

Improvements to Prestonpans War Memorial Square

Design Statement

January 2021



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Introduction

rankinfraser landscape architecture and team were successful in the East Lothian Council tender for the project 'Improvement to Prestonpans War Memorial'. The tender requirements included the submission of design proposals.

There has subsequently been extensive dialogue and consultation with the East Lothian Council and Prestonpans Community Council as key project stakeholders. This will continue through the project, especially in regard to the development of the interpretation design.

rankinfraser has a particular interest and connection to the project as founding partner Kenny Fraser was raised in Prestonpans.

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CDM Advisors:
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Drawing List

This Design Statement should be read in conjunction with the following drawings.

Plans			
2013.L.G(92)001	A1	1:1250	Location Plan
2013.L.G(92)002	A1	1:100	Existing Site Plan
2013.L.G(92)003	A1	1:100	Proposed Downtakings Plan
2013.L.G(92)004	A1	1:100	Proposed Overall Site Plan
2013.L.G(92)005	A1	1:50	Proposed War Memorial Square Plan
Sections & Elevations			
2013.L.G(92)020	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed North Wall Elevations 1
2013.L.G(92)021	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed North Wall Elevations 2
2013.L.G(92)022	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed East Wall Elevations 1
2013.L.G(92)023	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed East Wall Elevations 2
2013.L.G(92)024	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed West Wall Elevations 1
2013.L.G(92)025	A1	1:50	Existing and Proposed West Wall Elevations 2

Project Brief

The project brief has been developed by East Lothian Council and community representatives. It is clear from the briefing documents what the community and Local Authority aspirations are for the space;

- To continue to prioritise the important, 'B' listed memorial within the space and to provide appropriately considered additional space for missing or new names. For the space to provide a 'noble threshold' around the memorial which provides a high quality setting for William Birnie Rhind's evocative and moving sculpture.
- To improve connectivity to/ from the space and the High Street to the coast and the John Muir Way providing level access where possible. To explore ways that the compositional relationship of the lower space to the memorial space can be reinforced.
- To consider appropriate ways to introduce views to the Firth of Forth which replace the high-level viewing platform. Removal of this viewing platform and the undercroft shelter.
- To improve the amenity value of the space generally via the introduction of appropriate planting, response to the natural heritage and via considered elements which reinforce knowledge of the rich cultural heritage of the space.
- To improve the surfaces of the John Muir Way within the designated site and greatly improve accessibility via removal of steps and replacement with ramps.
- To provide innovative, considered and appropriate information/ heritage dissemination methods for local communities which will also encourage users of the John Muir Way to stop, pause and linger in the town using local shops and other services.

- To consider other aspects which could benefit the local community and challenge inequalities and that these should align with all aspects of the Preston Seaton Gosford Area Plan initiative.

The Rankin Fraser design proposals developed for the tender carefully considered the brief and have been developed in more detail for the planning submission.



Existing memorial square

Site Location

The War Memorial is located within Prestonpans town centre, in a civic square on the seaward site of the High Street. The civic square is located opposite the junction of High Street and Ayres Wynd.

The current setting to the memorial and road alignment were the result of extensive improvements in the 1950s, for more information refer to the next section Site History. There are existing stone walls which create an enclosed land-locked space around the memorial. To the west side of the space is a viewing platform.


On the lower level the John Muir Way runs along the coastal path.



 War Memorial 'Category B Listed'

 Site Boundary

 John Muir Way

 Firth of Forth SPA (& SSSI)



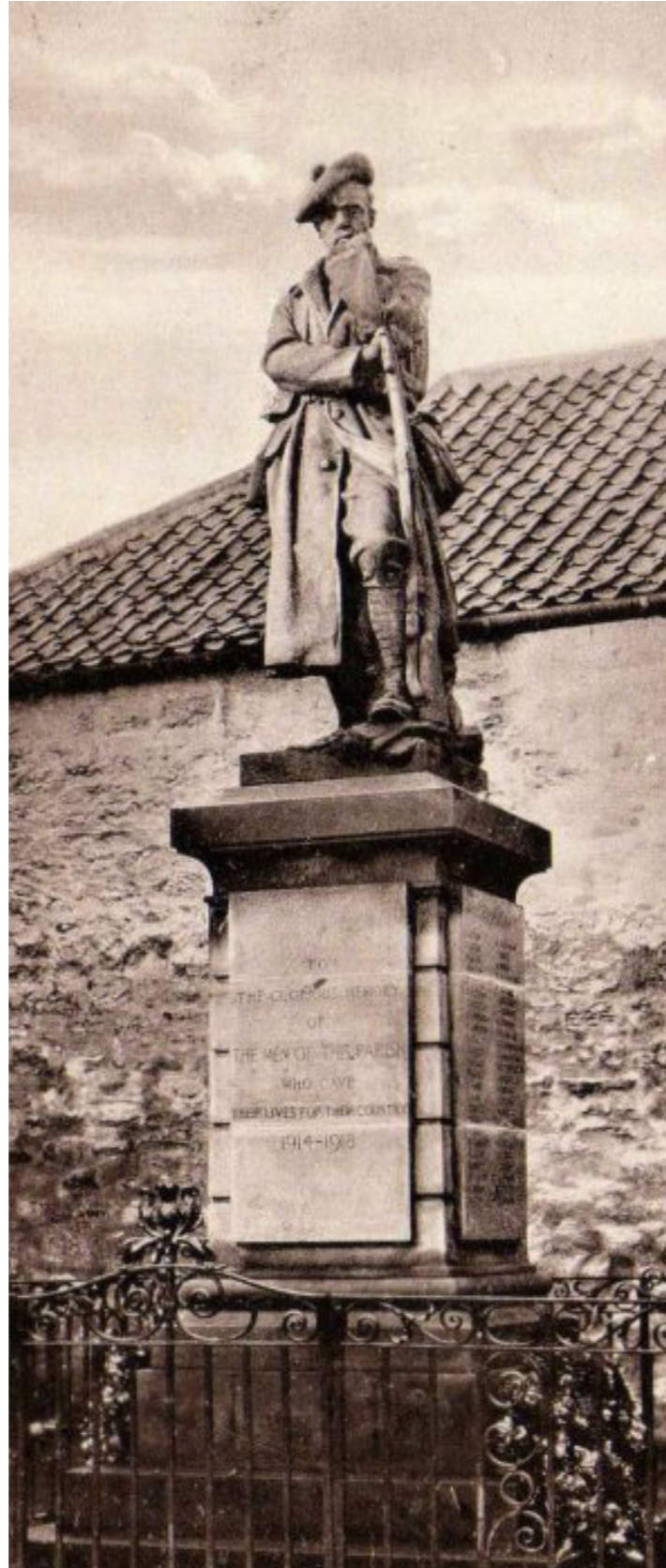
Photograph showing the current setting of the War Memorial and its relationship with the adjacent row of shops

Site History

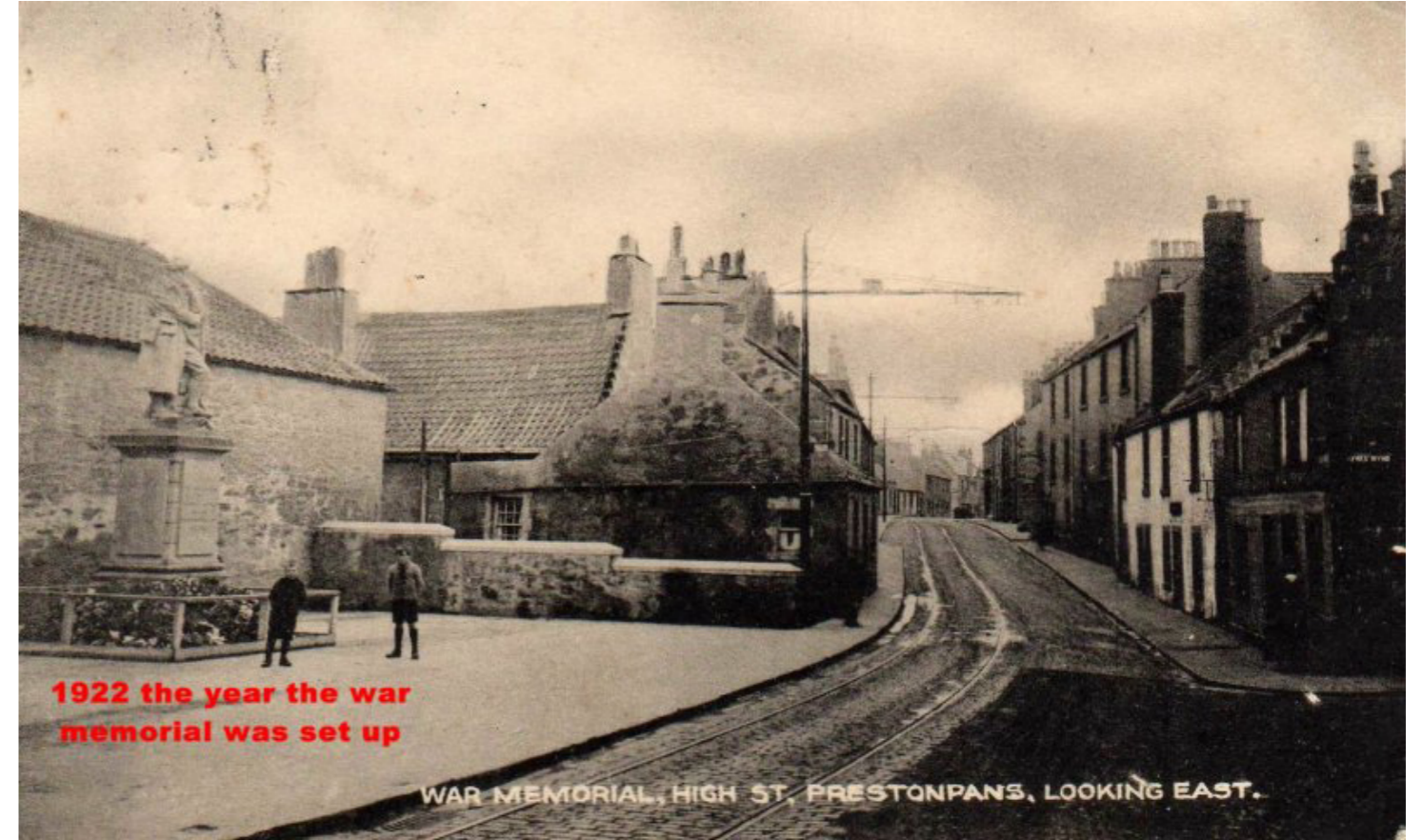
Site specificity and sense of place inform all of our work. Since starting work on the project we've visited the site multiple times. We also carry out desktop research and always refer to historic maps and photography. The most important conclusion emerging from this desktop research is the War Memorial setting itself. Historic photographs indicate that it has always been land-locked or separated from the sea/beach/ view originally by surrounding buildings and latterly from the mid 1950's, by the current walls.

It was also very clear from this initial desk top research period, which was subsequently reinforced by our site visits, that the area around the Memorial Square and the High Street has changed markedly from the installation of the Memorial in the early 1920's to the mid 1950's. Most of these changes were associated with re-routing the High Street, the demolition of older buildings (including a slaughterhouse) and the replacement of these with new vernacular housing and the War Memorial Square with its viewing terrace, shelter, boundary walls and the associated single storey run of shops immediately to the east. The square and these shops were clearly conceived as a single cohesive composition and in our opinion, this has a quiet restrained vernacular, modernist quality, albeit it undoubtedly needs refreshed.

The War Memorial was classified as a Category B Listed Building in 1997.



Prestonpans War Memorial in the late 1920s



Historic photographs showing the original setting of the Prestonpans War Memorial



Historic photograph indicating the important civic function of the square



Mid 20th C map indicating the previously constrained site for the War Memorial

Existing Site - Civic Memorial Square

The most prominent feature of the memorial space itself is Rhind's emotive sculpture. The railings around the memorial are copies of the original railings which were re-instated in the last few years. The memorial sits on a stone plinth, the bottom plinth is a cement base.

The enclosing perimeter walls and shelter block out all views of the coastal setting but contribute positively to microclimate and refer to the original sculpture setting form 1922. The walls of the space are approximately 3m tall and are in relatively good condition. The change in level to the coastline to the north mean that the wall on this side is approx 5m tall and retains the square area.

The space sits slightly higher than the adjacent High Street footway and while there are ramped access points, it is not completely accessible because of this. There are approximately 5 or 6 different paving materials in the space and this leads to a lack of ground plane material cohesion. A circular paved feature at the entrance to the space focuses on a base for a flagpole. The existing shelter and raised viewpoint are located on the western side of the space. The shelter base sits slightly higher than the surrounding space, again, creating an accessibility problem. Within the shelter there is some evidence of inappropriate and anti-social behaviour. The shelter roof and viewpoint are only accessible via steep steps. It is clear that if the shelter was removed as suggested in the briefing documents that remedial works would be required to the adjacent building as it is evident that the stone cladding does not continue behind the shelter platform or steps. Drainage problems with the shelter platform can be seen and may be contributing to vegetation growth on the north elevation: which is causing staining in this location.



Photograph showing the current variety of surfaces, interface details and the setting of the Memorial in the square



Existing viewing platform and shelter which is proposed to be removed as part of project brief

Existing Site - Access & Circulation

There are three access points from the High Street and the Memorial space to the John Muir Way and the beach.

Existing Access

Firstly, a narrow and relatively steep pend accessed by steps between the memorial space itself and the single storey shops to the east. This pend is poorly surfaced and unpleasant to use due to how narrow it is and the height of the walls either side. The pend to the west is wider but is also initially accessed via a short flight of steps. The third access point is integrated into the Memorial space itself as part of the viewpoint/ shelter and provides direct access to a lower space we believe was part of the original overall design composition. In the areas which are out of sight from the main space, there is evidence of some inappropriate behaviour and the safety railings are no longer compliant as they have completely open balustrades. However, we believe these steps were conceived as the 'hinge' or pivot between the upper and lower spaces and their location could be considered important.

Existing John Muir Way

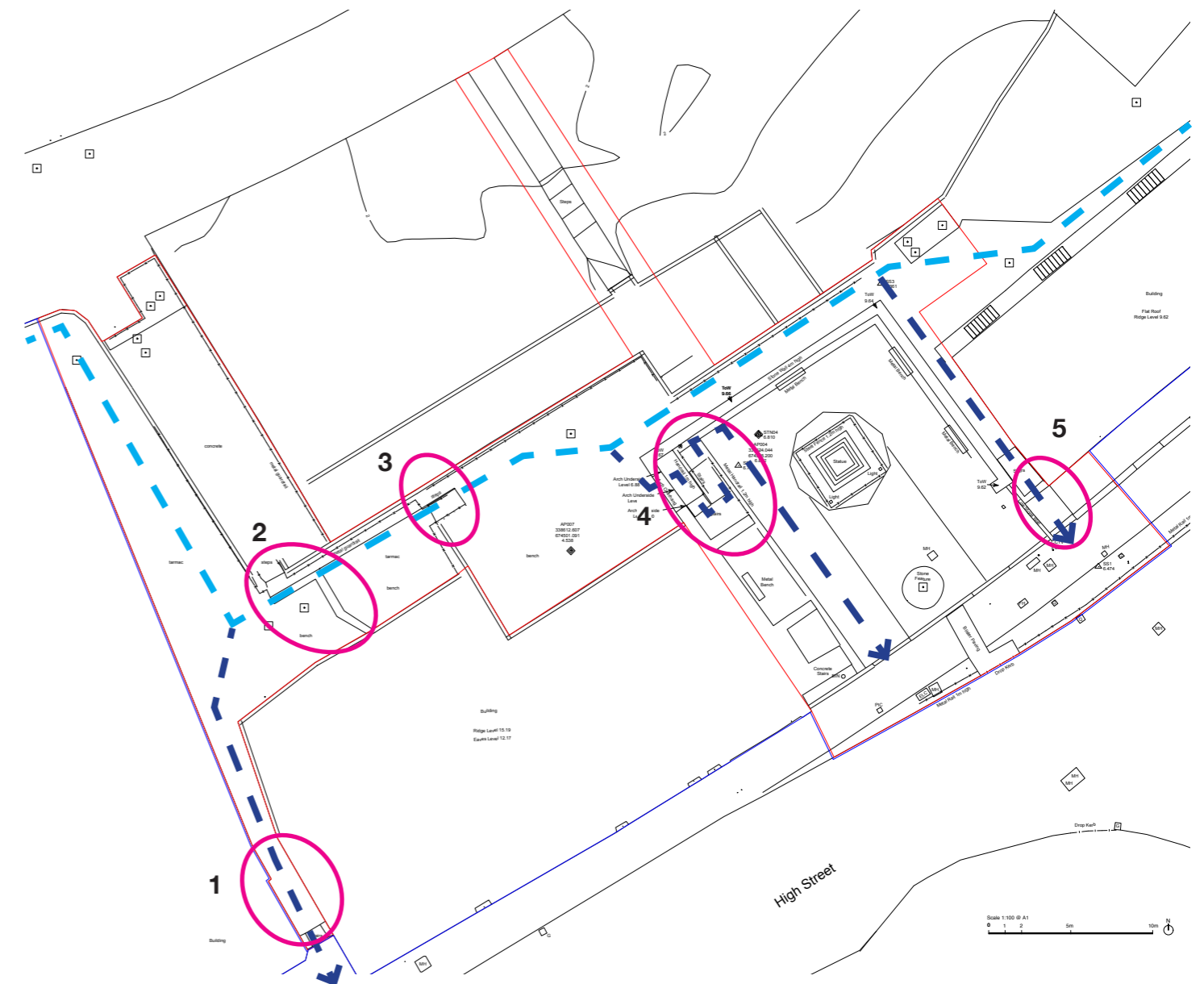
The lower areas, which are part of the John Muir Way, including the lower space described above have outstanding views and proximity to important natural heritage but are generally in poor physical condition and offer minimal amenity value. The railings are unattractive and inappropriate, the surfacing in general is poor; towards the east it is a very poor uneven patchwork of different surfaces. The routing of these spaces east to west along the John Muir Way is also problematic with varying path widths (it is relatively narrow immediately behind the Memorial space wall) and changes in levels which currently require steps. Access to

the beach from this point is also underplayed and confusing. The concrete access chamber which is likely associated with the sewage pumping network is prominent. A linear sea defence/ walkway isolates the upper beach from the lower beach. Very isolated clumps of marram grass are present on the upper beach immediately below the John Muir Way. The more ecologically rich areas of the beach are typically on the seaward side of the sea defence/ walkway.



Photograph showing the current lower area, including step access on this section of the John Muir Way. The project proposes a ramp is also included here.

Existing Access Diagram



Wider Landscape Context

From Ayres Wynd opposite the post office, the topography allows a view above the walls of the Memorial Space below, massively expansive, impressive, all the way across the Firth of Forth to Kirkcaldy, a view of blues and greys of sea, sky and horizon.

Below the space, the beach at Prestonpans is not conventionally beautiful, but is perhaps unconventionally so via its views, its rock pools and formations, the seaweed, the Redshank, Dunlin, Oystercatchers and its SSSI status as part of the Firth of Forth SSSI. The beach is arguably nationally important due to its culturally rich heritage. The physical fragments and memories of this history and heritage are all around.

The beach is exposed to the prevailing wind and the wind chill is in stark contrast to the micro-climate of the Memorial space and the role the existing walls play in protecting the space. Some plant growth is evident in the existing walls. Most of this is unproblematic and actually hint at nature and bio-diversity such as sea pinks. However, there is one area of vegetation which is getting out of hand on the north elevation which should be carefully removed.



Photograph showing the wider coastal landscape



Photograph showing coastal vegetation on the memorial wall



Photograph of redshank

Planning Context

Planning Application

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018

The site of the Prestonpans War Memorial is located within Prestonpans Town centre as defined by Policy TC2 (Town and Local Centre) of the adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018.

The Prestonpans War Memorial site is covered by the following policies within the adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018;

- Policy TC2 - Town and Local Centres
- Policies CH1 (Listed Buildings)
- CH9 (High Street/Inch View Prestonpans)
- DP2 (Design)
- T1 (Development Location and Accessibility)
- T2 (General Transport Impact)

Policy TC2 - Town and Local Centres

This policy focuses on the use of buildings/ areas within a Town or Local Centre. This project enhances an existing civic memorial space. There is no proposed change of use only reinforcing the existing public amenity space. The project reinforces the vibrancy, vitality and viability of the Prestonpans Town Centre.

Policies CH1 (Listed Buildings)

This policy concerns alterations, demolition and the setting of Listed Buildings.

The War Memorial is B Listed, the surrounding civic square and existing walls are not part of the listing. The design proposals will improve the setting to the War Memorial.

'New development that harms the setting of a listed building will not be permitted', Policy CH1.

The proposed design prioritises Rhind's beautiful and evocative memorial via an enhanced setting, providing a 'noble threshold' to the sculpture via a restrained, carefully detailed, simple and cohesive ground plane enhanced via the removal of the existing shelter.

CH9 (High Street/Inch View Prestonpans)

This policy considers 'vacant or underused land on the coastal side of High Street / Inch View'. The overall amenity should not be harmed by the 'loss of important seaward views'.

'Only project that do not have an adverse effect in the integrity of the Firth of Forth SPA will be permitted.'

The design proposals introduce new seaward views from the memorial space towards the Firth of Forth, via the creation of a new 'picture window' and 'Juliet Balcony' on the north war, behind the war memorial.

The project specifically sets out to improve the connection between the High Street and Memorial Space to the lower spaces at the coast and the John Muir Way. Therefore enhancing the relationship between the High Street and Firth of Forth.

DP2 (Design)

We are confident the project design proposals respond appropriately to the policy criteria.

- The design interventions are appropriate in terms of scale and context of the existing setting. Proposed materials co-ordinate with the existing site and are appropriate for the coastal setting, creating a high quality public realm.
- The existing public spaces will be enhanced and identity strengthened through the site specific design.
- The improvement of access from the High Street to the lower coastal spaces is a key project aim. Removing existing steps will importantly create step free access, particularly important to the local community.
- The placement of benches to ensure use of the space will take into account sunpath.
- The existing features are retained (War Memorial) and natural features are celebrated by opening views to the Firth of Forth.
- The design proposals and material specification will be robust for the public setting and allow servicing requirements.

T1 (Development Location and Accessibility)

Access to the existing site and amenity spaces are enhanced by proposals, due to the creation of a step free link between the High Street and coastal path and re-surfacing generally.

T2 (General Transport Impact)

The project proposals improve the John Muir Way path experience and encourage connection from the coastal path to the High Street.

Listed Building Consent

Prestonpans War Memorial is a Category B Listed Building (reference High Street, War Memorial LB43946) as being of special architectural or historical importance. ELC planning have confirmed a Listed Building Consent Application would be required.

Historic Environment Scotland Listing:
'William Birnie Rhind, 1921. 2-stage War memorial in sandstone of pier bearing statue. Statue of pensive "Tommy" with rifle and bonnet, greatcoat and puttees, atop cavetto plinth. Square pier in rusticated ashlar with inscribed panels for 1914-18 War, atop roll moulding and stepped base plinth incorporating 1 inscribed panel for 1939-45 War.

Main inscription states simply "To the glorious memory of the men of this parish who gave their lives for their country 1914-1918, 1939-1945". Associated railings and paving are recent, the original decorative railings having been removed during World War 2.'

The project responds sensitively and respectfully to the War Memorial, enhancing the setting of the memorial, by creating a high quality public realm.

The site is also within the Cultural Heritage Area of Prestonpans. The project aims to highlight and celebrate the local culture through the integration of interpretation which focuses on social history.

Advertising Consent

There is proposed interpretation as part of the project. An Advertising Consent Application will be submitted as required.

Coal Authority High Risk Area

To note the site is within the Coal Authority High Risk Area.

Design Approach

Our design is built on the following key principles;

- To prioritise Rhind's beautiful and evocative memorial via an enhanced setting, providing a 'noble threshold' to the sculpture via a restrained, carefully detailed, simple and cohesive ground plane enhanced via the removal of the existing shelter.
- Utilising a restrained and appropriate hard material palette to unify the space.
- To improve the memorial setting by appropriately incorporating the beautiful and expansive views of the Firth of Forth and Fife beyond via a 'Juliet Balcony' and a 'picture frame' slot cut into the wall which makes these views accessible to all and part of the memorial composition for the first time.
- Providing space for adding names to the memorial via a new tablet aligned with the 'picture frame' slot.
- Making these changes while still respecting the architectural integrity of the 1950's spatial arrangement and the original design intention of the memorial setting.
- By incorporating views into the space, initiating a more cohesive relationship of the upper memorial space to the lower spaces, the John Muir Way and the beach beyond.
- Initiating substantial amenity improvements to the space by incorporating more considered seating and also incorporating tree planting for the first time.
- Where possible improving access from the High Street and Memorial Space to the lower spaces and the John Muir Way; the western pend will be ramped to become fully accessible for the first time. The existing steps in the north-west corner of the Memorial Space will be retained

and upgraded as required.

- Resurfacing of the John Muir Way with robust simple materials will take place as will the addition of new appropriate street furniture and updating of the railing on the edge of these areas. A proposed accessible ramp here greatly improves the east/ west accessibility.
- The introduction of suitable planting on the lower level/John Muir Way and at the top of the beach via native marram grass to improve amenity, local biodiversity and introduce some much needed greenery to these areas.
- The proposed tree planting on the upper and lower areas also helps to create a further link between them. Improvements to the concrete north facing beach path to help to connect people to the beach and with their wider natural environment to facilitate health and well being improvements and wider connectivity.

We propose to carefully integrate social memory, cultural, industrial and natural heritage into the scheme via two aligned components. Natural heritage is prioritised via improvements to the existing concrete north facing beach path, which could potentially involve adjacent artificial rockpools and cast-in text which refers to animals, birds and plants found on the shoreline.

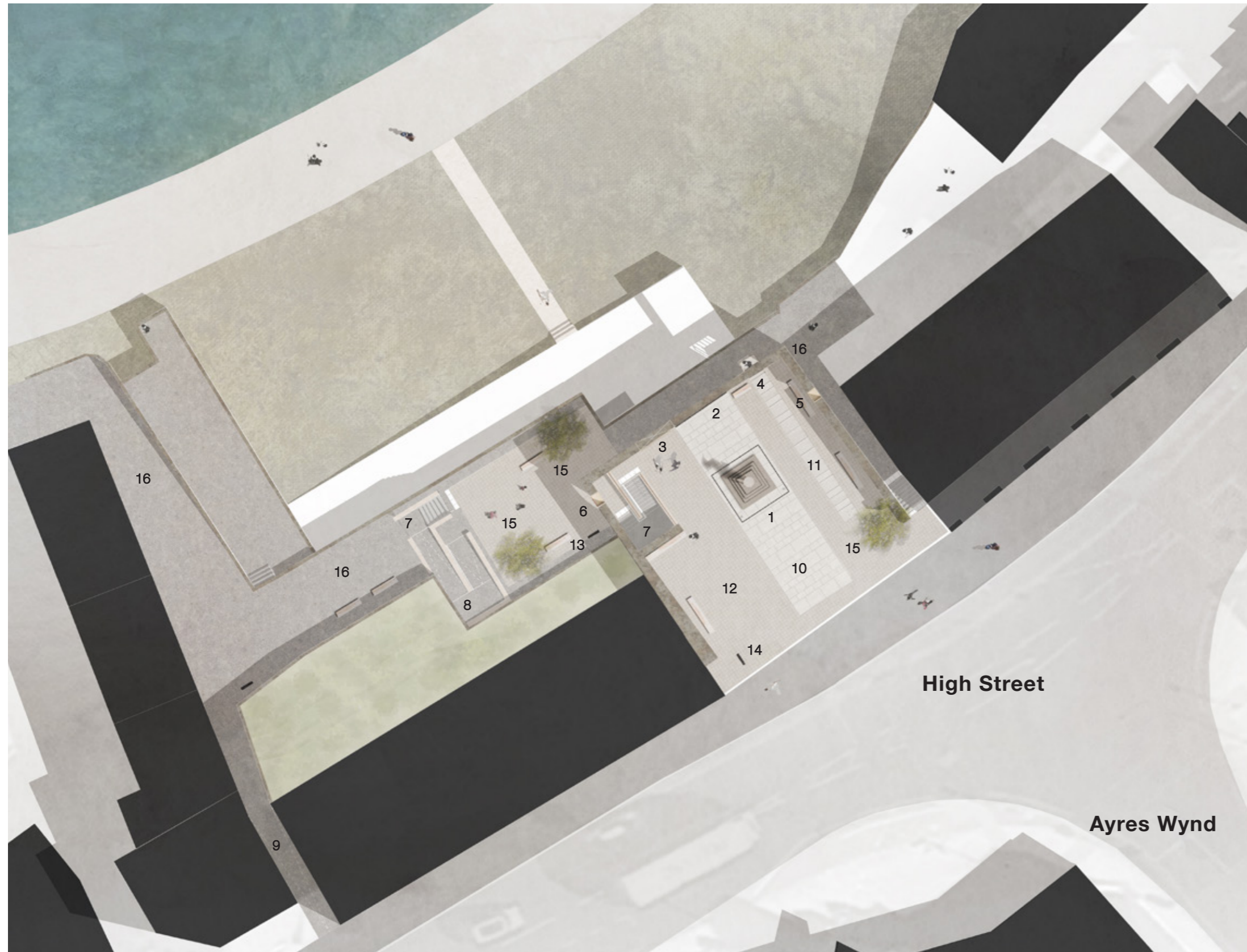
Mirroring this geometry in the upper space (and a further mechanism designed to integrate the upper and lower spaces) is the social memory, cultural and industrial heritage strip which is aligned to the Juliet Balcony in the north elevation. We would be very pleased to develop these two complimentary bands in conjunction with local schools, the community and local stakeholders and to learn from local experts. We believe that this could be both potentially playful and respectful and

representative of the very significant local heritage.

The project aims to create a greatly enhanced space which promotes social contact and engenders opportunity for enhanced health and wellbeing via accessible improvements to walking and cycling networks and will provide access to the beach all of which helps to bring neighbouring communities closer together.

Lastly, our project will promote the rich cultural, industrial and natural heritage of the area. We believe that the improvements to the Memorial Space, the John Muir Way and the beach will act as a signifier of change and as a catalyst for further improvements to Prestonpans High Street. Further, that the space can represent a new and exciting future for the town, while proudly displaying aspects of its past and should be something the whole community can be proud of. We further consider that the design can help to support local business by bringing more people onto the High Street and beyond.

Public Realm Masterplan



Plan Key




- 1 Prestonpans War Memorial
- 2 Proposed stone memorial panel to accommodate further and future names
- 3 Proposed 'picture' window to open up views to Firth of Forth
- 4 Proposed 'Juliet Balcony' to open up views to Firth of Forth
- 5 Proposed slot cut into wall to open up views to War memorial from John Muir Way
- 6 Proposed slot cut into wall to open up views to War memorial from John Muir Way
- 7 Upgraded steps linking different levels on the John Muir Way
- 8 Proposed ramp access to improve access along the John Muir Way
- 9 Proposed ramp access from the High Street to the John Muir Way
- 10 New 'memorial surface' linking the Rhind War Memorial to the proposed memorial plaque natural stone
- 11 Interpretive strip of inscribed paving leading to balcony
- 12 Surface of War Memorial square upgrade to natural stone
- 13 Proposed location for interpretive panel highlighting the industrial social, cultural and heritage providing direction to John Muir Way
- 14 Proposed location for interpretive panel highlighting the natural history and biodiversity of the coastal area and providing direction to the upper memorial square
- 15 Proposed specimen tree planting (Scots Pine)
- 16 John Muir Way upgraded to exposed aggregate asphalt surface



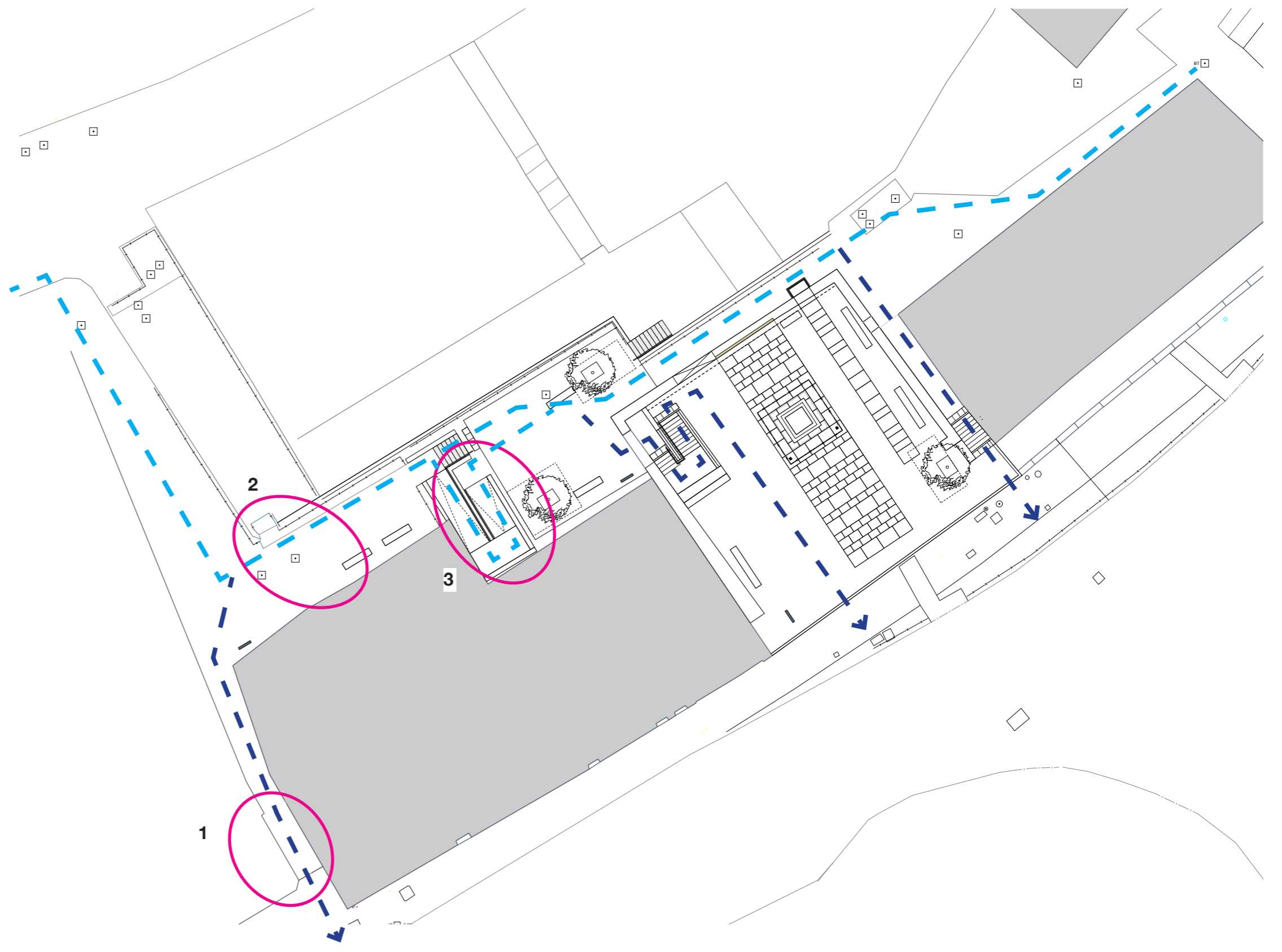
0 5 10 20m
Scale 1:200

Improved Access & Circulation

Access to the John Muir Way is improved by the removal of steps and the creation of a ramp. This improves the steps free access from the High Street to the John Muir Way.

-  John Muir Way
-  Connections from John Muir Way to High Street
-  Access Improvements
 - 1 - Existing steps removed and ground surface re-graded.
 - 2 - Single step removed
 - 3 - New ramp access added to compliment steps





Proposed Access Diagram



John Muir Way - Access

As highlighted in the diagram on the previous page a section of the long distance walking path, the John Muir Way, is proposed to be improved as part of the project.

During construction stage there would be options to provide an alternative route around the site. This can be discussed in more detail with the relevant stakeholders.

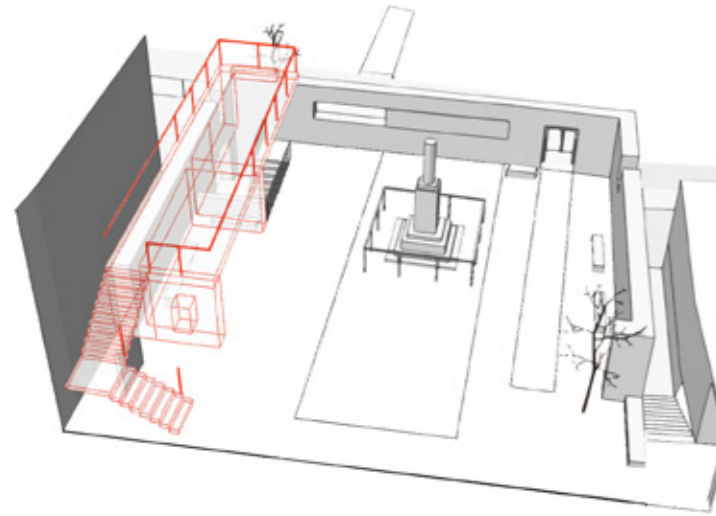
-  Site Extents
-  John Muir Way
-  Possible option of re route of John Muir Way route during construction
-  Possible option of re route of John Muir Way route during construction

Possible Access to John Muir Way During Construction Diagram

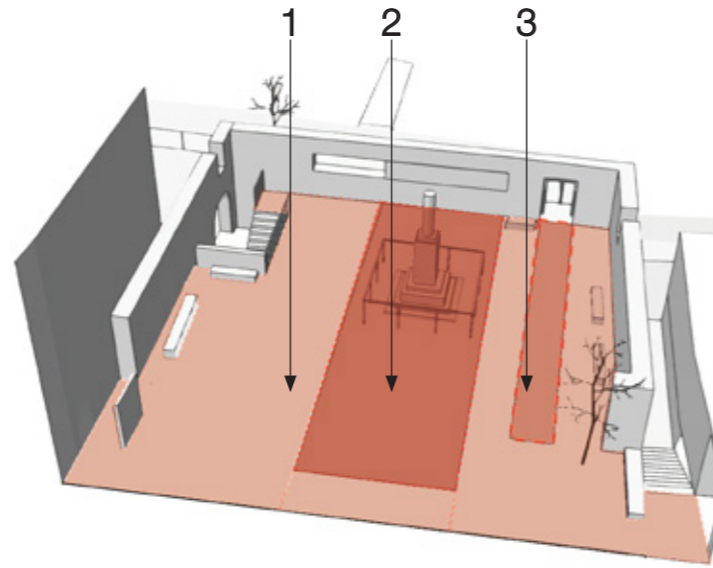


Key Design Principles

Dontakings - Removal of the Canopy

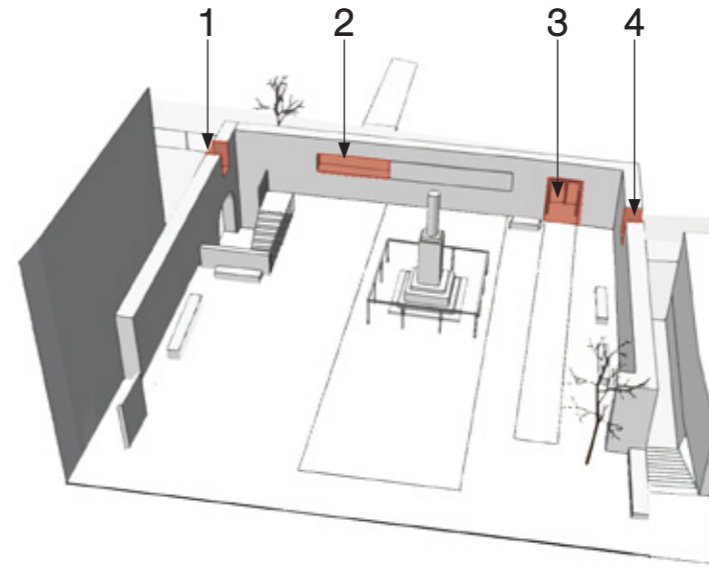


New natural stone surfacing



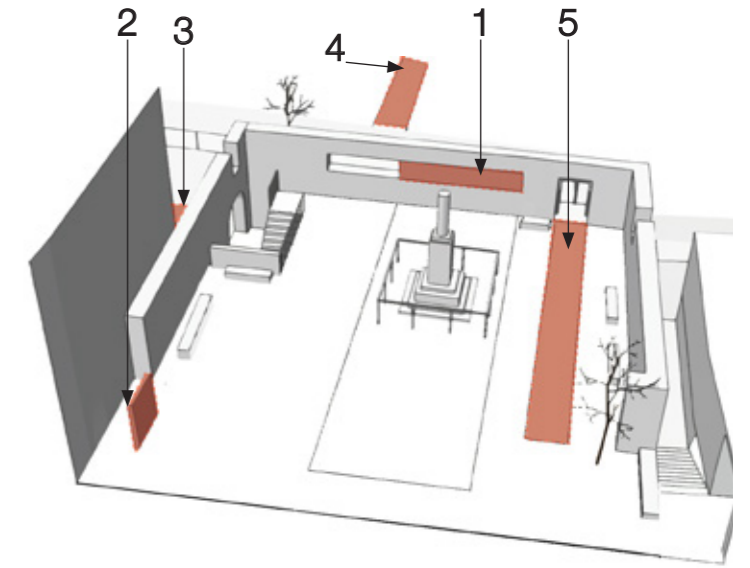
- 1 - Surface upgrade to natural stone
- 2 - New 'memorial surface' in natural stone
- 3 - Interpretive strip of inscribed paving leading to Juliet balcony

Opening up views to the Firth of Forth



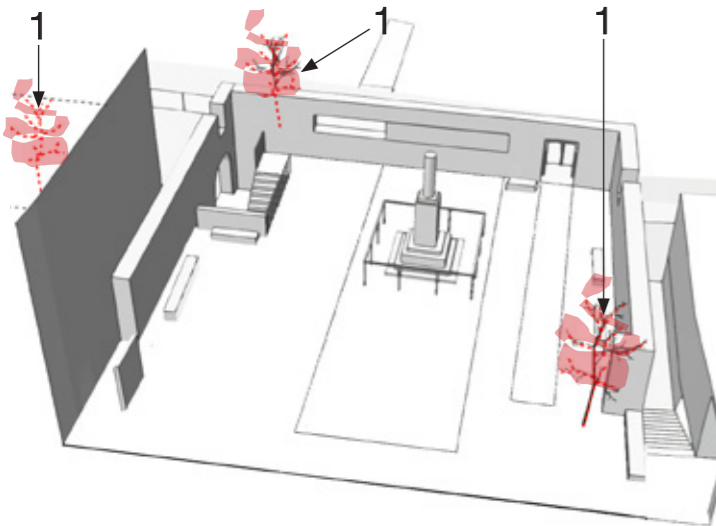
- 1 - West Slot opens up to views to the memorial from the John Muir Way.
- 2 - Proposed picture window to open up views to Firth of Forth
- 3 - Proposed 'Juliet Balcony' to open up views to Firth of Forth
- 4 - Proposed East Slot

Interpretation, memorialisation and heritage



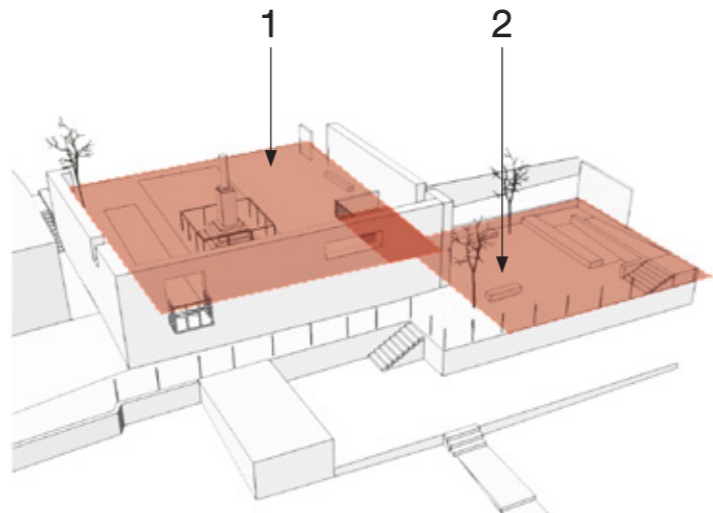
- 1 - Proposed stone memorial panel to accommodate further and future names.
- 2 - Proposed location for interpretive panel
- 3 - Proposed location for interpretive panel
- 4 - Natural interpretive heritage strip
- 5 - Interpretive strip of inscribed paving leading to Juliet balcony

Proposed planting



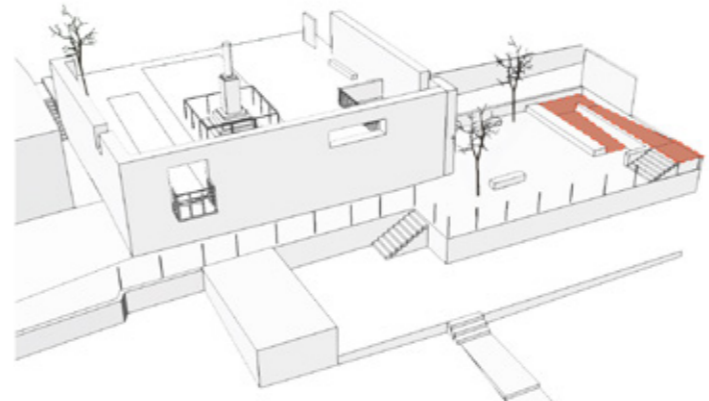
- 1 - Proposed specimen tree planting (Scots Pine) to animate the space

Interconnected Squares



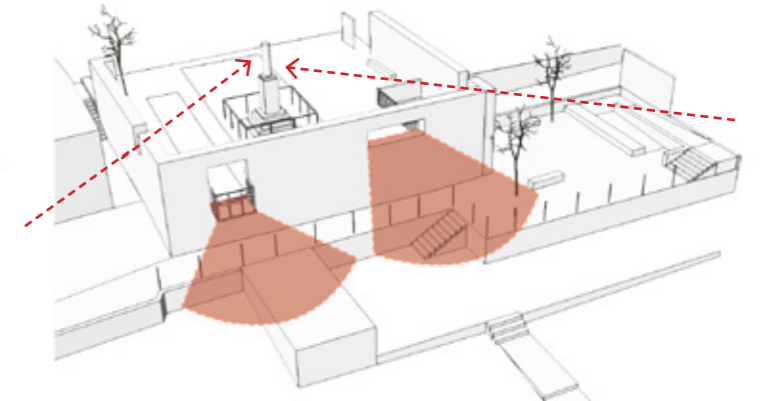
- 1 - Memory and Civic - inward looking
- 2 - Nature and Coast - outward looking toward the Firth of Forth

Improved access



- Proposed ramp access to improve access along the John Muir Way

Improved Visual Connections to and from the War Memorial Square



- Views to the War Memorial from the John Muir Way and views out to the Firth of Forth and across to Fife from upper War Memorial Square

Proposed Visualisations



Views looking north showing the new setting for the War Memorial framed by views to Firth of Forth.

Proposed Visualisations



View looking north along the memory strip towards the proposed Juliet Balcony



View looking west from John Muir Way showing the glimpse of the War Memorial, now Juliet Balcony and proposed lower civic space.

Proposed Visualisations



View looking north to the Firth of Forth. Natural heritage strip provides interpretation of the natural heritage area.



View looking east from John Muir Way showing the proposed lower civic square and the glimpse to the War Memorial.

Approach to Interpretation

We propose to carefully integrate social memory, cultural, industrial and natural heritage into the scheme via two aligned components. Natural heritage is prioritised via improvements to the existing concrete north facing beach path, which could potentially involve adjacent artificial rockpools and cast-in text which refers to animals, birds and plants found on the shoreline.

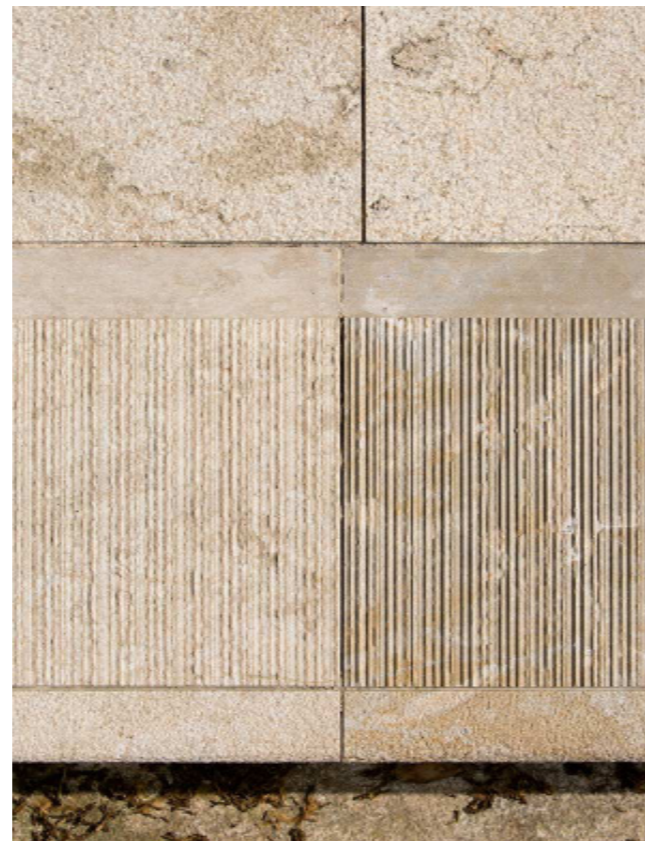
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“Dry word and dry facts will not fire hearts”
John Muir

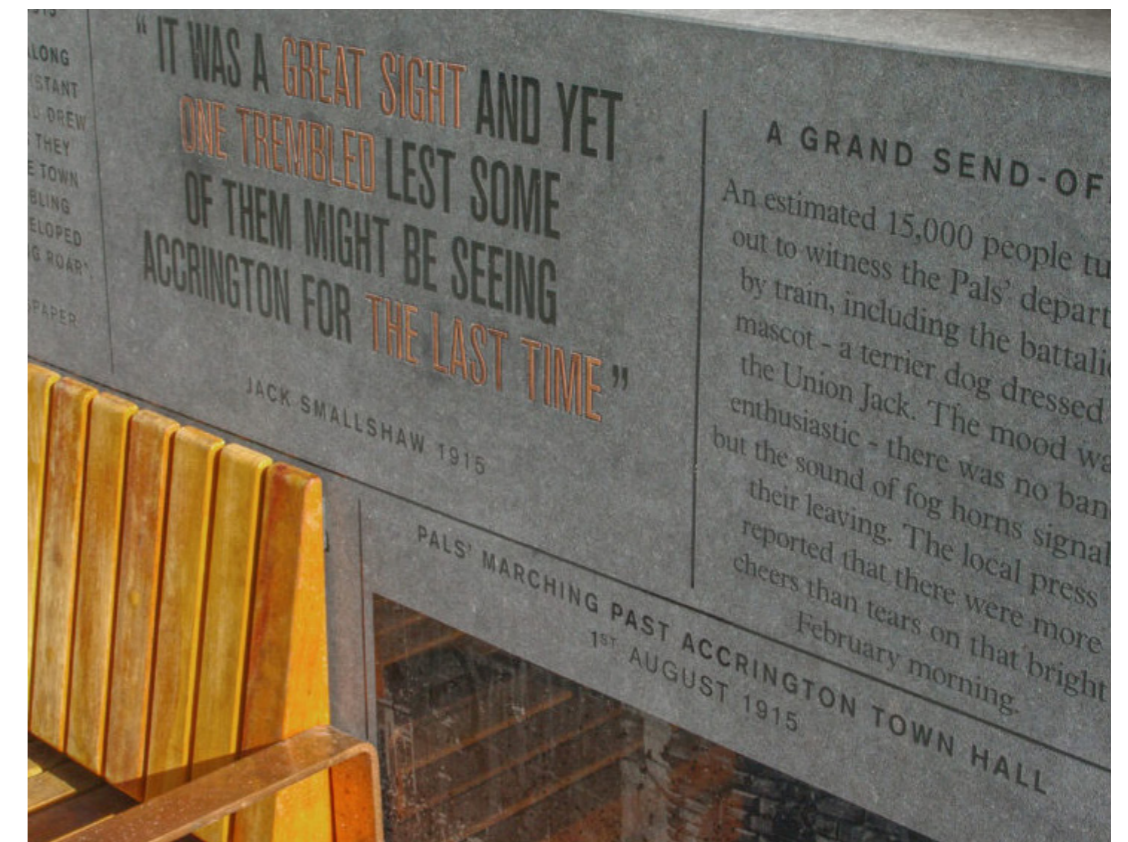
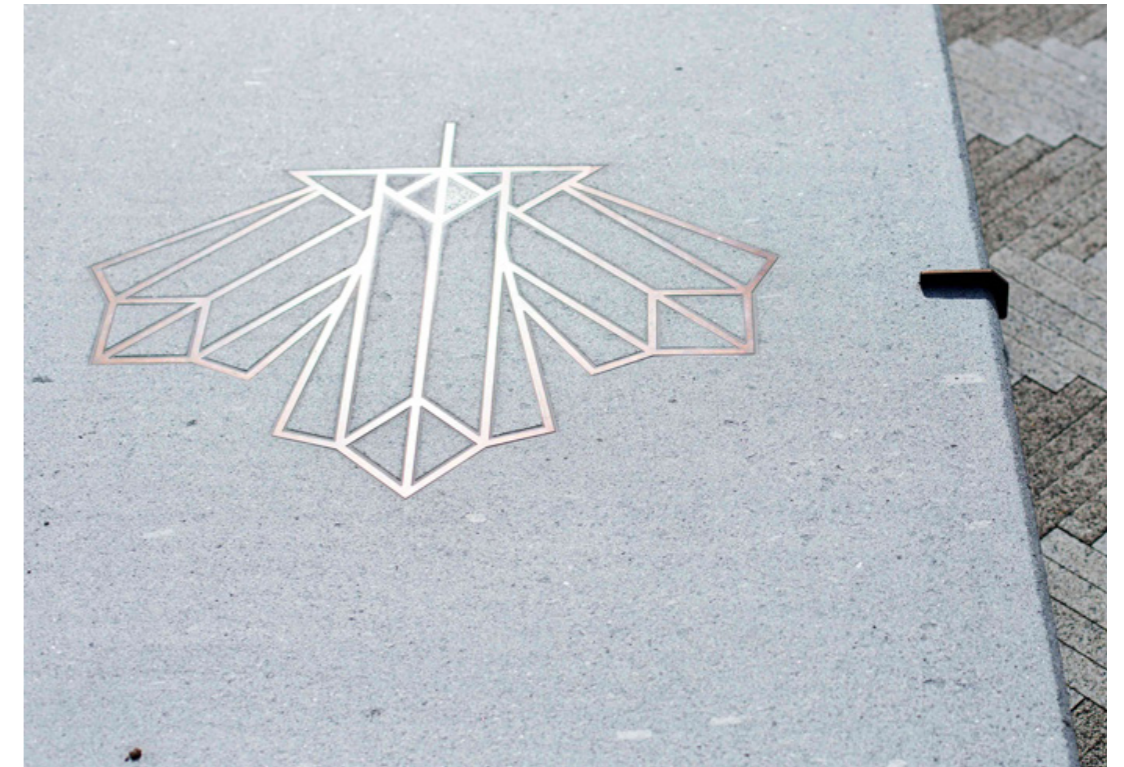
Our approach to interpretation will echo the words of John Muir. We will employ a diversity of means to engage local people, tourists and users of the John Muir Way. These means will include a combination of interpretive panels in key locations with incorporated ‘QR’ codes, engraved seating and surfaces and planting to creatively and imaginatively tell the story of the cultural, industrial and natural heritage of Prestonpans and the East Lothian coastline.



Examples from the Dunbar Battery of different forms of interpretation



Suggestions of working with different size and texture of stone



Precedents for incorporation of interpretive in benches and surfaces

