

How the FTC grant to FollyFest 2024 benefitted the town

Background

Faringdon has held a summer festival in the town centre for many years. Its current form as FollyFest, has been running since about 2004 and has evolved from music and performances on a single stage in the Market Place, to 3 stages and many Fringe events held across other town centre venues.

FollyFest enjoys great support from local businesses who act as sponsors or provide services and equipment at cost, or for free.

Social Impact

FollyFest requires around 120, two-hour marshalling slots over the weekend, all filled by local volunteers. Some do it every year, but for many this is the first time they have participated in such a mass event. Everyone reports how much they enjoy doing their bit and contributing to the event and it is particularly nice to see newcomers to the town getting involved, seeing what Faringdon has to offer and meeting people.

Many Faringdon families reunite at FollyFest. Children who have long grown up and flown the nest, come back for the weekend to meet up with old friends and extended family.

FollyFest is free to enter and for some, this allows access to live music and family entertainment which would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. We are frequently told that FollyFest is better than many paid for local Festivals.

With over 45 live music acts, FollyFest provides an actual stage for local talent to shine. Hundreds of musicians practice for thousands of person hours, to play sing and dance their way to applause from the local crowds. Particular effort is made to promote children and young adult performers to encourage and boost their confidence on stage and there is now a regular opening slot for students from The Community College.

Financial Impact

The Faringdon Town Council grant of £3500 (increased for 2025 thank-you) is a significant contribution to the total cost of more than £20,000.

Town centre pubs, food retailers and other businesses around the Market Place all notice the increased footfall, and for some, the festival marks a significant component in their annual sales returns.

Community Capital

By making demonstrable good use of all the towns connections, FollyFest increases the sense of community in the town, as local businesses take pride in directly transforming the centre into a festival for the whole weekend.

All of the points described above add up to an event that is unusual today – a free town festival, run entirely by volunteers, with no brand or political agenda.

FollyFest is a very special event enjoyed by so many people.

Jane Rennells

FollyFest 2025 Chair