

SEANKELLY

"Old Town steps to reopen after 10 years," *BBC*, February 6, 2014.



Old Town steps to reopen after 10 years

A set of steps in Edinburgh's historic Old Town, which have been closed off from the public for 10 years, are to be repaired and revamped.

The steps are to get new gates and an art installation by renowned Edinburgh artist Callum Innes.

The High School Yards Steps were boarded up in 2003 as they had "become a focus for anti-social behaviour".

The route will help access the new Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation.



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There will be "significant conservation works" to the steps with the railings renewed and refurbished, and new wrought iron gates being installed to close off the steps at night.

LED mesh screen

An old police box will also be moved.

As people climb the steps their movement will be captured by an infrared camera and their silhouette projected onto a large LED mesh screen.

Mr Innes has also worked with youngsters from nearby Panmure St Ann's Centre, and in collaboration with artists Catherine Payton and Tom Nolan, to create short film clips of silhouetted movement, which will play on a loop when no one is using the steps.

Callum Innes said: "I was initially approached by Malcolm Fraser to develop an installation that would reclaim the steps as a public space, addressing some of the issues that had led to its closure.

"By placing an infrared camera half-way up the steps we make a hidden part of the steps visible, relaying live footage of silhouetted figures to be superimposed onto the changing colours of the screen.

"The installation directly engages both the architecture of the steps and the public for whom they serve."

Some of the funding is being provided by Edinburgh City Council from its neighbourhood environment projects budget.

Jointly funded

Lesley Hinds, Edinburgh City Council's transport and environment convener, said: "This work demonstrates what community-focused funding can achieve and, with the increase in student footfall and physical improvements, will create a much more welcoming and safe environment benefiting local people as well as visitors to this historic part of Edinburgh."

Work is expected to start at the end of February, and will be completed in June.

The cost of the work is estimated at £177,856 and is jointly funded by Edinburgh World Heritage, the City of Edinburgh Council, and the University of Edinburgh.

Adam Wilkinson, Edinburgh World Heritage director, said: "This fantastic project builds on the experience of other EWH-funded projects at Scotsman Steps and Regent Bridge, where a combination of heritage conservation newly commissioned artworks has transformed neglected public space into places of surprise and delight.

"At High School Yard Steps we are going one step further, reopening a lost route through the Old Town, and helping lift the quality of life in the area."