

Bognor Youth Community Garden Project



On the 20 June 2024, nearly 100 people gathered to witness the inspiring launch of a brand new Youth Community Garden space behind the Phoenix Centre in Bognor Regis conceived and designed by local young people.

The launch event involved fantastic live performances, artwork unveiling and ceremonial ribbon cutting by the Bognor Regis Mayor Cllr Claire Needs.

The sun shone as the community came together to celebrate the brilliant achievements of young people from The Regis School, Felpham Community College, Angmering School and The Littlehampton Academy.



The garden has been developed and produced through the Young Cultural Changemakers Programme run across Arun by Artswork. This programme offers training and creative opportunities to cohorts of young people who are able to commission artists and other professionals in order to realise their ideas for new projects designed to benefit their communities.

The Youth-Led Community Garden was created in response to feedback from the community about a need for projects that can support local young people's mental wellbeing. Over the course of 6 months, 16 Young Changemakers met regularly online and in person to develop their ideas, commission artists and a landscaper for the space, and received training in Creative Leadership (Bronze Arts Award), Communication and Teamwork.

Throughout the project, the young people have championed youth voice by collaboratively tackling important local issues, with a particular focus on young people's mental health and combatting feelings of isolation, excessive screen use, and stereotyping of young people in public spaces. They explored these themes further by taking part in workshops that considered Augmented Reality possibilities with AR professional Sophie Dixon, and developing textile mood boards with Shirley Bloomfield Davies.

Why a garden?

When asked how the project could meet the needs and fix the issues that local young people had voiced, the Changemakers worked together to establish the idea of a community garden space that would be:

"A place for young people to make friends."

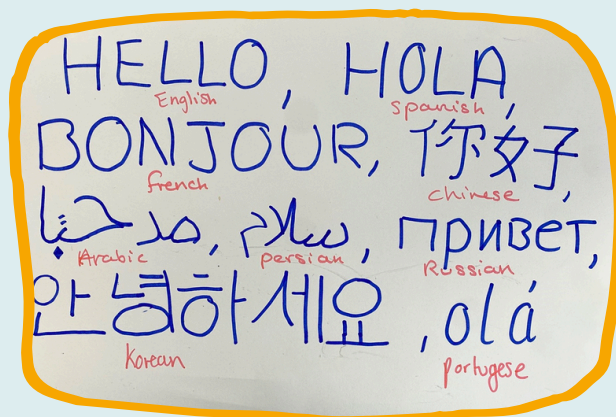
"Accessible to everyone."

"A safe space for young people to feel welcome, heavily inspired by nature."



Each element of the garden was carefully thought through by the young people to ensure accessibility and inclusion for all. These features include a wildlife area, pond, sensory planting, stage, new seating, and artworks made by mosaic artist Honey Mosaics and designer Angela Chick, who also attended the garden launch.

A particularly thoughtful idea when considering how to bring the community together, was to create a welcome sign with 'Hello' in a variety of languages. The group also designed several rules that would keep the space safe, clean and inclusive to all users.



This sign was created with the Young Cultural Changemakers by one of the artists they interviewed and selected: the brilliant designer Angela Chick.

Engaging with Local Young People:

The Changemakers felt that it was important for “people of all races, cultures, genders, and ages” to feel welcome and connected to the garden space and “to inspire others to be creative.” To do this, they came up with the idea of a mosaic mural that different schools, communities, and families could contribute towards. With each slate completed, they could then be brought together to create a large collaborative mural that truly represents the wider community and the values that inspire the new space such as Friendship, Kindness, Art, Connection and Broken & Fixed Mental Health.

The community mosaic was created with the Young Cultural Changemakers and students from Southway Primary, Nyewood Primary, and other local families, by talented mosaic artist selected by the young people, Honey Mosaics.



Launch Event Highlights:

"After many meetings, online and through trips to other schools, including meetings with Grahame and Angela, about designing the area it has become this amazing natural space we are in now, and we hope that you all enjoy it, but obviously we want to take care of it because it was a very long process. We hope you all enjoy this space as much as we do."

– Young Changemaker: Aisla



“This garden was built off of numerous ideas that we have all agreed are important to us and things we need to improve. This garden was built to improve the mental health of children and teens below the age of 18 and to make this a safe space for people to come out and enjoy nature.



Due to lockdown, people our age have been stuck inside their house and have been unable to find a place to go and escape it. This garden is for people like that, and this garden is for people to feel safe and welcome. As well as improving the mental health of others, this garden was also built to try to steer others away from anti-social behaviour.”

– Young Changemaker: Kai

The Young Changemakers also wanted the event to showcase the unique talents of local young people. Because of this, the audience were able to enjoy incredible live performances from Felpham Community College musicians Libby and Eloise, and Manny the Magnificent with his unforgettable comedy balloon magic!



Some quotes from teachers and parents:

"Thank you and well done to you, for facilitating such a fab project for the kids. They loved it!"

- Headteacher, Felpham Community College

"I think the project has been a huge success. The work both you and the students have done to produce a real, tangible and beautiful space is fantastic. So many projects don't have the realisation of the initial plans. This project has not only enriched our site, given something back to our local community and enabled the children to have a recognised qualification from it is totally brilliant and worth all the trips and consent forms from my end!"

- Senior Safeguarding Lead, The Regis School

"This project has really helped my son feel more confident and connected with his new school in his first year at secondary."

- Parent

Artswork's Young Cultural Changemakers programme takes place across the South East in 5 locations identified as Priority Places by Arts Council England. In 2023/24, young people in Arun, Dover, Slough, The New Forest and The Isle of Wight, are being empowered and supported to lead on significant creative projects in their local area. The programme connects groups of young people with artists to explore and articulate ideas, before giving them funding to shape and deliver creative projects that will make a difference where they live. This project is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

All photos by Tayler Forrester, Beccy East and Leanne Livermore