



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday 30 March, 2026

Record Broken as Folkestone transforms its shoreline into a living library

Folkestone, Kent — 28 March 2026

On Saturday 28 March, the shoreline at Sunny Sands in Folkestone was transformed into a vast, open-air exchange of stories, as *Folkestone is a Library* set a new world record for the largest beach book swap held within one hour.

Between 2-3pm **2073** people took part in the official record attempt, surpassing the previous record of 591 and marking a major cultural moment for the town.

In a striking act of collective participation, hundreds gathered by the sea carrying books to give, swap and discover. What unfolded was more than an event – it was a powerful expression of Folkestone as a place shaped by reading, writing and shared imagination: a library without walls, held in the open air.

The Beach Book Swap marks a defining public moment for *Folkestone is a Library*, Creative Folkestone's ambitious, multi-year place-making project. Delivered in partnership with local organisations, schools, businesses and community groups, the project reimagines the town as a living, breathing library – where stories move through streets, homes, schools and public spaces.

Sophie Haydock, Curator: Books, Ideas and Community at Creative Folkestone, said: *"What we witnessed today was something extraordinary – a whole town coming together through books. Yes, we've broken a world record, but more importantly we've shown what happens when stories move between people. This is what Folkestone is a Library is all about: not a building, but a shared culture of reading, connection and imagination."*

The event drew residents, visitors and families from across Kent and beyond, with an accessible participation area on Coronation Parade ensuring the experience extended beyond the sand. Volunteers and partners played a vital role in shaping a welcoming, inclusive and carefully delivered event.

The record-breaking Beach Book Swap signals the beginning of an expansive programme of activity under *Folkestone is a Library*, which will unfold across the town in the coming years – from festivals and creative interventions to community-led projects – culminating in a major public moment in 2028.

The book swap is one of the ways that we are contributing to the National Year of Reading 2026, a national movement and a UK-wide campaign designed to help more people rediscover the joy of reading.

Folkestone is a Library is an Arts Council England Place Partnership Programme; a collaborative, town-wide initiative led by Creative Folkestone, delivered with partners including Kent County Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Turner Schools, AFRA, Sunflower House and Holiday Extras, and supported using public funding by Arts Council England with additional funding from The Linbury Trust.

Creative Folkestone extends its thanks to all those who took part, and to the partners and supporters helping to embed a culture of reading at the heart of the town.

For more information, visit: folkestoneisalibrary.com

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For press information, interviews or images, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About Folkestone is a Library

Folkestone is a Library is a three-year Arts Council England funded project from Creative Folkestone, supported by Holiday Extras and the Linbury Trust and delivered in partnership with Kent County Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Turner Schools, The Alliance of Folkestone Residents Associations and Sunflower House.

We're celebrating and amplifying the town's love of reading and storytelling – not by replacing libraries, but by carrying their spirit into streets, schools, cafés and public spaces across Folkestone.

Why now? Because 1 in 8 children in the UK does not own a book of their own – and in areas facing deprivation, children are far less likely to read for pleasure. In Folkestone, we believe creative opportunity should not be shaped by postcode.

Expect a world's largest book swap event, poems glowing in shop windows, Story Benches sharing local voices, writing workshops, a Young People's Festival and annual town-wide celebrations.

At the heart of it all is *The Book of Folkestone* – a living collection of stories created by the people who live here, with children and young people leading the way.

This is an open invitation. Host something. Start something. Share something.

Folkestone is already on the map for art. Now we're putting words on it too.



With our partners, we are making
the town a better place to read,
write and share stories.

In partnership with



AFRA
Alliance of Folkestone Residents Associations



This is a Place Partnership Programme funded by



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Founding funder



About Creative Folkestone

Creative Folkestone is a visionary arts charity leading the transformation of Folkestone through creativity, ambition and community. We believe that everyone is creative, and that creativity has the power to change people and places for the better.

At the heart of our work is the Creative Quarter, a thriving neighbourhood of artists, makers and independent businesses. It is a living example of how creativity can regenerate a town, creating opportunities and inspiring pride in where we live.

Through Folkestone Book Festival we bring together leading writers and thinkers to explore ideas that shape the world around us. The festival celebrates the written and spoken word as a space for dialogue, curiosity and connection.

Our Learning and Participation programme ensures that creativity is open to everyone. Working with schools, young people and community groups, we enable new voices to emerge and empower the next generation to lead the town's cultural future.

We also produce the Folkestone Triennial, the UK's largest exhibition of newly commissioned public art. Artists are invited to use the town as their gallery, creating striking works that connect local stories with global themes. Previous commissions include works by Cornelia Parker, Jeremy Deller, Cristina Iglesias and Richard Wilson.

Across our venues, from Quarterhouse, our performing arts space, to Prospect Cottage, the former home of filmmaker and artist Derek Jarman, we lead, enable and champion creativity in all its forms.

Together, our projects demonstrate the power of imagination to transform a place. We are ambitious for Folkestone's future and committed to enabling creativity to shape a more vibrant, inclusive and inspiring town for everyone.

<https://www.creativefolkestone.org.uk/>