



TUNE - IN

A West Coast Cornwall retreat, designed around the SRT Theory to support touring musicians experiencing Post Performance Depression (PPD), rethinking mental health rehabilitation design.

In England, around 3,500 people occupy inpatient mental health rehab beds, with another 100,000 in supported accommodation. Yet, only 49.3% of those treated for anxiety or depression in NHS rehab centres recover, and half are placed far from their homes.

With 19 suicides daily in the UK, mental illness is a crisis demanding better solutions.

Designers have a unique opportunity to improve well-being through the built environment.

Could better spaces increase recovery rates and willingness to seek care? Many UK buildings sit empty - why is a sterile hospital room still seen as the only answer? Adaptive reuse could transform these spaces into rehabilitation homes closer to patients' communities. This project focuses on a retreat for touring musicians with Post Performance Depression - a specific group whose unique needs inspire design solutions that can inform wider mental health care innovations.

Over 60% of musicians experience depression or psychological challenges from touring. Ulrich's Stress Reduction Theory shows nature can boost recovery by 30% within built environments. Located on Cornwall's rugged Hawkers Cove, the retreat embodies the balance of mental protection and exposure - reflecting musicians' needs by blending raw natural beauty with safety and calm. This project presents a unique rehabilitation model that could inspire similar centres across the UK.

THE CONCEPT, THE HOME SCAR

The design extends an old lifeboat station, inspired by limpets' homing behaviour - marine mollusks that return to a "home scar" on rocks after foraging. Musicians are likened to limpets, with the extension as a stable refuge amid touring's unpredictability. The exposed structure connects users to the raw Cornish weather while offering protection, reflecting a deep understanding of user needs and site. This creates a rehabilitation retreat grounded in the SRT Theory, balancing nature exposure with refuge to support mental well-being.



Musicians protected on tour



Musicians exposed on tour



Musicians protected at the retreat



Musicians exposed at the retreat

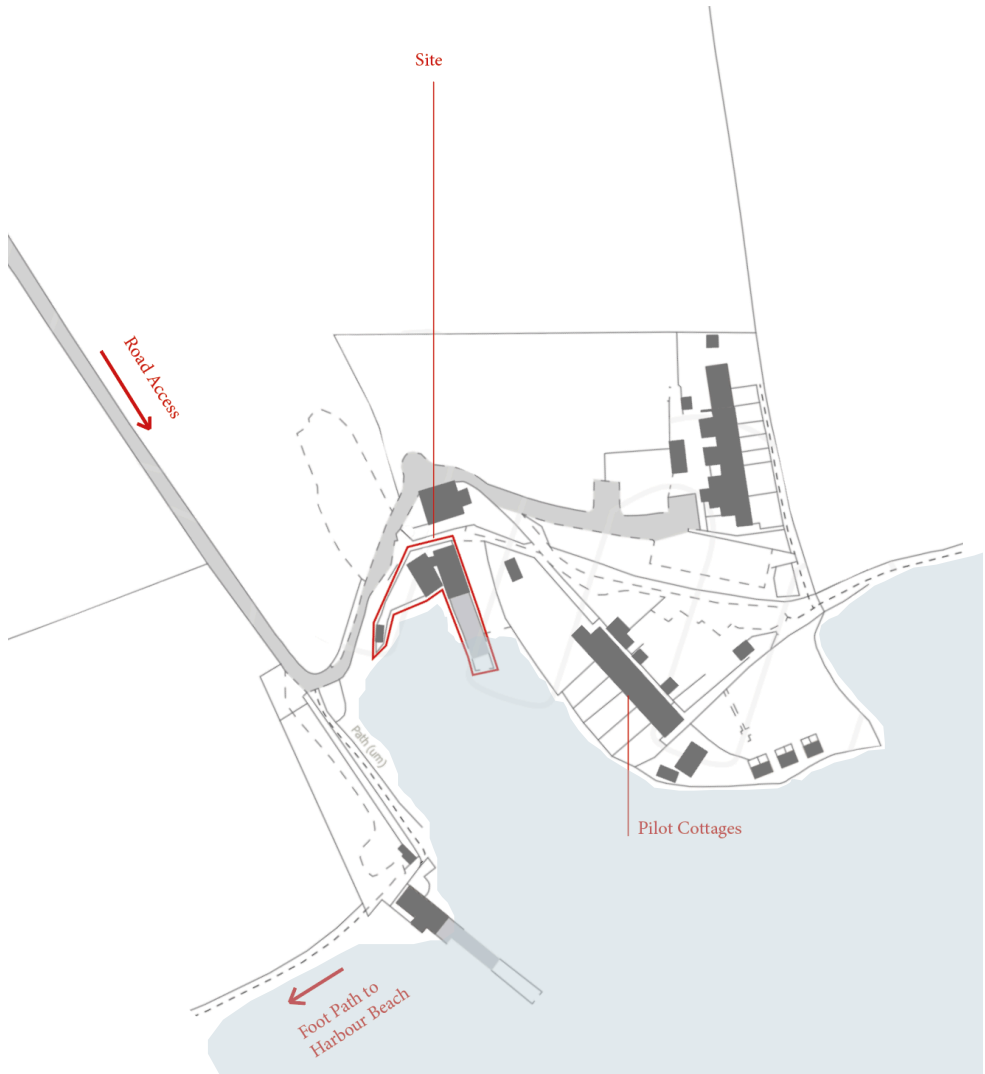
SITE INFOMATION

Site Map

The site is called Mariner's Friend, and is situated at Hawker's Cove in Cornwall, offering expansive views of the coast. It's housed in an old lifeboat station with remnants of a slipway. The site is in an isolated location.

The site is defined by a raw, unpredictable coastal landscape, with shifting weather and expansive views of the sea, cliffs, and sky and the weather in Cornwall can be wild, calm, cold or warm.

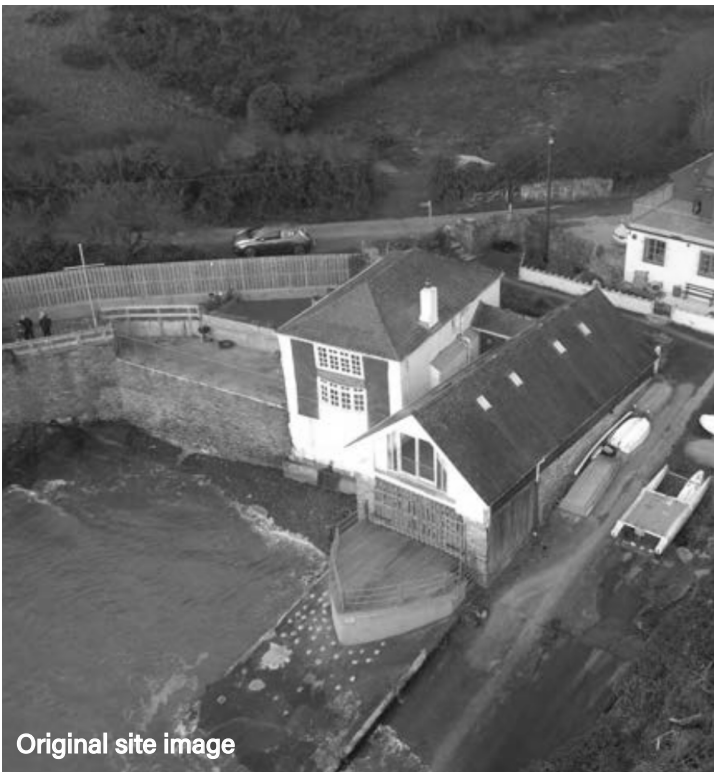
This understanding of the site directly influences the design, shaping spaces that balance exposure and shelter, calm and drama, in harmony with the natural environment, for the well-being of the musician, retreating.



Since the site is not listed, there is an opportunity to repurpose it creatively. The old boathouse, once used as a lifeboat station for the local village, now stands empty and unused.

The image below highlights the site's surroundings, emphasizing its sparse, secluded, and exposed landscape.

Although the building was previously converted into a second home, I believe structures like this have the potential to serve a greater communal purpose. In this case, its unique location and environment could be harnessed to support mental rehabilitation and well-being.



Original site image

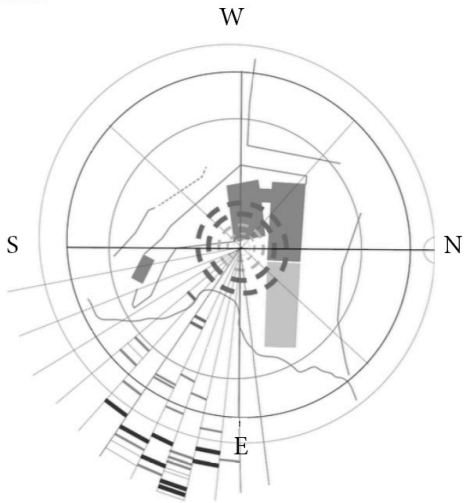


Site's location

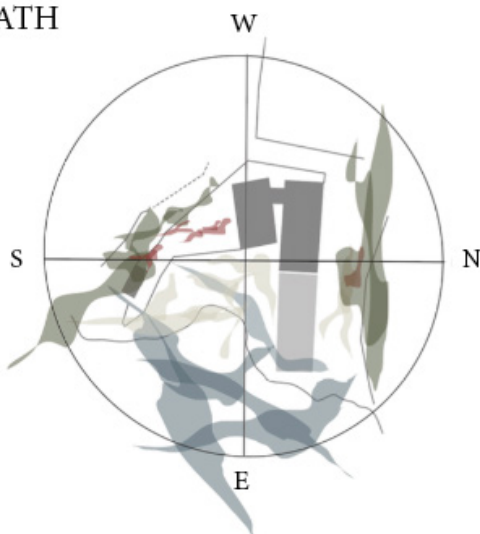
SITE ANALYSIS

To understand how the site could support mental well-being and connection to nature, a survey of wind, scent, sound, sun path, and materiality informed the concept of protecting and exposing musicians to these elements within the limpet-inspired extension. Cornwall's rich climate, wildlife, and sensory landscape naturally lend themselves to this approach—celebrated and harnessed to support healing, in alignment with the SRT Theory. Below and across show these diagrams.

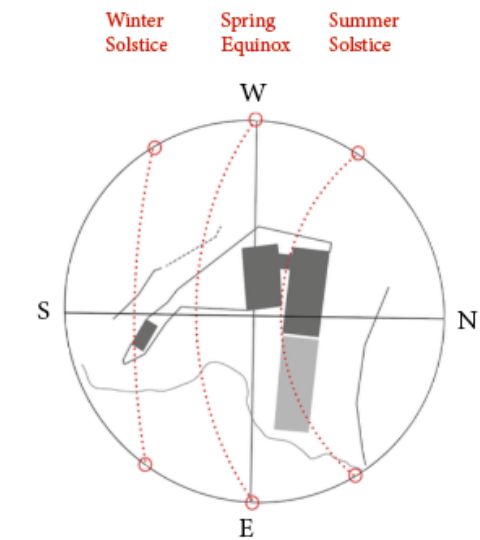
WIND PATH



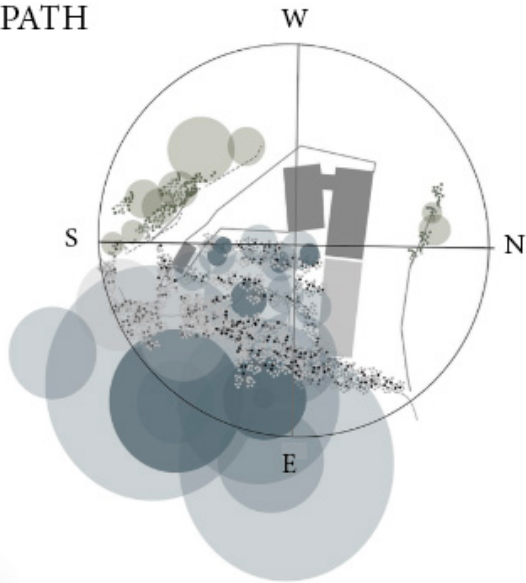
SCENT PATH



SUN PATH



SOUND PATH



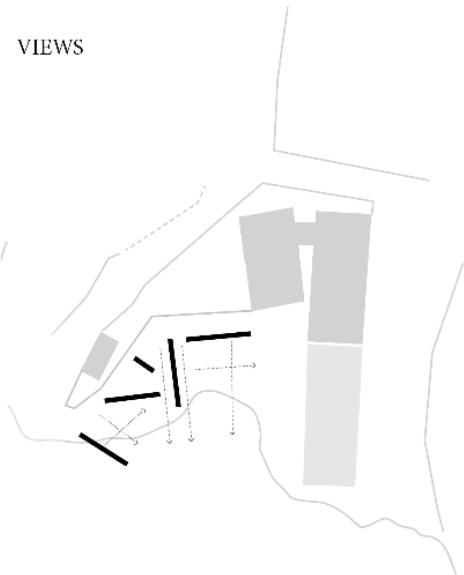
USER EXPERIENCE : Protection and Exposure

These walls were positioned in response to site analysis diagrams, guiding intuitive movement through moments of shelter and exposure. Aligned with the shifting landscape, light, and wind, they enhance the sensory experience and support the SRT Theory by fostering a deeper connection to nature.



Sea walls and wind breaks, common in Cornwall's built and coastal environments, inspired the use of walls in the retreat as barriers to create protective and exposing points within the extension. These forms offer users choice - inviting them to engage with the site's sensory landscape, including sound, scent, sunlight, water, texture, and wind - carefully curated at specific moments by the designer to support healing and connection.

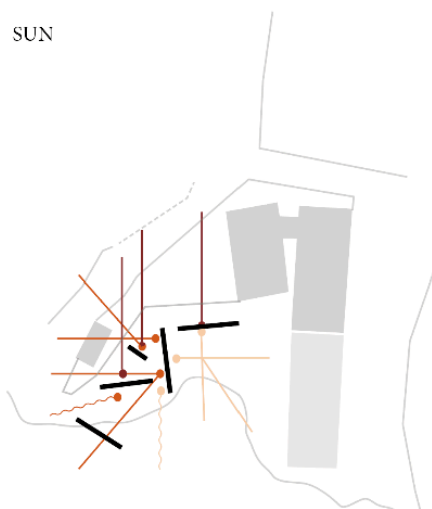
VIEWS



WIND

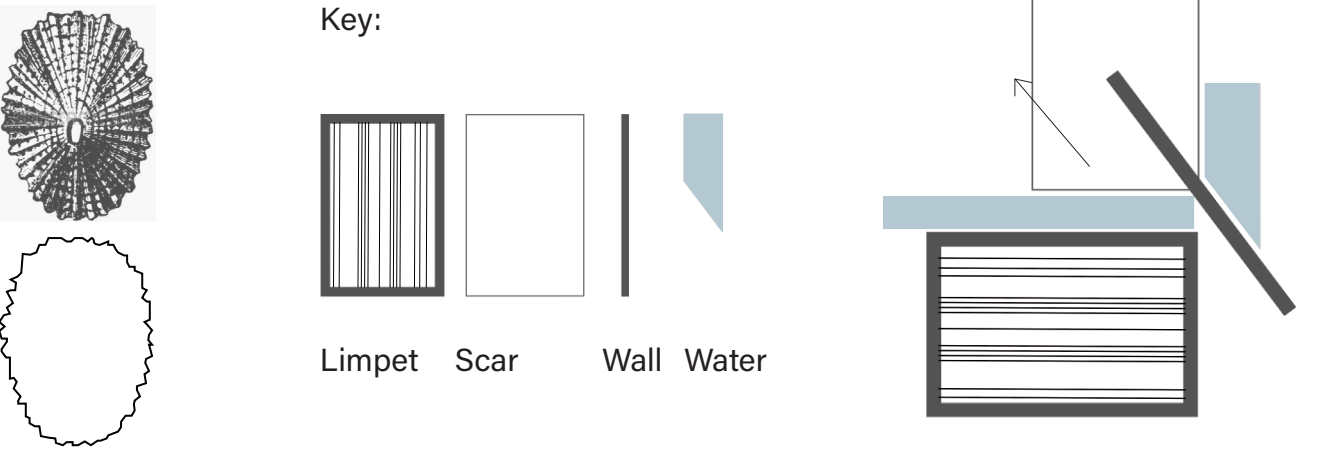


SUN



This rendered image illustrates the concept of sea walls and the water flowing between the limpet-like forms. A series of steps across the water leads the user toward the kitchen. Along the way, they are exposed to the open sky - sun, rain, wind, the calls of seagulls, and the scent of salt - while water flows beneath their feet. Yet, they remain protected on either side by the original sea wall and a newly introduced wall. This carefully choreographed journey immerses the user in the healing elements of the coastal environment, while always offering a sense of shelter and containment. Upon reaching the kitchen, the user is fully enclosed, completing the transition from exposure to refuge.

STRATEGY



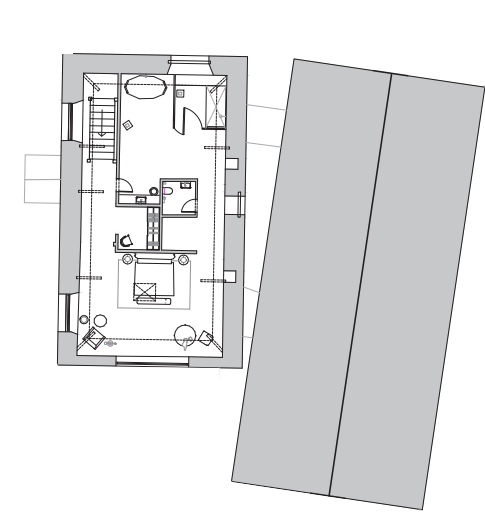
Ground Floor Plan



Lower Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



The plan reveals the residential rooms of the retreat, where a mix of casual, communal, and private spaces creates a variety of environments for users to rest and rehabilitate.

The limpet extensions feature a dedicated water therapy area, including pause points for sitting, a changing room, sauna, and sunbeds orientated southward. Water flows between the limpets, allowing users to swim or sit immersed as a form of physical and mental therapy. Steps descending from the limpets provide direct access to the beach.

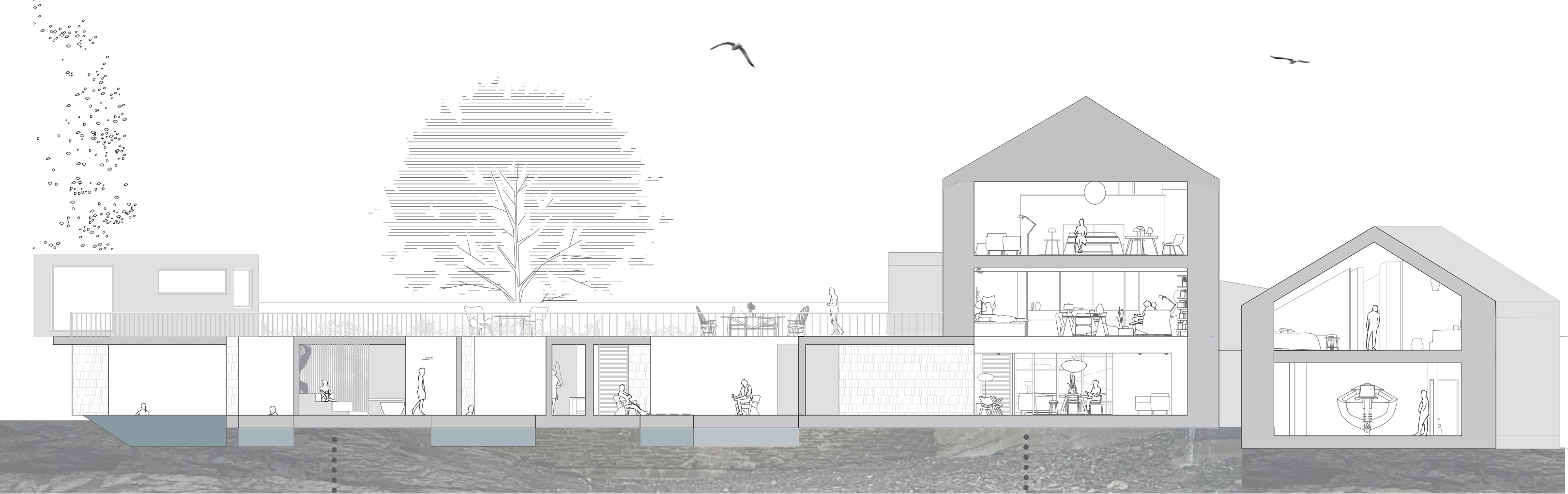
Understanding how a room affects an occupant's behavior and well-being is essential before designing solutions. Dak Kopec's Environmental Psychology for Design emphasizes balancing sensory stimulation to avoid over- or under-stimulation, drawing on theories that behavior responds directly to environmental stimuli. Sensory deprivation can lead to anxiety and depression, making it important to create spaces that provide the right balance—especially for users like touring musicians, who often experience sensory extremes.

In response to Kopec's insights, this rendered image captures a reflective moment for the user, protected overhead by the limpet structure but open to the surrounding winds, scents, salt air, and sounds of the sea—offering a balanced sensory experience. The chairs are thoughtfully positioned to correspond with the time of day—one facing east for morning coffee, the other south to catch the afternoon light. These intentional design choices demonstrate how restorative environments can be carefully crafted to support well-being by engaging the senses in a measured, meaningful way.

Image to show protection of limpet roof, with water aside, for a point to sit and watch the view, directed by the sea wall.

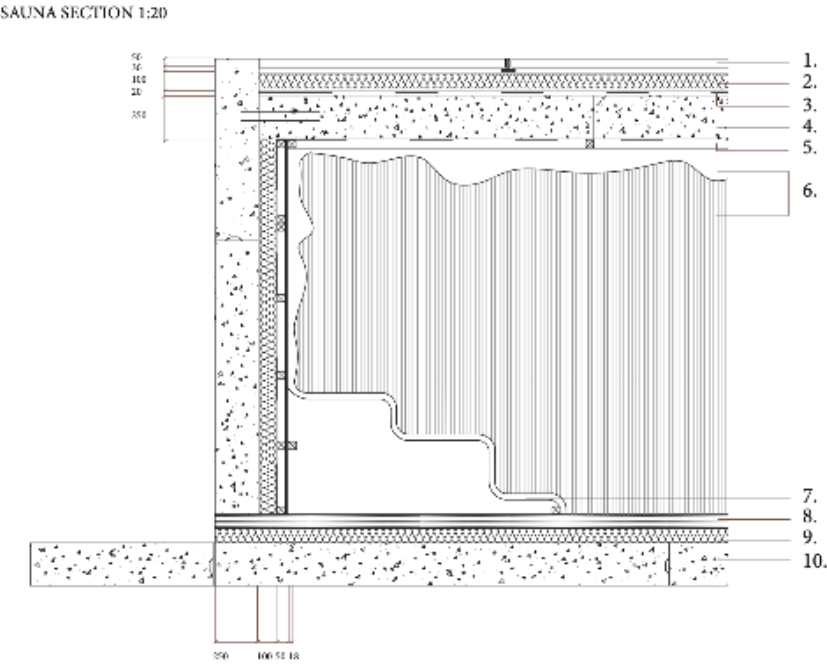
SECTION DRAWINGS

This hero section offers a comprehensive view of the design, where the limpets extend to the left, seamlessly blending into the landscape as they rise to the ground floor level, becoming nearly invisible from behind.



A-A Architectural Section

This architectural section offers a closer look at the sauna, where large picture windows visually connect the user to the surrounding site while providing warmth and structural protection.



- KEY:
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Paving Slabs on Pedestal Feet | 6. Bespoke Curved Timber Wall (Cedar) |
| 2. Rigid Insulation | 7. Bespoke Timber Steps (Cedar) |
| 3. Waterproof Membrane | 8. 65mm Screed |
| 4. Air Gap | 9. Rigid Insulation |
| 5. Insitu Concrete Slab | 10. Insitu Concrete Slab |
| 5. Timber Ceiling Lining (Cedar) | |

The fixture draws inspiration from sand ripples and the ribs of shells, designed to deepen the user's connection to the site by creating the sensation of being nestled within a limpet itself.

B-B Decorative Section

The decorative study shifts focus to the kitchen fixture, made from Tabby concrete. This stand alone fixture is inspired by the abstract form of the limpets, the island features a rectangular shape with cantilevered sides.



Tabby Concrete

I created my own sustainable Tabby concrete sample by incorporating oyster shells sourced directly from the site. Tabby concrete, an ancient building material made from lime, water, and crushed shells, is known for its durability and eco-friendliness. Using locally gathered exposes users to a tangible connection with the site's natural heritage.



Crushing

I collected oyster shells from the oyster farm, local to site, washed, dried and then crushed them.



Burning

Crushed shells were then burnt in a kiln, at 280 degrees celcius, to alter their composite to be calcium carbonate.



Mixing

Crushed shells were then ground into a powder, and mixed with water.



Moulding

The mix was then poured into a sample mould, and left to set for 3 hours.



Sampling

Hard shell concrete was then formed into a material sample.

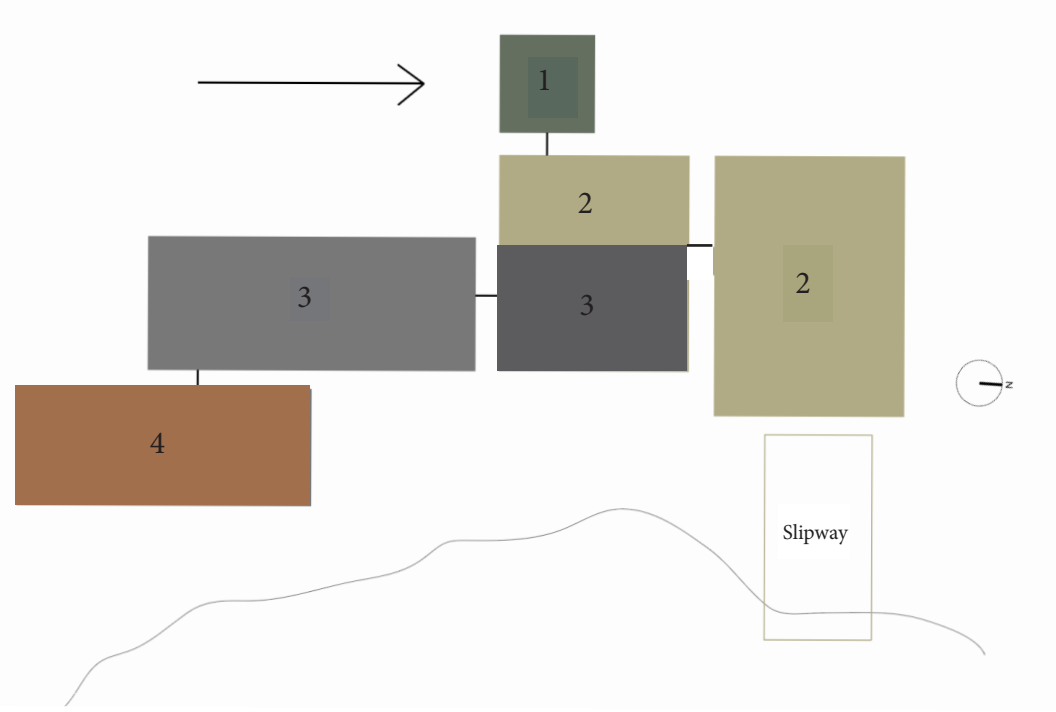
This custom Tabby concrete is now used for the kitchen worktop, allowing users to engage with and be exposed to the tactile textures and rich history embedded in the material.

USER JOURNEY: The Process of Healing

The Schedule of Accommodation illustrates the journey of psychological and physical healing for musicians grappling with Post Performance Depression (PPD). It unfolds in four key stages: acknowledging the issue, accepting its presence, processing its impact, and ultimately confronting it. These stages are symbolized through a gradual increase in human interaction, exposure and engagement with the site, reflecting the user's evolving connection with support, protection and resources throughout their recovery.

PROCESS OF HEALING

- 1. Acknowledge
- 2. Accept
- 3. Process
- 4. Confront



1. Acknowledge

This zone offers an initial sense of orientation, balancing protection and exposure. The ground floor foyer provides sheltered spaces to pause and reflect, with views that connect users to the open sea. A warm, tactile material palette - featuring oak floors, stone walls, and soft fabrics creates a calming, protective environment, with minimal human interaction but visual exposure to the outside environment.



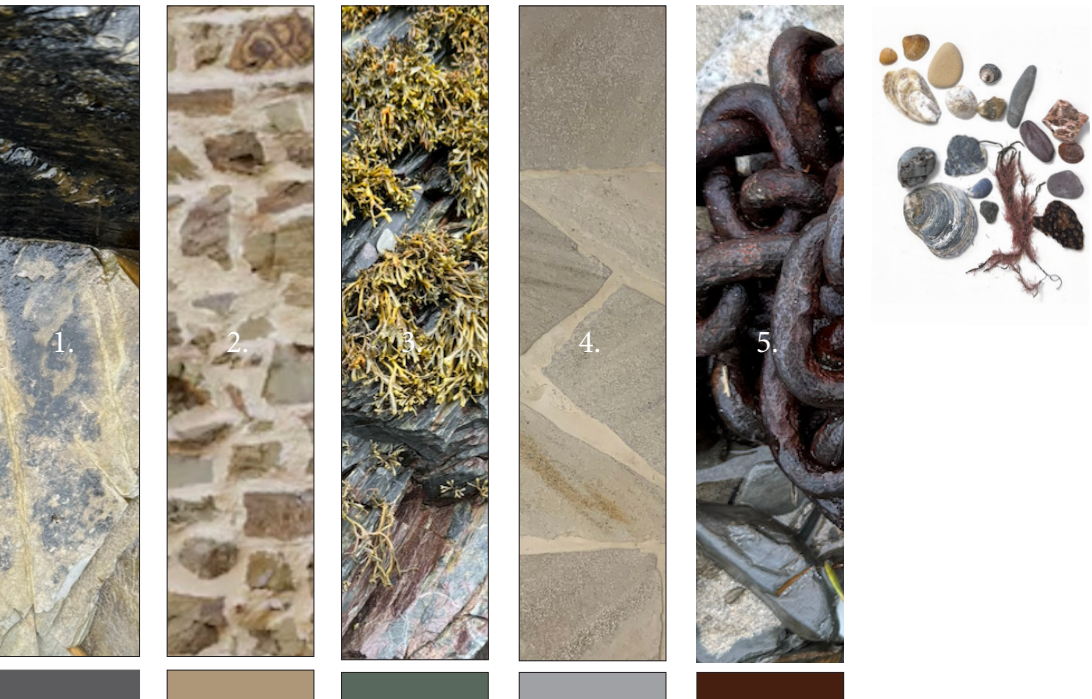
2. Accept

This zone is the bedroom area, designed to offer privacy, protection, and restful space for musicians and their close circles. Material choices - such as oak, onyx, and linens - foster a calming, beach-hut atmosphere, with natural light and site-inspired tones creating a sense of connection to the landscape while maintaining physical shelter.



Existing Materiality

A deeper understanding of the site - expressed through intentional materiality and its effect on user experience - is essential to designing restorative spaces. Informed by site imagery, the palette draws from natural colours, textures, scents, and symbolic cues to strengthen the user's bond with nature.



1. Grey/Green Cliff Rock. 2. Original Cornish Stone Wall. 3. Green Samphire. 4. Original Cornish Flag Stones. 5. Boat Chains.

3. Process

This zone transitions from shelter to exposure, with a snug, kitchen, and dining area one level below the foyer. Pivot doors create privacy, while sea-facing views gradually connect users to the landscape. Materials reflect this shift - warm textures in the snug contrast with raw, coastal-inspired finishes in the kitchen, guiding users through changing levels of sensory engagement.



Added Materiality

Guided by SRT Theory, the design balances protection and exposure - soft woods and muted tones offer calm and refuge, while raw, coastal materials foster a sensory connection that supports healing.



1. In-Situ Concrete. 2. Oak. 3. Corten Steel. 4. Natural Stone Tiles. 5. Smoked Oak. 6. Grey Painted Lime Plaster. 7. Green Mohair Velvet. 8. White Linen. 9. Red/Orange Onyx.

4. Confront

The zone sits between sea walls and limpets, where tidal pools, terraces, and a sauna offer a sensory journey through exposure and protection. Users move through sun, wind, and sea, engaging in cold-water therapy and rest. Durable concrete contrasts with oak and cast iron, creating tactile, site-responsive surfaces. Wildflowers on the limpets' roofs soften the structures into the landscape.

