

Parade Brief

About Midsummer Festival

On **Sunday 21 June**, from 10am–8pm, the third edition of the Milton Keynes **Midsummer Festival returns**—bursting with colour, creativity, and celebration. Inspired by the summer solstice and set along the city’s iconic Midsummer Boulevard, purposefully aligned with the rising and setting sun, the festival transforms the public realm into a vibrant outdoor playground.

Audiences can expect a joyful programme of performance, live music, creative workshops, large-scale art installations, interactive experiences, and exceptional street food—all free and open to everyone. The 2024 and 2025 festivals welcomed more than 14,000 visitors, featuring acclaimed creators including **Wild Rumpus**, **Folk Dance Remix**, **Thingamajig Theatre**, **Leap then Look**, and newly commissioned work by local artists such as **The Wandering Oracles**, **Midsummer Mischief**, **Birch Tree Family**, and **The Orbitza**. A buzzing music tent, hands-on creativity spaces, and a sell-out food and drink offer completed the atmosphere.

2026 will be the festival’s boldest edition yet.

www.midsummer-festival.co.uk

Commission Overview

Milton Keynes City Council seeks an experienced artist, creative practitioner, or outdoor arts company to create and deliver a new outdoor festival parade—a major highlight of the 2026 programme. We are committed to showcasing the transformative power of artists in shaping the public realm and enhancing the lived experience of Milton Keynes residents.



Aims & Ambitions

We are inviting proposals that:

- Deliver a high-energy, celebratory, visually striking parade suitable for a broad family audience.
- Include two presentations during the Festival:
 - One in the afternoon
 - One as a spectacular closing finale (Proposals must demonstrate how the work can be reset for two showings.)
- Match the scale and ambition appropriate for two major festival moments.
- Draw inspiration from Midsummer folklore, the summer solstice, and local stories, myths, and legends.
- Are designed as a shared public experience (not requiring audience participation).
- Prioritise theatricality, high-quality production, sound, colour, costume, and movement.
- Are bold, joyful, and visible across the festival footprint.
- Include meaningful collaboration with a minimum of two Milton Keynes-based community groups.

Budget

Total Commission Budget: £20,000 covering:

- Artist fees
- Research & Development
- Materials and fabrication
- Production costs
- Technical requirements
- Transport
- Installation & deinstallation
- Insurance
- Access costs
- Community engagement and workshops

Applicants must provide a clear, realistic budget breakdown.

Location & Presentation

The parade will be performed along Midsummer Boulevard, the festival's central spine.

From April onwards, the appointed artist/company will join fortnightly team meetings to share progress and collaborate on key aspects.

Proposals must consider:

- Outdoor and weather-resilient design
- Safety and full compliance with UK Health & Safety regulations
- Suitability for a mixed public audience, including families and young people
- The unique constraints and opportunities of the boulevard and festival footprint
- The commissioned artist/company will work alongside the Festival production team and Milton Keynes City Council officers to finalise all technical aspects.

Selection Process

To apply, send all required materials to: culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Shortlisted artists will be invited to present to the Festival team before the final selection is made. The chosen artist/company will then continue to develop the work in close collaboration with MKCC and the Festival team.

How to Apply

Deadline: Friday 21 April 2026 at 5pm

Please submit the following:

- A one-page outline describing your creative approach to the Parade Brief
- Up to 3 examples of relevant previous work (PDF/JPG), including:
 - Project descriptions
 - Images
 - Indicative budgets (Maximum 5 pages total)
- Indicative budget breakdown
- Timeline of activity
- Current CV or practice profile
- Letter confirming availability and two referees (email + phone, ideally recent commissioners)
- Evidence of insurance at appropriate levels
- Total submission must not exceed 6MB

Assessment Criteria

- Creative approach: Demonstrates strong response to themes, aims, and festival context
- Quality: Proven track record of delivering ambitious, innovative, high-quality outdoor arts
- Experience: Successful delivery of comparable projects, community collaboration, strong communication, and effective partnership working

For further information or questions, contact:

culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk

The Wondering Oracles at Midsummer Festival, 2025. Photograph by Chris Henley



MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL

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City Council

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www.midsummer-festival.co.uk