

Open Call Commission



MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL

Taking place on **Sunday 21 June**, 10am–8pm, the third edition of the Midsummer Festival features a **free, fun-packed family-friendly** programme inspired by the summer solstice. Located on Midsummer Boulevard, which was built to famously align with the rising and setting sun, the festival transforms both the road and surrounding public realm into joyful, colour filled stage, hosting performances, creative workshops, concerts, art installations, a fantastic street food offer and more.

To date, the 2024 and 2025 editions of the festival have attracted over 14,000 visitors, with the Programme highlights including **Wild Rumpus** who are known for producing extraordinary, immersive worlds, taking audiences out of their day to day lives into magical and enchanting places; **Folk Dance Remix**, **Thingamajig Theatre** and **Leap the Look** wowed audiences alongside a series of newly commissioned works by local artists and creative practitioners including **The Wandering Oracles**, **Midsummer Mischief**, **Birch Tree Family** and **The Orbitza**. A music tent, creative workshop space and a sold-out food and drink offer completed the creative programme offer.

2026 promises to be even bigger and better!

Artist Commission Brief

Milton Keynes City Council invites proposals from artists, collectives, or creative practitioners for a newly commissioned artwork or participatory project to be presented as Milton Keynes Midsummer Festival in June 2026.

We are seeking ambitious, engaging, and high-quality proposals that:

- Respond to the spirit of midsummer (light, renewal, connection, nature, celebration)
- Engage diverse communities across Milton Keynes
- Are suitable for presentation in an outdoor public setting
- Are accessible and inclusive
- Encourage participation, interaction, or shared experience



Birch Tree Family at Midsummer Festival, 2025. Photograph by Chris Henley

The commission may take the form of (but is not limited to):

- Temporary public art installation
- Participatory performance or procession
- Light, sound, or digital artwork
- Interactive sculpture or immersive experience
- Community co-created work

Budget

The total commission budget is up to £7,000 (inclusive of VAT if applicable). This must cover:

- Artist fees
- Materials and production costs
- Fabrication
- Technical requirements
- Transport
- Installation and de-installation
- Insurance
- Access costs
- Any engagement workshops or community activity

Applicants must provide a clear and realistic budget breakdown.

Location & Presentation

Proposals should be designed for outdoor presentation along Midsummer Boulevard (in the Festival location, visit www.midsummer-festival.co.uk/getting-here).

Proposals must consider:

- Weather-resilience
- Be Safe and compliant with UK health & safety regulations
- Suitable for a public audience including families and young people
- Installable within a short timeframe

Artists may be required to work with the festival production team and local authority officers to finalise technical details.

Selection Process

Applicants should understand the context and aspirations of the commission and then submit a proposal via culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Shortlisted applicants will be required to present to Festival teams.

A final proposal will be selected and the applicant awarded the commission. The successful applicant will be expected to further develop their proposal working in close collaboration with Milton Keynes City Council and the Festival team.

Exclusions

We will not accept proposals for existing artworks; projects that do not meet the timescales/budget or approaches that do not respond to the requirements of the brief as outlined.

How to apply

Deadline: 6 April at 5pm

If you are interested in this opportunity please submit the following information:

- An outline of your approach to this commission brief – **max 1 side of A4**.
- Provide up to **3 examples** of previous relevant commissions (pdf or jpg file types only) with information about each project – **max 5 sides of A4**. Please include indicative budget spend for each example and images.
- An indicative budget breakdown and timeline of activity.
- Current Curriculum Vitae or practice profile
- Letter confirming your availability and contact details for 2 referees (email and telephone) – note: preferably from recent commissioners
- Evidence of insurance cover at required levels
- **Please do not exceed 6MB in file size**

Submissions will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Approach: Respond to identified themes, aims and objectives, with the ability to research and respond creatively to the Brief.
- Quality of previous projects: A proven track record of high-quality delivery, working in collaboration with communities and partners to develop and deliver exceptional, innovative, and engaging outdoor performance works.
- Experience: Successful delivery of projects of similar scale and budget, demonstrable experience of working collaboratively with communities, partners and stakeholders, excellent communication skills with the ability to articulate ideas and processes.

If you have require any further information or have any questions – please email culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk