Granton Coastal Park

Penn State Study Abroad: Summer 2026

Introduction

In June 2026 landscape architecture students from Pennsylvania State University in the USA visited Edinburgh, with their tutor Professor Dan Marriott, during their summer study abroad programme.

As part of the programme the students needed an interesting site to study and use for a design project that, not only would help in their training as landscape architects, but could also contribute useful and thought provoking ideas for how the site could be improved.

Through discussion with local landscape architect Tim Wilson from OVERGROWN, the site chosen was the space for a future coastal park identified in the City of Edinburgh's "Granton Waterfront Development Framework" (2020).

Design principles

The design principles for the future coastal park were described and illustrated within the Development Framework which includes:

- take account of climate change and meeting future required flood defence.
- provide facilities for residents and visitors to create city and local scale destination.
- park should provide an east-west connection, continuing the active corridor from Cramond to Portobello.
- views across the Forth to be enhanced and framed.
- consider landscape and ecology designations, and improvement and management of biodiversity.
- provide an educational asset and opportunity for outdoor learning.
- create multi-functional landscape with wide range of hard, green, wild and open spaces.

As no further landscape design studies have been carried out, beyond the work within the Development Framework, it is a perfect site for the students to study and contribute their ideas to whatever design development will follow.

Brief

We challenged the students by expanding the brief beyond these design principles, to consider not just the area designated for the coastal park within the development framework (green area in adjacent plan), but also the inter-tidal area of the coastline and the wider connections into and out of the park.

To give an introduction to the site Tim Wilson, Katie Smith (Granton Community Gardeners) and Leonie Alexander (Edinburgh Shoreline) gave a walking tour of the area for the coastal park to the students.

Afterwards we met in The Pitt to discuss the site and the brief, and were joined by Rosslyn Barr who gave an introduction to Edinburgh Shoreline's "Shifting Baseline" project, and explained how the students ideas and response to the site could be included within this project.

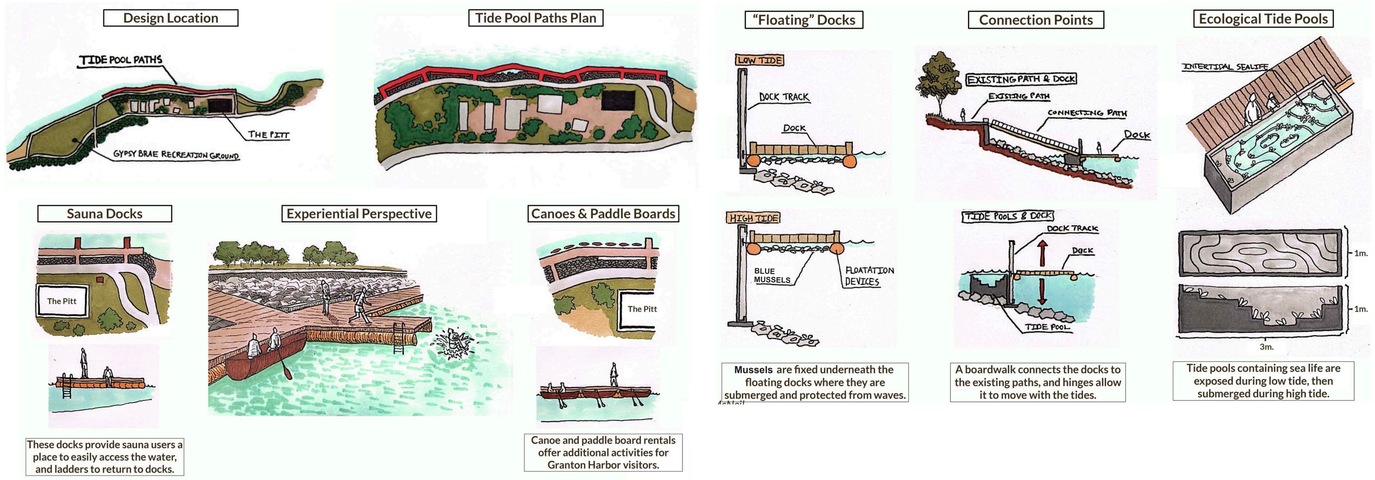
Then Tim Wilson gave a summary of the marine tree reef concept and proposals for a pilot project in the area.

The goal set for the students was to identify a focus area and then to research, visit and coordinate with individuals and organisations, and prepare a presentation back in The Pitt of their analysis and design concepts.

This board contains a summary of these design ideas, from the presentation, organised by the themes which the students focused on.

1. Tide pool paths

Max McNeil proposed multi-functional floating paths along a section of the coastal park that would not only enable access to, and enjoyment of the water, but also create habitat for marine wildlife and provide structures that help to protect the coastline.



Mussels are fixed underneath the floating docks where they are submerged and protected from waves.

A boardwalk connects the docks to the existing paths, and hinges allow it to move with the tides.

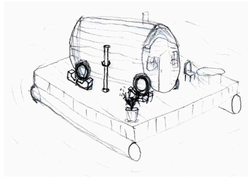
Tide pools containing sea life are exposed during low tide, then submerged during high tide.

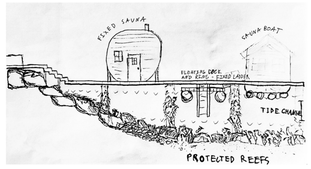
These docks provide sauna users a place to easily access the water, and ladders to return to docks.

Canoe and paddle board rentals offer additional activities for Granton Harbor visitors.

2. Sauna and wild swimming

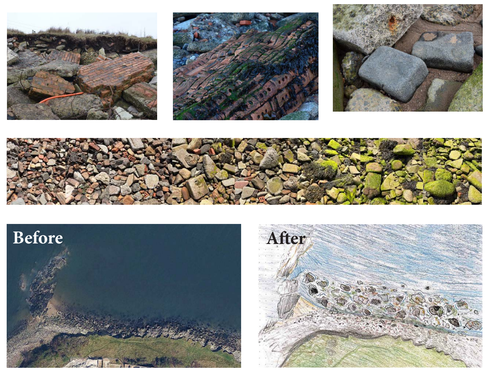
After visting Soul Water Sauna next to The Pitt, **Woody Blaine** realised that the experience would be better if there was easier access to the Firth of Forth to take a cold plunge. This led to proposals for the sauna pods on either fixed or floating docks, that would also provide habitat for marine species.





3. History, materials and re-use

Kyle Lam and **Luke Brossman** became fascinated by the story of how such an extraordinary mix of brick, stone and concrete ended up at Royston Beach from demolition elsewhere in Edinburgh. They explored the potential for re-using the material to provide inter-tidal habitat, and in the process provide opportunities for educating about the history and re-imagining the space through story-telling.

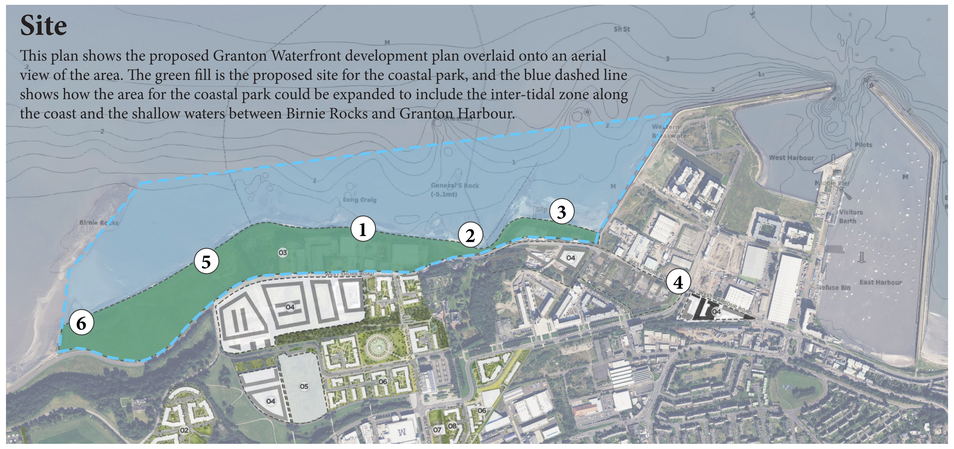


6. Ecology strategies

After researching the environmental devastaton of the Firth of Forth cause by industry and over-fishing, **Emma Schneemann** and **Madelyn McKee** proposed ecology strategies for restoring habitat for oysters, mussels and sea-grass suited for the Granton coastline, that include providing artificial reefs and tern rafts and creative use of dredged sediment from the shipping channels.

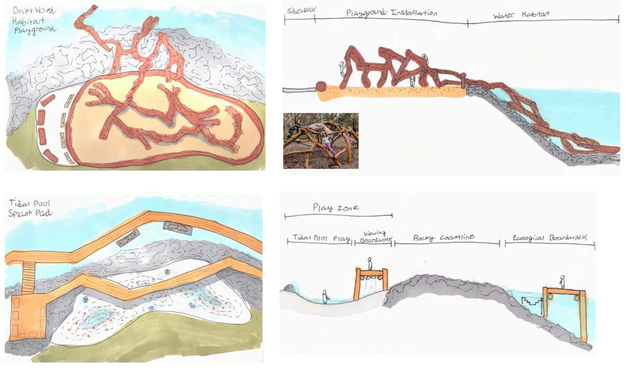
Site

This plan shows the proposed Granton Waterfront development plan overlaid onto an aerial view of the area. The green fill is the proposed site for the coastal park, and the blue dashed line shows how the area for the coastal park could be expanded to include the inter-tidal zone along the coast and the shallow waters between Birnie Rocks and Granton Harbour.



5. Driftwood habitat playground

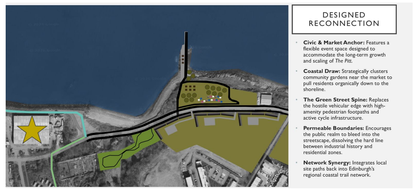
Inspired by the ecological and coastal protection benefits of reintroducing driftwood into the marine environment, **Nick Moore** designed a playground that uses this restoration strategy as the opportunity to create an interactive and playful learning experience. The playground could also include a tidal pool splash pad with the theme of shellfish habitats and their vital role in healthy marine ecosystems.



4. Fixing the broken coastal corridor

Exploring in the area around the site, **Kyle Platton** identified a break in the coastal path adjacent to the Granton harbour infill development (red line in adjacent plan) with narrow pavements and a car dominated streetscape.

The designed reconnection includes creating a new green street with generous pedestrian and cycle paths, and with a new civic / park space adjacent to Royston beach that can provide a space for a community market.



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