

Swindon
Culture
Collective

OPEN CALL

Swindon Winter Fest artist commissions and
creative workshops opportunities

Open call

Swindon Winter Fest Commissions

Swindon Culture Collective CIC invites proposals from artists, makers and creative practitioners to help deliver the vision of Swindon Winter Fest 2025, a magical one-day festival of culture, creativity, and community.

Paid opportunities available:

A) Commissions to deliver drop-in creative workshops or participatory activities on Saturday 22 November 2025
COMMISSION: £400 plus up to £150 for materials

B) Artists Commissions to create giant lantern sculptures to form part of a magical lantern forest art installation
COMMISSION: £400 (most materials provided)

C) Lantern making community workshop leaders
FEE: £145 per half day workshop

D) Lantern making workshop assistants
FEE: £80 per half day workshop

Background

Swindon Winter Fest celebrates the creativity of Swindon through free family-friendly, imaginative experiences. Taking place in Swindon Town Centre, this year's festival will invite families to follow a whimsical winter trail to discovery giant, interactive imaginary creatures, a magical lantern forest and lots of inspiring free activities along the way.

This new event is part of *Be More Swindon* - an ambitious 2-year programme to raise the profile of the town's vibrant creative and cultural sector. The initiative is a partnership between Swindon Culture Collective, Gel Studios, Morgan Thomas, Podpadstudios, Prime Theatre, South Swindon Parish Council, Swindon Borough Council, Swindon Music Service and Wyvern Theatre & Arts Centre on behalf of a network of local arts and cultural organisations and creative practitioners.

We are looking for artists to help bring this vision to life through fun, accessible, and enchanting creative activities for families and children.

These commissions are possible thanks to support from Swindon Borough Council and Arts Council England's National Lottery Place Partnership Fund.

**Swindon Winter
Fest**

Saturday 22 November



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**A)
Commissions to
deliver drop-in
creative
workshops or
participatory
activities on
Saturday 22
November 2025**

**£400 plus up to £150
for materials**

We are seeking artists to design and **deliver free, drop-in workshops or participatory creative activities** that:

- Are **suitable** for families and children of all ages
- Can be **completed or joined in** within a 10–30 minute timeframe
- Are inspired by the festival's themes of **winter whimsy, imagination, fairytale forests, or magical lanterns***
- Can be **delivered indoors** or under cover (venues provided)
- Possible examples of activities might include:
 - Making fairy-tale character masks or crowns
 - Decorating magical forest creatures
 - Collaborative painting or drawing activities
 - Inventing mythical beasts or enchanted artefacts from recycled materials
 - Simple shadow puppetry or paper theatre creations
 - Whimsical winter paper crafts
 - Crafting Musical instruments made from unusual objects

*The event will already include lantern-making as part of the magical lantern forest art installation, so if you would like to get involved in running lantern making workshops please read on

Practical Information

Date of event: Saturday 22 November 2025 between 10am to 6pm

Location: Various venues in **Swindon Town Centre**

Activity duration: Up to 4 hours of drop-in activity (times to be agreed. Please indicate in your submission if there are any restrictions on your availability that day)

Fees: Artists will be paid a **flat fee of £285 each** for the day, **plus £115** for half a day preparation time

Materials: costs **up to £150** will be covered (receipts will be required)

- Please indicate if **additional support** (e.g., volunteers, setup help) will be required.
- You will need to **provide evidence of Public Liability Insurance cover and a full risk assessment** for your activities no later than 1 week before the event.
- We will ask you to **complete a brief evaluation** of your activities after the event to feed into our overall evaluation (this should take no more than 30 minutes to complete)
- We would love participating artists to help promote your involvement in the event through your own social media channels where possible – we will provide you with templates and marketing assets to help with this.

Who Can Apply

- Open to **professional artists, makers, and creative practitioners**, including local arts or community organisations
- If your proposed activities require more than one artist to run, please give details in your submission
- **You do not need prior experience working at festivals**, but you must be comfortable engaging the public in a lively, open setting
- You **must have a UK bank account** in the same name as the applicant/organisation
- We especially encourage applications from **artists and creatives based in or with a genuine connection to Swindon**.
- We welcome proposals in **visual arts, crafts, storytelling, creative writing, performance-led workshops, a cappella or acoustic choir or band performances** or other creative disciplines.
- Unfortunately, due to licensing restrictions, **we are unable to consider proposals for music performances which require live microphones or AV equipment** this time around.

How to apply

**Deadline Friday 31
October**

**Artists notified by
Friday 7 November**

To apply, please send:

- A **short proposal** describing your drop-in activity idea, how it links to the theme, and how you would engage participants and the estimated costs for materials.
- Up to **5 images or links** to examples of previous work, workshops or participatory projects
- A brief description of your creative practice and experience.
- Any **access or support needs** you'd like us to be aware of.

We welcome non-written proposals too, including voice or video recordings if you'd prefer.

Deadline for submissions: Friday 31 October 2025

Please send your proposal to: louisehalliday@swindonculturecollective.org.uk

Overview

**Magical Lantern
Forest collaboration
art installation**

A vacant town-centre retail unit will be transformed into an ethereal lantern forest, created with the help of community groups, school children and visitors.

This magical installation will grow throughout the festival as visitors create their own lanterns to add to the display.

We aim to bring together communities, shine a light on local talent, and partner with a host of exciting organisations to deliver an unforgettable experience for everyone to enjoy.

We are looking to commission artists, makers and workshop leaders to help bring this exciting vision to life.

Full lantern-making training will be offered. This is a perfect opportunity for artists who would like to expand their practice and build experience of socially-engaged art.

These commissions are possible thanks to support from Swindon Borough Council and Arts Council England's National Lottery Place Partnership Fund.

**B)
Artists
Commissions:
Giant lantern
creature
sculptures**

**£400 per sculpture
(most materials
provided)**

We are seeking artists to design and deliver **6 to 8 large-scale sculptures** depicting woodland creatures as the key features of the lantern forest installation.

- Creatures can be **realistic** (owls, foxes, deer, bears, herons, etc) or have a more imaginative twist (eg dragons or unicorns) to fit in with the overall whimsical, fairytale theme of the event. However, they should be **ethereal and elegant** rather than cartoonish.
- Please indicate in your proposals **what type of creature** you would like to make. If we have several artists wishing to make the same animal, we may ask you to consider alternative options.
- The sculptures will be made either **using willow and paper** (which we will supply) or you may choose to source any other suitable eco-friendly natural or recycled material. The more sustainable the better.

Who Can Apply

- Open to **professional or aspiring artists and makers**
- You **do not need experience making willow lanterns**, as training will be offered.
- You must have a **UK bank account in the same name as the applicant**
- We especially encourage applications from **artists based in or with a genuine connection to Swindon.**

Practical Information

- Successful applicants will be awarded a commission of **£400 per large lantern sculpture**, payable upon completion.
- **Artists may apply to make more than one** large lantern, provided you can commit to do so in time for the delivery date.
- **We will supply basic lantern making materials** : willow, wet-strength tissue paper, masking tape and PVA glue. You are also welcome to use any other appropriate eco-friendly, natural materials to create your sculpture.
- If you don't have experience of working with willow, or would like to refresh your knowledge, **we can provide training**. We will be holding two training sessions (you would only need to attend 1):
 - Wednesday 5th November 10am – 1pm
 - Saturday 9th November 10am – 1pm
- We may be able to provide **access to a space for building your lantern sculpture**. If you would like to have access to a maker space, please say so in your application.
- Your lantern sculptures should be **5 to 6 foot high** (or at least 5-6ft long if appropriate for the type of animal you are depicting.)
- LED lights should be used inside the lanterns. **Artists are asked to source their own LED lights** appropriate to their design. The battery pack or power lead must be easily accessible once your sculpture is installed.
- Most large lantern **sculptures should be free standing**. If you wish to propose making a bird or other creature that would need to be suspended, please **give details in your submission**.
- Lantern sculptures must be **completed by 17 November 2025**.
- We will work with you to **arrange delivery/ collection** and installation of your sculpture at the venue.
- We would love participating artists to **help promote your involvement** in the event through your own social media channels where possible – we will provide you with templates and marketing assets to help with this.
- We will ask you to complete a **brief evaluation of your activities** after the event to feed into our overall evaluation (this should take no more than 30 minutes to complete)

If you would also like to apply to lead or help with community lantern making workshops, please do let us know in your submission.

How to apply

**Deadline Tuesday 28
October 2025**

**Artists notified by
Friday 31 October**

To apply, please send a short proposal including:

- a **description, and/or sketches/mock-up** of your ideas for your lantern sculpture(s) including **what creature(s)** you would like to make.
- up to **5 images or links** to examples of previous work, workshops or participatory projects
- a **brief description** of your creative practice and experience.
- Whether you would **also like to get involved with leading or helping with community lantern making workshops?** If so, please tell us about **any relevant experience** you have.
- Any **access or support needs** you'd like us to be aware of.

We welcome non-written proposals too, including voice or video recordings if you'd prefer.

Deadline for submissions: Tuesday 28 October 2025

Please send your proposal to:
louisehalliday@swindonculturecollective.org.uk

**C)
Community and
public lantern-
making workshops
leaders**

**£145 per half-day
workshop**

**D)
Lantern making
workshop
assistants**

**£80 per half-day
workshop**

We are looking for artists to lead or assist with lantern making workshops with community groups, schools, companies and the public in the run-up to the lantern forest art installation.

Most of these workshops will focus on making or decorating very simple wicker and paper lanterns in the shape of pyramids, stars, moons or leaves.

You do not need to have experience in making wicker lanterns as full training will be provided, however you must be comfortable working with people of all ages and backgrounds – including those for whom English is not their first language.

Who Can Apply

- Open to professional and aspiring artists, makers and creative practitioners
- You do not need prior experience making lanterns but you must be comfortable engaging with the public. Some experience of delivering creative workshops is necessary to be considered for the workshop leader role.
- You must have a UK bank account in the same name as the applicant.
- We especially encourage applications from artists and creatives based in or with a genuine connection to Swindon.

Lantern-making workshop Leaders

We are looking for confident, organised and committed artists who have some experience of leading community or public workshops.

You will be responsible for delivering pre-arranged workshops with community groups, schools, employers or members of the public.

This may involve a small amount of liaising with contacts at groups to finalise arrangements for the events.

For larger groups or drop in events, you will be supported by a workshop assistant and/or volunteer helpers.

You will be responsible for ensuring that all materials and resources are collected ready for the events, and for liaising with the production team to arrange for the resulting lanterns to be collected from the groups.

Fee: £145 per half day workshop/ £285 per full day

Workshop assistants

This is a great opportunity for aspiring artists or those who wish to build experience of socially engaged practice to work alongside experienced leaders in preparing for and running lantern making workshops.

You will support the workshop leaders in delivering workshops, helping participants to make lanterns and make sure the events flow smoothly.

You may also be asked to spend time making simple lanterns or preparing materials in advance of the workshops themselves, depending on the needs of the group we will be working with.

Fee: £80 per half day workshop/ £150 per full day

Practical Information

- Workshops will take place at **various locations around Swindon** on a variety of **dates throughout November**. These will mainly be during the daytime, but **will include some weekend sessions** and may include one or more early evening workshop.
- Public drop-in workshops will also take place at the town-centre lantern forest installation on **Saturday 22 November** for visitors to make simple paper lanterns or decorate premade willow lanterns to add to the installation during the festival.
- Please let us know if there are **any restrictions on your availability in your application** to help us in planning.
- **We will provide all materials** for the workshops.
- You will need to be able to **arrange your own transport** to and from workshops (including bringing materials and resources along if you are the workshop leader.)
- DBS checks may be required for artists leading workshops in schools or youth groups
- We will be holding two **training sessions** (you would only need to attend 1):
 - Wednesday 5th November 10am - 1pm
 - Saturday 9th November 10am -1pm
- We would love participating artists to help **promote your involvement** through your own social media channels where possible – we will provide you with templates and marketing assets to help with this.
- We will ask you to **participate fully in our evaluation**. This will involve asking workshop and drop-in activity participants to complete simple feedback cards, recording participant numbers and your observations of the workshops and drop-in activities, and sharing your reflections on the project

If you would also like to apply to make a giant lantern creature sculpture, please let us know
In your submission.

How to apply

**Deadline Tuesday 28
October 2025**

**Artists notified by
Friday 31 October**

To apply for workshop leader or workshop assistant roles, please send:

- **Brief information** about you, your creative practice and experience – particularly of delivering workshops or working with the public
- **Which role** you wish to be considered for
- Up to **5 images or links** to examples of previous work, workshops or participatory projects
- **Any restrictions on your availability during November** we should be aware of.
- Any **access or support needs** you'd like us to be aware of.

We welcome non-written proposals too, including voice or video recordings if you'd prefer.

We welcome applications for artists who would like to get involved in both building giant lantern sculptures and running workshops, provided you have the capacity to commit to both.

Deadline for submissions: Tuesday 28 October 2025

Please send your proposal to: louisehalliday@swindonculturecollective.org.uk

What happens next?

Selection Process

- Proposals will be reviewed by Swindon Culture Collective's programming team and a panel made up of local cultural stakeholders. We will consider:
- Creativity and relevance to the theme
- Suitability for a drop-in, family-friendly environment (in the case of creative activity proposals)
- Feasibility and materials (in the case of creative activity proposals)
- Feasibility (in the case of the Giant Lantern Sculpture Commissions)
- Diversity of practice and voices represented

All applicants will be notified of outcomes and unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback from the panel.

Contact us

For more information or an informal chat about your idea, contact:

Louise Halliday, Programme Manager
Swindon Culture Collective

Email: louisehalliday@swindonculturecollective.org.uk