

## Benefits of supporting a Town of Culture Expression of Interest

**Imminent Key Dates**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Stage 1 - Expressions of Interest Opens	14 January 2026
Stage 1 - Expressions of Interest Closes	31 March 2026

**Future Key Dates**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
Stage 2 – Shortlisting announced	Spring 2026
Stage 2 - Shortlisted places make a full application (£60,000 grant for support)	Spring 2026 – Autumn 2026
Stage 3 - Shortlisted places host and present to the panel	Autumn 2026
Finalists and winner announced	Early 2027
Delivery Period	2028

**Direct Financial Benefits**

- **Winning Prize:** The overall winner of the UK Town of Culture 2028 title will receive **£3 million** to deliver a six-month cultural programme.
- **Shortlisting Grant:** Any town reaching the shortlist will be awarded **£60,000** to help develop their full bid, supporting research and community consultation.
- **Finalist Funding:** Even if not the overall winner, the two runners-up (one from each size category) will each receive **£250,000** to deliver elements of their bid.

**Strategic Alignment with Local Priorities**

- **Culture and Heritage Strategy:** The Council is already developing its first-ever Culture and Heritage Strategy (consultation launched in late 2025). A bid for Town of Culture would directly implement this strategy's goal to "celebrate, support, and develop the District's unique identity".
- **Economic Growth:** Successful bids typically lead to increased footfall and local spending. For example, past City of Culture winners saw significant boosts in tourism and private investment.

**Social and Community Impact**

- **Boosting Civic Pride:** A core aim of the competition is to "restore pride in place" and tell a town's unique story to a national audience.
- **Increased Participation:** The bidding process encourages the Council to work with local residents and grassroots artists to design inclusive programming for those who do not currently engage in the arts.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Engagement in cultural activities has been shown to improve local residents' wellbeing.