

VENTNOR COASTAL DEFENCE SCHEME

LANDSCAPE

VISION AND OPPORTUNITIES

PLAN

STAGE 1 REPORT

*a long list document of public realm
mitigation and opportunities*

PREFACE

This document represents Stage 1 of the LVOP. It has been prepared in response to the LVOP SMI Scope (August 2025), and aligns with the Environment Agency standards outlined within the Collaborative Delivery Framework including those set out in LIT 74734: Landscape Visioning and LIT 74733: Landscape Overall Design Concept (ODC).

Building on the preferred engineering option outlined in the project's Outline Business Case, this Landscape Vision and Opportunities Plan seeks to identify placemaking and environmental design opportunities and mitigation, both big and small that could be considered within the emergent engineering design going forward. These opportunities aim to go beyond statutory compliance, seeking instead to deliver a lasting, place-specific legacy for Ventnor, one that enhances resilience, celebrates local character, and enriches the everyday experience of residents and visitors alike.



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APIB	Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity
BLTCA	Baseline Landscape Townscape Character Assessment
ESAP	Environmental Site Appraisal Plan
EA	Environment Agency
EU	European Union
FCERM	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
GiA	Grant in Aid
HRA	Habitat Regulations Assessment
IoWC	Isle of Wight Council
IPS	Island Planning Strategy
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
LNA	Local Needs Assessment
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LVOP	Landscape Vision and Opportunities Plan
NID	Nature Inclusive Design
OBC	Outline Business Case
ODC	Overall Design Concept
PEAR	Preliminary Environmental Appraisal Report
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SMI	Service Managers Instruction
SMP2	Shoreline Management Plan 2
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

01



SETTING THE SCENE

Ventnor is one of the Isle of Wight's most distinctive coastal towns, nestled between dramatic cliffs and the English Channel. Its seafront is rich in character, shaped by a unique topography and a legacy of Victorian engineering, with layered public spaces that offer panoramic views, intimate beach access, and a strong sense of place. The town's coastal edge is not only a vital line of defence but also a cherished public realm that supports tourism, recreation, and community life.

Like many coastal settlements, Ventnor faces complex challenges. Climate change is accelerating the risk of slope instability and coastal erosion, while the legacy of past development patterns has left some areas of the seafront more exposed and underutilised. The need for resilient infrastructure is urgent, but so too is the opportunity to reimagine the public realm - to create spaces that are not only functional but inspiring, inclusive, and reflective of local identity.

The Ventnor Coastal Defence Scheme, delivered collaboratively by the Environment Agency and the Isle of Wight Council, represents a significant investment in the town's future. While its primary purpose is to safeguard homes, businesses and infrastructure, the scheme also presents an opportunity to explore transformative placemaking. Through the development of a Landscape Vision and Opportunities Plan (LVOP), the project seeks to embed public realm enhancements and environmental mitigation into the engineering design - ensuring that the outcomes are not only technically robust but also socially, economically and environmentally enriching.

This document draws upon previous work undertaken to date, including but not limited to:

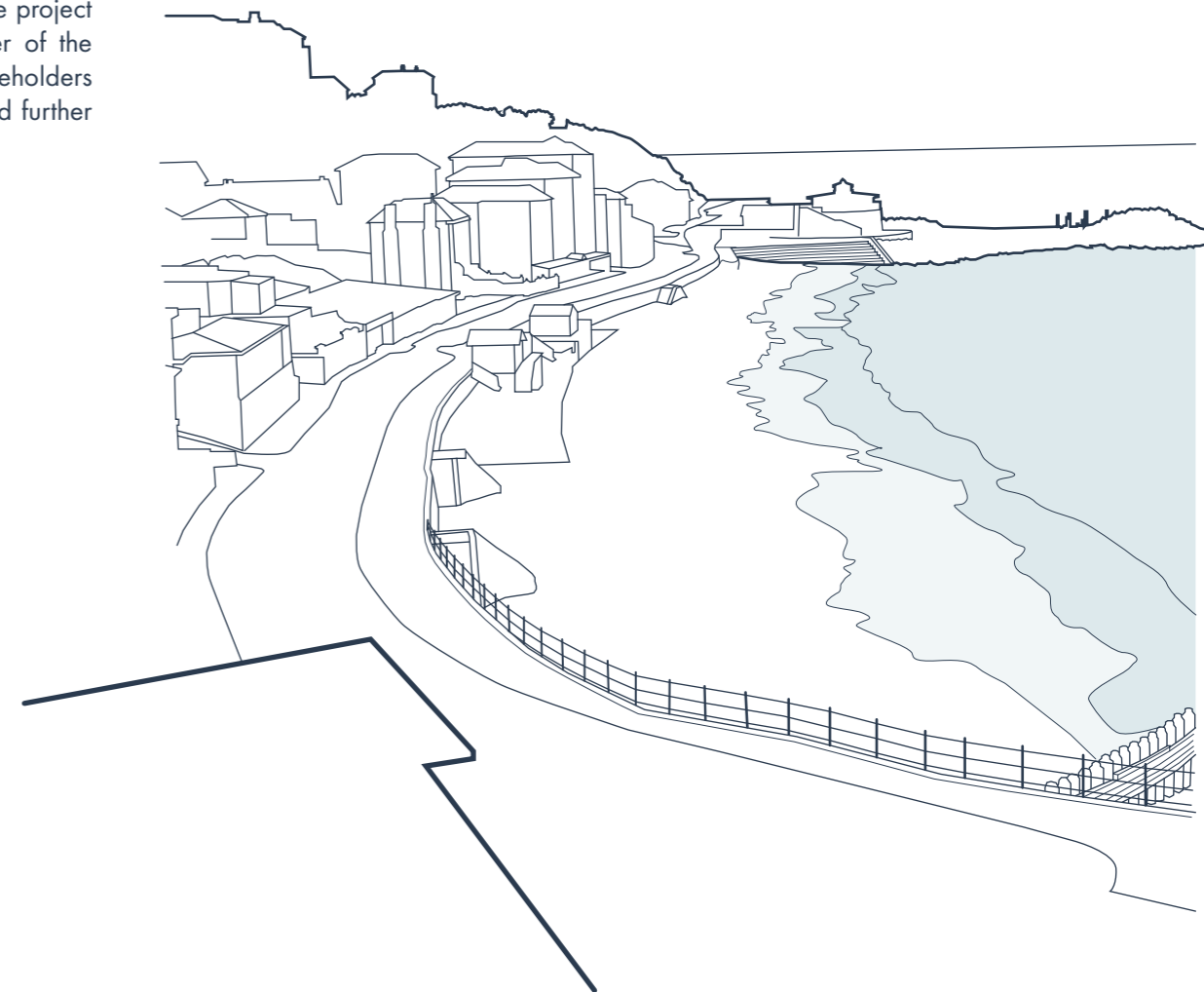
- Environmental Site Appraisal Plan (ESAP)
- Preliminary Environmental Appraisal Report (PEAR)
- Intertidal Baseline Survey
- Heritage Desk Based Assessment
- Baseline Landscape Townscape Character Assessment (BLTCA)
- Local Needs Assessment (LNA)
- Public Consultation

A summary of the overarching considerations influencing the project has been compiled to inform the LVOP baseline and the formulation of the long-list opportunities presented in Chapter 4. These considerations encompass a

summary of key environmental constraints and the principal findings of both the Local Needs Assessment and public consultation responses.

Building upon previous examinations of landscape character, the LVOP defines and maps character zones along the coastal frontage as well as existing uses and perceived sensitivities to sea defence development.

Upon baselining the observed characters, uses and sensitivities against the emerging engineering proposals, this document puts forward a working vision and array of potential opportunities that could be taken forward by the project or delivered independently through other funding streams. A number of the opportunities have then been illustrated in more detail to give stakeholders a clearer picture of how they might be made manifest if shortlisted and further developed during Stage 2 of the LVOP.



**BASELINING
POTENTIAL
OPPORTUNITIES**

02





View from the foreshore beneath Ventnor Park looking north-east towards Ventnor Town
| Photo taken at high tide.

OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

NOTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Within the project extents, several key environmental considerations influence large sections of the coastal frontage and have been taken into account during development of the long list. These include the South Wight Maritime SAC, and the Ventnor and Bonchurch Conservation Areas.

This section provides a summative, rather than exhaustive overview of the considerations most significant to this project. For a more comprehensive picture of all environmental considerations, please refer to the Environmental Site Appraisal Plans (ESAP).

SOUTH WIGHT MARITIME SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

The South Wight Maritime SAC is a protected area under UK legislation under the EU Habitats Directive. It encompasses the entire coastal frontage between Steephill Cove and Monks Bay. More broadly, the SAC extends continuously along the Isle of Wight's southern coastline, running from Alum Bay in the west to Bembridge in the east. The site is designated for its Annex I habitats, as defined under the EU Habitats Directive, most notably 'Reefs' and 'Vegetated Sea Cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts'.

The Ventnor frontage is specifically recognised within the SAC designation for its intertidal and subtidal rocky reef habitats. This is in the form of boulder communities which play a particularly important role in shaping ecological conditions. The irregular mosaic of boulders, combined with high wave activity, creates variations of microhabitats that fluctuate in abiotic factors. These microhabitats form ecological niches that support a greater variety of flora and fauna, that would otherwise be of lower biodiversity compared to uniform bedrock alone. These conditions have allowed areas of contrasting habitat to establish within small spatial areas; increasing species richness and supporting various taxa. This enhances overall biodiversity and increases the ecological resilience of the reef habitats to both natural and anthropogenic pressures.

As a result, the boulder-dominated reef habitat along the Ventnor coastline supports a dynamic and biodiverse ecological network. This fine-scale variability underpins the conservation importance of the site, distinguishing it from more uniform rocky shore environments.

VENTNOR AND BONCHURCH CONSERVATION AREAS

The Ventnor Conservation Area reflects the distinct character of a historic coastal town shaped by its dramatic south-facing slopes. Its identity is defined by the tiered arrangement of buildings, gardens, and seafront spaces, creating long coastal vistas and intimate views through a steep and compact townscape. Victorian and later architectural layers sit prominently across the contours, contributing to a coherent sense of place tied closely to the surrounding landform. Development within the area is required to preserve or enhance its special architectural and historic interest.

The Bonchurch Conservation Area encompasses a more enclosed and secluded historic settlement, characterised by steep wooded slopes, narrow lanes, and a rich pattern of medieval, Georgian, and Victorian development. Its built form - set amongst stone walls, mature trees, and a distinctive village layout - creates a sheltered character markedly different from neighbouring Ventnor. Notable heritage features, including St Boniface Church and early Victorian villas, reinforce its long continuity of settlement. As with Ventnor, any proposals must preserve or enhance the area's established architectural and historic qualities.

LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A Local Needs Assessment was undertaken in the summer of 2025 to ensure that the emerging design proposals for the Ventnor Coastal Defence Scheme could be informed by the community’s demographic, social, economic and environmental needs. By consolidating evidence across local needs categories, identifying corresponding Social Value considerations, and drawing on insight from the Equality Impact Assessment, the assessment provides a structured basis for aligning project decisions with what matters most to Ventnor’s residents. This approach ensures that Social Value initiatives are directly targeted, locally meaningful and capable of delivering lasting benefit throughout design, construction and legacy phases.

Findings from the assessment show that Ventnor’s character reflects a community with a higher proportion of older residents, areas where people may face economic or social challenges, and some barriers to transport and digital access, alongside significant climate and coastal vulnerability. At the same time, it is a place with strong community spirit, supported by active local groups, youth organisations and environmental charities whose work offers valuable opportunities for partnership and shared benefit.

The Local Needs Assessment highlights several areas where the Ventnor Coastal Defence Scheme can meaningfully enhance local wellbeing and resilience. The key Social Value considerations and opportunities are summarised below:

ACCESSIBILITY

Ventnor’s significantly older population and higher prevalence of mobility and sensory limitations create a strong need for accessible design, including accessible routes, step-free design, clear signage, frequent resting points, and inclusive engagement materials. Potential partners include Unlimited Island who were engaged on the Yaverland and Shanklin schemes during the development of their vision and design principles.

INCLUSIVITY

Digital exclusion and poor connectivity among older residents require non-digital, drop-in based, face-to-face engagement through trusted spaces such as libraries, churches, care homes, and community hubs like ‘Really Useful Thursday’. Engagement with Ventnor Town Council and Isle of Wight Pride should be undertaken in the development of the vision and design principles to ensure inclusivity to all residents, particularly those who belong to ethnic minorities, marginalised groups or suffer from

mental or physical health problems.

SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

With high rates of economic inactivity, lower qualification levels and pockets of acute deprivation, the scheme can deliver major value through local job creation, apprenticeships, on-site placements, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) engagement with schools and the Isle of Wight College.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

High levels of child poverty, fuel poverty, and food insecurity point to opportunities for partnership with local foodbanks, Baby Box, Footprint Trust, and other Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE). Construction-phase support could include warm-space contributions, volunteering, material donations, or joint awareness campaigns.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

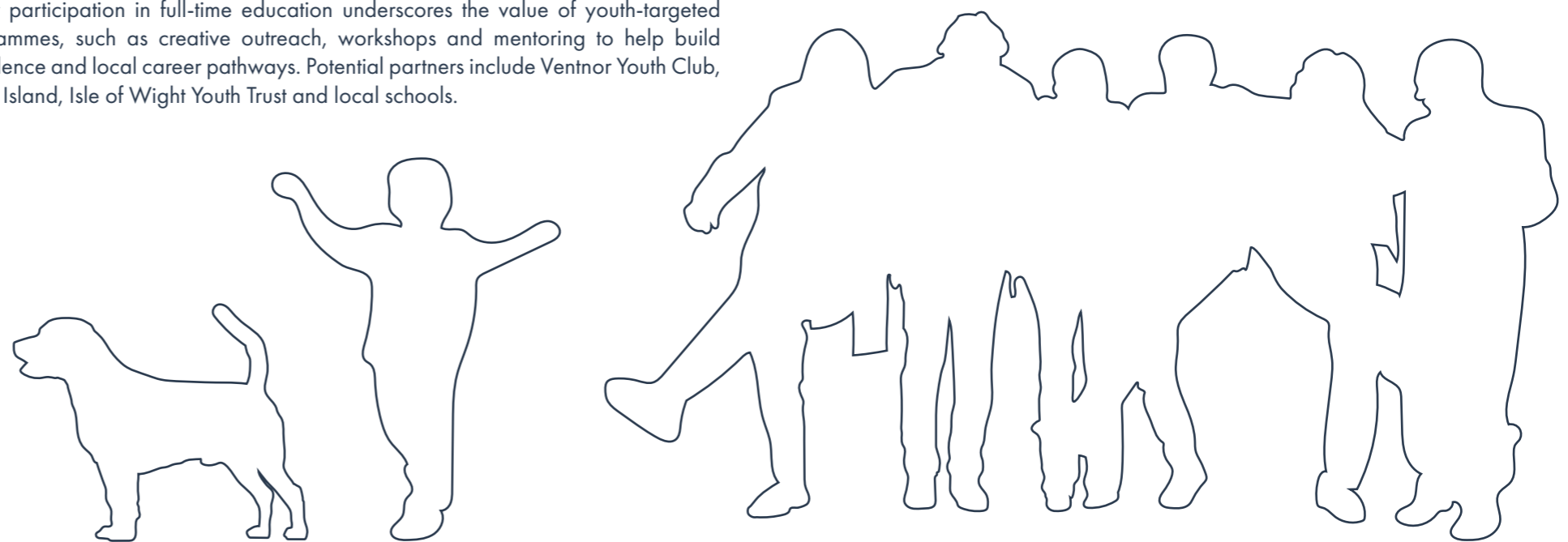
Lower participation in full-time education underscores the value of youth-targeted programmes, such as creative outreach, workshops and mentoring to help build confidence and local career pathways. Potential partners include Ventnor Youth Club, Brave Island, Isle of Wight Youth Trust and local schools.

NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

Given Ventnor’s climate vulnerability and the island’s biodiversity importance as a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, there is strong opportunity to integrate nature-based solutions, pollinator-friendly and climate resilient coastal planting, habitat enhancements and environmental education. Potential partnerships supporting delivery could include Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Ventnor Botanic Garden Community Interest Company and Natural Enterprise.

VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCSE)

Ventnor has a particularly engaged VCSE sector. The scheme can maximise value by co-delivering initiatives, volunteering programmes, events, training, and climate awareness activities with local organisations across wellbeing, nature, youth, and social support sectors.



PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Since early 2022, the Ventnor Coastal Defence Scheme has been supported by a sustained and evolving programme of stakeholder and community engagement. Initial activities focused on raising awareness of the developing project, beginning with press releases, councillor briefings and the launch of public-facing information pages in February 2022. Throughout 2022, the project team delivered a series of presentations, webinars and workshops with the Environment Agency (EA), Isle of Wight Council (IoWC) officers, ward councillors and technical specialists. Engagement also included direct outreach to local businesses and property owners, inviting them to join mailing lists and preparing them for investigative works.

From late 2022 into 2023, engagement broadened in response to significant events along the coastline. The Eastern Esplanade failure triggered multiple public engagement sessions led jointly by the Isle of Wight Council and the Environment Agency, supported by the wider technical team. These events drew considerable public interest and provided opportunities to explain emergency actions, discuss evolving risks and introduce the long term scheme. Parallel to these events, the project team maintained a steady programme of communication with Natural England, Southern Water, Island Roads, and other partners, ensuring that specialist input and regulatory advice shaped the scheme's direction.

Engagement intensified through 2023 and 2024 as ground investigation works were prepared and delivered. Newsletters, leaflets, in-person door-knocking, and targeted business communications were used to keep affected residents informed and to mitigate disruption. The severe landslip at Leeson Road in December 2023 temporarily halted outward-facing engagement, however technical liaison continued throughout this period to maintain project momentum.

In preparation for presenting the preferred option, the project team undertook research visits to coastal engagement events elsewhere in the country, helping refine the format for Ventnor's public exhibition. This culminated in a major three-day public exhibition at Ventnor Exchange in April 2025, supported by a month-long online survey. The exhibition showcased artist impressions, explained the constraints guiding the preferred design, and invited community views on public realm enhancements. Over 60 survey responses and substantial qualitative feedback were received. All comments were subsequently collated in the form of a Survey Response Report for use in shaping the next stage of the design.

The below summary highlights the most prominent and consistently expressed themes

emerging from the report. These insights have directly informed the development of the Landscape Vision and Opportunities Plan long list and provide an essential community-led baseline for shaping the project's direction.

ACCESS, MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

- Keep a continuous, accessible coastal route open during the works. Reinstate/reroute paths affected by landslips.
- Make steps and paths safer.
- Improve inclusivity for prams, older people and disabled users.
- Maintain/improve access to the water (slipways, bathing spots, especially Wheelers Bay to Bonchurch).
- Avoid designs that sever or overly restrict amenity access to the foreshore.
- Enhance footpath and cycle routes. Delineate the promenade to reduce conflicts between users.
- Tackle car-parking pressure.
- At peak times, consider reducing through-traffic on the seafront.
- Maintain access to key car parks (including the Graben).

PUBLIC REALM QUALITY, COMFORT AND USE

- More places to pause and meet: additional benches, seating clusters and focal "stopping places."
- Expansion of informal social spaces along the promenade.
- Better toilets!
- Increased provision of drinking-water fountains.
- Showers on the seafront.
- Occasional refreshment spots (e.g. along the eastern stretch).
- More bins and better maintenance.
- Ensure regular upkeep of the public realm during peak periods.
- Link interventions to "quirky" seaside character - be aspirational.
- Improve/replace tired lighting to support safety and accessibility.
- Balance lighting needs with dark-sky concerns in sensitive areas.

ENVIRONMENT

- Nature-positive public realm with hardy coastal flora of year round interest.
- Stop cutting down trees and create space for new trees.

- Butterfly habitat improvements.
- New intertidal features (e.g. Vertipools) and environmental interpretation.
- Strong interest in planting and environmental habitat creation.

HERITAGE AND LOCAL IDENTITY

- Clearer wayfinding and signage that explains heritage and ecology.
- Retain and maintain interpretive features, namely the Solar System Walk.
- Public art to be rooted in local culture and design.
- Respect for Victorian/heritage character.
- Avoid "brutalist" sea defence proposals where possible.
- Protect and enhance the Cascade, esplanade railings, clock tower, Flowers Brook path, promenade between Ventnor and Bonchurch, and Ventnor Haven.

LEISURE / PLAY

- Enhance the skate park.
- Consider additional play areas or a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area).
- Better access / enhancements for swimming opportunities between Wheeler's Bay and Bonchurch.

CONSTRUCTION APPROACH, PARTNERSHIP & FUNDING

- Deliver materials by sea where possible to minimise disruption in the town.
- Provide clear communication on phasing and timescales. Provide clear, timely information on closures and diversions.
- Collaborate with local groups (e.g. Ventnor Skatepark Group, Ventnor Botanic Garden).
- Enable community fundraising / support for enhancements and upkeep.

OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

STEEPHILL COVE

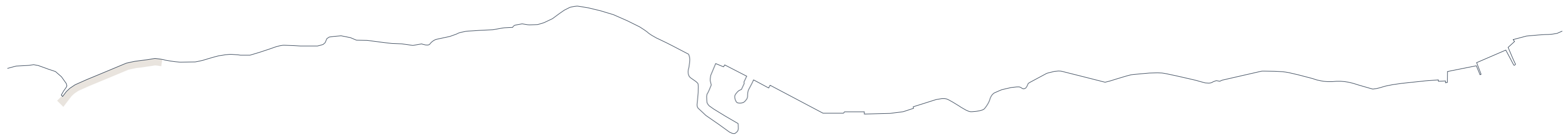


View from the headland looking west towards the settlement at Steephill Cove and the wooded slopes of Ventnor Botanic Garden beyond | Photo taken at high tide.



Nestled beneath steep, tree-covered hills, the cove is accessible almost exclusively by foot, enhancing its sense of seclusion. The compact settlement is informally arranged, with a delightful mosaic of cottages, cafés, small retail outlets and boats clustered along the shoreline. Interspersed between the mostly single storey buildings are small garden plots that add a splash of greenery to the built environment. A concrete promenade, surfaced with local beach grit, loops partway around the bay, separating most of the buildings from the shore and occasionally flanked by a low sea wall. The bay itself is framed by rocky headlands, with a short promontory of emplaced rock armour to the east. Between these arms lies a beach of golden flint and chert shingle, gently lapped by the sea. The sheltered nature of the cove, combined with its richly detailed layout and relaxed pace, creates an intimate and welcoming atmosphere that needs to be preserved in order to maintain its popularity with residents and visitors alike.





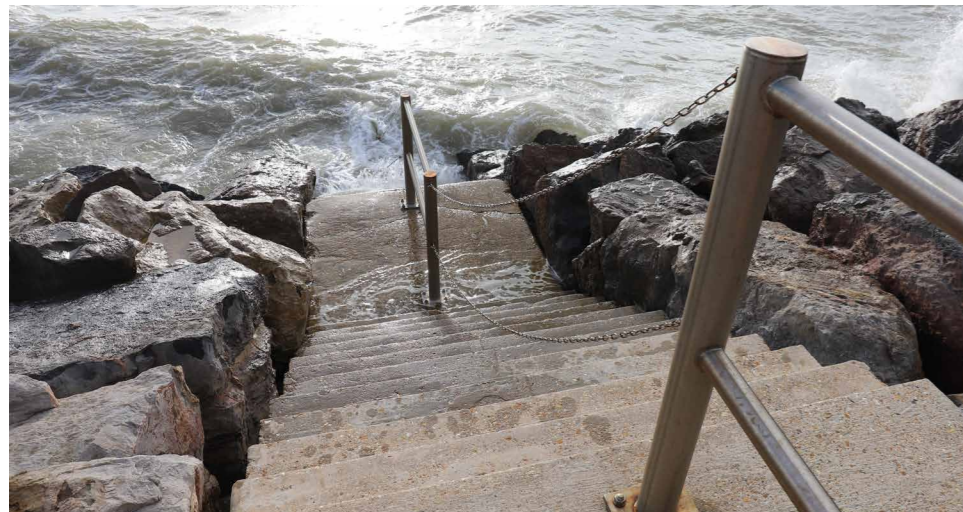
The area is defined by chalk downland that descends toward a single, sheltered bay; but this apparent calm belies its position at the foot of the Ventnor Undercliff landslide complex - a geologically active zone shaped by centuries of instability. The bay's current form owes much to significant coastal protection measures introduced in the mid-1990s, designed to counter the combined forces of marine erosion and ongoing ground movement. Despite being nearly 30 years old, the sea defences appear in good condition; however, they do not meet current design standards that account for sea-level rise and increased storm intensities caused by climate change.

The route down from Ventnor Park is by means of a meandering brushed concrete path, flanked by vegetation and headlands offering glimpsed views of the sea and land beyond. A line of rock armour, sea wall, and gabion-backed promenade marks the shoreline, forming a clear boundary to the sea, although now softened by colonising plant species, they blend more naturally into the coastal setting. Mature trees and coastal scrub frame the area, enclosing it with a sense of seclusion. The ground is mainly covered by rank grassland and pasture, interspersed with native trees, brambles, tamarisk and non-native coastal herbs. Sporadic pockets of colonising garden species hint at nearby homes, discreetly positioned along the brow of the hill.

The cove's simple landscape form and relative absence of detail evokes a sense of remoteness, yet understated beauty.

OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

CASTLE COVE



View from the rock revetment looking south-west towards the headland separating Castle and Steephill Cove | Photo taken at high tide.

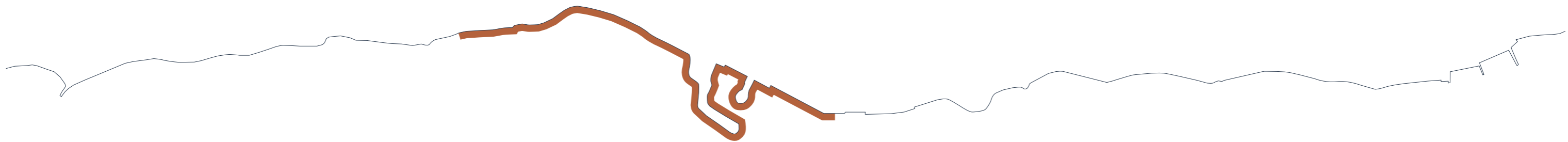
OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

VENTNOR PARK



Ventnor Park, extending from Castle Cove to Ventnor seafront and encompassing the once picturesque area of Flowers Brook, is one of the Isle of Wight's most distinctive green spaces - a harmonious blend of cultivated beauty, natural landscape, and coastal drama. Sheltered by Ventnor's mild microclimate, the park's topography ranges from low chalk cliffs and meadow grassland near the shore to wooded slopes and terraced lawns above. Winding and worn tarmac paths traverse the steep contoured hillside, often giving way to irregularly spaced concrete or timber steps where the incline becomes too great. The vestigial remains of former routes that have since slipped away form abrupt ends for unsuspecting users that have missed the limited and tucked away wayfinding prompts. Scattered sculptural elements and interpretation features such as the famous dinosaur labyrinth, the 'VENTNOR' sign and the modernist shelter near La Falaise car park form a disparate and whimsical chain of apparently unrelated features throughout the park. At its western end, the recently refurbished Flowers Brook garden - a once fitting expression of Ventnor's Victorian heyday - looks faded and somewhat marred by recent footpath diversion works that have necessitated significant clearance of the subtropical planting leading down to the gardenesque pool. Overall, the park remains an attractive and valued space offering respite from the activity of the seafront and opportunities to enjoy long coastal views. However, it is evident that the landscape has experienced a gradual decline, with limited evidence of recent investment or renewal. The numerous remembrance benches, which appear to constitute the primary additions in recent years, subtly reinforce this sense of stagnation, signalling a shift in the park's character from one of active recreation to passive reflection.

View from the grass plateau looking east, north-east towards Flowers Brook in the foreground and Ventnor bandstand in the distance | Photo taken at high tide.



OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

VENTNOR TOWN



Perched on the steep landslip prone slopes of the Undercliff, Ventnor town is characterised by a tight knit urban fabric that responds directly to its underlying geology and geomorphology. Rising to prominence in the 19th century as a Victorian health resort, the town exhibits an eclectic layering of architecture from Victorian resort villas to Edwardian terraces, a landmark Art Deco building and interwar seafront developments. This coupled with a milder microclimate supporting many sub-tropical plants has grown its appeal.

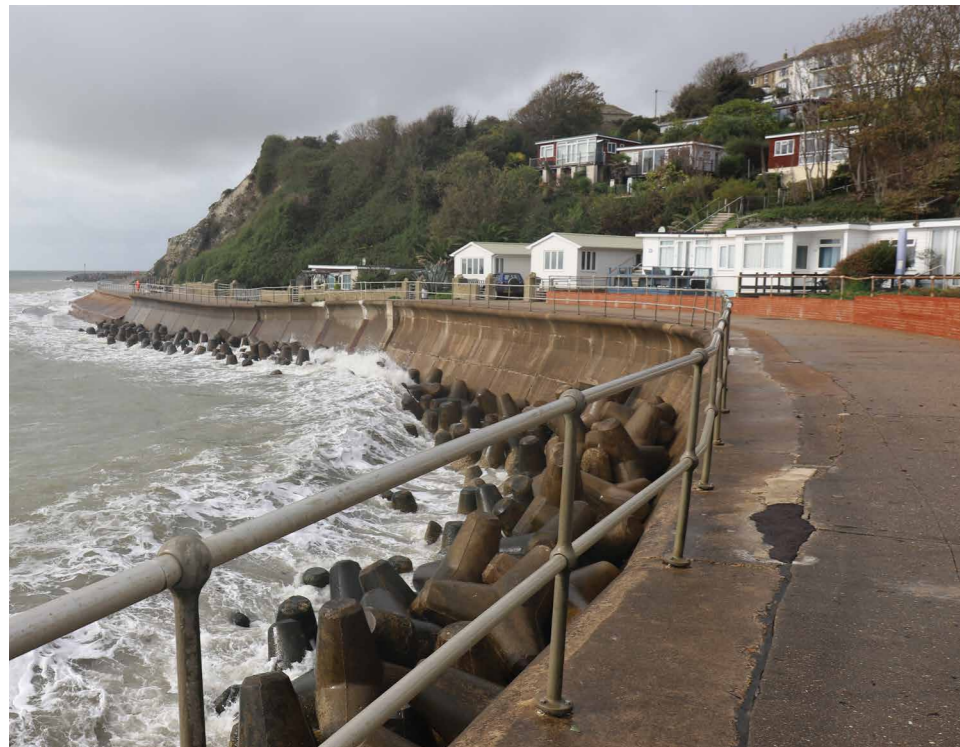
The sea front at Ventnor is a highly active, varied environment of beach, harbour and promenades, accessed inland via steep roads and paths. The beach is an unusual combination of grey and golden sand, reddish grit and some shingle lying in alternating bands from the shore to the sea wall - a mortared masonry stone structure supporting the promenade. This busy thoroughfare is the main organising geometry for the frontage, providing access to property, retail and hospitality, leisure opportunities and spaces beyond the town such as Ventnor Park and the Eastern Esplanade. The quality of the environment is generally high, with well-maintained and attractively detailed infrastructure and public space; the central focal point being the extravagant and visually arresting Cascade gardens bridging the change in level from the town centre to the seafront, separated from a small public space below by an impressive brick and stone flying pedestrian walkway whose design evokes the architectural language of late Victorian seaside promenades.

Moving east of Ventnor Haven the character shifts noticeably. The backdrop and bustle of the town is replaced by the densely vegetated undercliff, an expanse of car park and long uninterrupted views out to sea.

View from adjacent the entrance to La Falaise car park looking east along the Esplanade and Ventnor seafront | Photo taken at high tide.

OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

EASTERN ESPLANADE TO WHEELERS BAY

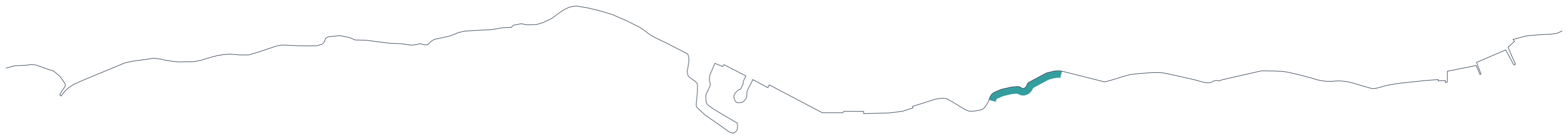


Between the Eastern Esplanade car park and Wheelers Bay, the coastline presents a narrow, engineered margin between the sea and the steep undercliff. The promenade traces the base of the slope, its concrete surface and low seawall recently renewed following the storm surge damage of 2022. New sections of wall and handrail sit brighter and smoother against the older, weathered fabric, signalling both repair and resilience. As the path rounds the headland toward Wheelers Bay, the broad sea defence composed of wave return wall, sloped concrete revetment and sheetpiled lower apron gives way to a near vertical wave return wall, at its footing the interlocking sculptural forms of the concrete tetrapods. Whilst these tetrapods give this headland its distinctive identity, they are visually incongruous with the more natural appearance of the granite rock armour that characterises large sections of the coastline.

Atop the promenade around the headland there is a similar confluence of materials not in keeping with the general aesthetic, exemplified by a failing double skin red brick wall which separates the private chalets from public access. The character is quite tired and unattractive.



View from the eastern extent of the Eastern Esplanade car park looking east, north-east towards the headland to Wheelers Bay | Photo taken at high tide.



OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

WHEELERS BAY



Wheeler's Bay, just east of Ventnor, has a quietly rugged charm defined by its close relationship with the sea. Its sheltered, enclosed shape - once reputedly a smugglers cove - now provides a welcoming setting for local swimmers, kayakers, and small recreational craft. The bay is framed by a narrow shoreline of sand and shingle backed by a low sheetpile wall and sloped concrete revetment leading to the promenade, with a public realm shaped by sea-defence infrastructure and historic maritime activity. The settlement edge and slipway further reflect its past use for boat storage and unloading, giving the bay a working-coast character that complements its recreational appeal.



View from the slipway at Wheeler's Bay looking east north-east along the sea defences towards Bonchurch | Photo taken at high tide.

OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

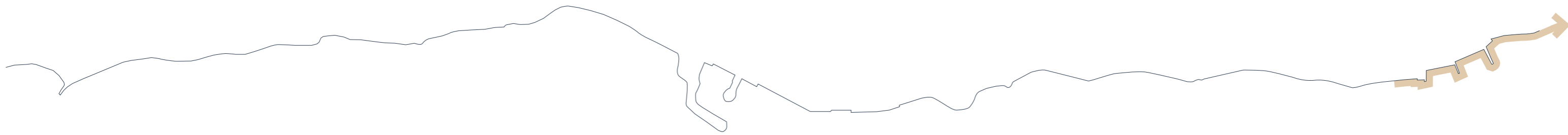
WHEELERS BAY TO BONCHURCH

The stretch of coastline between Wheelers Bay and Bonchurch is defined by a continuous concrete promenade and stepped revetment sea defence, occupying the narrow strip of land between the intertidal zone and the foot of the low chalk cliffs. Behind the promenade, a low timber sleeper splash wall and, in places, metal railings delineate a managed habitat area established to support the rare Glanville fritillary butterfly, with interpretation features drawing attention to its ecological significance. Additional interest along the promenade is provided by Stokey's Solar System Walk, an educational installation featuring information panels set into adjacent walls and railings.



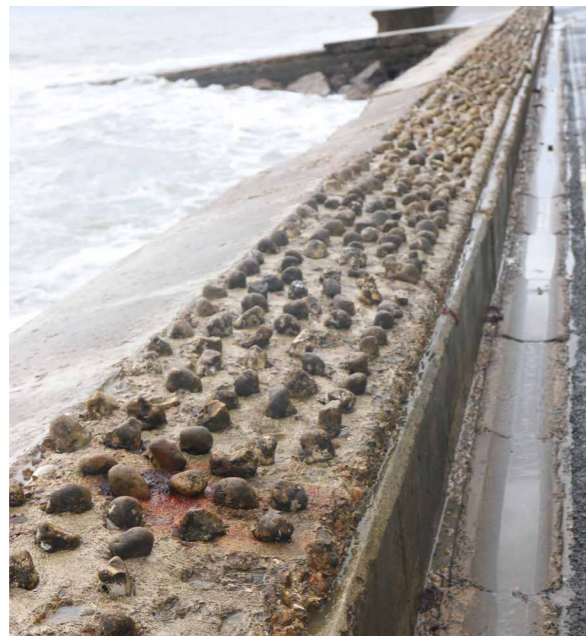
View from the promenade / concrete stepped revetment looking east, north-east along the sea defences towards the headland to Horseshoe Bay | Photo taken at high tide.





OBSERVED CHARACTER AREAS

BONCHURCH TO MONKS BAY



The coastal fringe of Bonchurch is defined by a gently curving shoreline tucked below densely vegetated slopes with the village's historic terraces and villas perched above. The intertidal zone comprises corner pockets of sand and shingle beach tucked between fingers of rock armour and old concrete groynes. At low tide the underlying stepped revetment beneath the narrower esplanade is plain to see. Unlike the stark concrete revetments further west, the sea wall here incorporates an exposed pebble finish to the top of the parapet, lending a more crafted and worked appearance, in keeping with the flint cobble wall defining the boundary wall to several properties fronting onto the promenade.

Monks Bay lies just east of Bonchurch, forming a compact, sheltered bay with a foreshore of sand and shingle. Recent beach recharge with material dredged from Ventnor Haven already displays the effects of the turbulent wave energy, creating miniature sandbank cliffs on what is normally a gently shelving beach. A series of granite breakwaters aim to slow the natural coastal processes of erosion. At the eastern end of the beach, access round to Steel Bay and the site of the recent Bonchurch landslip is made possible by walking atop the narrow wave return wall sandwiched between sea the densely vegetated hillside.



View from the western extent of Monks Bay beach looking south west along the sea defences | Photo taken at high tide.

BASELINE MAPPING

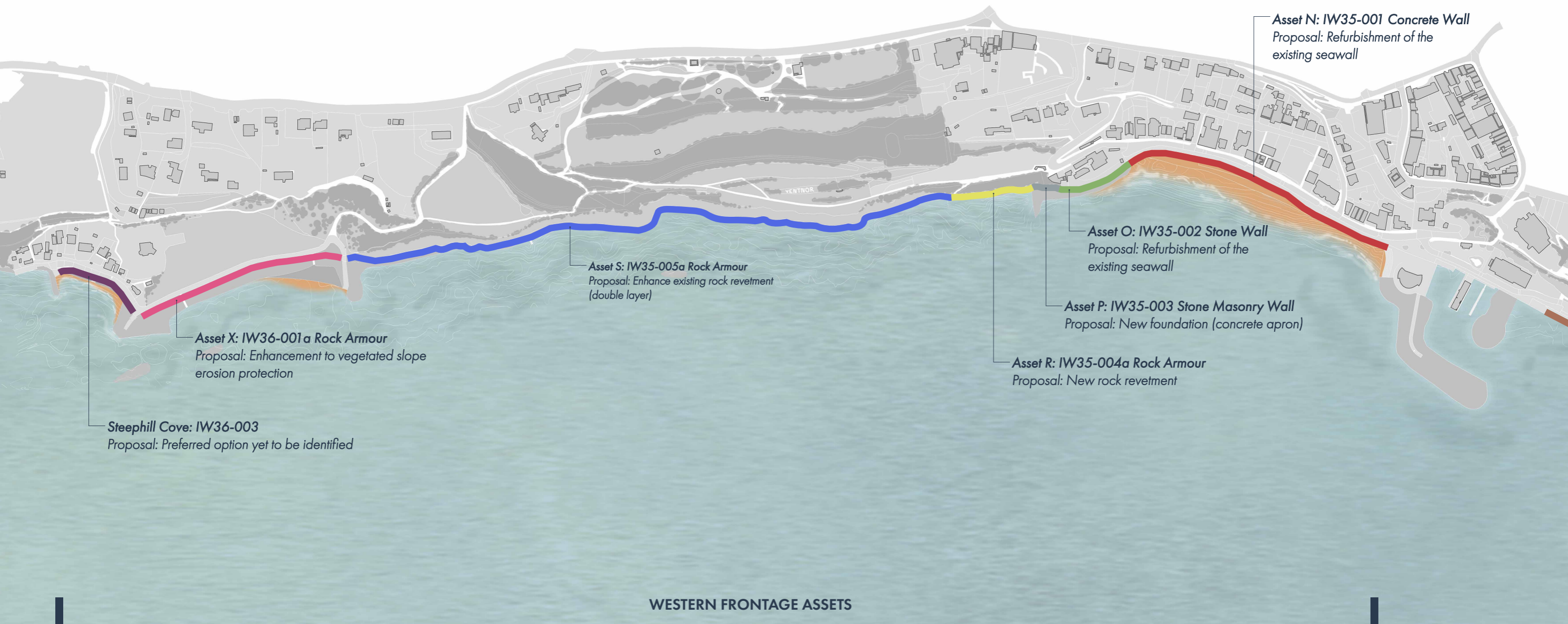
ENGINEERING CONCEPT DESIGN

To develop meaningful landscape opportunities along and adjacent to the sea defences, it is first essential to understand the existing sea defence frontages in terms of their type and location.

The plan below illustrates the existing defence frontages between Steephill Cove and Monks Bay, as defined in the Isle of Wight Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2). The SMP2 policy for this entire frontage is 'Hold the Line' as it has been identified as vulnerable to erosion. The Ventnor coastal defence is separated into three frontages, known as West, Central, and East. Each frontage is comprised of several Assets, which represent a distinct coastal defence unit.

In accordance with SMP2, the intention is to maintain and improve the existing defence line of seawalls and rock revetments to directly protect coastal properties, businesses, infrastructure and public space from coastal erosion and flooding for at least the next 60 years.

To achieve the aforementioned design life and standard of protection required for the project, each asset has been annotated with the concept engineering design to show how these frontages may be adapted.



LEGEND

Existing Asset Types

Western Frontage Assets

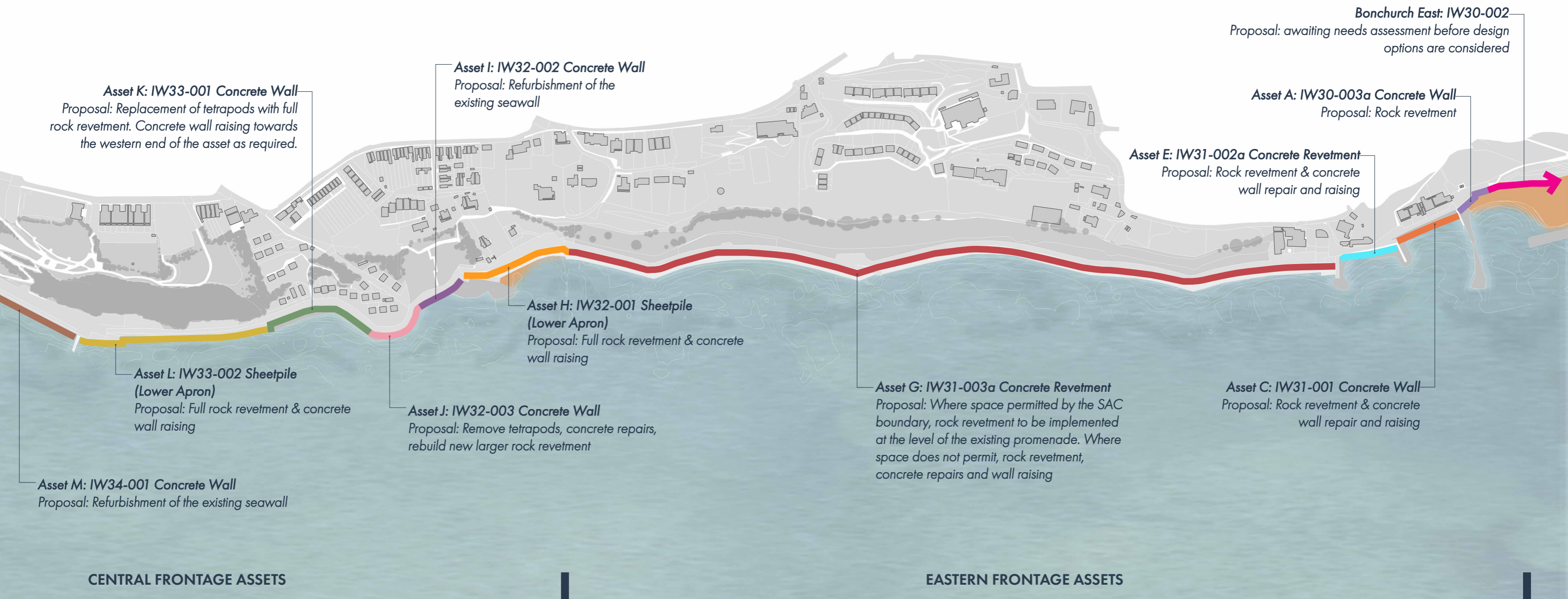
- Asset N: IW35-001 Concrete Wall
- Asset O: IW35-002 Stone Wall
- Asset P: IW35-003 Stone Masonry Wall
- Asset R: IW35-004a Rock Armour
- Asset S: IW35-005a Rock Armour
- Asset X: IW36-001a Rock Armour
- Steephill Cove: IW36-003

Central Frontage Assets

- Asset H: IW32-001 Sheetpile (Lower apron)
- Asset I: IW32-002 Concrete Wall
- Asset J: IW32-003 Concrete Wall
- Asset K: IW33-001 Concrete Wall
- Asset L: IW33-002 Sheetpile (Lower apron)
- Asset M: IW34-001 Concrete Wall

Eastern Frontage Assets

- Bonchurch East: IW30-002
- Asset A: IW30-003a Concrete Wall
- Asset C: IW31-001 Concrete Wall
- Asset E: IW31-002a Concrete Revetment
- Asset G: IW31-003a Concrete Revetment



CENTRAL FRONTAGE ASSETS

EASTERN FRONTAGE ASSETS

SENSITIVITIES TO CREST RAISING

Steepphill Cove, Ventnor seafront, and Wheelers Bay are particularly sensitive to crest raising, as their character, visitor appeal, and local businesses depend on strong visual and physical connections to the sea. Increasing defence crest heights here risks disrupting key sightlines and diminishing the open coastal views that define the seafront experience.

In Steepphill Cove, the informal, low-rise, and tightly clustered nature of the built environment means that even modest increases in crest height could overwhelm and diminish the setting of this historic cove. In Ventnor, the promenade and esplanade are central to the town's tourism economy, and any loss of visual permeability to the sea could impact footfall and the attractiveness of seafront businesses. Similarly, at Wheeler's Bay, crest raising would significantly alter its character and maritime function. This

historic smuggling cove has a strong visual and physical connection to the sea, as evidenced by the presence of the dinghy park and the area's popularity for recreational boating. As such, any future interventions must be carefully designed to balance coastal management with the preservation of visual amenity, landscape character, and economic vitality.

Castle Cove exhibits medium to high sensitivity to crest raising. The area is defined by its simple, open form and modest scale, with a strong visual relationship between the sloping chalk downland and the sea. The introduction of higher sea defences could sever the connection between land and water, creating a more enclosed and engineered feel that contrasts with the current status quo, which - though man-made - almost imitates a natural rocky shoreline. Similarly, the Eastern Esplanade to Bonchurch is considered relatively sensitive as its stepped revetments allow informal shoreline access, support recreation, and maintain open

views across the bay. Crest raising in this area could inhibit access, reduce permeability, and introduce visual barriers that would alter the experience of the seafront and promenade.

In contrast, the undercliff along the Ventnor Park frontage is considered least sensitive to crest raising from a landscape and visual perspective, as proposed recharging of the existing rock armour defence is likely to incur minimal change to the current appearance and public experience of the seafront in this location.

LEGEND

Sensitivity to crest raising

- High
- Medium high
- Medium
- Medium low
- Low

Observed character areas



Uses

- Coast route
- Key nodes
- Prominent Heritage features
- Walking
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Cycling

- Dog walking
- Skateboarding
- Sunbathing
- Play
- Paddle craft (all types)
- Boating / sailing
- Snorkelling
- Fishing
- Crabbing
- Vistas / views
- Wildlife / ecological interest
- Eating & Drinking
- Public toilets
- Car park
- Harbour / boat storage



VISIONING
IDEAS

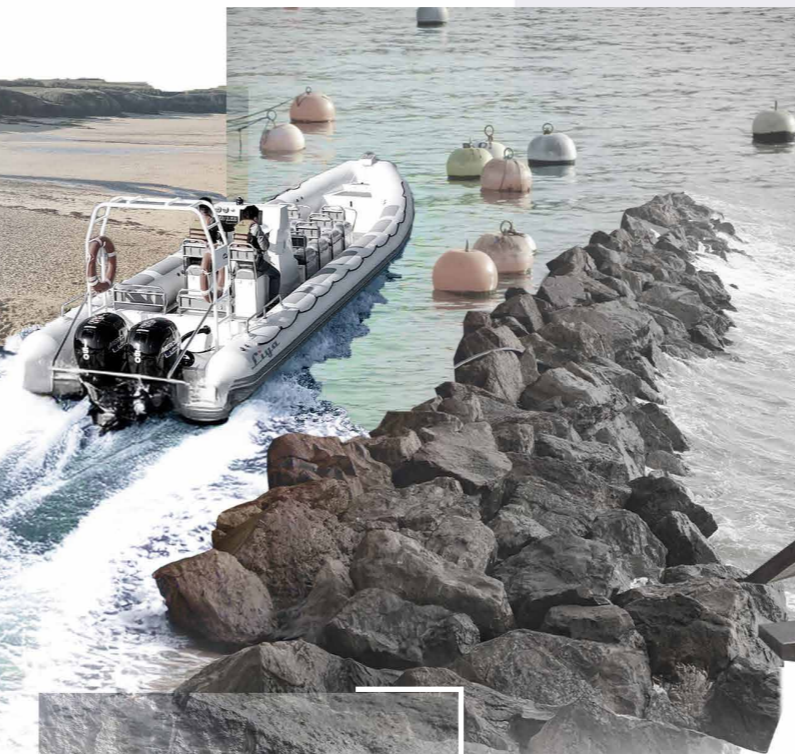
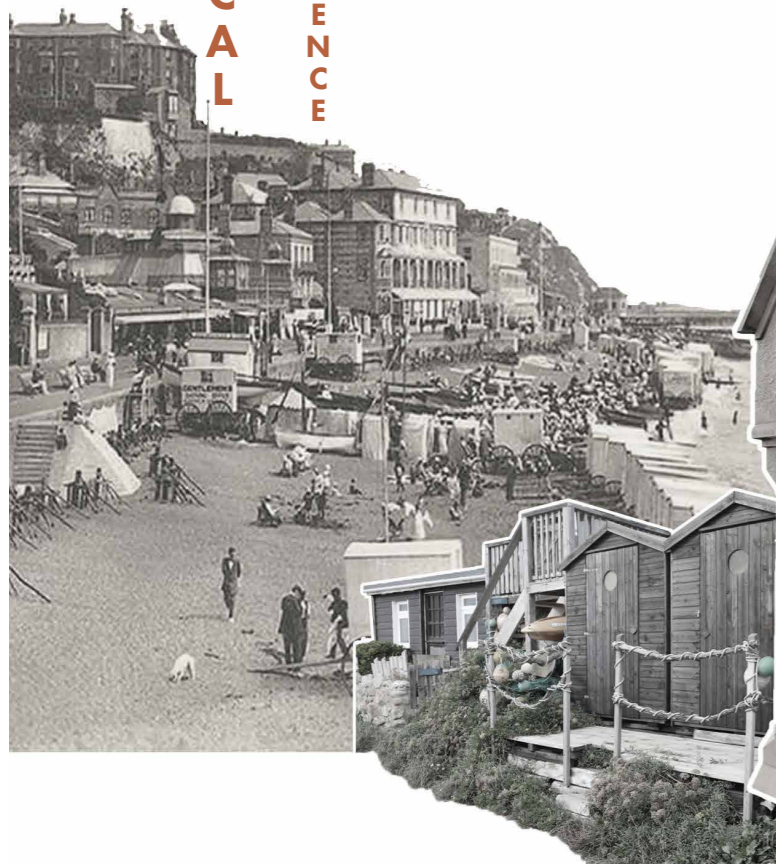
03



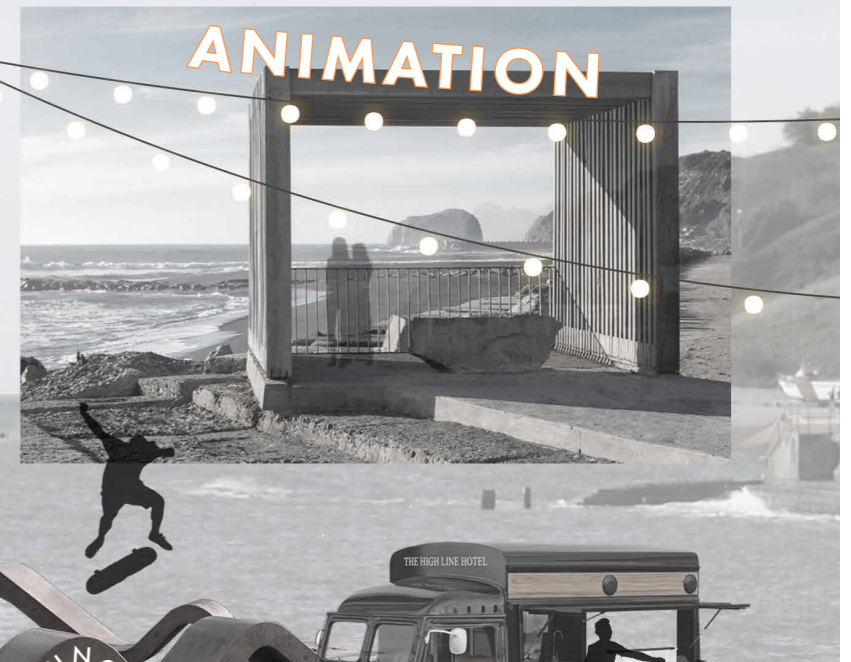
INITIAL THOUGHTS

BLUE TOURISM

HISTORICAL
REVERENCE



HARBOR WAY



DYNAMIC FUNCTIONALITY



EXTENDED
SEASONAL USE



ECOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY

Ventnor and its surrounding coastline hold a unique story of resilience. The above visioning montage seeks to distill some of the core themes that have informed the public realm opportunities explored in the following chapter.

* Concept Montage

**LONG LIST
OPPORTUNITIES**

04



SITE WIDE



LEGEND

- ① Create a single, coherent, uninterrupted coastal route linking Steephill Cove to Monks Bay through consistent wayfinding, surfacing, and public realm identity. Establish a unified palette of materials, lighting, and street furniture that reinforces the Ventnor coastal character, while perhaps allowing subtle variation by zone. All furniture and materiality to be suitably robust to a maritime environment, and be as multifunctional and low maintenance as possible.
- ② Wherever possible reduce the proposed crest height / upstand of the sea wall to maintain clear visual connections to the sea.
Opportunity to improve the surface of the proposed rock armour by incorporating man-made grooves and drilled 'bowls' which may promote colonisation by some intertidal wildlife. This approach could be trialled ahead of the main works to assess effectiveness, (Artecology are a local IoW company that could be used).
- ③

- ④ Develop a co-produced, place-based heritage programme that connects digital discovery, community storytelling, and public-realm interpretation. The initiative would create an interactive online map of local heritage sites enriched with community-sourced oral histories, archival images, and thematic trails accessible through QR codes along existing footpaths. Small-scale workshops could engage residents in exploring listed buildings, sharing memories, and contributing photographs and stories. These materials would feed into collaborative "landscape and memory" installations in public spaces, ensuring that local voices actively shape both the digital and physical interpretation of the area's heritage.

- ⑧9 Incorporate Bioblocks into the rock revetment design, considering two types: (1) structural units that can replace selected sections of rock (e.g., Reefy blocks measuring approximately 1 (H) × 1 (W) × 3 (L)m and (2) non-structural units designed to enhance sub-tidal biodiversity (e.g. Arc-Marine blocks up to 2 m³).

** Please note that some of these opportunities are shown indicatively, are not place specific, or apply to the route as a whole**



LONG LIST OPPORTUNITIES

STEEPHILL & CASTLE COVE

LEGEND

- 5 Any coastal defence works to be sympathetically designed to preserve the special qualities that make Steephill Cove so cherished.
- 6 Introduce a seating element and / or ground level mural / etching / inlay to demarcate the nodal point linking Steephill Cove and Castle Cove.
- 7 Collaborate with a local artist to design bespoke signage and wayfinding elements that reflect the cove's whimsical and characterful charm.
Develop a GPS-tagged snorkelling and scuba diving trail linking rocky outcrops, reefs, coves and bioblocks, supported by discreet mooring buoys for safe access and orientation. Each buoy could connect to a mobile app or waterproof guide, offering underwater wayfinding, reef identification, and marine life interpretation. Partnering with local operators such as Ventnor Bay Charters (who already explore nearby coves) and the Isle of Wight Dolphins Scuba Diving and Training Club, presents an additional opportunity to support guided snorkelling and scuba tours and an enhanced visitor experience.
- 8 Improve the habitat amenity of lowland calcareous grassland areas through the removal of any INNS such as Hottentot fig and any sporadic pockets of Pampas grass.
- 9 Create vegetated shingle habitat.
- 10 Improve the condition of the informal footpath and wayfinding connection to Love Lane.
- 11 To improve accessibility, incorporate landings / resting points at intervals along the existing steeply graded footpath, and / or provide an alternate stepped route with landings.
- 12 Remove / relocate unnecessary paraphernalia from the beach access steps such as safety signage and dog bins that have been installed retrospectively with fixtures / fittings not conducive to a marine environment.
- 13 Provide new shelters at key nodal points, headlands and vantages to serve as refuge from inclement weather or to frame important / attractive vistas.
- 14 Provide interpretation boards about the Ventnor lizard and the rich marine ecology just offshore, specifically the rocky reef habitats of the SAC and rare intertidal seaweeds species such as *Gracilaria bursa-pastoris*.
- 15 If required by the construction methodology, push the sea defences below Ventnor Park seaward, away from the base of the cliff. Create opportunity to improve site ecology between sea defences and cliff base. Provide a single continuous access route atop the sea defences to connect Castle Cove and Ventnor beach.
- 16

LEGEND continued

- 17 If required by the construction methodology, push the sea defences below Ventnor Park seaward, away from the base of the cliff. Create opportunity to improve site ecology between sea defences and cliff base.
- 18 Extend area of appropriate native species below The Lighthouse to improve visual amenity.
- 19 Remove unsightly post and wire fence behind the gabions if able to do so.
- 73 Suitably locate an automated external defibrillator (AED).
- 86 Collaborate with local adventure providers already operating along the coastline to develop opportunities for guided coastering experiences.



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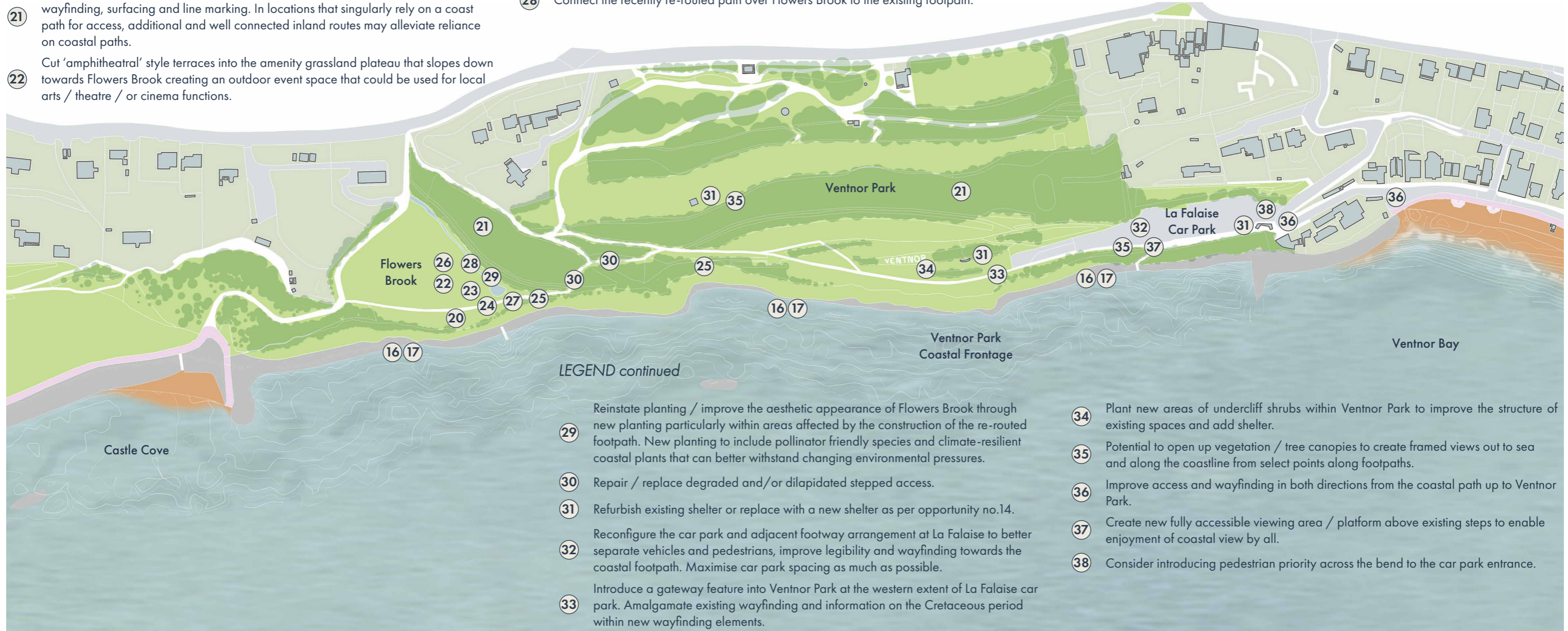
LEGEND

- 16 If required by the construction methodology, push the sea defences below Ventnor Park seaward, away from the base of the cliff. Create opportunity to improve site ecology between sea defences and cliff base. Provide a single continuous access route atop the sea defences to connect Castle Cove and Ventnor beach.
- 17 If required by the construction methodology, push the sea defences below Ventnor Park seaward, away from the base of the cliff. Create opportunity to improve site ecology between sea defences and cliff base.
- 20 Opportunity to rationalise the frequency and configuration of memorial benches and amalgamate into a single commemorative feature / totem / artwork (subject to consultation with all relevant stakeholders, leaseholders, community representatives and appropriate authorities).
- 21 Promote circular walking routes, orienteering / running trails through improved wayfinding, surfacing and line marking. In locations that singularly rely on a coast path for access, additional and well connected inland routes may alleviate reliance on coastal paths.
- 22 Cut 'amphitheatral' style terraces into the amenity grassland plateau that slopes down towards Flowers Brook creating an outdoor event space that could be used for local arts / theatre / or cinema functions.

LONG LIST OPPORTUNITIES

VENTNOR PARK

- 23 Further to opportunity no. 22, install an open air performance stage / pavilion equipped with power supply.
- 24 Opportunity to set up a community archaeology project evaluating the archaeology of the multi-period Flowers Brook site and the inter-tidal cove adjacent.
- 25 Close and remove defunct footpaths.
- 26 Improve sward diversity by using targeted management and selective soil stripping to create conditions for a richer floristic mix, including pollinator-friendly species and climate-resilient coastal plants that can better withstand changing environmental pressures.
- 27 Refresh / reprovide heritage interpretation around Flowers Brook.
- 28 Connect the recently re-routed path over Flowers Brook to the existing footpath.



LEGEND continued

- 29 Reinstall planting / improve the aesthetic appearance of Flowers Brook through new planting particularly within areas affected by the construction of the re-routed footpath. New planting to include pollinator friendly species and climate-resilient coastal plants that can better withstand changing environmental pressures.
- 30 Repair / replace degraded and/or dilapidated stepped access.
- 31 Refurbish existing shelter or replace with a new shelter as per opportunity no.14.
- 32 Reconfigure the car park and adjacent footway arrangement at La Falaise to better separate vehicles and pedestrians, improve legibility and wayfinding towards the coastal footpath. Maximise car park spacing as much as possible.
- 33 Introduce a gateway feature into Ventnor Park at the western extent of La Falaise car park. Amalgamate existing wayfinding and information on the Cretaceous period within new wayfinding elements.
- 34 Plant new areas of undercliff shrubs within Ventnor Park to improve the structure of existing spaces and add shelter.
- 35 Potential to open up vegetation / tree canopies to create framed views out to sea and along the coastline from select points along footpaths.
- 36 Improve access and wayfinding in both directions from the coastal path up to Ventnor Park.
- 37 Create new fully accessible viewing area / platform above existing steps to enable enjoyment of coastal view by all.
- 38 Consider introducing pedestrian priority across the bend to the car park entrance.

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LONG LIST OPPORTUNITIES

VENTNOR TOWN

LEGEND *continued*



- 39 Make temporary use of the vacant development plot along the Esplanade to activate the frontage. Possible uses include a pop-up event space or a site office during construction works.
- 40 Convert the esplanade along the seafront into a shared surface. Widen the promenade inland and reposition / remove some of the street furniture to improve pedestrian flow. Parallel parking spaces to be locally relocated, to ensure no net loss in numbers.
- 41 The Ventnor town Esplanade frontage is of heightened sensitivity due to its inclusion within the Ventnor Conservation Area and its importance for townscape character and visual amenity. As such, any intervention along this frontage must be approached with maximal design sensitivity.
- 42 Improve the appearance of the masonry sea wall through the incorporation of artwork / motifs / inlays.
- 43 Reimagine the space north of the pumping station as an events space, equipped with feature perimeter luminaires and/or centralised catenary lighting and inground pop-up power units. Reinstate / repair access to the pumping station roof terrace for public use during events.
- 44 Improve underground utilities in tandem with public realm improvements along the Esplanade; install power and water to specific areas identified for pop-ups / event space. A lower cost option would be to install the ducting first then supply power and water when event infrastructure funding or operator agreements are in place.

- 47 Introduce a cliff lift to improve access between the seafront promenade and the upper levels of Ventnor town.
- 48 Increase footprint of Ventnor Haven harbour eastwards to increase capacity for mooring boats.
- 49 Install mooring buoys just offshore to enhance maritime access and encourage blue tourism.
- 50 Provide a little ferry service from Ventnor Haven to shuttle daytrippers that have tied up at any mooring buoys.
- 51 Opportunity for feature / gateway sculpture at the mouth of the harbour.
- 52 Reinforce Ventnor's rich, architectural character through shopfront / façade restoration, and heritage-led public realm design.
- 45 Improve the aesthetics and functionality of the public threshold space at the junction between Shore Hill and Esplanade. Consider introduction of pedestrian priority to improve safety crossing Esplanade. Opportunity to transform this area into a gateway space.
- 46 Improve public amenity, namely the toilet facilities. Opportunity also to introduce showers and changing facilities.

- 53 Explore potential restoration of underused seafront buildings for community and cultural use.
- 54 Create a central hub showcasing Ventnor's natural and cultural heritage through exhibitions and digital displays. Perhaps to include physical/augmented reality/digital heritage interpretation model.
- 55 Develop a heritage trail / collate stories centring around key sites that celebrate Ventnor's distinctive local character. Examples include Bonchurch village, Cascade Gardens, Clock Tower, Crab & Lobster Inn, Royal Victoria Pier, and railway heritage.
- 56 Install a permanent, weatherproof digital tide and conditions display, supported by a laminated wind and launch guidance panel to help visitors plan safe watercraft launches by providing real-time tide data, local sea conditions, and links to Ventnor tide forecasts. The display could also include advice on minimising disturbance to the SAC and promote the Environment Agency's coastal flood-warning service.
- 57 Improve the setting of the water fountain.
- 58 Improve access and wayfinding in both directions from the coastal path up to Salisbury Gardens.
- 59 Opportunity to install Vertipools into the harbour wall, to improve marine ecology and serve as an educational feature.
- 60 Consider more inclusive beach access. The beach slipway adjacent to the pumping station represents the only ramped access.
- 88 Enhance the Ventnor paddling pool precinct with upgraded surfacing, improved seating options, vibrant new planting areas, and the potential introduction of a splash pad.

EASTERN ESPLANADE TO WHEELERS BAY & WHEELERS BAY

LEGEND

- 9 Improve the habitat amenity of lowland calcareous grassland areas through the removal of any INNS such as Hottentot fig and any sporadic pockets of Pampas grass.
- 44 Improve underground utilities in tandem with public realm improvements along the Esplanade; install power and water to specific areas identified for pop-ups / event space. A lower cost option would be to install the ducting first then supply power and water when event infrastructure funding or operator agreements are in place.
- 49 Install mooring buoys just offshore to enhance maritime access and encourage blue tourism.
- 56 Install a permanent, weatherproof digital tide and conditions display, supported by a laminated wind and launch guidance panel to help visitors plan safe watercraft launches by providing real-time tide data, local sea conditions, and links to Ventnor tide forecasts. The display could also include advice on minimising disturbance to the SAC and promote the Environment Agency's coastal flood-warning service.
- 61 Rationalise and improve barrier-gate/railing threshold.
- 62 Convert space into a waterside 'pop-up' space for food vendors / concession stands etc.
- 63 Make environmental improvements to the Ventnor skatepark through the addition of a shelter, new perimeter fencing, planting and seating. All installed elements to be of durable, low-maintenance materials to reduce volunteer upkeep while strengthening resilience to weather and vandalism.
- 64 Opportunity to create an art mural within Ventnor skatepark linking to the solar system trail.

LEGEND continued

- 65 Opportunity for public realm improvements to the existing double skin red brick wall around the headland to Wheelers Bay.
- 66 Opportunity to integrate distance markers, line markings, and signage along the promenade to support trail running; collaborate with the local running community to assess demand for a Parkrun even, and provide secure equipment lockers for participants.
- 67 The sea angling building is under-utilised and could be opened up for greater community use, such as yoga, or changing facilities for swimming. Having more routine access to the building could increase the bays' profile for cold water swimming?
- 68 The slipway at Wheelers Bay is a well-used access point for recreational watercraft, and its continued functionality should be a key consideration within the proposed coastal defence works.
- 69 Introduce intermittent stepped egress points through the rock armour within each bay (where appropriate). Need to accommodate the desire for people who use the existing stepped revetment if replacing with rock armour.
- 70 Consider replacement of grasscrete with shingle habitat area.
- 71 Provide secure equipment lockers and vertical storage racks for kayaks / canoes within the dinghy park to maximise storage efficiency.
- 72 Provide low level dock lighting adjacent the dinghy park to deter theft and improve safe launching/recovery at dusk/dawn.
- 73 Suitably locate an automated external defibrillator (AED).
- 74 Provide bike racks / cycle hoops to encourage pedestrian access to this area.
- 81 Introduce interpretation signage centring around the landslip and wider Shoreline Management Plan between Steephill Cove and Monks Bay.
- 86 Collaborate with local adventure providers already operating along the coastline to develop opportunities for guided coasteering experiences.
- 87 Create a dedicated swimming platform that provides safe, convenient access to the water while enhancing the coastal leisure experience. Potential to integrate with opportunity no. 69.



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LONG LIST OPPORTUNITIES

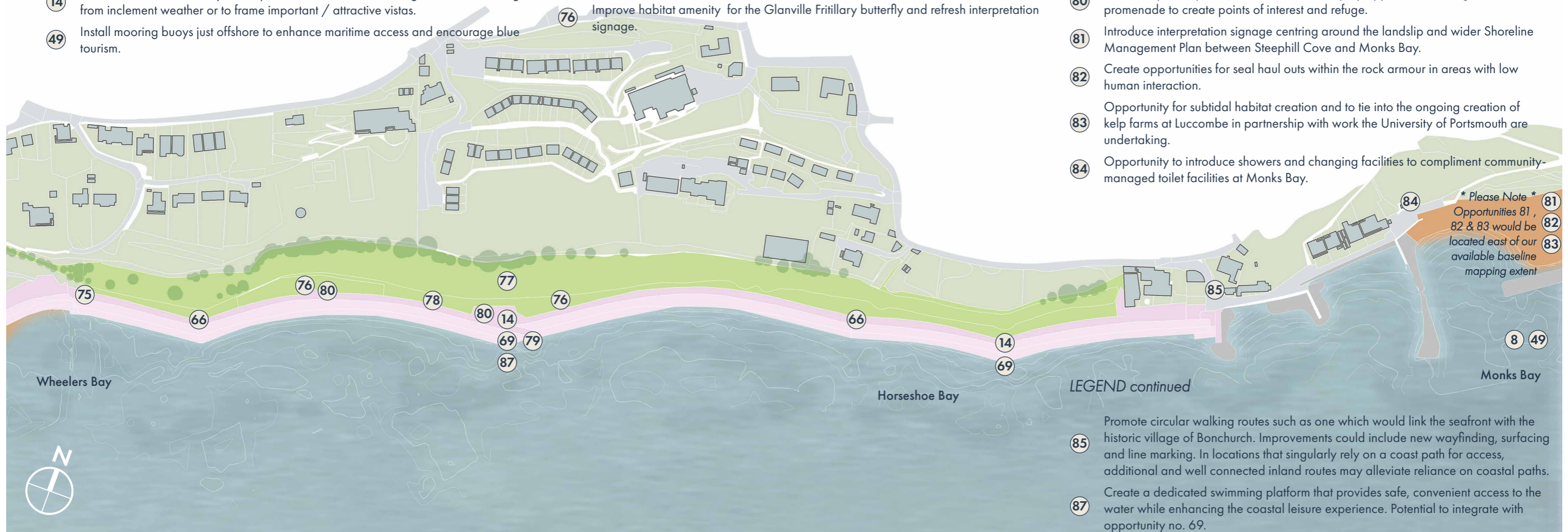
WHEELERS BAY TO BONCHURCH & BONCHURCH TO MONKS BAY

LEGEND

- 8 Develop a GPS-tagged snorkelling and scuba diving trail linking rocky outcrops, reefs, coves and bioblocks, supported by discreet mooring buoys for safe access and orientation. Each buoy could connect to a mobile app or waterproof guide, offering underwater wayfinding, reef identification, and marine life interpretation. Partnering with local operators such as Ventnor Bay Charters (who already explore nearby coves) and the Isle of Wight Dolphins Scuba Diving and Training Club, presents an additional opportunity to support guided snorkelling and scuba tours and an enhanced visitor experience.
- 14 Provide new shelters at key nodal points, headlands and vantages to serve as refuge from inclement weather or to frame important / attractive vistas.
- 49 Install mooring buoys just offshore to enhance maritime access and encourage blue tourism.

- 66 Opportunity to integrate distance markers, line markings, and signage along the promenade to support trail running; collaborate with the local running community to assess demand for a Parkrun even, and provide secure equipment lockers for participants.
- 69 Introduce intermittent stepped egress points through the rock armour within each bay (where appropriate). Need to accommodate the desire for people who use the existing stepped revetment if replacing with rock armour.
- 75 Enhance Stokey's solar system walk.
- 76 Improve habitat amenity for the Glanville Fritillary butterfly and refresh interpretation signage.

- 77 Manage grassland at the base of the chalk cliffs to maintain and enhance species-rich calcareous grassland, which provides valuable habitat amenity for the Glanville Fritillary butterfly.
- 78 Replace the existing timber sleeper wall and metal post-and-wire fence (assumed to intercept rockfall) with a singular designed structure, made of robust and local vernacular material.
- 79 Remove under utilised slipway
- 80 Introduce pocket parks / incidental rest and play opportunities along the eastern promenade to create points of interest and refuge.
- 81 Introduce interpretation signage centring around the landslip and wider Shoreline Management Plan between Steephill Cove and Monks Bay.
- 82 Create opportunities for seal haul outs within the rock armour in areas with low human interaction.
- 83 Opportunity for subtidal habitat creation and to tie into the ongoing creation of kelp farms at Luccombe in partnership with work the University of Portsmouth are undertaking.
- 84 Opportunity to introduce showers and changing facilities to compliment community-managed toilet facilities at Monks Bay.



LEGEND continued

- 85 Promote circular walking routes such as one which would link the seafront with the historic village of Bonchurch. Improvements could include new wayfinding, surfacing and line marking. In locations that singularly rely on a coast path for access, additional and well connected inland routes may alleviate reliance on coastal paths.
- 87 Create a dedicated swimming platform that provides safe, convenient access to the water while enhancing the coastal leisure experience. Potential to integrate with opportunity no. 69.

The remainder of this chapter presents a series of conceptual visualisations and precedent imagery illustrating selected public realm opportunities earlier identified. These visualisations are intended to support understanding of how the proposed opportunities could be realised in practice.

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

01

“ Create a single, coherent, uninterrupted coastal route linking Steephill Cove to Monks Bay through consistent wayfinding, surfacing, and public realm identity. Establish a unified palette of materials, lighting, and street furniture that reinforces the Ventnor coastal character, while perhaps allowing subtle variation by zone. ”

A continuous, well-defined coastal route presents a transformative opportunity for Ventnor to create a well-connected, high-quality destination that enhances accessibility and the visitor experience. Central to this vision is the integration of ‘art’ - telling Ventnor’s unique and evolving story through designed elements. Whilst an overarching brand identity should underpin the palettes of materiality, street furniture, wayfinding, and interpretation, the design approach should allow for nuance and variation to respond to local character and setting.

A unified public realm is not merely about visual amenity or creating opportunities for curated experiences; it has the potential to catalyse significant social, economic, and environmental uplift perhaps leading to greater social cohesion, civic pride, cultural identity, economic buoyancy and a blue-green infrastructure more resilient to the challenges of biodiversity decline and a changing climate.

Image sources

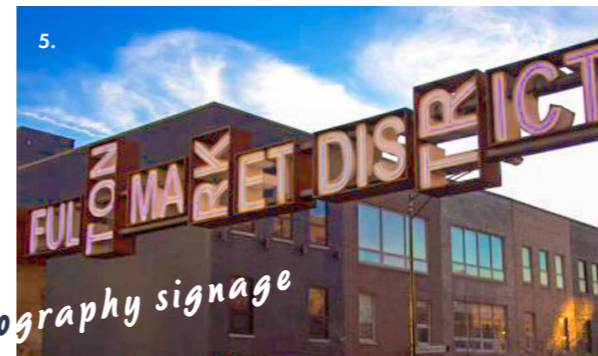
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- <https://www.destinationselfy.co.uk/wildlife/selfey-s-marine-ecology/vegetated-shingle/>

Estimated Cost			
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
Positive Impact			
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
Duration of Implementation			
Short	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long
Maintenance Input			
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High

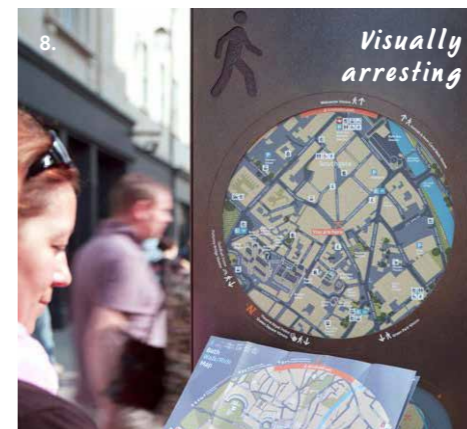


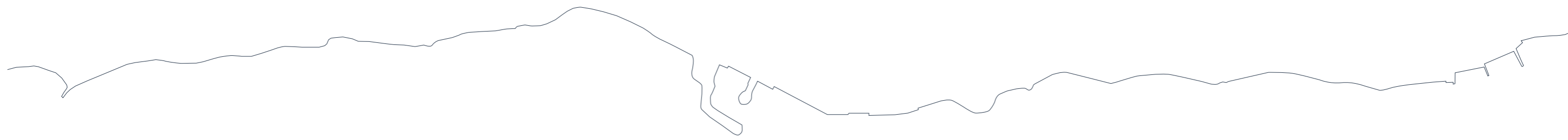
Feature and functional lighting to extend the use of public realm spaces and curate / augment its sense of place

Signage, Wayfinding & Interpretation



Typography signage

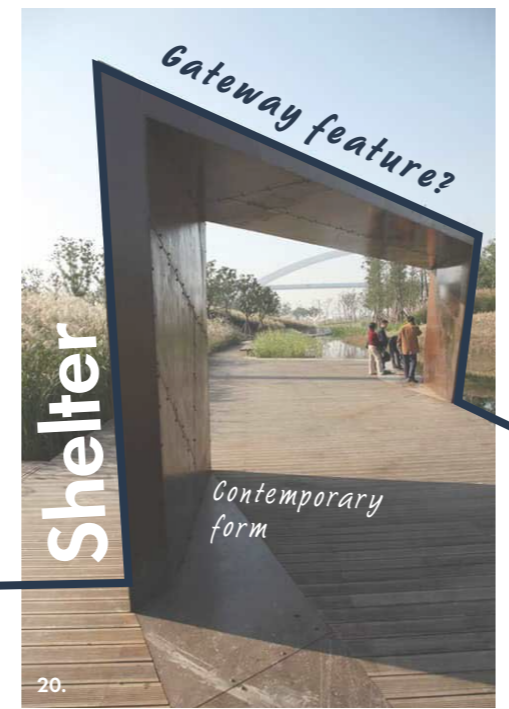




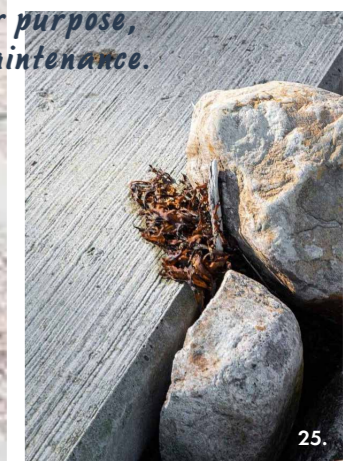
The Seawall

(along the beach frontage)

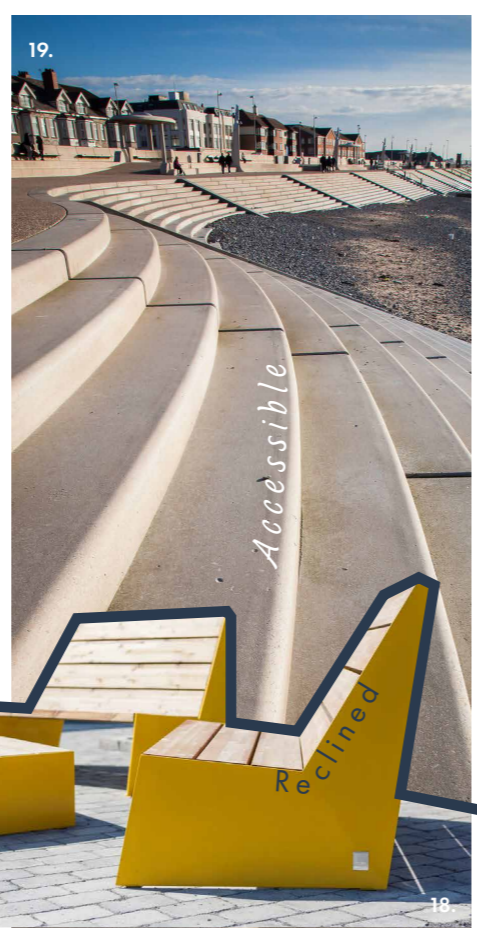
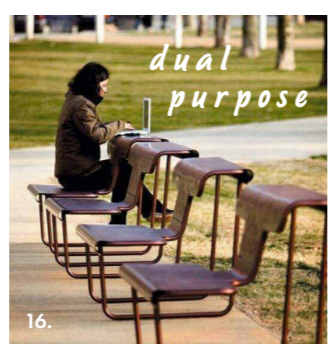
comfortably proportioned,
ergonomic design,
elegant



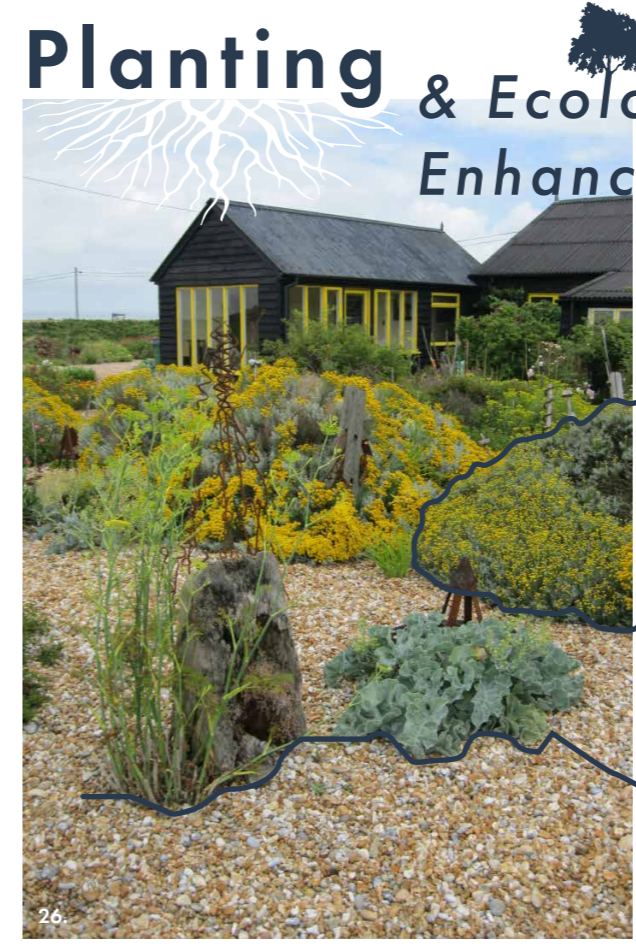
Materiality



Simple, reverent, fit for purpose, low maintenance.



Planting & Ecological Enhancements



Introduced planting to be resilient to harsh coastal environment



EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

03

“ Opportunity to improve the surface of the proposed rock armour by incorporating man-made grooves and drilled ‘bowls’ which may promote colonisation by some intertidal wildlife. This approach could be trialled ahead of the main works to assess effectiveness. ”

There is a significant opportunity to improve foreshore habitat diversity between Steephill Cove and Monks Bay by incorporating habitat features directly into the granite rock armour. Techniques such as carving grooves, holes and pools (of various sizes) into the boulders can create water-retaining microhabitats that encourage colonisation by intertidal species. In addition to carved features, the careful positioning of boulders – especially those with existing blast lines (garnered during the extraction process) or natural cavities – can further enhance habitat value by increasing structural complexity and water retention.

This approach has been successfully demonstrated at Runswick Bay in Yorkshire, where JBA Consulting led the design and implementation of similar interventions which involved distressing a number of the boulders and placing seed boulders at the tow of the rock armour to encourage colonisation by marine invertebrates. The project showed that such features can thrive even in high-energy coastal environments, where more fragile, attached elements like tiles or artificial rockpools may not be viable. It is important to note however that success is not always guaranteed, but dependent on site exposure and conditions.

To maximise the potential ecological value of these structures, early and ongoing collaboration between project ecologists and engineers would be essential.

Estimated Cost				
Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
Positive Impact				
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
Duration of Implementation				
Short	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long
Maintenance Input				
Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High

Considerations

- South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation
- Marine Licencing ?



Precedent
Runswick Bay



EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

89

“ Incorporate Bioblocks into the rock revetment design, considering two types: (1) structural units that can replace selected sections of rock (e.g., Reefy blocks measuring approximately 1 (H) × 1 (W) × 3 (L)m and (2) non-structural units designed to enhance sub-tidal biodiversity (e.g., Arc-Marine blocks up to 2 m³) ”

Reefy's blocks are modular, 'lego-like' concrete units that form artificial reef structures called 'Reef Enhancing Breakwaters'. ReefBlocks are a versatile solution that can replace or complement traditional armour rocks in scour protection; they interlock to form stable structures that dissipate wave energy and erosion while remaining effective in high-velocity, strong-current environments. Their textured surfaces, cavities, and tunnels provide habitats for marine life, promoting biodiversity and improving water quality. By incorporating a Nature Inclusive Design (NID) these engineered blocks can offer a sustainable alternative to quarried rock, simultaneously supporting marine species recovery and providing a resilient solution to climate change impacts.

Reef cubes are low-carbon concrete units designed to act as both coastal armour and habitat-forming structures. Arc Marine's reef blocks feature a 3D-printed textured surface designed to promote colonisation by local marine species, with integrated crevices and microhabitats that can be tailored to suit specific site conditions and optimise ecological performance. Trials at Newlyn in Cornwall, where 88 units were installed, demonstrated their effectiveness in high-energy environments and their potential to complement conventional coastal defences.

Considerations

- South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation
- Marine Licencing
- Stakeholder engagement

Image sources

1. <https://reefy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/4.-Waves-Breaking-e1682509400566-1200x900.jpg?crop=1>
2. <https://reefy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/DSCF5123.jpg>
3. https://reefy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/IMG_0415-3.jpg
4. <https://reefy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2.-Steurgarnaal-on-Rotterdam-Reef.jpeg>
5. https://arcmarine.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/arc-marine_newlyn_life-growth-reef-cubes-1024x683.webp
6. <https://arcmarine.co.uk/product/reef-cubes/>

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

14

“ Provide new shelters at key nodal points, headlands and vantages to serve as refuge from inclement weather or to frame important / attractive vistas. ”

Any proposed shelters should adopt a contemporary aesthetic that complements the coastal / heritage setting without resorting to pastiche, ensuring they feel modern yet sympathetic to surrounding character/s. Beyond providing refuge from inclement weather, they could serve as multifunctional elements - integrating wayfinding features, interpretive signage, or even trail-running distance markers to encourage active use of the seafront. Material choices could include concrete, timber, weathered steel, or a considered combination of these, provided they are suitably robust for a marine environment and incur minimal maintenance. The shelters should incorporate a range of seating configurations, orientated to different aspects to provide users with a choice of vantage and options for shelter from adverse weather.

The Bexhill beach shelters, designed by Duggan Morris Architects and shown in image 1, exemplify sleek architectural design and sustainable feature cladding, made from Kebony wood - a pioneering sustainable timber technology patented by Norwegian company Kebony. As an environmentally responsible substitute for tropical hardwoods and preservative-treated timber, Kebony use an eco-friendly process to impregnate wood fibres with a bio-based liquid derived from crop waste. The resultant effect is a natural material but with significantly enhanced durability, weather resistance, and long-term environmental performance.

Considerations

- Maintenance input
- Although outside of the conservation areas, potential impact to Ventnor and Bonchurch Conservation Areas
- Impact on visual amenity
- Vandalism / anti-social / illicit behaviour

Image sources

1. <https://www.stylepark.com/en/kebony/seaside-shelter>
2. <https://landarkitektur.se/projekt/akeshovs-arboretum/>
3. <https://inhabitat.com/folded-weathering-steel-bird-blind-pavilions-in-canada-mimic-flight/east-point-park-bird-sanctuary-pavilion-by-plant-8/>
4. <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/415386765652142840/>
5. <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/415386765652185267/>

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

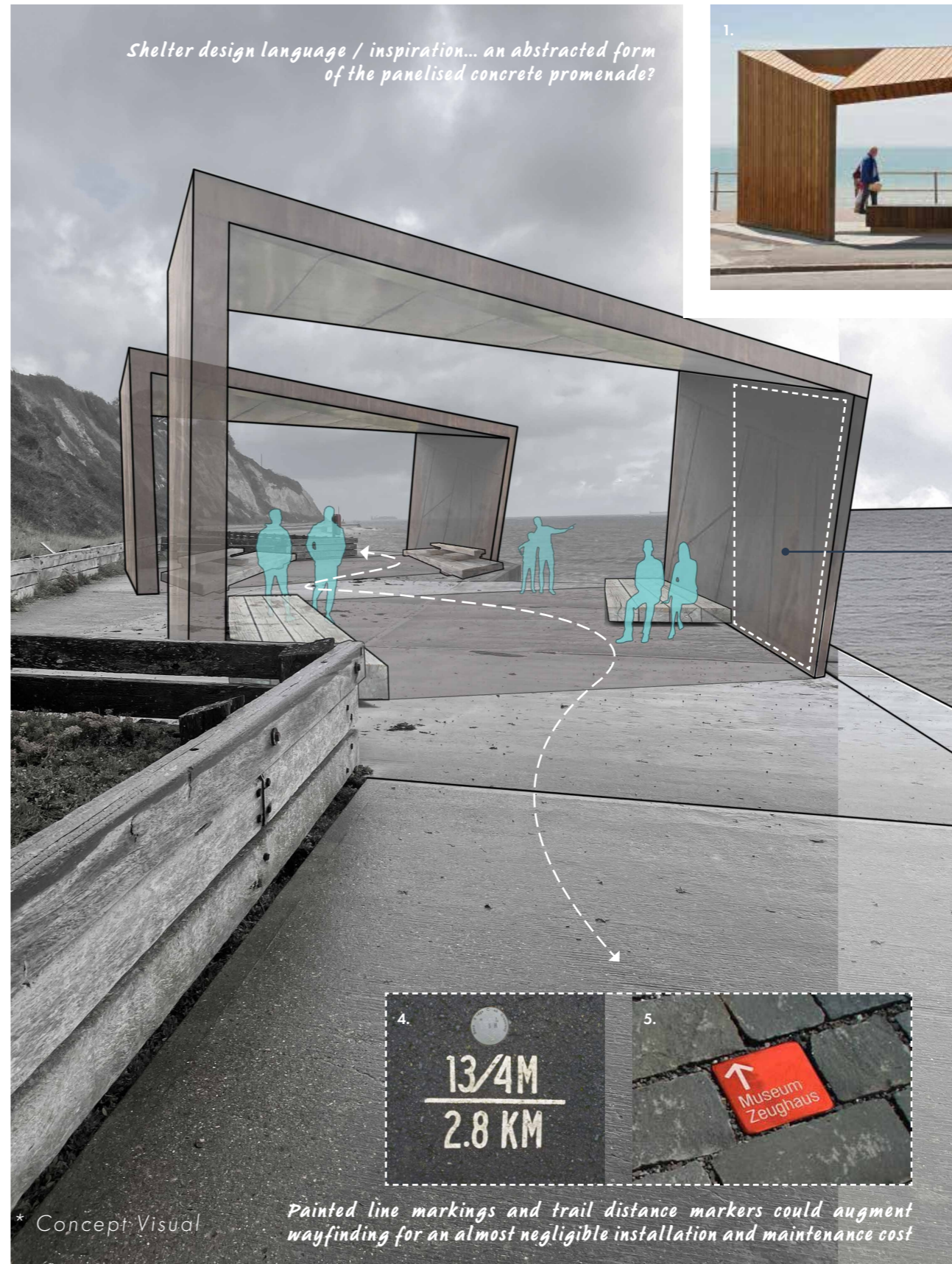
Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High



Precedent

Seaside Shelter, Bexhill, Sussex



Wayfinding / interpretation could be integrated within the inside wall of a shelter?



Opportunity to integrate 'art' (perforations / reliefs / sculpture) within the architecture / structure?

43

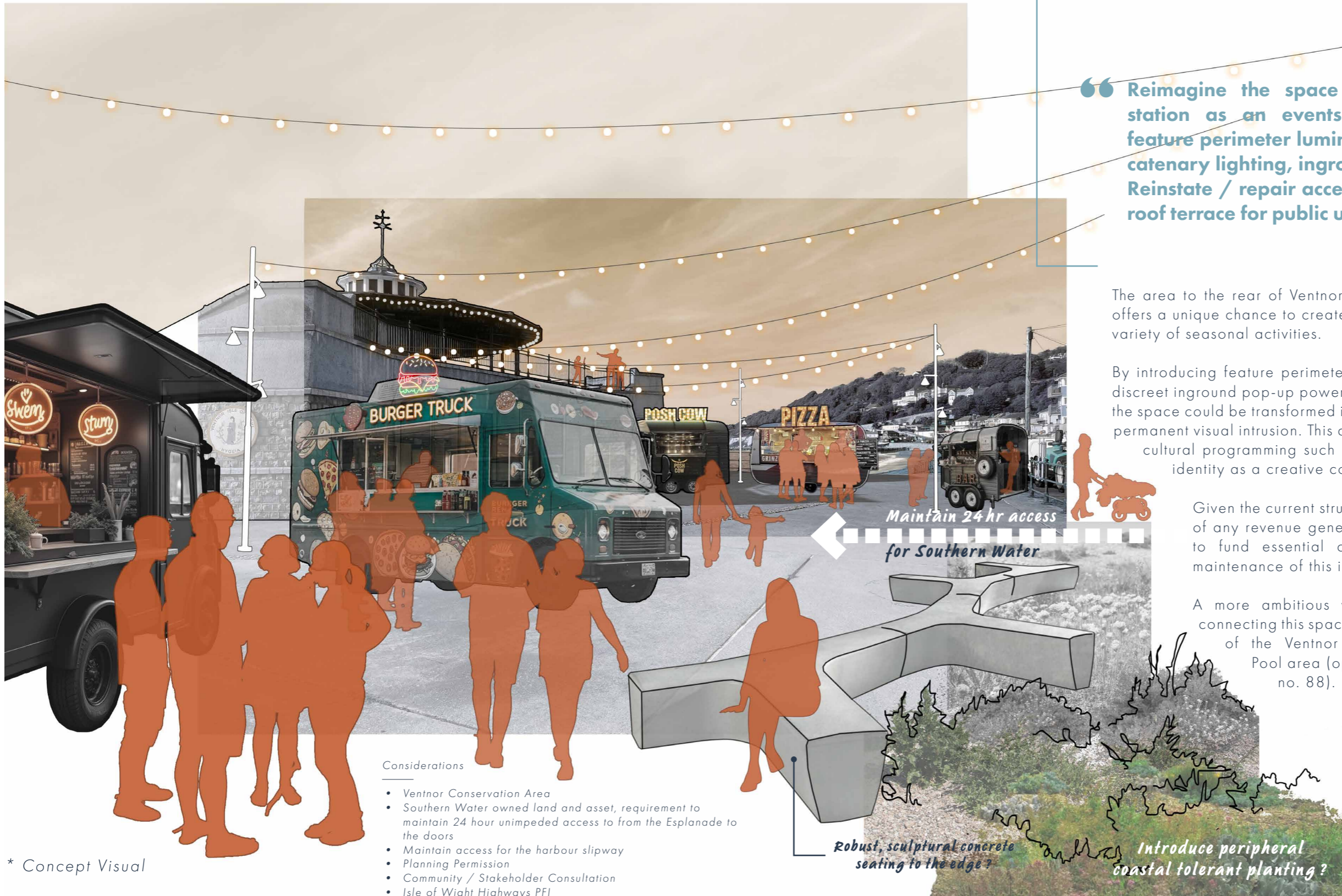
“ Reimagine the space north of the pumping station as an events space, equipped with feature perimeter luminaires and/or centralised catenary lighting, inground pop-up power units. Reinstate / repair access to the pumping station roof terrace for public use during events. ”

The area to the rear of Ventnor’s historic pumping station is underused and offers a unique chance to create a vibrant, multifunctional events space for a variety of seasonal activities.

By introducing feature perimeter luminaires or catenary lighting, along with discreet inground pop-up power units and opening up the bandstand terrace, the space could be transformed into a flexible venue for pop-up events without permanent visual intrusion. This approach would activate the seafront, support cultural programming such as Ventnor Fringe, and strengthen the town’s identity as a creative coastal destination.

Given the current structural issues with the bandstand, a proportion of any revenue generated from these events could be ringfenced to fund essential capital improvements and ensure ongoing maintenance of this important heritage asset in perpetuity.

A more ambitious vision for this area might involve visually connecting this space with that of the Ventnor Paddling Pool area (opportunity no. 88).



Considerations

- Ventnor Conservation Area
- Southern Water owned land and asset, requirement to maintain 24 hour unimpeded access to from the Esplanade to the doors
- Maintain access for the harbour slipway
- Planning Permission
- Community / Stakeholder Consultation
- Isle of Wight Highways PFI

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High

* Concept Visual

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

46

“ Improve public amenity, namely the toilet facilities. Opportunity to also introduce showers and changing facilities. ”

The extent of public toilets across Ventnor as a whole are somewhat limited, but the Eastern Esplanade Toilets at the base of the Cascade Gardens which serve beach goers, visitors along the esplanade and supplement several of the seafront cafes are in a state of disrepair. Their condition and limited provision detract from the overall visitor experience, particularly given Ventnor’s status as a key coastal destination where high-quality public amenities are integral to sustaining tourism and encouraging longer stays. Enhancing these facilities represents a clear opportunity to elevate both the practical and aesthetic quality of the seafront. A well-designed, contemporary structure could integrate toilets, showers, changing areas, and potentially a small lifeguard or first aid station, providing essential services while contributing positively to the town’s character. Taking inspiration from examples such as the Safety Pavilion at Knokke in Belgium, such an intervention could transform a basic utility into a landmark coastal feature – one that reinforces Ventnor’s distinctive identity and commitment to providing a welcoming, high-quality environment for residents and visitors alike.

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High

Considerations

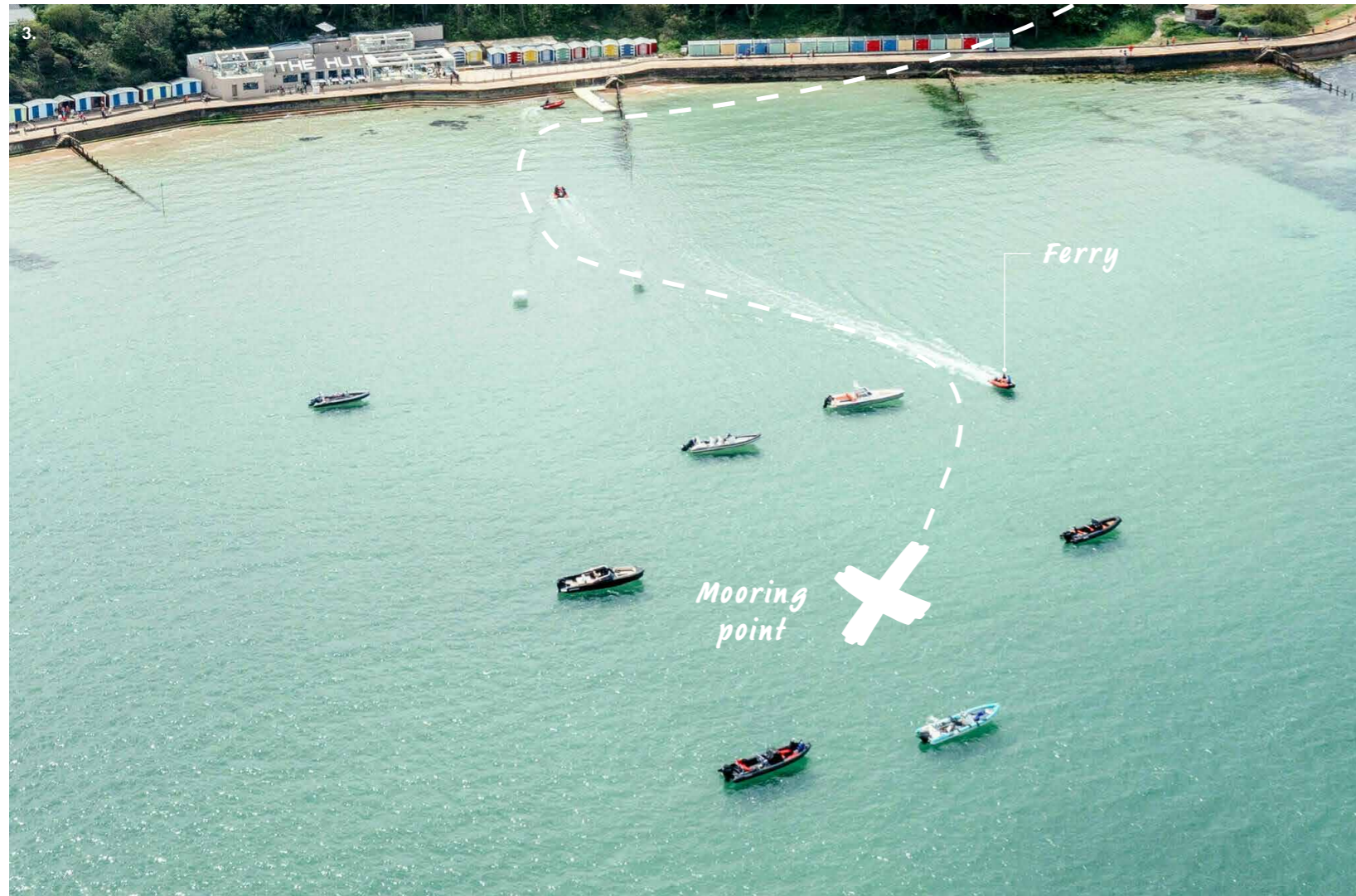
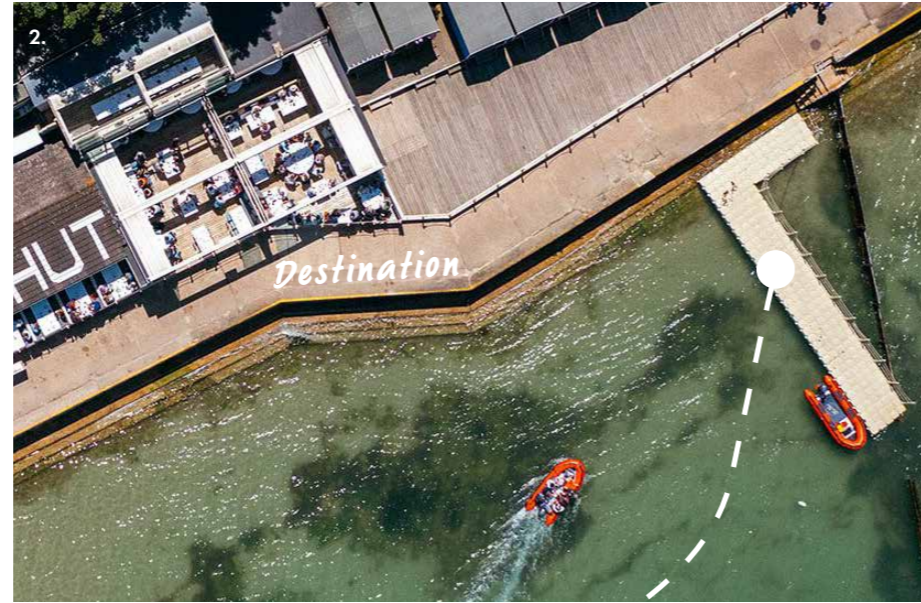
- Ventnor Town Council manage the public toilets
- Future maintenance input

Image sources

1. & 2. <https://www.compagnie-o.be/projecten/1/safety-pavilion-knokke>



Precedent
Safety Pavilion Knokke, Belgium



EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

49

“ Install mooring buoys just offshore to enhance maritime access and encourage blue tourism. ”

The introduction of offshore mooring buoys offers a strategic opportunity to improve maritime access and safety while supporting blue tourism along this unique stretch of coastline. Ventnor Haven is small and not equipped to handle increased vessel traffic, so offshore moorings would provide a practical alternative, reducing congestion and anchor damage to sensitive seabeds. These buoys would create designated anchorage points for visiting sailors and recreational boaters, opening up access to hard-to-reach destinations such as the Seapot Café at Wheelers Bay. By attracting nautical visitors, this initiative could deliver a significant economic uplift through increased spending on food and leisure activities, encouraging longer stays and repeat visits. If shortlisted for Stage 2, this opportunity should likely to be taken forward alongside Opportunity no.53.

The Hut restaurant at Colwell Bay is a local precedent and provides an ideal model to be replicated within the project, demonstrating how simple interventions such as installing offshore mooring buoys, partnering with local charter operators, and offering a dedicated tender service to ferry guests ashore can augment sea access generally and stimulate coastal economies.

Precedent

The Hut, Colwell Bay

Considerations

- South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation
- Marine Licencing
- Stakeholder engagement
- Ferry / shuttle RIB?
- Fee structures or booking systems
- Maintenance input

Image sources

1. 2. & 3. <https://thehutcolwell.co.uk/>

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

52

“ Reinforce Ventnor’s rich, architectural character through shopfront / façade restoration, and heritage-led public realm design. ”

Ventnor’s townscape exhibits a rich layering of architectural styles, including Edwardian, Victorian, and Art Deco buildings, among others. However, the quality of individual shopfronts and façades varies considerably, with some areas showing signs of wear or unsympathetic alteration that detract from the overall coherence of the streetscape. There is a clear opportunity to reinforce the town’s visual identity through a coordinated programme of shopfront and façade restoration, guided by principles of heritage conservation and high-quality design. Such an approach could include reinstating traditional materials, colour palettes, and signage, as well as improving the interface between buildings and the public realm through consistent surfacing, lighting, and street furniture. A heritage-led design strategy would not only enhance the aesthetic appeal and legibility of the town but also strengthen its sense of place and support local business vitality.

The restoration of 88 Dean Street illustrates the value of research-led, craftsmanship-based conservation. Detailed paint analysis informed the authentic reinstatement of the shopfront, while the careful removal of paint revealed fine carved timber details, including a rope motif and harp ornament. Targeted timber repairs, reinstated mouldings, and the use of historically appropriate colours combined with traditional gold-leaf signwriting, restored the façade’s original character and thus strengthening the visual appearance of the streetscape.

Estimated Cost				
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
Positive Impact				
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High
Duration of Implementation				
Short	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Long
Maintenance Input				
Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High

Considerations

- Ventnor Conservation Area
- Listed Building Consent ?
- Planning Permission
- Community / Stakeholder Consultation
- Owner of the building

Image sources

1. 2. & 3. <https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/specifications/shopfronts/historic-shopfront-restoration-case-studies/>



Before...

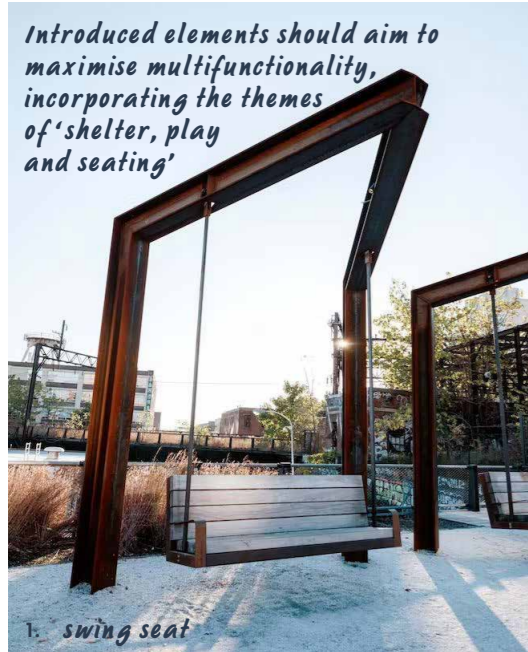


As it looked in 1905

...After



Precedent
88 Dean Street Shopfront, London



Introduced elements should aim to maximise multifunctionality, incorporating the themes of 'shelter, play and seating'

1. swing seat

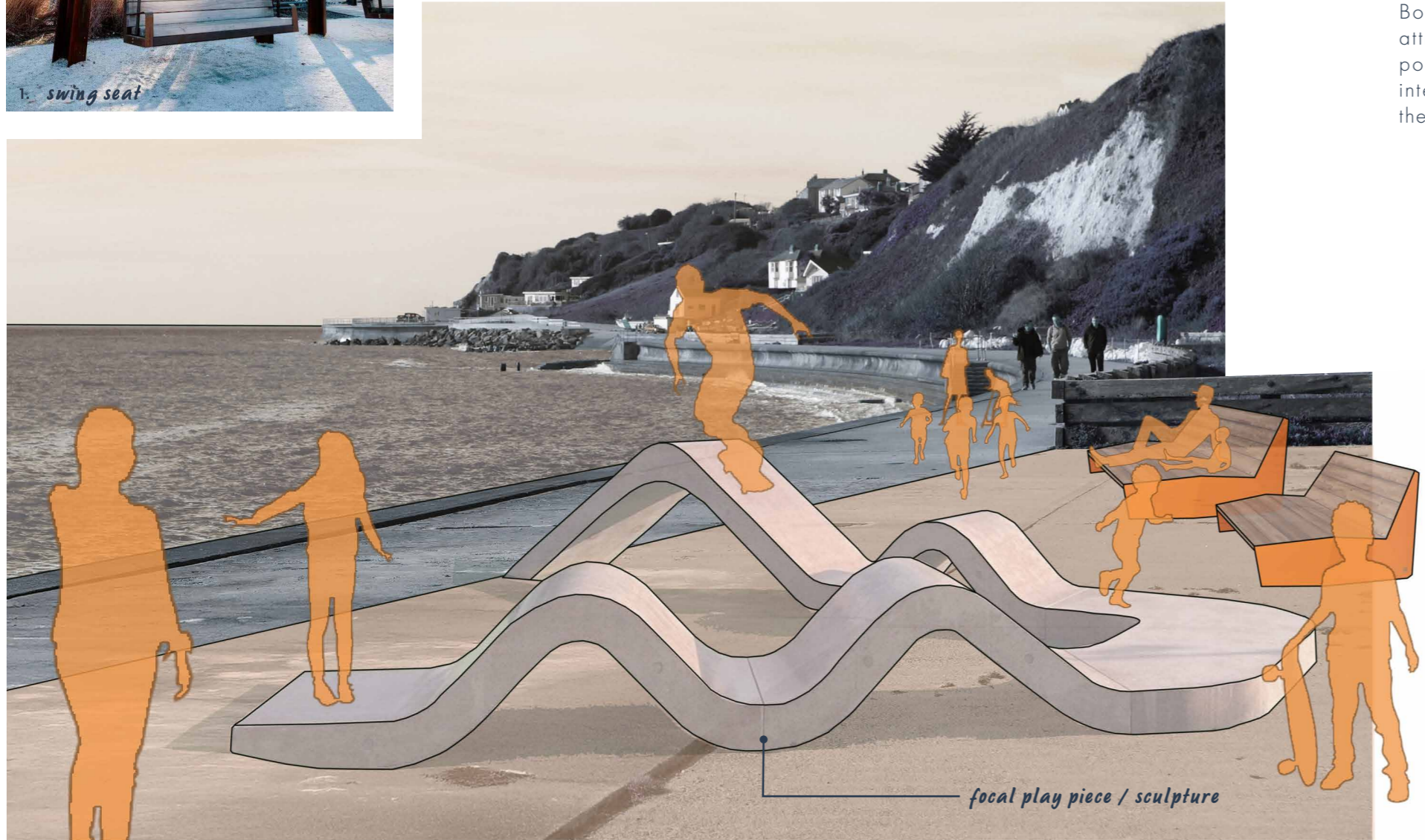


Further ideas ...

2. seating isles



3. sculptural seating, dining / play elements



focal play piece / sculpture

* Concept Visual

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

80

“ Introduce pocket parks / incidental rest and play opportunities along the Eastern promenade to create points of interest and refuge. ”

Pocket parks along the Eastern Esplanade - particularly between Wheelers Bay and Bonchurch - would break up a relatively featureless stretch of promenade and create attractive places to pause, meet, and enjoy views. These small incidental spaces positioned at key vantage points could incorporate a combination of seating, shelter, interpretation, artwork and informal play elements, aiding in placemaking and turning the promenade into a series of memorable nodes rather than a transient route.



'INTERACTIVE INTERPRETATION' more tactile / stimulating

Considerations

- Maintenance input
- Vandalism / anti-social / illicit behaviour
- Intended audience / use
- Impact on visual amenity

Image sources

1. <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/415386765651880567/>
2. <https://landezine.com/streetlife-recommendation-chicago-riverwalk-east/>
3. <https://landezine.com/the-circles/>
4. <https://designwanted.com/inclusive-design-the-benefit-of-designing-for-all/>
5. <https://ashton-design.com/work/lexington-market-plaza>

Estimated Cost

Low High

Positive Impact

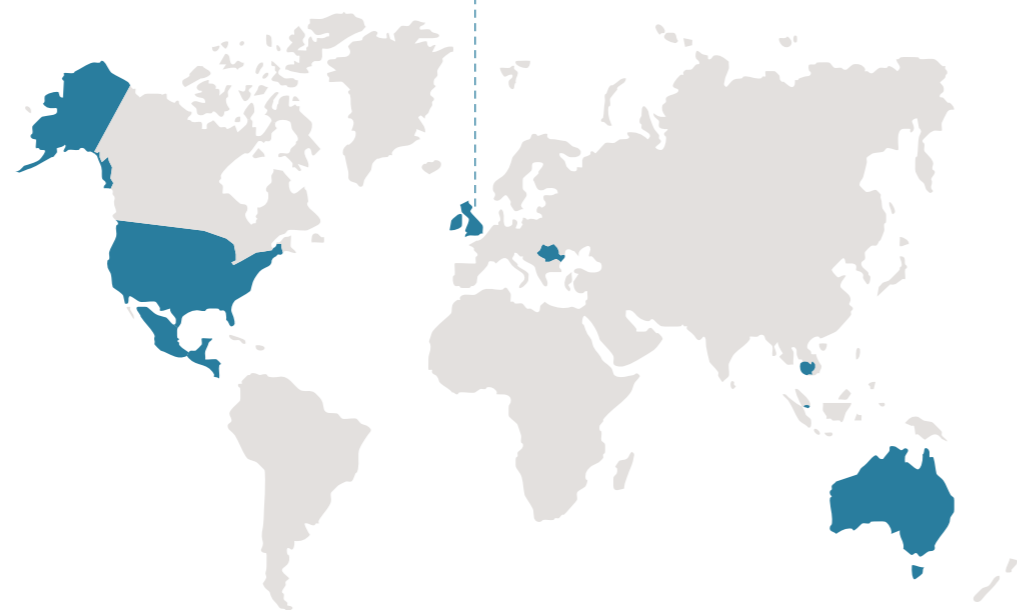
Low High

Duration of Implementation

Short Long

Maintenance Input

Low High



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