

Vibrant new mural celebrates restoration of oyster populations in Firth of Forth

An Edinburgh community hub is to be adorned with a vibrant new mural celebrating the restoration of oyster populations in the Firth of Forth.

Plans to paint a side of the Heart of Newhaven building with sea life and stories of the area's fishing history have been given the go ahead.

It comes after local residents and schoolchildren were invited to help create the design, which features species local to Newhaven such as horsetail kelp, coral weed and Atlantic herring.

The mural, funded by Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens, is based around the Restoration Forth Project which is working to bring back over 40 hectares of coastal habitat by 2030.



Newhaven Mural design. Image: Heart of Newhaven

Last year the major marine restoration programme deployed the first European flat oysters into the Firth of Forth in 100 years, and it's estimated by the end of this year 30,000 oysters and 40,000 square metres of seagrass will have been restored.

The artwork will look to highlight "local biodiversity, to the importance of the restoration project, and to reflect how this ties into local cultural histories and current activity".

Community engagement sessions asked people how the mural could honour the historical importance of oysters for jobs, diet and local culture "in a way that also makes space for oysters to have a different kind of significance for the Forth in the future".

The final concept which emerged shows oyster shells decorated with depictions of fishwives cleaning and selling oysters, fishing boats, swimmers and other historic cultural activities. Around these are different local species of animal, seagrass and seaweed weaved through to "combine human stories and local nature".

Plans stated: "The mural looks to draw attention to the biodiversity of the Firth of Forth and to Newhaven's current and historical connections to this.

"The Designs were developed through community engagement sessions, through research into the project and through considering the building and local surroundings."

A council report said: "The proposals would have no adverse impact on the character of the listed building or on the character and appearance of the conservation Area and are acceptable.

"The proposed painting will have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter