



-----**Release date: 10am Monday 16 December 2024**-----

## **Four Towns Shortlisted for 2026 Town of Culture**

Four towns have been shortlisted to be the 2026 Town of Culture: Ferndown, Sherborne, Swanage & Purbeck, and Wimborne.

Town of Culture was established by Arts Development Company, and is an opportunity for a town, village or hamlet in Dorset to work together and deliver a year's worth of extraordinary cultural activity. £30,000 will be awarded to the winner by a panel of industry experts, with support and funding from Dorset Council.

David Lockwood, CEO of Arts Development Company, said:

"We've been bowled over by the initial submissions for Town of Culture 2026. These four towns, each distinct, show clearly the opportunities for using culture and creativity to enhance their towns for their residents. Now the four towns have a chance to develop their plans in more detail, and we'll work with our panel to make the difficult decision as to which of them will be Dorset Town of Culture for 2026."

Cllr Ryan Hope, Dorset Council's Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement, said:

"The four shortlisted towns for the 2026 Town of Culture all bring something different to the table. I'm delighted they have been recognised for their individual culture offers. Dorset is home to some outstanding cultural venues and events, and I am excited to see how the judging unfolds so we can celebrate arts and events which make up the fabric of our wonderful county."

Portland and Weymouth will be Dorset's joint Towns of Culture in 2025. They will deliver a programme of extraordinary cultural and community events and activities across the towns in 2025.

END

---

### **Image Credits**

Ferndown, from left to right:

Fete on the Field - Tom Scrase

Ferndown Upper School Matilda production - Ferndown Upper School

St Mary's Church - St Mary's Church Ferndown

Longham Lakes - Kara Guppy



The Barrington Arts Centre - Ferndown Town Council  
Ferndown Upper School BTEC Foundation Diploma Show - Ferndown Upper School  
Voulez Vous Productions Jack and the Beanstalk pantomime production - Hattie Miles  
Jubilee Afternoon Tea Party - Tom Scrase

Sherborne- Paul Dibben  
Swanage- Andy Lyons  
Wimborne- Rob Stevenson

---

## Information

### About Town of Culture

Town of Culture was established by Arts Development Company to strengthen the excellent cultural activity already happening, and to deepen relationships between communities, cultural venues and organisations. Arts Development Company hopes to foster a spirit of collaboration, to ensure a legacy of rich and diverse culture across the county.

Bridport is currently piloting Town of Culture for the second half of 2024. Creatives and organisations from across Bridport have come together to create a vibrant programme of cultural events from July to December.

### About Arts Development Company

Arts Development Company is a social enterprise that harnesses culture to make positive change, enabling people and places to flourish in Dorset and beyond. They're responsible for Dorset's Cultural Strategy, which unites and harnesses the sector in shared ambitions, and they have an excellent track record in the strategic development of culture, working collaboratively across the sector and with health, tourism and placemaking.

Based in the heart of Dorset, they operate from The Little Keep, a 150-year-old barracks that they run as a creative workspace for artists, producers, organisations and social enterprises.

---

## Contacts

Jasmine O'Hare, Communications Lead, Arts Development Company:  
[jasmine.ohare@theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk](mailto:jasmine.ohare@theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk)

Tazmin Richings, Communications Intern, Arts Development Company:  
[tazmin@theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk](mailto:tazmin@theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk)