

# Fringe to lease premises as a “community hub”

Following the news that in the UK Government’s Spring Budget the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (EFFS) were to receive substantial funding, it has been revealed that the premises where they hope to create a new Fringe community hub are the South Bridge Resource Centre on Infirmary Street.

The Society said that they first revealed their need for a new year round space for artists and creatives in their [2017 blueprint](#). Now they say that they have “identified this building for a variety of reasons” not the least of which is the proximity to the existing footprint of **the Fringe**.

The UK Government announced £7 million of capital funding for the society with the remaining £1.6 million allocated to the Edinburgh International Festival.

Although the Fringe Society [initially claimed](#) the money was not for “plush new offices” it was clear that the millions were intended for a property purchase or development, and the Scotland Office Minister, John Lamont confirmed to The Edinburgh Reporter that the Fringe had indeed asked for funding to invest in a capital project.

The letter of offer from the UK Government said: *“As one of*

*the best-known festivals across the world, the UK Government recognises the significant contribution the Fringe provides in not just supporting performers and artists, but in promoting Scotland on the international stage and showcasing the UK as the premier destination for cultural and creative industries.*

*“With capital funding support now available, we look forward to helping the Fringe realise their ambition of creating a new central base for artists and performers year-round that will strengthen Scotland’s renowned ‘festival’ economy.”*

EFFS said: “The funding for us is restricted to capital and can only be spent on capital – specifically for a new Fringe creative community hub in Edinburgh – for the benefit of the Fringe community and city as a whole, incorporating the services of the Fringe Society during the festival and throughout the year. It is dependent on the Fringe Society creating a full business case and detailed scoping in the coming months, which will be shaped and developed through consultation with Fringe participants, local community and Edinburgh stakeholders. The investment commitment is the first step in a long process – planning and consultation with the Fringe community is now the project’s next priority.

“The recognition from UK Government through capital funding is an important milestone, but is only one part of the ambition for long-term investment, support and acknowledgement that the overall Fringe project needs to reinvent itself for a thriving and sustainable future.”

The council’s Finance and Resources Committee when it meets next week will consider an application by the Fringe to enter into a long lease of South Bridge Resource Centre (although due diligence is yet to be conducted). This will mean that Canongate Youth which works with children and young people from 5 to 25 years old, and other council services have to move from the B Listed former school built in 1885. The

response from Canongate to initial enquiries about this move are said to be positive.

During the due diligence to be carried out by the council it will be necessary to carry out a valuation of the property.

The building has been used by Greenside Venues as a Fringe venue for the last 10 years.

EFFS also claim that they continue to lobby for support for artists such as more affordable accommodation for them to live in during August and the possibility of a six week exemption from short term let rules in the summer months.

You can read the papers for the council's [Finance & Resources Committee here.](#)



The council report sets out the reasons for the Fringe's move: "As part of the wider 10-year vision, EFFS has been seeking to secure an iconic building within the city centre through which their future can be protected via a redeveloped and reimagined Festival and Community hub. This would allow the amalgamation and consolidation of their current occupied buildings which would, over time, create a more sustainable financial platform from which the Fringe would operate."

As well as paying rent the estimated cost of remedial work to be carried out to the building was estimated in 2019 at £1.13 million – which may have increased post Covid.

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (EFFS) was established as a charity in 1959 to “support advise and encourage everyone who wants to participate in the Fringe, provide information and assistance to help audiences curate their own Fringe experience and promote the Fringe and what it stands for all over the world”.

Last August there were 3,324 shows at 270 venues in Edinburgh.