

Culture and Heritage Update

Council
26 March 2026

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'Where Quality of Life Matters'



MALDON
DISTRICT COUNCIL

3.1 Culture and Heritage Strategy Development

Recent and upcoming engagement

19 February

Tollesbury

Location with significant community, heritage, culture, distinctiveness.

13 March

Maldon

Neighbourhood Health and Creative Health in partnership with CVS, ICB, ECC and Creative Lives.

19 March

Saltmarsh Coast Tourism CIC launch event
Regenerative Tourism Strategy recognises the importance of culture, heritage and environment to the tourism offer of the Maldon District.

24 March

Blackwater Landscape Partnership, leading discussion with key environmental stakeholders on how the cultural strategy can support awareness/engagement with environment and the unique landscapes.

30 March

Artists and practitioners across creative disciplines to gather to feed in thoughts on how to develop and sustain a vibrant cultural/arts sector in the District.

8 April

Workshop with Goldhanger partners (organised with Goldhanger Parish Council).

April

Event organisers - feedback on Cultural Engine's own regional research on festivals sector and discuss relevant issues to ensure Maldon District continues to be a key event location.

Further work

Continue engagement with sector and communities.

Emerging Key Themes

 Arts and cultural development	 Pubs and hospitality
Heritage, including collaboration, interpretation and space	 Festivals and events
 Public health, particularly opportunities for creative health approaches	 Maritime and waterways
 Planning, environment, nature recovery and conservation	Archaeology
 Libraries	Town and Parish Councils

Next Steps

April - May	Further sector and community engagement
End April	Further All Member Briefing
May	Further All Member Briefing
11 June 2026	Strategy and Action Plan presented at Strategy and Resources Committee

3.2 Special Event Performance Funding

**Strategy and Resources
Committee
November 2025**
Approval for up to £45,000
for Special Event
Performance in June 2026.

**Agent and Artist Liaison
December 2025**
Confirms cannot commit to
June 2026 and proposes
2027.

**Council
26 March 2026**
Formal request to defer
performance to 2027.

Complementary Activity

- Development of Culture and Heritage Strategy
 - Town of Culture Expression of Interest

3.3 Town of Culture 2028 Competition

Key Points



Overview

- DCMS launched the first UK Town of Culture competition on 14 January 2026.
- Modelled on UK City of Culture to celebrate the cultural contribution of towns of all sizes.
- Aims to strengthen local pride, broaden cultural participation, and deliver long-term social and cultural benefits.

Guidance from DCMS (21 January session)

- Tell a compelling, place-based story showcasing how culture unites communities.
- Demonstrate the town's unique identity, rooted in its history, culture, and environment.
- Show how this contributes meaningfully to the national cultural narrative.

Opportunity for Maldon District

- Rich cultural heritage, including the Battle of Maldon.
- Multiple themes and assets to highlight the District's distinctive story and wider national relevance.

3.3 Town of Culture 2028 Competition

Future Keys Dates



Date	Action
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

3.3 Town of Culture 2028 Competition Benefits



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.