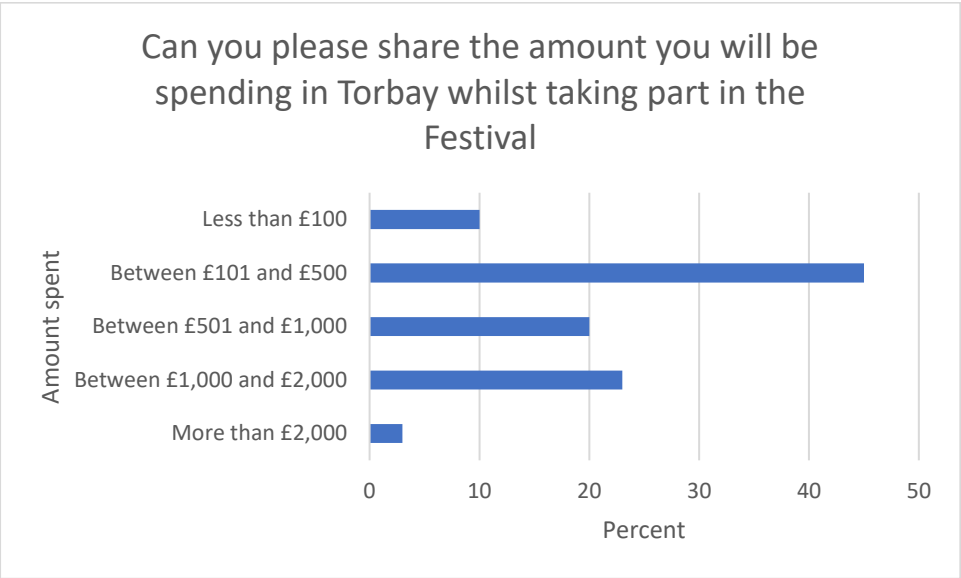
Our audience and participants

The design of our programme, book-ended by two weekends, alongside early promotion, encourages visitors from across the world to plan their travel and stay for the whole festival season.

At the same time, the diversity of the fringe programme which includes the popular annual Agatha Christie One Mile Sea Swim, encourages participation by local residents. We also ensure we offer low or free price points during our programme to include the low-waged. For example, sponsored by Kents Cavern, we offer free of charge lunchtime events across the four day literature festival. This year we welcomed visitors to Torquay from 30 countries.

69% of visitors to the literature festival told us they stayed for 5+ nights.

26% told us they spent in excess of £1,000 during their stay.



Data recorded by the South West Visitor Economy Hub reports a spike in footfall during our Festival in September, measuring 220,503 visits across four popular Torbay locations during Festival Week, 6,000 more than the week that followed the Festival, with our event being the only major public activity taking place that month.



Audience at the opening event of the Literature Festival, Torre Abbey (photo © Agatha Christie Festival/Emily Appleton)



Preview of the exhibition at Torre Abbey 'Agatha Christie and Tom Adams: Partners in Crime' © Agatha Christie Festival/Emily Appleton

In parallel to our Festival programme, we delivered a series of creative writing workshops for Torbay schoolchildren. These ran 15-19 September in partnership with The Writers Block at Torre Abbey and reached 200 children and 9 teachers. We were particularly gratified that pupils from Kings Ash Academy, a school within one of the more deprived neighbourhoods of Torbay, joined us this year for a full day session. These figures are additional to the number of ticket-holders we quoted above.



Year 6 pupils from Shiphay Learning Academy find inspiration in the Potent Plants Garden 2025, Torre Abbey © Agatha Christie Festival/Shiphay Learning Academy

From our Impact & Insights Survey distributed online to audience members at the literature festival, we know that 93% appreciate that the Festival makes an important contribution to the cultural life of the area. 86% told us they 'learned something new' and 56% stated they 'interacted with new people', with 37% developing new skills and/or knowledge from taking part. 34% of those surveyed were attending the Festival for the first time with 66% returning attendees.

98% of our survey respondents rated this year's Festival overall as Excellent/Good.

Below is a selection of comments received from our audience, summarising how the Festival affected them.

‘Great festival again this year. Already looking forward to next year. I think it’s important for Torbay that this highly regarded festival of a locally born but world-renowned writer continues to be closely associated with Torquay.’

‘Great to see and be among fellow enthusiasts. A great way to promote the sustained appeal and richness of Christie’s works.’

And from our speakers:

‘I thought this year’s Festival was a great success – as did all of my friends. Roll on next year’” **Dr John Curran**, Christie historian and expert

‘The Festival is always special to me, because of how much Christie’s writing continues to shape my own. Each time I speak at the festival I make new friends – and discover something new about AC herself! Can I also say how wonderfully well organised it was – from all the pre-communications, to the hotel, to the venue...everything went like clockwork and you and your team really made myself (and my wife) feel incredibly welcome and looked after. An exemplar of how to run a successful lit fest. Do call upon me anytime.’ **Vaseem Khan**, author

Whilst comments were overwhelmingly positive, where we did receive criticism it was for the lack of catering facilities on site for festival-goers during our four day residency in the Spanish Barn. We plan to remedy this – subject to grant funding- in 2026 through the use of a marquee installed in the grounds behind the Barn and with kind permission of Torbay Council.

Conclusion and 2026

Sponsorship from the English Riviera BID Company, together with funding made available from Torbay Council, The Colwinston Charitable Trust and the Rosalind Hicks Charitable Trust, enabled us to deliver a high quality literary festival which attracted record audience numbers and was received to great acclaim.

We are working closely with Torbay Council and its regeneration goals. Increasingly, Torbay Council is recognising the importance of Agatha Christie’s authentic provenance to the growth of Torbay’s cultural tourism and hospitality industry which employs 20% of Torbay’s workforce.

We continue to work closely with our licensor, Agatha Christie Limited, to ensure our programme goals are aligned with their own and we are gratified to have their support to continue to develop our Festival into 2026, a significant anniversary year for Agatha Christie’s legacy.

APPENDIX: Impact & Insight Report 2025

Ends/2025.10.28