

A Vision for Blake's Cottage

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INTRODUCTION

I WAS A TRUSTEE of the Blake Society from 2011 until January 2015. I was also its Secretary from 2013 until I left the Society, and I was extensively involved in the project to acquire William Blake's Cottage in Felpham from its conception in 2013 and throughout its campaign up to the moment I left both the BS and the Cottage project.

When I heard that the Blake Cottage Trust was asking for submissions of a vision of what the Cottage should be I was surprised, and worried. Much careful thought, work and time were devoted to defining that vision prior to and throughout the campaign, and it was because of that vision that so many people supported it in a variety of ways. I know this because I am responsible for a great deal in the campaign's working documents, and for how it was presented to the public, to the press, to potential donors and at the campaign's launch in Parliament in July 2014.

I am therefore submitting this document for your consideration. It is comprised of what those of us who started the Cottage project agreed that Blake's Cottage should be, an account of some of the recommendations for the continuation of the project that I sent to Tim Heath, the Blake Society's Chairman, when I left in January 2015, and some practical considerations. The present document also includes some new ideas that have come to my mind in the intervening time, a section on my concerns regarding the future of Blake's Cottage, and a series of appendixes that I think you may find useful.

ORIGINAL VISION

In this section I am quoting from both inner and public documents prepared for the campaign by those of us who conceived it. In the Appendixes section you will be able to access some other documents in full.

What the Blake Cottage campaign aimed at achieving was to acquire the Cottage in Felpham to turn it into "a centre that celebrates Blake, and welcomes visitors, poets, artists and universities to continue his legacy, creating new work in the spirit of his irrepressible imagination. The Cottage will be a refuge for everyone who asks great questions – the outsiders, the prophets and the visionaries. People will be able to visit & stay in the Cottage and in turn the Cottage will emanate their creativity back into the world." Our aim was also for the Cottage to "belong to everyone for the benefit of the nation – and the only nation is the *imagination*". The long-term plan was to join it to Blake's house in South Molton Street in London.

We stated that the Cottage wouldn't be a museum, for we didn't "want people to simply come in, look around then leave, but rather for it to be a place where people think, project and create. It would have an open door, but the emphasis would shift from a door open to draw in, to one open to give out".

The concrete ways in which we thought this could be achieved were (I quote again): “Open one or two days a week for day visitors, the rest of the week its rooms will be at the disposal of individuals and groups (i.e. artists, authors, thinkers, philosophers and scientists) invited to work on creative projects. One possible use of part of the building would be a house of refuge for persecuted writers. Each month the Cottage would host a public event: for instance, a conversation of Blakean interest with an artist or scholar, an exhibition, a talk or book launch, or an intimate concert. Ideally these events would be hosted by those who are currently working in the Cottage, and would be a chance to display the fruits of their work. So the Cottage would be a place for conception and creation, whose core values are imagination and dissent. It would also provide a flexible collaborative space for artists and minds where they could produce work that reaches local galleries, universities and other institutions. We want to create a space where people can take their projects off the ground, and therefore a space of renewal, including renewal of the world outside, even if in a humble measure.” Our vision was also stated as follows: “The Cottage is to be an exemplar of a way to live a life through courage and creativity. We are inviting support from everyone who is strengthened by the knowledge that somewhere in the world such a place exists; a home for the dissenting imagination.”

Such a statement is no mean thing, and the commitment behind it is not the kind of thing one can take lightly. That vision is what we worked for. Furthermore, that is the one vision that inspired people to support the Cottage campaign and prompted their generosity. Not only do I fail to understand why it might change; I don't believe in fact that anyone has the right to change it now, so my proposals in this document are merely an account of some of the ideas of that original project, and some other new ones that I believe follow the initial vision.

THE DISSENTING IMAGINATION

As seen above, we said in our campaign that we wanted to create, in Blake's spirit, “a home for the dissenting imagination”.

I know that it will take at least a couple of years for Blake's Cottage to reach a stage in which its programme can be fully developed, and that more funding will be urgently needed to make this possible, but I think it is crucial that while the fundraising continues solid liaisons are established with the people and organisations that can contribute to ensure that the Cottage keeps alive Blake's legacy of questioning and dissent through literature and the arts.

Here are some ideas. I am aware of the fact that the organisations I mention cannot give money and often need funding themselves, but if Blake's Cottage gets to be inspiring to them for collaborative work, much of what the original project aimed at could be achieved. It could also lead to access to these organisations' networks, from which further funding and support could be derived.

The House of Refuge for Persecuted Writers

The first step towards the actual Cottage campaign was taken in 2013, when the Blake Society's Chairman and myself visited the direction of English PEN, in order to find out how much we could do together so that part of the Cottage's programme included a House of Refuge for persecuted writers. I was inspired to propose this by the work of the Citlaltépetl House of Refuge in Mexico City, inaugurated by Salman Rushdie (<http://www.casarefugio.com/>).

The idea was to allocate some space in the Cottage to receive persecuted authors from other countries during a period in which they could find a safe haven and get adapted to a new country, get to meet and work with other colleagues and do their work in safety. The authors would engage with other features in the Cottage's programme, including literary workshops, lectures, conferences and other events that would take their work beyond the Cottage's boundaries into cultural venues, universities, etc. across the UK, but the Cottage would also host smaller events as the living space we envisioned, and would be a strong presence for the defence of freedom of speech – something we thought meaningful, as it was in Felpham that Blake was arrested for sedition.

English PEN was very enthusiastic about the project and helped a lot in promoting the Cottage campaign and spreading the word in social media; they also facilitated useful advice and support from organisations such as the Writers' Centre in Norwich and The Bookseller.

I know that English PEN is now delighted to know that the Cottage has been bought and I believe that a House of Refuge scheme within the broader project for the Cottage would be a most apposite use for this space that would truly honour Blake's legacy.

The way to go forward would be by taking up the links already established with English PEN (and through them with Free Word, <https://www.freewordcentre.com/>), the Writers' Centre in Norwich, and engaging with ICORN (International Cities of Refuge Network, <http://icorn.org/>) so that ideas, work and perhaps some resources could be shared. Felpham could then become a Village of Refuge!

The Barenboim-Said Foundation

I believe that the work done by this Foundation, including the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (<http://www.barenboim-said.org/en/inicio/index.html>) is an inspiring example of how human potential can be put at the service of creation rather than destruction. Blake rightfully said that "war is energy Enslavd". The Barenboim-Said Foundation's work is all for the liberation of that energy. I thought of the possibility of Blake's Cottage working with them towards the end of the campaign in 2014 and the Blake Society's Chairman was enthusiastic about it. This would give a chance to young composers from war-torn regions to find some respite to do their work in peace in Felpham. The fruits of their work could then be performed in the UK and beyond. It would also open the door for enriching exchanges with musicians from other countries regarding the importance of the arts in society (something that was a paramount concern of Blake's), and of music's place in times of war and peace.

Ai Weiwei's Studio

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is an outstanding example of the dissenting imagination in our times. He creates original, challenging and often collective projects across different media –his own versions of the kind of lucidity that made Blake create works such as *The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan*, or *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth*. On seeing his exhibition recently at the Royal Academy it occurred to me that a collaboration of Blake's Cottage and Weiwei's Studio would be worth exploring.

IF BLAKE'S COTTAGE started seeking links with these organisations and, when possible, organising joint events at this early stage of its foundation, a lot of support could come to the project and it would be visible on an international scale.

The same can be done of course with national people and organisations. I have recently come across, for instance, **The Dark Mountain Project** (<http://dark-mountain.net/>), that might be another ideal partner for joint ventures of dissent.

It seems to me that in engaging with projects and organisations as the above mentioned, Blake's Cottage would become a meaningful centre for creation within the context of the dissenting tradition that Blake represents. By opening its doors to artists and authors in need of a safe place where to bring their visions to fruition the Cottage would honour its original purpose of becoming sanctuary for dissenting spirits, a centre for the pursuit of truth, freedom and beauty opening up to the world from the village of Felpham – the grain of sand expanding.

STRENGTHENING LINKS

Many people and organisations supported Blake's Cottage campaign to a greater or lesser degree. The support of some was minor at that early stage, yet now that the Cottage has been purchased the project's credibility should be bigger, and therefore there could be better opportunities for joint work that could result both in further funding and in establishing links of collaboration for creative projects in the future.

In my opinion, imaginative fund-raising events could be organised with them in different venues that would keep the spirit of the campaign alive in the public's mind while the necessary structural work is carried out in the building. They could also contribute to setting up a clear programme for the Cottage.

Strengthening these links is one of the recommendations I made to the Blake Society's Chairman last January. Some of the contacts I think worth pursuing are those of Sir Andrew Motion (one of the first persons to publicly endorse our campaign) and the **Poetry Archive**, the **British Museum**, the **British Library**, the **Arvon Foundation**, the **Poetry Society**, **Foyles**, the **National Portrait Gallery**, **Strandlines**, **Keats House**, **Dr Johnson's House**.

Advice and possible useful links abroad for the programme of resident artists and authors could be pursued as well by following up the contact already established with places such as **Ledig House** in upstate New York (<http://artomi.org/writers>).

Links with collections with Blake's work

All museums, galleries and institutions that hold works by Blake in their collections were contacted during the campaign. In some cases, due to the urgency to meet some of our several deadlines, there was no chance to get to the right person and not much support came from them. However, now that the success of the campaign is a reality and the Cottage has been purchased, that situation is bound to change and both creative exchanges and support could result from getting in touch with all these organisations again.

Other Creative Links

A very exciting feature of the Cottage project was - and I suppose and hope still is - to make of it the home of the printing press that was built to recreate Blake's Lambeth studio for the *Apprentice and Master* exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford curated by Professor Michael Phillips. Wonderful projects could arise from making of it a living printing press and it could also inspire artists and authors to create new illuminated books in the tradition of Blake, for whom the marriage of word and image was imperative.

Taking up links already established with some publishing houses and the **Ashmolean** itself, the **Tate Britain** and other galleries that hold Blake's work, could be a gate of distribution for the resulting works. There is also **Bloodaxe Books**, who supported our campaign, and so did **Enitharmon Press**, whose artistic director Stephen Stuart-Smith attended the first formal meeting held for the initiation of the Cottage campaign. Poet Jeremy Reed supported the campaign as well and was keen to create a book specially to support the project.

Collaborative projects could go beyond the UK's borders. I talked about the Cottage project to **Taller Ditoria** in Mexico (<http://tallerditoria.com.mx/>), who create exquisite poetry and art books with a movable-type press, and they thought that bilingual joint editions could be a very exciting venture. Their catalogue includes many of the world's main contemporary poets. A link was also established with Spain's **Atalanta** (<http://www.edicionesatalanta.com/>), who published the first edition in Spanish of Blake's full Prophetic Poems (illustrations included) and Kathleen Raine's essays on Blake. Its director Jacobo Siruela is one of the most important editors in the Spanish speaking world. Atalanta was hugely enthusiastic about Blake's Cottage campaign, helped to spread the word and provided us with some contacts that resulted in further support.

Several well-established authors and artists supported the campaign and it would be worthwhile to strengthen links with them. And of course, the Cottage's doors should be open too to younger generations and to artists who may not have an established reputation yet but present projects with true vision.

The National Trust

Another of my recommendations to the Blake Society's Chairman when I left the campaign was to develop the relationship with the National Trust.

During the campaign the NT's former Chairman Simon Jenkins showed much enthusiasm about the project. Unfortunately, he sent to the campaign's launch at Parliament a representative who had just joined the Trust and didn't follow up the work we were doing; then shortly before I left the BS the NT got a new Chairman, Tim Parker.

Still, I believe that a lot of good for the Cottage could be derived by building a relationship with the NT. They knew from the beginning that Blake's Cottage would be ran by a different trust and that whatever kind of engagement we had with the NT, they would not own the building, and still they showed interest. As you know, they run a diversity of projects in the conservation of national heritage and natural environment and that means that they have enormous expertise in working in flexible ways, since the nature of the sites, buildings and

problems they deal with is very diverse. Even if the Blake's Cottage project is different from what they usually do, that doesn't necessarily preclude that they could engage with the Cottage Trust on a different level nor other forms of collaborative work, and their advice could be of enormous use for the many complex matters that the Cottage Trust will have to face in the future. The BCT could organise joint events with them, including fund-raising events in their own sites, which would help enormously to spread the word about the project. It might be worthwhile also to visit some of the places they run and see what they do (including the printing demonstrations at Cherryburn).

I would also recommend strongly to look at their Conservation Principles, as some of them would aptly apply to the nature of Blake Cottage Trust's work or echo those in the original campaign (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/conservation-principles.pdf>). As I will point out later, their stance regarding accountability could also be a good example for the BCT.

Finally, having a solid relationship with the National Trust could mean that if worse comes to worst and the BCT doesn't gather enough funding or a solid structure to run the Cottage, the NT might be interested to invest in it and both trusts could still work together in a dignified way that follows the original vision. As I am sure you must be bearing in mind, engaging with other organisations and sites (such as the Art Fund or Ditchling Museum), though time consuming, can result in much advice and learning for the administration of Blake's Cottage.

A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE I LEFT the Cottage campaign and the Blake Society, the latter's Chairman asked for my list of contacts (six pages), which I sent to him. When I finally left in January I offered to point at those contacts that I'd suggest should be pursued, something I'd still be willing to do if the Cottage project walks along the lines of what it originally set up to do.

INCLUSION AND TRANSPARENCY CONCERNS

Representation

Blake's Cottage campaign started as a Blake Society initiative. It was understood from the beginning that a new entity would have to be created for legal and practical reasons, as the BS was too small a charity to administrate such an enormous project. This meant that the project was going to expand, reach out to many others, be inclusive.

However, the creation of a new organism never meant that Blake's Cottage would be severed from the origins of the project, nor that the enormous amount of work, good will and generosity of many people would be used to snatch their fruits, then transfer those fruits to an entirely disconnected organism with limited knowledge and representation of the campaign. It is a matter both of ethics, and of the most elementary common sense.

I am sure that the Blake Cottage Trust as it stands now has the best possible intentions, and I am certainly thrilled that Professor Michael Phillips, such a respected authority on Blake, who has done so much to preserve his legacy, is one of its members.

Yet the fact that the BCT is calling for submissions of a vision for Blake's Cottage, however inclusive the intentions behind it, doesn't seem to me to signal a smooth continuity of the project; it may rather become, inadvertently, a disowning of it and an invitation to chaos.

The Blake Society's Committee knows why and how I left both the BS and the Cottage project. I think that it may recognise in the concerns arising from the handling of this campaign's success the serious problems of communication that we then faced. It would be a disservice to the Blake Cottage Trust and to everyone who contributed to make a success of the campaign not to give any warning about the dangers of such communication issues, and that is why I am submitting the present document.

The Blake Society

I am not sure of how aware the Blake Cottage Trust is of the extent to which the Cottage project is indissolubly linked in everybody's mind to the Blake Society, and of the enormous responsibility that entails. As stated above, the Cottage campaign was a Blake Society initiative; it drew on the Society's reputation for its work of 30 years, and it is the Society that people trusted and to whom they gave their support and money. As you know, the BCT was formed much later and therefore for a long time the BS actually held the money given to the project in one account put apart specifically for this purpose. Whereas not everybody in the BS Committee participated in the campaign, those of us who did, did so as representatives of the BS, and that is why people trusted us. The consequences of this cannot be taken lightly. Pretending it is otherwise would be as serious as accepting that people were wilfully deceived, something that I am sure the BCT would never endorse.

If we look, for instance, at the first leaflet we distributed for the campaign, we will read: **"This campaign is being led by the Blake Society that was founded in 1985 and is a registered charity. Our President is Philip Pullman."** I have no doubt whatsoever that this is why Mr Pullman endorsed the campaign publicly in such a brilliant way, made a personal donation to it and congratulated it for its success after the Cottage was bought. I am not sure what he would think if he knew that there are chances that the BCT disengages from any responsibility towards the BS and the trust people placed on it, but I'd imagine he would feel used and deceived himself, and much worried.

As of today, 15 November 2015, if you click on a link for blakecottage.org, you fall straight into a section of the Blake Society's webpage – the section we used, reviewing it constantly, throughout our campaign. It doesn't matter if the online contents change from now on: for the whole of the existence of the campaign, up to today, the Cottage project has stood publicly as a Blake Society endeavour.

If you keep on reading that webpage, you'll reach the Just Giving button. Click there and you'll find the project's Just Giving page, **to which people are actually still giving money**. I hope this is clear: for all practical purposes, people are giving money to the Blake Society, trusting that it will handle it appropriately. They know the Blake Cottage Trust had to be set up and that the money has been transferred to a new account there, but it seems rather unequivocal to me that the links between the two organisations are not severed at all, and that it is the Blake Society that people are trusting. They are also supporting our original vision of what we

thought the Cottage should be. So to change or betray those plans would be a rather serious breach of trust.

The heading of the Just Giving page is: **“The Blake Society at St James's. We have now raised £509k for Blake Cottage to create the first home for William Blake!”**, and further down, the BS invites further donations with **“Join the Blake Society at St James's Community”**. If you have time perhaps you would like to read some of the messages left by donors in that page. I copy here some that I find eloquent: **“I happily give my friendship to the Blake Society and to William Blake.”** **“Blake was a great visionary, and this project is equally visionary, which is why I'm supporting it.”** **“Congratulations on raising the money for the purchase of the cottage. The proposals for its future sound wonderful.”** **“The place of the greatest visions! But remember to leave the Gate open...”**.

I therefore suggest that the Blake Cottage Trust and the Blake Society consider in all seriousness the responsibility, ethical implications and consequences of this reality. In fact, the Blake Society is the most natural partner for the BCT and there can only be benefits for both organisations from working transparently together.

The Big Blake Project

Blake's Cottage campaign was a collective project. There were two organisations running it, and those were the Blake Society and the Big Blake Project. I was therefore surprised not to find the latter represented in the Blake Cottage Trust.

Collective projects will always have conflicting views about what should be done and how. At the beginning of the campaign there were some such differing perspectives between the Blake Society and the BBP, some of them serious. However, such differences don't turn people into enemies. They are bound to arise in any project and the thing to do is to sit together and talk; to join efforts instead of working divided, for division ultimately renders work for a common goal impossible. Unfortunately, the lack of communication I mentioned before made it very difficult to know what was really going on between these two organisations. For instance, from early on I was unable to attend further meetings with the BBP because I was not even informed by the BS Chairman of when they were taking place. There was triangulation of communication and therefore we all ended up lacking information that was essential for us being able to do our work properly together. Then I left the project so I don't know how the relationship between the two organisations progressed.

However, I do know that from the outset the Blake Society invited the Big Blake Project to be part of Blake's Cottage campaign. I do know that the BBP worked extremely hard, did a lot to promote the campaign and to gather the local support that is of course essential for such a project to succeed. They also raised a significant amount of money. They garnered the work of many enthusiastic individuals who believed all along on what we were saying in our campaign.

Differences between the Blake Society and the Big Blake Project were obviously never irreconcilable. And I say “obviously” because, had they been so, they would have stopped working together. They never did. If we look at the BBP's webpage, we read: **“Join us and help the Blake Society turn it [the Cottage] into a Radical Centre of the Imagination held in Trust for the nation.”** Their Just Giving button leads to donations **raised for The Blake Society at St James's**. The Blake Society encouraged the BBP to work for the Cottage campaign; it has allowed them to go on doing that even now. Yet the Big Blake Project has no representation in the Blake Cottage

Trust, which on its turn seems not to be very much aware of its indissoluble connections with the Blake Society. I must say I find all this very worrying.

Blake's Cottage project is a collective venture. Specific organisations (i.e., the Blake Society and the Big Blake Project) raised funds for a very precise objective. Even those donors who gave most money did —or should have done— so for a precise and already defined vision of what the Cottage should be. No organisation has the right to betray people's trust, work or money, and in that respect bigger donors have no more moral rights over the Cottage than those who gave what they could, even if it was one pound only. This is so because the campaign was not set up as a business undertaking. Part of what made it so original and appealing was precisely its encouraging everybody to give what they could so that the Cottage truly belonged to everybody. And we did believe in that when we started the campaign; it reflected Blake's spirit and was no vacuous publicity slogan. So it has to be respected.

Therefore, I believe that the BCT needs to have in it enough representatives that worked for the campaign, and understand it, and that is not the case now.

Because of everything stated above, I very much fear that the Blake Cottage Trust as it stands now is not representative of the campaign and its aims, and though I am sure that this is far from the BCT's intentions, from an outside and logical perspective it looks dangerously as if it used the work of others and took the money in order to follow another agenda, unknown to anybody else, including the very organisations that made the project possible.

Transparency

I have just said that even if the BCT is acting, as I'm sure it is, with the best intentions, the reading most people would have from an outside perspective is a different one. The only way to redress this problem is by a commitment to absolute transparency.

Transparency means, among other things, that the administration of Blake's Cottage cannot run on the basis of any individual holding all the information, nor on the divisions that such working methods necessarily create. Rather, and for everybody's sake, all parts involved should get together and talk openly as often as is necessary.

Transparency also entails that at all moments there must be absolute clarity regarding the people involved in the project, in any capacity and in any way, to guarantee that they are all of proved probity, honesty and competence, and therefore the BCT must be willing to disclose information regarding its direction, staff and volunteers and what work is being done whenever necessary. Transparency is, in short, the very opposite of secrecy.

Here is where I think that the example and expertise of the National Trust can come handy. I'll refer you in particular to their 6th Principle, Accountability. I quote: **"We will be transparent and accountable by recording our decisions and sharing knowledge to enable the best conservation decisions to be taken both today and by future generations. Our legacy to the future is formed by the record of our activities as much as by the places we preserve and pass on through our work. Only by recording and making accessible the decisions and actions both of ourselves and our predecessors can we be truly accountable to present and future generations."**

I think this position may be inspiring for the work of the Blake Cottage Trust.

My position

I invested in Blake's Cottage project much devoted work, time and commitment, as is acknowledged in unequivocal words by the Blake Society's Chairman in his email of 23 September this year informing me about the purchase of the Cottage, and thanking me for "all the work, time and passion" that I gave to it. As I said, the Blake Society's Committee knows why I had to leave, but of course I still would very much like to see the project flourish. Despite any conflict between any of those involved in its creation, the Cottage should become for future generations what we set out to create: a centre for the dissenting imagination that belongs to all.

Because of the pivotal part I played in the conception and development of the campaign, people ask me about it. Not for the first time, I don't know what to say, due to the lack of communication and transparency mentioned above. For the same reason I haven't yet thanked several of my contacts for their support, which is an uncomfortable position for me as I am really grateful. I would also be most happy to encourage my contacts and new people to contact the appropriate persons in the Blake Cottage Trust to support the project further, so that everyone can join efforts. But as I am sure you will understand, I cannot do that for a project that I can't guarantee is ran with absolute transparency, honouring our initial purpose.

In 2014, to give an example of my concerns, I was very enthusiastic about the ways in which Prof Phillips' Oxford exhibition and the accompanying festival could support the campaign, since the idea about having the exhibition's printing press in the Cottage had already been talked about and Prof Phillips was to become one of the Cottage's Trustees. The communication issues that I mention, however, prevented me from making my proposals known or having any information about how the Blake Society's Chairman was engaging in the festival's organisation, even when at the moment he and myself were the Blake Society Trustees running the campaign (while the Big Blake Project continued working very hard locally). I believe that because of this defective practice of division and withholding of information we may have lost the chance to gather a bigger support both at the exhibition and the festival. I also believe that this practice has prevented Prof Phillips from having all the information he needs as a Blake Cottage Trustee regarding the origins, nature and history of the campaign.

I am also concerned about all the people that any mismanagement of Blake's Cottage would affect, starting of course with all the donors, big or small, famous or anonymous. There are some very big names there and that might turn disappointment into a major problem for the BCT that would end up damaging the whole project. I think of the Howell family's generosity in giving us the legal right to purchase the Cottage and then extending our deadline several times so that our purpose could be achieved. I think of Philip Pullman, who as already stated, endorsed what he believed to be a Blake Society project; of St James's Church in Piccadilly, the BS's official address, and with whom the Society has solid and long-standing links. And of course I think the organisations running the campaign (the BS and the BBP) and the Cottage

Trust itself could be severely affected if things go wrong. All this can be easily avoided by the open discussion of any conflict and the above-mentioned transparency.

During the Cottage campaign we received many moving messages through email and post. You can view others equally moving in the Blake Society's Just Giving page, apart from those quoted above manifesting trust in the BS. I urge you to take a look at that page and read the messages of people giving money, for example, because of what Blake has meant in their lives, or in memory of dear departed ones.

All of us who have had a share in making this project possible have a moral, ethical responsibility of honouring these people's wishes and guaranteeing absolute transparency and coherence, making sure that the Cottage is not used for any other purpose and that there is no secrecy whatsoever involved in its management. If we really have understood Blake, we have the duty to open the material but also symbolic doors of the Cottage, engage in honest and fruitful conversation, exchange of ideas and harmonisation of contraries.

So far the Blake Cottage Trust does not seem to represent this attitude, and division seems to keep on prevailing over union of efforts. It doesn't seem to me that the Blake Society or the Big Blake Project are participants of the Cottage's success or its celebration and I can't find any public disclosure by the BCT of what they are planning to do.

Seeing this, I cannot keep silent. An atmosphere of secrecy, animadversion, mistrust and lack of communication is definitely not what people have been giving their work, support and money for.

These considerations are not about apportioning blame, but about highlighting the importance of being willing to talk, to open up and honour the work we all have done. Respect for others is ultimately respect for ourselves and the whole project will benefit if that is borne in mind. William Blake challenged a world riddled with injustice, falsehood and enmity, and the integration of the Four Zoas wasn't to him a theory, but an essential necessity in the experience of human life. The world has not got any better. Projects like the one we envisioned are much needed. If the management of the Cottage is not open and inclusive it would be a great injury to everything Blake is admired and loved for. The Blake Society's Chairman has done an admirable and incredibly generous work and because of this I don't think anyone challenges his entitlement to lead this project. He has devoted decades of his life to further Blake's legacy; he established a link with the Howell family 22 years ago with Blake's legacy in view, and all of us who love Blake have much to be grateful for to him. That should never be forgotten. But leadership entails, and demands, communication and transparency and that cannot be forgotten either. Blake's Cottage project doesn't belong to any one particular person or legal entity. It belongs to all. That is what we wanted and what has been achieved. Nobody can appropriate it, and it would be wrong if the Blake Cottage Trust is led to inadvertently appropriate it for lack of information.

I will be very grateful to receive an answer to the points raised in this document and clarification as to how the Blake Cottage Trust plans to guarantee its transparency and accountability.

If in doubt or need of clarification about anything at all of what I am saying here, I will be happy to talk with any of you or attend any meeting it's deemed necessary. I have a wealth of material that should be enough to clarify any doubts you may have about the campaign, my involvement and work in it and I will gladly put it at your disposal if necessary. I am also willing to contribute in any way I can to the project's success.

William Blake wrote that *"Everything that lives, lives not alone, nor for itself"*, and his Cottage is no exception.

APPENDIXES

- The following are two articles that I wrote for the campaign and appeared in its section in the Blake Society's webpage:

<https://diazenciso.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/blakes-difficult-journey-through-this-world.pdf>

<https://diazenciso.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/the-gate-is-open.pdf>

- These are the notes I made for my participation in our presentation for the launch of the campaign in the Houses of Parliament in July 2014. They draw in part on the document I presented for the first formal working meeting we had for the campaign.

<https://diazenciso.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/presentation-launch-campaign.pdf>

- Should you need information about my professional skills, you can look at my CV in the following link:

<https://diazenciso.wordpress.com/cv/>