



Sidley FESTIVAL 2026

28 June 2026, Sidley Recreation Ground

Subject to Arts Council funding, Heart of Sidley, 18 Hours and the De La Warr Pavilion are planning a step change in creative participation at and around Sidley Festival in June 2026.

This free one-day cultural festival will feature large scale performances by local children and young people alongside the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Dhol Foundation, resulting from an ambitious outreach programme in four schools.

Also on the menu: mentoring for young people in festival production, public dance and hula participation, top-class walkabout artists and wide-reaching craft workshops for the parade, boosting social creativity, arts exposure, skills and opportunities for locals of all ages and backgrounds.



FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

*** ALL FREE ***

>16 Acts >120 Performers

Local artists & young people will perform alongside highly acclaimed national & international artists
More local performers TBC...



Local young people join performance

The Dhol Foundation

Compelling combination of World, Bhangra and Dance rhythms in a headline performance to include secondary school participants



Local children join performance

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra - Noisy Kids

Fun-filled interactive concert featuring much-loved pieces. Joining RPO: participants from Create Music outreach at 3 primary schools. In partnership with De La Warr Pavilion



Participation for all ages, wheelchair friendly

Glass House Dance - Time Machine Disco

A century-hopping, inclusive participatory dance extravaganza where everyone can release their inner rebel



Free community crafts for over 55s

Sunshine International Arts - Animal themed mas-making for the parade
Artist in residence & Notting Hill legend Ray Mahabir delivers community mas-making



Circus Pazaz - Free Big Top Circus
Pazaz return with their interactive, crowd-pleasing programme of tricks and stunts



Circo Rum BaBa - Bats & Bugs
Hilarious antics and sublime stiltwork from acclaimed female circus troupe



Free hula workshops for all ages

Xena Flame
High energy hula performer, who follows her show with hula dance workshops for all ages



The Flying Buttresses - Pongo
Riotous walkabout with Bird-Brained Bill & his incredible 7-foot giant bird puppet

Performers include local groups, more TBC...



CARNIVAL PARADE

“Animals” themed, with Circo Rum Ba Ba stilt characters, UK African Acrobats and participants from school & family craft workshops, plus Ray Mahabir’s senior community mas-makers, local drumming groups and twirlers.

Timed for the start of Children’s Carnival Week (18 Hours is a partner of UK Centre for Carnival Arts)



UK African Acrobats

Diverse & hugely popular circus artists performing hilarious tricks and stunts in their interactive show



All ages participate, wheelchair friendly

Gypsy John & the Lindyhoppers
Performance & social dance led by local lindy hop specialist, aimed at all ages and abilities



Creative participation for families

Animal-themed Craft Workshops
In 4x schools plus workshops on the day for families to make sustainable colourful crafts and join in the Parade



Boathouse Theatre Arts (Choir)

Bexhill-based group including children & adults with learning difficulties / Autism



Raven Drummers and Sambalanco

Two local drumming collectives join the parade



Inside Out Theatre - Active Arts

Walkabout developed and performed with people with learning disabilities in association with Mencap



Young Producers

18 Hours will mentor two Sidley young people in festival production & marketing, focusing on Sidley Festival



Ben Watson

Popular local actor and children’s performer will comper the stage



Volya Voices

Traditional Ukrainian Choir based in Bexhill



Richard Storybeard

Enter the yurt to be mesmerised by new and traditional tales

BENEFITS OF SIDLEY FESTIVAL

2026

Placemaking

- ✓ raises the profile of the area
- ✓ inspires local pride
- ✓ unites local communities
- ✓ boosts local business

Diverse

- ✓ mainstreams diverse artists, both in programming and promotions
- ✓ reflects and attracts culturally diverse local audiences

Sustainable

- ✓ using the arts and the event to positively embed sustainability messages
- ✓ zero single use plastic at all events
- ✓ carbon footprint, water usage, power usage, transport usage monitored
- ✓ sharing and learning about sustainable practice

Inclusive

- ✓ supercharged outreach programme and participation opportunities for all ages
- ✓ free for everyone
- ✓ familiar, unintimidating, outdoor venue
- ✓ fully accessible
- ✓ supports community cohesion

Wider impact

- ✓ increases participation rates among hard-to-reach communities
- ✓ increases arts access for all residents
- ✓ provides opportunities for new commissions
- ✓ creates income and employment opportunities for artists, producers, venues
- ✓ works with community networks to deliver inclusive and relevant programme

Quality arts

- ✓ high quality programming
- ✓ multiple opportunities for high quality creative participation
- ✓ national and international profile artists

MARKETING

Tried & tested

Audiences, new and old, engaged via a tried and tested communications strategy:

- ✓ inclusive
- ✓ engaging
- ✓ informative
- ✓ eye-catching
- ✓ reflective

Multiple channels

- ✓ print (flyers, posters, banners)
- ✓ social media
- ✓ press
- ✓ email

Accessible, everyday environments

- ✓ schools
- ✓ libraries
- ✓ shops
- ✓ cafes
- ✓ bars
- ✓ online forums & listings
- ✓ other local events
- ✓ community centres

Positively inclusive

As well as core audiences, marketing deliberately targets and reflects:

- ✓ young people
- ✓ isolated adults
- ✓ children
- ✓ seniors
- ✓ diverse audiences
- ✓ disabled audiences

| Audiences | About | How will Sidley Festival appeal to this audience? | How will we reach this audience? |
|---|--|---|--|
| Disabled audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · May need support accessing some cultural venues and events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fully accessible outdoor event · Artists with disabilities reflected in a mainstream programme eg Inside Out Theatre, Boathouse Choir · Social dance opportunities with Time Machine Disco and Gypsy John & the Lindyhoppers actively encourage participation from wheelchair users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social media groups · Seafront posters · Flyers through doors · Regional MENCAP networks |
| Ethnically & Culturally Diverse Audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · May feel uncomfortable at other local events where alcohol is the norm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Alcohol free event · Diverse artists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Creative outreach eg mas-making workshops with community groups eg Women of Vision (group of senior women of diverse heritage), · Targeted networks eg East Sussex-based Diversity Resource International · Social media groups · Via culturally diverse eateries and restaurants |
| Low- income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Living, working, attending school in deprived area (Sidley is in top 1% most deprived in the country) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Free, quality performances that feel accessible, not highbrow · Close to home and easy to get to on foot, public transport or bike · Free entertaining performances suitable for children · Interactive performances all can take part in · No spend pressure at the event, free popcorn in Circus Big Top | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Flyers and shop posters · Schools' newsletters and emails · Community centres |
| Isolated Adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · May live alone, be unemployed, working from home, low mobility, low income. · May be homeless or insecurely housed. May have social anxiety or mental health challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Close to home · Unticketed – free to come and go · In spaces where it is easy to get involved or step back and watch · Catch passers-by | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Community groups including mas-making creative participation for over 55s · Flyers through doors · Homeless shelters, libraries, cafes |
| Students and under25's | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teenagers are often under-reached in cultural events. · Local teenagers may feel that events are too 'family' focused or that acts don't reflect them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mentoring programme in festival production for x2 local young people recruited through Heart of Sidley · Opportunity to programme main stage to suit youth through DLWP Creative Sidley project · Volunteering and work experience opportunities · Affordable, creative experience · An unthreatening, safe environment close to home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Secondary school Dhol Foundation outreach & newsletters · Heart of Sidley's youth group connections at Sidley Community Hub and The Pelham · Creative Sidley project in partnership with DLWP · Social media via youth ambassadors · Youth volunteers as advocates |
| Culture Vultures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Existing audience · Keen to gain new cultural experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High quality, diverse performance · Exceptional new artists for 2026 - Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Dhol Foundation alongside popular returning artists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social media · Flyers through doors and in other cultural venues · Flyers in cafes in each town |
| Mainstream Families and groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Existing audiences · All ages, and socio-economic backgrounds. · Mainly local, some from further afield. May have attended Sidley or St Leonards festivals in previous years. · Varying levels of cultural engagement. Often time poor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Free family friendly entertainment · Easy access, fun, creative experiences · Familiar brand · Familiar outdoor locations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supercharged outreach programme in 4 primary schools and 1 secondary school attracts young people, children & their families · Flyers/posters in libraries, cafes, shops · Social media groups and forums · Emails to 18H, HoS, DLWP database + schools emails |