

# BOGNOR REGIS – a vision for the future

## How do we propose a sustainable regeneration for Bognor Regis?

- Provide a key stone for the local community, support local businesses, retail and leisure opportunities
- A landmark regeneration project to bring Bognor Regis back as a serious tourist destination on the South Coast
- Catalyse the regeneration through the 'Centre for Imagination'; a proposal for a multi-use cultural centre both inspired by and to celebrate William Blake



## Bognor Regis is fantastically placed to expand its tourism economy

In order for a proposal to support the continual regeneration of Bognor, it needs to be underpinned with a sustainable economic model.

- Various capital and lottery funded regeneration projects, such as Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, The Jerwood Gallery in Hastings and the Contemporary in Margate align to the South Coast.
- All are conveniently placed within a day's rail trip from Central London.
- Bognor is equidistant from London – why can't Bognor have the same?

The Big Blake Project have a good track record in delivering unique and authentic events in Bognor Regis. They have established links with the Arts Council and the University of Chichester and had exploratory discussions with the Tate and the V&A. The Centre of the Imagination could work within a wider scheme providing that the Big Blake Project were involved in the design and delivery stages.

The Big Blake Project created BlakeFest, an annual Arts and Music Festival in Bognor Regis.

Here are a few highly successful examples of arts-led regeneration:

### Folkestone Quarter House Design Precedents

- £4M Contract Sum
- Completed February 2009
- Winning scheme of 2 stage completion
- Gallery and exhibition space
- Café and bar
- 220 seat/500 standing multi-purpose auditorium
- Business Enterprise Centre
- Envisaged as new cultural hub for Folkestone





Designed to act as a beacon for the local area, expressed through the use of materials which enables the building to be illuminated at night

The use of fluted metal mesh cladding inspired by scallop shells and links with the maritime story of the city.

### **Jerwood Gallery Hastings Design Precedents**

- 4M Contract Sum
- Completed March 2012
- Awarded an RIBA Civic Trust Award
- Primarily functions as a gallery displaying the Jerwood Foundation collection
- Temporary exhibition spaces
- Seafront location
- Associated studio spaces
- 350 seat auditorium
- 120 seat performance space
- Workshops and Artist-in-Residence
- Ancillary and supporting spaces

Built on a tight urban site, the layout and design reflects tightly woven street space Located on a compressed site, spaces are top lit.



### **Southend Pier Royal Pavilion Design Precedents**

- £4M Contract Sum
- Completed 2009
- Set on the world's largest and longest Grade II listed pier
- Used as Theatre and Art Gallery

Designed as an undulating wave form of glass and steel cladding to echo the movement of the sea.

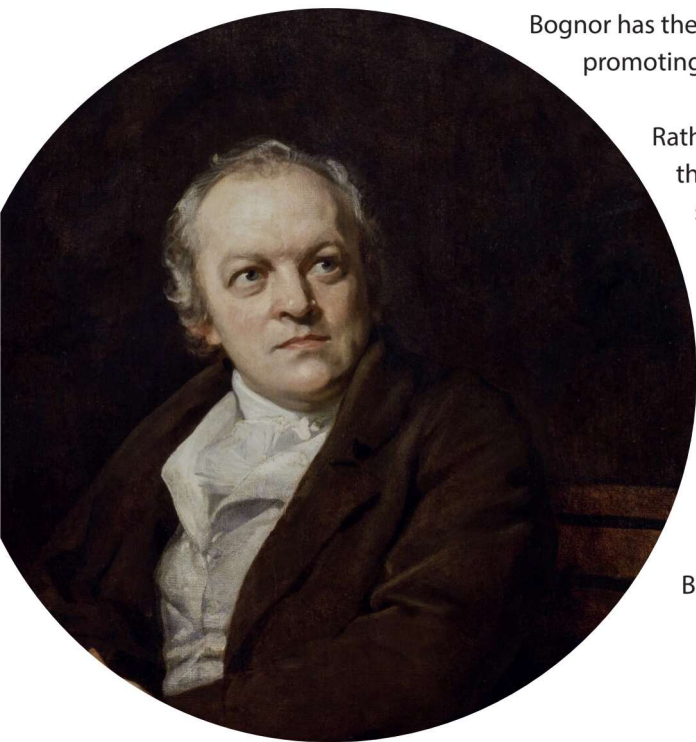
## **Bognor Regis and Felpham lay claim to an association with an iconic English artistic and literary figure**

Bognor has the ability to enter the cultural day-trip tourist market by celebrating and promoting William Blake, who was once resident of adjacent Felpham.

Rather than a retrospective exhibition space for William Blake, his paintings, thoughts, poetry and legacy, might not the 'father of imagination' be the seed for a centre? A place that not just celebrates his work but uses it to inspire a contemporary centre for imagination and creativity, that forms a central burst of regeneration to the Regis Centre site that can ripple throughout the town.

### **How can the historic link with William Blake regenerate the entire town and area?**

The Big Blake Project have created and published a Blake Trail – a meandering walk connecting key areas and associated places to William Blake in Bognor Regis.





Highlights of this trail include the Railway Station as a starting point, the seafront promenade and Blake's Cottage in Felpham Village.

This trail includes various opportunities for further regeneration. What if these areas could be strategically linked through the Blake Trail and formed a basis for a masterplan linking up Bognor's existing treasures and new potential regenerative sites?



**Regis Centre Site; a suggested proposal to meet the requirements for regeneration with both the local community and tourist market in mind**

The existing proposals for the Regis Centre site propose a mixed use retail and leisure hub for the local community.

This could be built upon with the addition of the William Blake inspired 'Centre for the Imagination', containing a new theatre/ performance space and freeing up more space for development.

Potential Regeneration sites:	Existing 'treasures':
Hothampton	Felpham Seafront
Bognor Regis Pier	St. Mary's Church
Seafront Promenade	Hotham Park
Esplanade/Butlin's corner	Waterloo Square/Regency Waterfront

This could also provide a residential element which could further enhance the quality of the development into a mixed use culture, retail, leisure and residential development that responds and enhances the existing rich Regency architecture and planning prominent along the esplanade.

**Centre for the Imagination! A cultural hub for Bognor Regis inspired by the art, poetry and philosophy of William Blake. What could this hub contain?**

- A new and unique Theatre/Performance/Exhibition space
- Permanent Exhibition space dedicated to William Blake
- Workshops and classrooms for schoolchildren or visitors to promote interactive and creative activities
- Associated retail and catering facilities, with a restaurant overlooking the town and seafront with views across the English Channel and coast

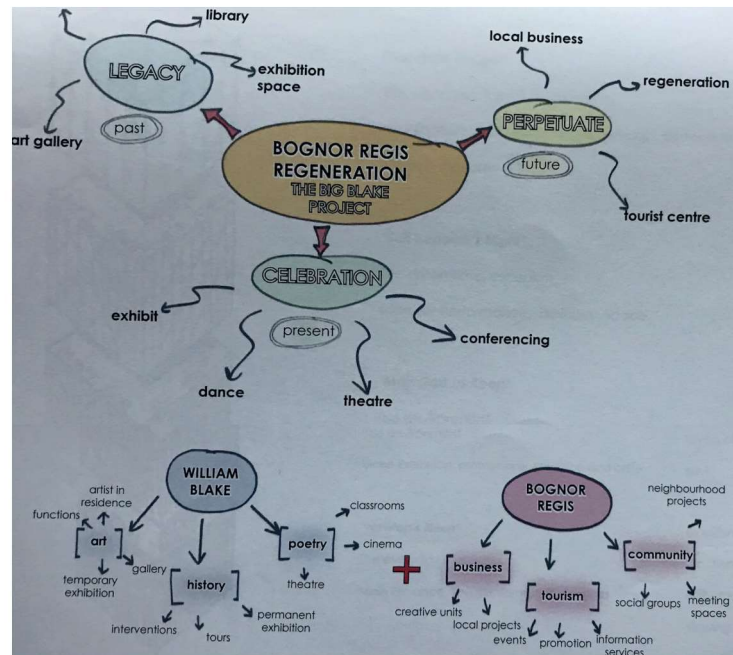
**Who is this for?**

- The Local Community; individuals, schools, further education, local businesses and external business
- The tourists; local visiting for an afternoon, sojourn from shopping, the day tripper from London, the holiday makers in Bognor or surrounding areas.

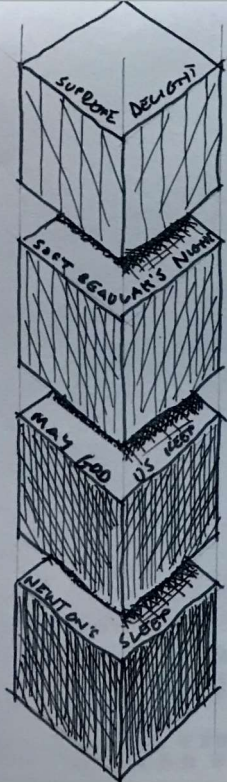
This centre could be a draw to re-imagine Bognor Regis seafront, not limited to the tourist, but the local community also. The outlined brief attempts to cater for everyone and not just narrowly focus on one group.

**Concept**

Host a permanent exhibition of William Blake's work as a cornerstone to the Centre of the Imagination.







**"Supreme Delight"**

The wondrous, infinite imagination  
Imagination and creative workshops, Restaurant,  
Viewing Platform

**"Soft Beaulah's Night"**

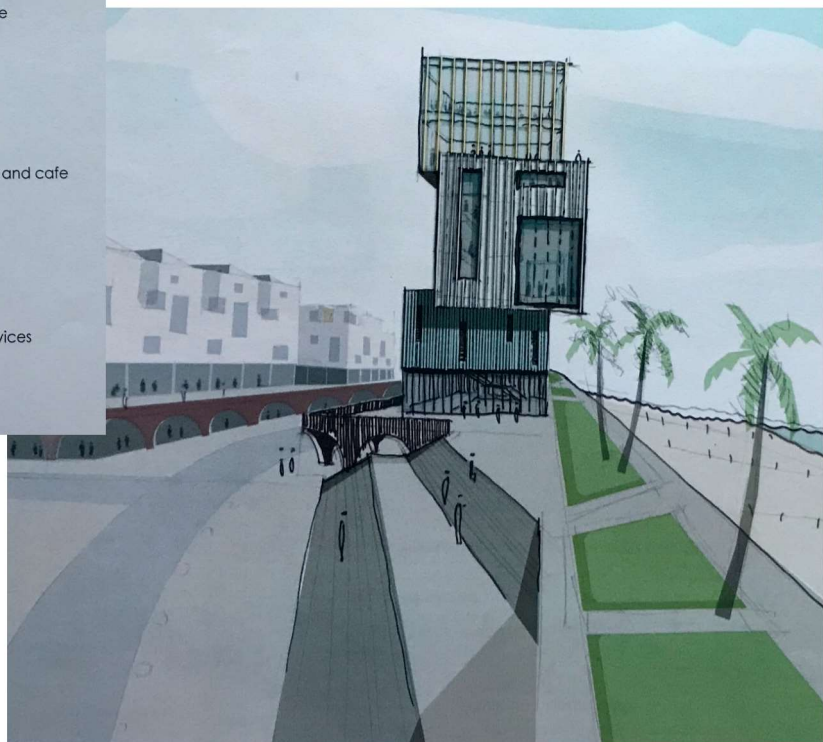
The dreamtime, escapism  
Theatre/ Performance/ Exhibition Space

**"May God us Keep"**

The environment  
Blake Exhibition, promenade entrance and cafe

**"Newton's Sleep"**

The everyday  
Main Entrance, Tourist Information, Services



Blake in 2019 was the featured Artist in the five month sell-out blockbuster exhibition at the Tate. Tremendous ticket sales at £18 a piece prove that Blake is not niche. It was the biggest ever exhibition of a single artist. Blake's high profile was further raised by the associated outdoor light projections of his iconic images across London. The exhibition itself was covered regularly and in depth by all the daily newspapers, across the BBC radio stations and TV news programmes.

One way to organise the 'Centre for the Imagination'

*"Now I a fourfold visions see,  
And a fourfold vision is given to me:  
Tis Fourfold in my supreme delight  
And threefold in soft Beulah's night  
And twofold always, may god us keep  
From single Visions and Newton's sleep!"*

William Blake wrote these words in a letter while walking from Felpham to Lavant. By utilising this vision as a concept to order the internal functions of the proposal, the visitor can engage with the narrative through a journey up to the viewing platform, with the horizon over the channel symbolising Blake's notion of infinite essence.

**Conclusions**

The idea of flagship cultural centre to spearhead regeneration is an established strategy, prevalent in many UK and European urban areas.

The day-trip tourist from London has many options on the South Coast, but a centre in Bognor Regis, focused on a huge giant in English culture would bring a new, unique, and authentic identity to the Bognor Regis area, as well as providing inspiration for local residents and businesses with a new and rich association to their town.

The surrounding Regis Centre site could build upon the existing proposals, and with the new Blake 'Centre for the Imagination' combine with the esplanade and surrounding town developments to once again make Bognor Regis a wonderful place to live, visit and stay.

**A Regeneration Proposal for Bognor Regis by The Big Blake Project, 2021. Go to [blakefest.co.uk](http://blakefest.co.uk) for further details**