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Capital venue delivers strong summer despite sector headwinds Fringe season sees progress on sustainability and steady visitor engagement

AUGUST brought encouraging results for one of Edinburgh's most established hospitality venues, as it balanced high demand with growing operational pressures and sustainability goals.

Surgeons Quarter, the commercial arm of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, has reflected on a successful yet demanding Fringe period, highlighting strong audience turnout and meaningful steps forward in its environmental commitments.

The organisation welcomed thousands of guests across its hotel, café and event spaces, with Ten Hill Place Hotel recording near-maximum occupancy and Café 1505 seeing increased footfall throughout the month.

While demand remained high, Surgeons Quarter noted that rising costs and upcoming regulatory changes are placing additional pressure on long-term profitability, making it even more vital to capitalise on August, one of the few months where trading reliably generates surplus. As a result, the team remains focused on maximising performance during this crucial window.

Scott Mitchell, Managing Director at Surgeons Quarter, said: "August remains a vital period for us. It's a time when the whole campus comes to life and we work hard to create memorable experiences for visitors, performers and locals alike.

"We're proud of how we performed across the board, especially given the wider challenges facing the hospitality sector."

While demand remained high, Surgeons Quarter noted that rising costs and upcoming regulatory changes are placing additional pressure on long-term profitability, a trend echoed across the industry.

Scott added: "It was a strong summer, but not without its difficulties. Like many operators, we're navigating a landscape of increasing costs and operational demands. Our focus is on resilience and smart evolution."

One key initiative was the campus-wide trial of a reusable cup policy, launched during the Fringe as a step toward reducing single-use waste ahead of Scotland's proposed disposable cup tax.

Sustainability remained a key focus, with the trial of a new reusable cup policy across venues helping to reduce single-use waste and encouraging more environmentally responsible behaviour.

The scheme, introduced following a pilot in 2024, saw thousands of souvenir-style cups used in place of disposable plastics. While adoption was positive overall, the team acknowledged mixed uptake and valuable lessons in managing logistics.

Scott said: "Our reusable cup trial was a progressive step, and we were encouraged by the support from many visitors. But we also recognise it's a work in progress.

"Changing habits doesn't happen overnight, and we're using this year's insights to refine our approach ahead of new legislation in 2026."

Scotland's forthcoming cup charge, aimed at reducing single-use waste, is expected to come into force within the next year. Surgeons Quarter hopes that its early efforts will place it ahead of the curve in adapting to the change.

Surgeons Quarter also strengthened its collaboration with long-standing partner theSpaceUK - acclaimed for hosting a diverse range of performance programmes. During August the SpaceUK presented a record number of shows attracting significant audience numbers and increased engagement throughout the month.

Scott said: "This was a summer that asked a lot of the hospitality industry, with high expectations and growing pressures. We're proud to have delivered results that support our team, our charity work and our long-term sustainability goals."

The Fringe has become a vital period for Surgeons Quarter, helping to spotlight its year-round offering for private hire, corporate events, conferences and hospitality.

With demand expected to grow in 2025, plans are already underway to expand its sustainable operations and enhance visitor experiences further across the iconic campus.

Surgeons Quarter promotes, sells, and manages all commercial activities held within the RCSEd campus.

These include facilities for conferences, meetings, private events, parties, and weddings, as well as its own four-star hotel, Ten Hill Place, Café 1505, and SQ Travel.

To find out more about Surgeons Quarter, visit: <https://www.surgeonsquarter.com/festival-fringe-2025/>

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