

Image: Participating family of JoFoo's exhibition Beyond Expectations

Birnam Arts Impact Report

April 2024 - March 2025



www.birnamarts.com

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WELCOME

Reflecting on the past year (24/25), Birnam Arts has sought to increase ways to contribute and enhance the cultural fabric of the communities we serve. We strive to be a vibrant community hub for creativity, education, entertainment and engagement, serving as a platform for artists, audiences, and learners of all ages.

In this report, we will highlight our key achievements and share stories of impact of the work we do. We invite you to join us in celebrating the successes of the past year and to look ahead with us as we continue to nurture creativity and inspire connections within our community.

The past year has also been one of resilience and adaptation, particularly in navigating the ever increasing difficult challenges posed by the economic environment. In January 2025, we were delighted to hear that we have secured MultiYear funding from Creative Scotland - bringing in £293,000 to help support organisational activity for the next three years.

We are proud to host Birnam Library, which is of great importance to the community and at the heart of our venue and so we are very relieved to hear that funding is guaranteed to keep it open for the next two years.

Together, we can ensure that Birnam Arts remains a vital part of our shared journey.

Giles Conisbee General Manager Birnam Arts



VISION

Birnam Arts at the heart of the community

Birnam Arts is a multi-purpose arts, community and conference venue in the twin villages of Dunkeld & Birnam, Highland Perthshire. Originally founded by a group of local residents as 'The Birnam Institute', it has operated continuously since the building opened in 1883, adding a modern extension in 2001 and changing its name to Birnam Arts in 2011.

The community feels a strong sense of ownership over Birnam Arts and it is a lively gathering place and focal point for local people.

Our venue comprises of a 200-seater (400 standing) auditorium with hybrid tech to allow for live streaming of performances and events, 2 mezzanine level art gallery spaces, a visual arts studio with kiln and a performing arts/dance studio.

It also has an office, a meeting room, a permanent Beatrix Potter exhibition, a gift shop, a community kitchen, a 60-seat cafe, a community education office and a library.



PURPOSE

To enrich people's lives with creativity, inspiration and different perspectives.

AIMS

- Offer our existing, rural and visitor audiences the opportunity to engage with accessible, high-quality and adventurous cultural experiences.
- Remain a valued community resource, a central hub which brings people together through our exciting activities, our welcoming spaces and our support for local groups.
- Develop new audiences and increase engagement with our local, semi-rural communities.
- Celebrate our unique location in Scotlandthrough engagement with its people, natural spaces, traditions, history, crafts, culture and language.
- Develop a sustainable organisation with appropriate ongoing resources to deliver our activities.

NB: Birnam Arts have recently created a Business Plan for 2025 - 28, to be implemented starting April 2025 (available on request.) Our new Artistic Vision for 2025-28 will be ART BEYOND BOUNDARIES, with new cross-cutting themes across the organisation.

Image: Beatrix Potter Exhibition at Birnam Arts



THE YEARIN NUMBERS



43

Performances in our Auditorium



40,000

Hot drinks enjoyed together



361

Days open to the public



5

Full time staff and 14 Parttime Staff employed



8

Free Exhibitions



46

Creative Workshops

PARTICIPATION AT A GLANCE



23,730

People attended a show, talk, film or exhibition



40

Valued volunteers supported us



1115

Community members participated in workshops and classes



138

Artists and creatives employed



7,177

Visitors to our Beatrix
Potter Exhibition



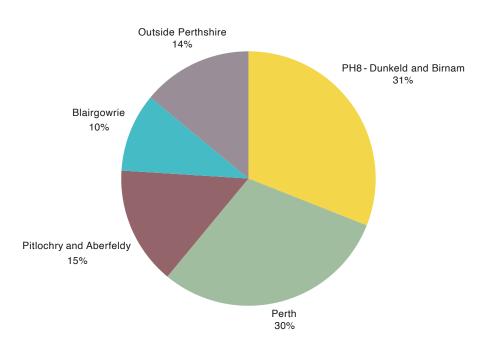
17

Organisations
benefiting from
community room hire
discounts

AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

We estimate that 85,000 people - audiences, participants and visitors, came through the doors between April 2024 - March 2025.

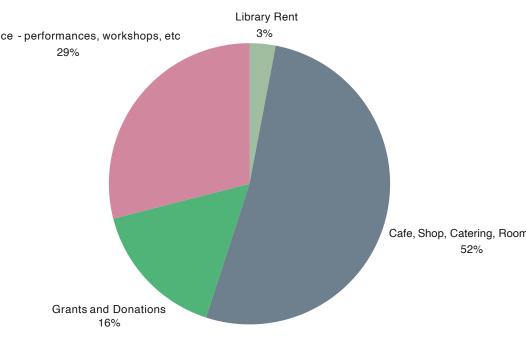
22% of audience members and participants were under 18, and research shows that there is a demonstrable correlation between schoolchildren's grades in maths and literacy, and their involvement with drama or music activities - called the 'Mozart effect'.



11,900visitors came from outwith Perthshire, adding a potential spend of nearly £500,000 into the local economy.

INCOME SOURCES

As we continued to deal with the cost of living ${\tt Box\,Office\mbox{-}performances,\,workshops,\,etc}$ crisis and rising energy 2024-25 costs. was another financially challenging vear for Birnam Arts. We had to make significant inroads into our reserves to be able to continue operating and serving our local community.



WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

We carefully programme to accommodate all our community. For adults, we offered regular daytime creative and wellbeing sessions as well as evening and weekend classes and events.

We ran specialist projects such as Free Film Wednesdays and Ageing Creatively for older people and hosted Just Singin, a community choir open to everyone, and accessible to people with dementia.

We offer after-school and holiday activities for children and daytime sessions for preschoolers. We offer term-time blocks of sessions as well as one-off activities are available.

Many of our activities are priced on a sliding scale to be inclusive to people from all economic backgrounds. We are proud of the opportunities offered by our ballet school - after-school and holiday activities for children, daytime sessions for pre-schoolers and adult classes as well, which are subsidised by Birnam Arts to make classes affordable.

This year we have consulted local parents and families of children with additional support to provide feedback on our offer and to improve our services. Their ideas included decluttering the art studio, more library-based activities, calm boxes to be available in the cafe and during events and more flexible pricing structures.

USERSOF OUR SPACES

We offer bright, welcoming spaceswhich are booked by a variety of non-profit and private organisations when we are not using the spacesfor our own, or community, activities. We provide technical support and catering for conferences, weddings and private hires such as birthday parties. Our offer is unique in the local area and we attract customers from far and wide.

National organisations and public bodies who used our meeting and conferences spaces included PKCCountryside Trust, Nature Scotland, Forestry Policy Group, Scottish Venison, Mountaineering Scotland, The Munro Society, Scottish Badgers Society, The Hutton Institute, Jacobs, Atholl Estates, Fishers Management Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Crown Estate Scotland, Growbiz, Live Active, and The Arts Society. We also hosted three weddings, a couple of ceilidhs, plus multiple celebration parties.

Community organisations using our spaces included Dunkeld and Birnam Climate Cafe, Dunkeld Community Care, PKVAS, PH8Community Trust, Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland, First Responders, the Gardening and Growing Club, A9 Community Group, SWRI, Dunkeld and Birnam Repair Cafe, Bridge Club, Dunkeld and Birnam Angling Club and Dunkeld and Birnam Junctions Action Group.

23,730audience members attended events and performances and 1115 members of the community took part in workshops and classes—with all the attendant benefits to their health and wellbeing from participating in arts and other community activities.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Birnam Arts is home to several local community groups and festivals which are supported by us through reduced studio, auditorium and meeting room rates (our subsidised community booking rate), marketing promotion including poster design and distribution, social media across multiple channels, in print and on our website, staffing, box office and wider promotion (for festivals).

Our community hire rate is available when a class or group is a not-for-profit organisation or if the class is for wellbeing activities, is made affordable to participants, and is open to everyone.

This year, we hosted a plethora of community activities, including:

- Birnam Institute Players local amateur dramatic society
- JustSingin' Community Choir

Image: Dunkeld and Birnam Trad Music Group

- Blow & Blast woodwind ensemble sessions
- Kids Art Club programme of weekly visual arts workshops
- Pottery Classeswith Kiln Creative
- Pete Clark Fiddle Masterclasses week-long music courses in Scottish fiddle tuition held twice a year, which attracts international students
- Niel Gow Festival (March 25) Celebration of the 18th-century local fiddler / composer through workshops, classesand concerts.
- Scottish Community Amateur Drama Festival and Scottish Youth Community Amateur Drama Festival
- · Dunkeld and Birnam Repair Cafe
- Wellbeing and learning activities included Thai Chi, Pilates, French Conversation Cafe, Bridge Club and Tiny Tunes (pre-school singing sessions)
- Birnam Book Festival (Oct '24) A collaboration between Birnam Arts and the Birnam Reader Bookshop, showcasing literature from Scotland and beyond.
- LEGO club with children with additional support needs / neurodiversity, organised by the parent council of Dunkeld Primary



BEATRIX POTTEREXHIBITION

Our interactive Beatrix Potter exhibition is on the ground floor of our building and is well-loved by families. The exhibition contains replica letters, artefacts and drawings relating to Beatrix Potter, as well as children's play zones such as a Victorian school room and market stall.

Approximately 7,177people attended the Beatrix Potter exhibition this year.



GIFT SHOP AND CAFE

Our gift shop sells a range of Potter-inspired gifts, as well as providing a platform for Perthshire-based artists and makers to sell their work, including Scents of the Wild, Babs Pease Print Makers and Fern River Jewellery.

In our cafe, we seek to source ingredients that include Scottish grown and harvested produce wherever possible. We work with local producers including the Taybank Growers Coop, Stewart Tower Dairy and ARANBakery. The Field community growing project also sell their seasonalfresh produce at Birnam Arts.

The gift shop and café sourced products from 20 local suppliers and makers to a value of £28,200



ARTISTICPROGRAMMEcurated by BA

MUSIC

Neon Waltz 20 April
Budapest Cafe Orchestra 24 May
Kris Drever 22 June
Good Guy Hank With Cahalen Morrison 12 July
My Darling Clementine 20 July
Firelight Trio 11 Aug
Sian 9 Dec
Paul McKenna Band 27 Sept
Robin Adams 15 Nov
Tommy Smith Jazz Youth Orchestra 18 Dec
Blue Giant Orkestar 22 Feb

COMEDY

Daniel Downie 4 May Ignacio Lopez

FILMS

Where Olive Trees Weep 3 July
Christmas Movie Marathon 21Dec
Smoke, Sauna, Sisterhood + sauna session 12March

POETRY

Lobster Tour - Hollie McNish 22 Sept Palestininian Supper Club + Poetry 14March



THEATREand DANCE

Sho and the Demons of the Deep 8 May
James V Katherine - National Theatre of Scotland 17 May
The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck 17 July
Unicorn Dance Party 10 Aug
A Warning to the Curious 22 Nov
Behold Ye Ramblers - Townsend Productions 15 Feb
King Lear - Oddbodies

EXHIBITIONS

Conglomerates - JessicaRamm: 27 April - 2 June

Finding Home - Louise McLaren 8 June- 21 July
Beyond Expectations - JoFoo 27 July- 8 Sept
Experimental Art Publishing - Dr Louisa Preston
19 Oct-24 Nov
JamesMacIntosh - Dunkeld Community Archive:
14 Sept - 13 Oct
Perthshire Artisans Winter Exhibition

Aches and Pains - Nicky May Bollard 18 Jan - 2 March
Stepping into the Mythic - Claire Hewitt 8 March - 20 April

ARTIST TALKS

Rock Concert Scratch Performance:
JessicaRamm 27 April
Artist Talk: JessicaRamm 11 May
Meet the Artist: JoFoo 27 July
Artist Talk: JoFoo 27 Aug
Artist Talk: Dr Louisa Preston 19 Oct
Artist Talk: Nicky May Bollard 7 Feb
Artist Storytelling: Claire Hewitt 29 March



New Thematic Programming

(From January 2025)

In a new approach to programming for 2025-28, annual themes will allow us to explore a diverse range of culturally and socially relevant programming topics which reflect our organisational vision, aims and cross-cutting themes, as well as our artistic vision of Art Beyond Boundaries. The themes help to ensure that our work is relevant and beneficial to the public.

Our themes will allow our visual and performing arts programmers to work closelytogether and ensure that programme content overlaps and complements each other across the artforms, giving scope for interdisciplinary work. It will also allow us to embed EDI into our programme. Below is our thematic wheel, which works across the three years of our Business Plan and shows our annual programming cycle. Each theme will run for 6-8 weeks.



Community Connections
A joyous opportunity to share and celebrate the rich tapestry of local voices and creative talent, with a particular focus on neurodiversity, mental health and those living with disabilities.

Women's Voices
Our focus for this theme is on
amplifying women's voices and
sharing their stories. Our priority is to
uplift women and non-binary people,
women of colour, older women, girls
and teenagers.

Exploring our connection to the land and the environment, working with partners and engaging with our community, we celebrate Birnam and Dunkeld's unique location within Scotland.

Natural Places

LGBTQ+Voices

Giving a platform for the creative work, perspectives, stories and experiences of the region's LGBTQ+community members. Advancing our equality, diversity and inclusion in terms of both creative content and audience development, this theme plays a key role in bringing people together and promoting BA as a welcoming LGBTQ+safe space and making space for young people/teenagers within the LGBTQ+community.

Climate Change

Encouraging discussion, seeking creative responses and educating audiences around the topic of climate change, generating ideas on how to tackle the climate change crisis at both a local and global level. We will also promote the resources and connections available in our community, such as the Climate Café and Repair Café.

PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME

VISUAL ARTS

FREEOR SUBSIDISED WORKSHOPS

KIDS

Paper Play, Esther Kent 6 April
Little Books workshop, Esther Kent 13 April + 4 July
Exploring Collage+Image Making, Louise McLaren 29
June

Lantern Masks Summer Workshop, Nicky May 11 July Modroc Summer Workshop, Helen O'Brien 18 July Shadow Puppets Summer Workshop, Anna Kelso 25 July

> Clay Self Portraits Summer Workshop, Susie Johnston 8 Aug

Nature Clicks Photography Workshop, JoFoo 4 Aug Clay self portraits (Me, Myself and I), Susie Johnston 15 Oct

Term-Time Kids Art Club, Nicky May
Zine-Making Workshop - Louisa Preston 19 Oct
Feb Half-Term Kids Art Workshop, Nicky May 22 Feb
Play in the Making, Susie Johnston (#Lets Create Art)
13 Feb

ADULTS

Life Drawing Pilot 10 April
Ageing Creatively, Alison Price 17Apr - 1May
Monoprinting, Jess Ramm 11May
Intro to Paper Cutting, Louise McLaren 13July
Mindful Photography Walk Workshop, Jo Foo 4 Sept
Zine-Making Workshop, Louisa Preston, 24 Nov
Live Painting, Libby Scott 8 & 11Jan
Feminist Embroidery Workshop, Nicky May
Bollard 13Feb
Heart Through to Hands, Claire Hewitt 29 Mar

COMMERCIAL VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOPS

Create your Own Paper Cut Art,
Louise McLaren 20 July
Snapshots Family Photography Workshop,
Jo Foo 7 Sept
Scraffito, Nicky May Bollard, 22 Feb
Art Club for Adults, Michael Fullerton, Monthly
Felt Your Own Story Pouch, Claire Hewitt, 18Mar



PERFORMING ARTS

FREEOR SUBSIDISED WORKSHOPS KIDS

Birnam Ballet School, Term-Time Kids Musical Theatre - term time all year Tiny Tunes for babies and carers D&B Traditional Music Youth Group Instrument Tuition

D&B Youth Trad Bands (incl guitar and whistles)
Drama workshop with Shaper/Caperin Dunkeld
Primary School

ADULTS

Ballet for Wellbeing
Just Singin' Community Choir
Birnam Institute Players (BIPS)
Blow and Blast

WRITING

Autumn Voices (6 sessions)
Chance Operations, Martine Foltier Pugh, 9 Nov

OTHER

Autumn Pumpkin and Easter Egg Hunts
Free Film Fridays
Jamie Jauncey writing retreats
Beatrix Pottery storytelling



NEW PROJECT: OPEN MIC NIGHT

With support from The Touring Network, we piloted a six-weekopen mic night between February 11 2025 – March 18 2025, giving local musicians a platform to practice, perform, and share new material. A standout feature is the option for live recording, with sets available to artists for their own promotion and potential inclusion in the Birnam Arts podcast.

This project is designed to enrich the creative and social fabric of the Dunkeld and Birnam communities. We aim to secure funding to continue and expand the initiative, supporting local talent and building a vibrant network of performers. It offers a valuable stage for songwriters, poets, storytellers, and musicians to hone their craft and reach new audiences—both live and through recorded media. Beyond performance, the open mic night creates a warm, welcoming space for people to enjoy live entertainment and connect with others, helping to fill a social gap in Birnam's evening life.

"Coming to the events is inspirational and heartfelt. A great community event and forum."

"Theseopen mic night sessions are helping me to develop my own voice and grow my confidence as a performer. It's a safe place to try out my material and "wrong notes are cool".



ARTIST DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

VISUAL ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

We selected two artists in residence this year - Nicky May Bolland (see case study) and Maya El Nahal who explored the topic of navigating motherhood as a non-binary person.

WORKSHOPS

- Preparing a Strong Application session, led by Helen Reid 20 June
- Artist in Residenceapplication feedback sessions, led by Helen Reid 25 Oct, 19 Nov
- Perthshire Artisans Drop-in session run by Caron Ironside
- Live Painting Demo, Libby Scott 8,11 Jan

OPEN MIC NIGHTS and PODCAST

As above, a six-week pilot, funded by The Touring Network which we hope to continue in 25-26 as it has been very successful, with 5-7 local acts each session and 20-30 people attending.

FREEFRIDAY OPEN STUDIO DAYS

- A chance to book the visual arts studio for individual or group practice
- 21 artists have booked this opportunity this year







CASESTUDY: NICKY MAY BOLLAND

- Artist in Residence Summer 2024
- KidsArt Club Facilitator from Autumn 2024
- Exhibiting Artist January March 2025

After attending our 'Preparing a Strong Application' workshop Nicky May Bolland submitted the first successful Artist in Residence application of 2024. In being awarded the residency Nicky used the 10 studio and 3 mentoring sessions over the summer of 2024, developing a body of work entitled 'Aches & Pains', which she later went on to exhibit at Birnam Arts between January and March 2025. A public programme of events accompanied the exhibition, including an intersectional feminist embroidery workshop, an Artist Talk and a Sgraffito clay craving workshop which sold out.

In the Autumn of 2024 Nicky took over from artist Helen O'Brien as the facilitator of 'KidsArt Club', a term-time weekly art workshop for primary school aged kids. In taking on this role Nicky worked with Visual Arts Manager Helen to develop a new vision for the 'club' offering child-led creative exploration, using a mix of media, with an ethos of reusing/recycling,drawing inspiration from the wider BA programme. Since taking on this role Nicky has also designed and delivered a number of highly successful one-off children's workshops during the school holidays, and will continue to do so moving forwards.

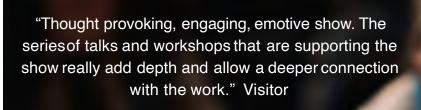
"The residency at Birnam Arts gave me the space to develop my ideas and practice in a format that was accessible for my needs (as a carer and as someone who is neurodivergent). I was well-supported by the curator and benefitted from both flexibility in how I wanted to use the resource as well as input when I needed it...." Nicky May Bolland















EVERYWOMAN CAFE

BA are proud to support local practice nurse Laura Downie, who began a series of wellbeing sessions targeted at women this year - a welcoming and inclusive space to chat and share experiences. The sessions she has produced this year have been:

Talk on Women's Health and Nutrition by Jill Storstein Fri4 Oct

Talk on Endometriosis by Willow Findlay Fri1Nov

Panel Discussion about Neurodiversity Fri1March

With Lorna Redford (Perth ADHDSupport), Catherine Steward (Scottish Women's Autism Network), Lindsey Gibb (Storyteller) and Myette Godwyn(Actor, Writer, Theatre Maker) Exploring the challenges and joys of discovering one's autistic identity

BA secured funding from PKCWarm Welcome Fund and Ross and Liddell to contribute towards some of the costs.



VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME

Volunteers play a vital role in the running of the centre. The number of regular BA volunteers has almost doubled, to 40, over this past year. Volunteers give their time, skills and energy in areas such as front of house, reception, maintenace, kids art club or working in the shop and assisting families attending the Beatrix Potter exhibition.

The BA Board of eight trustees also give their time voluntarily and continue to play an essential role in overseeing effective governance and financial accountability.

BA hosted two younger volunteers as part of Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards. A student from the University of the Highlands Music Business course had a three-month placement focusing on digital marketing as part of his final vear assessment.

Image: Volunteers at a recent Help Out Day

40 members of the local community with volunteered us regularly, which as well as individual and societal benefits, helps to build a more resilient local community.

Funding for a new Volunteer Development Manager role was secured in October through National Lottery Awards for All. This role aims to support existing volunteers, create new opportunities, and develop a more diverse volunteer base. Volunteers receive induction, role-specific training, and regular reviews with the Manager.

"It gives me great satisfaction when I see volunteers settling into their roles, gaining confidence and enjoying being part of the wider BA community." Elspeth Wood, Volunteeer Development Manager.

Two 'Volunteer Help Out Days' were held in January and March. BA collaborated with the Dunkeld and Birnam in Bloom and Mens Shed groups to help spruce up and maintain the outside of the BA building.

"We had a ball! When you work together with great conversation the time flies. Barbara Dunlop, Volunteer



Jan Caldwell and Jenny Park are friends from Pitlochry who decided to volunteer together.

They joined the Shop Volunteer team in January and immediately rolled up their sleeves at the Help Out Day cleaning in the Beatrix Potter Exhibition area.

"I have greatly enjoyed interacting with customers and, in particular, witnessing the childrens' pleasure and excitement in the play area"

Jan

"I have grown in confidence in managing and following procedures in the shop and exhibition area. I've enjoyed learning, and having success,in cashing up at the end of the day."

Jenny



Below: Volunteers Evelyn Gow and Esther Stielow manning our Gift Shop Counter



VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME CASESTUDY JOSEPHRYLES, Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award

Joseph (15), a S3 student at Breadalbane Academy, grew up in Birnam and as a young boy regularly visited the Beatrix Potter exhibition and gardens with his grandparents. In 2024, he joined the Café team on pot washing duties during busy weekends.

"I like the friendly, cosy environment of BA and working as part of a team and getting to know the other staff." he commented.

Joseph is working toward his Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Finding out that he had an interest in photography, Willow Findlay, BA Performing Arts Manager, mentored him to take and edit photographs highlighting the range of activities, exhibitions and spaces within the building. On completion of a three month volunteering placement, Joseph has built up a body of stock images which can now be used for marketing and publicity; a really helpful resource for BA.

"I've really enjoyed having the opportunity to be creative with photography. Willow has taught me how to use my camera better and I've experimented with taking shots at different angles, close ups and how to focus correctly."

As well as photography, Joseph has shown willing to pitch in to help set up for events and with some of the technical preparations for the Open Mic nights. Thankyou, Joseph for making a valuable contribution to BA.

"I have enjoyed using my time and skills to help out at the BA and I would encourage anyone





Image: Joseph Rylestaken.by Elspeth Wood

CASE STUDY: JO FOO

Perthshire photographer Jo Foo caught the attention of BA's Visual Arts Manager Helen Reid in early 2023 while seeking participants for a breastfeeding photography project. Helen offered Jo an exhibition and her curatorial expertise, helping Jo develop key themes including Representation, Inclusion, Privilege, Language, and the realities of breastfeeding.

BA partnered with Breast Buddies Perth & Kinross, connecting Jo with families and hosting two breastfeeding picnics. The project expanded to include support groups across Scotland, leading to overwhelming interest from families wishing to be photographed.

In February 2024, Jo and Helen presented a talk at AK Bell Library, Breastfeeding - Why it Matters in the Quest for Gender Equality. The resulting exhibition, Beyond Expectations, opened at Birnam Arts in July 2024, featuring 71 photographs of 66 families. The exhibition explored breastfeeding experiences, inclusing

direct feeding, exclusive pumping, and bottle feeding. Interactive elements encouraged audience participation, and a public program me of events, including workshops and talks, enriched the exhibition.

Jo's background in zoology and science education shaped her Wild Moments, Wellbeing Photography Walks, a project with the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust engaging children in nature photography, culminating in an exhibition at Birnam Arts in Dec 2024.

Thanks to further funding from Gannochy Trust, Jo will expand her environmental education work over the deliverina next three years, Wild Moments walks for various age groups and launching Kids' Nature Camp in Summer 2025. Her collaboration with BA continues. with future exhibitions planned to showcase the work of workshop participants.

"Working with Birnam
Arts has made a huge
impact on my confidence
as an artist. Beyond
Expectations started as a
personal project to
process my own
breastfeeding journey
and thanks to Helen's
expertise and insight, it
was propelled into a way
to connect families
across central Scotland
and beyond."

Jo Foo





Young nature photographers took walk on wild side for pics

An exhibition showcasing the work of young nature photographers has opened in Birnsen Arts Centre. The Wild Moments nature photography sessions gave youngsters between B and 1B the chance to take photos in hills above Aberfoldy earlier this year. Those who affended, pictured above with environmental educator and nature photographer Jo Foo, were taken on walks anyong rewilding projects at The Bunkhouse, at Glassie Farm.









WITH THANKS TO

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