

Design & Access Statement

St Monans Auld Kirk | October 2026

OCA

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Document issue

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D02	Final draft	12.10.2026
P01	Planning & LBC applications	21.10.2026

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1. Preface and Application Details

1.1 Preface

One of the oldest churches in Scotland, St Monans Auld Kirk is a significant and stunning historic building in Fife's East Neuk. Local community charity St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise took ownership of the Category A-listed building in late 2025, with support from the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Scottish Land Fund, and Fife Historic Buildings Trust, with the goal of running it as a community asset. They now propose to conserve and repair the structure while implementing a series of high-quality well-considered interventions to ensure both the financial feasibility of the operation and the long-term resilience of this unique heritage asset.

It is proposed that the building will be used for the following activities:

- a space to hire for those of all faiths and none to celebrate important life events
- a space which can continue to hold worship services as well as village celebrations such as the crowning of the St Monans Sea Queen
- a performance venue for concerts, talks and readings
- a place to find out about the history of the Auld Kirk and the wider area
- a community cafe serving locals, tourists, and walkers on the Fife Coastal Path
- open community and visitor access for contemplation & enjoyment

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by OCA Studio in collaboration with the wider design team, and is to be read alongside the Planning Application and supporting information provided:

- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Conservation Plan
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Landscape Maintenance Schedule
- Sustainability and Energy Statement
- Operating Statement

The proposals described within this document have been prepared on behalf of the applicant, St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise, an OSCR-registered charity and building owners.

1.2 Application details

Application type: Full Planning Application
Address: St Monans Auld Kirk, Burnside, St Monans, Fife, KY10 2BX
Applicant Details: St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise
Agent Details: OCA Studio

Design Team
the following design team has been appointed by St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise:
Architect / Lead Consultant: OCA Studio
Conservation Architect: Munro Allison Architects
Civil & Structural Engineers: Narro Associates
M&E Engineers: Lùths Services
Cost Consultants: Thomson Gray
Landscape Architects: HarrisonStevens
Interpretation consultant: LT Clark
Business Planning: Delfinity

Pre-Application Enquiry Reference: 25/00515/PREAPP

Site Area (red line boundary): 0.4 ha
Gross Internal Floor Area: 235 m^2

Description of development (Planning):
Repairs, alterations and change of use to Category A-listed former church building (Class 10) to make suitable for flexible community use (Class 11 / Class 3), including new kitchen and WC facilities, and new accessible entrance to north elevation. Other external alterations including new fixed glazing to reopened west entrance and new air source heat pump, with associated access improvements to existing graveyard.



2. Planning Context & Engagement Summary

2.1 Pre-planning advice

Preliminary development proposals were the subject of Pre-application Advice, issued by Fife Council on 2nd April 2025. Feedback on the proposals from the Council's Built Heritage Team was later received in May 2025.

The design has since been developed in response to points raised in the Pre-application advice, with further investigative surveys and community consultation carried out.

Key points from the Pre-application Advice relating to planning policy are discussed in subsequent sections of this report, most notably:

- justification for the principle of the development in this location
- the design and visual impact of the proposals on the Category A-listed building and its curtilage, and the wider St Monans Conservation Area
- road safety
- amenity
- archaeology

2.2 Statement of justification

Fife Council's Pre-Application advice noted a requirement to provide *"justification establishing the principle of development within the St Monans settlement as an appropriate form of land use in accordance with NPF4 (2023) and Adopted FIFEplan (2017), including demonstrating community demand, and information on the building being surplus to Church of Scotland requirements".*

In May 2023 the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland made the decision to sell St Monans Auld Kirk. A local community group St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise (the applicant) was formed and, with the assistance of Fife Historic Buildings Trust, developed a vision and business plan for taking on ownership of the building and running it as a community asset. Following successful fundraising efforts the ownership of St Monans Auld Kirk was formally transferred to the applicant in December 2025.

Now that the building is no longer used by the Church of Scotland as a regular place of worship it is evident that a new financially-sustainable function is required to enable the ongoing use of the site and to prevent this Category A-listed building from deterioration. The overarching impetus behind the proposals is to create a compatible use for this important building which conserves its historic character and building fabric, and allows members of the local community continuing access to this key piece of their built heritage. In this endeavour the proposals are aligned with the requirement to '*avoid the loss of valuable cultural, tourism, and community resources'* as set out in Policy 1 of the Adopted FIFEplan.

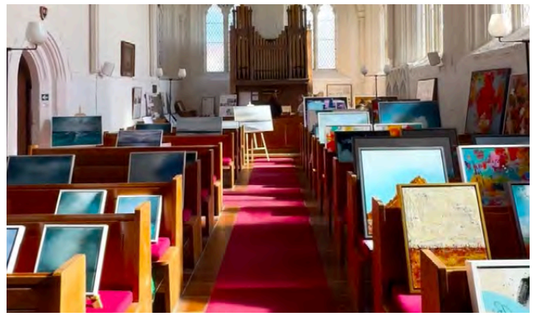
St Monans Auld Kirk sits within the St Monans settlement boundary, albeit on the western edge. As a former church building, a precedent has long been established for high-capacity use of the site, including for worship services, weddings, funerals, and concerts; all activities which these proposals aim to continue to facilitate. Section 2.3 of this document provides further detail on compliance with key policies as identified within the Pre-Application Advice.

The wider St Monans community have been hugely supportive of the applicant's proposals to operate the building as a community resource. St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise now has 230 members, almost a quarter of the village population, and the proposals have been well-received at local consultation events. Information regarding consultation feedback is provided in section 2.6 of this document.

Since the applicant took ownership of the building in December 2025, the Auld Kirk has continued to host weddings, worship services, and other events including acting as a venue for both the St Monans Arts Festival and the East Neuk Festival, a classical live music festival within the local area. The building has been freely open to the public since April 2026, and over this six-month period two visitor books have been filled, with many comments praising the beauty of the space, as well as showing support for the proposals. In addition over £4,000 has been raised in donations via a donations box within the building. The ongoing active use of the building and the level of support and interest garnered from both locals and visitors alike is evidence of the high esteem in which the Auld Kirk is held, and the appetite for its continued use and regeneration.







From top: St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise AGM in February 2026; a full Kirk at the watchnight service in December 2025; as a venue at the St Monans Arts Festival in September 2026

2.3 Key relevant policies

Fife Council's Adopted Local Development Plan (FIFEplan) sets out the general policies against which any planning application will be assessed. The specific policies relevant to this application as noted in the Pre-application Advice are outlined below.

Policy 1: Development Principles
Policy 1 requires development to conform to relevant Development Plan policies, and to address their individual and cumulative impacts. St Monans Auld Kirk sits within the St Monans settlement boundary as identified on the St Monans Settlement Plan from the Adopted FIFEplan, and complies with the policies for the location as outlined below.

Policy 3: Infrastructure and Services
Policy 3 requires development to be designed and implemented in a manner that ensures it delivers the required level of infrastructure, and functions in a sustainable manner. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site will utilise existing access routes via Braehead and Burnside from the east, with pedestrian access from the west maintained via the existing Fife Coastal Path. The existing car park to the north of the site shall continue to provide vehicular parking for the building, with new cycle stands supporting active travel. Further information on proposed access arrangements is provided in section 5 of this document.

The seated capacity of the building is currently around 230 persons, with a precedent established for peak occupancy at key times (worship services, weddings, funerals and concerts). A peak operating capacity of 110 persons is proposed, based on available exit routes from the building. An Operating Statement has been provided as a supporting document which outlines further details of proposed events, their capacity and frequency.

The proposals seek to upgrade and improve current pedestrian routes through the historic burial ground, enhancing accessibility across this green space and strengthening connections between the Fife Coastal Path walking route and the village. Additional planting and seating (to be maintained by the applicant) is proposed within the historic burial ground both to provide enhanced amenity and access for those visiting the site (Policy 13) and to enhance the setting of the listed church building (Policy 14) in line with recommendations of the Making Fife's Places Supplementary Guidance.

It is acknowledged that the proposed use for the building will generate additional commercial waste on the site. It is proposed to locate waste and recycling bins within an enclosure to the north of the site. In this location the existing topography and boundary walls provide appropriate screening, while permitting ease of access and collection via upgraded footpaths. Further information regarding recycling and waste collection and storage is provided in section 5 of this document.

Policy 10: Amenity
Policy 10 notes that development will only be supported where it does not have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of existing or proposed land uses. The proposals seek to balance the number of weddings, concerts and other events required to make the operation financially-sustainable with the applicant's aim to open the building for the local community and visitors to enjoy. There is an established precedent for high footfall land use on the site, and the Operating Statement provided as a supporting document outlines the anticipated basis upon which this would be maintained under the proposals.

Policy 11: Low Carbon Fife
While not a new development, the proposals have been designed to improve the environmental sustainability of the existing building. Taking a fabric-first approach to sustainable retrofit, insulation of the building fabric elements is proposed where these interventions would not detrimentally impact the Category A-listed building, including roof pitches insulated with carbon-negative hemp batts. The existing gas-fired heating system will be replaced by new air source heat pumps, removing the building's reliance on fossil fuels ahead of government schedule. Further information is provided in section 6 of this document.

Policy 13: Natural Environment and Access
Policy 13 notes that proposals will only be supported where they protect or enhance natural heritage and access assets. The proposals maintain and enhance existing footpaths across the historic burial ground, and do not detrimentally impact, or impinge on access to, the adjacent Firth of Forth SSSI. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is provided as a supporting document.

Policy 14: Built and Historic Environment
Policy 14 notes that development which protects or enhances buildings or other built heritage of special architectural or historic interest will be supported. As discussed in section 2.2 of this document the overarching aim of the proposals is to repair, enhance and maintain the existing Category A-listed building to protect and retain its status as a key piece of St Monans built heritage.

The proposed alterations are designed to have a low visual impact on the Category A-listed building and its setting within the St Monans Conservation Area, while providing the adaptation necessary to improve accessibility to and within the building, and allow it to be operated by the applicant as a financially-sustainable resource for the benefit of the local community. The impact on the existing building is discussed in the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment which is provided as a supporting document.

With accessibility in mind, it is proposed to use the vestry entrance to the north as the main entrance to the building, with the stepped south doorway still in use as an alternative means of access, particularly by users of the Fife Coastal Path. The current door to the vestry is small, with no visual connection into the building or external indication that this is a primary access point. It is therefore proposed to enlarge the opening to the vestry to create a wider compliant accessible entrance to the building, with new glazing and a slightly elevated roof peak identifying this as the main point of entry on approach from the car park or pedestrian access routes to the north. In line with the HES guidance on Managing Change in the Historic Environment, this new intervention is located within the vestry, an area of lower heritage significance, and is designed to read as a modern intervention while using appropriate and high-quality materials which tie in with the tones of the existing masonry. This intervention will provide an open and useable vestibule between the main Kirk and the outside, without requiring extension of the building envelope.

2.4 National Planning Framework perspective

The proposals for the alteration and reuse of St Monans Auld Kirk align with several of the key spatial strategies as set out in Scotland's National Planning Framework (NPF4). These include:

- **Just transition:** the community-led proposals see this important building within the local area transition towards renewable sources of energy, as well as implementing a programme of upgrades and repairs to protect and sustain the structure against the effects of our changing climate.
- **Conserving and recycling assets:** the proposals focus on the reuse of a Category A-listed building following its disposal by the Church of Scotland, and paint a sustainable community-led vision for its future.
- **Local living:** the proposals support and improve access to local green space and facilities, including publicly-accessible WCs, while provision of local events will help to bring the community together.
- **Rural revitalisation:** the proposed community-run cafe will provide year-round employment, and will work with local food and drink providers. The proposals will attract additional visitors through weddings and events, help extend and expand existing festivals, and help to increase economic benefit from those already staying / visiting locally through provision of an additional point of interest and heritage interpretation offer.

In addition, the following specific policies from the National Planning Framework are also relevant:

Policy 12: Zero Waste
Policy 12 notes that development proposals will be supported where they reuse existing buildings and infrastructure, and salvage materials for reuse. The proposals focus on the reuse of an existing building with minimal alteration and, following Pre-App feedback, have been further developed so that waste materials from existing internal furnishings are reused extensively within new interventions.

Policy 14: Design, Quality and Place
Policy 14 requires development to be consistent with the six qualities of successful places. The proposals retain and enhance the attractive setting of the existing Kirk and burial ground, and show commitment to the long-term exceptional heritage value of the building through appropriate adaptation in line with the changing needs of the local area. The proposed new entrance offers a carefully-designed intervention which improves accessibility while showcasing a contemporary interpretation of traditional architectural elements. Section 4.5 of this document provides additional detail regarding the design of this element.

Policy 25: Community wealth building
Policy 25 notes that development proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported. The proposals, by the community-led not-for-profit applicant group, aim to provide enhanced community access, amenity, and connection with local heritage, while creating a sustainable economic benefit for the wider community.

Policy 30: Tourism
Policy 30 aims to encourage, promote and facilitate sustainable tourism development which benefits local people, is consistent with our net zero and nature commitments, and inspires people to visit Scotland. As a landmark building within the East Neuk of Fife, St Monans Auld Kirk is already a point of interest for tourists and visitors to the area. The proposals aim to sustainably build upon this by offering additional information and interpretation on local heritage, improving access to and around the building, and putting economic benefit back into the local community. The Fife Coastal Path, which runs to the south of the site, provides a steady stream of pedestrian visitors to the building, while the site is in easy walking distance of the centre of St Monans. Car and cycle parking provision are provided to the north of the site; further details are contained within section 5 of this document.

Policy 31: Culture and creativity
Policy 31 aims to encourage, promote and facilitate development which reflects our diverse culture and creativity, and to support our culture and creative industries. The reuse of the building will allow local people ongoing access to and connection with this important piece of their built heritage, while proposed interpretation will provide additional information on the cultural heritage of the area. The use of the building as an events and performance space will see an enhanced offering of cultural activities within the local area, including building on and providing space for existing initiatives such as the St Monans Arts Festival, the St Monans Sea Queen Festival, and the East Neuk Festival.

2.5 Other key documents

Local Community Plan
The North East Fife Local Community Plan (2026-27) outlines a number of themes and outcomes which are supported by these proposals, including increasing opportunity for social interaction for the aging population through the fully-accessible community cafe; providing additional employment opportunities within the area; and enhancing community participation and opportunities for decision-making through the community ownership and operation of this significant resource.

Community Action Plan
The St Monans & Abercrombie Community Action Plan (2018-2022) identifies a number of priorities relating to improvements in the amenity, economy and setting of the area. These include:

- educate school children about local history: heritage interpretation within the building will tell the story of St Monans, with opportunity for schools to visit and use the space for heritage-related activities
- encourage development of existing events and festivals while creating new attractions: the enhanced facilities will allow the Auld Kirk to support existing festivals while hosting a range of other events and performances
- development of a community pub: 'pub nights' may be held within the community cafe, bringing people together in this community-owned historic setting
- promote St Monans & Abercrombie as a destination: under these proposals this landmark building will remain open to visitors, while also offering heritage interpretation and information about the local area

2.6 Engagement and community support

The proposed community ownership and reuse of St Monans Auld Kirk has been the subject of community consultation and engagement since 2023, when the building was first identified for sale by the Church of Scotland.

Two events held in 2023 were attended by around 150 people, and provided strong backing for community ownership of the building and its ongoing operation as a place to hold weddings, funerals and other celebrations and events.

In 2024, as part of an initial feasibility study into the reuse of the Auld Kirk, a consultation event was carried out as part of local Sea Queen Festival to garner feedback on developing proposals. The event was available to drop-in throughout the weekend, with presentation boards which explained the vision, the history of the building, design analysis and the proposed interventions, and also provided opportunity for attendees to talk about the proposals with members of the client team.

The drop-in event was supplemented by an online survey for people who were unable to attend on the day, and was publicised via social media and within the village. Attendees of the drop-in event were invited to 'vote' on what they thought of the outline proposals; of the 62 attendees who left feedback this way, all of them voted that they 'love[d] these ideas' (adjacent image, top right). At both the in-person event and via the survey people were also invited to leave comments:

> *"loved the plans, and great to see multi-use places within"*
>
> *"more heritage interpretation about St Monans"*
>
> *"Light, airy space with modern toilet and kitchen facilities. Love that it can still be used for celebration of life events - marriage, funerals etc"*

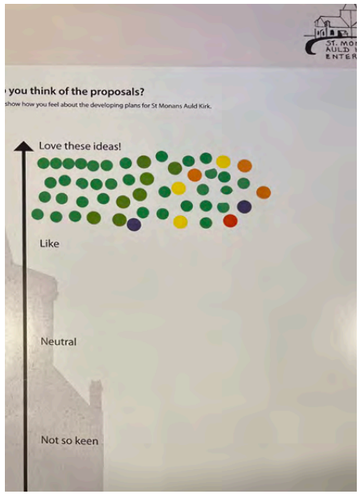
Further community updates and discussion were carried out in 2025 as St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise prepared to take on ownership of the building, and in 2026 the Sea Queen Festival was once again used to discuss the developed proposals with residents from the local area.

The event provided updated information on the designs for the building, including the proposed repairs to the building fabric, and offered an opportunity to discuss the proposals with both the client and architectural teams.

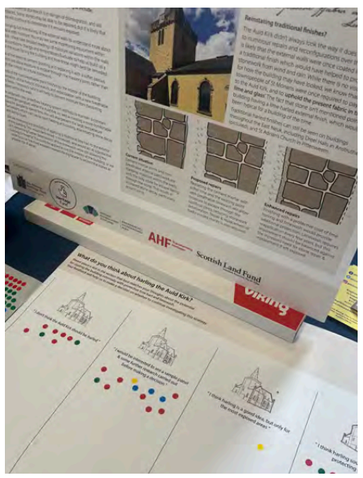
Specific feedback was sought on the potential for harling the building as a traditional method of protecting the deteriorating external stonework from the elements. A significant proportion of the attendees were interested in the visual and technical outcomes of this process, resulting in interesting conversations with the architectural team into the potential benefits that harling could bring, as well as the changes in the visual character of the building and additional maintenance requirements. Attendees were invited to 'vote' on their preferred harling strategy; 50% of participants voted in favour of a sample panel being applied to the building and more research being carried out prior to making a decision.

A further consultation event was carried out as part of the Doors Open Day Festival in September 2026 which primarily focused on the proposed heritage interpretation; which local stories people were most interested in, and how these should be displayed within the building. The outcome of this is the development of five key themes around which the interpretation will be centred, and the proposed approaches for display and dissemination within and around the building. Further information on the interpretation strategy can be found in section 4.9.









Top: Presentation and feedback on initial proposals in 2024
Below: Discussion on developing proposals as part of the Sea Queen Festival in July 2026, and feedback on potential external harling

3. Understanding the Site

3.1 Settlement context

The Auld Kirk sits just to the south western edge of St Monans, a coastal village of roughly 1,100 inhabitants in Fife's East Neuk. It occupies a prominent position on high ground, with dramatic views out across the Forth estuary. The Kirk is surrounded by a historic burial ground, walled on all sides. To the northern boundary there is a small car park, and to the west lies the new burial ground. A small burn runs along the eastern edge of the site, which is crossed by three small bridges, one of which is suitable for vehicles.

The Auld Kirk was formerly the parish church of St Monans, however, the building was sold by the Church of Scotland in 2025 and regular worship has now moved to the church hall in the centre of the village. St Monans has a town hall and public library, a primary school, two restaurants, a cafe, and a couple of takeaways. The nearby Bowhouse food hub is a five minute drive away, and holds regular weekend food markets with a range of local traders.

A popular section of the Fife Coastal Path, a walking route between Kincardine and Newburgh, runs along the southern boundary of the site, and the Auld Kirk is a key point of interest on the route.

The village is served by several bus routes along the A917 - an hourly service between Leven and St Andrews running all day throughout the week, and a direct service between Edinburgh and St Andrews which runs daily although less frequently.



3.2 The site

The Auld Kirk sits in the midst of a historic burial ground, with steeply-sloping terrain, and masonry walls to the majority of the perimeter. The site sits within the St Monans Conservation Area, whose western boundary wraps around the historic burial ground.

There are three entrance routes to the site from the village; each involving a bridge over the Inverie Burn which runs along the north-eastern perimeter. The northernmost bridge (constructed 1939) provides vehicular access to the car park at the north of the site, as well as to the adjacent active burial ground to the west. The other two bridges are older; the middle bridge from Burnside likely constructed in the mid-19th century while the informal and unguarded bridge on the coast forms part of the historic route from the village. This entrance also features a set of stone steps to accommodate the significant level change.

Elsewhere dramatic changes in level across the site are traversed via steeply-sloping paths; these can pose problems in accessing the building, with the loose gravel surface and significant slope of the path from the car park being particularly difficult to navigate. The middle access route from Burnside is the most level of the three, and provides opportunity for creating a wheeled access route with minimal intervention.

Historic photographs also show a former gated entrance to the south wall of the graveyard, with what appear to be stone steps cut into the rock allowing direct access from the shore. This presumably aligned with the end of the footpath which runs along the western side of the site and stops abruptly halfway along its coastal wall. The entrance appears to have been infilled sometime in the early 20th century.



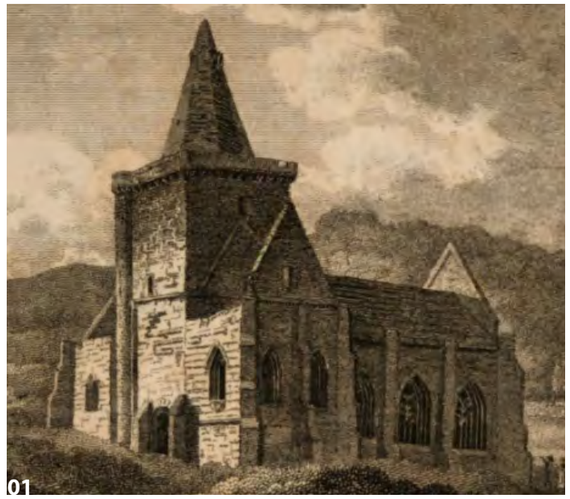
3.3 Historic development

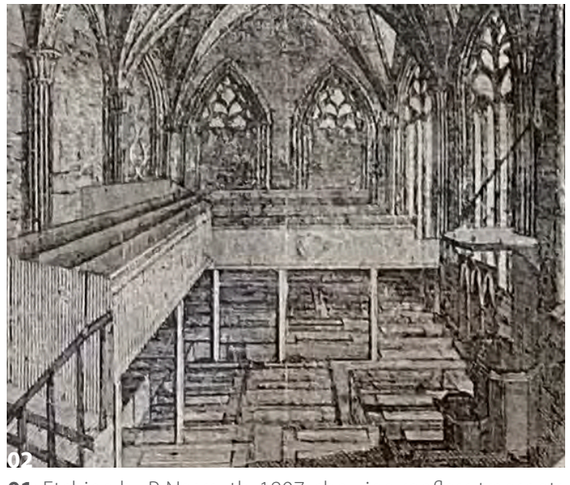
St Monans Auld Kirk is a landmark medieval building visible from many miles around thanks to its prominent coastal clifftop site. An A- listed building, much of its fabric dates from the 1360s, making it one of the oldest churches in Scotland.

There is evidence that a shrine to St Monan existed on the site prior to King David's II commissioning of the current structure in 1362-70. One medieval scholar attributes King David's interest in the site to a visit to the shrine which brought about his dramatic and miraculous recovery from an arrow wound; another says the commission was owed to his deliverance from a shipwreck in the Forth. Ownership was transferred to the Dominicans in 1471 by King James III. In 1544 the church was burned by English invaders, but restoration followed and it became a parish church in 1649. At this time the transepts were sealed off and only the chancel was used for worship; the pre-reformation altars were removed, the pulpit was on the south wall, and galleries were installed to the east and north.

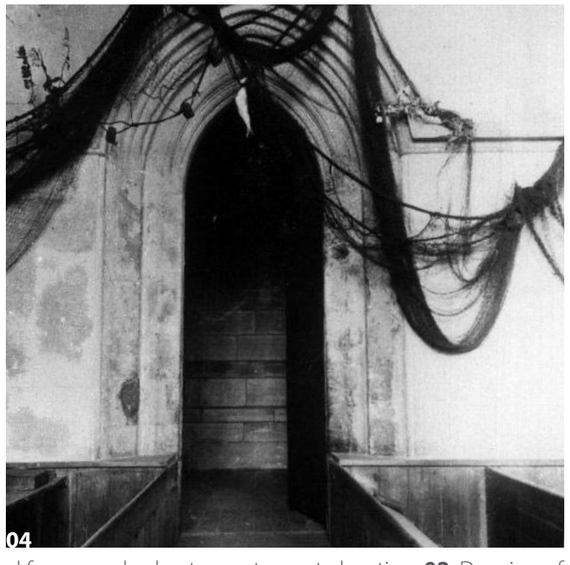
A major renovation was undertaken by William Burn in 1826-8, restoring the then-roofless transepts and reuniting the building into one space. The internal floor level of the Kirk was significantly lowered; the excavation works were said to have uncovered a number of burials within the north transept. The focal point of worship was moved to the crossing, and Burn also made alterations to the locations of entrances as well as adding small extensions to the north and east of the building. An internal porch, or narthex, was added to the east end of the chancel at a later date.

For full detailed information regarding the historic development of the building please refer to the accompanying Conservation Plan.

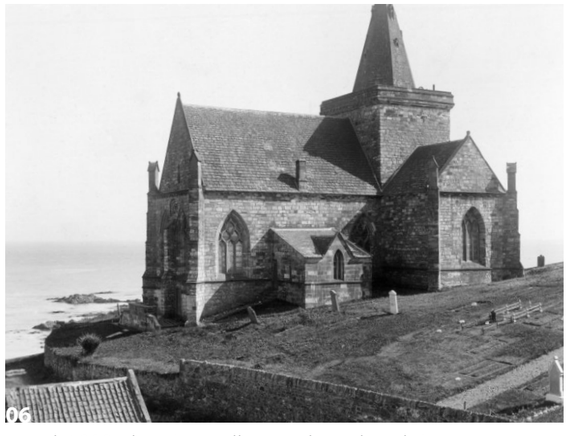

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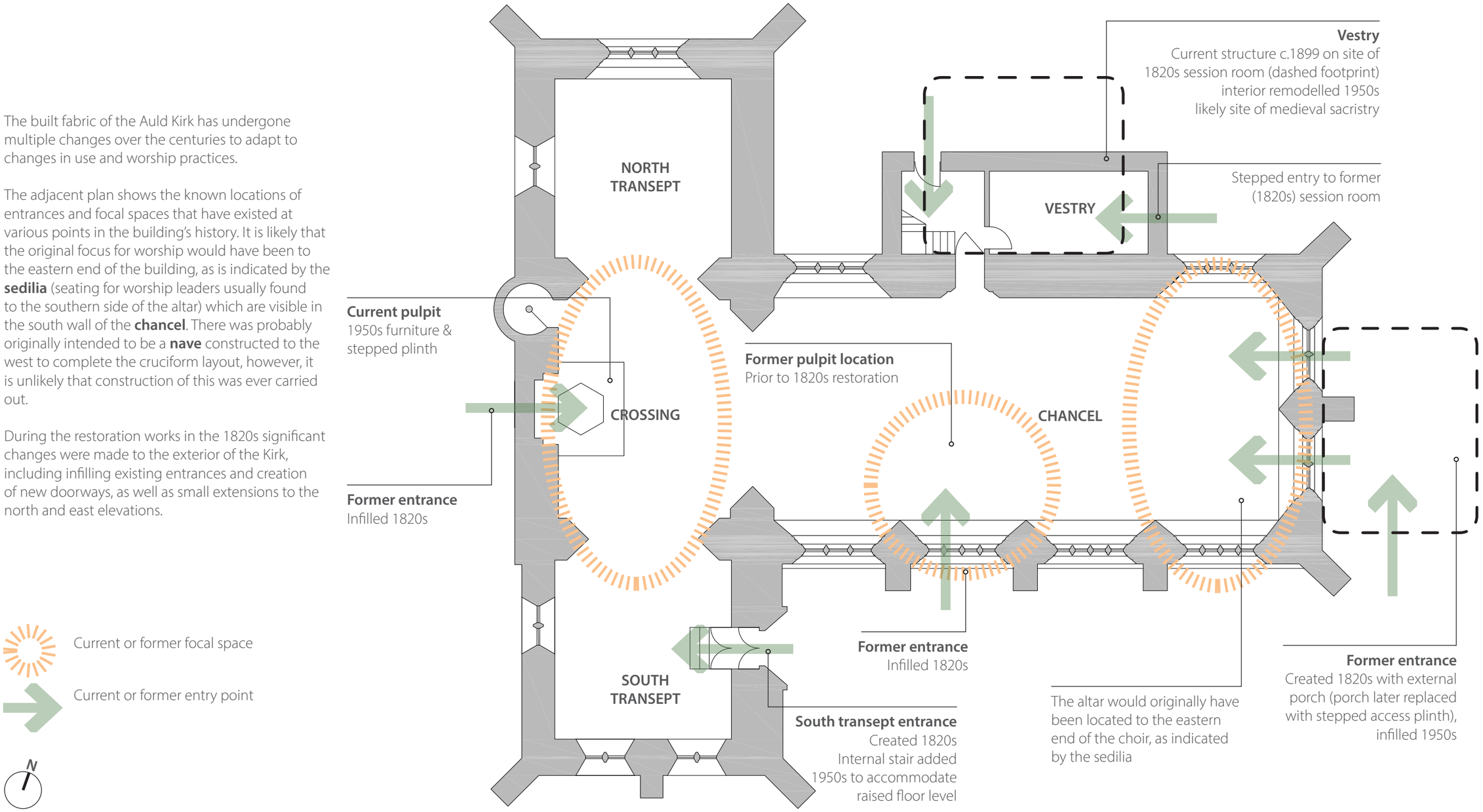

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01: Etching by P. Nasmyth, 1807, showing roofless transepts and former arched entrance to west elevation; **02**: Drawing of chancel, 1802, showing gallery and south pulpit ©HES Canmore
03: Photograph, 1866, showing west window installed in 1820s restoration ©HES Canmore; **04**: North door to chancel, pre-1900, decorated for harvest celebration, with lower floor level ©SCRAN
05: East entrance (created 1820s, infilled 1950s), with internal entrance porch or narthex; **06**: Photograph, 1890s, showing former session room in place of current vestry ©HES Canmore

The built fabric of the Auld Kirk has undergone multiple changes over the centuries to adapt to changes in use and worship practices.

The adjacent plan shows the known locations of entrances and focal spaces that have existed at various points in the building's history. It is likely that the original focus for worship would have been to the eastern end of the building, as is indicated by the **sedilia** (seating for worship leaders usually found to the southern side of the altar) which are visible in the south wall of the **chancel**. There was probably originally intended to be a **nave** constructed to the west to complete the cruciform layout, however, it is unlikely that construction of this was ever carried out.

During the restoration works in the 1820s significant changes were made to the exterior of the Kirk, including infilling existing entrances and creation of new doorways, as well as small extensions to the north and east elevations.



OCA

3.4 The existing building

Around the turn of the 20th century the session room to the north was replaced with the masonry vestry we see today. The entrance porch to the east has also been removed, with its doors infilled during a programme of further renovations and alterations carried out in the 1950s by Ian G. Lindsay.

The interior of the Kirk was whitewashed in the1950s, when decorative plasterwork from the 19th century restoration was stripped off, and the internal floor level raised. An electric underfloor heating network was installed (now defunct), and quarry tile floor coverings used throughout, with the exception of the dais to the east end of the chancel which is in caithness flagstones salvaged from the earlier floor. The pews and many of the internal furnishings also date from this time. Burn's tall window to the west was reduced in height, making the crossing a much darker space.

During the 2010s the congregation raised money for further repairs, mainly to the window traceries dating from the Burn restoration, with works overseen by conservation architect Steven Newsom.

While the internal finishes and furnishings from the 1950s works have an undoubtable impact on the current internal appearance of the Kirk, the history of the building is still visible through its built fabric. The medieval sedilia is a prominent feature, as are the piscina and aumbries, while the traceried windows bathe the chancel in natural light, although the effect is slightly diminished by the bulky presence of the organ installed at the eastern end in 1995. The model ships to the crossing speak to the area's seafaring past, and one of the heraldic shields visible to the gothic vaulted ceiling to the chancel bears the arms of Sir William Dishington, the master of works during the Kirk's construction almost 700 years ago.


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01: West elevation, with stair tower & infilled masonry to former openings; **02**: Crossing, looking north towards chancel door, with model ship; **03**: Crossing from chancel, with gothic vaults, and pulpit and infilled former arched entrance behind; **04**: Vestry on north elevation; **05**: Sedilia to south wall of chancel; **06**: North transept, with 1950s barrel-vaulted ceiling

3.5 **Site photographs**


01


02

01: Vestry door and exposed PVC pipework
02: Rooflight to vestry


03


04

03: Existing arch from former door opening visible internally, with wall-mounted radiator and 1950s pulpit
04: External stone leaf (1820s) at former door opening to west elevation


05

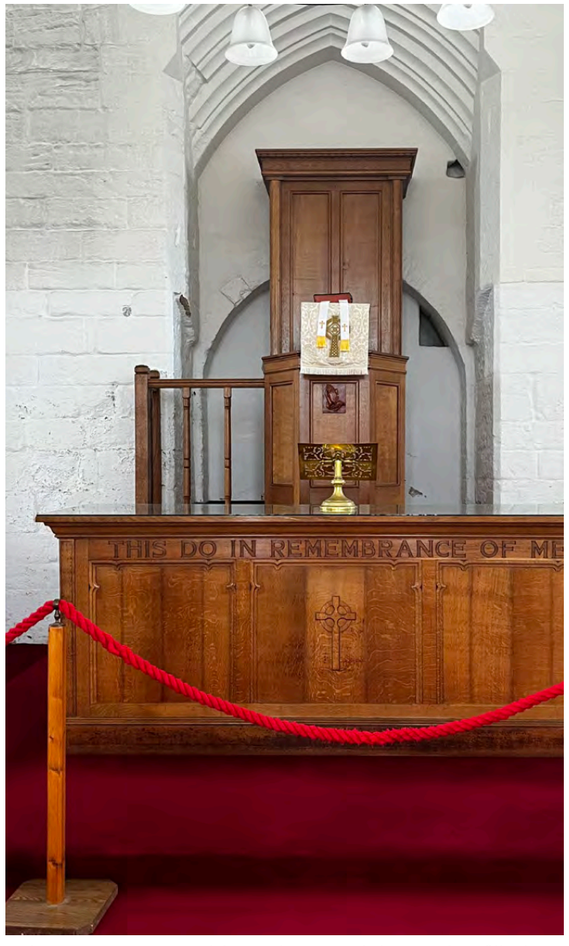

06

05: Pews and organ within chancel
06: Pews and wall-mounted radiator to south wall of chancel, with medieval consecration cross visible above, and infilled former doorway to RHS


07


08

07: Quarry tile flooring and exposed services
08: Exposed heating pipework and carpeted floor coverings within crossing



Pulpit, communion table, and stepped dais, with infilled arched opening behind



Oak pews, quarry tile flooring, and standing lamps (1950s) within chancel



Oak-lined partitions within vestry (1950s) with open-tread stair to upper floor beyond





Internal stone bench to north wall of vestry

3.6 Current condition

A building condition survey carried out in 2024 by Chartered Building Surveyors and Heritage Consultants Adams Napier Partnership noted a number of areas of concern, including deterioration of the external and internal stonework, and damage to the stair tower. It also noted areas of water ingress due to open lucarnes within the spire, and a poorly-fitted rooflight to the vestry roof. The roof was noted to be in a generally good condition, although replacement of some of the stone slates will be required, and the roof will need closer inspection once accessible.

Further surveys have since been carried out, including a full review of building fabric repair requirements by Advanced Conservation-Accredited Architect Georgina Allison of Allison Munro, and Steve Wood and Gary Moyes of Narro Associates. These identified several structural issues, including cracked modern lintels above the external door to the south transept and at the infill to the former doorways in the east gable, and significant structural issues with the stair tower, with cracking between the external walls of the tower and main building extending into the stair treads.

The architectural repairs survey found significant areas of stonework deterioration, particularly to the most-exposed south and west elevations. This included deterioration of Clashach sandstone elements that were installed in 2005.

A CCTV survey of the existing drainage was also carried out. This found the existing waste drainage route from the vestry to be in good condition. The building has no managed surface water drainage, other than a stone channel to the base of external walls which is in need of repair. Unmanaged surface water drainage across the wider burial ground is contributing to uneven footpaths and access issues.

Damp and moisture

The building has been suffering from damp-related issues since at least the time of the 1820s renovations. The exposed coastal location is causing erosion of the external masonry, particularly to the south and west, which is exacerbated by modern cement pointing across all elevations. Internally the exposed masonry has been coated with an impermeable paint during the 1950s works, trapping wind-driven moisture within the wall construction. Combined with rapid heating and cooling cycles as gas-fired radiators are turned on and off during periods of occupation, these issues are leading to damp-related decay of the historic masonry.

In order to more-fully understand the moisture issues within the external walls of the building, building services engineers Lùths Services are carrying out moisture monitoring within the building. Ongoing fluctuations in moisture content are being measured via probes embedded within the mortar joints of the south wall to the Chancel, with climactic data collected via sensors positioned both internally and externally.

Initial readings in this area showed a high level of dampness within the wall construction, with a relative humidity of 87% measured with a protimeter.

Proposed repair strategy

A programme of repair works are proposed to consolidate the fabric of the existing building, and to reduce and remediate issues relating to damp. Stone replacement is proposed for the most-eroded masonry, with repairs of existing units where practical, and the cement pointing is to be replaced with lime. Impermeable paint finishes will be carefully removed from the internal surfaces, and replaced with breathable limewash, maintaining the visual character of the interior while allowing moisture evaporation from within external wall constructions. An overhaul of the existing windows will ensure that vent panels are operable to maintain natural ventilation within the building and help prevent condensation. The proposed underfloor heating system and increased building occupancy will help to maintain the building at a steady temperature, preventing the damage associated with rapid temperature fluctuations and assisting with drying out the masonry shell. The stone drainage channel to the base of external walls will be repaired and realigned to direct surface water away from the building.

Potential further protective measures

The possibility of applying lime harling to the external masonry walls is being discussed as a potential future measure to protect the historic stonework from further deterioration, and to assist with moisture management within the building fabric. It is acknowledged that further research is required prior to making a decision on this, and it is therefore proposed to apply a sample panel to one of the 'bays' below the windows to the exposed south elevation. This will then be the subject of further monitoring to understand how this impacts the moisture content of the construction, as well as allowing a review of other considerations including visual impact, interaction with salts within the masonry, and the robustness of the finish in this exposed location.

This proposal is backed by the findings of the community consultation in July 2026, as noted in section 2.6.









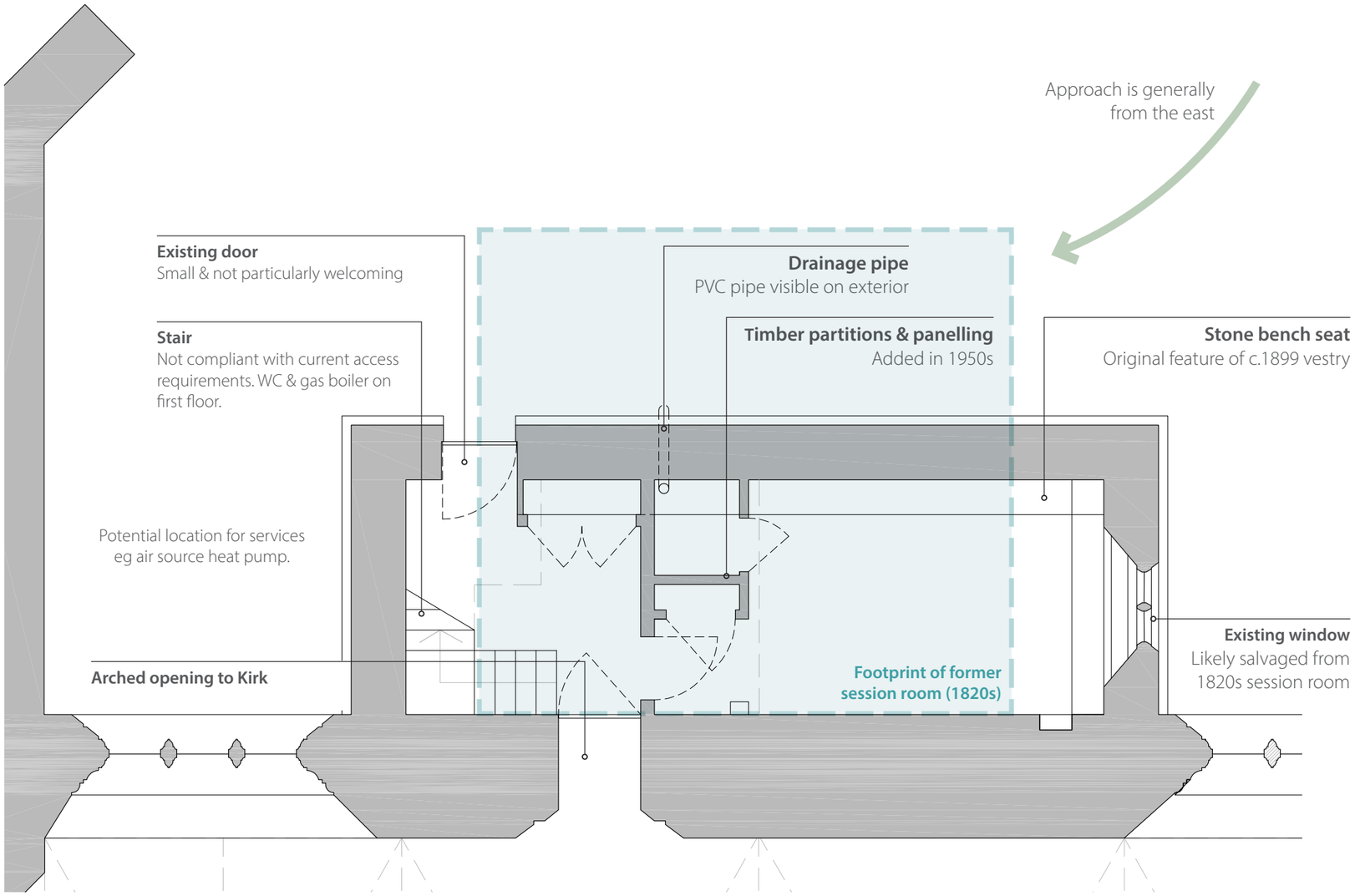
3.7 Areas of design focus

As a relatively recent addition to the historic Auld Kirk, and with plumbing and drainage connections already installed, the vestry is the most suitable location in which to install new services. However, its limited footprint and pinch-point access prevent the proposed cafe kitchen from being located in this area. The north transept has therefore been identified as the optimal location for the new kitchen, due to its relatively concealed location outwith main sightlines as well as its proximity and ease of access from the main Kirk.

The Vestry

As a relatively new addition to the Auld Kirk, the vestry is identified as the most suitable location for the required facilities to support the proposed programme of activities. It already benefits from drainage and plumbing connections, as well as a level access route into the building.

- The current vestry dates from c.1899, and its heritage significance is much lower than that of the Kirk itself. It was remodelled internally during the 1950s renovation works, with later stair and WC additions.
- The space will require to accommodate WCs, space services & plant, as well as general storage for cleaning equipment etc.
- Current entrance feels like a 'back door' - which is what it was designed as! Opportunity to widen & remodel to create a more welcoming & accessible entrance to the Kirk.



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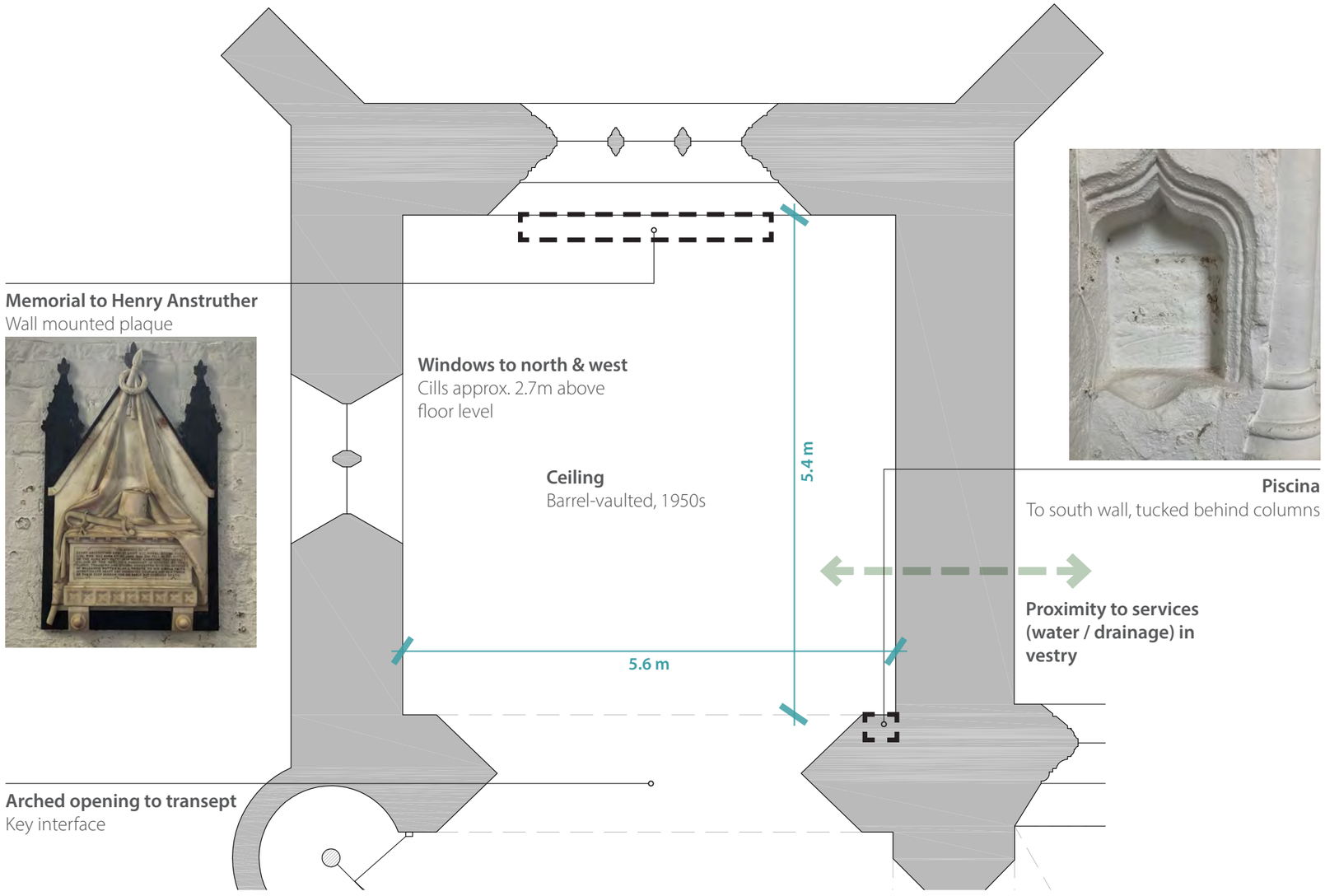
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The North Transept

Identified in early discussion as the most suitable location for the new cafe kitchen, the north transept was analysed in terms of its existing arrangement, constraints and opportunities.

The design criteria below were developed as a benchmark for assessing developing designs:

- Cafe / kitchen should be able to be securely closed up when not in use
- North transept should be visible & accessible, and should read as part of 'cruciform' layout, aiding understanding of the development of the Auld Kirk
- New drainage connection will be required running to adjacent vestry - may be able to run in floor construction
- Cafe design should avoid fixings to walls, and should sit below the datum provided by the window cills
- Cafe kitchen should read as a furniture object within the space, maintaining the language of the church as a masonry shell with carefully crafted pieces of internal furniture



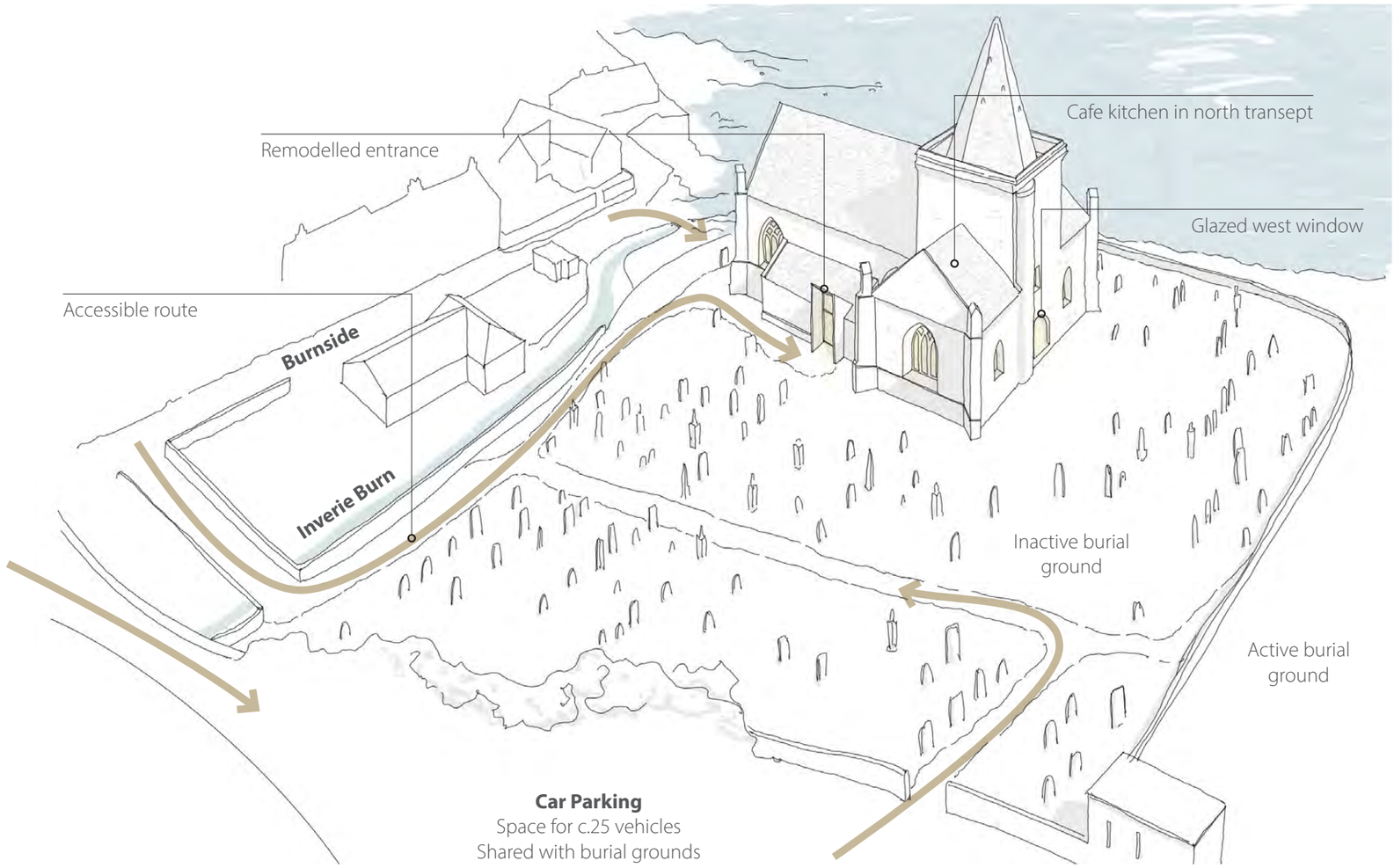
4. Design proposals

4.1 Overview

The proposals for the Auld Kirk are designed to have a low visual impact on the main space of the Kirk, while providing the facility and flexibility required to support its ongoing operation. Based on the principle of conservation through use, these proposals will allow this historic building to remain at the heart of the local community as a financially-viable and environmentally-sustainable resource.

Upgrades will be carried out to improve existing paths within the historic burial ground, leading to a new welcoming and accessible entrance to the existing vestry. This area will be remodelled internally to house new WC facilities and other services, while a carefully-crafted furniture piece tucked into the north transept will house a flexible kitchen and bar space. The former entrance to the west will be reopened with new glazing, connecting the interior of the Kirk to its surroundings and allowing it to benefit from views out to the coast.

Sympathetic building upgrades have also been carefully considered. Removing the 1950s flooring and wall-mounted radiators and installing a new underfloor heating system will help to reduce visual clutter and simplify the internal space, while maintaining an optimal internal temperature for the preservation of the existing historic fabric. External and internal fabric repairs are also proposed to assist with areas of ongoing damp issues and stonework deterioration, and help ensure the longevity of the structure.



4.2 Design approach and heritage impact

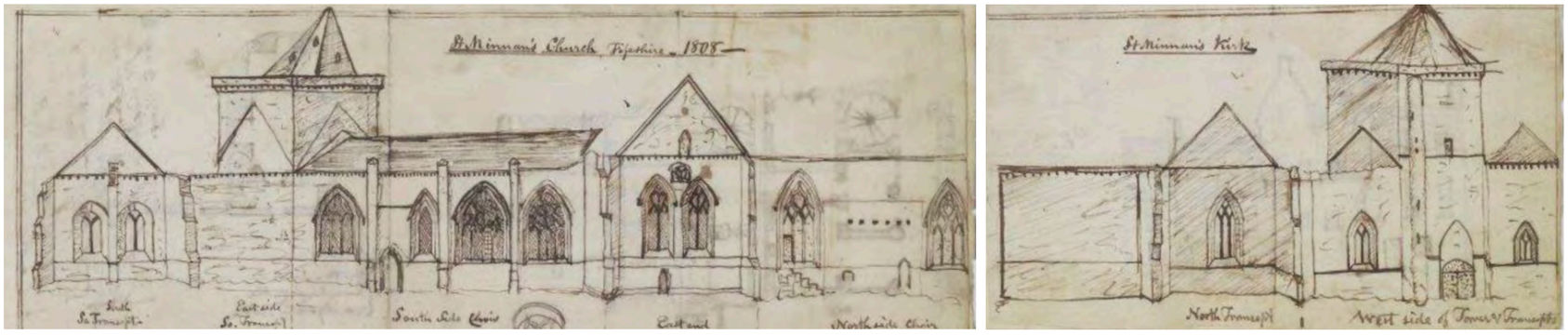
As can be seen through physical traces within its stone walls, the Kirk has experienced a number of changes through the centuries in order to better suit the prevailing requirements of the time. These new proposals for the Auld Kirk are designed to have a low visual impact on the main historic volume of the building, while providing the facility and flexibility required to support its new use as a multi-purpose resource within the local community.

This strategy aligns with the guidance contained within the FIFEplan supplementary guidance: Making Fife's Places (2018), which notes that '*the built environment has been adapted over time to meet changing needs. Protecting the historic environment is not about preventing change but ensuring that changes are appropriate to their location. Sustainable management of the historic environment should be based on an appraisal of the significance of a building or monument.*'

The areas of intervention are based on the assessment of heritage significance within the St Monans Auld Kirk Conservation Plan, with main alterations confined to areas of lower significance and/or newer elements of the building. A Heritage Impact Assessment accompanies this submission, which provides further detail on the impacts of the proposals on the historic fabric and the building's heritage significance.

Internal alterations focus on conserving the historic fabric, with new interventions crafted from recycled furnishings to maintain a continuous visual language which acknowledges the building's history.

Externally the dramatic form of the building as it appears silhoutted against the water is retained, with minimal interventions to improve accessibility and enhance the reading of the building both in its historical context and in this new phase of its life as a vibrant community-led resource.



01



02

01: Fold-out elevation study of the Auld Kirk as it looked in 1808 ©HES Canmore

02: How the same drawing might look following the proposed works

4.3 Material palette

The material palette for the proposed interventions has been kept deliberately simple in order to avoid visual clutter and present a unified appearance throughout. The design focus has been on reusing existing materials where possible, rooting new interventions in the physical heritage of the building, and avoiding waste products in line with circular economy aspirations. This includes reusing salvaged solid oak from existing pews, pulpit and linings, within the new cafe kitchen, external entrance canopy, and internal furnishings, presenting a visual continuity with retained pews and bookboards.

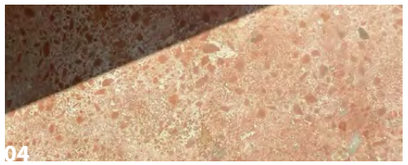
New external cladding and glazing frames are in warm bronze tones to echo the warmth of the existing sandstone, while also reading as a modern intervention through the use of distinct materials. Selected to be suitably robust for the exposed coastal setting, and simply yet carefully detailed, these interventions are designed to enhance the qualities of the existing building while simultaneously opening it to new audiences.


01


02

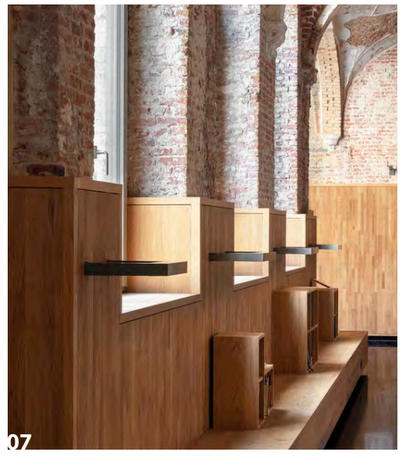

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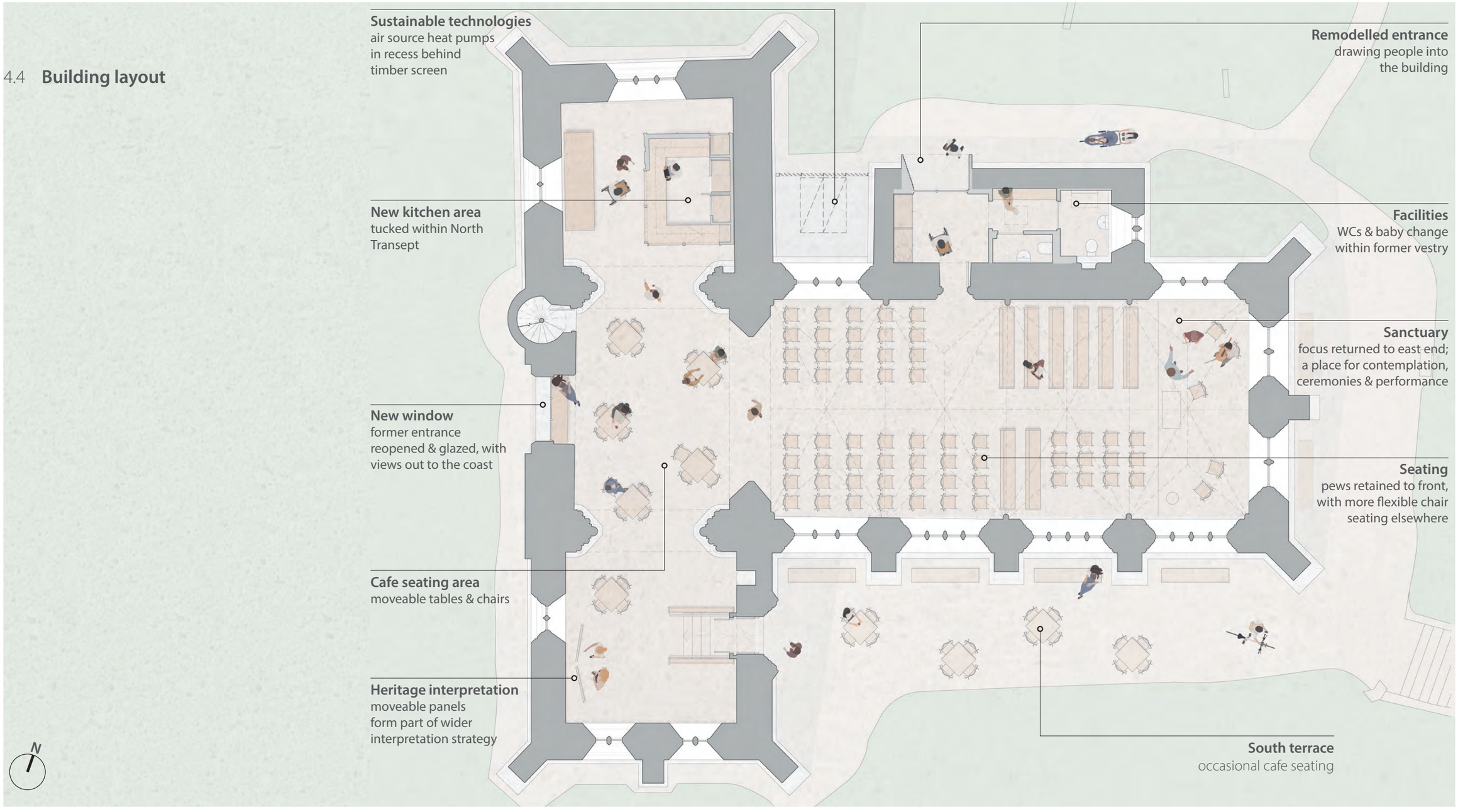

07


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Material palette:
01 limewashed stonework
02 salvaged Scottish oak
03 oxidised copper
04 stone / recycled aggregate flooring

Precedent & inspiration:
05 oxidised copper against rubble stonework
06 crisp detailing
07 new timber linings against historic masonry
08 new timber intervention in historic church

4.4 Building layout



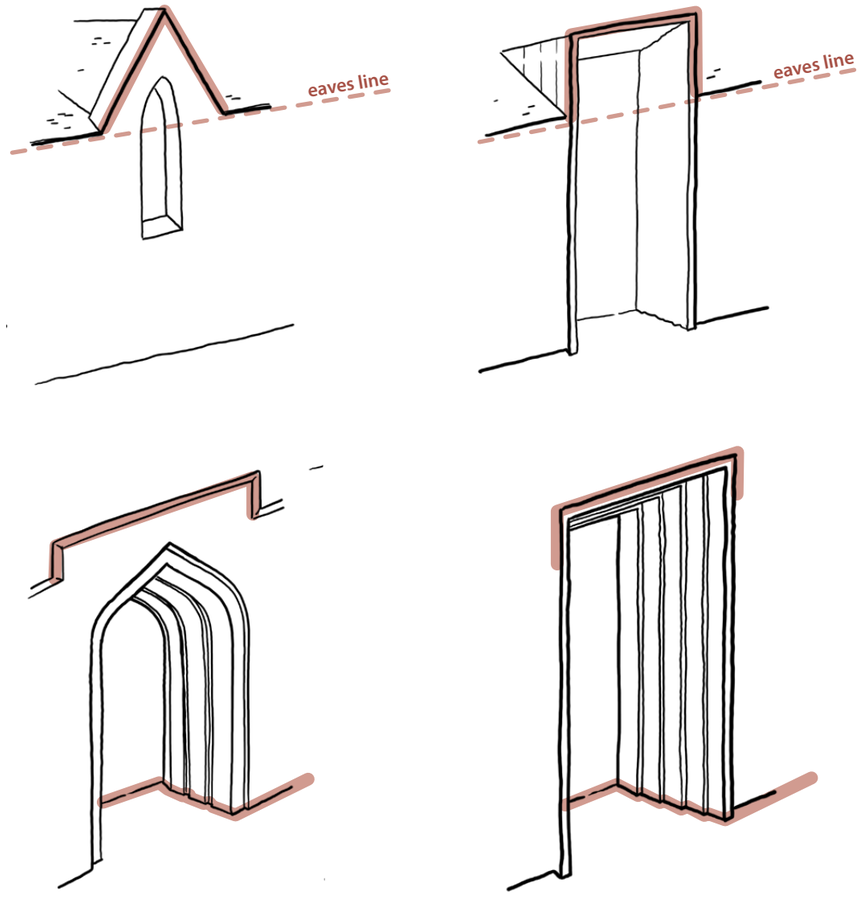
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4.5 The Vestry

As a relatively new addition to the Auld Kirk, the vestry has been identified within the Conservation Plan as being of lower hertiage significance, and is therefore the most suitable location for the required alterations to support the building's new use.

In addition to housing two new WCs, plant, services and storage, changes are proposed to the existing north entrance to the building to improve accessibility and legibility for building users. Due to significant topographical variation around the building the vestry provides its singular opportunity for level access, requiring this to become the new principal entrance in line with objectives to open the building to all members of the local community. Easily overlooked in its current form, it is proposed to remodel the existing doorway to create a wider, more welcoming and accessible entrance that will assist with wayfinding for visitors, with a transparency and visual identity that speak to the Auld Kirk's new use as a multi-purpose community-led resource.

The form of the proposed intervention references the wall-head dormer of the former session room, rising above the eaves line to provide a visual marker. The splayed surround and lapped timber evokes the archivolts and squared string course of the south transept door, while also providing a sheltered threshold at this new principal entrance to the building.



design development sketches
referencing former session room and south transept doorway



historic photo
c. 1890s, showing former session room in place of current vestry



south transept door
1820s by William Burn, with decorative ogee-headed archivolts and string course above

The new entrance structure is clad externally in oxidised copper, tying in with the warm sandstone of the external masonry. A splayed surround to the new glazed entrance door helps to draw people into the building, and is lined in solid oak boards salvaged from the existing pews.

The wider glazed door leaf with level-access threshold creates an accessible route into the building, which is not provided currently, while the oak-lined cowl creates a sheltered canopy, easing the transition from inside to out at this exposed site.

Although the majority of the windows of the Auld Kirk are glazed with clear glass, there are examples of simple stained glass within the transepts. Building on this tradition it is proposed to commission a local stained glass artist to create a bespoke stained glass piece which will fit behind the glazed sidelight to the new entrance door, showcasing the wealth of local creativity as well as providing an imaginative display for both project funders' logos and welcome signage, and allowing the community a further opportunity to input into designs for this important piece of their local heritage.



external elevation and section
on proposed north entrance



visualisation
showing remodelled entrance to vestry

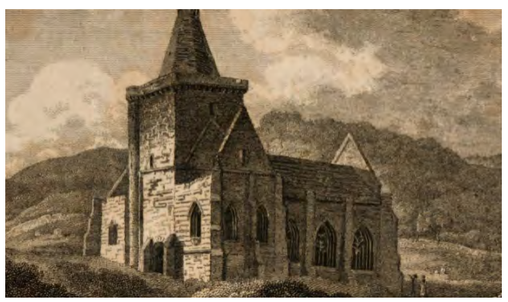
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4.6 The west window

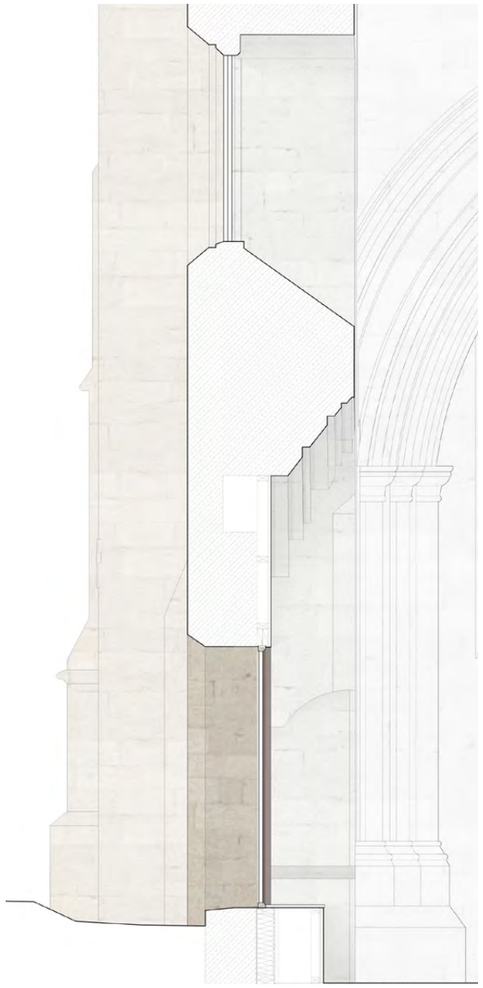
The interior of the Kirk benefits from beautiful natural light from its numerous windows, however, the high level of their cills means that there are no views out to the surrounding landscape from the main volume.

The Kirk would once have been entered from the west, via an arched opening adjacent to the stair tower as shown on the below image. This opening was infilled during the 1820s works under William Burn, however, the structural arch still remains and is visible from the interior. It is proposed to reopen and glaze this former entrance, illuminating this relatively dark area of the interior and providing a visual connection to the coastal landscape.

The internal floor level is now lower than the external ground level in this area, providing opportunity for an internal bench seat. This will be constructed from solid oak from existing furnishings, while the new plastered wall lining above will be painted a warm dark brown; tying in with the bronze window frames and adjacent model ships, and aiding in the interpretation of the originally-planned cruciform layout.



Etching by P. Nasmyth, 1807, showing former west doorway





section and internal elevation
on proposed west window



visualisation
reopened arch in west elevation

4.7 Internal alterations

The new cafe kitchen within the north transept has been designed as a bespoke furniture piece, similar in scale to both the organ and narthex which have occupied the eastern end of the chancel at various points during the Kirk's history. Flexibility is at the heart of the design, allowing the kitchen to serve a range of different functions in line with the proposed future uses for the building. The contained volume will help to minimise both odour and noise, and provide opportunity for the integration of lighting, extract ventilation, and fire suppression.

While the kitchen itself will include modern appliances and robust easily-cleanable stainless steel finishes, the exterior joinery will be in Scottish oak salvaged from the existing church furniture. This will ensure visual continuity between this and other interventions such as the bench seat below the new west window, as well as the sustainable reuse of these high-quality materials.

To improve flexibility within the wider space of the Kirk it is proposed to remove the majority of the existing pews, with those that are to remain reoriented towards the eastern dais. Their replacement with oak chairs will enable the internal layout to be reconfigured to suit a variety of scenarios, including the community cafe, weddings, celebrations and concerts, while ensuring a continuous material palette throughout. The organ, brought to the building in 1995, and the communion table (1950s) will be relocated to new homes. New timber picture rails are proposed along some of the internal walls to align with an existing datum; these will be painted out to match the limewash, and will help to conceal electrical wiring as well as providing a flexible fixing mechanism for exhibitions and events such as the St Monans Art Festival.



visualisation
looking northwest from crossing, with cafe kitchen in north transept and former west entrance reopened and glazed

4.8 Wider landscape

The landscape proposals have been developed in response to a number of key accessibility objectives, including:

- Providing a wheelchair-accessible route to the Kirk entrance.
- Improving the overall accessibility of the path network for all users.
- Managing surface water drainage to prevent deterioration of surfaces

Key design considerations include:

- Upgrading path surfacing to improve accessibility and ease of use.
- Introducing handrails where appropriate to assist users on steeper sections of the route
- Providing additional low-level lighting to access routes to and from the building
- Improving the setting of the building and biodiversity of the wider site through enhanced native planting

External landscaping has been designed to provide high-quality, easily-maintainable finishes which improve accessibility while minimising invasive construction within the historic burial ground. These are complemented by new planted areas, drainage channels, and locally-sourced stone boulders which will assist with surface water management while being resilient to the exposed coastal location.













4.9 Interpretation and signage

A key aspect of the proposals is the display of interpretative material to provide information on the building and enhance its status as a heritage destination for visitors and local people alike. An interpretation plan for the building by heritage interpretation specialist Lyndsey Clark has been commissioned to create a strategy for clear and concise heritage interpretation offer, which will cater to the full range of different audience groups anticipated to visit the building.

Following discussion with local stakeholders, members of the local community, and visitors to the building, five themes have been developed for the interpretation within and around the building:

- **A building shaped by change:** alterations, rebuilds and restorations have repeatedly reshaped the fabric of the Auld Kirk, and evidence of these changes can be read in the building itself.
- **Faith and function:** changes in denomination, worship practice, and periods of disuse or repurposing reflect the wider religious and social upheavals of Scottish history playing out at a local scale.
- **A constant companion:** the Kirk has remained a fixed point in the life of the community for personal life events and community gatherings across generations.
- **Setting the scene:** the Kirk's coastal setting is central to its enduring appeal and atmosphere.
- **Why It Still Matters:** the current project is not a break from the building's history but its latest chapter, with visitors and community members invited to see themselves as part of the ongoing story.

Information and interpretation will be displayed in a variety of formats to engage people with different levels and topics of interest, and to suit the various different activities proposed within Auld Kirk.

Moveable panels

Located within the south transept, these will provide a welcome to the building for casual visitors and information on the architectural and heritage features of the Kirk. The panels will be moveable to allow them to be cleared for events if required, and may be constructed from salvaged oak to tie in with other furnishings.

Wall-hung images

New picture rails will allow a selection of images of the Auld Kirk over time to be displayed within the building, and will allow these to be easily changed and adapted to different activities. This was identified as a key point of interest during community consultation.

External interpretation panels

Providing information when the Kirk is closed, it is proposed to locate external panels at the north and south entrances to the graveyard. The form and content of these is still under development in collaboration with local partners.

Cafe items

Heritage information embedded in cafe menus, table toppers, or even the tabletops themselves will provide a different option for engaging with the heritage of the building.

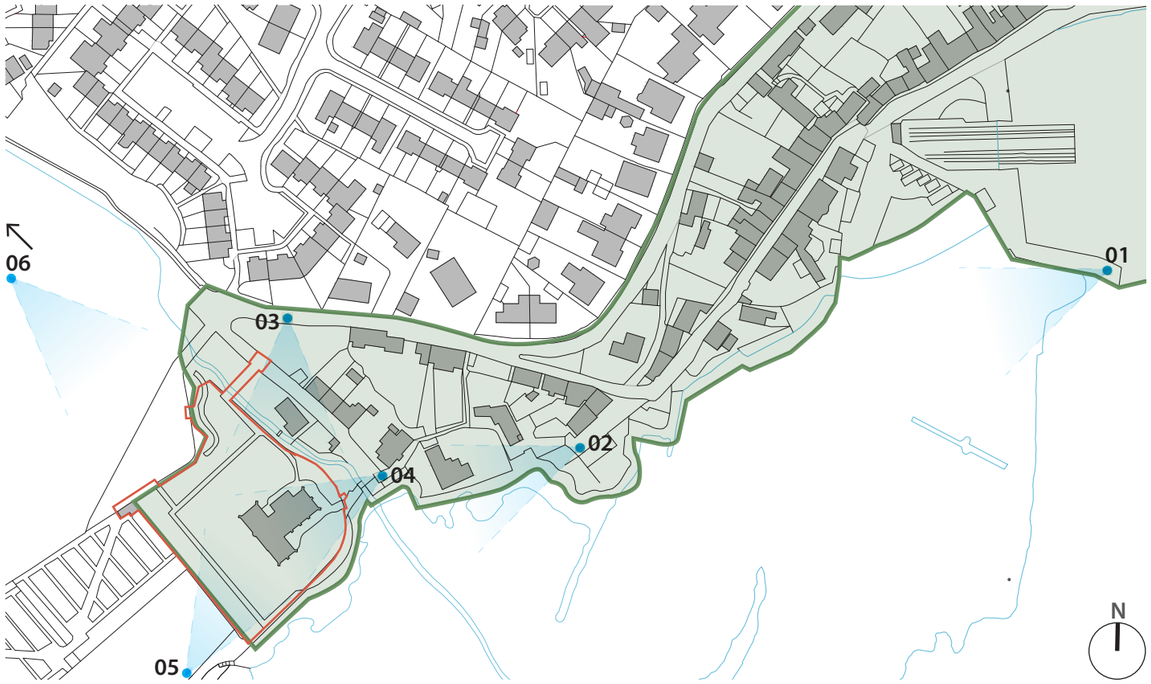


examples of internal and external interpretation boards

4.10 **Conservation area impact**

St Monans Auld Kirk sits on the western edge of the St Monans Conservation Area. The St Monans Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2013) identifies the building as being a key structure within the Conservation Area due to its size and prominent location, as well as its history and heritage value.

The Appraisal goes on to note that *'the views inland and along the coast from the harbour area and piers are particularly important.... Views, looking west and east along the foreshore and across the Forth are similarly important. The parish church and the restored saltpans wind engine provide respective focal points for these views.'* The visual impact of the proposals on views both from the harbour and from other points within and approaching the Conservation Area are shown on the adjacent photographs.



location plan
showing location of viewpoints in adjacent photographs

Planning application boundary

St Monans Conservation Area boundary



01 interventions do not impact views from the harbour



04 interventions do not impact views on approach from the Coastal Path at the end of Burnside



02 interventions do not impact views from West End



05 the reopened west window is visible on approach to the village along the Coastal Path



03 the new entrance and heat pump screening can be clearly seen from the top of Braehead, although do not impact the roof profile, and the visual effect is mitigated by the contrast of this shaded elevation against the water and horizon. Bin storage is concealed by rocky outcrops along the western edge of Burnside.



06 the new entrance is concealed by the landscape on approach along the A917

OCA

5. Access Considerations

5.1 Roads and parking

The proposals involve a Change of Use from Use Class 10 to a mix of Use Classes 3 (Food and Drink) and 11 (Assembly and Leisure). The footprint of the area designed as the community cafe is a reduced proportion of the gross internal floor area (approx. 50m^2 equating to 26 covers), and as per the Business Plan it is envisaged that this will primarily cater for local people from the village and walkers on the Fife Coastal Path, who will generally access the site on foot. The site parking requirements have therefore been based on the Assembly and Leisure use of the building, which in this case is likely to be more onerous.

The existing unmarked car park to the north of the site is proposed to be retained under the proposals. Under Making Fife's Places Supplementary Guidance Appendix G, Fife Council's Parking Standards note a requirement for 1 parking space per 5 seats for theatres and concert halls, with at least 3 of those to be accessible. The Fire Risk Assessment notes a maximum building occupancy of 110 persons, therefore when taking into account the above ratio 22 parking spaces are required under the proposals.

The adjacent diagrammatic layout shows how 22 parking spaces can be accommodated within the existing unmarked car park, in accordance with the recommendations in the SCOTS National Roads Development Guide section 3.6.

It is acknowledged that the existing parking area is shared with the adjacent active burial ground, however, this use will primarily occupy spaces during the week within daytime hours, while the peak use for concerts and other events is likely to be at weekends and evenings.

5.2 Paths

While the adjacent diagram shows provision for accessible parking bays, the paths to the building within the historic burial ground are not fully accessible. The main path from the car park has a gradient of approximately 1 in 5, making access prohibitive for wheelchair users or those with mobility diffculties. To improve accessibility to the building for all users, it is therefore proposed to create a demarcated accessible drop-off zone on Burnside adjacent to the level-access footbridge, which would allow unimpeded access to the site via this route.

Improvements will be carried out to paths along this accessible route to the building, including new resin bound gravel surfacing, surface water drainage improvements, and low-level lighting. Due to the presence of the historic burial ground as well as the steeply-sloping topography of the site there are limited improvements that can be made to the existing path from the car park, however, it is proposed to add areas of handrail and intermittent benches to aid pedestrians in navigating this route.

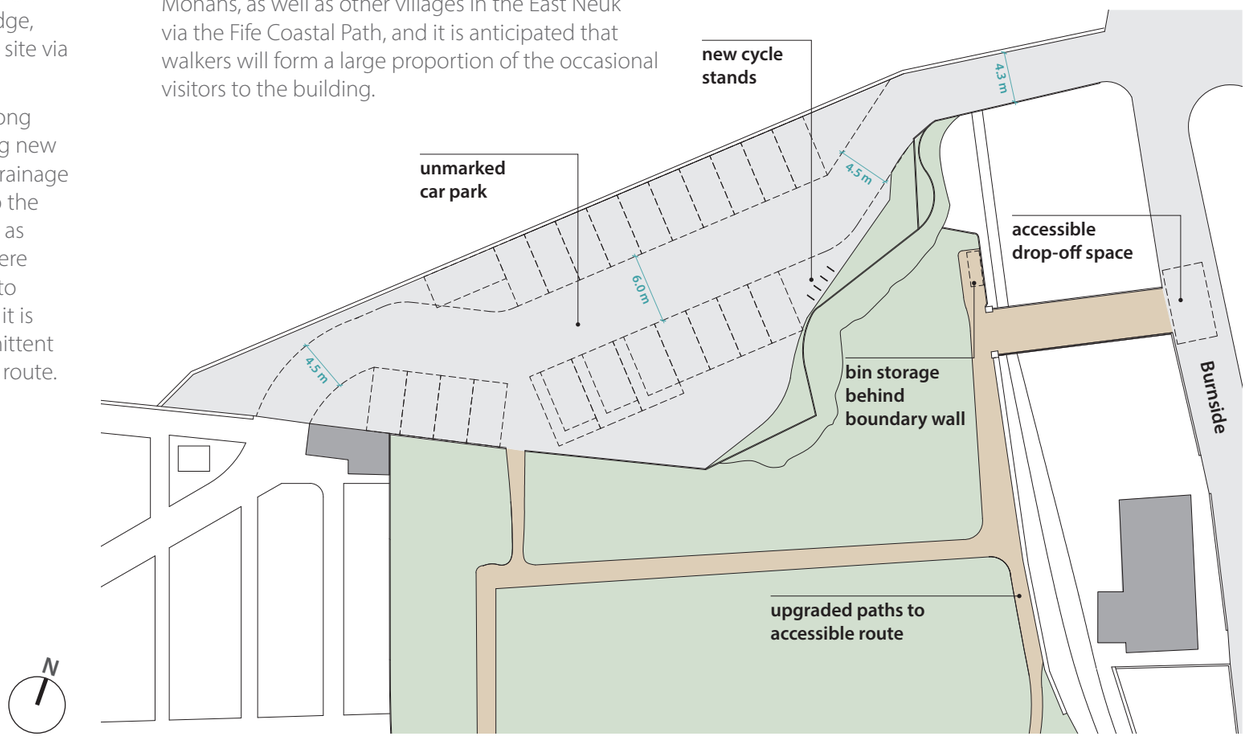
5.3 Active travel

While there is no National Cycle Route connecting the East Neuk of Fife, the area has its own 'East Neuk 50' cycle route, which runs between Kirkcaldy and Dundee, and notes St Monans Auld Kirk as a key attraction. Acknowledging this, as well as to encourage more-local active travel, it is proposed to install 4no. Sheffield cycle stands within the car park.

The site is well-connected by footpaths from the St Monans, as well as other villages in the East Neuk via the Fife Coastal Path, and it is anticipated that walkers will form a large proportion of the occasional visitors to the building.

5.4 Waste and recycling

Waste and recycling bins shall be stored within an enclosure behind the boundary wall, providing access for collection via the adjacent footbridge to Burnside. In this location these are screened by the natural topography of the site from the top of Burnside, and by existing walls from the south.



diagrammatic car parking layout
within existing unmarked car park - note that spaces shown are the larger bay size (5.5x2.9m) as recommended by the National Roads Development Guidance

6. Sustainability

6.1 Energy strategy

It is proposed that the existing gas-fired boiler will be removed, and new heat pump units installed to provide heating to the building. These will operate a new underfloor heating system, with trench heaters providing additional heating as required. The internal plant is located in new cupboards within the vestry, with the limited hot water demand supplied by instantaneous electrical water heaters. The proposed system offers a marked reduction in carbon emissions, with an anticipated 83% reduction compared to a gas-fired system. In addition building fabric upgrades have been specified where feasible to reduce heat loss and energy consumption.

The siting of the new heat pumps has been carefully considered on this exposed site to avoid visual impact, while still complying with operational and maintenance requirements. it is proposed to locate the units in a relatively-unobtrusive location between the vestry and the north transept; in this position they are screened from approach from the car park by the north transept, and from the west by the vestry. Additional screening and security is proposed in the form of a bespoke timber and stainless steel screen, which will use materials salvaged from the existing pews. The screen has been designed with a material palette and lapped timber fins to echo the design of the new entrance cowl, and will conceal the heat pumps from view on approach to the new main entrance while also allowing sufficient ventilation for their operation.

6.2 Heating and cooling

As discussed in section 3.6, rapid heating and cooling cycles from the existing gas-fired radiators combined with the infrequent use of the building are contributing to deterioration of the historic fabric. These proposals see the removal of the existing unsightly wall-mounted radiators, and modern (1950s) floor finishes and concrete screed and slab, and their replacement with a new wet underfloor heating system.

The new underfloor heating system will provide a background level of heating which is beneficial for the conservation of historic fabric, enabling the internal temperature to be maintained above the dew point of 10-12°C throughout the year to prevent mould and condensation. A sacrificial gap will be left around the internal perimeter to allow moisture to evaporate rather than being drawn into masonry walls, with floor-recessed fan convector heaters fitted within this zone to provide supplementary heating in the colder months. The heating system has been designed by building services engineers Lùths Services in collaboration with the wider design team to provide a sustainable, cost-effective, and visually-discreet strategy that will aid in conserving the existing historic fabric.

Due to the large internal volume of the building, and its lack of insulation and airtightness no active cooling systems are deemed to be required. The building shall continue to be naturally ventilated, with new mechanical extraction to the WCs and kitchen area to remove excess moisture.

6.3 Thermal insulation

As a Category A-listed building of significant heritage value, opportunities for carrying out thermal upgrades to the existing fabric are limited. It is proposed to use natural hemp insulation to insulate the pitched roof of the vestry and above the vaulted ceilings of the chancel and transepts, which will reduce heat loss without impacting the visual appearance of the main space of the Kirk.

The installation of a new wet underfloor heating system provides opportunity to install additional insulation within the floor of the building. Initial on-site investigation has revealed the existing floor construction to consist of site-cast concrete, with a non-compacted ash fill beneath. The slab is relying on the existing screed for stability, and therefore from a structural perspective the most straightforward option is to remove this floor construction in its entirety, and replace it with a new concrete slab. This will be set below the level of the proposed floor-recessed trench heaters, with insulation above which will improve the efficiency of the proposed underfloor heating system.

The floor of the Auld Kirk was lowered in the 1820s, at which point graves beneath the floor of the building were removed, and then raised again in the 1950s under Ian G. Lindsay. The current floor construction dates from this time, and it is therefore not anticipated that any material of archaeological value will be uncovered during the proposed works to the floor.

6.4 Circular economy

The proposals for the Auld Kirk are designed to minimise areas of intervention and new construction. Many of the existing furnishings, including pews, pulpit and vestry linings, will be redundant under the new use of the building, and it is therefore proposed to reuse these insofar as practicable within new interventions. The new entrance, kitchen unit, window seat, and storage units have been carefully designed to maximise the reuse of the Scottish oak from the existing furnishings, allowing this beatiful material to take on a new life suited to the building's modern requirements. It is proposed that the rest of the salvaged timber will be used in projects with the furniture course at the local Fife College, helping to develop and retain skills within the local area.

In order to facilitate the installation of the new underfloor heating system it will be necessary to remove the existing quarry tile floor coverings. While a decision on new floor coverings has not yet been finalised, it is important that these are robust, easily-maintainable, and a good conductor of heat, while also working tonally with the interior of the building. Working with a company such as UK-based Ethical Stone, we are investigating the potential of reusing waste products from the building works, including quarry tiles, sandstone, and concrete, as aggregate for new floor tiles, minimising waste and building pieces of the building's history back into its modern fabric.

OCA Studio
Chartered Architects

Codebase Argyle House, 3 Lady Lawson Street Edinburgh EH3 9DR
admin@ocastudio.co.uk | www.ocastudio.co.uk