



Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport



## UK Town of Culture 2028 Competition Expression of Interest (EOI)

Thank you for your interest in the UK Town of Culture 2028.

Please ensure you have read the “UK Town of Culture 2028 Expression of Interest: Guidance for bidders” document before applying. All EOIs must be submitted using this standard template.

The form comprises four sections which each require a statement response. You are provided with a series of prompts to use as a guide. You do not need to answer each prompt individually but your responses should address all prompts. The prompts draw from the competition criteria and bidding places should refer back to the criteria when completing the form to show the potential of their programme to make a contribution to the aims of the UK Town of Culture programme.

The form has set formatting (e.g., font size and line spacing) which should be adhered to. Please note that the EOI form is strictly word limited and we do not expect at this stage detailed economic data, research or in depth fundraising or delivery plans. Responses should also only include text.

The application deadline is **31 March 2026**. Applications received after this date will not be considered. **If a large number of applications are received, an initial sift will be conducted on the section, 'Section 2: Your Story', only.**

Contact: [uktownofculture2028-competition@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:uktownofculture2028-competition@dcms.gov.uk)

## SECTION 1: BID INFORMATION

In this section, we ask for information relating to your bidding team and place. The information will not be scored but will be used to confirm your eligibility.

### 1.1 Contact Information

Please provide contact information for the single point of contact for your bidding team.

Name, Position, Team / Organisation, Telephone Number, Email Address.

Ash Tadjrishi  
Town Clerk  
Felixstowe Town Council  
01394 282086  
[townclerk@felixstowe.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@felixstowe.gov.uk)

### 1.2 The Bidder

Please provide information for the bidder. With reference to the definitions of the Accountable Body and Delivery Body in “UK Town of Culture 2028 Expression of Interest: Guidance for bidders”. You should include information on who the lead bidder is and who the key partners are.

#### **The Accountable Body and Lead Bidder is:**

Felixstowe Town Council.

#### **The Delivery Body is:**

A newly formed UK Town of Culture Programme Board, Chaired by David Gledhill (Landguard Trust) and including the Town Clerk and East Suffolk Council’s Cultural Development Lead.

The partnership is anchored by the Felixstowe Place Board (FPB), an East Suffolk Council-facilitated strategic forum that coordinates area-level priorities.

#### **Key Partners include:**

Statutory: East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Felixstowe DWP, NHS Suffolk & North East Essex, Felixstowe School, Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership, University of Suffolk, Suffolk Centre for Culture and Heritage.

Economic: Port of Felixstowe, Felixstowe BID, Felixstowe Chamber of Commerce, LaVida, Beach Street.

Heritage & Arts: Furtherfield, WAMFest, Felixstowe Book Festival, Hamilton MAS, The Spa Pavilion Theatre, Landguard Trust, Landguard Fort and Felixstowe Museum. Two Sisters Art Centre, Art on The Prom. First Light Festival CIC, Royal Ballet and Opera, Orchestra’s Live, Dance East, Brighten the Corners and Suffolk Artlink.

Community & Leisure: The Felixstowe Society, Felixstowe Carnival, Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club, and the Felixstowe West Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board. Landguard Nature Reserve and Felixstowe Charities Network. Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum. Places Leisure. Lions Club of Felixstowe, Felixstowe Rotary Club, Edible Felixstowe.

Young People: Felixstowe Youth Forum (Representatives from Grange Primary School,

Colneis Junior School, Trimley St Mary Primary School, Felixstowe International College, Felixstowe School) and Level Two Youth Project.

### **1.3 The Geographical Area**

Please specify the geographical area that you are bidding for, with reference to the relevant geographical boundary designations. You may want to note the town categories set out in the “UK Town of Culture 2028 Expression of Interest: Guidance for bidders”. We will use your geographical area’s population size to categorise your bid.

**Felixstowe (civil parish of)**

## SECTION 2: YOUR STORY

In this section, we want to understand the unique story and culture of your town. [*Maximum 400 words for each section*]

### 2.1 Vision

#### **Felixstowe: Where the World Arrives**

##### **The Story: Peninsula of Parallels**

Felixstowe is the UK's front door. 40% of the nation's container trade passes through our port; with cargo, ideas and cultures arriving daily. Yet just beyond the cranes sits an Edwardian seaside town, a historic fishing community, and a landscape shaped by defence, migration and movement. Few places hold such a direct connection between the global and the local.

Set between the Rivers Deben and Orwell, Felixstowe is defined by edges and intersections: the maritime heritage of Felixstowe Ferry, the strategic history of Landguard - site of England's last opposed invasion - and the shifting shoreline of its nature reserves.

This is not the end of the line; it is a threshold where the UK and the world meet and where new cultural stories can begin.

##### **The Strategy: A Town Without Walls**

We will turn Felixstowe into a Living Stage where culture happens on promenades, high streets, container yards and neighbourhoods.

By connecting the Town Centre, seafront and communities such as Walton and Western Felixstowe, we will directly address coastal inequality. In a town where global wealth passes *through* but not always *into* local lives, culture becomes a tool for rebalancing, creating access, pride and opportunity.

##### **The Impact: From Arrival to Destination**

Felixstowe has long been defined by *arrival*; of people, goods and ideas. We will make it a *destination*; for people to stay, create and belong.

- **Social:** Reaching communities often excluded from cultural participation, using creative health to tackle isolation and coastal inequality.
- **Economic:** Building empowered pathways for young people and local enterprise, proving that a vibrant, year-round creative economy and global logistics can thrive together.
- **Cultural:** Scaling a quietly powerful grassroots scene, including the Carnival, Art on the Prom and the Book Festival, into a nationally recognised programme.
- **Profile:** Reframing Felixstowe from a 'port town' to a national cultural gateway, where global connections inspire local creation.

##### **Our Themes:**

- **Port / Fort / Resort:** Global trade, national defence, and seaside escape woven into a single cultural narrative.
- **Streets as Stages:** Neighbourhood-led programming, powered by a new 'Creative Engine' developing the next generation of cultural leaders.
- **People of Passage:** From suffragettes and innovators to port workers and residents, Felixstowe's story is one of movement, challenge and change.
- **Sculptures from the Sea:** A public art trail connecting town, port and promenade.
- **Beyond the Summer:** A year-round cultural rhythm that defies seasonality.

## 2.2 Local Needs

Felixstowe is a town of contrasts. Whilst the seafront thrives, Western Felixstowe sits within the 20% most deprived areas nationally, and is a designated "Pride in Place" priority area. Research from the University of Essex highlights the urgency of intervention, noting that young people in deprived coastal areas often face poorer health outcomes than their inland counterparts. This bid directly addresses this "coastal health gap," targeting high depression and childhood obesity rates through cultural and physical activity.

**The programme is data-led, focusing on:**

- **Families and Youth in Western & South Felixstowe (Streets as Stages / People of Passage):** Responding to findings that coastal youth face disproportionately poor mental health, the programme targets the 0-15 demographic to break cycles of long-term health decline and obesity through active cultural participation.
- **Young People Skills & Careers (Economy):** Creative industries often recruit fewer people under 25 due to a lack of portfolio and work experience opportunities. This bid will provide platforms for emerging artists to demystify creative roles and build viable local careers.
- **Socially Isolated Residents (Streets as Stages / People of Passage):** To foster cohesion there will be a particular focus on engaging residents in East and Western Felixstowe as well as those within newer housing developments. A 2028 Creative Health programme will offer targeted interventions within these specific wards to tackle loneliness.
- **Under-represented Groups (Streets as Stages / People of Passage):** The programme will proactively engage people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the Port worker community. It specifically targets those in deprived areas or with lower socio-economic classifications, as recent national research shows lower cultural participation for these groups.
- **Visitor Economy (Streets as Stages / Beyond the Summer):** With visitor economy valued at £54million annually and accounting for 16% of local employment, the goal is to bolster Felixstowe as a year-round destination.

**Strategic Alignment:**

- **Pride in Place:** The programme will provide the high-profile and financial mechanism to turn Felixstowe's status into tangible community transformation.
- **The Marmot Framework:** Cultural engagement, including creative health, serves as an intervention to tackle the social determinants of health identified by local data.
- **East Suffolk Cultural Strategy:** The "Culture Drives Impact" vision focuses on community, youth and economic growth. Whilst Felixstowe's creative economy contributes £4.5 million, it is underperforming with only 45 creative businesses. This bid will drive growth and investment in the sector.
- **Felixstowe Seafront Development Strategy (2025):** Ensuring the town remains a viable, year-round tourism destination.

## 2.3 Empowerment

### Designed from the Bottom Up

This bid has been shaped through an open, collaborative process capturing the voices of Felixstowe's residents, creatives, young people, businesses and community organisations.

### Stakeholder and Public Consultation

An initial cross-sector survey engaged 150+ organisations and individuals across arts, heritage, and local business. Simultaneously, a public engagement campaign gathered insight from residents, visitors and tourists, building a broader understanding of how Felixstowe is experienced. We followed this with themed workshops to map priorities and identify gaps in inclusivity. Insights revealed strong local pride alongside clear opportunities to expand and diversify the cultural offer. These sessions enabled partners to share ideas, identify strengths and highlight where cultural activity could grow and become more inclusive.

### Engaging Young People

Recognising young people as future custodians, we delivered a targeted consultation with Level Two Youth Project and the Felixstowe Youth Forum. Capturing the priorities of the under-25 demographic has produced a vision for a tech-enabled, connected town.

Key themes now embedded in the programme include:

- **Digital Heritage & Innovation:** Using immersive and XR technology to bring local stories to life, from the Port's evolution to interactive heritage experiences.
- **Creative Urban Identity:** Animating public spaces with street art that reflects a contemporary coastal identity.
- **Sustainable Connectivity:** Improving links between cultural sites such as Landguard, the hamlet of Felixstowe Ferry and the town centre through accessible, creative transport solutions.
- **Social & Night-Time Economy:** Enhancing social spaces and diversifying the evening economy to better serve younger audiences.

These priorities ensure the programme is not just for young people but shaped by them.

### Existing Networks and Partnerships

Ideas were further refined through the East Suffolk Culture Network, the Felixstowe Place Board and the Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership. These established forums ensure our cultural ambitions align with local requirements for wellbeing, community development and economic growth.

### Governance and Collaboration

A cross-sector Steering Group, comprising cultural, civic and economic leaders, has overseen bid development, operating as a place-based partnership with a consensus-led approach, reflecting shared ambitions. If shortlisted, this structure will evolve into a formal Programme Board to guide delivery.

**Accountability and Legacy**

Local ownership will be embedded through 'The Shoreline Collective', a resident-led assembly directed to co-curate the programme. To ensure a lasting legacy, our 'Creative Engine' - professional producers with technical and artistic expertise - will mentor local creatives so that the skills gained in 2028 remain within Felixstowe's grassroots permanently.

## SECTION 3: CULTURE FOR EVERYONE

In this section, we want to understand how you will design a cultural programme for all which will provide visible, accessible culture that boosts the profile of your town. [*Maximum 400 words for each section*]

### 3.1 Quality and Innovation

Felixstowe has a strong and distinctive cultural and heritage infrastructure, combining established venues, grassroots organisations and popular annual events. Key assets include Felixstowe Museum, Palace and Spa Pavilion theatres, Two Sisters Arts Centre, Landguard Fort, and galleries such as 142 Gallery and Hamilton MAS. Settings such as La Vida, hotels and Harvest House further enrich the offer.

Geographically dispersed and without a single large-scale hub, we view our entire town as a Living Stage. We will activate streets, the promenade, public and industrial spaces to deliver a dynamic, accessible cultural experience beyond traditional venues.

Our programme will connect venues through a coordinated, town-wide offer. By distributing events across multiple sites, we will strengthen infrastructure, animate underused spaces and link the seafront, town centre and heritage locations. Temporary infrastructure, pop-up performance spaces, outdoor exhibitions and digital installations will expand capacity with potential for legacy.

#### **Innovation through the "Port / Fort / Resort" Lens**

Engagement with young people through Level Two Youth Project identified a desire for immersive technology. We will deploy XR (Extended Reality) installations across the seafront, blending creativity with maritime heritage. Imagine "Digital Ghosts" at Landguard Fort or projections on the Port's gantry cranes, bringing global logistics and local history into a single narrative.

#### **Building on Success**

Felixstowe already hosts a thriving festival calendar including Art on the Prom, the Vintage Car Rally, Felixstowe Carnival, WAMFest, Proms on the Prom and the Book Festival. The programme will build on these by increasing scale, reach and ambition, developing flagship events with wider recognition.

These will be complemented by new commissions and cross-disciplinary work across visual arts, literature, music and heritage, forming a year-round programme that is inclusive, accessible and rooted in Felixstowe's identity.

#### **A New Creative Engine**

Delivery will be through a locally grounded yet ambitious 'Creative Engine', a network of local talent and freelancers, supported by partners including Landguard Trust, WAMFest, Felixstowe Carnival Association, Music in Felixstowe, Proms on the Prom, Hamilton MAS, La Vida, Felixstowe Book Festival and NPO Furtherfield. To maintain accountability, The Shoreline Collective (our resident-led assembly) will ensure the programme is shaped by the community.

#### **Strategic Legacy**

This approach aligns with East Suffolk Council's Culture and Creative Sectors Report (2026), which identifies Felixstowe as a key hub for creative industries. With the third-highest turnover in the district, the town has strong foundations. Town of Culture investment will strengthen infrastructure, expand opportunity and create lasting legacy.

## 3.2 Opportunity

### **From Isolated to Connected**

The UK Town of Culture programme will create meaningful opportunities for learning, participation and connection, shaped directly by needs identified through community consultation, particularly among younger residents.

### **Youth Learning and Skills Development**

To ensure initiatives genuinely align with local needs, we conducted engagement with the Felixstowe Youth Forum and the Level Two Youth Project. These sessions identified a clear desire for young people to be active participants in shaping the programme rather than passive consumers.

Through The Shoreline Collective and the Creative Engine we will provide hands-on experience in event planning, digital marketing, budgeting, and production. This ensures the programme remains relevant to youth interests while providing practical insight into creative careers. This focus is critical following the loss of post-16 education provision in Felixstowe, which has reduced local learning pathways.

Together with partnerships with our schools, youth organisations and cultural practitioners, the UK Town of Culture programme will offer mentoring and volunteering opportunities that build confidence and career awareness. Providing real-world experience within a major national programme gives our youth the competitive edge needed for future employment or higher education.

### **Bridging the Generational Divide**

The programme addresses the perception of Felixstowe as a town primarily for older residents. By designing activities that encourage participation across generations, such as intergenerational storytelling and collaborative projects, we will bring together young people, families, and care home residents. This ensures the cultural programme reflects the diversity of people who live and work here, strengthening relationships and fostering mutual respect.

### **Social Impact and Global Stories**

A key ambition of the programme is to move residents from *isolated* to *connected* by creating welcoming cultural experiences, encouraging participation and shared ownership. By activating public spaces and community venues across the town, the programme will provide opportunities for people to come together, celebrate creativity and build stronger community networks.

The programme will also celebrate Felixstowe's "People of Passage", recognising stories and contributions of the town's workers, volunteers, international residents and individuals with notable connections to the area. By bringing these stories to the forefront through events, exhibitions and storytelling initiatives, the programme will move local narratives from "hidden" to "headlines", strengthening civic pride and integrating our global industrial identity with our local residential life.

These social impacts will create a more resilient, inclusive town where every resident – regardless of age or background – feels their story is an essential part of our collective identity.

### 3.3 Accessible

#### **Breaking Barriers**

Accessibility is embedded across the design and delivery Felixstowe's UK Town of Culture 2028 programme. Our approach focuses on removing physical, financial, and geographic barriers to ensure every resident can participate, regardless of age, income, or ability.

#### **Physical Accessibility**

At the next stage we would work closely with Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum to help design programmes that address specific participation barriers. We will commission AccessAble to undertake professional audits of our key cultural assets.

#### **Financial Accessibility**

To minimise economic barriers, events will offer "Pay What You Can" tiers and concession schemes for those on lower incomes. Recognising that transport can be a barrier, we will develop creative solutions connecting key locations, including the station, town centre, and seafront, to help residents and visitors move easily between events. Wherever possible, activity will be brought directly into public spaces, streets, parks, and community venues, ensuring that culture is visible, welcoming, and accessible.

#### **Year-Round Participation**

The programme will challenge the perception that Felixstowe is only a summer destination by offering a vibrant year-round cultural programme. Activities will take place throughout all seasons, including indoor and community-based events during the winter months. This ensures that residents can engage with culture year-round and supports local businesses beyond the traditional tourist season.

#### **Reaching Diverse Communities**

Through The Shoreline Collective, the programme will be co-designed to appeal to a wide range of audiences and demographics. Events and activities will be developed for young families, young people, older residents, including care home communities, neurodivergent and disabled people and Felixstowe's diverse ethnic communities. Our "People of Passage" theme specifically celebrates these diverse traditions, ensuring residents see their own identities reflected in the town's narrative.

#### **Geographic Accessibility**

Events will take place across the full geography of Felixstowe, ensuring participation opportunities are distributed throughout the town rather than concentrated in a single location. By activating neighbourhood spaces, the town centre, and the seafront, we aim to reach residents who may not traditionally engage in cultural activities and to make participation part of everyday life.

#### **Flexible and Inclusive Scheduling**

Event timings will also be designed to accommodate the working patterns of Felixstowe's residents. For example, activities will be scheduled at varied times of day to allow participation by shift workers, including those employed at the Port of Felixstowe and in the night-time economy.

### **3.4 Communication**

A comprehensive communications strategy will be developed to ensure the Town of Culture programme reaches the widest possible audience, using a combination of digital, print, in-person engagement and partnerships. Our approach recognises that different audiences access information in different ways and will therefore use a breadth of formats and channels to maximise awareness and participation.

#### **Digital Innovation and The Creative Engine**

Communication will follow a tiered model combining digital platforms with traditional and community materials, neighbourhood noticeboards, community venues and local media. This ensures residents who may not use digital platforms are able to access information and participate fully in the programme.

A dedicated website will provide a central hub for all information relating to the UK Town of Culture programme, including event listings, updates on the bidding process, opportunities to get involved and reporting on progress.

Our Creative Engine will produce high-quality video content and behind-the-scenes streams to engage audiences across social media, sharing updates, highlighting local stories and celebrating community involvement, building momentum and visibility throughout the programme.

#### **Print and Physical Visibility**

To ensure inclusive communication, printed materials such as flyers, posters and a programme magazine will be distributed widely, including direct circulation to households and placement in community hubs, libraries, businesses and visitor locations. This ensures residents without regular internet access remain fully informed and engaged.

#### **Strong and Recognisable Branding**

A bold, clear and consistent visual identity will be developed and used across all communications. This will help create a recognisable and accessible brand for the Town of Culture programme, making it easy for residents and visitors to identify events, activities and opportunities.

#### **Community Visibility and Engagement**

In addition to formal channels, The Shoreline Collective will act as "Community Champions," using word-of-mouth and grassroots networks to reach socially isolated residents. Visibility will be enhanced through pop-up activities, preview events and promotional "trailer" events in public spaces. These moments will bring culture directly into everyday spaces while raising awareness of the wider programme.

#### **Regional, National and Global Visibility**

The communications strategy will also seek to amplify Felixstowe's profile beyond the town. Working with partners including the Suffolk Coast DMO, Visit Suffolk and Visit Felixstowe, as well as the Port of Felixstowe, whose global profile offers a powerful platform, we will support a PR campaign that positions Felixstowe as a vibrant, year-round creative destination and challenges the perception of the town solely as a seasonal seaside resort.

## SECTION 4: MAKING IT HAPPEN

In this section, we want to understand how you will deliver a successful programme.  
[Maximum 400 words for each section]

### 4.1 Partnerships

Our delivery is underpinned by a robust, place-based partnership endorsed by Felixstowe Town Council and embedded in the town's long-term growth strategy.

#### **Strategic Governance**

This bid is led by a cross-sector Steering Group, chaired by David Gledhill (Landguard Trust), which will transition into an independent Programme Board.

The partnership is anchored by the Felixstowe Place Board (FPB), an East Suffolk Council-facilitated forum bringing together local government, business, cultural organisations and charities. This enables alignment with statutory priorities in health, social care and transport, ensuring a joined-up approach across town and district levels.

#### **Securing and Supporting Creative Partners**

We will use the FPB's network to embed culture within wider social outcomes and secure commitments from key institutions including the Port of Felixstowe, Freeport East and the University of Suffolk, ensuring reach and long-term impact.

Alongside this, we will strengthen the local sector through our Creative Engine. East Suffolk Council's Culture Network in Felixstowe has an established membership from organisations to freelancers, who will be invited to take part and co-design the programme. Partners identified through March 2026 workshops, including National Portfolio Organisation Furtherfield, WAMFest, Felixstowe Carnival, Hamilton MAS, Two Sisters Arts Centre and La Vida, who bring trusted audiences, local knowledge and delivery capacity. These organisations will help shape and deliver the programme.

We will invite both National and Suffolk Cultural National Portfolio Organisations and key organisations to be part of our Town of Culture programme design, including First Light Festival CIC, Orchestra's Live, Dance East, Brighten the Corners and Suffolk Artlink, who can provide mentorship and specialist programming that ensures we offer a high-quality and varied programme in 2028, but with a view to work collaboratively with our existing cultural organisations and freelancers.

This ensures creatives are collaborators, not suppliers, building local capacity and leaving a legacy of skills, confidence and opportunity beyond 2028.

To ensure the programme reflects the demographics of Felixstowe, we will work with the emerging resident-led Felixstowe West Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board, which will oversee £20m of government investment over a ten-year period. This partnership will target engagement in areas of highest deprivation, ensuring activity extends beyond the seafront into residential communities.

Level Two Youth, a prominent youth organisation, will have representatives embedded

across these structures, ensuring young people are active contributors to decision-making and delivery. Together, this approach ensures all wards are represented and positions Felixstowe as a vibrant, multi-generational coastal town.

## 4.2 Programme Management

### Governance, Risk and Delivery Framework

Our delivery approach is designed to meet the DCMS “Making it Happen” criteria. We will implement a robust “Hub and Spoke” model, ensuring both professional programme control and meaningful community leadership. The current Steering Group will transition into an independent UK Town of Culture Programme Board - the central hub responsible for strategic governance, financial management, procurement, health & safety, safeguarding, legal compliance and reporting into DCMS.

Formal reporting lines to the Felixstowe Place Board will ensure place alignment and coordination with the long-term economic, cultural and regeneration priorities.

The Programme Board will also include East Suffolk Council’s Cultural Officer (strategic cultural leadership), and the Town Clerk (statutory governance and Accountable Body compliance). Capacity will be strengthened through the recruitment of a dedicated Programme Director for overall programming, delivery and budgetary control. Independent technical assurance, including ensuring quality control, and evaluation across the programme, will be provided by the University of Suffolk - ensuring that we support the requirement for strong evidence and outcomes measurement.

The “Spokes” will consist of thematic Delivery Groups, the Creative Engine and The Shoreline Collective aligning with the Town of Culture emphasis on community empowerment and inclusive programme design. This structure ensures the programme has the required skills, including community engagement, co-creation, cultural programming, event operation and artist liaison, whilst ensuring accessibility and representation across neighbourhoods.

### Key Risks and Mitigation

- **Delivery Complexity:** A multi-site, town-wide programme increases coordination risk.  
*Mitigation:* Central Programme Board oversight, supported by an experienced Programme Director and clear delivery structures.
- **Financial Management:** Managing a multi-million-pound budget across partners.  
*Mitigation:* Strong financial governance at the Board level, regular monitoring and independent assurance via the University of Suffolk.
- **Community Engagement Fatigue or Inequality of Access:** Risk that participation is uneven or not sustained.  
*Mitigation:* Distributed “mini committee” model, targeted engagement in underserved areas, and ongoing community feedback loops.
- **Infrastructure and Visitor Pressure:** Increased footfall impacting transport,

parking and public spaces.

*Mitigation:* Integrated transport planning, coordination with local authority services, and event distribution across sites.

- **Reputational Risk / Delivery Failure:** Failure to meet expectations at national level.

*Mitigation:* Experienced leadership, phased delivery planning, and robust monitoring and evaluation.

- **Legacy and Sustainability:** Risk of activity ending after 2028.

*Mitigation:* Investment in local skills, organisational capacity and infrastructure to ensure long-term cultural growth.

A RAG-rated risk register, regularly monitored by the Programme Board, will ensure proactive management and accountability throughout delivery.

### 4.3 Financial Management

If shortlisted, the £60,000 grant will be used to strengthen our full application by investing in specialist capacity, enhanced engagement, and robust delivery planning. We will appoint a Bid Development Lead to oversee the creation of a full Business Plan and act as the primary lead for shaping the 2028 delivery plan. This role will ensure the final submission is technically sound, financially robust, and locally co-created.

We have identified three strategic workstreams:

#### 1. Programme Co-Design & Stakeholder Engagement:

The Lead will undertake a comprehensive co-design process, working closely with Felixstowe West Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board, Felixstowe Place Board, and wider partners. The aim is to ensure residents, including those from underrepresented communities, move beyond consultation to active participation in shaping the programme. Small-scale test events will be funded to demonstrate feasibility, measure engagement, and validate the delivery model.

#### 2. Governance & Delivery Architecture:

The Lead will establish an independent UK Town of Culture Programme Board, with formal reporting lines to Felixstowe Place Board, Felixstowe Town Council, and East Suffolk Council. This structure will provide clear oversight, accountability, and coordination, supported by the technical expertise required to deliver a multimillion-pound programme. It will also ensure appropriate consideration of health and safety, licensing, and environmental mitigation requirements.

#### 3. Sponsorship Development:

The Lead will convert existing business interest into formal sponsorship agreements and prepare targeted external funding applications.

#### Total Programme Cost and Funding Mix:

We estimate a total delivery budget of approximately £4 million, reflecting the ambition of a transformative year designed to engage the whole community and attract national tourism. The proposed funding mix is structured to ensure stability and leverage:

- **Core Award:** £3 million (DCMS/Arts Council)

- **Heritage & Public Grants:** £400,000 from sources including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Community Fund, Arts Council England, and Historic England
- **Public Sector Alignment:** £400,000 from East Suffolk Council and Felixstowe Town Council through reallocated "Pride in Place"; "Enabling Communities" and other relevant budgets.
- **Private Investment:** £100,000 from commercial sponsorship
- **In-Kind Support:** £100,000 through donated venues and an estimated 3,000 volunteer hours

This approach builds upon the Felixstowe West Pride in Place programme. The Town of Culture award will act as a catalyst for high-profile cultural activity in 2028, while the wider £20 million Pride in Place endowment supports long-term physical and social regeneration. Together, this ensures DCMS funding is maximised through alignment with sustained local investment and legacy planning.

#### 4.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Legacy

##### Evaluation Methods

Our evaluation framework, developed with the University of Suffolk, a civic university with expertise in community-engaged research, is rooted in an agile and iterative Theory of Change. This live document acts as a roadmap to test and embed evaluation, feedback, and learning throughout delivery. This ensures improvements are made strategically and enables adaptation to changing contexts. By incorporating real-time feedback, participatory evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making, it strengthens community co-creation and supports a lasting cultural, social, and economic legacy that maps directly to local needs.

##### Outcomes:

##### Coastal Health & Youth:

To address the 'coastal health gap' identified by the University of Essex, we will monitor a self-reported wellbeing among the 0-15 demographic. Including external evaluation of creative health programme.

**Skills & Economic Growth:** To grow creative sector, we will track the creation of 100 accredited training opportunities for under-25s and the establishment of a Youth Culture Board to provide sustainability. Creating a careers pathway for local young people.

**Social Cohesion & Isolation:** We will monitor engagement across deprived deciles and new housing developments. Evaluation will focus on reducing loneliness through 300 volunteers contributing 3,000 hours of community-led activity.

**Under-represented Participation:** We will specifically track participation rates among the Port worker community, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, ensuring programming is co-created with these groups to bridge the socio-economic cultural gap.

**Year-Round Visitor Economy:** Aligning with the 2025 Seafront Strategy, we will monitor a and aim for an increase in footfall and the success of 10 major visitor events to transition Felixstowe into a year-round destination.

**Baseline Information:** Our evaluation is rooted in the March 2026 Public Survey and comprehensive stakeholder workshops. These provide a robust baseline of quantitative and qualitative data regarding resident pride and town perception. This is supplemented

by specific locality public health data regarding depression and obesity rates in Felixstowe, providing a clear benchmark for our health-led interventions, based on Marmot Health determinants. Baseline will include ESC's data dashboards and the Suffolk Observatory to track data on retail vacancy and visitor footfall. We will commission a creative sector economic report in 2027 and 2029.

**Legacy:** By training community event producers, establishing a Youth Culture board, we will ensure creative industry is self-sustaining. Crucially, the impact data gathered will provide the 'evidence of need' for a year-round cultural offer, securing Felixstowe's identity as a town of cultural creativity which benefits residents, communities wellbeing and Felixstowe's economy.