

**What can arts and culture contribute in the
regeneration of traditional English seaside resorts?**

By Lesa Dryburgh



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Front Cover Image: Wadsworth, Edward. (1937) *The Beached Margin* [painting]. Held at Tate Modern, London.

1. Introduction.

Arriving at the English coast is a unique and individual experience. On the one hand, there's the freedom to take your shoes off and feel the sand between your toes, the chance to breathe in salty sea air, the excuse to devour fish and chips and the permission to laze about or run around and be generally silly. There's the opportunity to look out on uninterrupted views of the horizon and dream of what lies beyond and to stare up to big sky views imagining planets other than ours. It's a free gift for creative thinkers and can be very liberating for both the mind and soul.

On the other hand, there is also a perception of something quite desperate about some areas of the English coast. Many of England's seaside resorts display an overwhelming sense of their identity as one of being lost in time. The tourist offer often lacks in standards benchmarked against other areas of our 21st century lives; poor food choices; low standard accommodation; and noisy amusement arcades offering pointless prizes.

The lyric extracts of two songs about the seaside succinctly convey popular opposing views of euphoric and melancholic reflections:

The first song was written in 1907.

Oh I do like to be beside the seaside
I do like to be beside the sea
I do like to stroll along the prom, prom, prom
Where the brass bands play
Tiddley-om-pom-pom!¹

¹ Glover-Kind, John A., 1907, *Oh I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside* (lyrics extract). Available from: <<http://www.eastbourne-cousins.com/idolovetobe.htm>> [Accessed 30 December 2008].

The following song was released in 1992.

Trudging slowly over wet sand
Back to the bench where your clothes were stolen
This is the coastal town
That they forgot to close down
Armageddon - come armageddon!
Come, armageddon! come!

Everyday is like Sunday
Everyday is silent and grey
Hide on the promenade
Etch a postcard:
"How I dearly wish I was not here"
In the seaside town
...That they forgot to bomb
Come, come, come - nuclear bomb²

What lies beneath the surface of these coastal places which carry such a range of personal experiences from people living in and people visiting them?

Perceptions range from nostalgic longing, to miserable 'down-at-heel dives'. A shared common perception is that the British coastal holiday met its demise in the mid-20th century, with the introduction of cheap foreign holidays in the 1950/1960s. In fact, this view is perceived as a result of media creation - these decades actually celebrated the heyday of the British seaside holiday. In reality, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that the lure of the Mediterranean package holiday attracted working class and family markets on a large scale. So what about the future for traditional English seaside destinations in the 21st century? What now for some of England's struggling seaside resorts? And why is there an apparent current drive towards art and culture as the contribution to revival?

² Morrissey, 1992, *Everyday is Like Sunday* (lyrics extract), Bona Drag, EMI, Audio DC.

This report unearths some interesting myths about the decline of English coastal towns and demonstrates bold aspirations for the future of England's Southeast and Northwest coastal resorts. Millions of pounds are currently being invested in 'coastal initiatives'; in particular to 'arts - led' or 'culture – led' schemes, designed to improve the image and quality of life in some of the most deprived areas of England. What contribution can such initiatives have and what difference can they make to economic and social sustainability?

One thing is clear – there is a plethora of initiatives supporting art and culture in the regeneration of a number of traditional English seaside holiday destinations - and that simultaneously, there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

However, there are some overarching common themes which have contributed to the changing perceptions and populations of some English seaside resorts, and to the emerging successes of those which have become deprived areas in the latter years of the twentieth century. In resorts where common themes of decline exist (and it's not all English seaside resorts – many are thriving); shared histories include the decline of local industry, changing patterns of holidaymaking in the twenty-first century; the rise of social housing and multiple occupancy in holiday resorts and lack of investment in public transport infrastructure and local authority service provision in remote coastal locations.

In all cases where successful culture-led regeneration is emerging, there is strong leadership at local political level, genuine engagement with communities and connection with the uniqueness of environmental and social histories, specific to the place.

2. Thanks.

For this research, fifteen professionals with an interest or involvement in arts, regeneration and seaside have been consulted along with residents and tourists in English seaside towns on the Northwest and Southeast coasts. The report attempts to provide a balanced and analytical view of what is happening strategically at policy level and 'on the ground' as perceived by locals and visitors.

My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Chris Bailey, Dean of Arts and Society, Leeds Metropolitan University for his support. Thanks also to all those who have so generously given time in their busy schedules to help with personal interviews, insight and comment: Andrea Bennett, Cultural & Leisure Services Manager, Shepway District Council; Jessica Courtney Bennett, Seaside Network Manager, BURA (British Urban Regeneration Association); Jane Bishop, Proprietor, Walpole Bay Hotel, Margate and Trustee, Turner Contemporary, Margate; Sarah and Chris van Dyke, Hotel Relish, Folkestone; Michael Eakin (former Chief Executive), Arts Council England North West; Mick Etherton, Owner, The Community Pharmacy Gallery and Director Beeping Bush Ltd, Margate; Nick Ewbank, Director / Chief Executive, Creative Foundation, Folkestone; Peter Fender, Principal Projects Officer, Lincolnshire County Council; Derek Harding, Director, Margate Renewal Partnership; Sadie Howlett, Invigilator, Turner Contemporary, Margate; Amanda Oates, Arts Development Officer, Shepway District Council; Brigitte Oransinski, Artistic Director and Lisa Oulton, Project and Finance Manager, Strange Cargo, Folkestone; Victoria Pomery, Director, Turner Contemporary, Margate; Anthony Preston, Head of Resource Development, Arts Council England North West; Michael Trainor, Artist; John K. Walton, Professor of Social History, Institute of Northern Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University.

I hope this report provokes thought and should you have comments, I would love to hear them. I can be contacted at post@stopthepigeon.co.uk and +44 (0)161 248 6405. Lesa Dryburgh. England's Northwest Fellow on the Clore Leadership Programme 2007 – 2008 www.cloreleadership.org

3. Why do some traditional English seaside resorts need regeneration?

In an attempt to examine the development of towns on England's coast, the publication *England's Seaside Resorts*³ considers how their heritage and built environment have shaped their evolution.

In an interview in *The Guardian* in 2007, co-author Allan Brodie commented:

'I suppose the popular press would say they [seaside towns] are under threat, but the reality is that they are changing, and they have been for 300 years...decline assumes that it's all negative. Some are still on the way down, but in other places you are seeing upturns'⁴.

This report includes research in economic and social factors and trends in the shifting fortunes of English seaside resorts and considers the two primary groups of people who 'make-up' seaside resorts; those who live and work there - the population; and those who visit - the tourists.

3.1 Location, industry and population.

The English coast is extremely diverse and developed historically around location and local industry. In the latter half of the 20th century, coastal communities have faced problems including the demise of local industry and the migratory nature of resident and tourist populations. The rise of Mediterranean package holidays introduced in the 1960s but not taken up en masse until late 1970s / early 1980s have contributed to the changing fashions of the English seaside holiday. The issues are complex and contributory factors include the disparity between resort-specific statistical facts and a generalised perceived image of overall decline and deprivation in seaside resorts. Reality can be in keeping or incongruent with perception and the issues are attempted to be covered in the pages of this report.

³ Brodie, Allan & Winter, Gary. (2007) *England's Seaside Resorts*. English Heritage.

⁴ O'Hara, Mary. (2007) Weathering the storm. Crumbling, poor and geographically isolated, many once-thriving English seaside towns seem trapped in a spiral of decline. But is the future entirely bleak? *The Guardian* [Internet], 12 September. Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2007/sep/12/guardiansocietysupplement.communities>> [Accessed 3 December 2008].

A recent report *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns*, published by English Heritage, October 2007, stated:

...there are grounds for optimism with regard to the future, with some evidence as to encouraging levels of employment growth in seaside resorts. Additionally, while hard data relating to a renaissance in domestic tourism is yet to emerge, there are certainly signs of growth in an evolving market of short breaks and weekend trips. Growing awareness of the environmental impact of aviation and long distance holidays also creates an opportunity for English tourist destinations. The coast remains a popular place to live, work or visit ⁵.

The report offers strategies to equip coastal towns for the 21st century, citing the historic environment as an adaptable and powerful resource which offers a platform for economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The 37 largest seaside towns in England, each with a population of at least 10,000 make a combined population of just under 2.9 million, or nearly 6 per cent of England's population – as much as one of the small English regions. A balanced view, taking account of a range of statistical evidence, would be that on average England's principal seaside towns are rather more disadvantaged than the rest of the country, but not markedly so⁶. A range of supporting significant statistical evidence is contained in this recently published benchmarking survey, including employment; seasonal unemployment; skills and qualifications; benefits and earnings amongst other socio-economic indicators regarding the current picture of *England's Seaside Towns*⁷. Examples cited in this report include the following statistics, the further detail of which can be accessed in the full report.

Employment has also been growing in England's principal seaside towns as a whole – up by 7.5 per cent between 1998–99 and 2005–06 compared to 6.9 per cent in England as a whole. The employment rate is nevertheless below the English average (72 per cent compared to 74 per cent in 2006) but there are big variations between individual seaside towns. Skill levels and achievement at school are slightly below average, but again there are variations between towns. The share of adults of working age claiming the three main benefits for the non-employed is above average – 13.3 per cent compared to 11.2 per cent

⁵ English Heritage. (2007) *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns*. Swindon, English Heritage.

⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2008) Beatty, C. Fothergill, S. & Wilson, I. (2008) *England's Seaside Towns. A 'benchmarking' study*. Sheffield Hallam University. London, The Stationery Office.

⁷ Ibid.

in England as a whole in May 2007. Incapacity benefit claimants are by far the largest group of non-employed working age benefit claimants in England's principal seaside towns. There is still seasonal unemployment in seaside towns, but on average the claimant unemployment rate across the towns varies by only 0.5 percentage points between summer and winter. Overall, the districts containing seaside towns have attracted rather fewer migrant workers than the English average. Seaside towns have an unusual pattern of housing tenure – a markedly low share of households in social housing and high levels of private renting more akin to London.

3.2 Tourism.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the UK, accounting for 2.7% of UK's Gross Value Added⁸ and worth approximately £86.3 billion in 2007 of which £21.2 billion is spent by domestic tourists on a trip of one or more nights and £45.4 billion on day trips⁹.

Domestic tourism to coastal towns has fallen by 10million visits since the late 1970s, falling from 32 million to 22 million domestic trips per year¹⁰.

In addition to competition from comparable destinations overseas, coastal towns also compete with an increasing range of types of holidays.

In 1968 seaside holidays in seaside resorts still accounted for 75% of all main holidays taken by Britons. By 1999, however, seaside holidays accounted for only 44% of all holiday trips with 42.8 million people taking holidays abroad and just over half that number; some 22 million, spending at least one night at the British seaside. This steady long-term decline inevitably has had a serious impact upon the seaside economies¹¹.

⁸ Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the United Kingdom.

⁹ Source: <<http://www.tourismtrade.org.uk/MarketIntelligenceResearch/KeyTourismFacts.asp>> [Accessed 29 Dec 2008]

¹⁰ English Tourism Council. (2001) *Sea Changes: Creating world-class resorts in England*. London, English Tourism Council.

¹¹ English Heritage and CABE. (2003) *Shifting Sands: Design and the Changing Image of English Seaside Towns*. London, English Heritage/CABE.

Given the significant decline in domestic tourism in recent decades, in particular the trends from week-long or two week holidays in Britain to a one or two night stay, what is the future potential in the 21st century? Predictions look promising and include a range of factors: In a presentation given by the Henley Centre, a global trends and futures research company, at the Tourism Management Institute Conference in 2005; research into the future of domestic tourism to 2015 considers significant lifestyle themes which could have an impact on national tourism in several years time. These include the experience economy (buying experience rather than utility); the pursuit of well-being; environmental impact lifestyles including less damaging forms of consumption; and entitlement.

In the shadow of increasingly large gaps of wealth between the richest and the poorest, nonetheless public policy emphasises entitlement of all. It is a cultural expression which has its roots in the human rights movement, as embodied in the UK and in the Human Rights Act. The strongest cultural expression has been in arts and sport. It is a strong trend ¹².

The 'emerging counter-themes' in this research appear to be linked by a core idea of the world 'gone too far'. Henley identifies the following trends which they believe will become more significant over the next ten years:

Keeping it simple: Affluence has bred over-complex markets and propositions in which consumers find the exercise of choice time-consuming and draining of energy. There is a move towards simplicity.

From 'always on' to 'turning off': People appear to be wearying of being always available through technology. Evidence of 'turning off' includes a small decline (after a rapid sustained rise) in the proportion of UK people stating that 'they like to be available on their mobile at all times' and recent statement by the head of Nokia Design that "in the rush to connect we have not designed what it means to disconnect, to tune out. How do we design to be sometimes off in a world that is itself always on?"

From recreation to conservation: keeping the heritage intact – even if it means closing off sights (and sites) of interest to tourists.

The return of community: Quite a lot of data suggests an increase in interest in the local, in volunteering, and in interest in local community. Other trends (such as the 'slow food' movement and other local initiatives) reinforce this.

Shared experience: Despite fragmentation of living arrangements and leisure, there is a desire for shared experiences. Attendance at music festivals is booming; sports events are watched outdoors, in crowds, in some discomfort.

¹² Tourism Management Institute Conference, 2005. Henley Centre, (2005). What is the Future of Domestic Tourism to 2015?, Prepared by England Research. © VisitBritain
© Lesa Dryburgh, May, 2009.

These lifestyle trends relating to values of experience, well-being and entitlement, and the counter themes of simplicity; turning off; conservation; community and shared experiences, have the potential to impact on increased national tourism over the next several years.

Another optimistic prediction is cited in research conducted by Enjoy England¹³ the national tourist office for Britain. It states:

The current movement towards sustainability and awareness of the carbon footprint left by flying may encourage consumers to fly less and holiday within England in the coming years.

VisitBritain's prospects for tourism in 2008 notes increased confidence trends in domestic tourism:

The coach tourism industry looks forward to 2008 with quiet confidence following a year in which more than five million people took a coach touring holiday in the UK. Coach operators who are members of the Coach Tourism Council (CTC) are not only investing in new state of the art coaches costing as much as £250,000 expanding their product to offer greater choice with more themed tours such as London Theatre breaks and concerts, heritage and cultural tours, garden shows, horse race meetings and Christmas markets heading the popular choice while traditional seaside holidays have not lost their appeal.

The CTC which promotes travel and tourism by coach on behalf of 300 members believes that other factors will have a positive impact on business in 2008. Two recent reports have revealed that travel by coach is the most environmentally friendly way to travel with the carbon footprint of coaches more than five times less than flying or driving by car and even two times less polluting than going by train. With continuing delays at airports the CTC expects many more people – including an increasing number of younger people – to opt to take a coach for their short breaks and holidays in the UK¹⁴.

As the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report on Coastal Towns 2007 notes:

¹³ Enjoy England is the domestic marketing arm of VisitBritain - the national tourist office for Britain. Their mission is to grow the value of the domestic tourism market by encouraging people to spend more on tourism throughout the English regions, throughout the year. Enjoy England (2007) *International and Domestic Market Profiles 2007*. London, VisitBritain.

¹⁴ VisitBritain (2007) *Prospects for Tourism in 2008* [Internet], December. Available from: <<http://www.tourismtrade.org.uk/corporatepress/2008prospects.asp?pf=y>> [Accessed 31 October 2008].

Historically economic activity within coastal towns has encompassed traditional industries that have declined, including manufacturing, ship-building, fishing and other maritime sector work, in addition to tourism. Official statistics show that the economy of seaside towns is diverse and that the range and trends in job sectors are broadly in line with the national experience, but with some noticeable differences in specific sectors. Professor Fothergill stated that recent employment growth has been “surprisingly broad-based”, indicating that the tourism sector is not the dominant industry in coastal towns to the extent that is commonly perceived, although it may be in some traditional seaside resorts. Tourism has long been important to a number of coastal towns commonly identified as ‘seaside resorts’...the “coastal tourism sector has not collapsed, but changed dramatically. The simplistic views that everyone now goes abroad, therefore no one holidays at home misses the point. For the average UK resident, holiday no longer means just a week or a fortnight in the summer”. Its position is supported by official statistics which show that the proportion of tourism-related jobs in coastal towns is still higher than the English average 11.7% compared to an English average of 8.2%.

Although tourism is only one of the employment sectors in coastal towns, for many traditional seaside resorts tourism is of significant economic importance. Domestic visitors to the English coast spent some £4.8 billion in 2005. Data on domestic destinations shows that “Eight of the top 20 (40%) are beach destinations”. Only 7% of domestic day trips, however, are to the coast and these trips appear to be concentrated in a relatively small number of seaside resorts. In addition, “the average spend per visit for tourism day trips to the seaside or coast was £18.50, markedly lower than the average spend for tourism day visits to either cities or the countryside (£30.80 and £20.70 respectively). This relatively low spend can be viewed as confirmation that a visit to the seaside is a ‘cheap day out’¹⁵.

Adding up the research findings and trend spottings above, presently, day trips and short-stays to the seaside are the current trend and a visit to the seaside constitutes a ‘cheap day out’. Future predictions indicate a social movement towards well-being; environmental sustainability; ‘turning off’; and entitlement and this would suggest that cultural attractions, in particular, free museums and galleries, temporary outdoor installations, free festivals and events, make a sensible seaside consumer offer.

¹⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government Committee. (2006 – 2007) *Coastal Towns*. Second Report of Session 2006 – 2007, House of Commons HC 351, London, The Stationery Office.

In a newspaper article in *The Guardian* in February 2009, it was reported that Pontins, the holiday company, are to spend £50m on expansion of their coastal sites and create 2,000 jobs. They will offer rock-bottom prices (three or four nights self-catering from £20 per person) and improve menus and entertainment. They are confident about the future, with bookings already up in 2009 by 30% as growing numbers of families struggle financially and are deterred from holidays abroad by the weakening pound decide to holiday in England¹⁶.

In addition to more obvious entertainment attractions, cultural attractions at the English seaside could be made more visible in tourism marketing materials and media coverage and add resurgence to the trend towards seaside revival. More about seaside image and profile is contained later in this report.

Also, as concerns about Britain's fragile economy escalate, The Marine and Coastal Access Bill¹⁷, currently under discussion in The House of Lords, could see walkers giving an annual boost of up to £128 million to coastal businesses, when the new all-England coastal trail becomes a reality. A report commissioned by the Ramblers¹⁸ into the economic and social value of coastal walking also found that over 11,300 jobs could be generated by better walking facilities on the coast.

Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Greaves said:

'Coastal walking brings in millions to the rural economy. Just look at the South West Coastal Path, which generates £307 million for the regional economy annually. If the proposed English coastal path brings similar benefits around the English coast, it will bring significant benefits to local businesses and the wider rural economy'.

¹⁶ Teather, David & Wearden, Graeme. (2009) Hi-de-Hire! Pontins to take on 2,000 workers as recession Britain holidays at home. *The Guardian* [Internet], 3 February . Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/feb/03/pontins-holiday-camps>> [Accessed 2 March 2009].

¹⁷ Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. (2007 – 2008) *Draft Marine Bill: Coastal Access Provisions*. Ninth Report of Session 2007 – 2008, House of Commons HC 656-1, London, The Stationery Office.

¹⁸ The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and to improve conditions for all walkers. 139,000 members in England, Scotland and Wales. The Ramblers (2008) *The coastal path around Britain is paved with gold*. 22 January. Available to view from: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/latest_news/coastal_path_gold.htm> [Accessed 3 February 2009]

Tom Franklin, Ramblers' Chief Executive said of the Bill:

'For coastal economies, the continuous coastal path around Britain is paved with gold'.

'Our vision is for a coastal trail that brings economic and ecological prosperity to coastal areas – currently suffering badly in the recession. Investment will improve walking opportunities, wildlife protection on the coast, and will rejuvenate struggling coastal businesses'.

3.3 The challenge: seaside resorts must define a new visitor offer.

One of the challenges for English seaside resorts is to define a new visitor offer, which diversifies into areas such as culinary tourism and adventure tourism, and which competes on quality as well as price.

The Seaside Economy report by Beatty and Fothergill in 2003 was the first comprehensive examination of economic change in Britain's seaside towns and concluded:

Seaside towns should not be bracketed with Britain's other problem locations, such as older industrial areas...Unlike many other 'one industry towns', seaside towns do not on the whole suffer from a downward spiral of decline. Whilst there has clearly been restructuring in the wake of the rise of the foreign holiday, the continuing resilience of employment in and around the parts of the local economy most dependent on tourism suggests that there has often been successful adaptation. The seaside tourist industry remains one to be nurtured, not written off as a lost cause. Nevertheless, signs of economic distress remain in several seaside towns, and not all have experienced successful adaptation. In the weaker-performing towns in particular, and in seaside towns more generally, there remains a strong case for policies to foster job creation¹⁹.

The issues surrounding seaside tourism and development are hot topics in art and culture, which are seen as one way to contribute to the revitalisation of coastal economies.

¹⁹ Beatty, C. & Fothergill, S. (2003) *The Seaside Economy: the Final Report of the Seaside Towns Research Project*. Sheffield Hallam University.

In an interview in *Leisure Management* 2008 about the *Sea Change* Programme - a government initiative which places culture at the heart of regenerating England's seaside resorts by investing in arts, public space, cultural assets and heritage projects - Director Sarah Gaventa states:

'As an island, we have turned our back on our seaside resorts. We invented the seaside resort; now it's about time we reinvented them for the 21st century. There is very high deprivation within seaside resorts and that needs to be tackled'.

'Tourists have got more sophisticated and expect better quality...it is very important that seaside tourism has a cultural offer'²⁰.

3.4 The need for leadership.

Personal interviews conducted and broadcast interviews researched suggest that seaside resorts have been let down over a period of years by Government and lack of strong leadership:

'Governments seem to ignore the plight of the seaside resorts because I think there was a perception it was fun. A fun industry, but in fact it's a serious industry and it's our only industry'.

'There has been a malaise over a long period of time and that comes down to leadership, and the question of leadership, political leadership, business leadership, and I would suggest that certainly over a long period of time, Blackpool has struggled with not having the kind of quality leadership that it deserves, the kind of renewal that we've been talking about requires'.

'Successive Governments have let seaside resorts down'.

'Seaside towns can have inexperienced Local Authorities and a lack of strong leadership, they are very often isolated from Government and Regional Development Agencies. What seaside towns lack is someone who stays long enough to make a change and see things through'²¹.

²⁰ Robathan, Magali. (2008) Regeneration Sarah Gaventa. *Leisure Management*, Volume 28 No. 4, pp.36 – 38. The Sea Change programme is funded by DCMS and led by CABE; a capital grants programme aiming to help regeneration in coastal areas through specific investment in culture and heritage.

²¹ *Blackpool gambles on a new future*. (2008) BBC Radio 4. 5 September 2008 11.00am – 11.30am.

The Communities and Local Government Committee's report, *Coastal Towns*, on the state of England's seaside communities, launched in Scarborough in March 2007 concluded that the Government is failing to meet the needs of coastal communities and although the Committee rejected a 'one size fits all' approach, it identified a number of characteristics shared by many towns by the coast including:

Physical isolation, deprivation levels, inward migration of older people, high levels of transience, outward migration of young people, housing shortages and poorly managed housing, imbalances in the coastal economy, and the environmental challenge of coastal erosion and flooding risk'²².

The Committee was particularly disappointed by the un-coordinated approach by Government to these issues. It found little evidence of cross-departmental liaison on coastal towns despite the common challenges that they face and calls for a more joined up approach. The Committee called for a permanent cross-departmental working group on coastal towns led by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Chair of the Committee Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, in commenting on the report said:

'If the needs of coastal towns are to be met then Government departments must develop an understanding of the particular issues facing these communities and work together to address the broad range of shared challenges they face.'

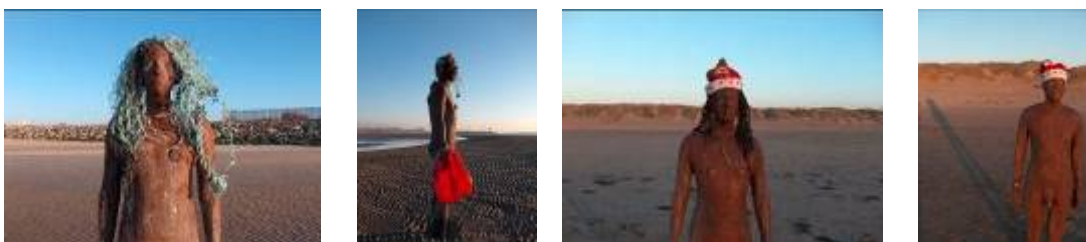
²² Department for Communities and Local Government Committee. (2006 – 2007) *Coastal Towns*. Second Report of Session 2006 – 2007, House of Commons HC 351, London, The Stationery Office.

4. What is the role of culture in regeneration?

Residents and visitors to English seaside towns on the Northwest and Southeast coasts have mixed responses to culture and regeneration.

Comments from field research conducted include:

'We've been several times to see this in Crosby²³ – we love it – it looks different each time, depending on the time of year and the tide. At Christmas, we've seen people dress them up in tinsel, Santa hats and foam reindeer antlers. There's nothing else here though! No cafe even! You'd think *they'd* do something with that bit around the beach wouldn't you?'



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'I would never have come down here before but lately I've come to sit beneath the Mirrorball²⁵ on Blackpool Promenade, every night for the past two months. It fascinates my three month old baby – it's the only thing that keeps her quiet!'

'We thought we'd come and stay at the Midland Hotel²⁶ to see what all the fuss is about. Morecambe is still a dump, though, isn't it?'

'I never would have come down here [to the old town in Folkestone] before – it's still not somewhere I'd come at night – but if *they* (sic) keep doing up the place like this, it'll be good, won't it?'²⁷

'These shops are being done up for creative businesses and loads of DFL's [a locally affectionate phrase meaning those 'Down From London'] came for the Folkestone Triennial in Summer, the place was heaving'²⁶.

'Margate's gone downhill – it used to be booming – we've got very fond memories of coming here when we were younger, we think 'they' should do something about it now though – that beach is stunning and just look at the amazing sky there'²⁸.

²³ Gormley, Antony. (1997) *Another Place* [cast iron, 100 elements / 189 x 53 x 29 cm]. 'Adorned' by the visiting public, photos by Lesa Dryburgh on New Year's Day 2007. Situated Crosby Beach, Merseyside, England's Northwest, UK.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Trainor, Michael. (2002) *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* [mirrored glass, GRP, galvanised steel, 47,000 mirrors 50mm x 50mm; 6 diameter sphere, 3.25m from the ground at base level]. Situated Blackpool South Shore Promenade, England's Northwest, UK.

²⁶ The Midland Hotel. © Urban Splash Hotels Limited. Morecambe, England's Northwest, UK.

²⁷ Folkestone-based Creative Foundation is revitalising the town by attracting and harnessing the energies of creative people and businesses. <<http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk>> and <<http://www.folkestonetriennial.org.uk>> [Accessed 17 December 2008].

²⁸ Turner Contemporary is at the heart of the regeneration of Margate. The new gallery will be built on the location of the lodging house where JMW Turner stayed, overlooking Margate's picturesque bay. <<http://www.turnercontemporary.org>> [Accessed 17 December 2008].

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These are just a few comments from local residents and tourists in the seaside resorts of England's Northwest, specifically Blackpool and the Fylde Coast and the Southeast, in particular Folkestone and Margate. There is clearly a general assumption that an unidentifiable group of people termed '*they*' (sic) ought to be '*doing something*' about the resorts.

Indeed there are great swathes of people who might be referred to as '*they*'; from government departments, local authorities, cultural organisations, educational institutes, artists, entrepreneurs, private and public sector and development agencies to name a few, constantly working on projects and programmes aimed at '*doing something*'.

That '*something*' includes arts and culture and regeneration. Millions of pounds of investment over several years, and never more than now, are injected into the renewal of traditional seaside resorts currently at a tipping point²⁹, with high ambitions to see them prosper and thrive in the 21st Century. A report compiled for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), *The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK* (2003), looked for evidence of culture as a donor (a contributor), as a catalyst or at the very least a key player in the process of regeneration or renewal across the UK identified three predominant roles for culture in regeneration as:

- **Culture-led regeneration.** In this model, cultural activity is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration. The activity is likely to have a high-public profile and frequently to be cited as the sign of regeneration. The activity might be the design and construction (or re-use) of a building or buildings for public or business use; the reclamation of open space; or the introduction of a programme of activity which is then used to rebrand a place.

²⁹ A tipping point is a critical juncture; a defining moment in a series of events at which time a series of significant, often momentous and irreversible reactions occur.

- **Cultural regeneration.** In this model, cultural activity is fully integrated into an area strategy alongside other activities in the environmental, social and economic sphere. This model is closely allied to the 'cultural planning' approach to cultural policy and city regeneration.
- **Culture *and* regeneration.** In this model, cultural activity is not fully integrated at the strategic development or master planning stage (often because the responsibilities for cultural provision and for regeneration sit within different departments or because there is no 'champion'). The intervention is often small-scale, for example a mini-festival: a public art programme for a business park, once the buildings have been designed; or a heritage interpretation or local history museum tucked away in the corner of a reclaimed industrial site. In some cases, where no planned provision has been made, residents (individuals or businesses) and cultural organisations may respond to the vacuum and make their own interventions.

This report focuses on culture-led regeneration as described in the above definition, in relation to different approaches being undertaken in three seaside resorts in England's Southeast and Northwest, specifically Margate, Folkestone and Blackpool.

5. How can art and culture contribute to the renewal of the English seaside?

Invariably, culture-led regeneration does not start with culture. It starts with funding. European and UK funding made available for art and culture, and attracting expressions of interest for the funding pots; rather than the culture of place and community identity being the driver and making the case for funding, although this is increasingly taking place.

Current funding initiatives include the DCMS *Sea Change* programme, which brings together English Heritage, Arts Council England and lottery funders³⁰. Blackpool, Torbay and Dover have been the first to benefit from the government's seaside regeneration scheme and received £4million earlier in 2008 for cultural and heritage projects. £45 million is to be spent in coastal resorts over the next three years and the scheme will be led by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Blackpool, one of the seaside towns included in the *Sea Change* programme, is considered later in this report.

One of the many County Councils in England currently bidding for funding for seaside regeneration, is Lincolnshire. Peter Fender, Principal Development Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, commissioned artist Michael Trainor as lead artist on the Lincolnshire coast from 2005 – 2008; part of a series of coastal environmental improvement projects part funded by the European Regional Development Fund. In response to the brief, Michael Trainor conceived the Bathing Beauties® project, 'Re-imagining the British Beach Hut for the 21st Century'³¹ after identifying the potential based upon an already existing 15km stretch of over 500 beach huts in varying states of repair. This international art and architecture competition received worldwide attention and resulted in the commission of 8 permanent small structures on the coast and

³⁰ The Sea Change programme is funded by DCMS and led by CABE; a capital grants programme aiming to help regeneration in coastal areas through specific investment in culture and heritage.

³¹ Bathing Beauties®: Art Meets Architecture on the Lincolnshire Coast, UK. Available from: <<http://www.bathingbeauties.org.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

spin-offs of a number of additional strands including a touring scale model exhibition and local annual festival. Additional European and other funding is now being sought for a second phase of the project.

National and international recognition of innovative art and cultural projects can increase attention on a place or destination, increase tourism and increase awareness of issues facing regeneration in seaside towns.

Acceptance amongst local people and businesses can take time to win over and it is often the case that arts and cultural projects need, somehow, to 'prove their place', to 'justify their worth' in gaining local respect. In small towns, large art projects can cause controversy. One such example is Antony Gormley's *Another Place*³² which was installed in Crosby in England's Northwest in 2005. Over the first 18 months, the installation attracted an estimated 600,000 visitors to the coast but despite this, generated a lot of local controversy. Initially a temporary installation brought to Crosby Beach by Liverpool Biennial in partnership with South Sefton Partnership in 2005, local public opinion was split between some who considered that the work was beautiful and poignant and others who claimed it was ugly, dangerous, and even pornographic (due to the simplified genitalia on the statues).

Local concerns over safety issued caused by the statues included claims that they created a hazard for people involved in sailing, windsurfing and watersports and that visitors were at risk from incoming tides. Despite these strongly raised concerns however, other local pressure groups wanted the work to stay. The case for the work to remain was won and in 2006, *Another Place* was secured by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council to be permanently located on the beach and maintained by them. This recognition of the power of culture-led regeneration and the need for long-term sustainability both in terms of ownership and maintenance plus promotion through partnerships, has significantly increased profile for the region.

³² Gormley, Antony. (1997) *Another Place* [cast iron, 100 elements / 189 x 53 x 29 cm]. Situated Crosby Beach, Merseyside, England's Northwest, UK.

The installation was honoured in the waterside regeneration category of the 2006 Northwest Business Environment Awards, and has also been recognised as best tourism experience of the year in the Mersey Partnership Tourism Awards and as one of the best examples of regeneration in the region by the RENEW Northwest Exemplar Learning Programme.

The work has been hailed as one of the best examples of culture-led regeneration anywhere in the Northwest and artist Antony Gormley credited with the 'democratisation' of art.

In a similar but smaller scale case, the Bathing Beauties® project on the Lincolnshire coast³³ raised a few eyebrows and caused some local controversy. Despite being one of the most popular international art and architecture competitions in the UK this century; attracting 240 scale model entries from 15 different countries; gaining over 400,000 visitors to the website; and welcoming more than 10,000 additional visitors to the Lincolnshire coast in its first two-day festival; there was outright rejection from one of the local parish councils, to permanently site one of the series of artworks (artist and architect designed beach huts) in their town. As a result one of the 21st Century commissioned beach huts will now be located elsewhere on the Lincolnshire coast.

Positive outcomes and lessons learned from phase one of the Bathing Beauties® project, which it is hoped will help future similar initiatives have been offered by Peter Fender, Principal Projects Officer, Lincolnshire County Council and Michael Trainor, lead artist on the Lincolnshire coast 2005 – 2008. Peter Fender comments:

'Arts and culture are critical elements in our attempts to regenerate Lincolnshire's coastal towns; to raise the profile of the area and create a new image for the coast, to attract new visitors and new investors. Following a selection process, we appointed lead artist Michael Trainor in 2005, who came up with the 'Bathing Beauties' idea that we thought would help to kick start the regeneration of these communities. What we didn't predict was the way the project captured the imagination of architects and artists from all over the world, attracting 240 scale models from 15 different countries and leading to the creation of a series of eight unique building commissions, an annual festival, a touring scale model exhibition and thousands of new visitors.

³³ Bathing Beauties®: Art Meets Architecture on the Lincolnshire Coast., UK.
Available from: <<http://www.bathingbeauties.org.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].
© Lesa Dryburgh, May, 2009.

All towns and cities are trying to find something that makes them different and special, something that can be a draw for visitors and investment. The vast, wild, untouched beauty of the coastline between Lincolnshire's resorts is a match for anywhere else in the country. The main success of the Bathing Beauties project is how it has raised the profile of this wilder coastline to a new audience, and people who have visited the projects website of the new structures themselves have been surprised and impressed by the beauty of the coastline. A second phase of the project will look at creating a new series of contemporary structures along this wild coast.

The delivery of this type of contemporary arts project is never straightforward and Bathing Beauties was no exception. The designs chosen from the original competition were deliberately thought-provoking and as contemporary artwork, we were aware that local public interest in the work would be heightened and opinions diverse. In Mablethorpe there was almost universal acceptance of the designs by local people and businesses. However only 10 miles down the coast the proposed new structure at Chapel St Leonards was rejected by locals. There were many local factors that contributed to this reaction and it proves you can never second guess public reaction.

The success of Bathing Beauties has encouraged us to develop a further phase of work and we hope to learn the lessons from the original project. The element of competition, the contemporary nature of the work delivered and the professional marketing are elements we want to carry into the further phase.

We have learned lessons about the involvement of other professionals in the development of the work and the importance of a well thought out, costed and funded maintenance programme for any features. The cost of ongoing maintenance of any artworks we commission is one of the major headaches we have. Unfortunately, none of the funders we apply to for this sort of work (including the Arts Council) have been able to offer revenue funding for ongoing maintenance of the features created. Most local authorities are cash strapped, they are able to fight in a competitive environment for funds for large capital schemes - but they have no opportunity to bid for monies to maintain the schemes. Their maintenance budgets are the first to be hit when they have to make budget cuts. As with Antony Gormley's *'Another Place'* - the Crosby beach example - local authorities only normally put their hands in their pockets when they are put under pressure by the public and media - and the elected members put pressure on staff to 'find the money from somewhere. It has been the continued international interest in the Bathing Beauties structures that eventually helped to persuade the local authority into adopting the structures and opening them to the public, two years after installation.

So, as you see, in the past we have worked with our partners (not always successfully) to ensure that the features are adopted by local organisations for maintenance. In the later stages of the Bathing Beauties project and with the next phase of the coastal project we have changed this approach. In addition to continuing to arrange maintenance of some of the features by our partners the County Council are setting aside their own funds for maintenance. The benefit of this approach is that we are able to guarantee a higher standard of maintenance. The provision of revenue funding for ongoing maintenance is critical to the success of permanent art in public spaces, especially those located in the extreme weather environments of the English seaside'.

Michael Trainor, lead artist on the Lincolnshire coast 2005 – 2008 comments:

The journey from having the original idea for an art work or intervention whilst cleaning your teeth, to actually realising the work in a public place, is often a long and complicated one. Unfortunately there are usually far more people finding reasons why it shouldn't or can't be done along the way than there are people sticking their necks out to help make it happen. In the absence of a strong support team the 'public' artist has to be far more than just an artist to drive it along without crashing.

The realisation of the Bathing Beauties® Project is a good, but not untypical, example. At the top of the tree there are economic regeneration officers, Peter Fender and Amanda Bond in Lincolnshire, who are being genuinely creative with limited funds secured from European sources for environmental improvement schemes in coastal areas. Great regeneration officers, willing to expand their remit beyond providing new benches and pavements, to involving artists in the generation of new ideas to improve the visual landscape and attract visitors. There is one fact that I can categorically state to be true through my long involvement with art in public spaces – good art and ideas attract visitors and a pleasing environment and good visitor experience keep them coming back. No one will particularly make a special visit to seaside town to see its new benches and amenity lighting.

Once the idea has been generated – in this case inviting artists and architects to re-imagine the beach hut for the 21st century – it has to be proposed, agreed and then implemented, a process that can sometimes take years. If the idea is approved and the funding is in place a new range of potential obstacles start to appear on the track – these include the opinions of local politicians, the vagaries of planning permission (and maybe building control consent), public opinion, opinion of the local and national press, concerns from the highways department, street lighting department, maintenance section, the environment agency, local business or traders groups, heritage and historical societies and so on depending on the nature of the project, all of whom have to be satisfied in some way or other andoh yes...the inevitable shot to the blindside out of left-field - a technical or political problem or objection that you could never have imagined. These range in my case from objections from the Dark Skies Society to the Civil Aviation Authority but I am saving them for my autobiography.

In Lincolnshire – the planning department presented no problems as I ensured that we discussed all the possibilities with them from the outset and the beach huts were too physically small to require building control regulations. Other local authority (as opposed to the County Council) departments variously floundered, raised spurious objections or withdrew from any kind of helpful communication. The national and international press were universally hungry and enthusiastic for the sexy images of the prototypes and finished work whilst the very small scale local press blew from extremely cold to bizarrely hot depending on which way the sea was pointing. It is never going to go all swimmingly but if I had to summarise a general advice it would be: 1. Have a great idea. 2. Talk to and engage with everyone you can about it from the outset – even if they end up not liking it at least they may understand it. 3. Try and get a small team in the local authority to help support the work thorough the various stages (this is what should be in place and provide for the artist from the outset but rarely is,

and is one of the fundamental failings of all public art schemes). 4. If the budget or practicalities allow try a ‘temporary’ on-site experiment to gauge opinion and garner engagement and support. 5. Keep the media informed at key stages (but only when ready) and invite them to events and openings and give them wine and never release images of the work before it is fully designed or ready.

Finally what is vital for the artist, and it is their sole responsibility that no-one can help with, is to ensure that the art comes out of the end of it still as worthwhile art and not as a confection of compromises based on other people’s fears and constraints.

Making permanent art in public places often requires a strong will and a steady hand at the tiller in the early stages, to ride the initial waves of dissent into the calm waters of approval. Sometimes, after time has passed, the work becomes an important part of the visual culture and heritage and may even eventually be defended and protected by the same people who were initially negative about it. A particularly strong example of this is my 2001 project ‘*They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?*’ (A giant seafront mirrorball) in Blackpool was initially treated rather coolly and is now featured on everything from the Blackpool train timetable to the opening sequence of the BBC nightly regional news. The work was recently selected by Blackpool residents as an icon for the town only second to Blackpool tower (which, to be fair, has been there since 1894).

With the Bathing Beauties® project on the Lincolnshire Coast the approach for phase 2 known as ‘Bathing Beauties® MK2 –Structures on the Edge’, is to develop the theme of small coastal structures from beach huts to other leisure and pleasure related micro-architecture, but in more remote sites rather than at the small coastal resorts themselves. The emphasis on the promotional and consultation aspects of this phase has concentrated more on the wildlife and nature aspects of the proposed new structures, and less on the term ‘artwork’ although the artistic concepts of ‘cloud viewing platforms’, ‘sea theatres’ and sound sculptures are certainly not diminished’.



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³⁴ Feix and Merlin. (2006) *Eyes Wide sHut* [GRP, timber and polycarbonate]. Situated 37 Mablethorpe South Promenade, Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, UK.

³⁵ i-am associates. (2006) *Jabba* [laminated ply-wood, paint and acrylic]. Situated in the sand dunes by Sea View Car Park at North Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, UK.

³⁶ Trainor, Michael. (2006) *Come Up and See Me*. [vitrified tiles, mirror, laminated ply-wood and galvanised steel.]. Situated Mablethorpe South Promenade, Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, UK.

It is interesting to note that a study and report about culture-led regeneration in the North East published in 2004, which, although not about seaside towns, could have parallels and help inform continuous learning. The report, which was published in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* in 2004 about Culture-led Urban Regeneration and the Revitalisation of Identities in Newcastle, Gateshead and the North East of England; considered the possibility that the success of culture-led regeneration could be related to the degree to which it effectively engages with local identities.

The region's own assessment of its position at this time was that its galleries were small-scale, but that it had an international reputation for its pioneering artworks in public places, with a site having just been identified for its boldest project yet – a landmark sculpture in Gateshead at the head of the A1 motorway. The subsequent success of the Angel of the North is another story, but beyond its iconic properties, perhaps more than anything else it illustrated that beneath the figures there lay a belief, a sense of identity and a willingness to get things done that could transform the arts scene and perhaps even the region itself. The particularities of the local and regional identity were key factors in ensuring the success of what would emerge as an internationally significant example of culture-led regeneration; the point being here that far from taking away from it, the regeneration fed on and into that sense of identity.

This research, although urban in context, could be seen to have parallels with any region, rural or coastal, where local identities have been the champions of culture-led regeneration projects. The report findings were based upon charting the emergence of cultural policy in England's North East over a 10 year longitudinal research project. The paper was written in an attempt to counter the assumption that regeneration must automatically mean dislocation from the lived past of a place. Rather, it was argued that understanding and incorporation of the history of a place in its culture is essential if regeneration is to succeed.

The article suggests that successful culture-led regeneration is not about a trickle-down effect at all, but rather represents a counterbalance to broader processes of cultural globalisation....It is suggested that only an in-depth understanding of geographical and historical specificities will help us understand the way in which cultural regeneration potentially strengthens existing sources of identity rather than imposing new ones³⁷.

³⁷ Bailey, C. Miles, S. Stark, P. (2004), Culture-led Urban Regeneration and the Revitalisation of Identities in Newcastle, Gateshead and the North East of England. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, March, Vol. 10, Issue 1, pp. 47 – 65.

What would appear to be the critical learning shared in the paper, is the old-fashioned phrase 'where there's a will, there's a way...' that true authenticity and genuineness with residents, their opportunities and their environments, can result in the most successful art and culture-led regeneration projects which make a long-term difference to people and the places they live in. The interviews and conclusions of this report take further the case that leadership, engagement and a broad strategic view are essential components of successful initiatives.

6. The importance of public perception.

6.1 England's Brand Image (in Britain).

Enjoy England, the national tourist office for Britain, conducted research in 2007 into England's brand image. A brand image is the mental perception of a brand in the mind of consumers based upon communications and/ or customer experience. What people perceive about England, based upon marketing profile and / or personal visits can differ in different countries. In the domestic market (that is, in Britain), three pillars of appeal are cited³⁸.

The main pillars of the England brand in the domestic market are Real, Fun and Indulgent. The England brand model can be said to be describing three key need states; the three pillars:

Real: The need 'to Feel and Sense' is the result of the need to belong, to feel part of something, to feel secure in one's own surroundings, to feel at home.

Fun: The need 'To Do', to be active and proactive, avoiding sitting around doing nothing, bonding with friends and family, letting off steam, etc.

Indulgent: The need to 'Reward oneself' to counteract the stresses and strains of modern everyday life.

Recent research by Enjoy England has shown that Real is the strongest brand value for domestic visitors in England. Fun brand values such as variety and social aspects are also perceived as relatively strong. There are opportunities to increase awareness of the Indulgent factors England has to offer (this is particularly important as Indulgent is a differentiator that drives consideration for England as a destination).

6.2 England's Seaside Brand Image.

For beaches and coastline and the chance to see wildlife in its natural habitat there is an opportunity to educate some visitors about how good the product is, while for others there is a need to address the quality of the product to change perceptions³⁹.

In a survey conducted by English Tourism Council in 2000, visitors were asked to categorise seaside resorts which gives some indication of the perceptions of their different characters, which resulted in the list in Table 1.

³⁸ Enjoy England (2007) *International and Domestic Market Profiles 2007*. London, VisitBritain.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Table 1. Categories of English seaside resorts (source: English Tourism Council, 2001)⁴⁰

Picturesque	Traditional	Family	Lively	Fun
St Ives	Eastbourne	Falmouth	Morecambe	Blackpool
Lizard area	Bournemouth	Isle of Wight	Weston super Mare	
Bude	Salcombe	Gt Yarmouth	Newquay	
Truro	Lyme Regis	Folkestone	Torquay	
Robin Hood's Bay	Aldeburgh	Scarborough	Brighton	
	Worthing	Southport	Paignton	
		St Austell	Swanage	

Further research into the changing perceptions of categories of English seaside resorts may be available, but nothing more recently documented nationally has been uncovered during this research phase.

In terms of England's seaside brand image, the importance of palimpsest in seaside renewal is a key factor. Like a manuscript written over a partly erased older manuscript in such a way that the old words can be read beneath the new, seaside resorts have continually renewed themselves. Over decades, they have weathered the storms of economic and societal change and traced over and re-traced their development.

In July, 2006, the first National Coastal Symposium took place in Skegness. John K Walton, Professor of Social History, Institute of Northern Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University concluded in his presentation that recognition of the historical evolution of resorts should inform their potential futures and brand identity communications:

'...the importance of historical specificity: of understanding how resorts evolve (or sustain themselves in creative equilibrium - growth is not necessary to success) through their own distinctive interactions between economics, environment, accessibility, fashion, culture and politics. In order to develop effective policies for resort regeneration it will be necessary to develop a modest working understanding of their pasts to inform their presents and potential futures. And as part of this process it will also be important to incorporate the stories of their own pasts into their current images, programmes and advertising'⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Smith, M.K. (2004) Seeing a New Side to Seaside: Culturally Regenerating the English Seaside Town. *International Journal of Tourism Research* [Internet], January/February, 6 (1), p.18. Available from: <<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com>> [Accessed 20 October 2008].

⁴¹ Walton, J.K. (2006) The Coastal Action Zone National *Coastal Futures Symposium*, Skegness, July 2006.

Brand image is a complex and valuable commodity in any industry and media coverage can impact heavily on image and identity, for better or for worse. Perception and reality can be very different and in the case of the perceived decline of English seaside resorts commencing in the 1960s, this was not the case, but a created 'image' conveyed at the time by the media, film and television.

It seems to have become an imagined truth almost universally acknowledged that the British seaside fell into terminal decline at some point in the 1960s. This is when (it is usually assumed) everyone suddenly discovered the hot Technicolor glow of sun, sea, sex and sangria of the Mediterranean beaches... This vision of overnight transformation, which still colours ideas about the current state of the British seaside, is a media creation, and is (of course) far too simple. Press, film and then television conspired and interacted to concoct and perpetuate a cautionary story of doom and decline. The message is that the British seaside apparently lost its old customers and fell into an unrelenting cycle of decay which seems to be at one and the same time steep, terminal and unending...[and] this all began in earnest about the time of the Cliff Richard film *Summer Holiday* (1963)....

The 1950s and 1960s were actually the heyday of the British seaside holiday as a genuinely popular and accessible, if conventional and dangerously cosy, way of enjoying the two or three weeks of summer break from work⁴².

Where art and culture-led regeneration initiatives in English seaside resorts are reported in the media, all too often the local angle can be negative 'all this money wasted on art' whilst conversely, the national or international angle celebrates the art, the innovation, the design or the art as an attraction. This

⁴² Walton, J.K. (2006) The Coastal Action Zone National *Coastal Futures Symposium*, Skegness, July 2006.

disparity in coverage and therefore 'image' can perpetuate local resident community negativity; and leave a large gap in the potential contribution of the art and culture to tourism to the region and the 'visitor experience' economy.

Positive public relations are vital to the success of art and culture-led regeneration and can be a major factor in contributing to brand image of the project and the place; informed and balanced coverage brings a pride to the project, the region and can go a long way to support developing aspirations.

Iconic art is more and more frequently used in marketing and advertising in place-promotion even more than the brand of the place name itself.



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⁴³ Trainor, Michael. (2001). *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* Situated on Blackpool South Shore Promenade, UK. Featured and artwork name only accredited on front of Blackpool train timetable.

7. A focus on culture-led regeneration in England's South West: Margate and Folkestone.

7.1 A review of Margate's culture-led regeneration.

Turner Contemporary is a visual arts organisation that celebrates JMW Turner's association with Margate and, through a varied programme of exhibitions and events, promotes an understanding and enjoyment of historical and contemporary art. Work is underway to build a permanent gallery which set to open in Margate, Kent, in 2011. David Chipperfield, who won the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize in 2007 for The Museum of Modern Literature in Germany, was appointed in July 2006. An earlier design for the Turner Contemporary, to be situated part-way in the sea off Margate, was scrapped when projected costs rose to £50m. Kent County Council then put a ceiling of £15m on the cost of the new gallery, though it later rose to £17.5m. It has been a long-haul to reach this point, having experienced several set-backs since 2002. Work finally commenced in November 2008 on what is hoped will be the centrepiece of using arts and culture to regenerate Margate. Margate is one of many towns using arts and culture in attempts to regenerate coastal towns in the South East. Whitstable has enjoyed an artist-led regeneration following a natural influx of artists with development concentrated on small scale projects; a businessman from Folkestone is investing millions in creative industries and also over the summer of 2008, there was the first Folkestone Triennial, a series of cultural events including art by Tracey Emin. In Hastings, £400m is being spent on regeneration as well as plans for a £4m contemporary art gallery. If successful, it could give a boost to the local economy, as it is hoped Turner Contemporary will do for Margate.

In November 2008, the 'ground-breaking' ceremony (the work commencing) on the Turner Contemporary took place, and the local news was heavy with comment from residents, developers, artists and tourists. Additionally, national coverage on BBC 1 *The Politics Show* echoed wide-spread commonly felt responses to the potential for Turner Contemporary in the regeneration of Margate:

James Kennell, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Regeneration, University of Greenwich commented:

‘What Turner Contemporary can’t do is address all the factors that have contributed to the decline of tourism in the South East and in seaside towns the UK generally. What it can do is act as a catalyst and over a period of time, attract other investment, attract tourists and really make a change in the town but the success factors for that are very complicated and very long term’.

‘Historically, seaside towns always innovated with culture, with piers, winter gardens, pleasure beaches. What’s new is that everybody is doing a similar thing at a similar time, so the real challenge for cultural regeneration in seaside towns in the South East is to work together; to collaborate, strengthen local partnerships, strengthen transport infrastructure, so it’s easier for tourists to move between these different destinations and not have to just pick one, but to be able to put together destinations that constitute a meaningful long-term trip’.

Stephen Roper, a local artist who moved to Margate because of the promise of Turner Contemporary commented:

‘There have been serious problems here, to be honest, beyond the hype and that is, that local goodwill has been dissipated and national media interest has been lost because of the initial delays; delays which were announced five times over the course of 2002 – 2006 and then of course we had the fiasco of the abandonment. But since then, it’s fantastic; fantastic architect; fantastic leadership by KCC [Kent County Council]. What we need now desperately is cross-party support, because this whole project has been such a political football. We also need a massive marketing campaign, so that the creative industries – the people who are going to be interested in the cultural revival – are encouraged to come here. That can only happen if people are really made aware, nationally, of just the magnitude of what’s upon us’.

‘I’d like to make an interesting point. Margate was created and has continually been renewed over two or three centuries by London Metropolitan culture. This was the first seaside town in the country to have Georgian squares; at that time it must have been the shock of the new for the fishing village. What we’ve got *now* is the shock of the new, and it’s so exciting. I just want people to be able to grasp the huge opportunity with open hands. However, I would suggest, in order to build on the goodwill which will be starting now, to win over hearts and minds, that the newly appointed Trustees see the rationale behind, over the next two years, adopting a twin strand of programming so that as well as the most cutting edge conceptual art - there’s more to contemporary art than that – there’s also the more mainstream art, produced by nationally recognised fine artists, and that is what I would like being shown as well’⁴⁴.

⁴⁴The Politics Show. (2008) *Time for Turner*. South East, BBC 1, 23 November, [video:VHS].

Can Turner Contemporary regenerate the whole of Margate?

Margate was once a hugely popular seaside resort, popular with holiday-makers from London and further afield. Now that's dried up and Margate has some of the most deprived areas in the South East. One of the worst areas is Cliftonville West where 26% of 16 – 18 year olds are not in education or employment, compared to an average of 4% across Kent. Only 58% of the working age population are in employment, compared to a UK average of 72%. It is hoped that culture can help regenerate the town, with over £17m being spent on the Turner Contemporary. So how do local people feel about the investment?

In vox pop interviews, three members of the general public commented:

'It's a waste of time. It's not really going to bring more people into Margate, all the shut squares and there's nothing really for young people to do'.

'I think it's quite a nice idea, because it will obviously bring more people to the area, because it's a shame about the seafront and everything that's gone downhill. Yeah, I think it's quite a good idea'.

'I love the arts, but I think that whole thing is hopelessly misguided'.

Derek Harding, Director Margate Renewal Partnership commented:

'I can understand that [people are sceptical] because the project has been talked about for some time, but Turner is much more than about bringing great art to the town, it's a component of a much wider regeneration programme that's about modernising Margate, bringing it into the 21st century. And what that actually means is that investment, those new visitors will actually bring money into the local economy'.

'The wider regeneration programme is so important, we're investing in the facilities, the structure, the restaurants, the shops, the old town, the whole feeling of the place, to ensure the visitors spends time here and come back again for many many years'.



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⁴⁵ Photos of Margate by Lesa Dryburgh 2008.

Left to Right. Margate beach. Turner Contemporary Scale Model. Shop front hoarding.

Is there a danger that Turner Contemporary sucks the life out of Margate and other areas are neglected? Derek Harding continues:

‘No, because Margate Renewal Partnership⁴⁶ which is the agency spearheading this regeneration, which is a partnership backed by South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Arts Council, the County Council, the District Council, is investing in other parts of the town and things like the Margate Museum is an important part of our future plans. The next big priority for us is the seafront and Dreamland⁴⁷, that’s where the heritage and traditional offers are going to be’⁴⁸.

An interesting Case Study worth mentioning here is that of Tate St Ives, a contemporary art gallery which opened in 1993. It can be seen as the pioneer for a new cycle of seaside town regeneration; although at the time there was some local opposition, local authorities and businesses were quick to see the potential economic benefits that the new gallery could bring. Early estimates were for 75,000 visitors per year; in the event, the first year attendances reached 200,000 and by January 2000, there had been more than 1.2m visits to the gallery⁴⁹.

It is often perceived by local people that investment in a place does not include investment for the people of the place. Typically, and a reaction vocalised from local people in response to high investment art projects, is about why so much money is being spent ‘on art’ and what the point is. Interestingly, multi-million pound culture-led publically funded projects can be perceived by the public as something ‘for someone else’ and ‘not for me’. This could occur because the benefits of culture-led regeneration are hard to track, take time to realise and, when they are realised, they are not necessarily well shared across regions within communities as examples of what benefits can occur. Whilst it is

⁴⁶ Margate Renewal Partnership <<http://www.margaterenewal.co.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009]

⁴⁷ Dreamland, Margate (UK) is one of Britain’s most famous seaside amusement parks. The park, which opened in 1920, is home to the Grade II listed Scenic Railway roller coaster, the oldest operating roller coaster in the country and Britain’s first listed amusement park ride. It is also hugely important to the area’s local economy as the Isle of Thanet’s most-visited tourist attraction. In January 2003, the owner of Dreamland announced that the park is to close and be redeveloped.

⁴⁸ The Politics Show. (2008) *Time for Turner*. South East, BBC 1, 23 November, [video:VHS].

⁴⁹ Tate St Ives presents modern and contemporary art, often created in or associated with Cornwall. Its location in St Ives, with dramatic views across the town and harbour to the east and Porthmeor Beach to the north, provides a unique opportunity to view work in the surroundings in which, in many cases, it was actually created. <<http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1085>> [Accessed 2 March 2009]

understood that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, this lack of available and reported 'good, but long-term news' and a lack of real community engagement (not token public relations), can leave communities, cultural and political leaders 'in the dark' and isolated when it comes to sharing knowledge and experience.

The British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) established the Seaside Towns Network in 2006 to enable practitioners in seaside towns to share best practice. It now has 120 members from the public and private sectors and arranges events to address the challenges of regenerating seaside areas. The network aims to raise the profile of seaside towns and share knowledge, ideas and contacts. Jessica Courtney Bennett, Network Manager, BURA (British Urban Regeneration Association) ⁵⁰ comments:

'Seaside towns can have inexperienced Local Authorities and a lack of strong leadership, they are very often isolated from Government and Regional Development Agencies. What seaside towns lack is someone who stays long enough to make a change and see things through. A programme of training in regeneration, seminars and small events may be welcomed'.

'Having a local champion, someone independent and a person known in the local communities works very well'.

'Having support from the community, local press and regional authorities will make a difference in increasing the confidence of local authorities to be bold with their ambitions'.

Victoria Pomery has been Director of Turner Contemporary since 2002. From her background as curator at Tate Liverpool, she has a network of support from Tate galleries; Turner Contemporary and Tate have developed a strong working partnership. Victoria is passionate about contemporary art and has acquired a wealth of experience and expertise during Turner Contemporary's long and varied journey. Her personal insight for the purposes of this report raises some key issues.

⁵⁰ British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA), is the leading membership organisation championing regeneration. <<http://www.bura.org.uk> > [Accessed 6 January 2009]

- Directors of new cultural projects need significant time to develop partnerships locally and regionally, with communities and policy makers.
- It is essential to embed culture in strategic thinking.
- It is vital that the synergy between the cultural organisation and the town exists through the town being ready for the project as much as the project being developed in the town.
- That 'the building' is 'the backdrop'. In other words, it's not about the building, it's about changing mindsets.
- Directors of capital projects need support from knowledge networks.
- Joined – up thinking is essential in coastal town development – packaging regional destinations as the tourist/cultural offer as opposed to the one place, space or cultural attraction.
- It is essential to take the community with you.
- Arts Council England could help make the political case for arts and culture more strongly.

Mick Etherton, Owner, The Community Pharmacy Gallery and Director Beeping Bush Ltd, Margate privately bought his gallery property in 2000, following setting up an arts company in Brick Lane in London. He was forced to move out of Brick Lane when his lease ran out, and at a time when rents were increasing and higher profile artists such as The Chapman Brothers were moving in. He used the opportunity to invest in Margate in affordable property and set up a gallery.

'A number of properties have been bought up locally by business people and builders, who are sitting on them, waiting for things to change in Margate. Derelict buildings have been renewed with grants available for galleries, and then left empty or sold on'.

Commercial property acquisition and ownership is a common theme in the success or otherwise of culture-led regeneration and the ability for artists and other creative practitioners to afford to work and live there. Where it is done well and sympathetically, success emerges, and this principle is referred to later in this report in the focus on Folkestone. Typically, opportunities to purchase run-down or derelict properties are ignored by council's during regeneration phases and private developers can take advantage of the culture-led potential. A phrase for this model has been coined as 'the Hoxton effect' – rising property and rental prices capitalising on emerging cultural initiatives; something which has been avoided in Folkestone by the creation of the Creative Foundation. The details are contained later in this report.

In Margate, The Community Pharmacy Gallery is an independently owned space and received European Regional Development Fund capital grants to enable artists to work and exhibit their work. It offers opportunities for selling - exhibitions in return for opening the door to the public, using the space to produce work and invigilating the gallery. Private owner Mick Etherton does not receive any revenue funding for this and like many independent creative entrepreneurs, runs other concerns. His other business, Beeping Bush Ltd, is an arts and digital media company, run as an Industrial Provident Society⁵¹. Beeping Bush Ltd is currently the Screen South Community Network UK Film Delivery Partner for Kent & Medway, supported by UK Film Council and Kent County Council Art Investment Fund⁵². Amongst other work, Beeping Bush Ltd have made five short films on artists profiles for Turner Contemporary, which have been distributed on www.kenttv.com which is the UK's first county council funded on-demand broadband television channel. It was launched on 21 September 2007 by Bob Geldof and by early December there had been more than 100,000 visits to the website.

⁵¹ An Industrial and Provident Society is an organisation conducting an industry, business or trade, either as a co-operative or for the benefit of the community, and is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965. <http://www.fsa.gov.uk/pages/doing/small_firms/msr/societies/index.shtml > [Accessed 6 January 2009]

⁵² More information available at <<http://www.beepingbush.co.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2008].

Typical of many creative practitioners who find themselves in the midst of culture-led regeneration, who are often not consulted, engaged or communicated with; Mick Etherton was disappointed about the lack of relationship with Turner Contemporary in the early years. However, he considers he has a good working relationship with them now, which he considered started around 2006 when the project delays began to unfold. At this time, Turner Contemporary contacted Mick to make short films, and he was pleased to be contacted and his services used, which was not how the relationship had started out in 2002.

Mick Etherton would have preferred a more engaged relationship from the outset and his experience is not uncommon. Disappointment can occur when engagement with local artists and artists work is limited or non-existent and it takes time to build confidence again. Goodwill can be built very early on, when engagement with local artists and creative practitioners can be considered from the outset of arts and culture-led initiatives.

‘In the early days, no-one from Turner came to see any of the work exhibited here, though we sent invitations. For the first two years, or more, every artist brought into Margate to show work was from Eastern Europe, this put all the local artists back up. Also, when people from London are brought in to work, it feels like your work isn’t considered good enough’.

The (lack of) use of ‘local artists’ problem is a common factor in culture-led regeneration. It is frequently cited by local creative communities that ‘people from London’ are ‘brought in’ to deliver contracts and that they are overlooked. Factors for long-term success in culture-led regeneration need to consider cultural mapping and accessing appropriate engagement of local suppliers to support sustainability.

7.2 Insights on Folkestone's culture-led regeneration:

Folkestone is enjoying a culture-led revival spearheaded by investment from local businessman and philanthropist Roger De Haan, former owner of SAGA, holidays, insurance and financial services for people over 50s. Folkestone – based Creative Foundation⁵³, want to revitalise the town by attracting and harnessing the energies of creative people and businesses and Director, Nick Ewbank shares his insights:

The Creative Foundation was established in 2002 as a charitable enterprise to develop a strategy to reverse Folkestone's failing fortunes. The vision places the arts at the heart of every aspect of the process, drawing together cultural activity, economic growth, educational transformation and significant enhancements to the built environment⁵⁴.

Nick Ewbank has over 20 years experience in arts regeneration and comments:

'The role of arts in regeneration has been a debating point for many years. When the Charity Commission reviewed regeneration, around 10 years ago they brought in a new charitable activity of regeneration. Essentially, in the past, it wasn't possible to define the sort of work which the Creative Foundation principally focuses on, certainly in terms of its property work, as being charitable. So, the Charity Commission has introduced this new category and I think that allows us to take a more socially enterprising role, but we do still have to focus on the individual beneficiaries of charity, so we have to ensure that we're promoting artistic excellence and educational opportunities or that we're relieving poverty amongst individual artists'⁵⁵.

'So, for example, with the provision of affordable workspace, we have to demonstrate that we're either helping an unemployed artist to start up a new business, or, in some other way, contributing to relieving hardship'. It's a challenge for us, constantly thinking about how we are fitting in with Charity Commission regulations, to allow us to do our work'⁵⁶.

⁵³ <<http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

⁵⁴ Ewbank, Nick. (2008) Folkestone Resurgent. *Arts Professional*, 17 November, p.5.

⁵⁵ Charity Commission, RR2 Version March 1999 *Promotion of Urban and Rural Regeneration* states that following public consultation, the Charity Commissioners have recognised the promotion of urban and rural regeneration for public benefit in areas of social and economic deprivation as charitable purposes in its own right. <<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/rr2.asp>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

⁵⁶ The Charities Act 2006 introduces changes that will make arts, culture, heritage charitable purposes in their own right. It is being phased in over some years, the recent Charity Commission Statement (December 2008) Public Benefit Statement of the Basis for the Charity Commission's Role and Action states ' In 2006, Parliament passed new legislation for charities which, amongst other provisions, gave fresh emphasis to the requirement for all charities' aims to be, demonstrably, for the public benefit. It is in both our interests, as the regulator of charities in England and Wales, and the interests of the charities that we regulate, that our approach to public benefit maintains and, if possible, increases the public's trust and confidence in charities'. <<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publicbenefit/pbstate.asp>> [Accessed 6 January 2009]

In relation to research conducted into current social trends as outlined earlier in this report; and the potential for a travel and tourism revival in English seaside towns, Nick Ewbank shares his views about the possibilities for seaside towns currently in decline:

‘I think people are increasingly interested in quality of life and sustainable lifestyles and I think the urban model of living is getting more and more difficult for many people, particularly families. I think the English seaside has the potential to offer a viable alternative to urban life. Improving transport links is vitally important if that potential is going to be realised. We’re very fortunate here, in that Folkestone will benefit from the high-speed rail link. Commuter services, when they start in late 2010, will reduce the journey time from London from an hour and forty minutes to just fifty two minutes, and if you look at the seaside towns that have managed to transform themselves over the last twenty years, there are two things at the heart; the common factors are good transport links and higher education, both good determinants of success. Brighton is a classic example; good transport links to London in less than an hour and two Universities and Newquay is another, on the back of the surfing and improved air services, the airport has made a huge difference’.

Given the complex mix of economic, social, education, environmental and cultural factors involved in regeneration, what role can culture-led regeneration play in Folkestone?

‘I think there has been an acceptance that the arts, or creativity in its broadest sense, can have a powerful transformational effect. People often quote Bilbao, or Barcelona and St Ives; now obviously in each case, there are special factors at work, and it’s not a one-size-fits-all model. Any attempt to do the sort of thing we’re trying to do here in Folkestone can only work if it involves close collaboration with local people and is in response to the place that you’re working with’.

‘Also, I don’t think you can be precious about the role of the arts. I think you have to fight for international standards of excellence wherever you can, but you can’t be too didactic about what’s inside and what’s outside the tent. A small example might be around private businesses in the Creative Quarter; if someone wants to set up a new taxi firm in the Creative Quarter, that deserves as much of our goodwill and support as a new gallery. Education might be arts-led or arts-themed, but that doesn’t mean it’s narrow. So arts is a broad theme, here in Folkestone specifically, there was a consensus that something needed to be done, because the town had been in decline for so long and no-one really knew what to do about it, and bizarrely that helped in agreeing on a new direction. It also helps that it’s a relatively small town and you can get the significant key players in the same room. Also, in our case, to have Roger De Haan as the key champion, ensuring we follow a dynamic, enterprising model; personally and very generously providing funding; and being a respected figure who is part of and buys into the concept and is prepared to champion it. I think it’s perfectly valid to separate out those three different roles; you don’t have to have the same person carrying out all three, it just happens to be the case here.

When you’re looking at Folkestone, some may think...”of course *they* can do it, they’ve got support from Roger De Haan”...but the point is that you don’t need

all those three roles to be invested in one individual, you can divide it up, for example, you can have one agency, or combination of agencies working on the funding; and a dynamic leader arguing the case politically; and still have a successful project’.

In summary, the three ingredients in this approach to culture-led regeneration comprise dynamic leadership to champion the initiative and argue the case politically; an individual, an agency, or a combination of agencies investing or applying for funding and an enterprising model which engages local communities and which strives for, but is not precious about, international standards of excellence.

What can happen when public response to regeneration is mixed?

‘We put a huge premium on relations with the public. Here in Folkestone, we are very lucky to have Strange Cargo⁵⁷ who have done a lot of work in the town, for at least fifteen years and have overcome a lot of hostility, generally, towards the arts. You need to engage local people, work with schools; you can’t just parachute in. The community-based approach, with a real commitment to both excellence and access, can, in itself make a huge difference. I’m sure you’ll find that any successful project has got that going on, often in a quiet way; ensuring that thousands of local people buy in through their schools and families. And that, builds a sense of community and sense of place. I think it’s difficult for organisations, with the best will in the world, to really listen to what people are saying. It requires an openness and willingness to change what you’re doing, and I say that because it’s difficult for our organisation, and we try really hard. It’s a two way street – how can you expect the community to go along with what you’re doing if you’re not really prepared to listen to what they’re saying? I do believe in that’.

‘A lot of schemes similar to ours are Local Authority or Regional Development Agency led, and it can be very difficult for those projects to focus, because the other side of the coin to stakeholder engagement, is trying to please everyone; and you can’t, or you can try, but more often than not you end up diluting what you’re trying to achieve and everyone ends up getting frustrated. One of the things we were clear on from the start was that although we’re in the district of Shepway, we were going to focus on Folkestone, and in fact on a relatively small geographical area of Folkestone, where we believed the real core of the problem and the solution lay. So you need to have a rigorous analysis and then come up with your idea, test it out, mend it, adapt it, and then have the courage to go out and say what you’re doing, and we think if we do this, it will be good for everybody. Now that’s easy to say, but it’s difficult for locally elected politicians to have the same degree of focus, because they are being pulled in all sorts of different directions by their supporters.

‘A few years ago, when we were starting out, people were happy to go along with what we were proposing. As we have progressed, it’s become more

⁵⁷ Strange Cargo: Artist-led company; public art, celebratory art, gallery space, training, education. Available from: <<http://www.strangecargo.org.uk>> [Accessed 9 January 2009]

complicated, particularly within the heritage lobby, and I think that's happened because of increasing self-confidence, amongst the community and a stronger sense of place. People have different views about how we should go forward, for example, the County Council were planning to deregister the museum and turn it into a history resource centre and there was a campaign locally to stop that happening. I think that's maybe a mark of a successful regeneration scheme, when people begin arguing for what they want and have a stronger voice'

'Measuring success is a big challenge for us, we are actively working on that We will be publishing a fairly comprehensive evaluation of the Folkestone Triennial⁵⁸ in 2009⁵⁹. Measuring impact is very difficult. To give you an idea of how complicated that is, talking to some researchers, the reasons why an individual stays in an area or moves on is complex; on the one hand, you want local people to feel supported and empowered to stay in their community and be part of the change, on the other hand, some people haven't had the aspiration to get up and go to, and if they gain that aspiration to move away and get an education or a better job that is a good thing, so you can't just measure whether people stay or go, it depends on the reasons'⁶⁰.

Whilst commissioned impact and evaluation reports are not available at the time of publishing this research, it will be interesting to read some of the early findings of the impact of Folkestone Triennial, when they are available later in 2009. Meanwhile, this interview is suggesting that focusing on a small geographical area, concentrating attention at the core of a problem and nurturing the solution within a defined physical area is key. Conducting rigorous analysis and then having the courage in resulting convictions to initiate and grow innovative solutions is essential. And, whilst ensuring stakeholder support, being bold enough to keep strong attention on 'the big idea' and not dilute it ought, ultimately, to enhance civic pride and build stronger communities. Measuring impact is complex and clearly a longitudinal study will be necessary to assess the effect on local communities and people's decisions to remain, leave or indeed move to, the area. The complex nature of measuring economic, cultural and community impact, supports earlier statements in this report related to conducting a longitudinal study over a 10 year period, charting the emergence of cultural policy in England's North East (pp 24).

⁵⁸ <<http://www.folkestonetriennial.org.uk>> [Accessed 8 January 2009]

⁵⁹ Richard Ings is conducting the evaluation of Folkestone Triennial, to be published in late 2009.

⁶⁰ Gray, F. and Powell, D. are working on measuring impact on a research protocol which combines objective measures of economic impact with a softer and more subjective measures to track changes to people's perceptions of themselves and their sense of place. The is work commissioned by South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and is not available at the time of publication of this research.



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'Property refurbishment is an important element in the way we've developed here. It has helped us to achieve our objectives, replacing empty buildings with buzzy new businesses and increasing footfall. And having a property portfolio gives us a sustainable income for decades to come. If you can do it, it seems like a smart thing to do. Whether borrowing money to acquire property would be justified, I wouldn't want to venture an opinion on that. Regional Development Agencies and Local Authorities need to get their investment back over a fairly short term, in five or ten years, whereas we're lucky here and the money is now invested in charity in perpetuity. We were wary of making a big announcement, we've taken our time with the acquisitions and things have happened slowly. One of the opportunities with Folkestone was that it had disappeared off the map, literally, been removed from signage, with the Channel Tunnel coming. On the motorway signs coming down on the M20, Folkestone had been blanked out and replaced with the words Channel Tunnel, an interesting phenomenon, for sure! So we quite literally have the challenge of putting Folkestone back on the map'.



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⁶¹ Dion, Mark. (2008) *Mobile Gull Appreciation Unit* [fibreglass gull, containing small library, portable on wheels]. Temporarily situated in various locations Folkestone during the Folkestone Triennial in 2008.

⁶² Coley, Nathan. (2008) *Heaven is a Place Where Nothing Ever Happens* [scaffold structure, illuminated fairground bulbs]. Situated 48 Tontine Street, Folkestone, UK.

⁶³ Bachelor, David. (2008) *Disco Mecanique* [multicoloured spheres created from thousands of plastic Sunglasses rotate silently]. Temporary installation, suspended from the ceiling of the former ballroom of the Metropole Hotel, Folkestone UK.

⁶⁴ Photos by Lesa Dryburgh 2008. The Creative Quarter, Folkestone, Tontine Street and adjacent streets.

There are a variety of company structures which can empower artistic and creative industries to flourish.

'You don't have to be a charity to do this kind of work. There are other models of creating space for artists to work in, for example Acme⁶⁵ studios are, I think, an Industrial Provident Society. So, there are models which aren't charities but have similar aspirations and, in the past, that gave them more freedom to trade. If you look at the history of SPACE⁶⁶ studios and the history of ACME, you can see that ACME could focus on the property side of what they did and the business of providing good quality artist studio spaces, whereas SPACE studios was at the same time, focussing on education and exhibitions. Things have changed now, but all through the 1970s and 1980s, I think that was the case and you can see the difference reflected in the trajectory of those two organisations. There is now a new category of social enterprise, a Community Interest Company⁶⁷, which is how, for example, the Folkestone Artists Co-operative has been set up. It's a new form of company, a type of social enterprise, and the model gives opportunities to be dynamic and business-like. But ultimately the advantages of being a charity are considerable, rates relief, (in certain cases), corporation tax relief and access to funding; so the benefits to us are worth it and we put up with the restrictions, which are a lot less than they were ten years ago. I'm sure new models will continue to emerge. The legislation controlling companies needs to evolve to find ways in which people can do this stuff without being tied with conditions which aren't really 21st century'.

A tentative conclusion might be drawn here. Folkestone's culture-led regeneration is business driven, very rooted and strong on governance and as such, had a competitive advantage from the outset. Margate's culture-led regeneration commenced with poor leadership and was icon-driven but with little substance from the beginning. At the outset, it did not engage with local communities or potential local opposition. As such and with the benefit of hindsight, Margate's culture-led regeneration has struggled through difficult years to reach its current position, which now appears to have strengthened leadership and community engagement and may therefore succeed in turning the place around?

⁶⁵ ACME Studios have been providing affordable space for art and artists since 1972. They provide work/live and studio residency schemes and an international agency programme for visiting artists from abroad. <<http://www.acme.org.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

⁶⁶ SPACE Studios was founded in 1968. SPACE supports artistic production by developing and managing studio space, widens participation in visual arts & media, fostering the creative potential of individuals and communities. <<http://www.spacestudios.org.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

⁶⁷ Community Interest Companies (CIC) are limited companies, with special additional features, created for the use of people who want to conduct business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage. This is achieved by a 'community interest test' and 'asset lock', which ensure that the CIC is established for community purposes and the assets and profits are dedicated to these purposes. <<http://www.cicregulator.gov.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

8. A focus on culture-led regeneration in England's North West: Blackpool and the Flyde Coast.

J.B Priestly once called it 'The Great Roaring Spangled Beast'. Hitler wanted it to be his 'personal post-war playground'; so it survived the bombs of the German Second World War. Luftwaffe images put up for sale in February 2009 show maps and aerial photographs issued in Berlin in the early 1940s by the German Department for War. Although the Fylde coast escaped largely unscathed from the ravages of Hitler's Blitzkrieg – the maps are a chilling reminder of the devastation that might have been.

Blackpool is Britain's largest tourist resort and over 70% of us have visited. However, visitor numbers have dramatically declined over the last two decades; from 17million visitors per year in 1992 to 10million in 2008. In a presentation delivered at the BURA Seaside Symposium in 2008, statistics indicated Blackpool to be the 12th most deprived Local Authority in The UK; having the lowest gross annual wages (resident) in the UK; the 15th highest level of real unemployment and the highest alcohol related deaths ⁶⁸.

In the 21st Century, Blackpool, like many other English seaside resorts, is at a 'tipping point', a critical point in its historical development, planning for its future. Following the failed bid in 2006, to win the opportunity for a Super Casino to spearhead regeneration ⁶⁹, other plans for Blackpool's future have been developed and Blackpool is leading the regeneration on England's Northwest coast.

ReBlackpool - Blackpool's urban regeneration company - is tasked with delivering the 21st century vision of Blackpool's Masterplan.⁷⁰ The Masterplan

⁶⁸ Potter, Jackie (2008) The foundations of a new seaside future *BURA Seaside Symposium*, Blackpool, March 2008. Available from: <<http://www.bura.org.uk/Events/BURA+Seaside+Network/BURA+Seaside+Symposium.htm>> [Accessed 9 Jan 2009].

⁶⁹ Submission to the Casino Advisory Panel, Towards a World Class Resort Destination, March 2006. Blackpool Council. Available from <<http://www.culture.gov.uk/Cap/proposals/Blackpool.pdf>> [Accessed 9 January 2009].

⁷⁰ More information available at <www.reblackpool.com> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

sets out an ambitious vision that will transform the town by re-defining Blackpool's future as a top-quality, world-class resort destination, improving the lives of residents and visitors alike. The vision for Blackpool's visitor economy⁷¹ is to be innovative, confident and world-class and includes support for a bid to become a World Heritage Site as the first working-class seaside resort in the World⁷².

Blackpool's World Heritage Site nomination for consideration by UNESCO is under the category of 'cultural landscape'. Cultural landscapes, represent the '... combined works of nature and man' and '... are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal'. They are seen as retaining '... an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress' while at the same time exhibiting significant material evidence of their evolution over time. UNESCO recognises that World Heritage Sites falling under this category are living and working places that must be allowed to grow dynamically and organically in response to their local environment and society as they have in the past. Cultural landscapes have also been recognised as a legal entity in the European Landscape Convention, with its emphasis on the strong inter-relationship between people and place and bringing together social, cultural, economic and environmental values, concerns and opportunities⁷³.

A little background on Blackpool's seaside holiday history puts current initiatives into context. Most people in Northern England will have heard of the Lancashire Wakes Weeks - occasions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when entire towns would close down completely while their mill-working

⁷¹ *A Strategy for Blackpool's Visitor Economy 2006 – 2010*, Blackpool Council.

⁷² *Heritage Strategy 2006-10 (2006)* Blackpool Council.

⁷³ Walton, J.K. and Wood, J. (2006) *The Seaside Resort as World Heritage Site? The Case of Blackpool* p.18.

populations migrated en masse to the seaside. In 1801 Blackpool's population stood at 573, only a century later it reached 47,348. Many of Blackpool's famous attractions were built in the latter half of the nineteenth century including North Pier (1863), Central Pier (1868), South Pier (1894) and the world famous Blackpool Tower (1894). Blackpool was also the first place in the world to have electric street lighting in 1879, with the installation of the electric arc street lighting system⁷⁴.

In October 2008, Nalgao, The National Association of Local Government Arts Officers organised its annual roadshow in Blackpool "Switched on!"⁷⁵ The conference focussed on the contribution that the arts and creative industries make in building sustainable communities and supporting regeneration.

The 3 day conference programme included, amongst many opportunities to experience Blackpool, a Walking Tour of *The Great Promenade Show* Blackpool's Linear Outdoor Public Art Gallery on South Shore Promenade⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ Source: Visit Lancashire, People's playtime and Wakes week.
< <http://www.visitlancashire.com/site/inspire-me/living-legends/peoples-playtime-and-wakes-week> >
[Accessed 2 March 2009]

⁷⁵ Nalgao, The National Association of Local Government Arts Officers. *Switched On* conference (2008). 8 –10 October. <<http://www.nalgao.org/page.php?75>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

⁷⁶ The Great Promenade Show stretches two kilometres on Blackpool South Shore Promenade, Blackpool, UK. It includes ten permanent artworks commissioned from UK artists.
<<http://www.thegreatpromenadeshow.co.uk>> [Accessed 6 January 2009].

*The Great Promenade Show*⁷⁷ was curated from 2000 - 2003 by a small team of Northwest artists, The Art Department, and the project involved both making and commissioning permanent works for the scheme. I spoke to one of the artists involved, Michael Trainor, who co-curated the works and conceived *They Shoot Horses Don't They?* A 20m diameter rotating mirrorball, images of which are now frequently used in the regional, national and international promotion of Blackpool.



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⁷⁷ Further information available at <<http://www.greatpromenadeshow.co.uk/greatpromshowflash.html>> [Accessed 24 February 2009]

⁷⁸ Trainor, Michael. (2002) *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* [mirrored glass, GRP, galvanised steel, 47,000 mirrors 50mm x 50mm; 6 diameter sphere, 3.25m from the ground at base level]. Situated Blackpool South Shore Promenade, England's Northwest, UK.

⁷⁹ Blake, Peter, Sir, OBE. (2004) *Life as a Circus* [bronze casts, steel, stone, 108" (274.3cm) high including base]. Situated Blackpool South Shore Promenade, Blackpool, UK.

⁸⁰ Freeman, Peter. (2001) *Glam Rocks* [sprayed concrete, steel, lights, 2m long x 1.5m high]. Situated South Shore Promenade, Blackpool, UK.

⁸¹ Knight, Chris. (2001) *Desire* [coreten steel, stainless steel, 7.2m high]. Situated South Shore Promenade, Blackpool, UK.

Michael Trainor comments:

'The big question here is - do the arts and the seaside go together? Is there something special about the coast and culture as opposed to, say city centres and the arts, or rural villages? The answer here, crucially, from the artist's point of view is definitely yes. Why? There is something artists have got in common with seaside towns and that, surprisingly, is showbiz! The business of showing things to people. Attracting people to look, to feel and to experience. At the bottom of it all, the traditional British seaside holiday town is fundamentally an installation, it doesn't call itself art and its *raison d'être* may be more financially orientated, but it is as much an assemblage of colours, objects, performance and cultural references as any artist ever created.

In general artist's are interested in the visual landscape and seaside towns are a constantly changing palette of complex visual references in a state of constant animation (in season anyway!). Many artists are inspired by that strange confluence of nature with man-made popular culture and they reference it or are inspired by it in their work - given the opportunity many relish the opportunity of working on the coast. But here is where it is worth sounding a note of caution. The art is likely to be least successful when it is a direct reference to something which already exists in seaside visual culture – sculptures of giant shells on beaches or tattoo shaped neon art work in a town full of illuminations and tattoo shaped neon advertising (to make a couple of obvious but real examples). '*The Great Promenade Show*' is a linear coastal gallery of large works which obliquely reference aspects of Blackpool's special culture and history without being literal.

Art and the seaside are a fascinating combination and the changing cultural offer at the seaside is something that still has much to be explored and developed. Contemporary art forms can often be media painted as being something weird, deliberating shocking, and not in the public taste but then so, it might be said, is the perception of working class seaside towns by distant middle class observers. In a way contemporary art sounds like the ideal candidate as a new coastal attraction but, as this story illustrates, it often makes for an interesting union:

In pre-TV 1930s Blackpool the 'sideshow' was entertainment king and media queen. Opportunistic impresarios drew in hundreds of thousands with exhibits like '*The Starving Brides*' where a couple on their wedding day had to lie in parallel glass coffins prior to consummation for 28 days with only cigarettes and water for sustenance for a £200 cash prize! This outdoes the most visceral of contemporary artists and voyeuristic of TV concepts. The idea was taken one step further by entrepreneur Charles Stafford who acquired Jacob Epstein's '*Jacob and the Angel*' sculpture to exhibit as a freakish aberration for people to point and laugh at in one of his paying adult-only side shows. The sculpture now resides in Tate Liverpool but let that be a warning to all those thinking that all the English seaside needs is a bit of art and culture.....

The commissioning process undertaken by The Art Department for *The Great Promenade Show* involved drawing up a detailed artists brief and circulating it widely to established and emerging artists in the UK. In the brief, written in an engaging and inspiring manner, quite unlike that of more orthodox briefs, the collective identify a quality they call "Blackpoolness", referring to "the visual overload of linear miles of frenetic lighting, high fat foods, automated exhilaration, theatrical architecture and commercial outlets so intensely stocked that they look like deliberate art installations".

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Arts Council England, North West, is currently working with Blackpool to maximise opportunities for the arts and to re-position its tourism destination offer with culture playing its part, building local capacity and participation as an integrated part of the regeneration process. Investment initiatives include developing more arts activities with communities, building support for the creative industries and contributing to emerging festivals and events.

Anthony Preston, Head of Resource Development, Arts Council England North West, comments:

'Blackpool is presently on Arts Council England's agenda because a lot of things have come together recently. The combination of need and opportunity, through new investment, make it an exciting proposition, with culture as one of the drivers for change. There is a relatively new arts team and a strategic vision and leadership in place and the cultural staffing is growing. Some exciting propositions, including the People's Playground, 360 degree festival and Lawrence Llewelyn-Bowen's designs for a stretch of the Illuminations, have made people look again and think about doing things differently'.

Arts Council England North West are working with Blackpool Council and Re-Blackpool to develop the capacity of the Arts team and investing in such things as improved public realm, the involvement of communities in regeneration and dance development, amongst others.

Funding has recently been re-aligned in the region, to develop capacity and support strategic changes in relation to having one cultural service across Blackpool and the Fylde, mirroring the footprint of the Multi Area Agreement

Structural funding changes has enabled artificial boundaries to be removed and emerging tourism destination brands to link together different cultural offers; with Blackpool as the vehicle for the strategic agencies to align themselves with in order to make stronger regional destination offers. For example, marketing Blackpool and The Fylde coast; also known as The Golf Coast as a joined-up tourist offer.

A challenge for Blackpool lies in its historic lack of creative industries, or at least the profile, recognition and development of such industries to meet the demands of a 21st century market, audiences and contemporary tastes. Blackpool has without doubt a plethora of entertainment and variety niche industries but few community focussed arts organisations, little creative industry enterprise and a resident population who traditionally have not been involved in cultural activity. The challenge is how to find ways of increasing participation and access to arts and culture for the communities in Blackpool, (in an area high on the national indices of national deprivation) working together with the creation of a world-class visitor destination with high quality product and excellence at the forefront. In addition, how to build knowledge and skills development in the region in these sectors so, for example, creative industries grow towards being skilled service providers.

In a guided tour in February 2009 of the interiors of many of Blackpool's famous landmark buildings designed by Frank Matcham; including the Grand Theatre, Blackpool Tower Circus and Ballroom and the Winter Gardens, Professor Vanessa Toulmin (Curator of Admission all Classes, National fairground Archive, University of Sheffield), shared insights about Blackpool heritage in entertainment and the part the venues played in establishing Blackpool as Britain's leading seaside resort⁸². Professor Vanessa Toulmin comments:

'Blackpool is constantly re-inventing itself and has cornered some seemingly obscure but highly lucrative markets including pigeon-fanciers, magicians and dancers'.

The dance niche is being celebrated through the *Sea Change* programme, with funding for the development of a new sea-front 20,000-capacity outdoor arena that will be used for music and dance festivals, set to open in 2010⁸³.

One example cited by Anthony Preston, Arts Council England, which demonstrates capacity building in culture-led regeneration is:



'The Illuminated Car Parade⁸⁴ has the potential to grow to become an innovative addition to the illuminations attraction. When it first took place on Blackpool's promenade in 2008, it achieved community involvement and developed a new relationship with tourism. In fact the tourism department paid towards Art Cars 2008. The next stage is to begin to explore how the producers, Walk The Plank, together with the Council, can put in place the building blocks for developing local skills and the capacity of communities in Blackpool to sustain this activity into the future and balance real meaningful participation alongside a high calibre, quality artistic offer'.

⁸² Further information about Blackpool's famous landmark buildings and the related 10 day seasonal events as part of Showzam is available at: <<http://www.showzam.co.uk/whatson/matchamtour>> [Accessed 2 March 2009].

⁸³ The Sea Change programme is funded by DCMS and led by CAFE; a capital grants programme aiming to help regeneration in coastal areas through specific investment in culture and heritage.

⁸⁴ Art Car Parade is produced by Walk The Plank <<http://www.walktheplank.co.uk>> and was originally conceived and curated in Manchester in 2007 by Michael Trainor. <<http://www.artcarparade.co.uk>> [Accessed 9 January 2009].

⁸⁵ Mountain, Pete. (2007) *Black Cab*. Photo from Art Car Parade, Blackpool, 2008 by Eyekonic images.

The changes in Regional Tourism Strategies have enabled innovation of this nature; for the tourist budget to contribute to art projects as the example above illustrates. Whereas tourism initiatives in Blackpool used to be membership led (i.e. visitor attractions and hoteliers), it is now supported by Northwest Development Agency and Lancashire Tourism Board and can therefore be more strategic⁸⁶.

With art seemingly serving so many 'agendas', what about the art itself? What about art for arts sake? What about the enjoyment of the cultural experience itself as an end in itself? Anthony Preston comments again:

'Sometimes art doesn't come off. When public money is involved, where could one start to test it without the possibility of failure and potential public outcry? What's a runner and what's not? It's always difficult to commission art for arts sake in the public realm, (it generates intense public media interest and debate). Grants for research and development, for risk taking and road-testing are important to cushion the negative impacts further down the road'.

One way to implement innovative and risk-taking art in public is in commissioning and installing temporary works of course. Indeed, Antony Gormley's '*Another Place*'⁸⁷ was originally conceived as a temporary installation as was '*Super Lamb Banana*'⁸⁸ a sculpture now situated in Liverpool. Both works originally caused controversy but both also came to belong in the hearts and minds of the communities in which they were located; eventually permanently adopted by them and subsequently used as promotional icons distinctive to their geographical location, instantly recognisable and popular symbols of their place.

⁸⁶ A Strategy for Blackpool's Visitor Economy 2006 – 2010, Blackpool Council.

⁸⁷ Gormley, Antony. (1997) *Another Place* [cast iron, 100 elements / 189 x 53 x 29 cm]. Situated Crosby Beach, Merseyside, England's Northwest, UK.

⁸⁸ Chiezo, Taro. (1998) *Super Lamb Banana* [concrete, steel, 17ft high]. Commissioned for the Art Transpennine Exhibition of 1998, it first attracted interest from its original position on the Strand, London, UK. It was a controversial, but welcome addition to the public art arena in Liverpool.

There are some possible conclusions to draw here. Blackpool's regeneration has struggled with the role of 'culture', initially through pursuing a culture *and* regeneration model. It has deeper structural problems, a lack of inherent creative industries or strong links with higher skills or knowledge economies. Instead, strategies have for decades, focused on engagement with spectacle. Maybe now, more than ever, opportunities for culture-led regeneration, brought about by strengthened partnerships, financial investment and visionary leadership can steer Blackpool's fortunes with deeper rooted impact for long-term economic, cultural and community growth?

9. The role of the artist and their work in culture-led regeneration.

So what or who should lead culture-led regeneration and what about the role of the artist and their work?

This piece of research suggests that whilst 'culture-led' regeneration continues to be a recognised political model for economic, social and community benefit; the commissioned artist is often not adequately supported in policy delivery structures to make the work, or for the work to be maintained. Equally, commissioned artists can be perceived with suspicion, rather than embraced with open arms within the local councils and communities, from the outset of a project. Why should this be the case?

More often than not, the artist or artistic director of a project can find themselves up against all manner of political and community conflicts and end up dealing with those issues whilst trying to make art or projects of excellence.

Is it the case that temporary structures or performance art projects including temporary interventions or festivals are less politically-charged forms of culture supporting regeneration? Certainly, the culture *and* regeneration (as opposed to culture-led) approach, such as the promotion theatre, film, dance, music and multi-media art projects, festivals and exchanges can be 'softer' interventions. Such projects can perhaps demonstrate more immediate 'returns' on investment in engagement and temporarily increased seasonal visitor numbers.

One such initiative is the Seas Festival, a peripatetic conference along the Black and North Seas comprising public and academic debate around how artistic initiatives can lift urban re-invention and including performance art in the host coastal town. In 2009, the conference has taken place across Europe including England (Skegness in September/October 2009). The Seas Festival opens up for debate issues such as the degree to which communities in coastal regions, as opposed to external agencies, derive benefit from such initiatives⁸⁹.

⁸⁹ Further information available at: <<http://www.seas.se/>> [Accessed 30 March 2009].
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Should the artists' role be about filling in the gaps where community cohesion is fragmented? Should the artists' role be about making bold statements which focus wider national and international attention on places and spaces in flux or undergoing a period of change or renewal? Should the artists' role be about making great art?

In relation to culture-led regeneration, it could be argued that the role of the art is interpreted in different ways according to different agendas. And it is because of these varying interpretations that the artist, the art or arts leader / artistic director at the core can become pushed from pillar to post to such a degree, that the work or project ambitions can become compromised or thwarted without determination and strong-will.

Where culture-led regeneration projects are taking place, success is more likely when artists and arts practitioners involved are included in the wider agendas, respected and supported from political and cross-political councils and local authorities in particular. Lack of agreement or understanding in these areas can potentially water – down artistic ambitions and stifle creativity, ultimately leading to partially successful projects or, at worst, projects that largely go un-noticed and therefore have little impact therefore, in and with the local communities.

Where support for the artist, artwork or project has been built from the outset, through strong leadership and engagement, the outcomes are more likely to result in success, relevant art, increased participation and cumulative long-term benefits.

Bold permanent work which exists, such as the examples cited in this research, frequently undergo an initial period of resistance by local communities; often followed by acceptance and pride when real local ownership takes place. In a case relating to another Antony Gormley work, *Angel of the North*⁹⁰ which

⁹⁰ Gormley, Antony. (1998) *Angel of the North* [corten steel, 20m high, 200 tonnes]. Situated the mound near the A1 motorway, NewcastleGateshead, England's Northeast, UK. Article available from: <<http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-evening-chronicle/2008/04/25/secrets-of-shearer-shirt-on-angel-revealed-72703-20819841/>> [Accessed 2 March 2009]

celebrated its 10th Anniversary in 2008; footage of Newcastle United fans draping a 30ft Alan Shearer football shirt over the 65ft sculpture in 1998 in a headline grabbing stunt to celebrate the clubs appearance at Wembley Stadium has been released. At the time, this marked a pivotal occasion which enlisted enduring local support for the sculpture.

In an interview on A Life in Art published in *The Guardian*⁹¹ artist Anish Kapoor give his views on the role of the artist and identifies that 'public sculpture' is a problem outweighed by the need as a sculptor to work in scale:

In response to the question 'Has public art become a clichéd response to the urge to regenerate post-industrial cities?', Anish Kapoor answers:

'I think we've gone totally public sculpture mad...I hate public sculpture...It's really a problem, I've got to say it's really a problem. Public sculpture ... oh God, even the phrase makes me feel tired. Why I am engaged in it? Well, I think, as a sculptor, that is something of one's lot. Because scale is a tool of sculpture, and it needs to be worked with'.

Kapoor is right to complain about mediocre art, but surely it's just that – bad art? It's not bad because it's been commissioned in a particular way, but because of the failure at some point in the creative process. Many artists have resisted being called 'public artists' fearing that they will automatically be judged as second best.

What needs to be in place for England's seaside towns to embrace and celebrate artists working there and what will it take for local authorities to consider artists as professionals, as experts in their field as opposed to 'agitators' to the planning processes? What agency or inter-departmental structures are required to support artists making or developing nationally and internationally recognised projects, to have support at community, local authority and political level?

⁹¹ Higgins, Charlotte. (2008) A Life in Art: Anish Kapoor, *The Guardian* [Internet], 8 November . Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/nov/08/anish-kapoor-interview>> [Accessed 2 March 2009].

How would it be if arts-led or culture-led regeneration schemes - often not originated by arts or culture, but frequently by developers, local authorities, regional development agencies or partnerships - were brokered with the art or cultural project at the heart? If consultation with experienced artists, makers and practitioners and the local communities were at the centre of plans, and not 'fitted in' with a pre-prepared economic, social, cultural or community vision, prepared with the absence of their voice?

Artists work in different ways and what suits one individual or company does not suit another. An experienced creatively-led consultancy team, working cross-sectorally in the private, public and voluntary sectors could potentially cross new territory in culture-led regeneration. In particular, such a collective could have significant impact in the current renewal of some of England's best loved (but in need of much more love), seaside towns.

Of course, the value of 'the arts' ultimately lies in the interaction between a 'work of art' and its audience.

In culture-led regeneration, cultural activity is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration, likely to have a high-public profile and frequently cited as the sign of regeneration. The catalyst could be the design and construction (or re-use) of buildings for public or business use; the reclamation of open space; or the introduction of a programme of activity which is then used to rebrand a place. However, these things alone will never by themselves enhance community spirit, achieve economic revitalisation and develop cultural tourism. The 'cultural activity' or 'the art' of itself cannot be expected to fulfill all these agendas.

Without a shared understanding amongst the '*they*' who are constantly '*doing something*' about revitalising England's seaside towns; government departments, local authorities, cultural organisations, educational institutes, artists, entrepreneurs, community leaders, private and public sector and

development agencies to name a few, it will not be possible to truly maximise the potential or develop criteria for success.

Ownership, consultation and evaluation are crucial and the growing information available regarding evaluation of arts and culture supports this.

In 2006, the Arts Council launched the arts debate, a major enquiry into how people value the arts, their priorities for public funding and their expectations of the Arts Council⁹². The findings led Arts Council England's corporate plan priorities for 2008 – 2011⁹³ has, and at its core, a mission to ensure 'great art for everyone' At the centre of this mission is the desire to provide quality experiences that are both excellent and that engage people with the arts, through a programme of work that addresses five key areas – reach, engagement, diversity, excellence and innovation. Of particular significance is that the Arts Council has begun to shift from the direct delivery of projects to working more strategically with key partners and stakeholders, both internally and externally.

A series documenting a unique initiative where local communities became involved in commissioning major public artwork, *Big Art*, was broadcast in May 2009. *Big Art* is a public art initiative from Channel 4 supported by Arts Council England and The Art Fund⁹⁴. It seeks to inspire and create new works of public art commissioned by communities and encourage debate on the importance of art in the built environment.

Karen Durham, Resource Development Officer, Arts Council England, Yorkshire, commented:

'Viewers can see the complex considerations that curators, planners and artists have to grapple with as part of the process of commissioning public art – a valuable insight for a process that is sometimes regarded as distant bureaucrats and artists wasting public money on outlandish projects that contribute nothing to the community'.

⁹² Arts Council England. (2007) *Public value and the arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate*. London, Arts Council England.

⁹³ Arts Council England. (2008) *Great art for everyone*. London, Arts Council England.

⁹⁴ Further information available from Arts Council England:
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/news_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=1291>
[Accessed on 30 May 2009].

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10. Findings.

Findings emerging from this research project include the following factors in relation to developing successful art and culture-led regeneration initiatives in English seaside resorts. Whilst it is clear that there is no 'one size fits all approach', there are generic components to success which include:

- Understanding, defining and incorporating the history of a place in its culture is vital both in developing uniqueness and building long-term impact.
- Community engagement and ownership is essential. This does not necessarily mean community involvement in the design process.
- Strong governance, leadership and a broad strategic approach to innovation, partnership working, education and skills development and local authority structures are critical.
- Good infrastructure including transport links, a strong cultural tourism offer and joined-up place marketing are significant factors to success.
- Commissioned artists need support at regional political level to make international class art with and within communities.
- Revenue budgets for maintenance of permanent public artworks must be considered at the outset for project sustainability. This may also include human as well as financial resources.
- Positive local media relations have a direct influence on aspiration and success.
- Measuring impact is complex and longitudinal studies are required to track change.
- Agency and departmental flexibility for innovation and entrepreneurialism in business planning and funding models should be inherent.
- Business and funding models for the acquisition of property and skills development to support for artists and creative practitioners are critical in contributing to the long-term success of place-making.

Some speculative conclusions might be drawn regarding the challenges ahead for some of England's Northwest and Southeast seaside resorts.

The challenge for Blackpool in England's Northwest, is to find ways of increasing participation and access to arts and culture for the wide residential communities, hand-in-hand with the development of a world-class visitor destination with high quality product and excellence at the forefront. In addition, to build knowledge and skills development in the region in these sectors so, for example, creative industries grow towards being skilled service providers.

The challenge in Margate is to connect with local communities and identity to develop maximum long-term impact and embed culture in strategic thinking, cross-party and cross-council.

The challenge in Folkestone is to continue to develop community and academic relations, to harness the strength of public voice to the advantage of the renewal vision and to develop and learn from research findings as they emerge. In addition, to continue to fund, develop and distribute research, share positive practice and potentially influence legislation and culture-led policies in other coastal regeneration areas through impact findings over a period of years.

The analyses offered by the interviewees consulted for this research can be connected with some of the content and conclusions in *Planning for the Intercultural City*⁹⁵, which although urban and intercultural in context, contain transferable recommendations. These include rethinking administrative and funding divides, extending and pluralising involvement through a welcoming and open civic mentality which embraces others and is willing to experiment, openness to ideas and innovation, building research and creative relationship capacities with the academic and creative communities and spreading civic competencies.

⁹⁵ Bianchini, Franco & Bloomfield, Jude. (2004) *Planning for the Intercultural City*. Comedia.

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Interviews

Unless otherwise indicated, these face-to-face interviews have been conducted by Lesa Dryburgh.

Andrea Bennett, Cultural & Leisure Services Manager, Shepway District Council, Margate, 26 November 2008.

Jessica Courtney Bennett, Seaside Network Manager, BURA (British Urban Regeneration Association), Preston, 29 August 2008.

Jane Bishop, Proprietor, Walpole Bay Hotel, Margate and Trustee, Turner Contemporary, Margate, 27 November 2008.

Mick Etherton, Owner, The Community Pharmacy Gallery and Director Beeping Bush Ltd, Margate, 27 November 2008.

Nick Ewbank, Director / Chief Executive, Creative Foundation, Folkestone, 26 November 2008.

Peter Fender, Principal Projects Officer, Lincolnshire County Council, by email, 20 April 2009.

Derek Harding, Director, Margate Renewal Partnership, Margate, 28 November 2008.

Sadie Howlett, Invigilator, Turner Contemporary, Margate, 27 November 2008.

Amanda Oates, Arts Development Officer, Shepway District Council, Margate, 26 November 2008.

Brigitte Oransinski, Artistic Director and Lisa Oulton, Project and Finance Manager, Strange Cargo, Folkestone, 27 November 2008.

Victoria Pomery, Director, Turner Contemporary, Margate, 27 November 2008.

Anthony Preston, Head of Resource Development, Arts Council England North West, Manchester, 21 November 2008.

Michael Trainor, Artist, Manchester, 18 March 2009.

John K. Walton, Professor of Social History, Institute of Northern Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, 28 July 2008.