

NORWICH SCIENCE FESTIVAL

14-21 FEBRUARY 2026

Presented by
the
forum

Impact Report



Image credit: Beth Moseley

Principal Partner



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And The R C Snelling Charitable Trust and The Paul Bassham Charitable Trust.

A Decade of Discovery



Since the first event in 2016, Norwich Science Festival has grown into a nationally recognised and much-loved celebration of science. With upwards of **90,000 visitors** and **290 events** in the year we celebrated a milestone tenth anniversary, NSF is now counted amongst the largest science festivals in the UK.

The 2026 programme offered everything from hands-on experiences to show-stopping performances and in-depth science talks – plus kombucha tasting and a musical performance exploring the history of women’s health. And with adventurer **Aldo Kane**, YouTuber **Maddie Moate**, chemist and Great British Bake-Off Finalist **Josh Smalley**, earth scientist **Anjana Khatwa**, and evolutionary biologist and Festival Patron **Ben Garrod** among the line-up, there was something for everyone to enjoy!

A core objective of the Festival is to inspire a life-long appreciation for science, and its role in our everyday lives. Our programme of events brings people together to enjoy amazing experiences with science, technology, engineering, art, maths, and medicine (STEAMM) at the very heart.

A survey of our audiences found that more than **93% felt motivated in some way by the Festival**, with 35% citing they wanted to explore the subjects presented at NSF26 further.

32% of our visitors hadn’t attended a science related event in the last two years, yet more than **97% of visitors enjoyed the Festival**, and 81% plan to come to future Norwich Science Festival events – demonstrating the power of NSF in fostering science capital and supporting an interest in science subjects.



Photography by Beth Moseley and Luke Witcomb

90,000 Visitors

12,589 Tickets booked for 296 events

97% of visitors enjoyed the Festival

93% of visitors felt motivated by the Festival

31% were first-time visitors

“ The [Dino Duel event] at Epic was totally wow and fun. Learning was at the heart of the show, delivered in a really fun way. ”
- Visitor

Increasing Access to Science

We believe that science is for everyone. Research has shown that children who have opportunities to participate in science experiences are more likely to engage in science at school and consider future science careers.

We recognise that financial barriers can limit participation, and the team work to ensure that as much of our programme is either completely free to access or low cost (£6 and under). In 2026, **35% of NSF events were completely free** – an offering within the programme that is supported by the University of East Anglia.

For the second year in a row, we also offered free Essential Companion tickets at point of booking with no proof of eligibility required. Improvements were also made to a reinstated Quiet Hour in The Explorium, and we introduced the Sunflower Snug; a quiet space in which visitors could transition between activities, take a calm break from a busy event or enjoy their visit in a more relaxed setting.

Since 2024, we have been working year-round in partnership with community groups and leaders to develop and deliver a programme of free and accessible events for families. Focused on key postcode areas historically identified as underserved by the Festival, in the past year the Science on Your Doorstep project has engaged with **1,917 participants**.

The highlight of the project's calendar year includes Bugs and Beasts, which came to Henderson Community Park in August 2025. More than 500 local people came out to enjoy a day of nature, discovery and science in NR5 – featuring everything from fossil-themed crafts, memorable animal encounters with Bert's Amazing Creatures and animal-inspired dance moves with Capoeira Communities.

“ Thank you so much. We could access things we couldn't normally afford as a family. ”

- Visitor



“ I was so impressed with the Sunflower Snug... and so grateful for the Quiet Hour and was impressed with the overall offering. I felt so seen and comfortable and that our boys were understood and welcome. Thank you. ”

- Visitor



1,917 Community project participants

15 Events in the community in 2025-26

3,756 Tickets booked for free events

90.2% of visits at NSF26 were to free events

A Region of Scientific Excellence

“ I really liked the inclusion of live scientific research studies from the UEA. It was interesting to see science in action. ”
- Visitor



At the heart of the Festival is **The Explorium** at The Forum – a space for visitors of all ages to explore science through free, hands-on activities from a changing rota of brilliant exhibitors. Among them are students, researchers and academics from the **University of East Anglia**, our Principal Partner. Across the eight days of the Festival, more than **77,000** visits were made to The Explorium.

The Explorium Lates opened to adults only on the Friday night before the Festival, giving more than 120 grown-ups an important opportunity to meet, discover and play together – in a way often reserved only for children.

The **Centre for Microbial Interactions**, based on Norwich Research Park, launched their **Microbe Zoo** – an immersive experience featuring microbial worlds. A team of ‘zookeepers’ – who are scientists working on the Park – guided visitors through a range of microbe habitats, highlighting the ways in which microbes keep plants, people and the planet healthy.

By connecting members of the public with real-life scientists working in Norwich and Norfolk, we believe that people can feel a deeper connection with the research that impacts their lives – from the importance of gravitational waves when studying the universe, or what we can learn from the hidden organisms living underneath the ice shelf!

The Festival is very much a team effort, with incredible support offered by local organisations, businesses and members of the community. We couldn’t do it without the support of our sponsors, funders, partners, venues, volunteers, speakers, exhibitors and all the staff at The Forum.

77,412
Visits to The Explorium

103 Exhibitors
in The Explorium

58 Festival
partners

302 Volunteer
hours

58% of visitors
feeling connected to
other people and to
Norwich

Connecting with Audiences

Norwich Science Festival is experienced by thousands of visitors every year. The work to foster a sense of community amongst our visitors, members of the public, scientists, researchers, performers, authors, and local organisations is continued in our marketing and communications activity.

In 2025-26, we saw significant growth in our digital marketing channels, reaching more than **22,500 combined followers and subscribers** across our platforms. We delivered social media content in partnership with Norfolk Libraries, Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum and local content creators, which count among Festival content with the highest engagement and reach. The Festival's Instagram channel, in particular, enjoyed a 21.6% growth in followers year-on-year.

The Festival also attracted media coverage, with features on BBC Radio Norfolk, in the Eastern Daily Press and Norfolk Magazine, reaching upwards of **2,800,000 potential readers and listeners**.

In March, we were awarded the **Festival of the Year Award** in the 2026 Suffolk and Norfolk Tourism Awards, by public vote. Coordinated by Visit East of England, the awards recognise the people and organisations behind the region's tourism success.



“ Fab day out. We all learnt lots and the activities were a perfect way to get children understanding the topics. Everyone who worked there was engaged, interesting and obviously loved what they do. ”

- Visitor



2,800,000

Estimated press reach

16,276 Total subscribers and followers

23,000 Brochures printed and distributed

4.3% Average email CTR rate

89% of visitors named the Festival as their reason for visiting Norwich



Learning in Schools

Following on from the success of Food Scientists to the Rescue (2025) and To The Moon and Back (2024), this year The Forum team worked with Actor Tom Butterworth and Director Bob Percy, to develop and deliver a brand-new touring play to schools across the county – reaching **8,400 pupils in 38 primary and SEND schools**.

The Great Science Time Tour invited children to look at the world around them and imagine how they might shape it in future, by considering the work of three impressive figures in science history. The time-travel structure provided a sense of excitement, presenting learning as an adventure. The aim of the piece was to provide children – who are already imagining their futures – with a sense of agency. If past scientists have reshaped the world, then they can too.

The play was made possible with funding from the Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm via the Norfolk Community Foundation, the John Jarrold Trust, The R C Snelling Trust, and The Paul Bassham Charitable Trust. Their support enabled us to deliver the play completely free to schools, who otherwise would not have been able to access external science engagement offerings. The tour was far reaching, with schools from Great Yarmouth, Thetford, Watton, Dereham, Fakenham and Norwich taking part. We were keen to focus on rural communities, and those schools with a high proportion of children who are eligible for pupil premium.

The play ended its run at Norwich Science Festival, where it formed part of the key free offering for families.

“ We know lots of our children would love to attend the Festival’s events, so being able to bring [the play] into school means that everyone can share this experience. ”

- Teacher

8,400 Primary-aged children

38 Schools across Norfolk

9.2/10 Rating given by teachers

1,000 Visitors at the main Festival



“ The pupils and staff were talking about it all day. It was exactly the right balance between scientific knowledge and making them all laugh. ”

- Teacher

