

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Special Full Council
Tuesday - 17 February 2026
UK Town of Culture

Recommendation

The Council RESOLVE to agree:

1. To submit an Expression of interest for Blyth to be UK Town of Culture 2028 before the deadline of 31 March 2026.
2. To explore the possibility of being the Accountable Body

Ward
All

Risk Management

The submitting of the expression of interest (EOI) would not require additional resource but would include discussions with local cultural organisations. Should the EOI be successful, shortlisted bids are to receive £60,000 for bid development, this could cover additional resource if required.

Crime Prevention

Extremely low at bid stage.

Objective

To promote the environmental, social, and economic well being of the town and its community.

Report

The UK Town of Culture programme, delivered by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), is designed to celebrate the cultural life of towns and to use culture as a catalyst for regeneration, pride in place, and economic growth. Previous holders of similar cultural titles have demonstrated significant social, cultural and economic benefits, including increased investment, enhanced national profile, and stronger community cohesion.

Blyth is well placed to submit a credible and ambitious bid for the medium town category. Blyth has a strong cultural identity rooted in its history, people and coastal location, alongside a growing programme of contemporary cultural activity. Recent successes such as Blyth Celebrates, the Festival of Energy, and the sustained positive work of the

Town Council events and many local cultural organisations illustrate both capacity and ambition.

If Blyth were successful in securing the UK Town of Culture 2028 title, the potential benefits could include:

- Access to cultural funding £3M (overall winner) or £250k (runners up) and the ability to leverage additional public and private investment.
- Growth in visitor numbers, increased spend in the local economy, and support for local businesses.
- Opportunities for training, volunteering and employment within the creative and cultural sectors, particularly for young people.
- Enhanced visibility for Blyth at a regional and national level, supporting wider regeneration and inward investment ambitions.
- Long-term improvements to cultural infrastructure, partnerships and participation that extend beyond 2028.

The benefits of bidding are not limited to winning the title. Experience from similar initiatives shows that the process of developing a bid can itself have a transformative impact on communities, including stronger partnerships, community engagement, strategic clarity, and confidence and momentum.

Regardless of the outcome, submitting the EOI would send a strong message about Blyth's confidence, creativity and commitment to culture-led regeneration.

Blyth has a compelling story to tell and a growing track record of delivering high-quality, inclusive cultural activity. A bid for UK Town of Culture 2028 represents a timely opportunity to build on existing successes, galvanise local partnerships and articulate a bold vision for the town's future.

The Council is therefore asked to consider leading the development and submission of an EOI, recognising both the potential rewards of success and the benefits that can arise from the bidding process itself.

Northumberland County Council is supportive of Blyth developing the EOI as a local authority partner, recognising there could be good synergies with Culture and Placemaking Programme 2 (CPP2) which may score well with DMCS to show a joined-up approach with a strong community arts/cultural base. The main programme commences in April 2028, when they'd be well underway with CPP2 and community cultural grants. The involvement of NCC in the partnership is open to be reviewed

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk
Tuesday 10 February 2026