

Sevenoaks eyes up cultural first for UK towns



WINNING THE TITLE WOULD ENSURE
£3M TO SPEND ON YEAR-LONG EVENTS

SEVENOAKS is competing to become the UK's first Town of Culture.

Launched by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, this national competition aims to boost local pride, highlight the contribution communities make to the UK's cultural landscape and widen access to the arts.

Sevenoaks will submit its Expression of Interest by March 31. The strongest applicants will be short-listed and awarded £60,000 to help develop their final bids.

The first title will be awarded for 2028, when the winning town will run a year-long programme of cultural events and celebrations.

The winner will receive £3 million, while two runners-up will each receive £250,000 to support their cultural programmes.

The competition invites towns of all sizes to showcase their local visions and voices, through arts venues, performances, workshops and more. The contest runs alongside

the existing UK City of Culture competition.

Sevenoaks has a wide range of cultural venues and spaces, including The Stag, The Vine event space and bandstand, the Environmental Park and Amphitheatre, The Space at Sevenoaks School Performing Arts Centre, Knole House, Knole Conservation Studio, Kaleidoscope Gallery, Museum, Library and Art Space and the restored heritage **Bat & Ball** Station.

Sevenoaks' entry builds on the town's Cultural Strategy, endorsed by the community in a public referendum in May 2023, as part of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan.

Developed with local arts groups, the strategy sets out an ambition to strengthen, enrich and promote the town's cultural offer.

Cllr Victoria Granville, chair of the arts and culture working group, said: "This is a positive opportunity for Sevenoaks to extend and enrich the creative potential of our diverse

artistic community."

The town council's arts and culture working group oversees the implementation of the strategy through an action plan, and its priorities include:

- Improving signage and wayfinding to cultural venues;
- Enhancements to The Stag, including additional seating and a new gallery space;
- Developing proposals for affordable working spaces for artists;
- Further developing Sevenoaks' year-round cultural events programme, including revitalising the Summer Festival;
- Appointing a dedicated cultural liaison to help coordinate projects and partnerships.

If Sevenoaks is successful in this competition, funding would help accelerate these initiatives and expand the town's cultural ambitions.

> 26 March 2026 at 0:00

