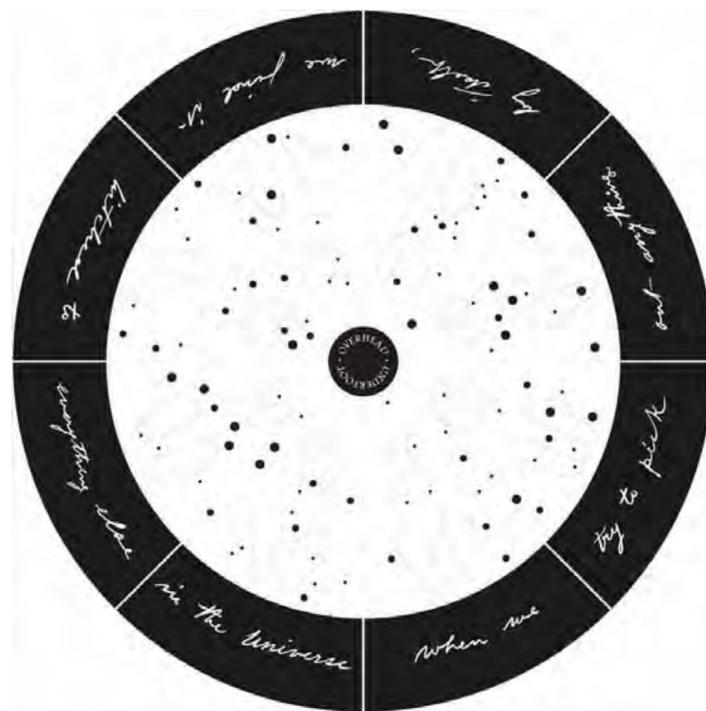


# John Muir Way Artwork Study

April-June 2021



# The Brief in Brief

## ***Process John Muir Way Artwork Public Consultation***

As part of the Helensburgh Waterfront Development Project works, there is an opportunity for the existing John Muir Way Start/Finish point Artwork, currently located on the esplanade opposite Colquhoun Street, to be re-sited and incorporated within the new public realm area created at the widened junction of Sinclair/West & East Clyde Streets.

The Green Action Trust, which manages the John Muir Way, has secured funding for the John Muir Way Artwork Study. This study is funded by the Scottish Government Scotland Loves Local Fund administered by Scotland's Towns Partnership and secured, with a focus on Helensburgh, by the Green Action Trust. The Study/Consultation is being delivered by *WAVEparticle*, on behalf of the Green Action Trust, and is supported by the Helensburgh Waterfront Development Design Team.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJrrS6TONik>

# Organic Forms to Echo Muir's Nature



The Brief ruled out a figurative representation based upon John Muir, leaving the opportunity to explore more conceptual and organic forms



Take the man out and leave the hat?

## John Muir

John Muir was born in Dunbar in **1838**. **He left Scotland at the age of 11 in 1849 from Helensburgh**, destined for America, where he went on to become a **pioneering environmentalist**. He was known as **'Father of the National Parks'**, founding the Sierra Club and playing an instrumental role in preserving the Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park.

California celebrates April 21 as John Muir Day, and numerous things are named after him, including three Mount Muir's, Muir Glacier in Alaska, a college, a highway, an asteroid belt, a species of butterfly and, in Scotland, a country park in East Lothian. He also features on 2 US Commemorative stamps.

*The choice of Helensburgh for the western end of the John Muir Way, a coast to coast route long distance route, is symbolic of Muir's journey from the east to west coast of Scotland, to set sail for America as a boy. It is thought that the ship left from Glasgow, however Helensburgh's position on the Firth of Clyde provided a fitting point on the west coast for the John Muir Way, linking the route to Scotland's first National Park – symbolic of Muir's legacy. The eastern end of the route is Muir's birthplace of Dunbar.*

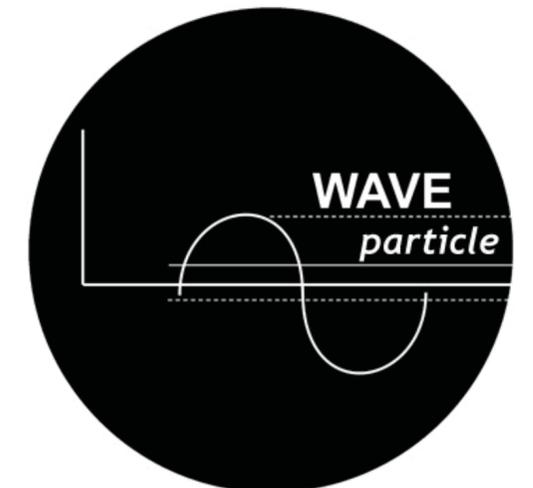
The young Muir and his family boarded the ship *Warren* at the Broomielaw in Glasgow, and the ship then made a final stop to take on heavier cargo at Greenock. So Greenock was the final departure point for the journey. You can read about this here <https://www.johngraycentre.org/east-lothian-subjects/transport-travel/sailing-seas-new-land/>

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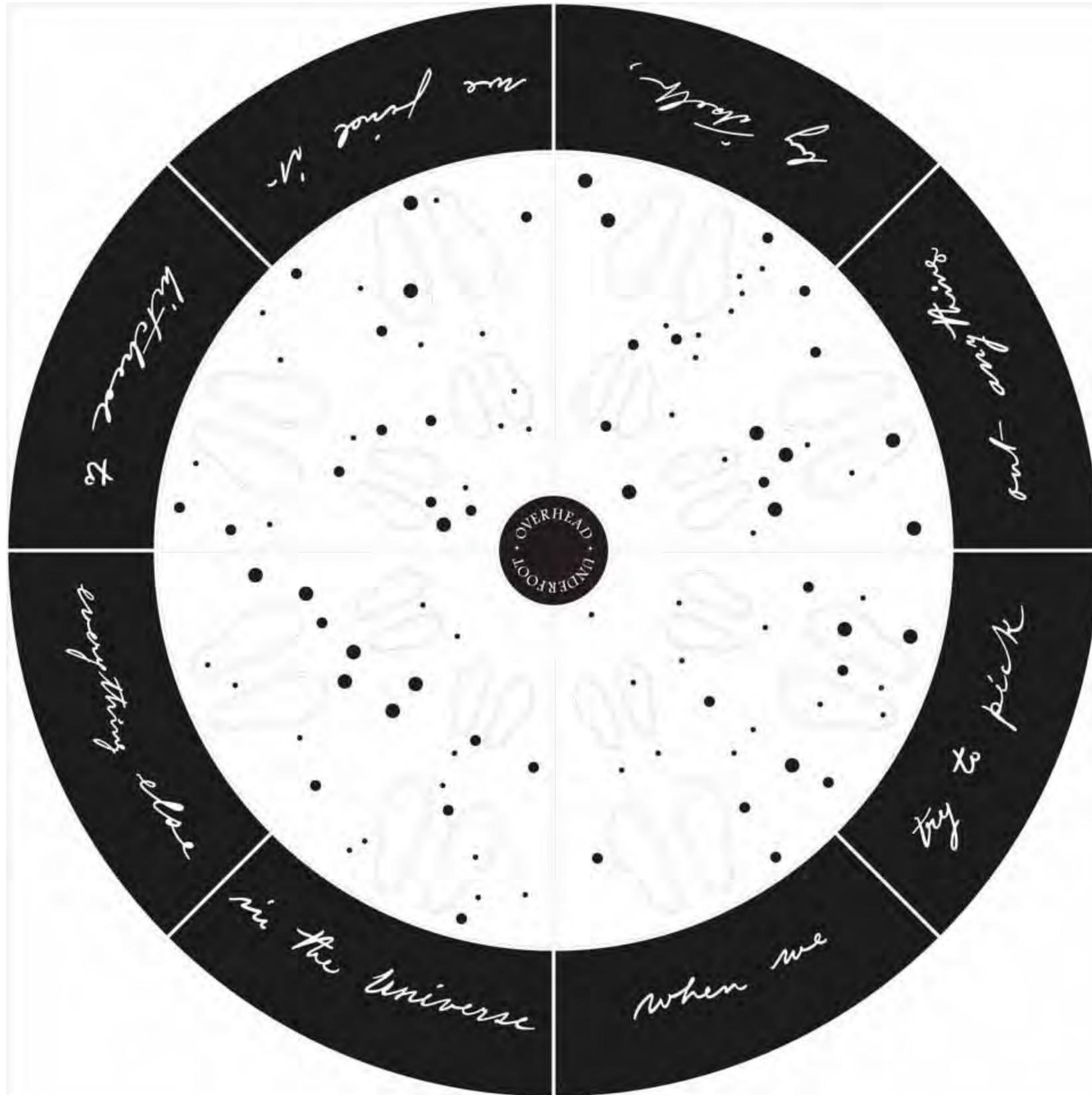
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The Existing Artwork from Launch Event 2014



carved into the rock on [Dunadd](#). in [Aravll](#). is linked to the crownina of the Scots kins of [Dál Riata](#).



# Executive Summary

A rigorous engagement process was conducted by artist organisation *WAVEparticle* between March and June 2021, with significant creative and conceptual input from a small and committed number of representatives of Helensburgh. In parallel, a rigorous process of testing and advancing these emerging ideas was undergone with Argyll & Bute Council and the Green Action Trust. There was additional targeted input from John Muir experts, a local primary school, the Greenpeace Group and Hirst Landscape Architects

A launch event, (via Zoom) took place on the 8th April with the community, followed by a series of open workshops, (also via Zoom) on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of April, and emerging ideas were presented on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Schools' workshops (again via Zoom) took place on 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> May with Hermitage Primary School. There was a physical site visit on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April, after which Peter McCaughey met Norman McNally, who presented the illuminating *Vision for Helensburgh*. On 25<sup>th</sup> May Peter met (via Zoom) Jo Moulin, Museums Officer East (Promotions), who had many excellent insights from Dunbar's perspective, which she shared. On May 28<sup>th</sup> the Working Report was presented to Attendees. The workshops were conducted mainly by Peter McCaughey and Danielle Banks of *WAVEparticle*, supported by Elaine Macintosh from the Green Action Trust. Danielle was tasked with drawing suggestions as they were made, and these were then shared at the end of each session so participants could actually see that their idea had been listened to, logged and given form. These activities were complemented by regular Project Team Meetings with representatives of *WAVEparticle*, Argyll and Bute Council, the Green Action Trust, and others, to sense check emerging concepts, address the community's questions and check out the viability of alternative locations for the John Muir Way artwork.

# Executive Summary

COVID protocols dictated that the workshops on the John Muir Way Artwork have taken place in people's homes, via Zoom, so with the exception of the site visit in April we lost out on our preference of speaking to people in the place they are responding to. COVID guidelines have also restricted our preference for the unplanned, peripatetic encounter, so we've found it difficult to get to the people often neglected in participative processes. Ultimately, we have had to identify ambassadors for these communities and go to them. This engagement therefore has gaps, geographically and in terms of diversity. This underscores our experience on other projects recently, that the harder to reach have become even harder to reach during COVID, especially given that the use of some of our approaches and customised tools are restricted by current guidance. Despite our best efforts we didn't get wide participation, and the consultees were largely those reached through Helensburgh Community Council. Nonetheless, the experience is, and has been, inspiring, illuminating and educational (and in terms of the hunt for the perfect location - sometimes frustrating - the lack of an agreed base/foundation/location for the work undoubtedly restricted our progress on this relatively short study).

There are brilliant ideas out there captured on Danielle (Banks) hand-drawn 'Ideas' map. These ideas have value not just for the John Muir Way artwork but for the enhancing of the whole seafront and indeed townscape. The map is a resource, a collection of the ideas illustrated, with over 30 drawings, by Danielle, filling the map with icons and concepts.

# Executive Summary

The focus on the location for the John Muir Way Artwork began at the Launch Meeting, with a number of attendees expressing concern about the proposed re-siting of the John Muir Way artwork at the to-be-built 'Civic Space'. People had different ideas about the Civic Space- some were concerned that you couldn't see the sea from this space, some felt that it would be dominated by the traffic junction, and therefore that it couldn't work as a space for meditation, introspection, and reflection.

These opinions sent us on a journey to explore other locations for the artwork, supported by Argyll and Bute Council who were receptive to an alternative location and did their best to explore the possibilities with us. However, despite exploring EIGHT alternative options, (detailed in this study), some with considerable depth of research into foundation details and legal permissions, we were collectively unsuccessful in identifying a viable alternative- in each case something thwarted the development of the new site in question. These considerations had to include where we were within the existing programme of work in the waterfront, and the pragmatics of delivery without holding up the main work.

For the reasons articulated under *Considering (Re) Location (Pg. 56 onwards)* this report has come full circle to acknowledge that the only viable location for the John Muir Way Artwork, under the current programme of work, is the Civic Space by Sinclair Street and West Clyde Street. Ultimately, we returned to review the original site and test the perceptions around it.

We felt the lack of 3d visuals hampered people's ability to imagine the space, and as an initiative of this study, visuals were commissioned that would allow the landscape architect's vision for the space to be shared. Thankfully, the new visuals of this space, commissioned for this report, help us all visualise the planned Civic Space. These images of the space suggest its potential much more clearly than the previous two-dimensional ground plans.

# Executive Summary

It is clear, for the first time, from these visuals that the space can be an excellent focussed place of orientation towards the sea, towards Greenock and to the National Parks. In addition, its circular design lends itself to focussing any artwork, including the John Muir Way work, that is placed within its boundaries. The design would also seem to offer fantastic opportunities to add value to this space, and integrate many of the ideas put forward in this study by the community.

The next phase of this work has to proceed quickly as the programme is live and the delivery point for this site will be September of next year. For this reason, the study recommends a process of integrating the John Muir Way Artwork into the proposed site at Sinclair Street and raising the funds to augment the work, rather than going down the road of a new commission, which would require a timescale beyond the current programme.

One of the principal ideas developed as a way to extend the existing artwork, is to extrude the disc at the centre into a column- becoming a plinth / a vertical lighting column / or indeed a sculptural work. Because the Civic Space is in Phase 2 of the programme, there is still time to integrate any necessary foundation detail into these plans- if the findings of this study are accepted and the detailing of the work can be progressed quickly. The idea of a 'touchstone' to John Muir, something from Helensburgh that would have been significant to him, was the lovely suggestion for a theme. Like the process for the Outdoor Museum, this study recommends the next phase is evolved in close consultation with the local Helensburgh community. There is an idea that has emerged at the end of this study to address the circular Civic Space, with a circular artwork at its heart, as a circular counterpart to Colquhoun Square, with its own outdoor museum, this time using circular / cylindrical plinths rather than square plinths.

The ideas captured from community consultation could become the basis for the content going forward, with a focus on organic motifs and framing the things John Muir would have loved about Helensburgh.

# Buildability

In parallel with this process of idea generation and mapping, there has been a sense checking round the viability / buildability of the ideas generated in terms of their physical parameters, such as height, weight and other dimensions, to ensure that the restrictions of the suggested sites / locations could guide this viability. These restrictions include for example, exposure to the elements, loading restrictions, the opportunities and restrictions around integrating into an existing programme of work, as well as other tolerances.

As this work progressed, we nurtured some thoughts on budget and identified a number of viable funding sources for the currently unfunded next phase of the work. The combination of the elements, enquiries, research, visualisations, detailed in this study, is aimed at yielding a material that is as useful as possible to the Green Action Trust, and indeed to whoever takes the work forward in its next phase.

# The Process

RHS Flyer for Launch Event and Workshops

HELENSBURGH ARTWORK

## John Muir Way Artwork Study

PHASE 1

-  **LAUNCH**  
Thursday 8th April 7-8pm  
with: Helensburgh Community Council
-  **WORKSHOP 1**  
Thursday 15th April 7-9pm  
Zoom: [bit.ly/MuirWork1](https://bit.ly/MuirWork1)
-  **WORKSHOP 2**  
Wednesday 21st April 7-9pm  
Zoom: [bit.ly/MuirWork2](https://bit.ly/MuirWork2)
-  **WORKSHOP 3**  
Wednesday 28th April 7-9pm  
Zoom: [bit.ly/MuirWork3](https://bit.ly/MuirWork3)
-  **REVIEW**  
Thursday 13th May 7-9pm  
Zoom: [bit.ly/MuirReview](https://bit.ly/MuirReview)



*When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.*

### JOHN MUIR WAY ARTWORK STUDY

There is an opportunity to explore how to mark the start/end of the John Muir Way in Helensburgh with a new artwork, to complement the ground-based John Muir artwork that is being re-sited as part of the Helensburgh Waterfront Development. The existing artwork and the new artwork would be located in and around the new public square on West Clyde Street that is being designed by Hirst Landscape Architects. It will be important to consider how any additional artwork integrates with the existing landscape plans. Would you like to contribute to the process of shaping the brief for the artwork? What kind of artwork would you like to see there? This could include your ideas on how to orientate people who are at the start or end of a significant journey, or you could share your take on the context of the site, on local history, seaside memories, a story about this area right beside Helensburgh's Clock Tower. Are you interested in workshops on public art? Peter McCaughey and Danielle Banks from art organisation WAVEparticle (the team who worked closely with the community to deliver Helensburgh's award-winning Outdoor Museum) will present some initial thoughts and the approach for the workshops that will happen later in April. We hope to see you there. Events are free and everyone is welcome!



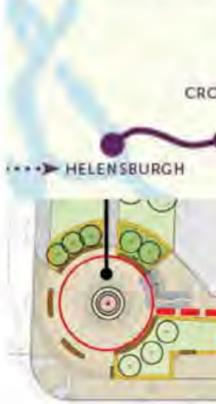

### ABOUT THE JOHN MUIR WAY

The John Muir Way was launched in 2014 on the centenary of John Muir's death. The aim was to provide an outstanding coast to coast route across the diverse landscapes and rich heritage of central Scotland; easily accessible and attractive to local people, businesses and visitors, and providing opportunities for all to increase their understanding of John Muir's legacy and philosophy through getting closer to nature.

Muir's advocacy of protecting the natural environment for the health of the planet and all its inhabitants is needed now more than ever. However, in recent times, concerns have been raised about racist views contained in some of Muir's early writing and this has led to questions around the continued promotion of his legacy. Muir's views on indigenous peoples were later replaced by a more enlightened viewpoint, and while recognising his shortcomings we believe that his legacy continues to be as relevant as ever – and that the environmental, health and wellbeing aims behind the John Muir Way are not incompatible with a need to understand and acknowledge the flaws of Muir himself.

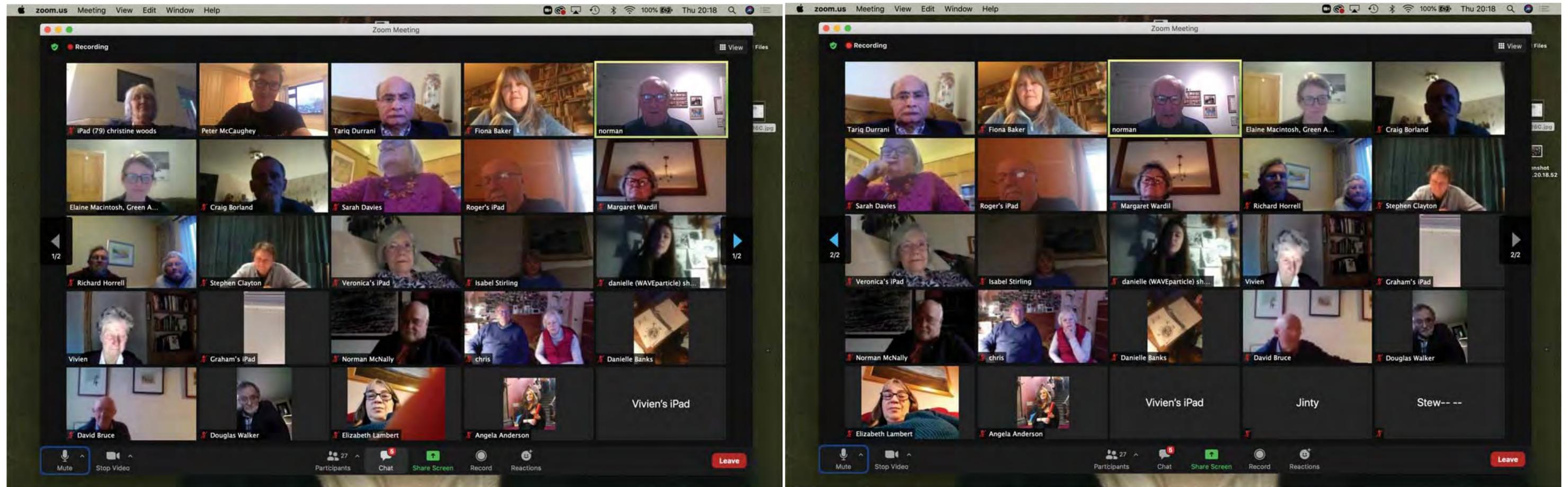
The choice of Helensburgh for the western end of the John Muir Way is symbolic of Muir's journey from the east to west coast of Scotland, to set sail for America as a boy. It is thought that the ship left from Glasgow, however Helensburgh's position on the Firth of Clyde provided a fitting point on the west coast for the John Muir Way, linking the route to Scotland's first National Park – symbolic of Muir's legacy. The eastern end of the route is Muir's birthplace of Dunbar.

The Green Action Trust manages the John Muir Way in partnership with local authorities, national agencies and John Muir charities.  
– Green Action Trust, 31.03.21




This study is funded by the Scottish Government Scotland Loves Local Fund administered by Scotland's Towns Partnership and is carried out with a focus on Helensburgh by the Green Action Trust. It is being delivered by WAVEparticle, on behalf of the Green Action Trust which manages the John Muir Way, and is supported by Argyll & Bute Council and Hirst Landscape Architects.

# The Process



Zoom Launch Event hosted by Helensburgh Community Council

# The Process

Five online workshops have taken place during April and May to engage the local community in developing a brief for an additional artwork feature for the John Muir Way. An in-person site visit was also attended by a smaller number from the community. The aim of the study is to create greater visibility for the start/finish point of the John Muir Way route and to explore opportunities for this in relation to the Helensburgh Waterfront Development. This study was led by Peter McCaughey of *WAVEparticle* who was previously involved in the CHORD scheme Outdoor Museum and existing John Muir Way Artwork. The launch workshop was hosted by Helensburgh Community Council, with 25 members of the community attending. A smaller but substantially-engaged group attended the subsequent workshops where a series of ideas have emerged, with a broad consensus on an approach going forward. This study will set out conclusions on preferred location, design brief/options and indicative budget. Funding for this first phase of work was secured by the Green Action Trust – the charity which manages the John Muir Way – from the Scottish Government Scotland Loves Local Fund. Funding is yet to be secured for commissioning design and construction.



WAVEparticle designed and delivered Helensburgh's Award-winning Outdoor Museum with Austin-Smith:Lord and Helensburgh's Local Community



# Ideas Suggested:

**At The Launch** Strong themes of orientation emerged

I was struck by the remark made by Norman and others, in the webinar, about the pier. It is surely the town's most latent asset and badly in need of a purpose as it can no longer fulfil its original function. Then I remembered Campbell Town Tasmania, half way between Launceston and Hobart, where the long pavement through the village incorporates a line of bricks with the name of a transported prisoner, their crimes, dates, and ship on each one. It is very touching (see attached). Now, I am not sure what the equivalent would be for us; I doubt if, for example, there were enough emigrant families leaving Helensburgh to stretch the pier's length, but there might be some better idea along those lines.

Alternatively (and more feasibly) something to relate the length of the pier to distances by ratio, such as to Greenock, Dunbar, or the USA. Indeed anything that will make the pier worth a tourist visit. I don't suppose the figure of John Muir looking to the horizon would quite do it, but who knows?

Regards,

DB



This and following page from David Bruce

MARY HOLEHOUSE

AGE 23

TORY 1842

STOLE 2 SOVEREIGNS - 7 YEARS

MARRIED JOHN CRAY

BA 97

JOHN CRAY

AGE 23

ISABELLA 1842

PICKPOCKET - 10 YEARS

DIED BALLARAT VICTORIA

BA 96

JOS

PRO

MACHINE

98

# The Process

## Workshop 1

Open up ideas of location

Observe proposed move contested – perception of location as traffic junction with no view of the sea important

## Workshop 2

Sent us on a location hunt, area outside the Clock Tower, the point, augmenting the existing location, moving further along the grass banking towards the bell monument- locating on pier, locating at east bay, distributing through the town, multiple points of connection, including existing sites and new locations at the steps close to the toilets, further along at the steps by the ramp of the swimming pool.

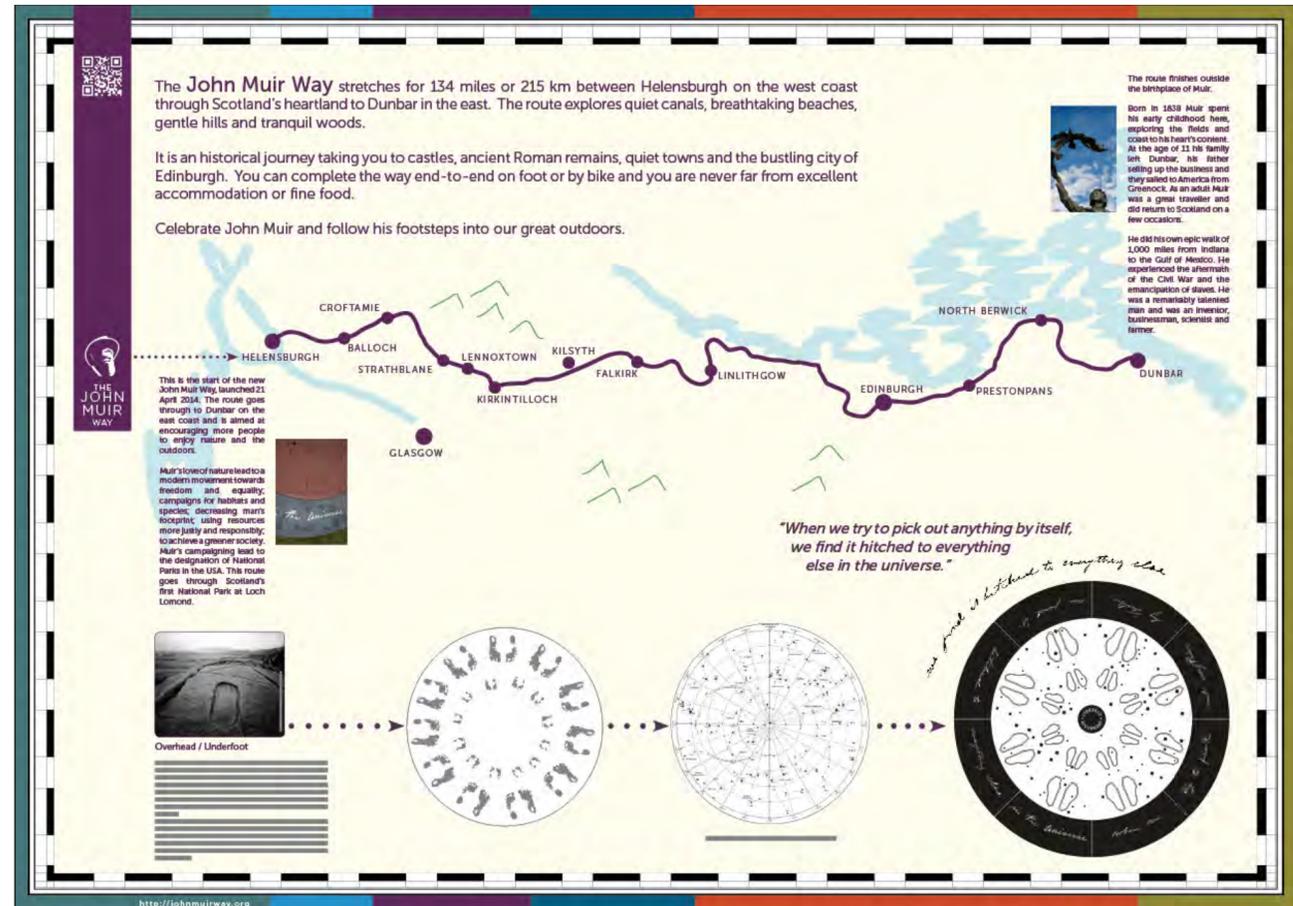
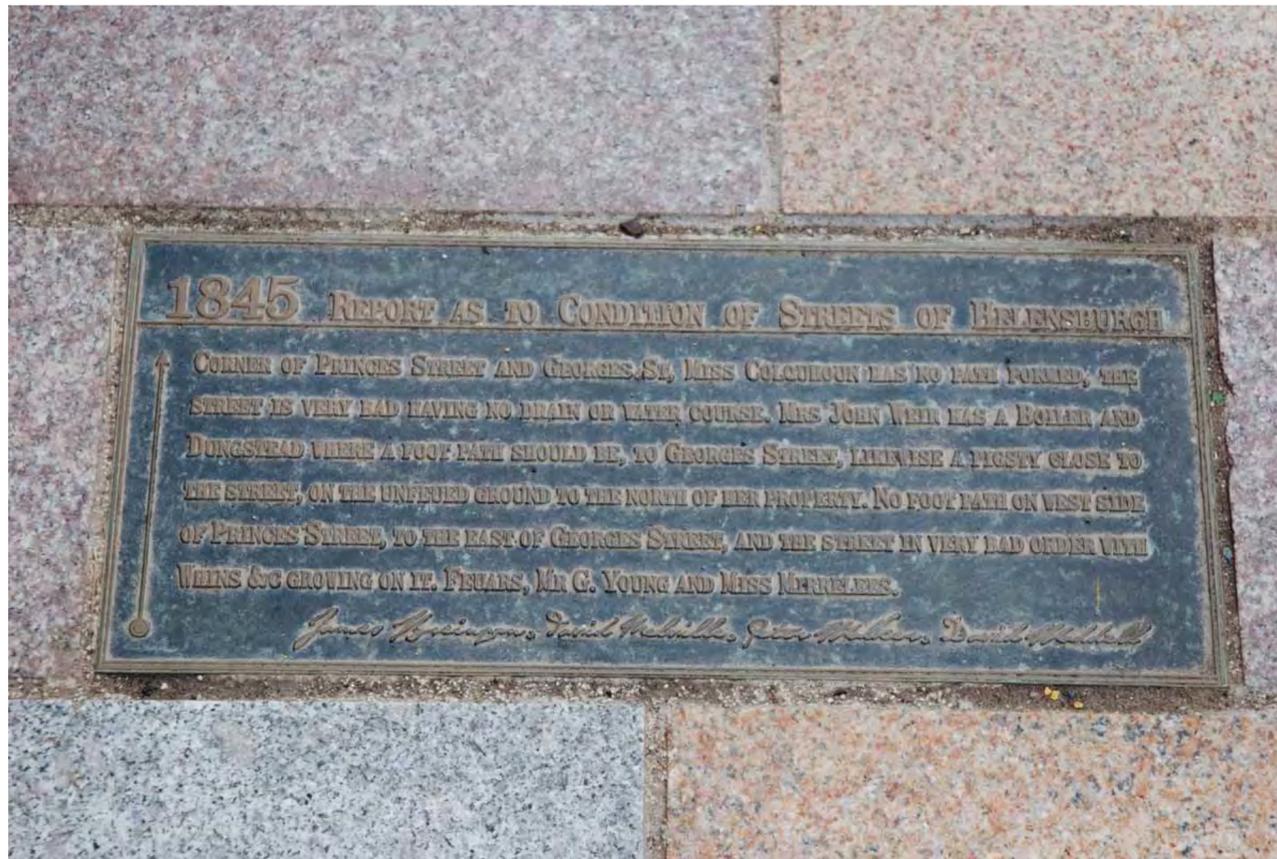
## Workshop 3

Visualising work at these locations, exploring forms from Ziggurat, and adding layers to the existing John Muir Way Artwork, the extrapolation of the central disc to become a cylindrical plinth, a pole, a lighting column, a tree, a tourist telescope, a conceptual orientation tool, a more organic form – some folk still returning to a figurative form, although this, under the direction of the brief, is not an option.



To complement this process, *WAVEparticle* researched and presented ideas and approaches from contemporary artists, designers, artworks to help to give the ideas generated along the way, a physical form, and to provide examples as to how concepts / ideas might be materially realised in actual public space.







The **John Muir Way** stretches for 134 miles or 215 km between Helensburgh on the west coast through Scotland's heartland to Dunbar in the east. The route explores quiet canals, breathtaking beaches, gentle hills and tranquil woods.

It is an historical journey taking you to castles, ancient Roman remains, quiet towns and the bustling city of Edinburgh. You can complete the way end-to-end on foot or by bike and you are never far from excellent accommodation or fine food.

Celebrate John Muir and follow his footsteps into our great outdoors.



This is the start of the new John Muir Way, launched 21 April 2014. The route goes through to Dunbar on the east coast and is aimed at encouraging more people to enjoy nature and the outdoors.

Muir's love of nature led to a modern movement towards freedom and equality; campaigns for habitats and species; decreasing man's footprint; using resources more justly and responsibly; to achieve a greener society. Muir's campaigning led to the designation of National Parks in the USA. This route goes through Scotland's first National Park at Loch Lomond.



Overhead / Underfoot



CROFTAMIE

HELENSBURGH

BALLOCH

STRATHBLANE

LENNOXTOWN

KILSYTH

FALKIRK

KIRKINTILLOCH

GLASGOW

LINLITHGOW

EDINBURGH

PRESTONPANS

NORTH BERWICK

DUNBAR



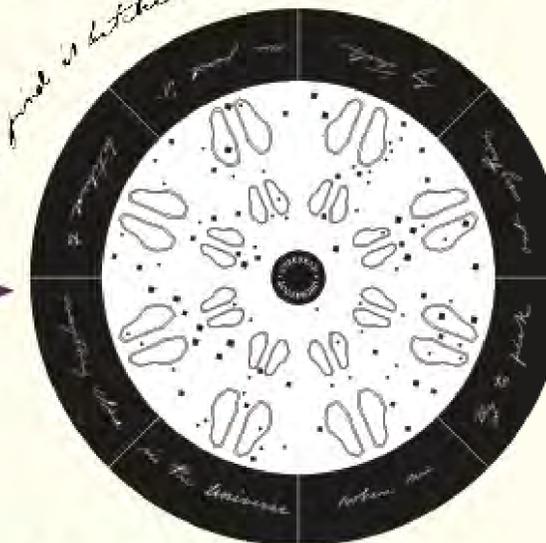
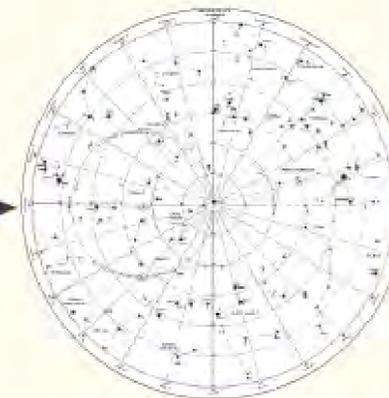
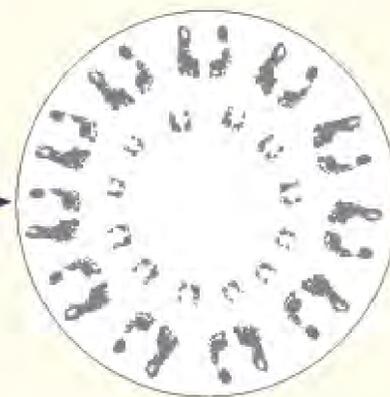
The route finishes outside the birthplace of Muir.

Born in 1838 Muir spent his early childhood here, exploring the fields and coast to his heart's content. At the age of 11 his family left Dunbar, his father selling up the business and they sailed to America from Greenock. As an adult Muir was a great traveller and did return to Scotland on a few occasions.

He did his own epic walk of 1,000 miles from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico. He experienced the aftermath of the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves. He was a remarkably talented man and was an inventor, businessman, scientist and farmer.

*"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."*

*our mind is hitched to everything else*



# The Process

## Site Visit

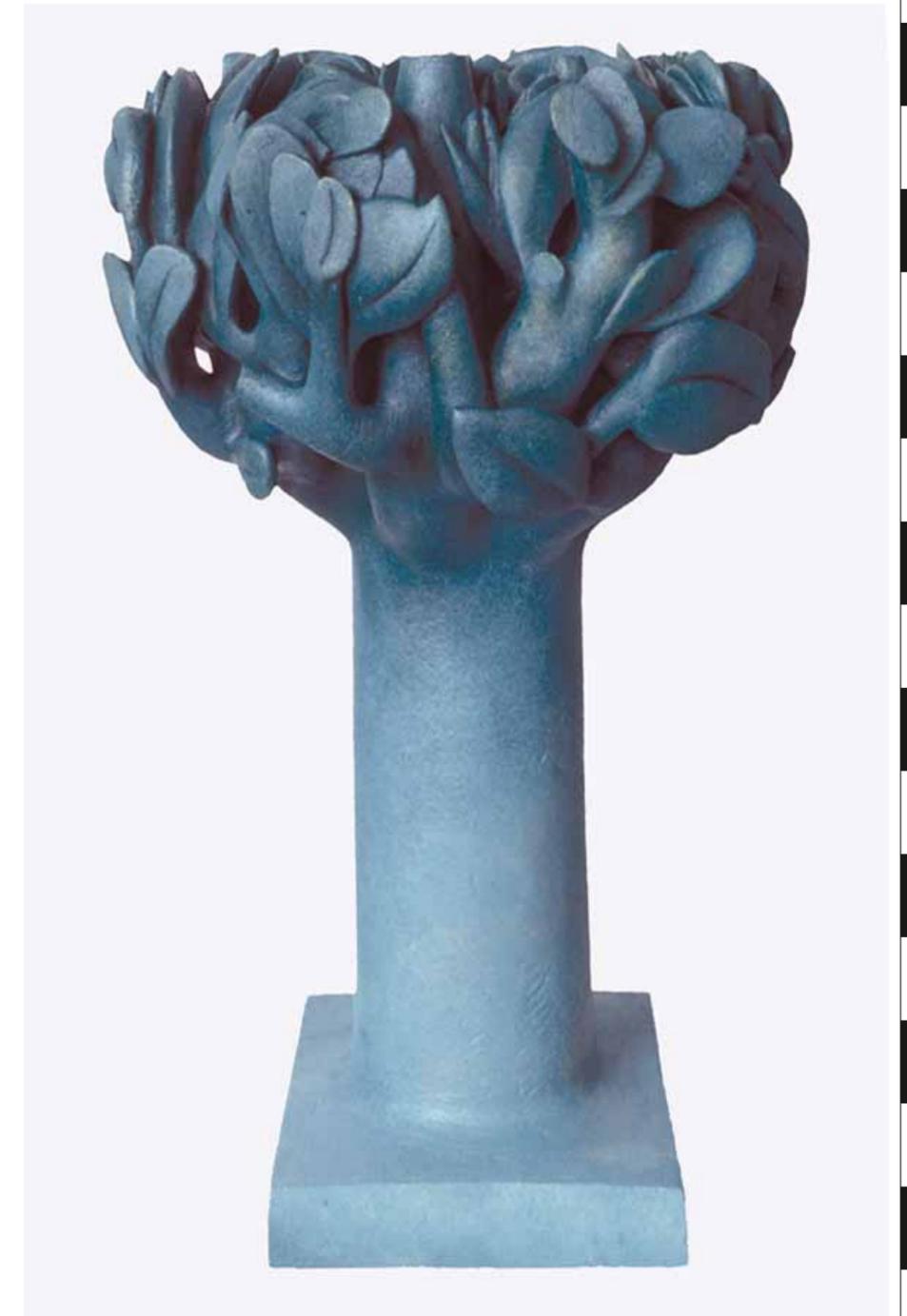
This focussed on location- at this time, negotiations with Scottish Water and reviews of the original plans, process, and permissions, flag up the precarity of the current location- the difficulty of adding weight, (attenuation tanks), insurance, and vulnerability should access be required, and ultimately agreeing the site is no longer suitable for the work. Hard to see this as progress as it feels like a negative step but realistically it is important, and it required substantial research, negotiations, and graft. This was done in order to be able to immediately feedback to the community, so that as ideas were put forward, they were robustly tested, pragmatically, aesthetically, conceptually, and in terms of health and safety and viability. This comprehensive checking was not within the remit of the brief and extended the timescales and the work, significantly taxing the time of everyone involved including Andrew Collins, (Project Manager, Argyll & Bute Council), who worked hard to provide and explore options. However, we began to hit problems associated with retro fitting into an existing programme of work, (related to the alternative site in Phase 1, not the Sinclair St. site, which is Phase 2), where the programme was already strained, and there were significant dangers to that programme in terms of potential delays, particularly if the moving of the existing work required additional foundations for a speculative, near-vertical artwork, as the brief stipulated.

Sites were identified that seemed to meet the brief of a view of the sea, and of Greenock, and a more publicly visible nature, a more vertical aspect – but ultimately these sites were also ruled out for the reasons listed above, especially the proximity to services and to underground cabling, as well as slip hazards / trip hazards given the proximity to the steps. This feedback about the proposed site at the top of the steps was provided, after due consideration, by the landscape architect, along with the Council and the Project Manager.

# The Process

*WAVEparticle* attempted to assuage the concerns as they occurred, the trip hazard could be alleviated if the work was recessed, or level with the ground; a general foundation could be designed and the work moved to allow for the timescale of an artist's commission at a later date (roundly dismissed as an option because of the unpopularity of having to close down access for the retro-fitting process), but ultimately the site was formally ruled out, and again this news had to be relayed and workshop plans re-directed. Obviously, this process of discussing, exploring, researching, proposing, visualising, testing, checking, and rejecting, is part and parcel of creative design, particularly akin to the model of prototyping, (James Dyson made 292 versions of the Dyson Hoover before it finally made it to production). But there is no doubt that it came with frustrations for the community, and everyone involved, and it was disappointing to feel that we raised our collective expectations, finding an exciting compromise, only to ultimately dash hopes when the viability didn't proceed. In this instance, this is a genuine design process but not everyone has the appetite for such prototyping, and this understandable frustration, compounded by the uncertainty around funding, led to a deflated and negative article in the Helensburgh Advertiser, which caught nothing of the excitement and the value of the rich and generous contributions of the townsfolk in terms of the idea's contribution, and focussed mainly on the lack of certainty in the 3-month process.

# Organic Forms to Echo Muir's Nature



# Organic Forms to Echo Muir's Nature



## The Wind Bush

The Wind Bush is smaller than the Wind- and Modular Trees and can be planted alone or in groups. The Wind Bush has just as many photovoltaic petals as Aeroleaves. These solar petals allow the Wind Bush to gain more power while being ultra-versatile.

Light and dark green

Off-white

### OPTIONS

LED lights ⓘ

Charging port ⓘ

Air-purifying leaves ⓘ

FROM  
19 500 €

POWER  
4,2 kW



# The Process

At this point, as is often the case in a design process, we went back to the drawing board to see if we had missed anything, and in doing so uncovered a misconception about the original proposed site. This site had the advantages of being a later part of the programme and had the capacity to hold the foundation required for a vertical marker that was central to the brief. It transpired that a fundamental concern regarding the site as having no vantage point / sightline to the sea was actually incorrect, as no visualisation of the site had been rendered. With the only viable location being the existing move, proposed, and previously consulted on, as an option, we sought and raised the funding to generate a visual of this site, so that its sightlines could be explored and adjusted, in response to the community's response, to find that there are in fact good sightlines to the sea. What's more, for ourselves and the Council, it's clear the site has the potential to be significantly augmented to take on board a range of proposals that emerged, which will address points raised in consultation.

These visuals have not yet been circulated, and we hope that their circulation in this report, will make evident that the setting is more protected than may have at first appeared, that the sightlines are open to the sea, and the potential for augmentation is significant.

# The Process

HELENSBURGH ARTWORK

## John Muir Way Artwork Study

PHASE 1

Peter McCaughey and Danielle Banks from art organisation *WAVEparticle* have spent the last 6 weeks exploring how to mark the start /end of the John Muir Way in Helensburgh and would like to present the results of this study, as a draft for comment, on Friday 28th May at 7:30pm.

This study includes thoughts on a new location and enhanced form for the existing John Muir Way artwork. The study has been guided by response from members of the community who attended a series of workshops in April and May. We hope to see you there. This event is free and everyone is welcome!



### JOHN MUIR WAY ARTWORK STUDY

#### About the John Muir Way

The John Muir Way was launched in 2014 on the centenary of John Muir's death. The aim was to provide an outstanding coast to coast route across the diverse landscapes and rich heritage of central Scotland; easily accessible and attractive to local people, businesses and visitors, and providing opportunities for all to increase their understanding of John Muir's legacy and philosophy through getting closer to nature.

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The Green Action Trust manages the John Muir Way in partnership with local authorities, national agencies and John Muir charities.  
Green Action Trust  
31.03.21



Flyer for Summative Event



This study is funded by the Scottish Government Scotland Loves Local Fund administered by Scotland's Towns Partnership and secured, with a focus on Helensburgh, by the Green Action Trust. It is being delivered by WAVEparticle, on behalf of the Green Action Trust which manages the John Muir Way, and is supported by Argyll & Bute Council and Hirst Landscape Architects.

zoom.us Meeting View Edit Window Help

Zoom Meeting

Press (⌘%A) to unmute or hold space bar to temporarily unmute.

View

John Muir Way S

Play Keynote Live Table Chart Text

Stewart Noble

Peter McCaughey

norman

Sarah Davies

Norman McNally

Vivien

David Bruce

Anne Foy

Nigel Millar

Anne Urquhart

Elaine Macintosh, Green Acti...

Fiona Baker

danielle banks

Jo Moulin

Arlene Cullum

Roger Clarke

Elizabeth Lambert

Press (⌘%A) to unmute or hold space bar to temporarily unmute.

Unmute Stop Video

Participants 17

Chat

Share Screen

Record

Reactions

Leave

The John Muir Way stretches for 134 miles or 215 km between Helensburgh on the west coast through Scotland's heartland to Dunbar in the east. The route explores quiet canals, breathtaking beaches, gentle hills and tranquil woods.

It is an historical journey taking you to castles, ancient Roman remains, quiet towns and the bustling city of Edinburgh. You can complete the way end-to-end on foot or by bike and you are never far from excellent accommodation or fine food.

Celebrate John Muir and follow his footsteps into our great outdoors.

HELENSBURGH BALLOCH STRATHBLANE LENNOXTOWN KILSYTH FALKIRK DUNBAR  
GLASGOW

This is the start of the new John Muir Way launched 21 April 2014. The route goes through to Dunbar on the east coast and is aimed at encouraging more people to enjoy nature and the outdoors.

After a series of successful modern movement events, the John Muir Way is a new initiative for the future, using resources from the John Muir Society, the John Muir Society of Scotland and the John Muir Society of the United Kingdom.

"When we find it else in t"

Overhead / Underfoot

http://johnmuirway.org

# The Process

The next phase of this work has to proceed quickly as the programme is live and the delivery point for this site will be September of next year. For this reason, the report recommends a process of integrating the John Muir Way Artwork into the proposed site at Sinclair Street and raising the funds to augment the work, rather than going down the road of a new commission, which would require a timescale beyond the current programme.

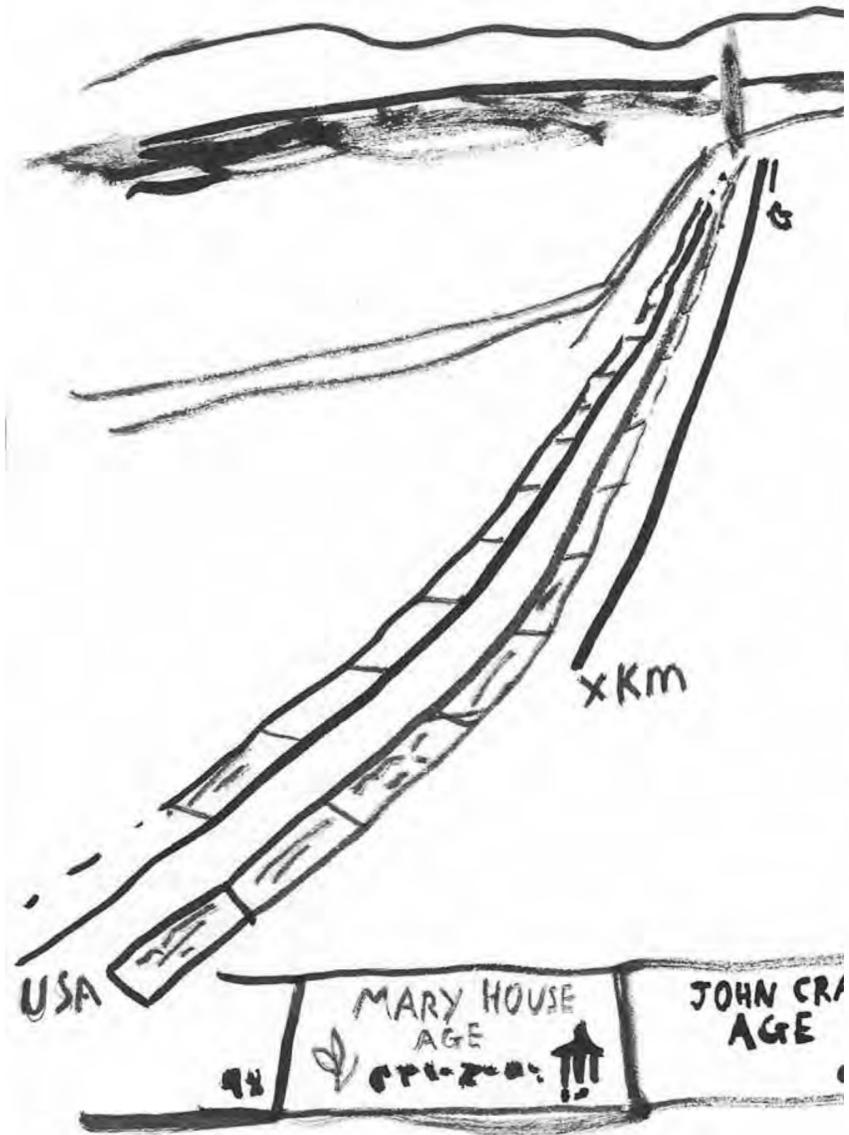


# A Map of Conversations, Suggestions and Related Ideas

Throughout this process *WAVEparticle* attempted to encapsulate the ideas that were suggested, primarily in the form of *WAVEparticle* team member Danielle Bank's drawn map of ideas, and in the photoshopped sketches created by *WAVEparticle* team member Peter McCaughey. Additional concepts and themes are included in the Appendices.

Drawn by Danielle Banks

# Ideas Index







- 1 Linking to the momentum of COP26 by creating environmental work
- 2 We looked at Wind Trees - small tree shaped wind turbines that generate power
- 3 There was an ask for organic tree shapes and examples
- 4 Coast To Coast - this is a coast to coast walk
- 5 There is a plan to rebuild the pier and it might be that the eventual ideal starting point is on the end of that pier
- 6 Visitors may come to Helensburgh by boat and there is maritime heritage
- 7 "When we try to pick out anything by itself we find that it is bound fast by a thousand invisible cords that cannot be broken, to everything in the universe." - John Muir
- 8 Using organic forms such as pine cones or Sequoia seeds in a compass or wayfind sculpture
- 9 Looking at East Bay and thinking about potential artwork in that area
- 10 The importance of the sightline to Greenock which was the last town John Muir stopped in before leaving Scotland as a boy
- 11 "You have finally come home" Helensburgh is visited by many tourists with Scottish or Helensburgh ancestry.
- 12 We discussed the opportunity for light as part of a public sculpture
- 13 The Sea Kayak Trail goes between Helensburgh and Oban
- 14 A hand loom represents weaving different means and histories together
- 15 The body was an important theme in the discussion - a wish for greater circulation around Helensburgh and the sense of the walk to come as a personal experience of the body
- 16 A tree that incorporates direction and compass points
- 17 The bear represents the idea of matching sculptures in Helensburgh and Dunbar as the two sides of the trail. However we decided we would not seek to match their representation of John Muir as a boy due to a need to ensure people of colour feel welcome on the trail, as well as a strong feeling that this wouldn't be the artwork John Muir himself would choose.
- 18 Cyclists take part in the trail and they would benefit from enough space to prop their bike up and rest before starting the trail.



19 We discussed the idea of a celebratory, ceremonial moment such as ringing a bell when you are about to start the trail

20 The clock tower was discussed as a key visible point for visitors navigating the town and finding the start of the John Muir Way

21 A lot of the discussion focused on looking outward to the sea, but we recognised a need to also look inward - both to the town and also to the long walk ahead across Scotland.

22 An exciting idea involved measurements of distance (such as to Greenock compared to the distance to New York) represented by lengths of tiles in the ground, each with a personal history of a person who left Scotland

23 The current artwork is a disk with footprints for walkers to place their feet inside. We've identified that this needs to be moved. We also want something with height so as to improve the visibility. The current disk can simply incorporate a stemmed artwork within its centre. In discussions about height, one contributor speculated about having something very much larger that might dominate the view of the sea front.

24 The stem could take the form of any number of things such as an architectural model

25 It could be a pillar of light

26 This idea represents a written pledge that could be tied to a tree. The papers could be biodegradable and seeded to plan a natural disintegration over time.

27 We talked about Sequoia seeds at different scales - a large human sized seed, or one that you might hold in your hand

28 Identifying where hikers might stop in shops and other facilities

29 The sightline along the road away from the coast and a clear route to walk along

30 Incorporating light into the work could be something that benefits the residents of Helensburgh

31 One idea was to plant a significant tree such as a Scots pine

32 Another pledge idea involved a pledge box

33 The compass represents a sense of navigation, adventure and invention

34 John Muir created a number of inventions, some of which are very intricate and curious. The artwork could represent one of these.

35 John Muir also became an advocate for indigenous people in North America later in life and the totem pole would fit nicely with the ask for verticality



36 Blank white walls such as on the toilet cubicle could become visible reminders of the trail through mural

37 A pine cone shaped shelter

38 In connection with giant pine cones - in Scotland, we have a few giant pineapples

39 An anti-racist response would be to take the orchid as an emblem which represents nature as well as John Muir's personal transformation - it was the first thing John Muir perceived when regaining his sight

40 A contributor described a logo from another trail that was half face and half oak leaf

41 The national park to the West is clearly visible from Helensburgh and this is a strong link to John Muir that might be missed if not communicated

42 We saw an example of a red telescope installation which could be used to view the national park or rotated to view the sea, bringing a sense of curiosity and play

43 Reiterating the connections between Helensburgh and Dunbar and the idea of connecting artworks

44 An idea for a participative artwork where you carry an object with you to place somewhere, in the tradition of the scottish cairn. Once again thinking of the personal experience.

45 An inverted ziggurat would fit around the existing disk artwork, provide a semi sheltered space and communal space for hikers, offer a raised view to the West and the coast, and mirror some of the other longstanding public monuments. Unfortunately when investigated, this would be too sizeable/too much weight for the potential locations







One of the principal ideas developed in the engagement, as a way to extend the existing artwork, is to extrude the disc at the centre into a column- becoming a plinth / a vertical lighting column / or indeed a sculptural work. These ideas are also sketched on the new visuals of the site (Pgs 90-94) to help explain and contextualise the potential. This suggested an object presented on a cylindrical plinth, extruded from the centre of the existing roundel, and this in turn offers a thought of a circular version of the squared plinths of Helensburgh's Outdoor Museum. It transpires that this proposal is only viable in the Civic Space, due to restrictions for foundations on the existing site.

Please note, if extending above the height of a plinth, we have been alerted by Alison McBride, (Architect with Argyll and Bute Council), that the work may be subject to a planning application. If extending significantly above plinth height, a foundation detail would need to be considered for the work



Other ways to adapt/add to the existing artwork



Other ways to adapt/add to the existing artwork





Download preview  Save to lightbox  Add to cart  Share   

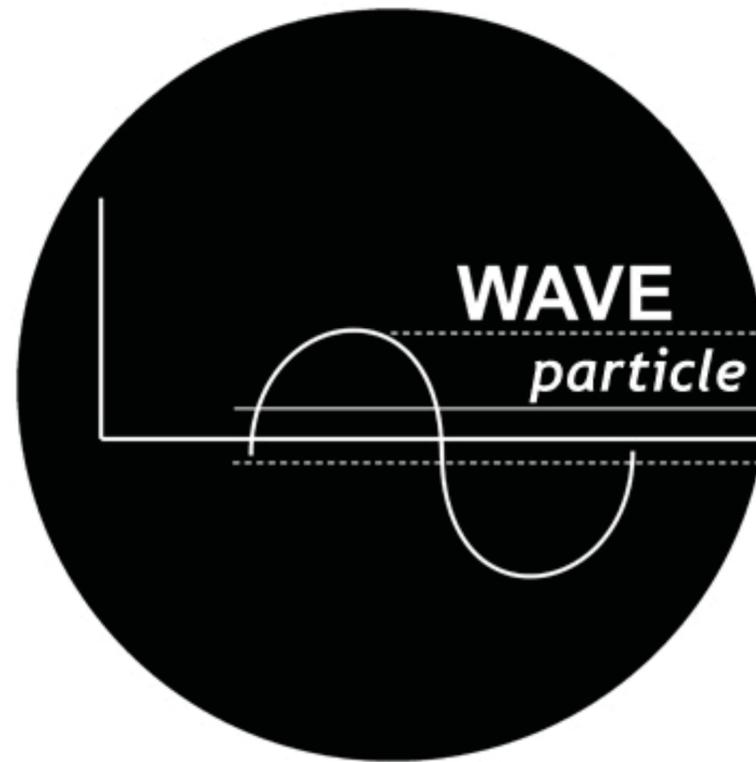
Enlarge 

Could the artwork be a tree? Either sculpture or functioning wind 'bush', actually generating power and symbolising the sustainable aspirations of Muir?

John Muir Way

Artwork

Considering (Re)Locations



# Considering (Re)Locations

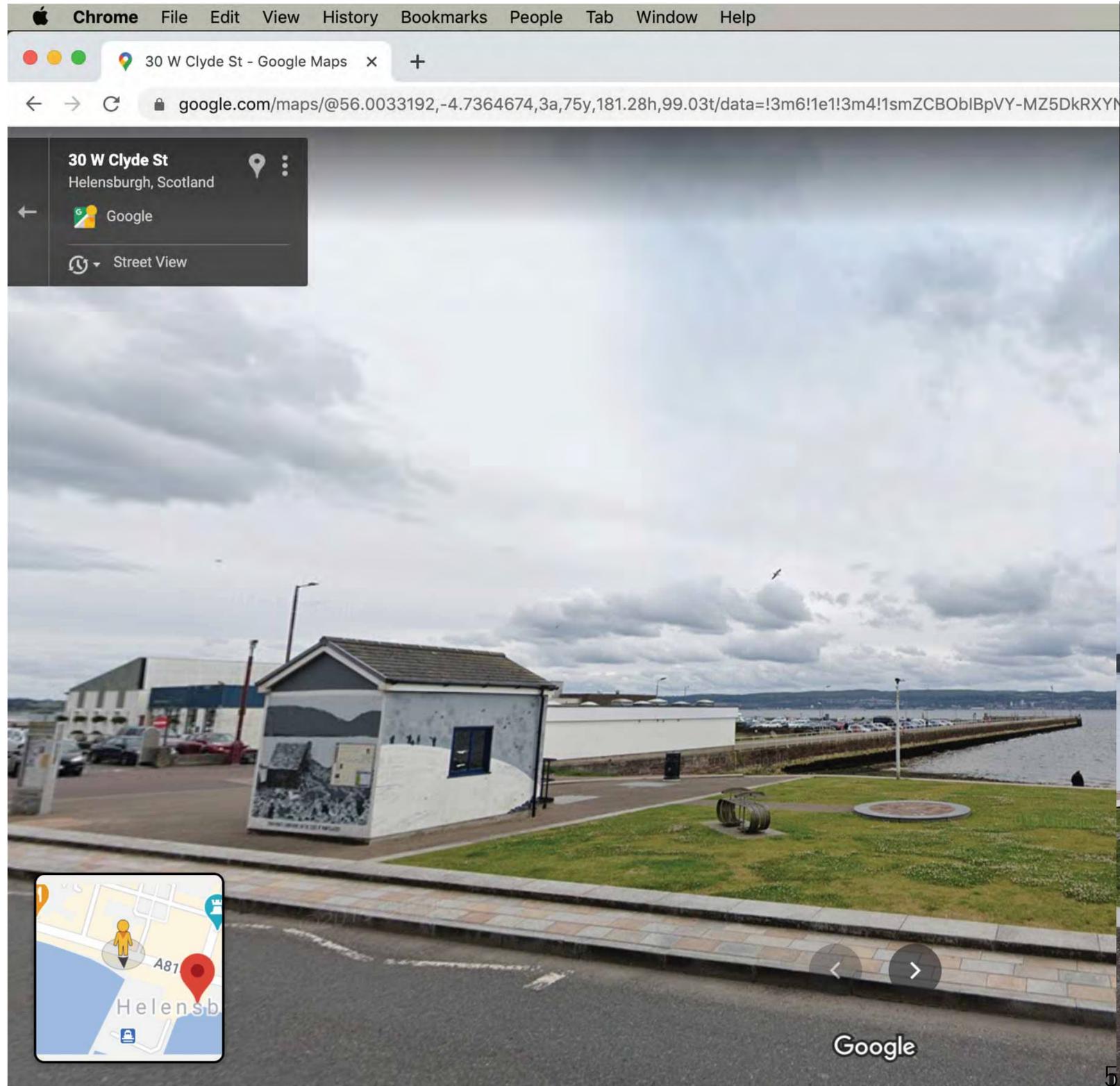
**Synopsis of Locations as discussed in Community Workshops.**

**Location 1: The current site. W Clyde Street /Colquhoun Street** Is hard to find. Did offer space for reflection for JMW walkers. Views of the Sea and Greenock. However transpires due to Scottish Water attenuation tanks there is no scope for development. In fact the current artwork should be considered precarious here. We went so far as to request an engineer to calculate loading and share this with Scottish Water

**Location 2: On the Pier.** The Pier needs repair/development. Any move here could be considered pre-emptive/precarious. Other ideas – on the pier, or as part of the future retail development public realm, are all in the undefined future in terms of timescale and potential. It should be noted that both locations have no budget identified and no programme. To choose either as a potential site would push the opportunity to relocate the start/finish of JMW into an unknown timescale.

Once the Pier is developed this could be an optimal site for JMW. Particularly the focus on walking to the end of the Pier to ring a (Henry Bell's) Bell to start/finish a walk.

# Location 1: The current site. W Clyde Street / Colquhoun Street











Drawings Norman McNally

GRC?  
 LASER CUT METAL?  
 MINIMAL CONTACT WITH PAVERS



# Ziggurat/inverted Ziggurat

Materials: Granite Step, Red Sandstone top Concrete infill

3 Discs  
Top Layer (Existing work:)

3m diameter x 0.2m deep

2nd Layer:

3.8m diameter x 0.2m deep

3rd Layer:

4.4m diameter x 0.2m deep

4 Discs

Top Layer (Existing work:)

3m diameter x 0.2m deep

2nd Layer:

3.8m diameter x 0.2m deep

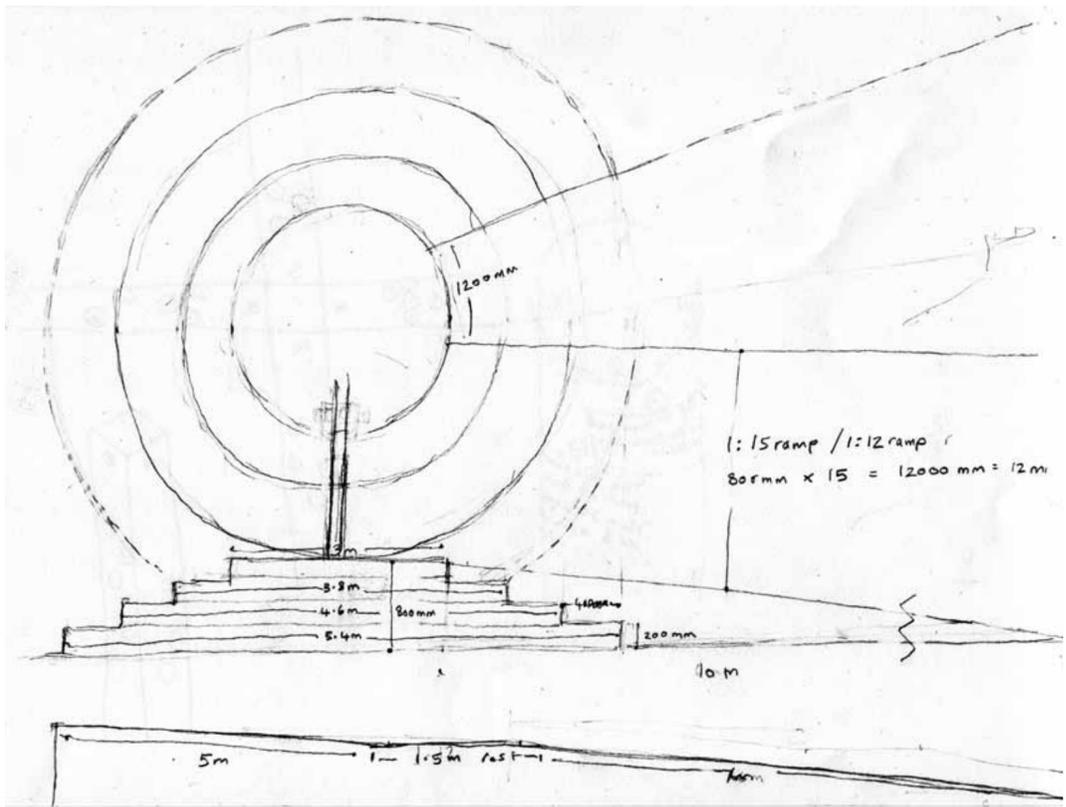
3rd Layer:

4.4m diameter x 0.2m deep

4th Layer:

5.4m diameter x 0.2m deep

Optional : Ramp 12m rising to 1m , 1.2m wide at top 3m wide at base, Limestone



### Ziggurat (Mass)

$$V = \pi r^2 h$$

Density of concrete = 2,400kg/m<sup>3</sup>

#### 3 Discs

Top layer (Existing work)

$$3\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 1.41372\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 3,393\text{kg}$$

2<sup>nd</sup> Layer

$$3.8\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 2.26823\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 5,444\text{kg}$$

3<sup>rd</sup> Layer

$$4.4\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 3.04106\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 7,298\text{kg}$$

Foundation (+0.4 dia) x 0.3 deep

$$4.8\text{m dia} \times 0.3 \text{ deep} = 5.42867\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 13,029\text{kg}$$

Total Mass = 29,164kg (29.16 Tonne)

#### 4 Discs

Top layer (Existing work)

$$3\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 1.41372\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 3,393\text{kg}$$

2<sup>nd</sup> Layer

$$3.8\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 2.26823\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 5,444\text{kg}$$

3<sup>rd</sup> Layer

$$4.4\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 3.04106\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 7,298\text{kg}$$

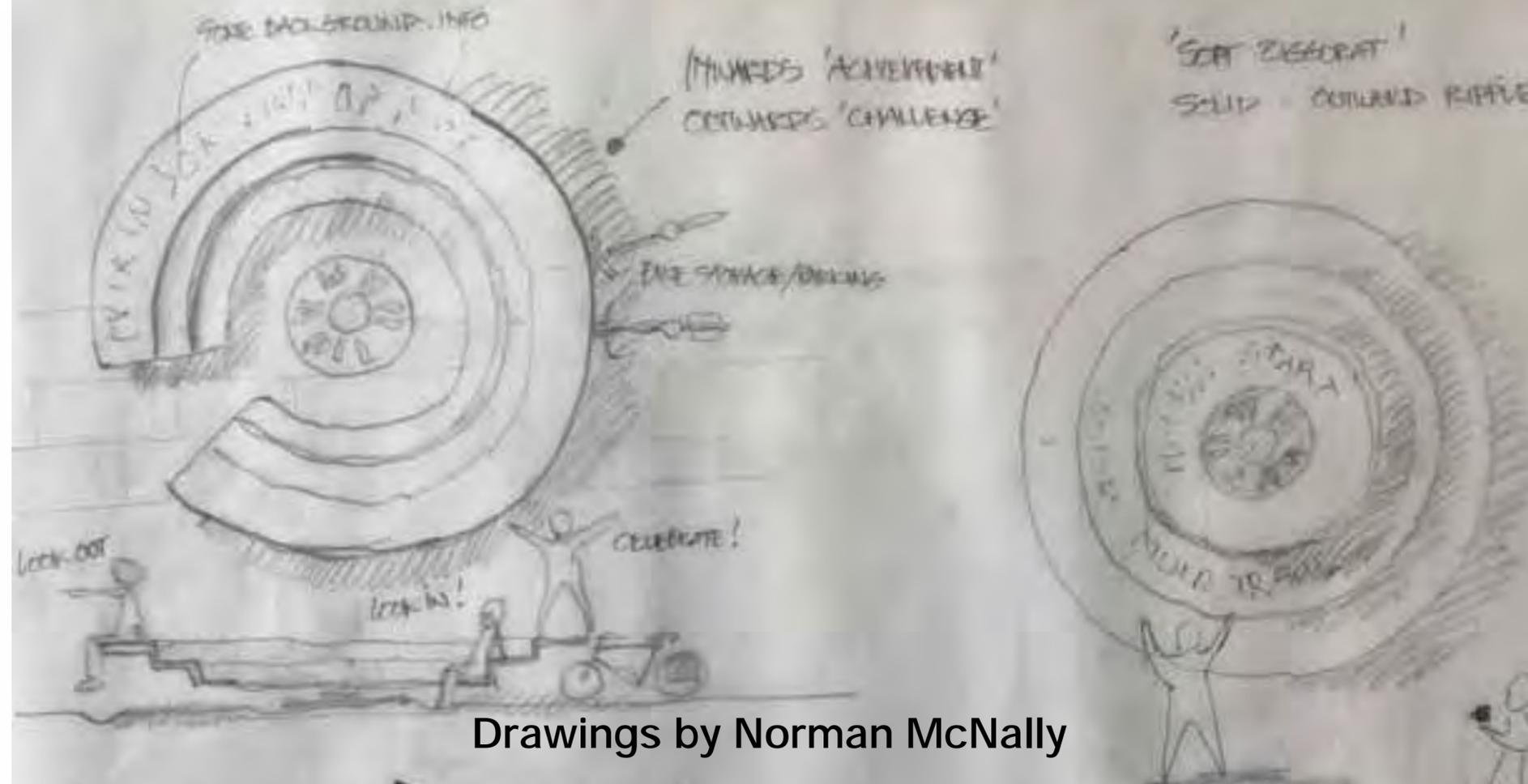
4<sup>th</sup> Layer

$$5.4\text{m dia} \times 0.2 \text{ deep} = 4.58044\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 10,994\text{kg}$$

Foundation (+0.4 dia) x 0.3 deep

$$5.8 \text{ dia} \times 0.3 \text{ deep} = 7.92624\text{m}^3 \times 2,400\text{kg} = 19,023\text{kg}$$

Total Mass = 46,152kg (46.15 Tonne)



Drawings by Norman McNally



# Considering (Re) Locations

Two size options are shown in the calculation:

- a. 3 disc ziggurat, the widest (bottom step) being 4.4m diameter, total height 0.6m, with a 4.8m diameter 0.3m deep foundation; total mass 29,164kg (29.16 Tonne)
- b. 4 disc ziggurat, the widest (bottom step) being 5.4m diameter, total height 0.8m, with a 5.8m diameter 0.3m deep foundation; total mass 46,152kg (46.15 Tonne)

Discussion with Scottish Water revealed that these weights and footprint dimensions would likely be challenging to accommodate. The tanks take up circa 75% of the grassy area, and although fairly deep and enclosed in a boxed concrete shape, were likely not constructed for significant weight above. Scottish Water would need to carry out structural surveys on the tanks (at our expense) to know what weight could be accommodated - a 45 degree side load from foundations would impact even if the art work was not directly above the tanks.

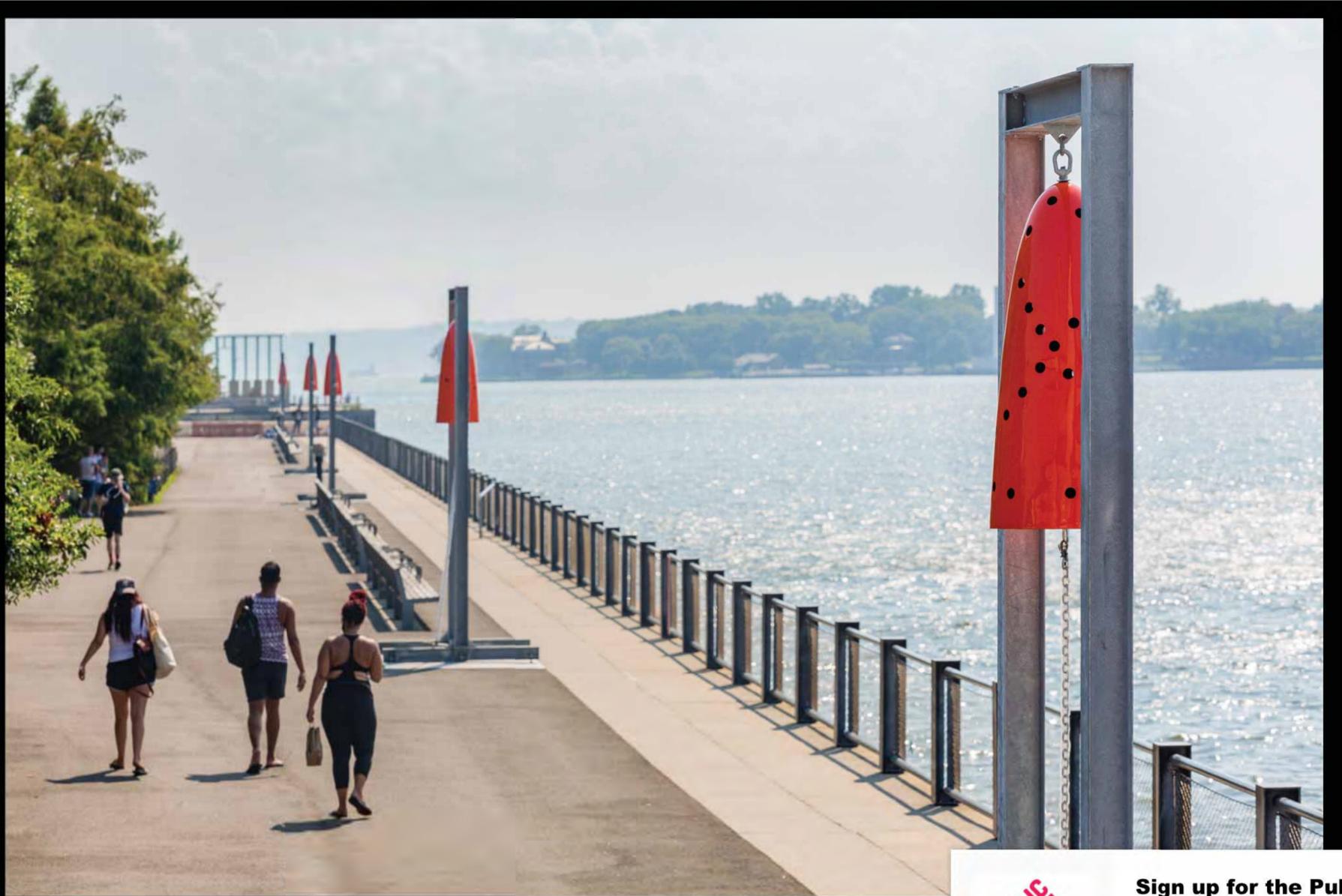


Attenuation Tanks just below the surface

Also, if the artwork would affect access to the tanks in the event that Scottish Water needed to dig down and open them up, we'd likely need to sign a building-over agreement, making us liable for any additional cost this added to the excavation and for the cost of reinstating the artwork.



The Outdoor Museum, Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh



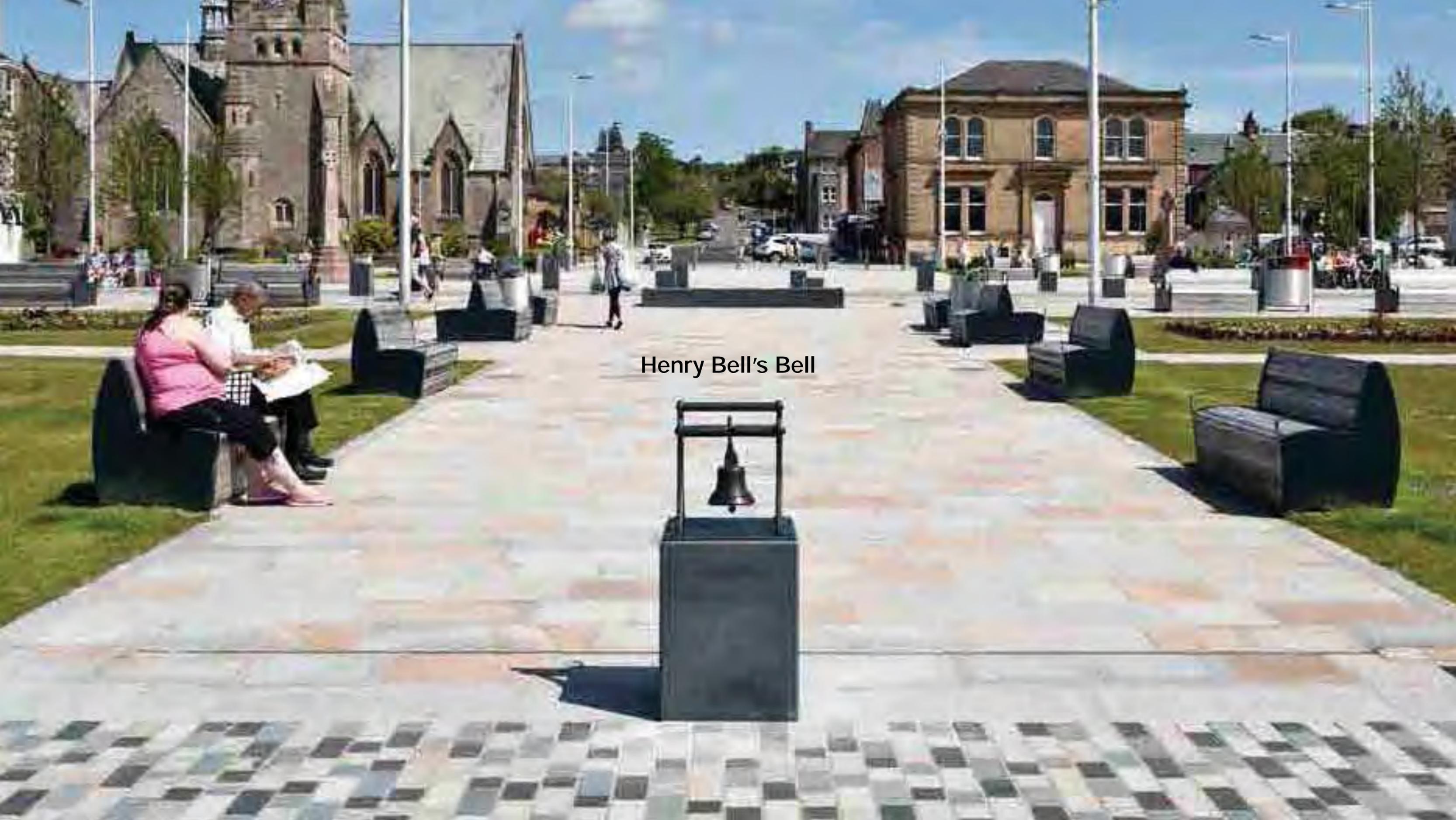
Davina Semo, "Reverberation," 2020 Patinated cast bronze bell, UV protected 2-stage catalyzed urethane and steel chain and hardware, clapper. Courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco Photo: Nicholas  
Art Fund, NY

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*Location 2: On the Pier*



Henry Bell's Bell

# Considering (Re)Locations

Synopsis of Locations as discussed in Community Workshops.

## ***Location 3: In the grounds beside the Clock Tower. Corner of Sinclair Street and W Clyde Street***

Outwith the Scope of the Helensburgh Waterfront Development programme- would therefore require funding for all works. No views of Greenock/the Sea. Lacks space for reflection for JMW walkers. Considered (by some) to be a better location for a John Logie Baird Memorial –(anniversary 100 years of first broadcast on 26 January 2026).

## ***Location 4: The Civic Space (the proposed site). Corner of Sinclair Street and W Clyde Street***

The original location for the artwork is in Phase 2 of the work programme – so work wouldn't commence until the existing swimming pool is demolished. Works here are in the last quarter of 2022. This is relevant as it gives the best chance to advance the work in a proper development cycle including engagement with schools /local business/ Helensburgh Community Council etc, and avoiding expensive retrofitting.

The site is considered (by some) to have no views of Greenock/the Sea. To be too close to a Traffic Junction. To lack a space for reflection for JMW walkers.



***Location 3: In the grounds beside the Clock Tower. Corner of Sinclair Street and W Clyde Street***





Aerial View of Site 4

# Considering (Re)Locations

**Synopsis of Locations as discussed in Community Workshops.**

***Location 5: The Point. End of Sinclair Street towards sea***

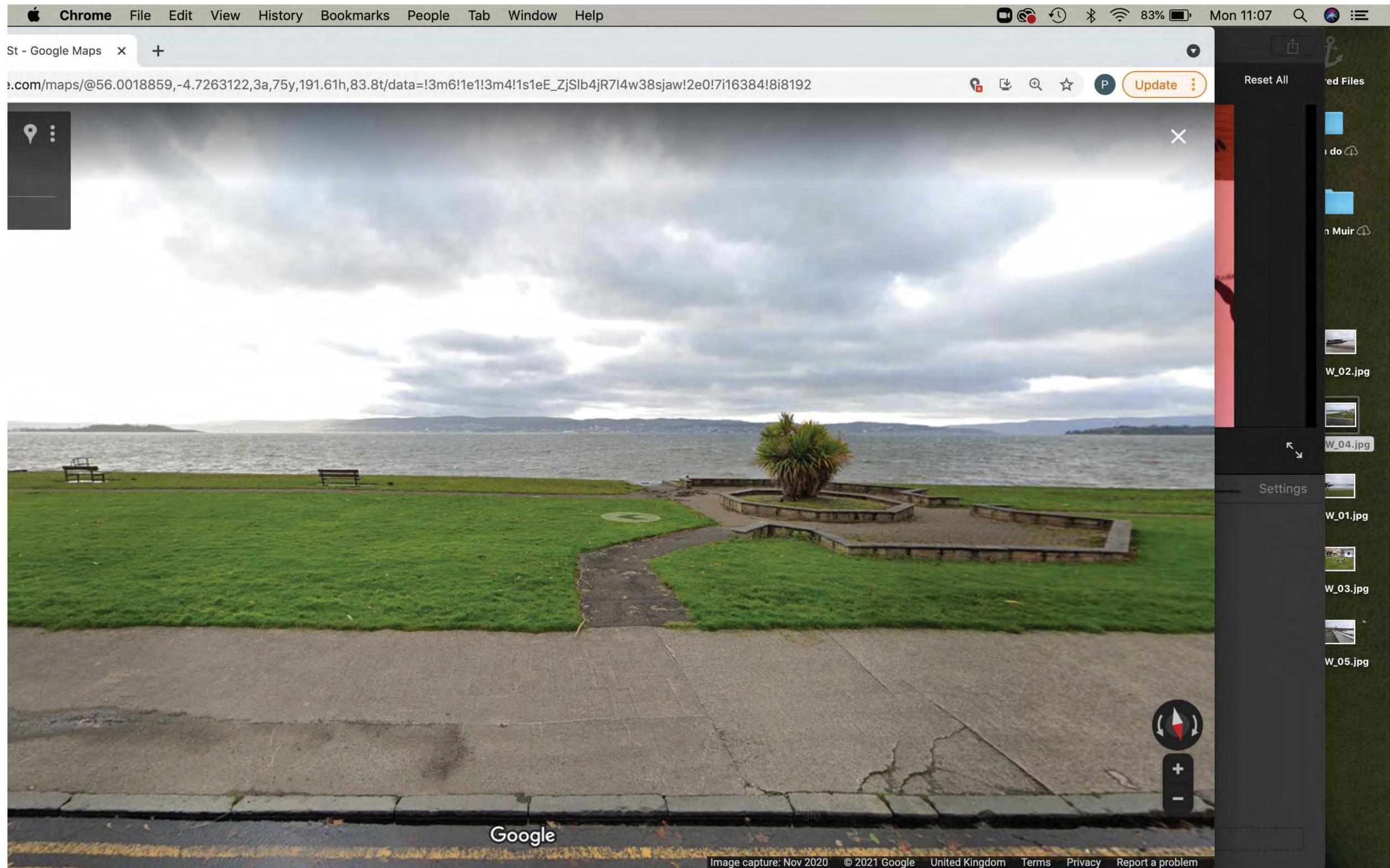
Best JMW spot for uninterrupted views to Greenock, a bit dislocated (and potentially even less obvious to find than existing location). Worth noting that there is a 4m wide walk/cycleway all around the site perimeter that would draw you down to here, but it's still essentially at the far end of a large car park. It's also part of Phase 1 and faces the same timing pressures. Perhaps fair to say offers a fragmented space for reflection for JMW walkers.

***Location 6: East Bay. East Clyde Street towards Craigendoran***

Great location. Potential for development. Too far off the current beaten track, particularly for JMW walkers



*Location 5: The Point. End of Sinclair Street towards sea*



**Location 6: East Bay. East Clyde Street towards Craigendoran**

# Considering (Re)Locations

Synopsis of Locations as discussed in Community Workshops.

**Location 7: The area at the top of the steps closest to the new building.** For some time this site seemed to be the best compromise to move the existing artwork and add a vertical marker. It has views to the Sea and the National Park, and a natural line of sight to and from Colquhoun Square/Street. It would also naturally be more visible to the JMW walker being at the heart of the new development along excellent sight lines. The steps adjacent act as a natural version of the proposed Ziggurat form proposed by several members of the community.

This newly proposed location at the emerging steps was very favourably received in workshops and site visit. This preference was due to better views, a larger space both for circulation and to accommodate the work, and ramp access, as well as steps which would be better for bikes. It was felt slipway access wasn't to be an issue as apparently the slipway is too steep and so only used by canoeists. There was however a sense that the ideal scenario would be for all work to be delivered ahead of the opening of the new leisure centre, for both practical and presentational reasons. Unfortunately, upon scrutiny, this site is not an option. The Council evaluated this, in conjunction with Hirst Architects, and concluded there is too much going on under the ground here, including substantial drainage works, water and gas services now being routed up the emerging ramp. Wheeled access to the kayak slipway here also precludes anything raised above ground level. A vertical feature, as well as requiring foundations which the site drainage/services can't accommodate, would have challenges in standing out against the backdrop of the building.

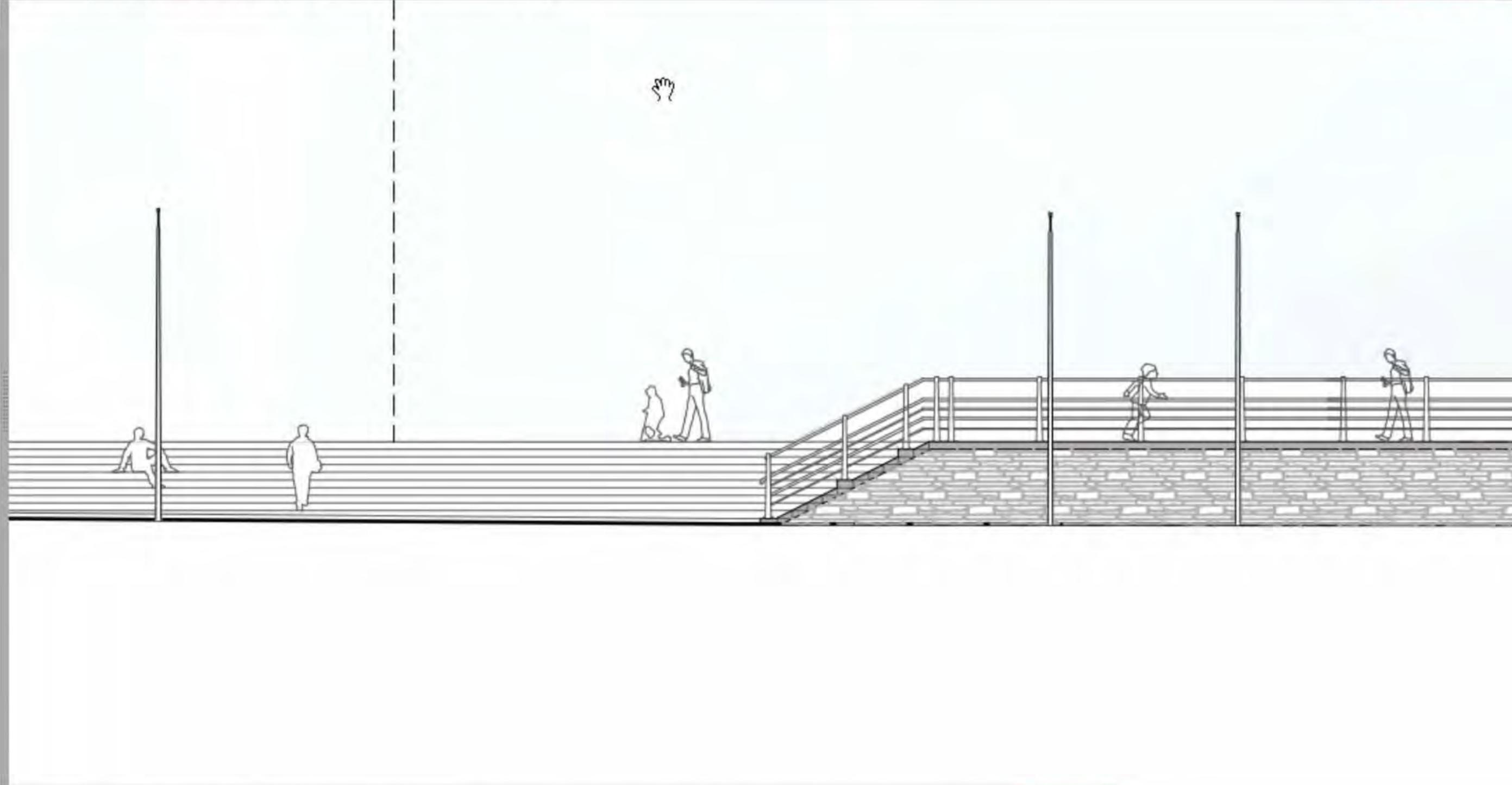


***Location 7: The area at the top of the steps closest to the new building.***

marks

Sheets and Views

- 1450-07D
  - OLE30
  - OLE31
  - OLE36
  - OLE41



28:49

Video, Microphone, Screen Share, More, Hand, Chat, People, Request control, End Call

# Considering (Re)Locations

**Synopsis of Locations as discussed in Community Workshops.**

***Location 8: By Steps along from Colquhoun Street (close to Public Toilets).***

For some time this site seemed to be a viable compromise to move the existing artwork to and add a vertical marker. It has views to the Sea and the National Park and a natural line of site to and from Colquhoun Square/street. It would also naturally be more visible to the JMW walker being at the start of the new development along excellent site lines. A bit proximate to the public toilets but far enough to be seriously considered. The steps adjacent act as a natural version of the proposed Ziggurat form proposed by several members of the community. Unfortunately, upon closer inspection there isn't enough space to accommodate the roundel or anything similarly raised above the ground on this thoroughfare.

There is also the 'square hole / round peg' issue of the existing artwork not being ideal for the design of this area, and being too late in the process to design this in properly. However, this site is now completely ruled out, due to the extent of utilities planned for the area, which means that no foundation would be possible for a vertical feature.



***Location 8: By Steps along from Colquhoun Street (close to Public Toilets).***



Considering views back from location 7&8

# Considering (Re)Locations

## Conclusion

An enormous percentage of the time for this study was consumed by the search for the perfect relocation for the existing artwork with an additional vertical / visible aspect.

In this we had significant and continuous support from the Council's Project Lead endeavouring to understand what could work in terms of physical infrastructure and works programme.

Eight different locations were considered, tested and rejected one after the other, on one basis or another. The *WAVEparticle* team and the Green Action Trust exceeded the boundaries of an outline study to test viability in-depth, and unfortunately each time a significant obstacle was uncovered that prevented progress. Ultimately this report suggests a compromise based on the relocation of the existing John Muir Way Artwork to the site identified by Hirst's in their original drawings. We came to understand that some of the perception of the space- for example lack of sightlines to Greenock/ the Sea was based on a misconception that has arisen due to no visualisation of the Civic Space being shared prior to this study, other than a 2-d plan.

However we strongly recommend that the site be developed /augmented to address its perceived flaws, and we have detailed additional enhancements to that site on this basis.

# Supporting A Better Understanding Of The Civic Space

In the consultation process it was clear people had different ideas about the Civic Space- some were concerned that you couldn't see the sea from this space, some felt that it would be dominated by the traffic junction, and therefore that it couldn't work as a space for meditation, introspection and reflection. These opinions sent us on a journey to explore other locations for the John Muir Way Artwork, but in each case something thwarted the development of each new site and ultimately we returned to review the original site and test the perceptions around it.

It became clear that the views to the sea were indeed available from the space on several sides and it seemed there was potential to focus the sense of its civic nature through the positioning of the John Muir Way Artwork. The Clock Tower was a very clear vertical marker and potential 'selfie' backdrop. We felt the lack of visuals exacerbated some of the negative perceptions of the space and the study requested some accurate visuals to help frame the existing artwork and assist some consideration of augmenting the space to ameliorate concerns and enhance the civic, cultural and historic aspects to amplify its role as a destination point- both for the John Muir Way, but also as a place to connect the town to itself. These images follow, (NB: trees are not the exact species).











# The Definitive JMW Selfie?



One aspect of the Civic Space that was raised in the consultation, is that the Clock Tower is a significant vertical point of reference in Helensburgh. It's potentially a great vertical marker to the start of the John Muir Way.



In addition,  
these are the  
types of  
enhancement to  
the Civic Space  
that could frame  
the perfect JMW  
Selfie...





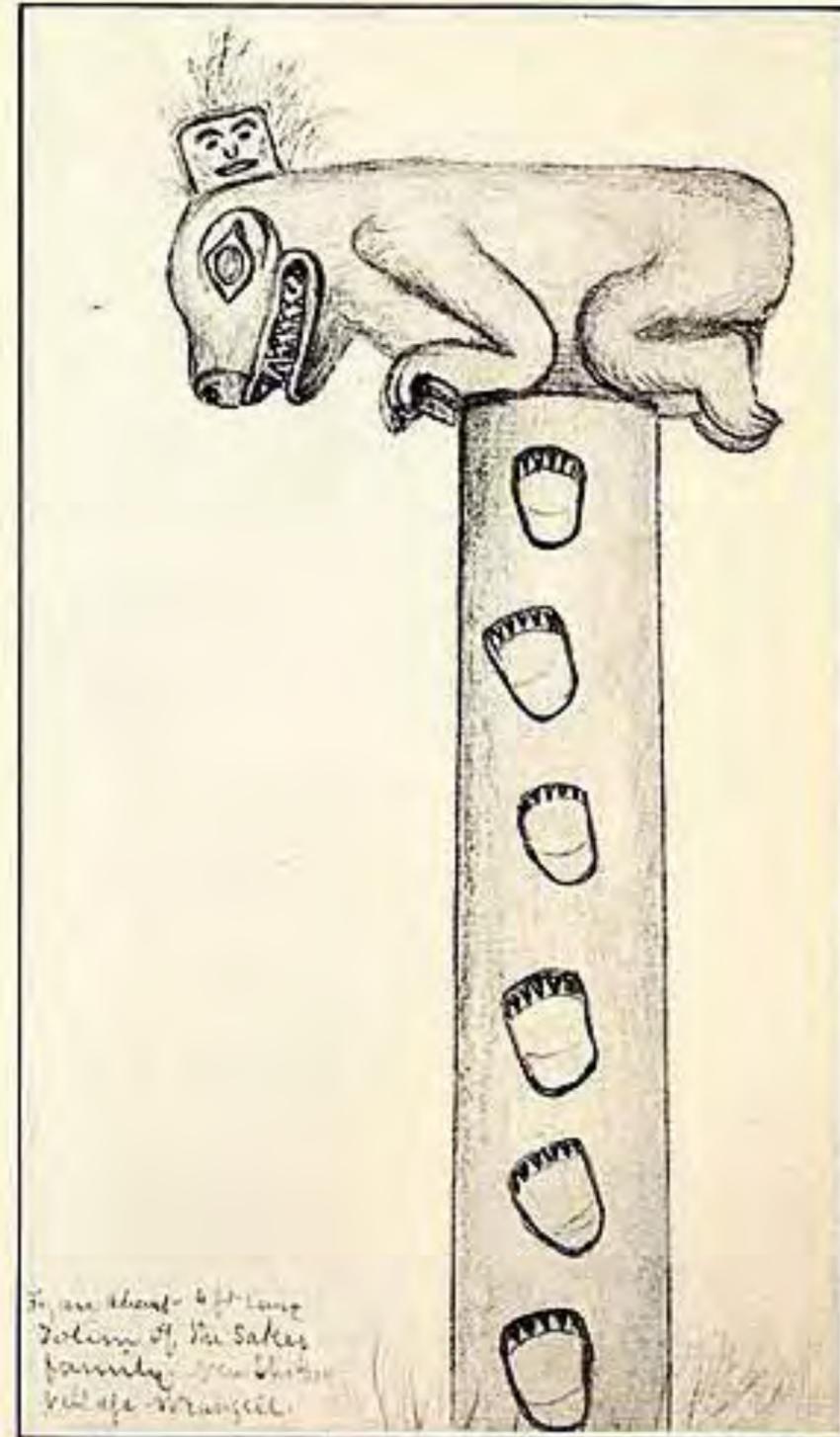


Objects used to reference a more organic marker for JMW- semi-abstract/organic/natural

# Augmenting The Existing Artwork



During consultation, a strong idea emerged of augmenting the existing artwork- utilising the small disc at the centre of the work and extruding out from it a column or base for a new work- either on a plinth or 'grown 'from the centre of the work.



PENCIL SKETCHES OF TOTEMS FROM THE NEW STICKEEN VILLAGE  
FROM JOHN MUIR'S ALASKA NOTEBOOKS









# Recommendations Going Forward

One of the principal ideas developed as a way to extend the existing artwork, is to extrude the disc at the centre into a column- becoming a plinth; a vertical lighting column or indeed a sculptural work, (see images RHS). These ideas are sketched on the new visuals of the site to help explain and contextualise the potential.

Please note, if extending above the height of a plinth, we have been alerted by Alison McBride, (Architect with Argyll and Bute Council), that the work may be subject to a planning application. If extending significantly above plinth height, a foundation detail would also need to be considered for the work. If an internally lit column was developed this would require power connection.



# Recommendations Going Forward

The idea of a ‘touchstone’ to John Muir, something from Helensburgh that would have been significant to him, (such as the Blossom Festival), was the lovely suggestion by Jo Moulin from Dunbar. Jo runs the Museum and shop and exhibit to John Muir in Dunbar, and she felt this was a natural way to integrate John Muir into the town, and the town into John Muir. Jo asked what would John Muir have loved about the town?

*“Key to deciding and shaping the brief for the artwork is, I believe, to somehow get inside John Muir’s head. He has left a library of his own writing and a further library of books by those who have shaped his thinking. However there is one short piece, written by Muir a few brief months after his wife died, that gives the key. During this time he had all but withdrawn from public life but early in 1906 he turned to an old friend who had travelled with him on many of his adventures. The result was ‘Thoughts written on the Birthday of Robert Burns’, penned appropriately on 25 January and easily obtainable on line at:*

*[https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/people/robert\\_burns.aspx](https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/people/robert_burns.aspx)*

*Muir lists the field mouse, the daisy, a wounded hare, silly sheep and cattle, squirrels and birds among those that Burns identifies as “earth-born companions and fellow mortals”. All, and more, may be seen along the John Muir Way whether it’s Helensburgh to Dunbar or vice versa.*

**Jo Moulin, Museums Officer East, Dunbar**



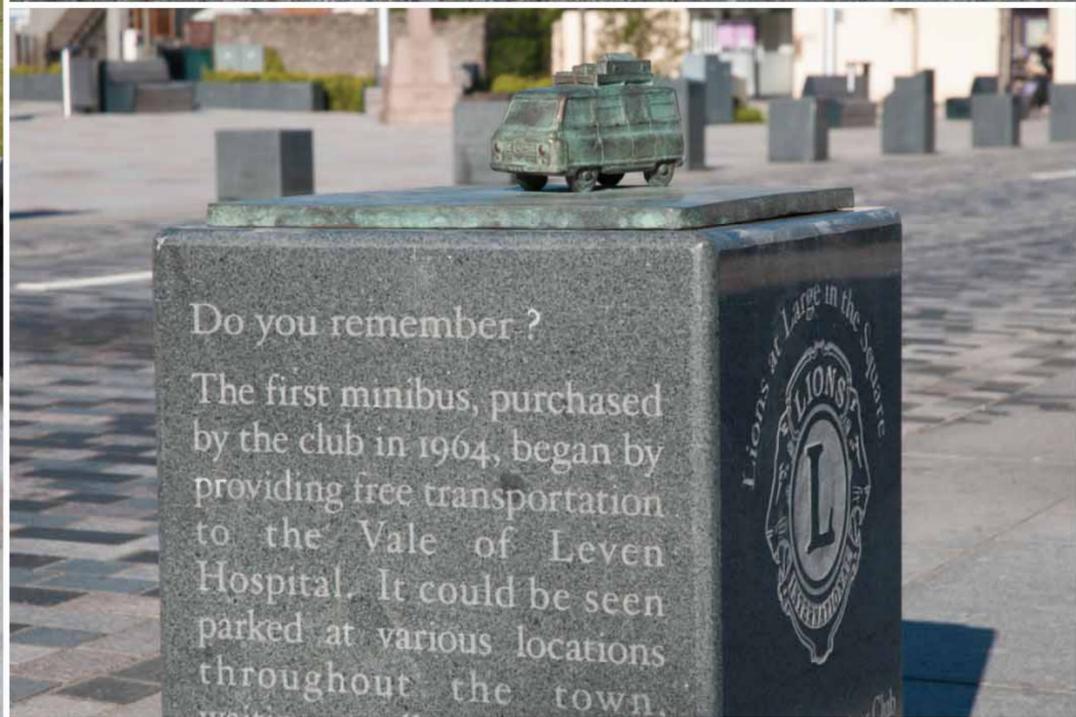
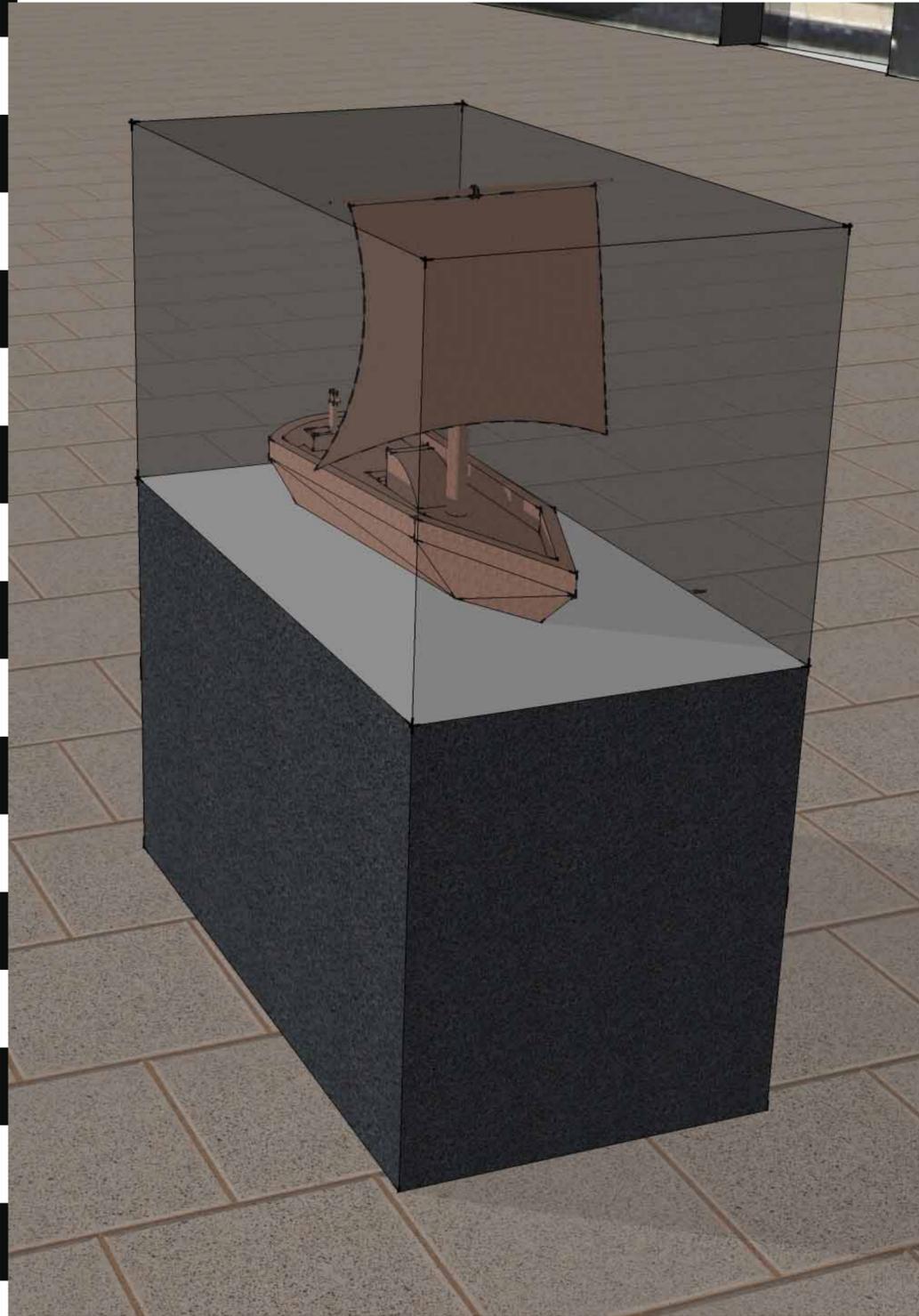




# Artwork Study: Connecting to the Site's History



The Comet & The Lion's Bus plinths











An object presented on a cylindrical plinth, extruded from the centre of the existing roundel, in turn offers a thought of a circular version of the squared plinths of Helensburgh's Outdoor Museum, 9 of these begins a conversation with planetary configurations- on for example Earth Day (John Muir's Birthday)

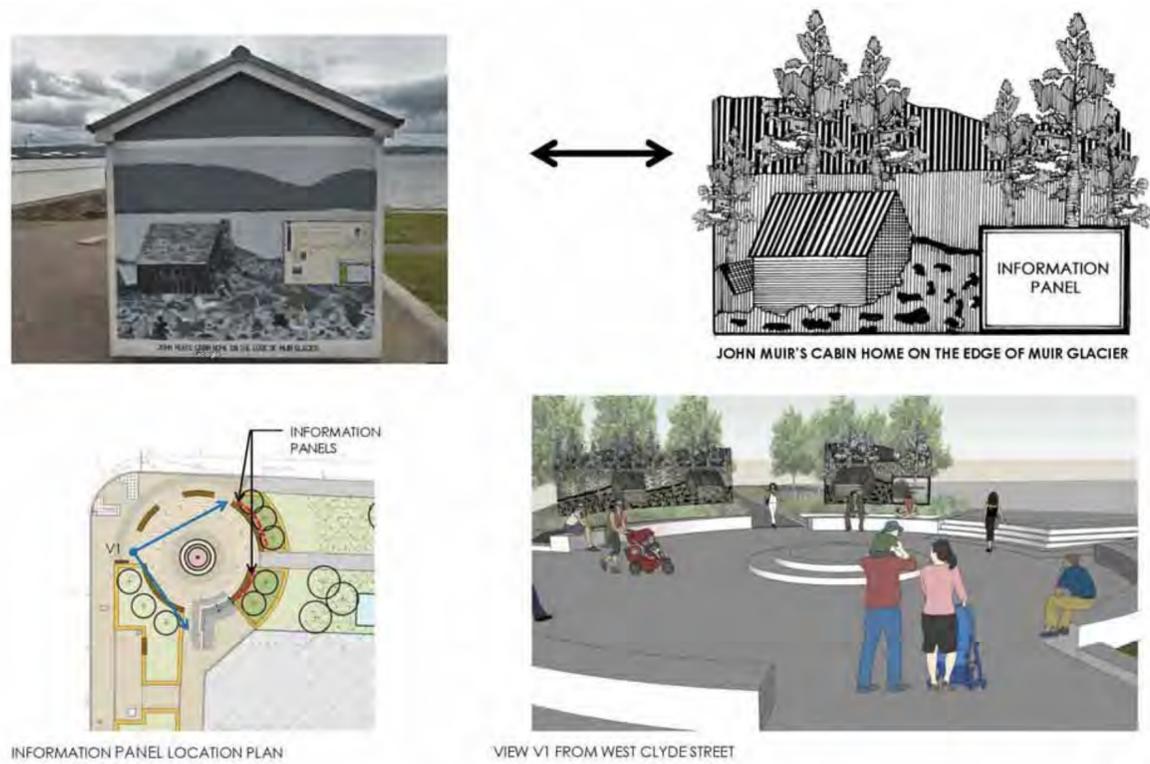


A cylindrical version of the Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square. Eight plinths representing 8 planets and the 9th plinth the Sun, configured for John Muir's Birthday/Earth Day, each carrying an artefact relevant to Helensburgh / John Muir / Nature.

As coincidence's go sometimes, Earth Day celebrations on **April 22nd** also allow us to remember John Muir and celebrate his birthday. (He was actually born on April 21st, but over the years these two dates have become synonymous.)



# Approaches to enhancements to the Civic Space by Hirst Landscape Architects



Hirst Architects had already suggested a set of sympathetic enhancements that could bring rich cultural detail on the John Muir Way and on the Town's History and Heritage into the space - in the event that additional funding was available. The use of cortex sheeting was particularly interesting as a way to provide additional shelter from the traffic behind on Sinclair Street.

This reports supports the augmentation of the space through these approaches and WAVEparticle or others could with Schools and other community groups to generate content for these creative interventions.

## 6. ENHANCEMENTS TO PUBLIC SQUARE ASSOCIATED WITH JOHN MUIR WAY

- CURVED LASER CUT INFORMATION PANEL
  - ENGAGING LOCAL ARTISTS
- ENGRAVED PAVING -
  - WHO JOHN MUIR WAS?
  - JOHN MUIR EVENTS/ACTIVITES TIME TREE



JOHN MUIR WAY ETCHING IN THE PAVING OUTSIDE THE JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM IN DUNBAR



HELENSBURGH WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT - POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENTS  
FEBRUARY 2019



## EXTENSION OF COLQHOUN SQUARE OUTDOOR MUSEUM



ENGRAVED PAVING TO JOHN MUIR WAY - ILLUSTRATIVE

HELENSBURGH PIER AND PADDLE STEAMER TIME LINE WALK PAVING - ILLUSTRATIVE

## 3. EXTENSION OF COLQHOUN SQUARE OUTDOOR MUSEUM

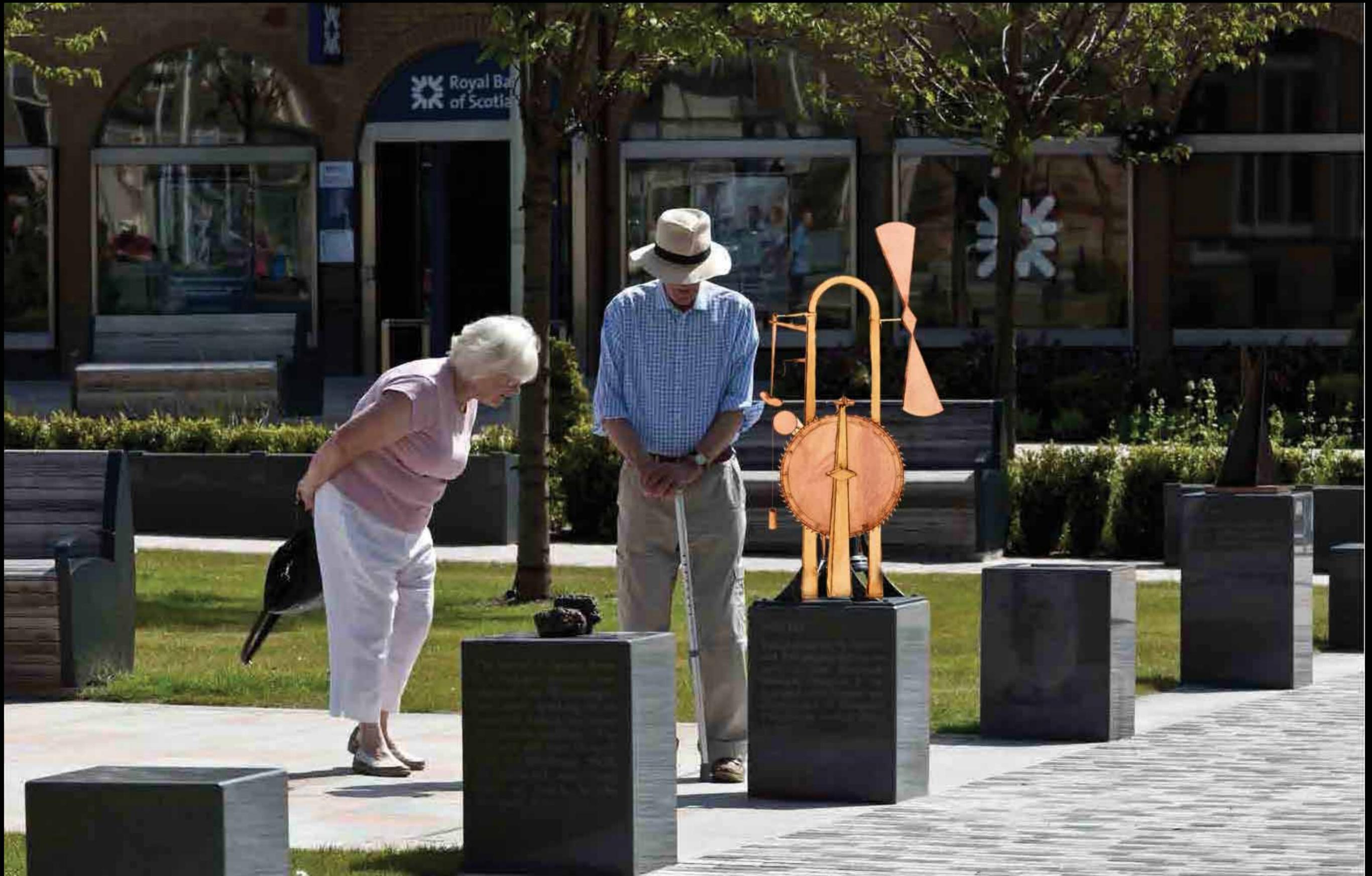
### THEME :

- A TIMELINE OF EVENTS TO TAKE THROUGH HELENSBURGH PIER EDGE & SWIMMING POOL HISTORY ALONG PUBLIC REALM EDGE FROM WEST CLYDE STREET TO NEW LEISURE CENTRE
- AT JOHN MUIR WAY - WHO JOHN MUIR WAS? JOHN MUIR EVENTS/ACTIVITES TIME TREE

### ENGRAVED ON LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

- PAVING/STEPS/SEATS
- SOLID BOLLARDS/PLINTHS







Outdoor Museum displaying artefacts in Colquhoun Square, on completion. Photo by Keith Hunter

# The Importance of Ongoing Engagement

Like the process for the Outdoor Museum this study recommends the next phase is evolved in close consultation with the local Helensburgh community.

The Outdoor Museum responded directly to the Helensburgh community's desire for a Town Museum, and many people, local residents, schools and organisations were involved in the generation of the content for the first 15 plinths. Any further work should trust that the content is *here* in the community and just requires an armature to hold /present it. David Bruce connected us to Elspeth Davis, Head Teacher, at Hermitage Primary School with thoughts about twinning with Dunbar Primary School. **Option B** which recommends the augmenting of the Civic Space rather than commissioning one person's artwork to add to the space offers the opportunity to customise the space in terms of the same approach taken to the outdoor museum.

It was a key principle of the curatorship of the first fifteen objects on permanent display that the contributions should underscore the relationships and mutual value of the local and the national. As such, diversity and empowerment were cornerstones of the process with equal access and rights shared with school pupils, elder statesmen and those contributors who initially felt they had nothing to offer the process. This has extended to the desire to empower diversity going forward and likewise support the sustainable future of the Outdoor Museum.

There is an idea that has emerged at the end of this study to address the circular Civic Space- with a circular artwork at it's heart, as a circular counterpart to Colquhoun Square with it's own outdoor museum, this time circular/ cylindrical plinths rather than square.

Could this help the Civic Space actually become a space for reflection for the JMW walkers and the townsfolk? Could contributions draw out the natural references and organic forms hankered after by some contributors to the workshops? Could the space celebrate John Muir Way and Helensburgh? Potentially but what I am 100% confident about is that if you continue the engagement you will quickly fill those plinths and pavers and corten dividers with wonderful, stimulating objects and stories sourced from the ordinary, extraordinary people you meet- John Muir Way adventurers, local school children, those who have contributed to the engagement thus far and those still to be encountered.

***Fundamental to the design of the Outdoor Museum was to leave the majority of plinths free so that the community could continue to nominate contributions for exhibit long into the future. The Civic Space could likewise evolve over time....***



Pupils from Hermitage Primary getting very excited about making a new plinth for Colquhoun Square

# Recommendations Going Forward

For the reasons articulated under *Considering (Re) Location Pg 56* this report has come full circle to acknowledge that the only viable location for the John Muir Way Artwork under the current programme of work is the Civic Space by Sinclair Street and West Clyde Street.

Thankfully the new visuals of this space, commissioned for this report, help us all visualise the planned Civic space. These images of the space suggest it's potential much more clearly than the previous two dimensional ground plans.

It is clear from these visuals (in contrast to the voiced anxieties of some consultees) that the space can be an excellent, focussed place of orientation towards the sea, towards Greenock and to the National Parks. In addition its circular design lends itself to focussing any artwork, including the John Muir Way work, that is placed within it's boundaries. The design would also seem to offer fantastic opportunities to add value to this space (and integrate many of the ideas put forward in this study by the community)

## **There are two clear choices for the next stage of this work.**

The first option, *Option A*, would be to commission a new John Muir Way Artwork of significant scale that would sit in the Civic space and complement the existing roundel artwork that will be moved there.

The second option *Option B*, would be to augment the existing roundel work with related smaller artworks, etchings and additions to the paving, surrounding benches and to the centre of the artwork, introducing elements that echo the Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square.

Both options would enhance the sense of the Civic space as a place of quality and culture -The first would bring the focus squarely to the John Muir Way, the second option would develop the space to welcome and orient participants on the John Muir Way but also create a destination that connects the town to it's self, it's history and its visitors a space for reflection, engagement and education.

In choosing between enhancements to the Civic space or a newly commissioned artwork, In the balance this report suggests spending money to supercharge the site seems a better approach and gives the best chance of an integrated whole. It must be added that beginning a new commissioning process is challenging in the time scale of the current programme of works and planning. Augmenting the space should not require additional planning permissions.

It should also be noted that the original brief focused on the need for a vertical marker to orientate the JMW participants, the advantage of the Civic space is it's proximity to the Clock Tower. An unmissable vertical marker on the Promenade's horizon.

# Funding Opportunities Summary

## Funding Opportunities

Outwith Creative Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund, in terms of funding for the arts and public art, and the proposed augmentation of the site, a number of the bigger charitable trusts and foundations, with a range of funding streams, may be worth exploring. Between them they basically cover, community, arts, improvement to the local environment. There are also a number of Scottish grant makers worth exploring.

**The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation** – have a number of funding streams but possibly start with the Creative Confident Communities:

<https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/creative-confident-communities/>

**The Paul Hamlyn Foundation** – they invest around £30 million each year across six funding priorities where they wish to see change, and a commitment to social justice underpins all these priorities. They have six open application funds.

<https://www.phf.org.uk/our-funding/>

**Garfield Weston Foundation** – support a broad range of causes and charities across the UK that make a positive difference – including the arts; museums and heritage etc

<https://garfieldweston.org/what-we-support/>

**Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – UK Branch:** is possibly a long shot but may well be worth a look <https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/>

**Biffa Award** – supports a wide range of projects but to be considered at all the project site must be within five miles of a significant Biffa operation or within 10 miles of an active Biffa Landfill site, their recreation theme includes funding for landscaping works etc

<https://www.biffa-award.org/>

## Specifically Scottish Funding

**Scotland Loves Local:** A £10 million **Scottish Government Scotland Loves Local Fund**, multi-year support scheme, aims to encourage people to think local first, supporting businesses and enterprises in their community. A total of £2 million-worth of grants will be available this financial year. **Applications for the fund are open from Monday 9th August 2021 until Friday 1st October, 5pm.** The minimum application is £10,000 and the maximum is £50,000.

<https://lovelocal.scot/scotland-loves-local-fund-application-and-guidance/>

# Funding Opportunities Summary

## Specifically Scottish Funding

**Awards For All Scotland** – always worth applying to as it's a relatively straightforward process with a 3-month turnaround – and can fund up to £10k.  
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

**Institute of Physics Scotland** – have a public engagement grant which offers up to £2,500 to individuals or organisations based in Scotland for physics-based events and activities. For funded projects, they offer support with both public engagement (for physicists) or with physics (for artists, community groups and science communicators).  
<https://www.iop.org/physics-community/iop-membership-where-you-are/Scotland/public-engagement#gref>

**Culture & Business Fund Scotland – Deadline 28<sup>th</sup> September at 11am** – *“The Culture & Business Fund Scotland enables businesses and arts or heritage organisations to come together and build effective, sustainable partnerships, bringing creative projects – large and small – vividly to life. Funded by the Scottish Government via Creative Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland, and managed by Arts & Business Scotland, the CBFS provides critical £ for £ match funding – making the journey from a great idea, to a great project, possible”.*  
<https://www.culturebusinessfund.scot/>

**Year of Stories 2022, Community Stories Fund** – A fund managed by the Museums and Galleries of Scotland. Organisations and groups working with communities can apply for up to £5000 to take part in and celebrate Scotland's Year of Stories 2022, with new, creative events, activities and programming, spotlighting stories inspired by, created, or written in Scotland.  
<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/funding/year-of-stories-2022-community-stories-fund/>

**Foundation Scotland:** have a diverse range of funding programmes benefitting communities across Scotland. Some funds are available on a Scotland-wide basis, and others are aimed at specific geographical areas or themes. You'll find grant size and criteria information on each fund's page, together with any unique criteria. <https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/>

# Appendix

**PG113** Links to relevant research

**PG114** Moving the Current work

**PG116** JMW Greenpeace consultation with Anti-Racist reading Group discussing John Muir Legacy

**PG118** Key Contacts

**PG119** JMW Coverage Helensburgh Advertiser

**PG127** JMW Additional Ideas and Feedback

# Appendix

promo videos giving an overview of the trail:

- John Muir Way by Numbers video ad (45 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJrrS6TONik>
- Discover Scotland on the JMW video ad (60 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viKVw9OsDrg>

<https://artandecology.earth/pilgrimage-for-cop26/>

<https://muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk/2021/04/pilgrimage-for-cop26/>

Info here <https://www.buglife.org.uk/projects/john-muir-pollinator-way/>

Andy Scott John Muir bear statue <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18046693.john-muir-legacy-honoured-giant-steel-bear-statue/>

Image gallery

<https://johnmuirway.org/gallery/>

Merchandise range – see the Icon design which captures a sense of what’s along the Way

<https://www.johnmuirwaystore.org/>

<https://www.johnmuirwaystore.org/collections/frontpage/products/icon-cotton-shopper>

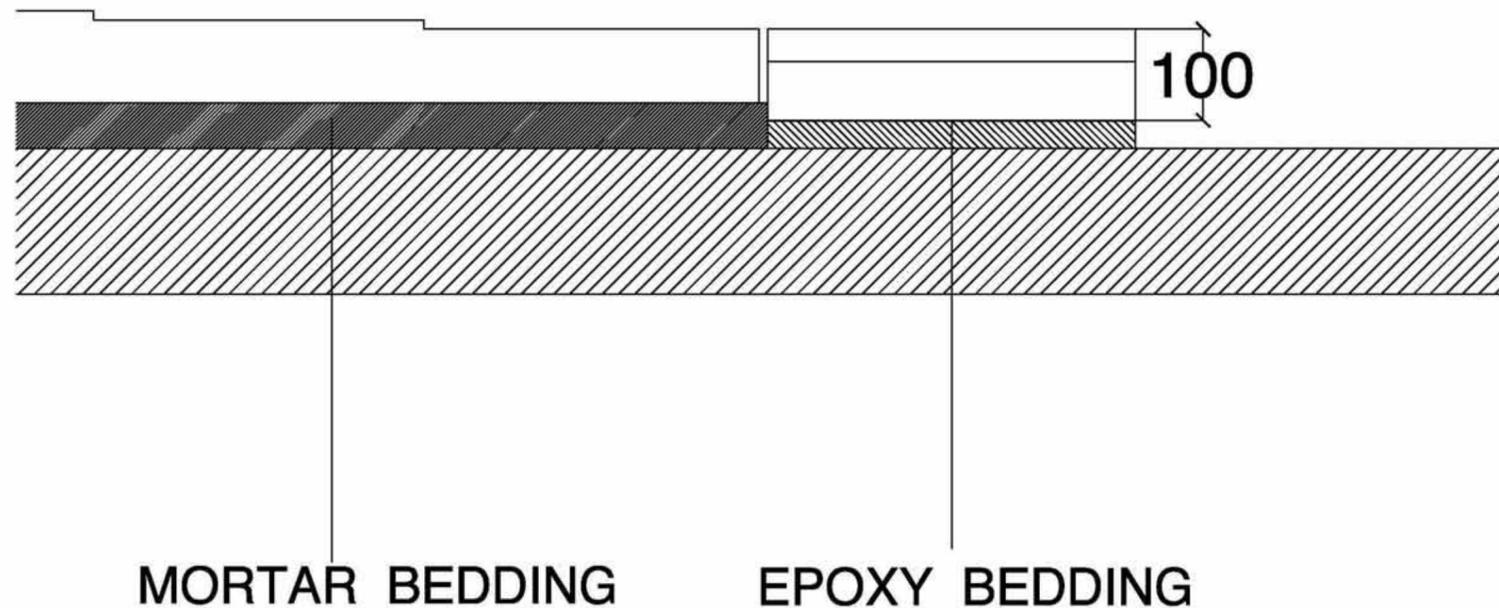
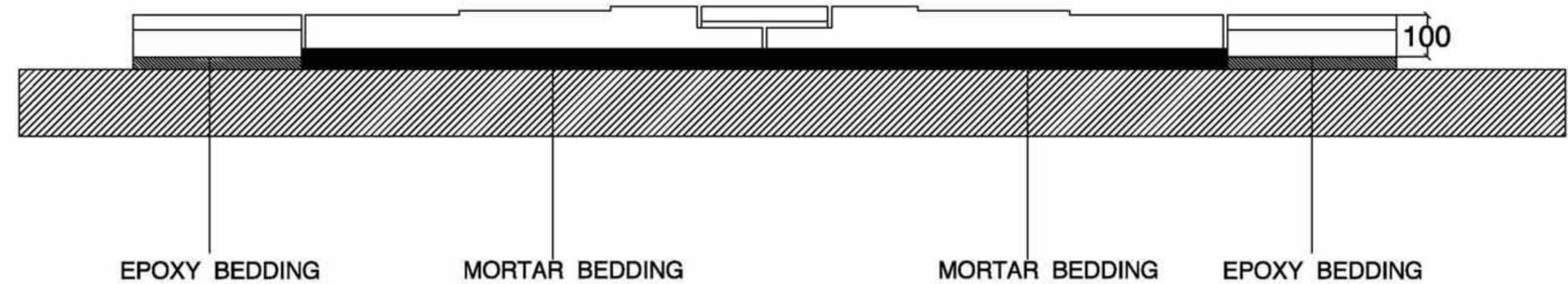


# Appendix

## JMW existing artwork -Bedding\_Detail

Note to Heron's (or whoever moves the Artwork)

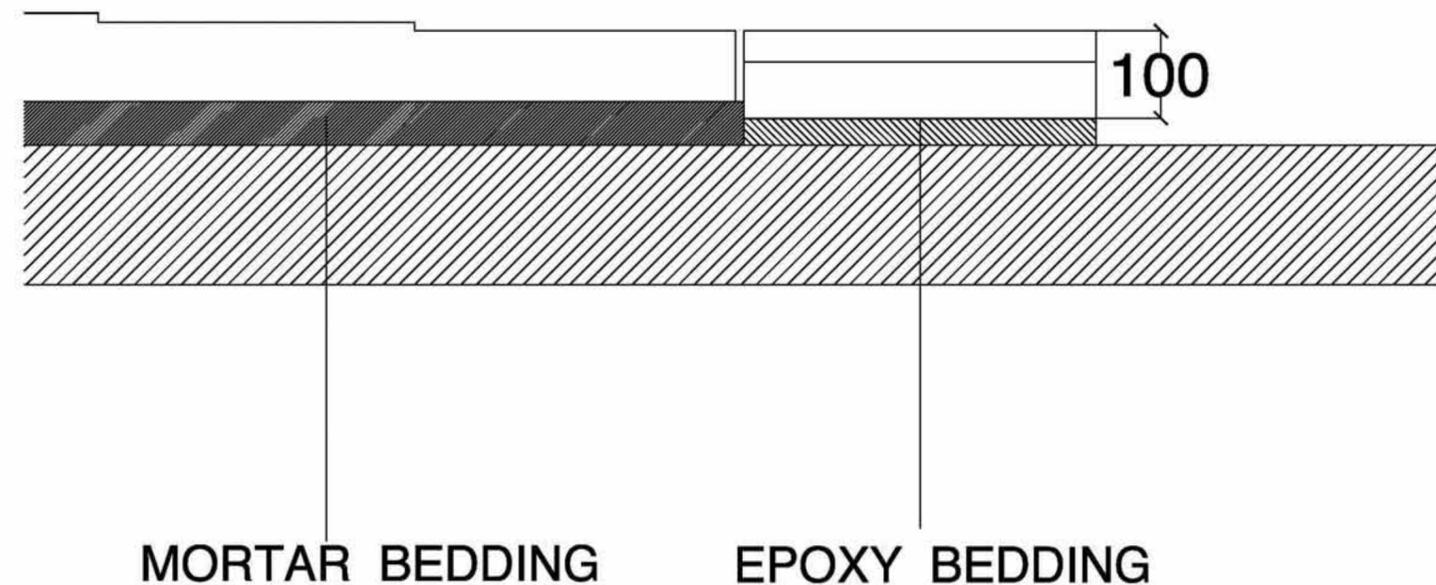
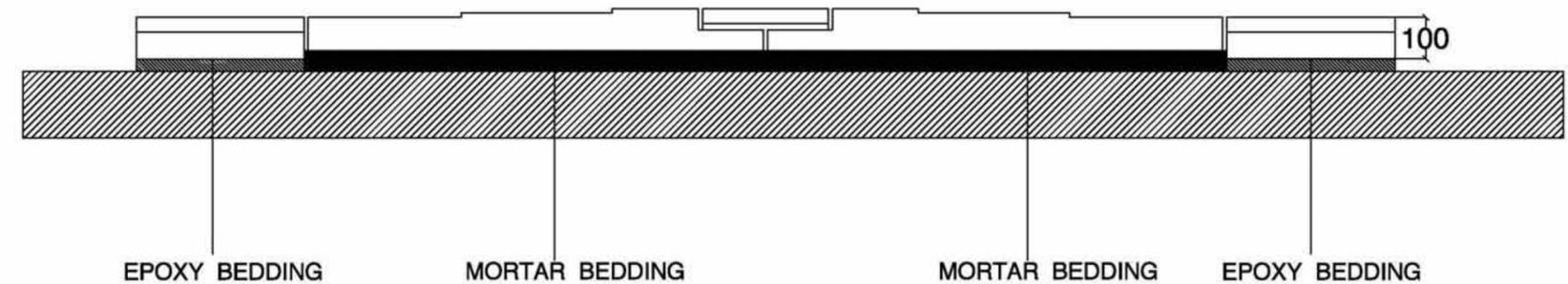
The work was installed by Realstone Glasgow, who used an epoxy bonding agent to fix granite section to concrete foundation. The granite itself was a specialist water jet artwork with infilled section produced by Sawyers for WAVEparticle. We recommend caution in de-mounting the granite from the concreted base -We recommend insurance cover in the region of 10k should the work be damaged and need to be replaced. WAVEparticle designed the work, Sawyers [andrew@asacltd.co.uk](mailto:andrew@asacltd.co.uk) fabricated the outer ring and small disc in the centre. Alec Keeper at Conservation Masonery the sandstone inner pieces



## JMW existing artwork -Uplifting

### Sequence of Laying

- Dry lay all pieces: the outer 8 granite panels circle, 4 sandstone panels and inner granite disk to ensure the correct positions, arrangement and expansion joints have been considered. (At all times when moving the outer granite pieces use the appropriate lifter to ensure the corners to not break off as these will be exposed around the finished piece)
- Remove the 8 granite outer pieces and inner disk.
- Mark the location of sandstone panels.
- Lay the sandstone panels on a (...) bed of (...)mm.
- Lay the 8 granite panels on a (...) bed, there should be a 10mm expansion joint between the granite panel and the sandstone panel. Build the bed up to ensure that the top face of the granite is level with the top face of the sandstone. Lay the inner disk on a mortar bed, in the centre position. Once possible to do so, fill expansion joints. The final colour of these joints should be black.



## **The John Muir Consultation with Greenpeace Glasgow's Anti-racist reading group Thursday 18th March 2021 Danielle Banks Report :**

As part of an effort to understand how John Muir's Legacy is being interrogated Danielle Bank from *WAVEparticle* attended On the 18th of March 2021, a group of 6 environmental volunteers who have formed an anti-racist reading group met to discuss John Muir's legacy. We read a range of the following articles:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-miseducation-of-john-muir>

<https://www.sierraclub.org/michael-brune/2020/07/john-muir-early-history-sierra-club>

<http://geographical.co.uk/uk/discovering-britain/item/3783-discovering-dunbar-following-the-footsteps-of-naturalist-john-muir>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/article/more-diversity-how-to-make-national-parks-anti-racist>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/newsletters/travel/article/how-national-parks-fighting-racism-july-7>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/23/john-muir-sierra-club-apologizes-for-racist-views>

<https://www.europenowjournal.org/2017/01/04/the-nature-of-german-imperialism-conservation-and-the-politics-of-wildlife-in-colonial-east-africa/>

Furthermore, Chad Hanson, Director of John Muir Project (California), got in touch and asked that we include these two articles in our reading. One is an update of the progress made by The Sierra Club after their statement last year, and the other gives more context to John Muir and why he may have held the views that he did early in life.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14Mkwc9crFjxrQDUBLFFVw0-BuG5i0fU/view?usp=sharing>

<https://johnmuirproject.org/2020/07/who-was-john-muir-really/>

Chad asked to join the group and speak but members were a little too timid and felt they wanted to read and form their own opinions before inviting a representative like him.

- Group members were very interested in the fact that he was a technophile first
- They were also interested that later in life, he demonstrated a respect and love for indigenous populations
- While John Muir and his racist writings were a product of their time, Hilary pointed out that there were many, even at the time who were better informed on these matters, such as the quakers. And so we can't excuse him.
- We discussed how his status (the father of the environmental movement) has been given to him by a white people's narrative, which has neglected to tell the stories of the indigenous and black campaigners for the protection of nature.
- We felt he was, later in life, respectful when going into other people's spaces but did not invite indigenous people into his own. We questioned the narrative that he became non racist later in life.
- Anne spoke about the John Muir Trust's role in Scotland. It is much more about protecting the land from human influence. For example, **they are very anti wind farm.**
- We spoke about indigenous people having been moved out of the national parks. Trudy identified that these communities had already been moved before the parks were created and largely the group felt that it wouldn't have harmed the communities further.
- We began to speak much more generally about examples of black friends, colleagues and children having less feelings of safety in the country. We spoke about the hidden knowledge and resources that might be required to feel safe and comfortable in the country - clothing, map reading, transport.
- In response to talking about safety and fear, two group members discussed their own experiences walking from Helensburgh and ending up in either a firing range or at Faslane due to losing their way.

**Response to the sculpture explanation:**

- The group felt it would be important to actually communicate what he did and share more balanced awareness (rather than say, renaming the walk.)
- Trudy highlighted the Orchid as an emblem. This was the first thing John Muir saw when he regained his site as a young person, and he says this is what opened his eyes to the value of nature. I felt that this was an interesting acknowledgment of the personal transformation he went through in his life.
- I then asked them to imagine they were a black person or indigenous person visiting. What would make them feel welcome or safe? The group members didn't feel comfortable speculating about this but felt it was an important question to ask.○ I suggested that perhaps if I was a person of colour, I just wouldn't be very interested in the story of John Muir, a white man. In response to this, group members felt it could become more about the individual's own experience of the walk like the sign at the entrance to the Yellowstone National Park, "For the enjoyment and benefit of the people." They spoke about representing information about what's to come on the trail - for example the trees or the birds.

# John Muir Way: Contacts

JMW flyer n the JMW website –<https://johnmuirway.org/assets/b4f8519d0f/John-Muir-Way-Artwork-Study.pdf>

the HCC Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/helensburghcommunitycouncil/>

Destination Helensburgh

<https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverHelensburghandLomond>

Helensburgh's Community Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HelensburghsCommunityOpinion/>

JMW Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/thejohnmuirway/>

# John Muir Way: Coverage

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## News

7th April

### John Muir Way artwork considered for Helensburgh town centre



Peter McCaughey and Danielle Banks from art organisation WAVEparticle will speak at the Helensburgh Community Council webinar

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**EARLY** ideas for a new piece of art in Helensburgh town centre to mark the western end of the John Muir Way will be sought at a Zoom meeting this week.

Peter McCaughey and Danielle Banks from art organisation WAVEparticle – which worked with the community on the delivery of the award-winning Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square – will outline the project to members of Helensburgh Community Council (HCC) at a special launch ‘webinar’ at 7pm on Thursday, April 8.

A series of free public workshops, again via Zoom, will be held later in the month.

To find out more by attending Thursday evening’s event, email HCC member Tariq Durrani and you’ll be sent an invitation to join the meeting shortly before it begins.

[Keep up with all the latest Helensburgh and Lomond headlines here](#)

## John Muir Way: Racism row sparks fear over plan for new Helensburgh artwork



By Craig Borland | @helensburghadv  
Senior Content Editor



**WORK has begun on plans for new piece of public art in Helensburgh remembering the legacy of world-renowned conservationist John Muir – but Muir's heavily-criticised views on race mean the artwork is unlikely to be a statue of the man himself.**

The Green Action Trust (GAT), which is responsible for the upkeep of the 134-mile John Muir Way from Helensburgh to Dunbar, and art organisation WAVEParticle held the first in a series of online workshops last week to gather the views of the community on how best to mark the western end of the route.

The start – or finish – of the walk in Helensburgh is currently marked by a flat, ground-level artwork at the eastern end of the promenade, close to the public toilets on the pier.

But relocating that artwork to the corner of West Clyde Street and Sinclair Street forms part of the £22 million redevelopment of the town's waterfront – and thought is now being given to whether the western end of the Way should be marked more prominently, to point walkers towards the official start, or end of the route.

<https://www.helensburghadvertiser.co.uk/news/19241374.opinion-john-muir-racism-fears-shouldnt-stop-helensburgh-marking-legacy/>

Muir, who was born and raised in Dunbar, emigrated from Scotland to America with his family in 1849, when he was 11 years old.

His passion for the conservation and the natural world led to him becoming known as 'the patron saint of the American wilderness' and 'Father of the National Parks'.

### [READ MORE: Racist views of conservationist John Muir prompt review](#)

But he hit the headlines in the summer of 2020 when the Sierra Club, which Muir founded to champion the American environment in 1892, issued a public apology for the "derogatory comments" he made in some of his writings about Black and Indigenous Americans, which "drew on deeply harmful racist stereotypes", while stating that "his views evolved later in his life".

Also last summer, Black Lives Matter protesters toppled a statue of 17th-century slave trader Edward Colston from its plinth in Bristol and dumped in the city's docks.

Helensburgh resident Christine Woods, referring to that incident, asked: "Are we opening ourselves up to trouble if anyone takes exception to a statue of Muir?"

Elaine Macintosh from the GAT replied: "John Muir was not perfect, and we're not trying to say that he was – but there is plenty in his legacy that we think is worthy of promotion.



The current flat artwork marking the western end of the John Muir Way is to be relocated to the junction of Sinclair Street and West Clyde Street as part of the waterfront work - but a new, more prominent, piece of art marking the start, or end, point of

“I wouldn’t imagine that the outcome of this piece of work will be a statue of John Muir himself.

“In promoting the John Muir Way we are much more interested in promoting what Muir was an advocate of, than promoting the man himself.”

Ms Macintosh told the event: “The feedback from users of the John Muir Way is that it’s quite hard to find the current start or finish point.

**[READ MORE: Look back at how Helensburgh celebrated the launch of the John Muir Way in 2014](#)**

“We’ve managed to secure some money from the Scotland Loves Local fund to carry out the first phase of a new project, putting forward a brief for an artwork that’s a bit more visible, though we don’t yet have money for a subsequent phase to fund an artwork itself.”

The Way in Helensburgh climbs up Colquhoun Street, past the Hill House and out of town on the cycle path next to the A818 before crossing Bannachra Muir, Goukhill Muir and Upper Stoneymollan and descending to Balloch.

From there it continues via Carbeth, Strathblane, Lennoxton, Kirkintilloch, Croy, Bonnybridge, the Falkirk Wheel, Linlithgow, Bo’ness, South Queensferry and Edinburgh, before the final stretch via Musselburgh, Prestonpans, Gullane and North Berwick to Dunbar, where Muir was born on April 21, 1838.

Further Zoom workshops to explore Helensburgh’s views on the idea of a new piece of art remembering Muir’s legacy, if not Muir himself, are being held on Wednesday, April 21 and Wednesday, April 28, before the end results are presented at a further session on Thursday, May 13.

Each of the sessions will run from 7-9pm.

To take part in the sessions click on the following on each date:

Wednesday, April 21 at 7pm: [bit.ly/MuirWork2](https://bit.ly/MuirWork2)

Wednesday, April 28 at 7pm: [bit.ly/MuirWork3](https://bit.ly/MuirWork3)

Thursday, May 13 at 7pm: [bit.ly/MuirReview](https://bit.ly/MuirReview)

**[READ MORE: Catch up with all the latest Helensburgh and Lomond news headlines here](#)**

# John Muir Way: Coverage

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News 18th April

## Opinion: John Muir racism fears shouldn't stop Helensburgh marking his legacy



**Ideas are being gathered in Helensburgh over the next few weeks with a view to having a more prominent piece of art sited in the town to mark the western end of the John Muir Way.**

It's a long way off: there isn't yet any money to pay for said new work of art, nor any decision on what it might look like – a whole new potential can of worms, as Lady Helen will tell you every time you walk past her face on the Civic Centre – or where it might be located.

Now, here I have a confession to make: if it weren't for the fact that the John Muir Way begins, or ends, in Helensburgh, I doubt I'd be able to tell you much about

# John Muir Way: Coverage

John Muir himself. His link with Helensburgh doesn't appear to stretch much beyond the fact that the coast-to-coast walk that bears his name stretches from Muir's Dunbar birthplace to the prom on West Clyde Street. And, possibly, that if you look across the Clyde from the small piece of ground-level art that marks the western end of the Way, you will see Greenock, from where the 11-year-old Muir and his family emigrated to the USA in 1849.

Which is not to say I think Helensburgh's association with John Muir, however slight it might be, is a bad thing. Anything that brings visitors to see what Helensburgh has to offer, and support the local economy is all right by me.

But a story which briefly hit the headlines last summer, and an exchange we reported in the Advertiser this week, show that a link with John Muir isn't entirely without risk. Because in some of the things he wrote after he arrived in the States, Muir described Black Americans and Native Americans in terms which are, to our 21st-century eyes, racist and, to be frank, entirely unacceptable.

Muir's views changed, for the better, as he got older. But given the anger expressed by the Black Lives Matter movement at the memorials to people such as the Bristol slave trader Edward Colston, who owed a large part of his success in life to his exploitation of his fellow human beings, the question of "aren't we asking for trouble if we put a statue of John Muir up in Helensburgh?" needed to be asked.

# John Muir Way: Coverage

Thankfully the Green Action Trust, which maintains the Way, is well aware that Muir is not as straightforward a figure as people used to think. And to hear the Trust say they think any such artwork should be about Muir's legacy, rather than a statue of the man himself, is most welcome. For there are plenty of aspects of that legacy – a passion for the outdoors, a dedication for protecting wildlife and preserving areas of wilderness, a lifelong enthusiasm for the natural world in the face of the increasing march of materialism – that are worth remembering and being inspired by. That is not to suggest that the unacceptable views Muir penned on race should be swept under the carpet. As with any of our heroes, the whole story might take more time and more effort to learn.

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News

16th June

# John Muir Way: Lack of cash puts Helensburgh artwork plans on hold



By Ross Hanvidge | [@RHanvidge](#)  
Senior Reporter



The current artwork in Helensburgh marking the start, or end, of the John Muir Way (Photo: Ann Stewart)

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**NEW artwork marking the western end of the John Muir Way is unlikely to be installed in Helensburgh any time soon due to a lack of funds.**

Helensburgh Community Council (HCC) had hosted a series of online presentations by art organisation WAVEParticle, but members described the virtual workshops as "disappointing" following their conclusion at the end of May.

The idea of a new artwork had been discussed by WAVEParticle's Peter McCaughey, who designed the Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square.

When the the idea of a new piece of art to mark the western end of the Way was first raised in April, concerns were aired that it might become a target for protests because of Muir's controversial views on race, which he aired in his early years in America after emigrating there from Scotland.

**[READ MORE: 'Are we asking for trouble?' Racism row sparks fear over Helensburgh artwork plan](#)**

But the likelihood – or lack of it – of a new piece of art being installed to mark Muir's legacy appears to be down to something rather more prosaic – a shortage of cash.

An additional feature was suggested to complement the current stone structure, in the grass beside the esplanade just to the west of the pier, that is being re-sited as part of the waterfront leisure centre development.

However those plans are no further forward as it was announced that it was "extremely unlikely" that there would be any money in the near future to fund such a project.

HCC member Stewart Noble, who attended the virtual presentations said: "The one plus point arose from agreement that the proposed new location for the existing ground-based artwork at the south-west corner of Clyde Street and Sinclair Street was unsatisfactory, but that a new location nearer the new swimming pool would be much better.

"Its removal to the new site would be undertaken by Heron Bros as part of their work on the new swimming pool.

# John Muir

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"The existing artwork is having to be moved because Scottish Water feel that it is too close to one of its underground storage tanks. Furthermore Scottish Water are particularly concerned that, if the artwork were to be made any bigger, its weight could actually damage the storage tank.

[READ MORE: Advertiser View: John Muir racism concerns shouldn't stop Helensburgh marking his legacy](#)

"It had also been felt that the existing artwork was insufficiently conspicuous as a marker because it did not rise above ground level – it lacks a vertical element.

"As a result walkers and cyclists finishing the long distance route or starting out on it had nothing of real significance for their photographs. This is in marked contrast with the other end of the John Muir Way at his birthplace in Dunbar."

The existing artwork will be moved from its current location and relocated to near the new leisure centre, and it will be raised up with the potential of doubling as a seat.

HCC convener Norman Muir said: "Let's just hope that money can eventually be found for a really worthwhile artwork to underline Helensburgh's place at the west end of the John Muir Way.

"In the meantime I would like to thank all those who contributed to the workshops for their ideas, and for giving up their time."

[READ MORE: Check out all the latest news headlines from around Helensburgh and Lomond by clicking here](#)

# John Muir Way: Feedback

Comments after Workshop 1, 15 April 2021

Fiona Baker

Focus - John Muir the man or the vision of protection of the natural world. You have stated the latter but the discussion in Workshop One became too literal, too focussed on the person and personality of JM, physical location and 'ye olden days'. Yes, the personality of JM needs to be discussed but danger of missing the big picture and the big idea.

- Arrival and departure, looking out and looking in, between the old and the new worlds, liminal space. Embrace, poignancy and welcome. Letting go and moving on. This is the end of the pier.
- Is Helensburgh the beginning of the walk? Walking back in time to his birth or setting off out into the world to change the world? I have always thought of Helensburgh as the end, JM's departure point, which way do most people walk the route and what do walkers perceive as beginning and end. Or for most is it small pieces, a world within worlds microcosm as Yosemite was to JM. What do the 300 surveys say? Is there a word cloud?
- Welcome home/ a journey of self-discovery.
- Selfie power and sense of place
- Pilgrimage and spiritual transformation
- BLM - a can of worms in a town and district built on the wealth of sugar barons, tobacco lords and shipping magnates who made their fortune in the second city of Empire. Is it even necessary to mention JM's racist views concurrent with his era. Revisionism is a dangerous game.
- Seeds, ideas, from little acorns.... '(tactile big bronze acorn or Sequoia cone) theme that could be carried all along the route, seed pods and natural things (bronze) and / or around the town 'constellation effect' embellishing our lost opportunities'
- JMW logo / symbol - his image is used for the walk, takes a nano second to interpret it is the face, perhaps a new / additional symbol needed.
- Climate emergency and value of preservation of nature
- Looking forward not backwards, JM looked forward.
- 'Exploding' seed head with inspirational words on the seeds - believe, vision, journey, protect, explore, persevere, legacy, endeavour, etc Sequoia / pine cones also explode lots of seeds.

- Pool blocking the view and retail park on pierhead...future environs.
- Essential to see the sea.
- End of the pier is the best location (but we need to fix it first)
- Bottom of Sinclair St, something needed to counterpoise the clock tower. Expect a square being done there anyway and this project seen as a way to amalgamate and play tag on this by moving the JM marker there. Last place to mark the end of the JMW is at a main road junction at the entrance to a car park with no view of the sea and access to it across a busy carpark. Anathema to his achievement.
- Light installation in this square a better idea. This should reference JLB (e.g. giant cathode ray 'cathodiser') and celebrating JLB anniversary in 2025.
- JM connection to HB is already a tad tenuous / a victim of practicality. JLB is unequivocally our greatest son and light sculpture, and innovation is suitable.
- Signs pointing to Yosemite or telescope / seaside viewers with a hark back to the past and a view of Yosemite - too literal, it needs to be a bit more esoteric than that, walking 134 miles is transformational. Seaside big binoculars with images of the estuary in days gone by is a nice interpretive idea (incorporate into pier regeneration 'community engagement') but JM is 'bigger' than that.
- Science /STEM focus, numbers, and ratios (apart from the golden one) you have lost half the audience, art is not, to my mind, about mathematical formula and presenting statistics. Evocation is a higher priority than education, thoughts more than facts. Personally, I suspect 'factual / science' brains are more receptive to abstract concepts than 'creative/ artistic' brains are to numerical formulas / representations.
- Money for the actual artwork - the Outdoor Museum has pots of money £50k or so that is supposed to be spent by a certain time (soon and no doubt extended by COVID). Very low take up for the plinths because of the 50:50 cost requirement and the many hoops people must jump through. The outdoor museum would be successful if it were 100% funded and people were submitting proposals they didn't need to find £1000s for.
- The pier is about Helensburgh not JM. Timelines are nice, but it should be Helensburgh's timeline not JM's.
- Tie into West Coast Waters and The Coast that shaped the World.
- Durability of material on seafront, mirrored steel would last 5 minutes, and bronze will need a special patination / protection for the long term.

# John Muir Way: Feedback

Good meeting yesterday evening... very impressed by how you keep it running along. Besides individually conjuring up concepts around and through our screen(s), I think we might develop a greater and deeper insight (and a more solid appreciation of the marker's physical, historic, geographic and conceptual positioning) through consideration of participants' physical and emotional requirements at that vital start/end point. This could help define relevant features that support/enhance the totality of experience in either setting off or completing the John Muir Trail. Moreover, it represents a robust design process, ie, placing the user at its centre. Perhaps gather information/ thoughts from some folk who have completed the trail? What measures of orientation/ celebration might be most welcome at the beginning/ end of such a trail? ... information.... the total concept...immediate points of interest along the way....

*Norman McNally*

Hi Peter

You may remember me and my husband John from way back when you did the outdoor museum and there were quite a number of consultations around that. We were active too around the time when we persuaded [GreenSpace](#) to bring the John Muir Way to Helensburgh on the back of the existing Three Lochs Way.

I did try to join the CC meeting last night, but did not receive the requested meeting link from Mr [Durrani](#) and when I phoned [Nigel Miller](#) he was of course busy at the meeting. We're keen to see an improved presence for the JMW existing [artwork](#), but would suggest that there are also other related considerations that merit some attention.

Here is a list of items that we are anxious to highlight before things get too far down the line –

- The junction of Sinclair Street and the entrance to a car park for the new swimming pool was never the terminus of the JMW.
- As an historic and iconic landmark, Helensburgh Pier head was chosen as the start/finish of the JMW for the excellent reason that the Pier is where there is an uninterrupted view across to Greenock where JM sailed for America in 1849.
- Helensburgh Pier is also an important waypoint on the Three Lochs Way – another of Scotland's Great Trails.
- The Pier is also the start/finish of the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail to Oban.
- It is also a waypoint on the car/cycle touring route called the Clyde [Sealochs](#) Trail which stretches from Dumbarton to Arrochar – recognised by VisitScotland and road signposted – There are 14 information panels along the trail and an additional panel is about to be installed on the actual pier. We were asked to input to that and a new information leaflet that has been designed and is ready for printing by A&B Council.
- Both the TLW and the JMW turn away from the seafront at Colquhoun Street into Colquhoun Square and thence up the quiet, leafy and floral [Colquhoun](#) street to the Hill House, a much more preferable route than walking or cycling up busy Sinclair Street.

We understand that this may complicate [matters](#), but having been heavily involved in all of the above projects, all of them designed in one way or another to highlight Helensburgh and bring a variety of benefits to the town, we think it would be remiss not to try and 'join them up' at what is an important point in the townscape. We believe some kind of signpost idea along with the existing horizontal artwork was under discussion last night. That sounds interesting.

# John Muir Way: Feedback

Another point to bear in mind is that there are many reasons to believe there is every chance that the pier will one day be resurrected as an important focus in the life of Helensburgh and it would be a mistake for this development to turn its back on such a historic location.

Happy to chat and hopefully we'll manage to join you at some of the other sessions.

All the best  
Anne and John Urquhart

Hi Anne/John

I am interested but chiefly from the notion that the public artwork should incorporate the start/finish of the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail and an important waypoint on the Three Lochs Way. Do you know if anybody else is doing this?

Geoff

# John Muir Way: Thanks

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