ARTS AND REGENERATION
IN ENGLAND’S SOUTH-EAST
COASTAL TOWNS

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Teresa Smith
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Teresa Smith
Oxford Social Research Ltd.
1 Warnborough Road, Oxford OX2 6HZ
March 2011

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements and copyright 2

Contents 3

Introduction 4

Arts and regeneration in England – the national picture 5

England’s South-East coastal towns: social and economic decline 10

Folkestone – philanthropy in charge 15

Margate – statutory initiatives 22

Chatham, the Medway Towns, and North Kent – the Thames 31

Gateway Regeneration

An alternative model – kindness and social cohesion 37

Discussion: models, drivers, and outcomes 40

Annex: Programme of the fieldwork tour 25-29 October 2010 44
INTRODUCTION

The idea for this fieldwork visit to a number of England’s south-east coastal towns grew from meetings in Beppu in southern Japan in the spring of 2010, when Teresa and George Smith were visiting community regeneration projects developed there by Professor Mukuno and her colleagues from the University of Oita. Much discussion focused on the range of regeneration initiatives, from small-scale ‘arts platforms’ – derelict shops in downtown Beppu, leased by the City Council and renovated as small centres for dance, craft, exhibitions, community cafes – to large-scale arts festivals with international artists and visitors from all over Japan and indeed the world, inspired and led by Mr Yamaide and Mr Serizawa, well-known Japanese artistic entrepreneurs/‘animateurs’. The question then discussed was the role played by the arts in the regeneration of socially and economically declining areas such as Beppu.

At that time, we suggested that an interesting comparison might be made with the English town of Brighton. Beppu and Brighton are both coastal towns; both might be compared for their experience of social and economic decline, and the potential of arts-led regeneration (beginning in Beppu, well-established in Brighton) to reverse that. However, when we began to take soundings in order to plan possible fieldwork, Brighton seemed a less useful example; it is now a thriving economic centre, marked by the regeneration of much of the inner areas of the town and its seafront (although with pockets of deprivation in outer housing estates), and the process of regeneration, is far advanced. For a better understanding of this process, the challenges and potential, other towns along the south-east coast of England such as Folkestone, Margate or Hastings might provide better examples.

Thus the aim of the week’s tour at the end of October 2010 was to visit a range of projects and gain an understanding of the different models underpinning different initiatives, and the complexities of the organisations and partnerships involved. In the end, our fieldwork visits and discussions included major projects in Folkestone, Margate and Chatham, all on the south-east coast of England (and located in the county of Kent), and additional discussions in nearby Canterbury and Maidstone with other project organisers and local authority staff.

It is important to note that this report was written shortly after the election in May 2010 of a new government, committed to cutting public expenditure and overhauling existing institutional arrangements. Most of the reports and policies discussed in this report date from the previous government, which substantially increased public expenditure for the arts and for disadvantaged areas. The effect of the cuts remains to be seen.
ARTS AND REGENERATION IN ENGLAND: THE NATIONAL PICTURE

This report does not claim to be a comprehensive overview of national policy in England on the decline of English coastal towns and the possibilities of reversing that decline through arts-led regeneration. A few paragraphs must suffice to sketch in the background and present some of the debates.

UK Government reports and other documents recognise that arts, culture and education play a key role in regeneration. ‘There is an emerging body of evidence, which suggests that culture is a key driver in the regeneration process and can help create sustainable communities’, according to Culture at the heart of regeneration, published in 2004 by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)¹, which looked at ‘the regenerative effects of large cultural buildings as well as smaller community initiatives’ and assessed ‘the economic and social benefits of cultural regeneration’. This report was hailed as the first big programmatic statement of the relationship between culture, regeneration and public policy from a UK government². Decline and revival is not just a matter of the economic but also of the social fabric, and not just at the local neighbourhood level but within the wider context of regional and national policy and infrastructure. But the size and scope of initiatives remain debatable. The rationale for arts and cultural involvement was well set out again in a recently published report by Regional Cities East (RCE), Bigger Thinking for Smaller Cities³, an alliance of six smaller cities in the East of England:

‘arts and culture have a central role to play in smaller cities, where a high quality of life and intimate networks help creative industries to thrive. Our research shows how arts and culture is helping to attract inward investment, bring communities together and encourage people to re-engage with the democratic process.’

How might success be measured in ‘culture-led regeneration’? Economists agree that the value of the cultural sector should be measured by ‘impact’, whether defined in ‘economic’ or ‘social’ terms⁴. They argue about the merits of methods such as stated preference techniques (survey-based techniques for valuing non-market resources such as beautiful objects or landscapes), revealed preference techniques (using price-based evaluation),

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² Comment by Dr James Kennell; see discussion later in the report.
Subjective Well Being (how happy we are, how satisfied with our lives), or Quality Adjusted Life Years (QUALYs – how many years a particular intervention would add to someone’s life). The Coastal Alliance argues that cultural activity should be seen as ‘the catalyst and engine of regeneration’, with a high public profile\(^5\). Requirements are strong leadership at the local level, a specific artistic vision for a distinctive area, and a genuine and broad engagement process. Indicators might be communities engaged in cultural activity, skills development, job creation, community sustainability, ‘people feeling good’, civic pride – or any mix of these. An important indicator is ‘users’ or ‘consumers’ or ‘tourism spend’ – how many people actually visit or participate or make use of a place. Clearly there has been enormous investment in improved facilities and staff, but it has to be justified by the ‘return’.

But challenges and success have to be seen in the wider context. Culture-led regeneration has to be carefully defined, and understood within a wide context, and will take time. A report commissioned by the Creative Foundation in Folkestone, *South East Coastal Towns: Economic Challenges and Cultural Regeneration*, published at the end of 2009\(^6\), makes clear the links between the social and the economic when it refers to ‘the growing interest in and increasing levels of investment which national, regional and local government have made in cultural infrastructure and activity.... Creative and cultural businesses and practice combine to make places more exciting and better to live in and visit, offer ways of engaging with communities in areas of multiple deprivation, and provide some of the conditions in which a forward looking business community can flourish.’ Brighton and Canterbury are given as examples where this ‘synergy’ has worked (p11). The location and commitment of higher education institutions is also important. But this cannot be a ‘quick fix’:

‘Decades of poverty and low self-esteem take more than a few time-limited projects to remedy. Cultural, educational and civic bodies need to work together effectively to make their towns work better. Higher education institutions need to deliver effective ways of engaging with and supporting local cultural organisations and networks, and of delivering professional development and management support to small cultural businesses.’\(^7\)

Four themes run throughout this report: the nature of community, the definition of ‘culture’, the notion of ‘gaze’, and the debate between social and economic goals and impact.

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\(^7\) [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/?id=2501](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/?id=2501) ‘Universities and culture boost coastal town fortunes’
First, community. ‘Community’ may refer to geographical location (often a small
eighbourhood defined by recognised features) or to common interest (an interest or feeling
shared with someone else)⁸. In this report, both senses of the word are clear to see. There is a
long history to community arts in England. Community arts projects played a big part in
community work and local projects in the 1970s and early 1980s. Ed Berman’s Inter-Action
Community Arts Trust⁹ was typical, providing ‘alternative space’ for local people – arts, a
farm, communal food, children’s and young people’s activities. The theme was local activity
and engagement: summer playschemes, face-painting, fire-eating – the stuff of
neighbourhood activity, then and now. Today’s large-scale projects seem a far cry from this
local activism – Liverpool’s bid for the Capital of Culture with its redevelopment of the
Liverpool docks and siting of Tate Liverpool¹⁰; the redevelopment of Newcastle/ Gateshead
with the Baltic¹¹; Anthony Gormley’s figures¹² on Crosby sands near Liverpool, and his
Angel of the North. These require very large-scale funding indeed, and complex
arrangements with funding organisations and partners. But both small- and large-scale
initiatives involve local participation. The redevelopment of part of Folkestone as a ‘Creative
Quarter’¹³, Margate’s erection of the new Turner Contemporary art gallery¹⁴ overlooking the
harbour, and the redevelopment of Chatham’s historic dockyards with a creative and artistic
community at its heart, are all examples of large-scale, complex initiatives requiring very
large-scale investment. But they also involve, and strive for, local participation – with schools,
local neighbourhood groups, through festivals, street theatre and on-site workshops. Although
the extent of participation varies with different initiatives, none will succeed without it.

Second, we have to define ‘culture’. We can see two meanings running throughout this report.
One is the sense common in the Victorian period in England, ‘associated with the moral
betterment and spiritual development that would come from the contemplation of “the best

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¹⁰ One of the major art galleries of the world. It has established ‘satellites’ in Liverpool (in the north west of
England) and in St Ives (in the south west).
¹¹ A new contemporary exhibition space in a converted warehouse on the Gateshead quayside near Newcastle.
¹² Another Place, 100 of Antony Gormley’s cast iron figures on the beach at Crosby.
¹³ Part of down-town Folkestone, near the harbour; see later sections of this report.
¹⁴ A major new art gallery, reminiscent of the new Tate galleries in St. Ives and in Liverpool, also intended to
play a major part in regeneration; see later sections of this report.
which has been thought and said in the world”\textsuperscript{15}. The other is a ‘more anthropological understanding’ of the ‘construction and transmission of meaning’, where it is ‘the artefacts and objects that are constructed as meaningful’. The debate has been associated with Bourdieu’s distinction between ‘highbrow’ and ‘popular’ culture\textsuperscript{16}:

‘Sociology endeavours to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and their taste for them, are produced, and at the same time to describe the different ways of appropriating such of these objects as are regarded at a particular moment as works of art.... But one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless ‘culture’, in the restricted, normative sense... is brought back into ‘culture’ in the anthropological sense.... Scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level... and social origin.’

Bourdieu’s surveys and analysis of ‘culture’ in mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century France (style, taste, in clothing, food, house decoration, as well as arts, music, etc) was ground-breaking, both empirically and conceptually. More recently, however, critics\textsuperscript{17} have suggested that ‘cultural practices’ are not nearly so clear-cut and distinct in their relationship to social class and family background in, for example, early 21\textsuperscript{st} c. England. Here we find much greater overlap in cultural preferences between different social groups, and greater differentiation between specific activities (that is, we cannot just lump together music, painting, reading, and media such as television and cinema but have to consider them separately); age group differences feature perhaps more importantly than social class and family background. Photographer Martin Parr focuses on popular culture such as domestic interiors, seaside resorts, food\textsuperscript{18}; but he also crosses over into the classical ‘framing’ of a camera angle. Yet the ‘highbrow/popular’ distinction may still be firmly embedded in the popular mind: consider, for example, the local hostility to the Turner Contemporary art gallery when the design was first proposed\textsuperscript{19}, and the comment of our taxi driver in Margate quoted in a later chapter.


\textsuperscript{19} There is similar local hostility to the Jerwood gallery under construction on the sea front in Hastings; see www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2009/mar/12/hastings-jerwood-gallery-plans/print and www.jerwood-no.org.uk/
Third, there is the notion of ‘gaze’. The way we ‘see’ the environment, a landscape, objects defined as ‘art’, a painting, is not just a matter of ‘looking’, but is socially constructed by historical period and social background; we ‘see’ within an analytic frame of reference. Urry, in his book *The tourist gaze*, argues that ‘this [tourist] gaze is as socially organised and systematised as is the gaze of a medic’\(^{20}\). His most striking examples suggest the way ‘the tourist gaze’ has changed over the centuries in definition and organisation. Pilgrimages in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Western Europe and the Middle East were the equivalent of modern tourism, in a way. The European Grand Tour from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries instructed the sons of the aristocracy and the professional middle class, first in classical art and later in Romantic scenery. The most striking contemporary example is our interest in ‘heritage’: the transformation of rural villages and former industrial heartlands of mining or steel into ‘heritage centres’, marks a significant new focus of the tourist ‘gaze’\(^{21}\). We visit the museums of Ironbridge Gorge near Telford to understand the early beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in England; or the country houses now looked after by the National Trust to view their extraordinarily rich collections of objects and art and learn about the social history of the landed gentry. The transformation of derelict warehouses in Folkestone, and the development of the historic Chatham Dockyards, discussed later in this report, can be seen as examples of this ‘heritage’ approach – the ‘heritage gaze’.

Finally, should we be interested in social or economic factors if we consider ‘culture’ and arts-led regeneration in declining areas? In their heyday, seaside resorts in England were economically thriving centres of fashion and trade, whether for the mass market or the more select – boosted as much by protective legislation such as the 1871 Bank Holiday Act which brought in paid holidays during the working year, as by changing social fashions about the seaside. The development of the railways was a key driver in the general expansion, while the particular ‘social tone’ of different resorts has been attributed to the local patterns of land ownership and control\(^{22}\). Perhaps it is unnecessary to say more here than to note that this debate runs throughout the report, alongside a general acceptance that it is impossible to separate social and economic change.


\(^{21}\) See Urry, Ch 6, ‘Gazing on history’.

\(^{22}\) See Urry, Ch 2, ‘Mass tourism and the rise and fall of the seaside resort’.
ENGLAND’S SOUTH-EAST COASTAL TOWNS:
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DECLINE

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee published its Second Report in February 2007, on coastal towns in England. It concluded that the government has no specific policy or initiatives for coastal towns, since they are so different: ‘the diversity ... is evident if you contrast an area such as Brighton, with its buoyant and diverse economy, with Margate, marked by its physical isolation and relative deprivation.’ The report argued, however, that there are a number of common characteristics: physical isolation (often ‘at the end of the railway line’), high levels of deprivation, high proportions of older people, outward migration of young people, poor quality housing (often left vacant with the collapse of tourism) and a declining local economy (the collapse of tourism based on the traditional English seaside holiday, and of traditional industries such as fishing, boat-building, and – in Kent – mining). The Select Committee’s report has led to renewed interest in coastal issues. The government published its response in March 2010, outlining the same problems but stressing the importance of investment in heritage; and it is worth noting that the South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA – soon to be abolished) has been heavily engaged with a strategy for coastal towns. Two studies commissioned by the government have contributed data on both larger and smaller seaside towns.

Housing in many coastal towns appears to be characterised by a dual economy, with high house prices, often fuelled by second homes, alongside areas of low-cost housing, often of poor quality or in neighbourhoods with a poor reputation. There is also a large, low-quality private rented sector, often heavily dominated by vulnerable adults and children who have

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25 All regional development agencies are due to close in March 2012. [http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economic-development/englands-regional-development-agencies](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economic-development/englands-regional-development-agencies)  
been ‘placed’ in the area by other authorities – families on benefit, refugees and asylum seekers (Margate is a particular example). A large proportion of the accommodation in the private rented sector is composed of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Large numbers of HMOs can present difficulties for the regeneration of an area, as their poor physical condition can put off investors. Many people who live in HMOs often stay on a short-term basis, which can make it difficult to get resident support for local regeneration projects.

These coastal towns have a combined population of nearly 6% of England’s population – just under 2.9m – the size of a small region. Nearly a quarter of the population (24%) is over state pension age: considerably more than the English average (19%). Employment, skills and school achievement levels are considerably below the English average – although this varies between towns. Welfare benefit claimant levels are high. Housing patterns found in these areas with low levels of social housing and high levels of private renting are more typical of London. Levels of deprivation are high; coastal towns such as Margate show some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country on the IMD. Thanet, which includes Margate, is ranked as one of the weakest local economies in the country.

Powell and Gray summarised the change from fashionable to decline:

‘The dominant perspective to the recent history of British coastal towns has been to treat them as places in decline. This includes the decline of traditional coastal industries such as fishing and shipbuilding and, in the case of seaside resorts, the devastation wrought by the explosion of more attractive holidays elsewhere in Britain and overseas. Related explanations stress the inevitability of decline for aging British seaside towns at the end of the ‘resort life cycle’ and the significance of the changing ‘tourist gaze’ viewing older seaside resorts as culturally deeply unfashionable. Within Britain, the countryside and nowadays-rejuvenated inland cities are powerful competitors, chasing government funding, employment opportunities, education initiatives, leisure visitors, conferences and entertainment spectacles.

However, we also recognise the distinctiveness of individual coastal towns each with its unique geography and history set within particular localities and regions. There are exceptions to and some significant regional variations in the performance of coastal towns. The South West of England – despite significant and persistent levels of poverty – is a special case, the coast reimagined with a new seaside economy. Similarly, Brighton and

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Bournemouth are successful coastal conurbations with diversified economies in part because of the influence of the surrounding affluent regions, the significant resident gay populations, and because of the local expression of the rapid national expansion of higher education.

Despite the exceptions, various general consequences followed from the decline of the seaside holidaymaking industry: fewer visitors staying for shorter periods; staying visitors replaced by day trippers; ever older visitors not replaced by younger ones; declining incomes flowing into restaurants, accommodation and attractions; often a move downmarket; underinvestment or disinvestment in infrastructure and the environment; a search for alternative income streams – perhaps from benefit claimants; coastal public authorities increasingly unable to stem the decline and inland authorities and central government at times compounding it; the in-migration of poor, disadvantaged and sometimes transient groups; and, the decayed and redundant physical infrastructure of the holidaymaking industry and other aspects of a traumatised built environment... A common pattern in the worst hit resorts includes the redundant resort infrastructure on the central seafront and, a few streets behind, the former commercial holiday accommodation now providing homes for people suffering multiple deprivation.’

Other assessments are more optimistic: ‘we have seen the start of whatever regeneration means at lots of places, and there are successful examples. But I don’t think there’s any resort that can claim it has been regenerated. It’s a process of change. And, hopefully, seaside resorts will continue to change.’ Understanding how heritage, economic progress and regeneration interact is vital to this process.

Resources for regeneration have massively increased over the last twenty years – from central government (for example, with the Single Regeneration Budget introduced in 1994, which pulled together more than twenty separate budget streams and was intended to promote economic, physical and social regeneration through partnerships at the local level; the New Deal for Communities, announced in 1998, published its final evaluation in March 2010); regional authorities (the South East England Development Agency – SEEDA – covers the area visited during our tour); local authorities; cultural bodies such as Arts Council England with its regional offices; and major charitable trusts which have a cultural and educational brief, such as the Esmee Fairbairn and Gulbenkian Foundations. Increasingly arts and culture have been seen as legitimate elements of regeneration and therefore worth funding.

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35 It has to be stressed, however, that public funding will be substantially reduced, and public bodies which previously played a major role in strategic planning and support, such as SEEDA, are to be abolished.
From 2000 there has been a shift in how central government has allocated resources to alleviate multiple deprivation. The Indices of Deprivation 2000 (ID2000)\textsuperscript{36} introduced a new and improved methodology into the measurement of deprivation, with the result that areas with small populations were given equal weight to large areas in the analysis – it was the level of deprivation on different dimensions or ‘domains’ (education, health, employment, etc) that mattered rather than population size. This meant that while previously it had been the large urban conurbations which had benefited from renewal funds, smaller areas such as the small coastal towns and settlements were now eligible. The resulting national deprivation maps for England showed that many coastal areas had quite high levels of deprivation on a national scale. These had been previously been ignored.

It is also essential to understand the changing organisation drivers. If statutory funding and support declines, at national, regional and local levels, then what is the way forward for local regeneration? Current thinking favours social enterprise as a way of drawing back from public funding and encouraging third sector investment. In this model, enterprises operate as businesses, but with community aims, projects in harmony with community aspirations, and profits reinvested in the community: Community Interest Companies (the new legal status created in 2008) have an ‘asset lock’, which means that assets are tied to the company and cannot be sold on to an outside company, and that profits generated have to be reinvested in line with the company’s social aspirations and aims. The advantages of this model are that third sector organisations can generate income from a physical base. But it is not yet clear to what extent public assets will – or can or should – be transferred to community interest companies. And coastal towns own a lot of physical assets which currently act as a ‘drag’ on the local authority – promenades, coastal defences, forts, theatres, amusement arcades, and a large amount of housing which is often in too poor condition for it to be attractive to social landlords.

It is likely that current government responses will be geared more positively to innovation and growth-based proposals to drive regeneration funding, rather than deprivation. This may create more problems for seaside towns as a lack of innovation and private sector growth is endemic in the coastal areas\textsuperscript{37}.

\textsuperscript{36} http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/regeneration/indicesdeprivation
\textsuperscript{37} Comment by Dr Kennell. It is also the case that schemes in disadvantaged areas funded by IMD-distributed money have been cut more heavily on the grounds of a more equitable distribution.
FOLKESTONE – PHILANTHROPY IN CHARGE

Folkestone, on the cliffs on the south east coast of Kent, looking out towards France, where small river and stream valleys cut through the chalk, began life as a small fishing village, settled in Roman times and one of the Cinque Ports in medieval times. Watercolours by J. M. W. Turner in his series of paintings of the Kent coast in the 1820s include five of Folkestone: one of fishing and four others of the smuggling ‘industry’ for which it was notorious in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Its modern development can be dated from the arrival of the railway from London in 1843, and marked by the passing of the Folkestone Improvement Act in 1855. The population tripled between the 1840s and the 1890s. The building of the railway was followed by construction of an improved harbour for cross-channel trade. There was large-scale housing expansion and the building of leisure facilities to meet growing tourist demand; examples included a hydraulic lift on the cliffs between the beach and the seafront promenade above (1885), and the pier (1888). The barracks still house the Gurkha Regiment from Nepal.

In its heyday Folkestone was a highly successful ferry port and tourist town – the Orient Express even stopped there on its way to Venice. From the mid-20th century decline is evident as traditional tourism moved elsewhere; the pier theatre burned down in 1946, and the pier itself was demolished in 1954. The opening of the cross-Channel Tunnel further to the east along the coast marked the end of rail and harbour traffic. The harbour was sold by Sea Containers during the 1990s, and largely acquired by Roger de Haan in 2004. The main employer in the town today is Saga38 (formerly a family firm founded by the de Haans) with some 2,500 employees; local word is that ‘if Saga goes, Folkestone goes down the drain’. Young people move away as the town has poor housing stock and little in the way of employment or entertainment.

During our visit to Folkestone (25-26 October 2010) we had meetings with representatives from the Creative Foundation, the de Haan Charitable Trust and Shepway District Council39. We visited the Creative Foundation’s offices, the new arts and business centre The Quarterhouse, and the new performing arts university campus, and walked round the Creative

38 A company offering services particularly for older people (insurance, holidays, health advice etc). Saga is now a large employer in other local areas such as Thanet and Hastings, and looks to increase in size.
39 Interviews with Peter Bettley from the de Haan Charitable Trust; Yvette Illsley Communications Manager and Nick Ewbank, former Chief Executive/Artistic Director of the Creative Foundation; and Jeremy Whittaker, Regeneration and Economic Development Manager for Shepway District Council.
Quarter and the old town centre as well as the seafront promenade with Victorian/Edwardian and new developments.

Plans for regeneration in Folkestone have been driven to a large extent by Roger de Haan through his charitable trust and the Creative Foundation charity, which he founded and chairs. These organisations have funded or part-funded a range of projects including the redevelopment of the harbour; the Folkestone Academy sponsored by Roger de Haan and designed by Norman Foster, focusing on arts and European culture (Folkestone’s 11-16 year olds’ results, previously amongst the poorest in the country, are said to have improved dramatically over the last four years); a joint University of Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church University campus focusing on the performing arts; and a new arts and business centre, The Quarterhouse. Local people support the educational developments but are said to have mixed views about the Creative Quarter.

1 The Creative Quarter, Folkestone (photograph by Teresa Smith)

40 Originally a joint initiative; the University of Greenwich pulled out in 2009.
The creation of the Creative Quarter has been made possible by the Trust’s purchase and refurbishment of properties in the old quarter leading up from the harbour, leased at peppercorn rent for 125 years\(^{41}\) to the Creative Foundation for letting at sustainable rents as shops, studios, and living accommodation. Some 80 properties have been purchased to date, and some 50 refurbished, ranging from small shops with living accommodation above to large derelict warehouses. This arrangement provides affordable long-term rents for local people, and in the long term should provide an operating income for the Creative Foundation from which to fund its artistic activities. An illustration of the decline was shown to us through photographs of Tontine Street in the centre of the Creative Quarter – built in the 1860s, a bustling port thoroughfare in the 1880s/90s, but silent and largely derelict 100 years later, with an unsavoury reputation. Initial designs fell through to redevelop the harbour and associated seafrontage, purchased by Roger de Haan from a local developer, but new plans are currently under consultation to link the Creative Quarter developments in more closely with the harbour plans.

\(^{41}\) This length of ‘time perspective’ is difficult for the public sector, and one of the unique features of this example of private sector funding.
The model in place in Folkestone is thus that of large-scale investment by a major philanthropic trust which has a strong local commitment to ‘put something back into the community’ from which its business derived\textsuperscript{42}. Arts and culture form part of a multi-dimensional programme of investment and regeneration by the Trust, intended to ‘kick-start’ other investment – a ‘holistic vision’ which includes physical redevelopment, a focus on skills and education, emphasis on the arts (the new academy went for ‘performing arts status’, the university focuses on the arts), economic business start-ups, tourism through the Folkestone Triennial arts festival, opportunities and services through the Quarterhouse. Examples of partnership investment include the academy school (the Trust and national funding), the University Centre (SEEDA and the Higher Education Funding Council), and the Quarterhouse\textsuperscript{43} (funding from SEEDA, Arts Council England, Kent County Council and Shepway District Council). Partnerships were said to work well in the education sector, but less well elsewhere – partly because of difficulties due to land ownership, partly because the public sector requires short-term returns.

There is involvement with local schools: for example, the Shepway Find Your Talent pathfinder project, supported by the Creative Foundation and Kent County Council with funding from the government\textsuperscript{44}, offered children and young people regular involvement with arts and culture, both in and out of school. Schools are involved locally in the planning for the Folkestone Triennial, and in sports and arts activities.

Roger de Haan and his family clearly have a personal vision about Folkestone as ‘a better place to live, work and study’, and are closely involved in the management of the Trust and of the various bodies involved in the developments, such as the Creative Foundation. The ‘unique vision’ of the Folkestone model was reported as the following:

- Careful control of developments

\textsuperscript{42} The Trust allocates some £2-3m. per year to arts and welfare projects (not just in Folkestone or the south-east). Over 1999-2009 the Trust spent £14.7m.

\textsuperscript{43} Designed by award-winning architect Alison Brooks, costing £4.5m.

\textsuperscript{44} Find Your Talent was a pilot project in ten areas across England between 2008 and 2010, aiming to find out what it would take to provide high quality cultural experiences for all children and young people, regardless of age or ability. It was delivered by Creativity, Culture and Education in partnership with the Museums & Library Agency, Arts Council England, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Children, Schools and Families. \url{http://www.findyourtalent.org}
• Emphasis on sustainability
• A long-term vision
• The contribution of private philanthropy
• The combination of arts, education and property development

One comment was that it is highly unusual for a philanthropist to have such a close interest in a specific place\textsuperscript{45}; also highly unusual for a charity such as the Creative Foundation to have such a strong strategic role, and as much capital to invest.

The arts and culture programme developed by the Creative Foundation includes the following:

• The \textbf{Folkestone Triennial}, first held in 2008, a three month arts festival with twenty four leading UK and international artists working ‘at the cutting edge of contemporary practice’ commissioned to create works specifically for sites in Folkestone, some of which are still \textit{in situ} (Tracey Emin’s ‘Baby Things’ are one example). With hugely positive reviews, ‘some local people thought this was wonderful, others scratched their heads’. For the 2011 Triennial, there has been much greater planning and educational outreach and involvement, with artists working with schools and young people on projects;
• The annual \textbf{Book Festival}, held over two weeks in November, with a range of ticketed and free events and participatory workshops;
• The \textbf{Quarterhouse} performing arts centre hosts a year-round calendar of events in its 220 seat theatre, including dance, comedy, live music, theatre and film.

Another artistic organisation based in Folkestone is \textbf{Strange Cargo}, an independent award-winning group of artists with a reputation for high quality public art projects, participatory festivals and celebratory art forms such as Charivari Day. Strange Cargo won international recognition for its ‘Other People’s Photographs’ project, in which images taken by residents of their lives on the streets of Folkestone were turned into street signs and placed throughout the town. The organisation has been commissioned to produce a new work as part of the 2011 Folkestone Triennial.

\textsuperscript{45} Roger de Haan was said locally to have been interested originally in investing in Folkestone in order to improve the company’s ability to recruit and retain staff.
The Coastal Alliance Handbook, published by the Coastal Communities Alliance, had this snapshot ‘case study’ of culture-led regeneration in Folkestone⁴⁶.

‘Folkestone Triennial includes headline artists and mixes temporary and permanent art in a deliberately small geographic area of Shepway⁴⁷. The Triennial is one part of a larger culture-led regeneration programme led by the Creative Foundation, which includes property acquisition and letting for creative and cultural industries and links with education and communities. 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, while 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 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. Commissioned impact and evaluation reports are in progress, but not available at the time of publishing this research.’


⁴⁷ Folkestone is part of Shepway District Council, which is part of Kent County Council.
4 (above) View from The Quarterhouse: Nathan Coley

5 (below) Mark Dion’s Seagull Project in the Folkestone Triennial
(photographs by Pip Wittenoom)
Margate, like Folkestone, began as a small fishing town, but its expansion was earlier and more rapid because of its greater proximity to London. It was already a fashionable watering place in the 18th century, when travel from London was possible by stagecoach or by hoy, the local sailing boats which took barley, vegetables, fish and wood to London and brought visitors back by return. Sea bathing seems to have been practised since the early 18th century; the bathing machine with a ‘modesty hood’ was invented in Margate in 1753; and the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital was founded in 1791 to treat a range of ailments. The latter years of the 18th century saw rapid building expansion of new squares, the Assembly Rooms, the Theatre Royal built by Frank Matcham, circulating library, hotels, and new housing – much in the style of fashionable London. Regular paddle-steamer services from London began in 1815 (the ‘Royal Daffodil’ continued in service until 1966). The railway arrived in 1846, with a second station built in 1863. The Jetty Extension (the pier) was built in 1875; partially destroyed by the storm of 1978, the remnants were removed in 1998. Terraces of homes and lodging houses expanded rapidly in the centre of the old town around the harbour and its sands near the station, with the large-scale arrival of working-class ‘trippers’ from London, as well as in the more fashionable Cliftonville, just further out, with its new hotels, bandstands, Pettman’s Bathing Platform, and beaches under the cliffs, where gaps in the chalk gave access to the sea. ‘If, sometimes, the fun is a little noisy, perhaps even a trifle vulgar, who, after all, is the worse for it? ... there are at least two Margates, and ... the Cliftonville and New Town quarters have scarcely anything in common with the regions sacred to the tripper.’ Photographs of the late 1880s/90s and the early 1900s show the Margate beach below the Marine Parade, easily accessible from the railway station, packed with children and families, donkeys and bathing machines (mixed bathing was allowed from the early 1900s), and entertainments such as Punch and Judy and black and white minstrels; the Cliftonville Sands look more elegant and less populated. Behind the Marine Parade, the Hall by the Sea took over the booking hall of the 1865 railway terminus and converted it to a ballroom and concert hall, soon joined by the Zoological Gardens and Sanger’s Circus. By the 1920s this was converted into an American-

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49 1899-1900 guidebook to Margate quoted in Barker et al. p43.
style amusement park called Dreamland, with its Scenic Railway, cinemas and funfair rides and stalls.

Margate was heavily bombed in the Second World War, and much of the replacement development was low quality and geared towards a mass tourism market. This put off the middle class visitors of its heyday, but it did manage to attract mass tourism through to the 1960s. Once that market collapsed, however, it was left with exactly the wrong kind of infrastructure for developing new, niche and special interest tourism markets. Its formerly fashionable residential terraces are now in some of the most deprived wards in the country, for example Cliftonville, and the town is subject to ‘dumping’ of benefit claimants and refugees, particularly from London boroughs. ‘Dreamland’, the 1930s American-style amusement park, is now a car-park. Shops in a new development of the 1960s are now partly boarded up, or taken over as ‘everything for a pound’ shops or charity shops. The town has been described as an example of high street decline: ‘River Island has gone. So has M&S [Marks and Spencer, one of the largest national retailing stores]. And of course Woolworths. In fact, shops on Margate’s high street are closing at a faster rate than anywhere else.

During our visit to Margate (26-27 October 2010), we stayed at the historic Walpole Bay Hotel (built in 1914), walked along the seafront from Cliftonville round to the Marine Parade, and visited the harbour and its new cafes, shopfront developments in the old town, the emerging Turner Contemporary gallery overlooking the harbour (on the site of the lodging house where Turner stayed in the 1820s), and the Dreamland site. We had meetings with the director of the Turner Contemporary gallery, the Total Pap artists working in shop-front sites, and the project manager for Margate Arts, Creativity and Heritage (MACH).

Turner Contemporary, a major new art gallery opening in April 2011, designed to attract national and international visitors, grew out of a local campaign to celebrate Turner’s connection with Margate, which coincided with Arts Council England policy in the late 1990s to develop arts infrastructure across England, and support from Kent County Council

51 I am grateful for this comment by Dr Kinnell.
54 Interviews with Victoria Pomery, director of Turner Contemporary, Justin Mitchell and Emily Firmin of Total Pap, and Sophie Jeffrey, Project Manager of Margate Arts, Creativity, Heritage (MACH).
55 Interview with Victoria Pomery, director of Turner Contemporary.
for the idea. Subsequent studies and consultations indicated that a new art gallery would not only be a significant addition to the cultural provision in Kent but that it could act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Thanet and Margate in particular\textsuperscript{56}. Led by Kent County Council, the project has the support of many key stakeholders, including Thanet District Council, Arts Council England, SEEDA and the European Union\textsuperscript{57}. The development has ‘galvanised thinking’ about regeneration, according to the director. Other government funding for Thanet Works has brought in training and skills development. The Margate Renewal Partnership leads and co-ordinates the wider regeneration and transformation. The vision is to create a vibrant and successful town that provides a mixture of the traditional Margate seaside alongside revitalised areas that will create modern retail and new lifestyle and creative quarters: Turner Contemporary is central to this vision. ‘An extraordinary decision,’ commented the director; ‘but art can drive change.’ This sums up the initiative\textsuperscript{58}.


\textsuperscript{57} The Turner Contemporary original design, which was scrapped, cost £29m. Final cost likely in the region of £17.5m.

\textsuperscript{58} See Jason Wood’s essay on the history of the project since 2006, ‘Contemporary history in the making’, May 2010. \url{www.turnercontemporary.org/about}
Essentially, the Turner Contemporary gallery is a massive public sector investment supported by local, regional and national funding, intended to spearhead the regeneration of Margate, by bringing in visitors who will expect high quality hotels, restaurants, shops, transforming housing, employment, aspirations, confidence and civic pride. The initial architectural design proved too ambitious; the new design has been modified through public engagement. While construction is underway, project spaces have been set up in the old town. The chief of these was the derelict Marks and Spencer shop in the 1960s shopping precinct; another is Droit House, the old Customs House on the harbour wall, with a display by Tracey Emin and a temporary space for ‘sea stories’, *Sea Whisperers*. These have been used for temporary exhibitions, project work with schools and care homes for elderly people, and collaboration with the University of Kent, for example on a project linking elderly people and teenagers in a history project on ‘what it was like to be a teenager in the 1960s: *The Time of our Lives*’. While these might seem diversions, they have stimulated essential local engagement.

The long-term challenges in Margate, however, centre on sustainability, major changes in government policy, and the difficulty of maintaining the quality of the vision in the face of major cuts in funding. Housing remains a huge problem, with private landlords profiting from benefit claimants and other vulnerable groups ‘dumped’ in the town by local authorities elsewhere without consultation; this is a particular problem in Cliftonville West, one of the most deprived neighbourhoods. A recent development is a ‘task force’ including health, social services, housing and the police, concerned with economic efficiency rather than economic development, and focusing more on individual problems such as benefits, housing, skills (there is a possibility this body will take on new powers to deal with private landlords and benefit dumping). It is not clear whether arts organisations will sit on the Task Force, nor whether it will replace the Margate Renewal Partnership.

Other physical projects have included the Old Town, the Piazza, and the harbour wall with its new cafes and studios, attracting European funds for public realm improvements and creative uses for historic buildings. But there is recognition that physical regeneration on its own is not sufficient. Reports have been commissioned into the social challenges facing the town; key themes are more opportunities for artists and better use of physical space including empty

59 There was a lot of talk about the possibility of Turner Contemporary echoing the ‘Bilbao effect’ after the opening of the Guggenheim gallery in that city; this remains to be seen. It is interesting to compare Bilbao in Portugal as a declining industrial centre with Margate in England as a declining tourist centre, both trying to develop cultural tourism. I am grateful to Rebecca Ball for this comment.

60 Interview with Sophie Jeffrey, Project Manager of Margate Arts, Creativity, Heritage (MACH).
shops, and better facilities for visitors. The revival of Dreamland, which attracts a different type of visitor, is also central. Margate Arts, Creativity and Heritage (MACH), a partnership initiative between Thanet District Council, Arts Council England and English Heritage, has a remit to look at the area between Turner Contemporary and Dreamland and come up with a plan ‘to animate the space in between’. The plan for Dreamland is to negotiate purchase by Thanet District Council from the current owner of a sufficient part of the site to allow redevelopment of the derelict scenic railway and other historic attractions. Other initiatives include Heritage Days, to ‘increase access to historic sites’ and ‘bring them to life through the arts’ as well as opening up ‘a conversation with local people about how we can secure the long-term future of Margate’s cultural assets’. When the mothballed Margate Museum was briefly opened, there was strong local support for the reopening of the museum in its entirety.

61 The Dreamland project has received a grant of £3.7 million from Wave 3 of the government’s Sea Change programme, a three-year scheme funded by £45 million from the Department For Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), devoted to helping rundown seaside resorts regenerate themselves by improving their public spaces, cultural facilities and architectural heritage: ‘the creative use of relatively small amounts of public money to socially useful and aesthetically imaginative ends’. http://www.cabe.org.uk/sea-change/wave-three. This followed a £30,000 grant from Wave 1, for a scoping study of Dreamland as the UK’s first Heritage Seaside Amusement Part with its restored scenic railway. The Sea Change programme has now come to an end.

The Margate Renewal Partnership has so far played a crucial role, but the loss of funding with the imminent closure of SEEDA and the shift in government priorities may lead to a change in focus from physical infrastructure and cultural organisations as a way in to changing people’s perceptions and capabilities, to a focus on individual problems. The organisation proposed to take on this shift is the new Task Force (which may possibly in time replace the Margate Renewal Partnership). The Project Manager for MACH commented that so far there is insufficient linkage between social services (such as housing) and the arts, and so far there is only a small artists community, so ways have to be found to attract them in. Artists could work as key workers for residents in social housing; and could themselves get subsidised housing. For example, Cliftonville, as a seriously deprived neighbourhood, needs to diversify its residents, needs residents with vision, and needs to create a better understanding between local people and artists.
In contrast to large-scale projects in Margate such as Turner Contemporary, Total Pap⁶³ (short for Papier-Mache, and also a pun on ‘pap’ as inferior reading material) is a small artist-

⁶³ Interview with Justin Mitchell and Emily Firmin of Total Pap.
9 Total Pap installations in shop windows, Margate (photographs by Teresa Smith)
led organisation with a staff of two operating from their home. Commissioned by Thanet District Council with funding from the government’s Art in Empty Spaces’ initiative\(^{64}\), the artists started by taking a three week residency in the shop in the central precinct used by the Turner Contemporary for temporary exhibitions, and began to make papier-mâché installations, inviting passers-by to say what shops they would like to see revived in the town. From the suggestions, the artists designed ten shop fronts with large papier-mâché displays (fish, a poodle parlour, a hair shop, gardening, hardware, a record shop). Local interest was generated; families came to look; there were articles in the press; schools invented their own shopfront windows in miniature; and a scheme to publicise local shops was started, Shop Local First. Problems, however, included a certain amount of vandalism, keeping the windows clean, and arrangements for leasing the shops. But the rationale for the project was a simple one: ‘people feel more comfortable when they come into streets with filled shops’.

The model in Margate is thus essentially one driven by the public sector – at national, regional and local level. Funding for initiatives both large (Turner Contemporary) and small (Total Pap) has come almost entirely from statutory sources. The Margate Renewal Partnership has in effect been an arm (functioning as a department) of the Thanet District Council; although technically it has its own board, it has a contract with the council and its staff are council employees. The post of the MACH project manager is funded by English Heritage. It remains to be seen whether this model will survive with national funding cuts and shifts in policy.

The Coastal Alliance Handbook, published by the Coastal Communities Alliance, had this snapshot ‘case study’ of culture-led regeneration in Margate, with a comparison between Margate and Folkestone\(^{65}\):

‘Turner Contemporary is a visual arts organisation that celebrates J. M. W. Turner’s association with Margate and, through a varied programme of exhibitions and events, promotes understanding and enjoyment of historical and contemporary art. Work is under way to build a permanent gallery which is due to open in Margate in 2011. ....the project has not been without its complications over the past several years and lessons learned are

\(^{64}\) *Art in Empty Spaces* was part of Arts Council England’s response to the effects of the recession on the arts, funded with National Lottery money (£500,000) and run in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG) scheme *Looking after our Town Centres* (£3m). Grants supported artistic activity that would transform empty retail units into creative spaces – anything from an art gallery to recording studios or family arts workshops – which the whole community could enjoy.


\(^{65}\) [http://www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/regeneration-handbook/culture-led-regeneration-in-seaside-towns/case-study-3-englands-south-east-margate.htm](http://www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/regeneration-handbook/culture-led-regeneration-in-seaside-towns/case-study-3-englands-south-east-margate.htm) See later sections in this report for our discussions with Dr Kennell.
generously shared. James Kennell, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Regeneration, University of Greenwich suggests:

*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 in 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.*

..... art alone cannot be the magic bullet. It is a component of wider initiatives and requires joined-up thinking with tourism and transport strategies and community engagement and participation. This is the case of an iconic physical building as a catalyst for renewal. A summary of key findings is as follows. It is essential to embed culture in strategic thinking, vital that directors of cultural projects have significant time to develop key partnerships locally and regionally with communities and policymakers, and essential to share joined-up thinking in relation to the cultural tourist offer. Ultimately, ‘the building is the backdrop’ to culture-led regeneration which requires strong political leadership and community ownership and engagement to support success.

A tentative conclusion might be drawn in the differences between approaches in Folkestone and Margate. 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 appears to have commenced with poor leadership and was icon-driven but with little substance from the beginning. At the outset, it did not have an opportunity to 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.’

One media comment summed up the new Margate thus: ‘art one end, and charity shops the other’. Our taxi driver put it in a more nuanced fashion: ‘high art with the Turner for you visitors at one end, and Dreamland for us locals at the other’.

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66 It is worth noting that new galleries and festivals have sprung up in other south coast towns such as Bexhill, Eastbourne, Hastings, and Whitstable as well as Folkestone and Margate.
67 Dr Kennell disagrees with this analysis by the Coastal Communities Alliance. In his view, the Folkestone regeneration is not business-driven as the de Haan Trust funding for the Creative Foundation insulates it from market pressures. It has a high business turnover in its properties, but there are issues around business support and development. The biggest difference lies in governance.
CHATHAM, THE MEDWAY TOWNS AND NORTH KENT –  
THE THAMES GATEWAY REGENERATION

Chatham has been the site of the principal naval dockyards in Britain for more than 400 years. It owed its beginnings to its position on the river Medway, part of a large complex of waterways and islands offering safe anchorage and protected water on the southern bank of the Thames estuary near London. In 1547, Henry VIII selected nearby Gillingham for his main fleet anchorage, and storehouses and repair facilities began to be built; Chatham Dockyard was first referred to in 1567, in Elizabeth’s reign. This site served as the main dockyards for ship building and repair as England engaged in wars with European naval powers and maintained an empire across the globe. The buildings now surviving as part of the historic site demonstrate that in effect the dockyard functioned as an industry, with a series of ‘factories’ producing, maintaining and repairing every piece of equipment required by the naval fleet – rope, sails, engines, ships’ hulls, clothing, guns and armaments, etc.

The town of Chatham was a naval town, subject to naval discipline, with a fort above, and characterised by the attendant activities of the press-gang, prostitution, and drunkenness; a large civilian population was employed in providing services ranging from food to clothing and engineering. In 1901, more than 15,000 families were in employment directly connected to the navy or its civilian facilities; the dockyard alone employed about 10,000, while the Royal Navy, the Royal Marine Barracks and the gun wharf were heavy employers of civilian labour, as were the Chatham army barracks, also situated in Dock Road, providing accommodation for troops protecting the dockyard against attack.

Chatham was hard hit by the 1930s recession, although it revived during World War II. But from the 1950s onwards decline set in. The dockyards closed in 1984, many of those employed directly transferring to dockyards in Devon or Scotland, though the civilian industries depending largely on the navy presence could not of course do so. While Rochester on the hills above boasted a cathedral (said to be the second oldest in England) and a medieval and Georgian heritage, Chatham was always seen as a commercial centre – ‘the commercial heartland of the Medway Towns’. During the 20th century much of its older building and character has been destroyed by roads development. Some reminders of the

naval presence still survive: for example, rows of lists of bus stops on the walls of Dock Road still mark the bus stops for dockyard workers, shown to us by one of our taxi drivers, who had worked in the dockyard until 1984 and stayed on in Chatham as his family lived there.

During our time in Chatham (27-29 October) we visited the dockyard site, in particular Slip 6 (one of five covered buildings formerly used for ship construction and repair; research is now being carried out into its use for arts activities), where we met some of the artists resident in the space. We also visited the historic site (The Historic Dockyard), and spent time in the new commercial development on part of the former site which now contains a large shopping mall, restaurants, and ‘Dickens World’. We also spent an evening in Rochester up the hill.

The historic dockyards site is now split into smaller elements. The Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust aims to promote the heritage site and the industries surrounding it (for example, there is a working rope-maker and metal-worker); many of the buildings are scheduled ancient monuments.
Part of the site, Slip 6, aims to become a creative hub with a ‘creation centre’ at its heart – space and opportunities for artists and creative companies (e.g. outdoor arts, street arts, circus, props and sets etc. for outdoor performance) to develop and produce high quality work at different levels. The Dockyard regeneration is playing a key role in changing and enhancing the image and identity of Medway as it aspires to become a city of culture, tourism, education and innovation. A creation centre located within the Dockyards could act as a focal point for the creative partners located in and around the area, and play a significant role in artistic development and production at regional, national and international levels.

Medway Council and Kent County Council successfully brokered support and investment from ACE South East and Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust to set up action research into the development of the Slip 6 Creation Centre during 2010. ACE was particularly keen that this was a practical rather than theoretical exercise, with artists and artistic companies using the space and the learning to inform any subsequent funding bid. The research included case studies of other creation centres, site visits by artists and companies, the development of artistic projects and partners and seven artistic companies resident in the space over a six week period, to test the operation and feasibility of a creation centre in Slip 6.

There is demand from the cultural sector for a creation space within Slip 6 that is flexible, in keeping with its location, at the heart of a thriving creative community within the Dockyards, and nurtures the development of excellent and innovative art and artists. The opportunity to use the space and create new work needs to be affordable and accessible to artists. There is also potential to use the space for commercial hire to generate a modest income.

Two major projects were developed during the research and development. The first was a week-long national residency for the Imagination Our Nation project, with participants building five new, nine-foot tall puppets and devising a final site-specific performance in Slip 6. The second will see the Slip 6 partners working with Zap Art and ZEPA (a network of French and UK arts organisations and creation centres) to commission a new outdoor, site-

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71 Information in this chapter from discussion with Pip Wittenoom, and interview with Emma Wilcox, Arts and Regeneration Officer (North Kent), Kent County Council.

72 The model for this is the publicly funded French ‘creation centres’ for street and outdoor arts and their large-scale creations such as the Sultan’s Elephant. The French project has cost 1m euros delivered in tranches.

73 The project was launched in 2007 by Kinetika, and has involved thousands of participants building puppet ‘champions’ and using them in festivals to foster youth-based participatory art. The Medway Champion, Sparky, was launched in Chatham in 2009 and has been active throughout 2010. These were the artists we met during our visit to Slip 6. (see http://www.imaginationournation.co.uk/news/article/all_our_champions_are_lit_and_the_eternals_have_arrived)
11 Puppet-making, *Imagination Our Nation* residency, Slip 6, Chatham Dockyard (photograph by Teresa Smith)

12 Stage for puppet performance, Slip 6, Chatham Dockyard (photograph by Teresa Smith)
specific performance by NoFit State Circus in 2012 as part of the FUSE Medway Festival. Additional work has subsequently been commissioned, including a structural survey and feasibility study, to determine if Slip 6 can operate as a sustainable creation space, and if so, to identify the partnerships and support to develop it.

The model of arts and regeneration in Chatham is different again from Folkestone and Margate. Chatham, one of the five Medway towns on the river Medway just south of the Thames Estuary, is seen as an integral part of the Thames Gateway Regeneration, linked to the north and south banks of the Thames and the 2012 Olympics-related regeneration in east London. Here arts and culture are seen only as one tool for regeneration: housing, the physical infrastructure, facilities and jobs are also seen as vital ingredients: the Medway towns, as part of the Thames Gateway, are part of much larger investment. Chatham is identified as a retail, commercial and cultural ‘hub’. The following section considers the part played by Kent County Council as one of the players in the Thames Gateway, which includes three of its authorities (Dartford, Gravesham, Swale and Medway) in North Kent on the south side of the Thames Estuary. First we look at the economic angle and then the cultural.

At the wider economic level, the Medway towns are part of Kent’s strategy for wider partnerships across local authorities. Kent is attempting to harmonise planning regulations and investment strategies across its districts. On a larger scale, plans for a ‘super’ Local Economic Partnership (LEP) including the local authorities of Kent, Essex and East Sussex were approved by government ministers on 28 October, during our visit. Higher education enrolment is very low in Medway. Higher education developments showcase the Chatham Dockyard Campus (a multi-university campus which includes the University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christchurch University and the University of Kent’s BA outdoor performance and events degree, which is part of the University of Kent’s Theatre Faculty but based on the Dockyard). According to James Kennell of the University of Greenwich, while contemporary regeneration funding focuses largely on economic restructuring to tackle deindustrialisation, North Kent has a history from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) onwards of using policy to support community organisations and develop public sector projects with innovative social impact (for example, healthy living centres), and has also attracted European and other government funding. But problems remain of sustainability.

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74 Note that Medway is a unitary authority and thus formally independent of Kent County Council.
75 [http://www.rainhamcentralconservatives.co.uk/article.php?id=352](http://www.rainhamcentralconservatives.co.uk/article.php?id=352)
76 Interview with Dr James Kennell, University of Greenwich, [http://socialseaside.wordpress.com](http://socialseaside.wordpress.com)
At the wider cultural level, arts policy in Kent is also part of wider partnerships with other authorities. Artlands North Kent is a contemporary arts programme which explores North Kent’s identity through a series of public realm commissions, responding and engaging with the unique qualities of the area – landscapes, heritage and people. There is a strong focus on ‘place’ – the unique identity of each area, and how people identify it and engage with it, as a counter to the lack of ‘place’ so often characterising rebuilding or redevelopment. Funding comes from Kent County Council, Arts Council England, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (a partnership of public and private organisations). The Parklands study has produced five booklets with themes of heritage, historic environment and culture. The Cluster Studies, funded partly with Homes and Community Agency (HCA) support, have produced eight studies so far to identify a ‘coherent sense of place’ for each cluster area, capture what is already happening, and identify aspirations and a common vision. Art at the Centre, funded jointly by the Arts Council England, Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council, seeks to embed creativity within regeneration policy and practice, and has stimulated a number of events and projects across the area. The Finnish Scarecrows project, run by the North Kent Local Authority Arts Partnership in the Isle of Sheppey, supported artists creating installations with local people at different sites across the island; local involvement was clearly demonstrated when one of the installations was vandalised and local people made the perpetrators repair the damage. Other examples show that ideas come from the local community: they say they want more art. A central concern is what role artists can play in helping people plan new communities and get through the transition – an example here was a new town proposed for a former factory industrial site. And running in parallel were questions about evaluation – what would be the criteria for judging success? – community engagement, communication, new skills?

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77 Interview with Emma Wilcox, Arts and Regeneration Officer (North Kent), Kent County Council.
78 [www.artlandsnorthkent.org.uk/](http://www.artlandsnorthkent.org.uk/)
AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL:
KINDNESS AND SOCIAL COHESION

We consider finally a rather different model of arts-led regeneration – People United, led by Tom Andrews, based in the Canterbury Innovation Centre, University of Kent, where we met him on 26 October. People United is a charity which uses the arts to ‘promote kindness’, ‘to grow community cohesion, volunteering and caring environments’. The focus is on relationships, the connections between people, social capital, social cohesion, emotional literacy, drawing on a theoretical background in social psychology, notably social learning theory with an emphasis on empathy, role modelling, and group behaviour. This is a very different model from the large-scale structural investment of Folkestone or Margate, or the animation/activity focus of Kinetika at Chatham. The organisation has one full-time and two part-time staff – again a big contrast to other models. It has funding from Arts Council England South East, Kent County Council and Canterbury City Council, and charitable foundations such as Esmee Fairbairn and Paul Hamlyn.

People United’s work with schools fits in well with the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning curriculum (SEAL) focusing on social and emotional literacy as a basis for learning and behaviour - ‘a whole-school approach to help create a climate and conditions that encourage pupils to develop their social and emotional skills’. The organisation develops ‘imaginative projects that build and support kind and caring communities’ with an emphasis on the ‘doing of positive things’, and serves as what Tom Andrews calls a ‘creative laboratory’ – ‘creating, testing and evaluating ideas and then giving them away’.

In the We All Do Good Things project, People United worked in three primary schools, sharing ‘positive stories’ from across the community. Each school had an artist in residence, working with everyone in the school and its community, with complete freedom within the aims of the project to create something new – poetry, theatre, dance, photography etc. The project was evaluated by the University of Kent. Interviews with the school children before, during and after the project showed a significant increase in pro-social attitudes (willingness to care for, share with and help other individuals) and in positive feelings towards other

79 www.peopleunited.org.uk
80 Interview with Tom Andrews.
82 A focus on ‘emotional regeneration’ to parallel ‘cultural regeneration’ and ‘economic regeneration’? (comment from Rebecca Ball).
groups (in this case, children in other schools) compared with children in control schools. Christ Church Canterbury University also evaluated the project using qualitative interviews.

The key element of engagement in this project is that ‘everyone has a story to tell’ and can tell it in any way they wish. The initial project was then developed and extended, in 2010, on a whole town basis in Herne Bay on the North Kent coast, which was selected as an area of high deprivation, with low levels of arts participation and of volunteering. The aims of the project were to increase arts participation, levels of volunteering and sense of neighbourliness, and reduce social isolation. The subject gave everyone the possibility to engage, and the intention was to work with as many organisations and individuals as possible, with no distinction between local government, education, arts, etc: 15-20 voluntary organisations were involved, along with every school in Herne Bay, sports clubs, councillors, businesses, and individuals. The project managers spent a lot of time talking to people face to face, developing relationships.

The first stage of the project was ‘uncovering stories’. Age Concern groups wrote stories and made books about friendship. Young people in youth centres worked with cartoonists telling their own personal stories. Adults with mental health difficulties worked with a film company to make and edit a DVD. About 80 different events were held with the public – decorating cakes, writing poetry, decorating ribbons on railings in the parks, making chalk drawings on the sea front. A theatre company worked in hairdressing saloons on the stories that clients told their hairdressers. Every primary school child wrote a story and then created their own bags with the help of textile artists. A giant glass bottle was filled with stories by the sea cadets.

The second stage was ‘sharing’. Exhibitions were held in the main museum and the library and in shops and other places round the town. The third stage was ‘action’ – encouraging people to do something positive in their community. The choice was a giant picnic in the park, with food, music, art activities and so on.

One way of evaluating is to ask what happens next. Tom Andrews commented ‘something is bubbling up’ in Herne Bay and listed six initiatives:

- Adults with mental difficulties want to develop activities with other adults
- The community film maker is now setting up a community cinema in a former theatre
• A youth group has turned itself into a ‘social action group’ doing ‘positive things’ round the town
• A group of people suffering from dementia, who sang at the picnic, have asked for help from People United in forming a choir to work with primary schools
• A Canterbury-based arts group wants to move to Herne Bay to run arts activities
• An oral history group has increased its membership and is doing wider community projects

Tom Andrews’ view on evaluation is brief: ‘the key is what we leave behind’. His future role is to ‘support local communities doing their own thing’. Plans for the future include creative ways of evaluating projects (e.g. on-line, interactive). Tensions include the temptation to become a service provider, rather than ‘giving away’ whatever has been created. Another tension is the role of small arts organisations, where community engagement has to be key, very ‘bottom up’ rather than ‘top down’. An interesting dimension is the organisation’s partnership with the University of Kent. Tom Andrews suggested that the interest was mutual: he was interested in the university’s expertise as a ‘learning community’; they were interested in his ‘real world experience’ available for their students.
DISCUSSION: MODELS, DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

Finally, we must attempt to make sense of the approaches to arts-led regeneration sampled in our week’s tour. We can divide the field in various ways, for example:

- **Size** – ranging from huge investment (Turner Contemporary, Folkestone’s Creative Quarter) to organisations working on a shoestring (People United, Total Pap)

- **Funding** – we have seen examples of philanthropic funding (Folkestone on a big scale, People United on a small scale), and statutory support (Margate, Chatham, and indeed an element in all the projects visited)

- **Physical infrastructure or social investment** – again compare Turner Contemporary with People United

- ‘**Top down**’ or ‘**bottom up**’ – compare Folkestone’s Creative Quarter with small-scale participatory ‘animateur’ groups such as Strange Cargo or Total Pap

Discussion with Pip Wittenoom at the end of the tour helped clarify some of these distinctions and the context. Investment has been on a very large scale indeed. The point was made that central government does play a large role in these initiatives but the models are locally-driven, local decisions are important, and initiatives may be led by different actors but have the same cast of partners. The question is the catalyst. Huge developments such as in Liverpool and Glasgow, round the European Capital of Culture, were seen as the catalyst for economic and physical as well as social regeneration. But so far progress has been seen on the physical buildings side; investment in the social side may be slower, and is likely to be affected by the new government’s proposals for funding cuts83.

Issues in different regions and areas may be similar (industrial decline, the decline of tourism), although the coastal towns may present a particular configuration of decline in service industries (as argued by James Kennell: the collapse and restructuring of the service economy in the south east has left the same physical and social problems as the collapse of the industrial economy in the north east). But different places may select very specific local initiatives. Folkestone has focussed on contemporary visual art in the Folkestone Triennial (Tracy Emin, for example); Margate has a cutting edge major gallery; Chatham is an example of using regenerated buildings to house a major creation space for outdoor and street arts. All,

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83 Arts Council England’s budget was slashed in the government’s October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review from £449.5m in 2010/11 to £349m by 2014; an overall cut of 30%. Arts Council England South East Plan for 2008-11 (that is, before cuts were announced) suggested a budget figure of some £20m a year.
however, have similar aims: to bring people back into town centres, to bring in visitors to boost the economy, to establish a national and international cultural reputation and to boost people’s civic pride. Art and artists are seen as a way to get local people involved. Why Kent and the south east chose cultural development as the driver of economic regeneration is an interesting question. James Kennell’s tentative suggestion is that cultural development is seen as an appropriate driver for regenerating the service sector and tourism, compared with the focus in the north east (Liverpool, Gateshead, Newcastle) on economic regeneration as the primary driver for regenerating the collapsed heavy industrial sector (mining, ship-building, steel). We should note that as a sector ‘the creative industries’ (in the broadest sense) are one of the fastest growing parts of the economy, and are apparently continuing to grow during the recession.

Yet cultural redevelopment may have its own problems. There is some evidence of both economic impact (creating jobs) and social impact (sense of place, attachment, civic pride). But there are also concerns: the community sector’s different agenda; local hostility over imposition of a different sense of ‘place’; artists and locals are two different sets of people; low levels of engagement; and issues over the ‘colonisation of space’ – artists talk of themselves as ‘explorers’ while local people feel pushed out.

Top down or bottom up is a constant tension. The Creative Foundation in Folkestone laid itself open to disagreements with local people (one example was the launch of the inaugural Folkestone Triennial to the press on its first day, followed by a launch to the locals on the second day). The design of the Turner Contemporary in Margate was challenged by local people at public meetings.

What role does culture play in these tensions? James Kennell suggested an analysis based ‘cultural capital’ theories, derived from Bourdieu: ‘cultural’ industries (e.g. art, opera, theatre) with high status and high barriers to entry (i.e. the education, money and leisure to understand and participate) versus ‘tourism’ industries (e.g. amusement arcades, ‘Dreamland’) with low status and low barriers to entry. Ideas and policy round regeneration

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84 There is also an issue about the sustainability of ‘artists as explorers’: as places become fashionable and property prices rise, artists themselves may be pushed out. The regeneration and redevelopment of East London is an example.

tend to be based on high cultural capital: a belief in the power of culture leading to aspiration, inspiration, education. ‘Passive consumption’ tends to be associated with low status type culture (television), while ‘active participation’ is associated with high status culture (music lessons, technology). The relationship between participation and consumption, however, is very fluid, and changing rapidly. One justification for the development of outdoor arts, street arts, carnival and so on in Medway is that these art forms have been shown to have a much wider socio-economic reach than many other art forms. Cultural participation is also changing: in many areas more people ‘take part’ in amateur arts activity than ‘go to see’ or consume professional arts activity.

So if arts-led regeneration is to be effective at community-building, the question is how to lower the barriers to participation – what are the strategies to promote participation? These might include events rather than installations; experiential education projects; events to develop audience participation in communities; and an understanding that everything has to be site specific – what works in one neighbourhood is not necessarily transferable. So what kind of art is useful and engaging in a particular area?

Examples suggested in Folkestone include the Seagull Project – the ‘Mobile Gull Appreciation Unit’ created by artist Mark Dion in the Folkestone Triennial (a seagull modelled around a vehicle that acted like a kiosk, providing information to the community on the local gull population), and the work of Strange Cargo (very hands-on participation with local schools, school children wearing seagull costumes for a procession, and especially their ‘Other People’s Photographs’ project). In Margate, when the new building was delayed, the Turner Contemporary gallery moved into the derelict Marks and Spencer shop in the local shopping precinct, where international artists and local school children worked together, with local people participating in a setting they understood. For the funders this delay was seen as disastrous; but the unintended consequence was an enormous increase in local participation and support.

What can be said about outcomes so far? The emphasis has been heavily on the physical infrastructure – that is, buildings. For example, Margate has the Turner Contemporary gallery under construction, and a number of refurbished buildings – cafes and galleries on the harbour wall, a new media centre converted from a former bank. Folkestone has a new school funded by the de Haan Charitable Trust and designed by Norman Foster, and about eighty
buildings in the Creative Quarter in process of refurbishing, including a new university building and the Quarterhouse as a performing arts and business centre.

There is some evidence that jobs have been created, and that public support for arts initiatives is increasing. Initiatives which involve schools seem more successful at engaging audiences such as children and their parents. Sustainability, however, is not guaranteed; and there is no evidence as yet of large-scale economic and attitudinal change as has taken place in Brighton. But it is important to understand why support and engagement is low in the first place. Finally, economic and cultural policies must run hand in hand so there is more investment that makes sense to lower-income groups.
**ANNEX: ARTS-LED REGENERATION TOUR 25-19 OCTOBER 2010: PROGRAMME**

**MONDAY 25TH OCTOBER**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Resources, websites</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 14:00</td>
<td>Oxford - Folkestone</td>
<td>Professor Mukuno, Dr Kataoka, Dr Himeno and Teresa Smith travel to Folkestone by train (approx 3 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:45</td>
<td>Folkestone</td>
<td>Take a taxi or walk (approx 20 mins) to the Creative Foundation office at The Block, 65-69 Tontine Street, Folkestone, CT20 1JR.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk/">map of location</a></td>
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| 15:00 – 17:00 | Folkestone | Meet with Yvette Illsley, Communications Manager for the Creative Foundation, and Jeremy Whittaker, Regeneration and Economic Development Manager for Shepway District Council. Also Peter Bettley from the Roger de Haan Charitable Trust  

Creative Foundation has spearheaded a ground-breaking regeneration project, including the development of a new Creative Quarter populated by artists, independent retailers and creative businesses. CF co-ordinate many of the artistic elements of regeneration, including the Quarterhouse performing arts venue, the Folkestone Triennial international art festival and the Folkestone Book festival. Yvette will take you on a walking tour around the Creative Quarter.  

Yvette@creativefoundation.org.uk, 01303 842184  
Jeremy.Whittaker@shepway.gov.uk  
Peter.bettley@strandhouse.org | [http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk/](http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk/)  
[http://www.quarterhouse.co.uk/](http://www.quarterhouse.co.uk/)  
[http://www.shepway.gov.uk/content/category/1/100009/3353/](http://www.shepway.gov.uk/content/category/1/100009/3353/) |
### TUESDAY 26TH OCTOBER

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<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Folkestone</td>
<td>Arrive at The Quarterhouse, Tontine Street.</td>
<td>map of location</td>
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| 10:30 – 12:30 | The Quarterhouse, Folkestone | Meet with Nick Ewbank, a cultural regeneration consultant and former Chief Executive / Artistic Director for Creative Foundation. He can talk about the challenges and opportunities for regeneration in Folkestone, about the strategic partnerships developed with local authorities and development agencies, and the artistic programme. | [http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk/](http://www.creativefoundation.org.uk/)  
[http://www.quarterhouse.co.uk/](http://www.quarterhouse.co.uk/)  
[nick@nickewbank.co.uk](mailto:nick@nickewbank.co.uk) / 07966 017206 |
| 13:30 – 14:30 | Folkestone - Canterbury | Travel to Canterbury Innovation Centre, University of Kent                                                                                                                                                      | map of location                                     |
| 14:30 – 16:30 | Canterbury              | Meet with Tom Andrews, Chief Executive of People United. People United acts as a practical laboratory, working with universities to test out and professionally evaluate creative social programmes that can be replicated and shared. People United believe that being kind to one another is fundamental to making the world a better place. Their work takes place in high streets, schools, residential homes and offices. They have recently completed a project using the arts to tell good news stories across the whole town of Herne Bay (on the coast near Canterbury and Margate). The aims were to be a catalyst for community engagement, neighbourliness and volunteering in the town.  
tom@peopleunited.org.uk / 07984 733818 | [http://www.peopleunited.org.uk/](http://www.peopleunited.org.uk/) |
### WEDNESDAY 27TH OCTOBER

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Margate</td>
<td>Arrive at Turner Contemporary, 17-18 The Parade, Margate CT9 1EY.</td>
<td>map of location</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 12:00</td>
<td>Margate</td>
<td>Meet with Victoria Pomery, Director of Turner Contemporary, the major new visual arts gallery currently under construction, due to open in 2011. The team have been operating a satellite, artistic programme operating out of a project space in Margate town centre. Victoria can talk about the role of the arts in the regeneration of Margate. <a href="mailto:vpomery@turnercontemporary.org">vpomery@turnercontemporary.org</a> / 01843 294208</td>
<td><a href="http://www.turnercontemporary.org/">http://www.turnercontemporary.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>13:15</td>
<td>Margate</td>
<td>The Media Centre, 11-13 King Street, Margate CT9 1DA.</td>
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<td>13:15 – 15:15</td>
<td>Margate</td>
<td>Meet with Justin Mitchell / Emily Firmin from Total Pap. Margate was chosen as one of the locations to receive funding for the Art in Empty Spaces initiative, a national response to the impact of the recession on town centres. Total Pap was chosen as the artistic company to fill the spaces in and around Margate, with many of the windows in the town centre Marks &amp; Spencer’s building. If weather permits, Justin will take you for a short tour of the shops in the town centre. <a href="mailto:justin@totalpap.co.uk">justin@totalpap.co.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/investment-in-arts/art-empty-spaces/">http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/investment-in-arts/art-empty-spaces/</a></td>
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<td>10:00 –</td>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>Meet Pip Wittenoom at the Ramada Encore Hotel, Chatham, to discuss the research visit so far. Walk over to Chatham Historic Dockyards to see ‘Slip 6’ - a proposed creation space for large scale artistic work. Slip 6 is embedded in the cultural strategies of both Kent County Council and Medway Council, and the Dockyards themselves are the focus of major regeneration and investment. There will be artists in residence in the space as part of the <em>Imagination Our Nation</em> project managed by carnival company Kinetika.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thedockyard.co.uk/">http://www.thedockyard.co.uk/</a> <a href="http://www.imaginationournation.co.uk/">http://www.imaginationournation.co.uk/</a></td>
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<td><strong><a href="mailto:pip.wittenoom@googlemail.com">pip.wittenoom@googlemail.com</a></strong>  /  07789 963497</td>
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<td>13:00 –</td>
<td>Maidstone</td>
<td>Meet with James Kennell, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Regeneration at the University of Greenwich. James is working on a project to investigate the social impacts of cultural regeneration in seaside towns. Strategies of cultural development are becoming increasingly frequent in the regeneration of former resorts and this research aims to contribute to our understanding of this trend and to developing socially sustainable forms of cultural regeneration.</td>
<td><a href="http://socialseaside.wordpress.com/about/">http://socialseaside.wordpress.com/about/</a></td>
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| 15:00      |                  | There are three stages to this research:  
1. An analysis of contemporary seaside regeneration policies and projects  
2. Interviews with key stakeholders in seaside regeneration  
3. Research into the uses and users of cultural regeneration zones within three seaside towns in Kent: Folkestone, Whitstable and Margate.  
The findings will be integrated to produce an analysis of the social impacts of cultural regeneration in seaside towns. |                                                                                                         |
|            |                  | **J.S.Kennell@greenwich.ac.uk**                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                         |
| 15:00 – 17:00 | Maidstone | Meet Emma Wilcox, Arts and Regeneration Officer (North Kent) from Kent County Council. Emma is a local authority officer working in cultural regeneration in Kent. Emma will speak about a range of cultural regeneration projects she is involved in including ‘Art at the Centre’, which aims to embed culture and the arts in the regeneration process, and ‘Artlands’, a series of public realm commissions that respond to the unique qualities of Kent. Kent County Council is also a partner in the Slip 6 creation space. | http://www2.swale.gov.uk/aatc/  
http://www.artlands.org.uk  
http://www.kent.gov.uk/community_and_living/regeneration_and_economy.aspx  
http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture.aspx  
http://www.swale.gov.uk/home/default.aspx |
| Emma.Wilcox@kent.gov.uk / 07769 901542 |