

FESTIVAL OF _____ **TOMORROW TUMORROW**

1-20 FEBRUARY 2027

GET INVOLVED!
CALL FOR PROPOSALS



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**UK Research
and Innovation**



"It was an absolute pleasure getting involved with this festival and the feedback we received the visitors was overwhelmingly positive. Really impressed with everything that went into it and the organisers should be incredibly proud !"

BE PART OF THE FESTIVAL OF TOMORROW

Are you passionate about sparking curiosity, celebrating ideas and sharing knowledge?
The Festival of Tomorrow blends the creative arts with science and innovation to explore the ideas that will shape our future.

Whether you'd like to showcase your work to a wide audience, test out a new public engagement activity, or bring the wonders of research, science, technology and the arts to life for families and young people, we'd love to hear from you.

Each year, we work with performers, science communicators, researchers, industry professionals, artists, writers, organisations, charities, academic institutions, businesses, community groups and more.

Through our programmes, we can provide a wide range of opportunities for you to reach a new audience, try out new ideas and approaches or connect and collaborate with other organisations.

We've put together this pack to tell you a bit more about the Festival of Tomorrow, our audiences and the sort of content, events and activities we are looking for.

Please submit expressions of interest by completing our [proposals form online](#) by Sunday 17 October 2026 or [get in touch](#) to discuss your initial ideas.

If you'd simply like to exhibit at the Festival Finale please [book online](#) by Weds 23 December to guarantee inclusion in our printed programme

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL OF TOMORROW

SERVING SWINDON'S COMMUNITIES

Centred in Swindon, the home of UK Research and Innovation, we use a range of venues and formats to bring local people, artists, performers, researchers, businesses and cultural organisations together to support engagement and participation with a diverse range of audiences, and particularly with young people from Swindon's underserved communities.

FREE TO ACCESS

Over 95% of our programme is free for everyone to enjoy, and under 18s go free to almost all activities. Where a small ticket price applies, this is to help manage capacity and minimise no-shows to help ensure as many people as possible get to experience our most popular events. We offer complementary passes to community groups and anyone experiencing financial hardship.

JOIN OUR MISSION

We work with partners from academia, industry, government, charities and the arts to create opportunities for everyone to engage with our shared research endeavour, and how it can shape our choices in a changing world.

"Phenomenal - just what Swindon needs every year. We have stayed all day and talked with so many people. Loved the small local businesses doing cutting edge work."

"It was absolutely incredible for our family. Adults and children alike, we all had a fantastic time"

>44,000

Directly engaged with Festival of Tomorrow activities in 2026



1.2 million new
workers will be needed in the
creative industries in the next
decade[#]

57% drop in creative
subjects Further Education
enrolment between 2014/15
and 2022/23****

27% of those aged 18-34
said they had been
discouraged from pursuing
science at school*

Lack of STEM skills costs UK
businesses

£1.5bn per year ***



WHY WE EXIST

FACING NEW CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING WORLD

In the face of environmental crises, the debate around the rise of AI and the lasting impacts of the pandemic, the need for more equitable, sustainable and inclusive approaches to how we fund, create and share knowledge has never been clearer.

By bringing research into the cultural sphere, we help to remove barriers between experts and the public, building audiences' confidence with science, and giving professionals opportunities to pilot new approaches, open conversations and grow understanding of public needs and views.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

The importance of the STEM and creative industries workforces and their skills in UK and global society has never been clearer, but there is still a shortage young people pursuing careers in these vital sectors. In Swindon, science and technical employers are expected to become increasingly important, yet our young people have some of the lowest qualifications and access to Higher Education in England. Over a third of parents say that they lack the knowledge and confidence to advise their children about STEM or creative career choices. Through our programmes, we work to broaden the aspirations and opportunities of young people in Swindon and beyond.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

There is an overall lack of representation in both the STEM sector and the creative industries, particularly certain ethnic minority and socio-economic groups, women, disabled people and those from the LGBTQ+ community. Without greater diversity in the workplace, valuable skills, experiences and perspectives are being lost. We aim to inspire remove barriers for audiences who have not traditionally seen science or culture as 'for them'.

Sources: *3M State of Science Pandemic Pulse **Research Without Barriers Survey Commissioned by Thales, March 2021*** STEM Learning, 2018 ****PEC State of the Nation - Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce #Screen South Creative Industry Skills Overview

WHAT WE DO

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION

Each year, Festival of Tomorrow brings together researchers, programmers, artists and performers to share discoveries, research and knowledge and ideas from a huge variety of organisations from Swindon, the UK and internationally. By creating a joined-up festival period at venues across the town, we create excitement and anticipation with audiences and contribute to growing local pride.

We share our learnings with peers including the UK Science Festival Network, BIG and other networks, to help contribute to best practice in the sector.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Through our free, hands-on Discovery Zones, drop-in activities About Town, and our accessible programme of shows, we give young people opportunities to unlock their curiosity, meet diverse role models from a wide range of disciplines and help build their parents' confidence in supporting them in considering options for Further and Higher Education, and careers. Our free Schools Programme enables thousands of pupils who would not normally have the chance to take part in interactive sessions with skilled science communicators, join workshops, or chat and ask questions of role models from a wide range of organisations.

INVOLVING AND INCLUDING EVERYONE

We value the diverse range of backgrounds and interests of our attendees and contributors, and we work hard to make our programme and content relevant and engaging for people of all stages of their lives. We fundraise in order to be able to make as much of our activity free for attendees as possible, thanks to the support of our partners, exhibitors and funders. We work actively with community groups and schools to bring opportunities to people who would not normally see science or culture as being 'for them'.



93%

said the festival makes an important cultural contribution to Swindon

76%

of visitors said their interest in science increased as a result

54%

of visitors to the Festival Finale are under 18

OUR KEY PUBLIC AUDIENCES



CHILD-FIRST FAMILIES

Seek days out that will keep kids busy and entertained; 'if the kids are happy, we're happy'.
Driven by fun for the kids, rather than educational value.
Budgets are often tight, but they will spend money on activities that are perceived to offer guaranteed entertainment for kids.



FAMILY ADVENTURERS

Busy families who treasure activities both parents and kids take part in and learn together.
Family time together is precious – they want to create memories and introduce new experiences.
They like to choose their own activities and make their own adventures from a range on offer.

ENQUIRING MINDS

Always curious, with a wide range of interests – they seek experiences that stimulate their minds.
Love to ask questions, delve deeper and make connections between the things they learn.
Appreciate quieter spaces to sit and think about what they've experienced.



THE PROFESSIONALS

Work in or study science, research, engineering or technology, they produce or curate knowledge.
Seek cultural activities and evening events which match their interests.
Volunteering or running public engagement activities help them hone their skills and share their knowledge.



With our partners and exhibitors, we curate a wide range of activities to appeal to different audiences.

Our main priority is to meaningfully engage underserved audiences and to broaden aspirations for young people and those who don't normally seek out science or cultural activities.

62%

don't normally seek out science content or see science as not being 'for them'

21%

of attendees are from ethnic minority audiences

OUR THEME FOR 2027

New Horizons

Every great leap begins with a question.

Inspired by groundbreaking space missions like NASA's ESCAPADE, the 2027 Festival of Tomorrow celebrates discovery in all its forms - from artificial intelligence and medical breakthroughs to elite performance and green tech.

Here, scientists and artists unite, blending research, technology, and storytelling to reveal the human spirit behind discovery.

New Horizons isn't just about reaching distant worlds—it's about expanding the borders of our lives through creativity, innovation, and curiosity.



While we are particularly interested in proposals with a connection to our theme, the most important factor is providing high-quality, engaging experiences for our audiences – so don't hesitate about putting any ideas or activities forward!

THE FESTIVAL OF TOMORROW 2027 – *New Horizons*

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



ONLINE / IN-SCHOOL

Interactive programme, focused on Primary and EYFS schools. Online and in-school shows, presentations, workshops and challenges.

Pilot of interdisciplinary workshops for secondary schools.

Fully funded for Swindon schools.

>13,000
bookings *

01-12 FEBRUARY

HAWKING BUILDING HYBRID EVENTS SERIES



SCIENCE & INNOVATION PARK

Evening hybrid events series hosted at the Science Museum Groups' new Hawking Building national collections centre.

Live panels plus online link ups with labs, galleries and curators, aimed at science-engaged adults and teens who want to delve deeper.

~450
audience

EVENINGS 05-11 FEBRUARY

ABOUT TOWN PROGRAMME



MULTI-VENUE

Free family-focused half-term drop-in workshops, activities, self-guided trails, creative activities and art installations at shopping centres, community hubs, libraries and parks, to reach audiences who wouldn't come to the Finale.

Accessibly priced evening events programme for adult audiences.

>20,000
participants*

12-20 FEBRUARY

FESTIVAL OF TOMORROW AT STEAM



STEAM MUSEUM

Keynote immersive art installation *Mars* by Luke Jerram will provide a focal point for our theme.

We will curate a wraparound programme of free performances, exhibits, creative workshops and hands-on activities to accompany *Mars*.

>12,000
Attendees*

13-20 FEBRUARY

FESTIVAL FINALE EXTRAVAGANZA



THE DEANERY, WICHELSTOWE

Free admission to 5 Discovery Zones, filled with interactive exhibits and creative activities.

Lively programme of shows in two theatres – nominal charge applied for adult tickets to minimise no-shows.

Attracts a broad and diverse audience.

~5,000
Attendees*

19-20 FEBRUARY

WHAT SORT OF ACTIVITIES ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We're looking for events, activities, workshops and installations and that bring to life science, engineering, research and innovation in the broadest sense, offering something for everyone, whatever their background and level of interest.

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME: we programme a core series of engaging online shows with science communicators for a mass audience of pupils, focused on EYFS, KS1 and KS2. These are complemented by in-school performances, presentations and workshops for individual class & year groups. We encourage submissions that include an interactive element and/or follow-up activities for teachers to do with their classes.

FOT AT STEAM & ABOUT TOWN PROGRAMME: We're looking for proposals for events and activities which will appeal to audiences who wouldn't normally engage with content or activities about science, research, tech or innovation. We particularly welcome proposals for interactive or participatory activities which allow audiences to immerse themselves in the content – these might be hands on workshops, classes, drop-in activities, walking tours, art installations or performances. As the programme runs during the February half-term, family-friendly proposals are especially relevant, although we do also curate evening events for an adult audience.

We also love working with partner venues, so if you are a Swindon visitor attraction, community space or other venue and would like to host an event or organise your own Festival of Tomorrow activities as part of the programme we'd love to hear from you.

HYBRID TALKS AND PANELS: we curate a small number of in-person and hybrid panel discussions, interviews and presentations which bring a fresh perspective or 'behind the scenes' access to appeal to adult and teen audiences who want to delve deeper.

FINALE EVENT: our family-focused two-day extravaganza brings together hands-on exhibitors, drop-in workshops, art installations, spectacular shows and thought-provoking panels. If you'd simply like to exhibit, you can [apply online](#). We're also looking for proposals for shows and performances, interactive workshops, immersive installations and more.

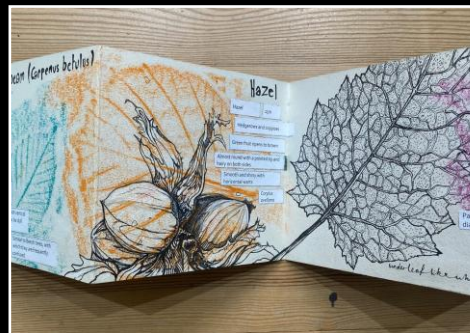


JUST A FEW PREVIOUS EXAMPLES...



BUBBLE SUPERSTARS

Pupils explored experimental protocols, surface tension and simple chemistry in this whole school challenge- devised by award-winning Science Communicator Dr Sarah Bearchell



WINTER TREE WALKART JOURNALLING WORKSHOP

Collaboration between local artist Jo Beal and forest ecologist Dr Robin Hayward



MONOCHROME - THE PHYSICS OF COLOUR

Art/science interactive installation by the MoSAIC transformed a vacant retail unit in Swindon Designer Outlet.



LAST AND FIRST MEN

Live contemporary dance performance presented by Neon Dance, set to the backdrop of Johann Jóhannsson's 16mm black and white film, with narration from Tilda Swinton.



WHAT THE TORTOISE TAUGHT US

Live walkaround animatronic puppetry performances exploring ecology and biodiversity loss, by The Flying Buttresses



CURTAIN UP! THE DRAMA OF SOUND AND LIGHT

Workshop for young people, exploring the science of light and sound and the theatre professionals using them to create atmosphere, emotion and entertainment.



HOTHOUSE

Interactive 'garden' of giant soft robotic plants brought to life by creative studios Air Giants.



STORIES WRITTEN IN STARDUST

Immersive art installation in the historic Health Hydro Small Pool by young Swindon artist, Harrie Dearing, digitising her Cosmoscapes painting series



NOISY TOYS

Walkaround science-busking exploring the physics of sound.

HOW WE WORK WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS



ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

- Run a workshop or showcase innovative public engagement activities About Town
- Propose a hybrid talk or panel
- Inspire with an interactive exhibit at our Festival Finale or at Steam Museum
- To help us keep 95% of our programmes free, we ask institutions to contribute a small fee for exhibiting to help cover costs.



INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONALS

- Propose a show, performance, workshop, or immersive experience, including details of your fees.
- Looking for an audience for your funded project, installation or collaboration? We can provide in-kind support, venues, marketing exposure and access to our audiences.



CHARITIES & NOT FOR PROFIT GROUPS

- The support of our sponsors enables us to make a limited number of complementary exhibitor spaces at the Festival Finale and Steam available to relevant charities and not for profits.
- We'd also love to hear any proposals for our wider programmes – from providing activities, to hosting an event or workshop as part of the programme.



COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS

- Showcase your innovation by exhibiting or running workshops. We ask for a small fee for exhibiting.
- Support local communities and help inspire the next generation by sponsoring the Festival
- Provide personal development opportunities for your staff through volunteering



LOCAL VENUES

- Run your own events and activities as part of the Festival Programme and benefit from marketing to our audiences
- Propose your site as potential venue for us to use for Festival events or activities – please outline any costs to cover staffing etc.

* Exhibitor fees play an important role in enabling us to keep the majority of our programme free for audiences. However, if cost is a barrier, please get in touch to discuss your ideas. Thanks to our sponsors, we can sometimes make spaces available for relevant organisations.



“The venue was superb and the staff were really lovely & helpful - thank you for hosting us! We'd love to collaborate on other outreach opportunities in future”

KEY DATES

17 OCTOBER	DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS FOR TALKS & SHOWS, SCHOOLS PROGRAMME, ABOUT TOWN EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS
OCTOBER-MID DECEMBER	PROGRAMME CONFIRMED & EVENT MARKETING COPY & IMAGES COLLATED
23 DECEMBER	FESTIVAL FINALE EXHIBITOR BOOKING DEADLINE FOR GUARANTEED INCLUSION IN PRINTED PROGRAMME
JANUARY	FULL PUBLIC PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED AND BOOKINGS OPEN
15 JANUARY	LAST MINUTE AVAILABILITY FINALE EXHIBITOR BOOKINGS CLOSE
1-12 FEBRUARY	SCHOOLS PROGRAMME IS LIVE
5-11 FEBRUARY	HYBRID EVENING EVENTS PROGRAMME IS LIVE
13-20 FEBRUARY	ABOUT TOWN PROGRAMME IS LIVE
19-20 FEBRUARY	FESTIVAL FINALE EVENT
MARCH - APRIL	EVALUATION & REPORTING

OVER TO YOU!

SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSALS

EXHIBITING AT THE FESTIVAL FINALE

If you would simply like to secure an Exhibitor Space at our Finale Event, book [online here](#) before Wednesday 23 December 2026

PROPOSALS FOR ACTIVITIES, SHOWS, EVENTS, WORKSHOPS OR INSTALLATIONS

Use our [online form](#) to tell us about you, your organisation (if applicable) and your ideas by Sunday 17 October 2026. Alternatively, you can email details to louisehalliday@newelements.uk

SUPPORT IN DEVELOPING YOUR ACTIVITIES

If you're keen to be involved in the Festival but haven't got a fully formed idea yet, or if you aren't sure if your activities would fit with our programme, we are always happy to arrange to chat through your ideas and options with you.

Get in touch with louisehalliday@newelements.uk to arrange a time to discuss your ideas.



FESTIVAL OF _____ **TOMORROW TUMORROW**

CONTACT US:

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