

A Creative Vision for Bognor Regis – Statement of Intent

Introduction

Arun District Council (ADC) appointed FEI in March 2024 to help them to develop a Creative Vision for Bognor Regis - a process supported and funded by Arts Council England. The aim of the project was to gather the stories of creative and cultural ambition to co-create a compelling vision for Bognor Regis, which would highlight what is unique and special about the town, set out a shared purpose and start to foster collaboration and partnership working through bringing together a group of committed stakeholders. Research into current and potential opportunities was undertaken and a total of 40 stakeholders were engaged in the process.

This document sets out a shared statement of intent around creativity and culture and is the first step towards developing an ambitious cultural strategy for the town. This will require additional resources to support deeper and broader research and consultation, conduct a robust analysis of challenges and opportunities, ensure leadership buy-in from all three layers of local government and engage with other businesses and stakeholders.

Until the resources for a cultural strategy can be found, key stakeholders from across the private, public and third sector have agreed to work together to test and refine the creative vision through regular meetings and practical action around current opportunities.

Definition of Culture

Culture means many things to many people, and we take it to mean all those places, practices, activities and objects whose origins lie in human creativity, whether past or present. It means all arts, culture, creative practices, and heritage - built, natural and intangible - and it includes arts, heritage, creative businesses, local customs and traditions and festivals and events. It includes all parts of the cultural ecosystem including the technical and practical aspects of making culture, and spans professional and voluntary arts, freelancers, everyday creativity, talent pathways and cultural education.



Picturedrome

Vision

Our vision is for Bognor Regis to realise its potential as both an alternative and traditional 21st century creative coastal town, buzzing with independent spirit and built on a rich heritage, as a place of creative enterprise, innovation and wellbeing.

Bognor Regis will be a welcoming, colourful and iconic seaside cultural destination and a vibrant, inclusive and future-focused place to live, work and study, where creative people can find their tribe and follow their dreams.

We will achieve this by working together to support and inspire home-grown talent, build local capacity and develop new audiences. This will require us to think strategically: to develop big ambitious ideas for the future, make the most of current opportunities, improve communication and make a plan to attract more resources. We will do this by coordinating local effort more effectively and by working with partners across the town, district, county and along the coast.

Principles

The principles are the values which should guide decision-making and more detailed planning and will allow for a curated programme of activity over time:

- Innovation - a commitment to thinking about whether things could be done in a new way; keeping up with current ideas; trying things out
- Inclusion - ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be involved and reflecting how physical, cultural and economic barriers might be removed
- Independent spirit - identifying opportunities to support individual practitioners, traders and freelancers.



Image from Bognor Regis Regeneration Board website



Priorities

There are six priorities, which are detailed below. Four of these have immediate opportunities associated with them, which could help provide some momentum for future working. There are three programme priorities, based on the Bognor Regis place values. For each, an outcome, key ideas and a key focus is suggested. There are also three enabling priorities which provide the underpinning structure.

1. A Beacon for a Bold Future

Outcome: Bognor Regis is a place of enterprise and ambition, where creative talent can be supported to grow, and creative businesses thrive.

- Key ideas: Talent development, young people, creative enterprise.
- Key focus: Creative/ digital.
- Immediate opportunity: Coastal Catalyst (Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival).

2. Blue Sky Thinking

Outcome: Bognor Regis is a place to be inspired by coastal panoramas and the open air where sustainable, inclusive and future focused projects flourish.

- Key ideas: Environmental sustainability, social inclusion, quirky.
- Key focus: Festivals and events, visual art.

3. Ready for fun

Outcome: Bognor Regis is a place of fun and happiness where people's wellbeing is supported through creative participation and shared cultural experiences.

- Key ideas: Wellbeing, entertainment, taking part, play.
- Key focus: Theatre/ performance, making.

4. Sector Development

Outcome: There is a programme of support available to the creative and cultural sector at all stages of their development and for all types of enterprise: businesses, cultural organisations, voluntary groups and individuals.

- Key ideas: Data, business support, networking, advice.
- Key focus: Skills development for children and young people especially in creative/ digital and sector business advice.
- Immediate opportunity: WSCC Creative/ Digital Growth programme (AWI).

5. Audience Development

Outcome: It is easy to find out what is happening in the town and different groups work together to reach target audiences: families, young people, visitors.

- Key ideas: Data, joint audience development strategy, communication.
- Key focus: Joint audience development, links to tourism strategy.
- Immediate opportunity: Arun Arts Venue Networking Group.

6. Partnership Working

Outcome: Key partners work together to develop the overarching cultural ambition and to make the most of cultural opportunities. They commit to meeting regularly and committing their resources and networks where this will help the common good.

- Key ideas: Leadership, hearts and minds, town/ district/ county/ coast.
- Key focus: Long-term strategy, short-term project partnership working.
- Immediate opportunity: Coastal Catalyst (Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival) planning meeting, six-monthly Town Hall meeting.



Creative Vision Stakeholder Group

The statement of intent was agreed on Thursday 9th May by the following stakeholders:

- Arun District Council - Matt Gover, Economic Regeneration Projects Officer
- West Sussex County Council - Greg Ockwell, Arun Growth Lead
- Bognor Regis Town Council - Glenna Frost, Town Clerk
- Bognor Regis BID - Heather Allen, COO
- University of Chichester - Michael Holley, Head of Creative Industries
- Bognor Regis Regeneration Board - Rebecca White, Executive Director
- Arun Arts - Kate Bennett, Chair, Jo Latus, Operations Manager and Caroline Bennett, Head of Marketing
- Artsworld SE - Beccy East, Programme Manager: Arun Aspires

This group agreed to meet monthly to discuss the long-term strategy development and to respond to current cultural opportunities. The group will be convened by Matt Gover on behalf of Arun District Council.

Next steps

The following actions were agreed:

- Stakeholders to advocate for the Creative Vision, and seek buy-in from their leadership to support the next stage of the process
- The group to formally come together in June to discuss and agree the Coastal Catalyst project. DC and MG to organise a workshop with BDBF.

