

COUNTESS STREET PUBLIC REALM, SALTCOATS



LOCATION: SALTCOATS

CLIENT: IRVINE BAY REGENERATION COMPANY & NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

START: 2015

COMPLETION: 2018

VALUE: £1M

SERVICE: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SECTOR: URBAN REGENERATION

CIVIL AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: HARLEY HADDOU

LEAD CONSULTANT AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: AUSTIN-SMITH: LORD

TRANSPORT CONSULTANT: TRANSPORT PLANNING LIMITED

ART STRATEGY: WAVEPARTICLE

COST CONSULTANT: NEILSON PARTNERSHIP

MAIN CONTRACTOR: LAND ENGINEERING / RAINTON CONSTRUCTION

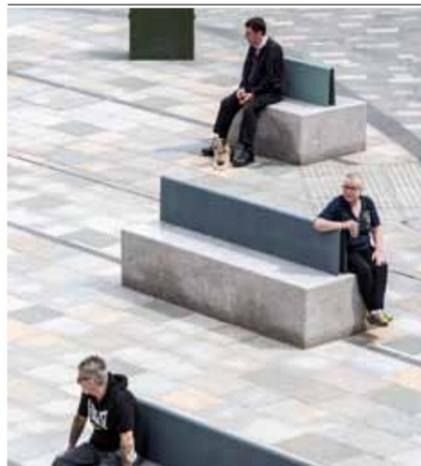
Austin-Smith:Lord was appointed in September 2015 by Irvine Bay Regeneration Company and North Ayrshire Council, after selection through a design competition, to prepare design proposals for Countess Street, Saltcoats in North Ayrshire.

The project is part of the Saltcoats Town Regeneration Plan, which is, in turn, part of the visionary masterplan for the five towns making up the Irvine Bay area. The public realm works also build upon the success of the initial phase of regeneration associated with the Town Hall and the refurbishment of the old station building on Vernon Street.

A new, improved public realm has been created on Countess Street, the strategic artery which links the town's main railway station and local bus stops on Vernon Street with a key retail area on Dockhead Street plus the seafront beyond.

Improvements to the street create an enhanced environment for the Town Hall, a feature of Countess Street since the 1890's, which was recently redeveloped into a vibrant new community and civic hub. The ongoing shop front improvement projects also add to the regeneration process.

The design includes a new convivial urban space which features high quality surfacing and lighting improvements, to encourage community and civic activity, support the increased footfall to the newly refurbished Town Hall and create an attractive setting for weddings and other events set within the revitalised building. The one-way vehicular traffic system has been retained and accommodates ceremonial vehicles arriving at the Town Hall, general service and refuse access. Pedestrian space, however, has been increased and the space is organised to avoid parking interfering with pedestrian movement.



The project, which was informed by a local consultation, will also benefit the retail, office, leisure and residential users of Countess Street.

The concepts and components to transform Countess Street included:

- Creating the impression of visual continuity across the space by organising street furniture to restrict vehicular traffic to the west side of the space, thereby retaining the majority of the streetscape solely for pedestrians;
- Specification of high quality, timeless, durable, and easily maintained materials carefully detailed to provide a contemporary, civic setting;

- De-cluttering of the space to vastly enhance the setting and views of the refurbished Town Hall and create an adaptable, convivial urban space capable of hosting an array of events;
- Careful organisation of the layout to reinforce natural desire-lines through and to the space and adjacent destinations (including the railway station);
- Opportunity to benefit from a more sheltered microclimate and design the space to encourage connectivity, increased footfall and dwell time in the space;
- Considered integration of best practice streetscape design to create inclusive, barrier-free public realm that is attractive and easy to navigate by all users;

- Adoption of a lighting strategy to create an attractive, safe and welcoming space with a positive evening ambience,