

MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE



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MSA
LIVE 22

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Partners

Manchester Dragoneer Paddlers for life are a group in support of Breast cancer patients and those affected by it. The group was formed in 2012 under the Paddlers for Life banner, with the focus being not on racing, but about enjoyment of the unique exercise opportunity that can be beneficial for those currently undergoing treatment, as well as the benefits for mental and emotional health that come with spending time being active and enjoying the calm outdoors.

The paddlers meet every Saturday to go out on the reservoir at Debdale Outdoor Centre, at 10am aiming to be out on the lake by 11am. The hour long session is followed by tea and cakes in the Kitchen and Classroom at the centre. The paddlers don't just enjoy Dragonboating, taking part in Canoeing, Kayaking, Sailing, Walking and more! At the centre, wildlife and biodiversity is of high importance with a lot of local groups interested in supporting and maintaining the wildlife corridors in the area.

The centre also provides for more than just the Manchester Dragoneers, hosting various school trips and watersports lessons for all ages, making the design adaptable to the needs of all these clients is key to the success. Combining the needs of the centre users, with the needs for pollinating animals provides an interesting challenge, accompanied by a site with its own constraints and opportunities for development.

Agenda

Dragonscapes

The Manchester Dragoneers interest in wildlife and ecosystems as well as their social times before and after paddling sessions produced a need for a new social space that can be used outdoors, especially during the summer months for tea and coffee in the sun. The space is also required to provide a healthy bee and pollinator garden, to help local wildlife and green spaces. 'The site is required to be accessible and comfortable, whilst also adapting to constraints provided by the sites attributes.

Through multiple site visits and discussions with the clients, the initial idea for the area was vague and required us to provide a direction and ideas to get the process started to create a site that can adapt and change throughout its use. As the centre houses many clients, not just the paddlers, the space had to be adaptable to the needs of groups ranging from children to the elderly. The project brief we agreed upon with the client set out the main features to be a pollinator friendly space, outdoor seating that can be moved, and features to clear up the site to make it a comfortable place for people to enjoy.

Following the initial discussions with the client, our action weeks began with concept ideas and site masterplanning discussing how to design a garden and seating space with no budget, using only found material and upscaling. Many of the concepts focussed on staying true to the centre's identity, relating to boats and the Dragon's for the Dragoneers, using the Pink and Black as the main colour palette similar to that of the cancer ribbon. We discussed ideas of modularity in seating and bug houses, as well as garden placement and material reuse.

The proposal was presented to the clients before we received approval to begin construction on site during our second week. Throughout we faced various challenges, including the weather, however we persevered to produce the initial stages for the centre to build from and change in future to suit their needs.

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**MSA
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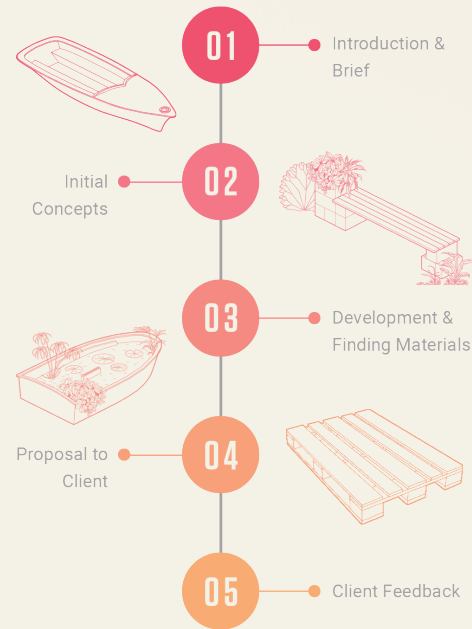
Timeline

The timeline for the two Action Weeks was divided into the design phase (Week 1) and the construction phase (Week 2).

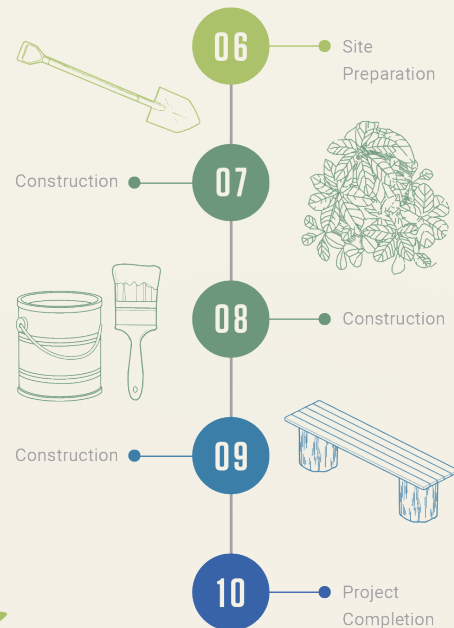
Week 1 focused on initial concepts, design development and masterplanning. The students explored ideas for the bee-friendly gardens and seating through collages, sketches and illustrations. The team also spent time looking for materials to reuse in the construction process, obtaining timber planks and wooden pallets. The work done in Week 1 was culminated in a final proposal sent to the clients from the Manchester Dragoneers and the Debdale Outdoor Centre.

Week 2 was spent on site at the Debdale Outdoor Centre. The students began the week with preparing the site for construction, cleaning the site and the boats that were to be reused according to the proposed scheme. The rest of the week was spent landscaping, gardening, constructing seating and painting the mural.

WEEK 1



WEEK 2



First Meeting

The first meeting between the students and the client took place on Saturday morning, 7th May 2022. The students had been invited to join the Manchester Dragoneers during their weekly dragonboating activity.

The students were able to speak to and get to know the Manchester Dragoneers during the activity, and were able to observe wildlife on the site while out on the lake such as Canada geese, swans, coots and mallards.

After the activity, the students were brought to the site for the project, which was a narrow plot of land between the Centre and the adjacent park. They were briefed on the agenda and client requirements, and were shown the existing resources provided by the site, including driftwood and old boats.



Design Objectives & Concepts

Primary Objectives



To transform the 'user experience' within the space



To enhance the economic and social value of Debdale Centre



To create an accessible space in which nurtures the users mind and wellbeing.



To construct a low maintenance garden for the client.



To create a green space which enriches its local community and biodiversity.



To encourage and enhance more local niches and biomes within the area.

A Pollinator Garden

The space will be a therapeutic haven for people and local wildlife, encouraging pollinators to group and flourish.

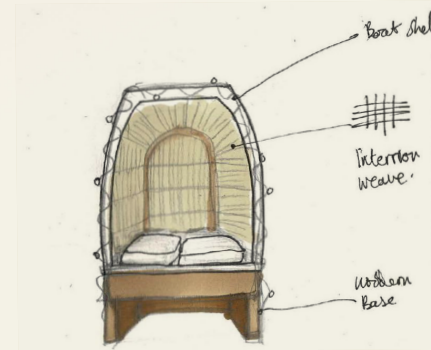
People and Nature

The core social values aim to strengthen the co-existence between the public realm and the local ecosystems by creating enriched spaces that are designed to facilitate both collaborative and friendly interactions between people and the local environment.

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle.

We plan to recycle materials (such as wood, tires, rope etc.) and use them as an integral part of the gardens construction.

Initial Concepts



Re-using Materials

The team have developed a proposal which re-uses materials on-site which would have been discarded and wasted otherwise. We have developed the idea of using old boats and reconstructing them into seating for the Dragoneers coffee mornings. We also plan to re-use wood from recycled furniture stores to both reduce waste and lower our projects carbon footprint and cost.

A Mural Inspired By The Paddlers

We plan to paint a mural which will be developed and designed as a team. The mural will be painted proudly by the gardens entrance to celebrate and inspire the paddlers.



A Garden For Pollinators



Proposed planting for the seating area will include various flowering plants filling the garden with vibrant colours of pinks, blues and purples. Ivy and crawling leaves will be planted along the fences, providing privacy from the public footpaths so the users can enjoy their time afterwards in without disruption. The plants have been carefully chosen for their colours and bee friendly nature creating a garden for both boaters and bees.

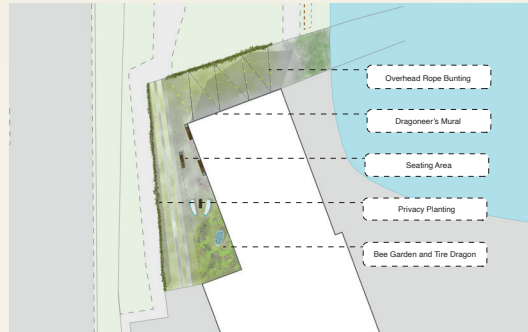
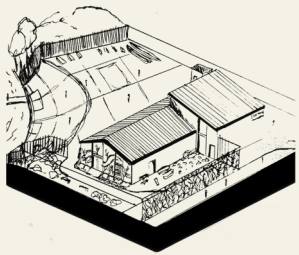


Proposal to Client

At the end of Action Week 1 we proposed our scheme to the client, by emailing them a pdf of the masterplan and proposed changes to the site. We received plenty of useful feedback from the client and made appropriate adjustments to the design to accommodate these changes.

The proposal covered everything from who we are, our concepts and how we arrived at our conclusions for the site before showing off our proposal and rendered visualisations of the site.

Following the proposal and feedback from the client, we also had to gain approval from the council and the centre to make changes to the site, with particular reference to the mural. We received permission from these groups fairly quickly, allowing us to begin construction on site during Action Week 2.



Site Masterplan



Seating Area and Tire Dragon Render

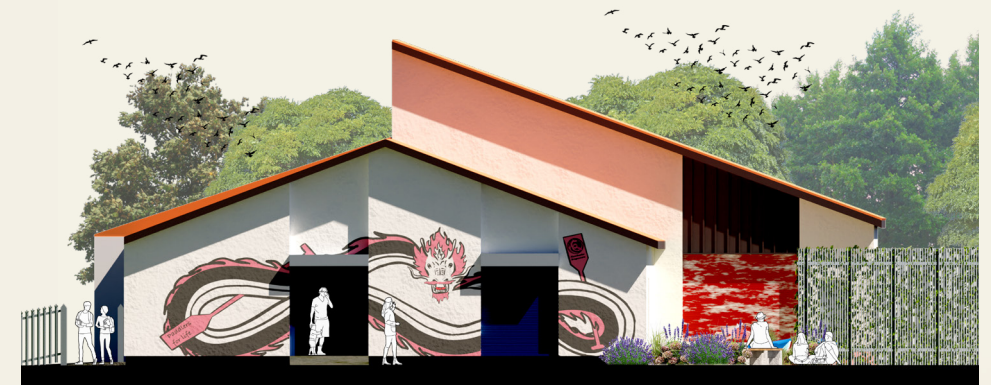


Masterplan Axonometric View

Proposal Visualisations



Mural and Lake View



Proposal Elevation

The Gardens

Day 6 involved preparing the site ready for planting according to the proposed masterplan. we faced some challenges, as the ground was fairly hard and made up of a large proportion of gravel which meant digging was exhausting! The site was also not well maintained as we found a lot of rubbish, which we cleared. Once we dug deep enough we filled these areas with soil ready for planting.

The edge of the site fronting onto the lake was heavily overgrown with brambles and weeds. We decided to leave a lot of the existing plants as they were already attracting a variety of pollinators, our aim was to enhance them instead. We decided to focus mainly on cutting back the brambles to create more soil beds to plant seeds. Once we were happy with the outcome, we laid soil down in the areas for planting and also created a path winding around down the slope towards the planting using stones we found on site which we thought was an interesting feature in-keeping with our re-use theme.

After all the soil was laid, we planted a variety of seeds including: foxglove, chrysanthemum, achillea, butterfly annuals, poppies and more! We bought some climbing ivy plants which will eventually climb up the fence to create a green wall.



Preparing the Site



Lake Side Meadow



Planting



The Boats

The clients generously gave us 2 boats to use for our project and we decided to use them both in accordance to our 'reduce, re-use, recycle' theme as they were going to be thrown into the skip otherwise. We also did not have a budget for this project and everything was out of our pocket which allowed us to really get creative with the limited supplies we had.

We decided to use the smallest boat to create a pond as it was in decent condition with no holes and a perfect size. We used stones found on site to stabilise the boat, and we then decided to paint the edge of the boat yellow to add a splash of colour. We added gravel and bought pond plants including a pink water lily, which really brought it to life. The second boat was a considerably larger boat and came with more challenges. We came up with a variety of concept designs for it and decided that we would experiment by cutting up the boat to create some bench seating and a planter. Once the boat was cut, we had to reinforce the bench structure by re-using wood which we sourced from the universities furniture recycling store.

The rest of the boat was also used as a planter as we felt it was important to use the whole boat. We nailed wood into the boat to create the planters. This was fairly challenging as it took a lot of force to nail through these dry pieces of wood but we had to be careful to make sure the wood didn't split. We thought about the drainage of the planters and drilled holes underneath which would allow for water to drain through the soil.



Pond Boat



Boat Seating

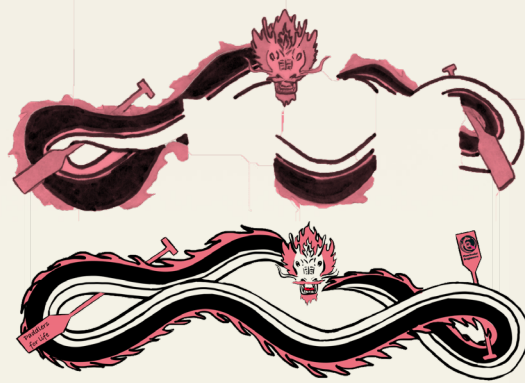


Boat Planter



The Mural

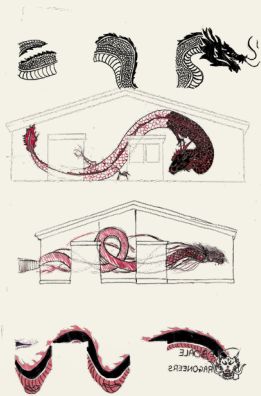
Throughout Week 1, the Dragonscapes team started the mural by sketching ideas using the colour theme selected by the client. Proposed sketches were presented, and as a group, we selected the most successful. On site, we prepped the canvas by power washing the walls, followed up by sketching the dragon with chalk.



Using the colours: white, red, and black, we mixed paints to get our desired colour, PINK! We then went on to outline the dragon and filled in with colour, and left-over paints were used on stones or boats. Details were added to clean up the outlines, and the dragon head was finalised!

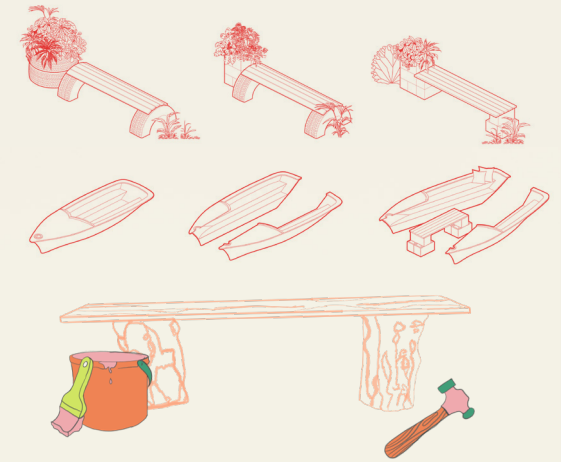


The Paddlers can now enjoy the mural alongside the general public as they walk around the Gorton Lower Reservoir.



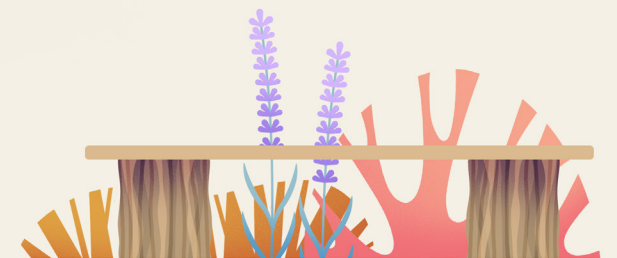
The Benches

Bench concepts were sketched out during Week 1 and amended when the team configured the materials throughout Week 2. We changed our materials to sustainable reuse materials, which we collected on site and at the wood supply shop.



The construction of the benches included levelling out, nailing together and painting! Our benches are made from wooden planks and logs from the site; these were sandpapered down and made stable. (With a little trial and error!)

The Paddlers can now use the benches after dragon boating in the reservoir to enjoy cups of tea and cake!





ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites M Arch. year 01 with B Arch. year 01 and 02 and M Land. Arch 01 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA masters students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. Other cohorts joined for an eventful 2 weeks of activities at the end of the academic year.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 550 students from 4 cohorts in MSA have worked on 35 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:

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BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2022

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