

**MANCHESTER SCHOOL  
OF ARCHITECTURE**

# Window Into Lindow



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## Partners

Our collaborators are Groundworks, a charity organisation who are a part of the Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership; a collective of community organisations to raise awareness of Lindow Moss's ecological, historical, and cultural importance. The collective includes Friends of Lindow Moss, Wilmslow Town Council, Cheshire East Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, and Mersey Rivers Trust, working to protect and restore Lindow Moss. Our main points of contact from Groundworks were Izzy Cook, Jack Crowshaw and Peter Jordan.

Groundwork is a coalition of environmental charities in the UK, founded in 1981, committed to creating a fair and green future where people, places and nature thrive together through action on the ground. The organisation is based in Birmingham and is a registered charity. Groundwork's mission is to improve people's quality of life, employment prospects and living environment by working in partnership with communities, with a particular focus on areas that lack social infrastructure and economic opportunity. They have been granted National Lottery funding to cover ten years of collaboration to ensure the uplift of the conservation area.

# Introduction

## Window Into Lindow

We are working with Groundworks from the Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership to create an architectural heritage trail that weaves together cultural heritage, nature, tourism, and community. The aim is to raise awareness of the detrimental environmental impact of the historic peat extraction and encourage renewed engagement with the site. Our project's focus is to provide subtle, yet meaningful interactions throughout the liminal natural landscape, inviting deeper relationships between people and place. By introducing a new trail centred on the architectural features of Lindow Moss, we seek to engage visitors through stories of history, material, and transformation.

The materials and strategies chosen to respond to the local ecology and the sensitivities of the peat landscape. Our hope is that this project establishes the foundations for a vibrant, evolving space, one that supports education, reflection, and community connection.

Our work focused on three key outcomes:

**The Trail:** Building on existing routes, we identified architectural points of interest and developed a mapped route enriched with narrative and way finding. Whilst few and far between, the settlements within the conservation area are rich with cultural history.

**A Pamphlet** was created to be available to visitors on site. This would tie in with the already created heritage trail and Lindow loop, maintaining brand identity.

**Informational Plaques:** A series of QR-coded plaques connect the trail to the Discover Lindow website, offering layered content for visitors to explore stories, features, and processes. **The Gateway & Interventions:** Designed using sustainable materials, the sculptural gateway and supporting interventions offer moments of arrival, shelter, and reflection within the conservation area and trail.

This publication captures the process, exploration, and final proposals created during the 2-week MSA Live event.

# Action Weeks

## Pre Action Week

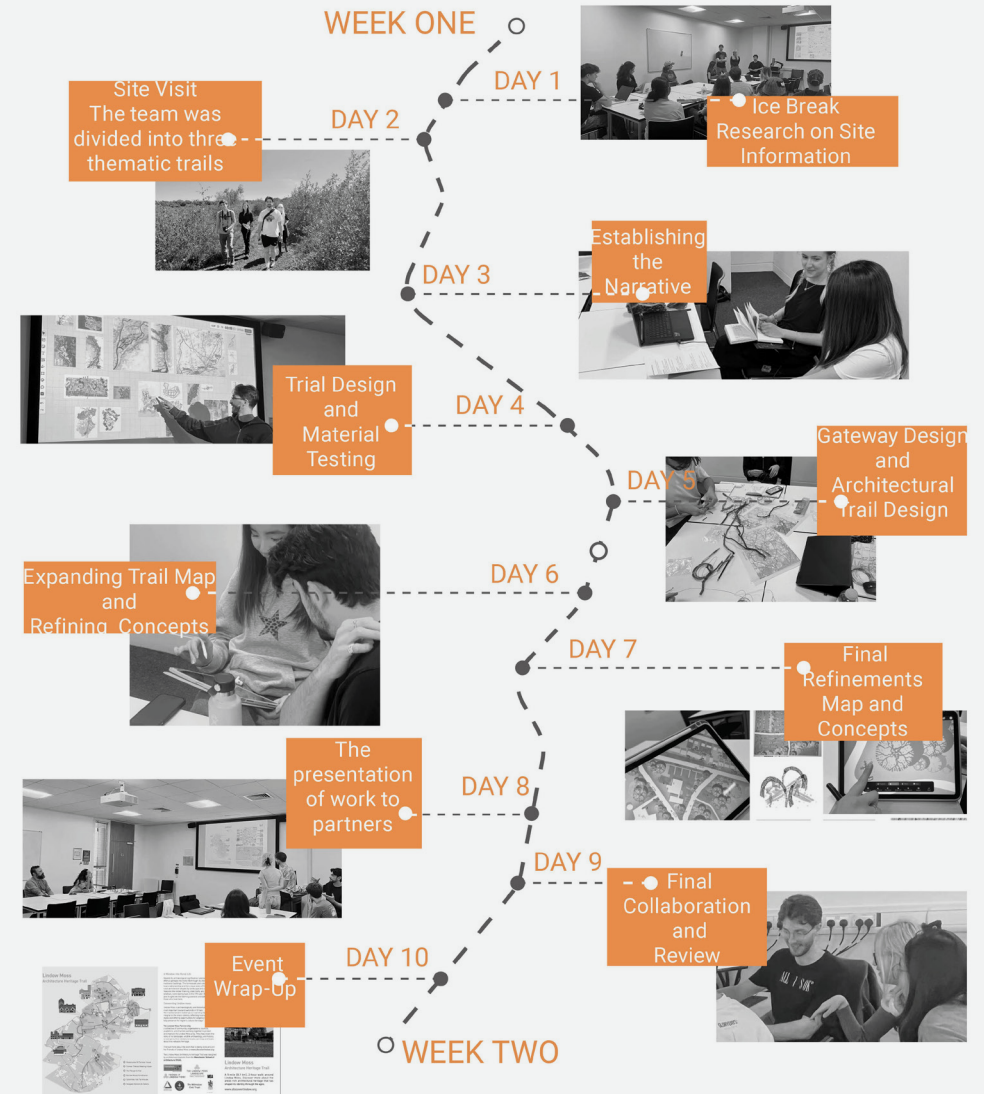
The five MArch students leading the project met bi-weekly with our studio tutor to carefully plan the action weeks. These meetings were essential in establishing the project scope, aligning with our collaborators; the Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership. In this time we developed a poster introducing the projects themes of heritage, ecology, and storytelling. To ensure we complied with MMU ethical guidelines, we provided risk assessments and completed the required ethos application prior to action weeks. We engaged with our collaborators, initiating in-depth conversations about the ecological conditions, historical memory, and cultural significance of Lindow Moss, clarifying each party's role and focus within the project. Gradually shaping the project's overall direction, identifying potential audiences. It was decided the project would aim to tell the ecological story of Lindow Moss through an architectural trail and conceptual spatial installations. We visited Lindow Moss with the collaborators engaging in a slow reflective hike. Our collaborators elaborated on the ecological zones, historical remains, and the current efforts toward conservation. We began thinking about how this experience and sense of place might be translated into our publishing work. We named the project "Window to Lindow"; both as a "window" to guide the public in understanding Lindow Moss, and as a metaphor for the architectural perspective we are providing. This provided the conceptual symbolic form of the arch for our poster, evoking ideas of connection, passage, viewing, and understanding. With the conceptual groundwork established, we prepared for Action Week. We broke the activities into three specific goal orientated groups, developing a two-week Action Plan, covering every activity, from the project introduction to the field trip, a final presentation to the collaborators, and concluding with the publication.

## Week One

In week one, the team would research Lindow Moss, visits the site and establish a conceptual approach with early design concepts. At the end of the week we would look to have the trail designed, tests done for the QR code plaques and concepts for spatial interventions throughout the site.

## Week Two

Teams would refine the pamphlet and website, and complete the set of drawings for the spatial interventions. We would present the work to the collaborators to gain feedback to ensure the outcomes would have utility in improving the awareness of Lindow Moss.





# Field Trip & Site 'Essence' Drawings

After the introductory session, the second day began with a field trip to Lindow Moss, giving students the opportunity to engage directly with the site. This visit played a key role in shaping early impressions of the landscape's character: its open peatlands, woodlands, and ecological diversity. Divided into three groups, the students explored different areas of the site, closely observing variations in vegetation, terrain, and atmosphere. Following the visit, an artistic exercise was undertaken to express individual responses to the environment. Rather than producing literal representations, students were encouraged to create abstract and emotive interpretations. These visual outcomes captured the 'essence' of the landscape, reflecting personal observations through texture, composition, and tone. Samples were also collected along the trails to support future design development. These early investigations laid the groundwork for route planning and sparked initial ideas for the proposed architectural interventions.





## Mapping the Architecture Trail

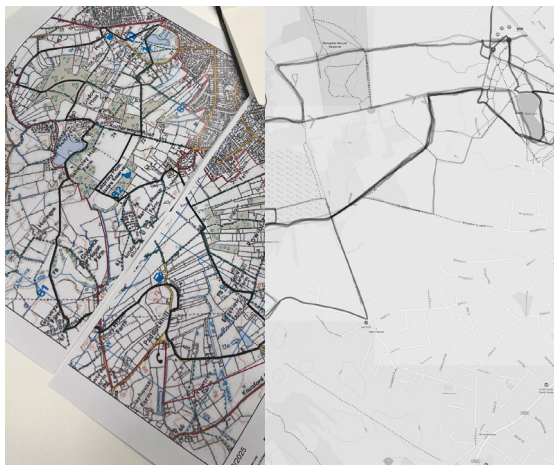
Following the Lindow Moss visit, we compiled our desktop research, sketches, and group impressions to propose the initial Architecture trail route. We then mapped and collaged these ideas onto site plans, highlighting key points of interest: architectural features, ecological markers, and spaces for pause or interaction.

## Developing the Student Routes

To refine our proposal, we designed an exercise where students drew routes identifying key features of the Lindow Moss area and architectural waypoints. Each student's route was then overlaid onto a base map, revealing commonalities. This collaborative process allowed us to compile a final architecture trail route from their diverse proposals.

## The Architectural Heritage Trail

From these student proposals, we refined and selected the final Architectural Heritage Trail route. This trail weaves through open peatland and other areas of the Moss, tracing both architectural and natural histories. It not only covers the main peat bog and nature reserves but also integrates six key buildings as waypoint nodes. To further enhance the experience, we designed companion QR code information signs and gateway installations. These elements combine information guidance with clear path identification, ensuring an immersive and informative journey along the trail.



## Final Map Production

The culmination of this mapping process was the production of the final trail map. On this map, we plotted the selected route, clearly indicating the six key building waypoints. To provide clearer visual context and a more engaging experience, we incorporated axonometric illustrations of each key building onto the map. Developing the Informational T

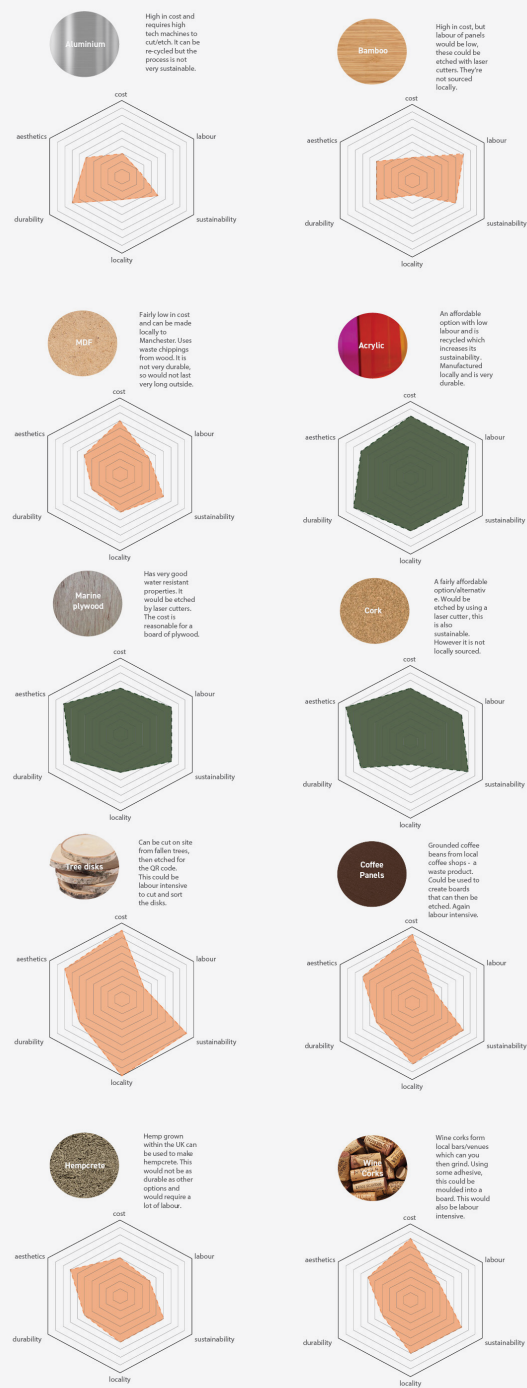
## Trail Pamphlet

Using the trail map and the research conducted during our desktop study, we developed an informational trail pamphlet. This pamphlet serves as a companion for visitors, offering in-depth narratives about the historical and ecological significance of each waypoint. It combines the visual guidance of the map with the rich contextual information gleaned from our research, providing an educational experience for all who explore the Architectural Heritage Trail.



materiality research -

Groundworks wanted to educate visitors about Lindow Moss. We looked to create QR code plaques that would be placed around the trail. We investigated materials that we thought would be sustainable and durable. As demonstrated in the graphs above, it became clear that some of these would be either expensive, labour intensive or too fragile for the project. The first three graphs show materials that whilst durable, perform to a low standard. With the second three being exceptional all-rounders. It was clear from the start that we had to think realistically about the material and making sure that these materials are readily available to purchase and to lasercut. Lastly, we researched experimental materials, such as tree disks or coffee bean veneered board. Whilst cheap, sustainable and sourced locally, the durability would be low, and labour would be intense.



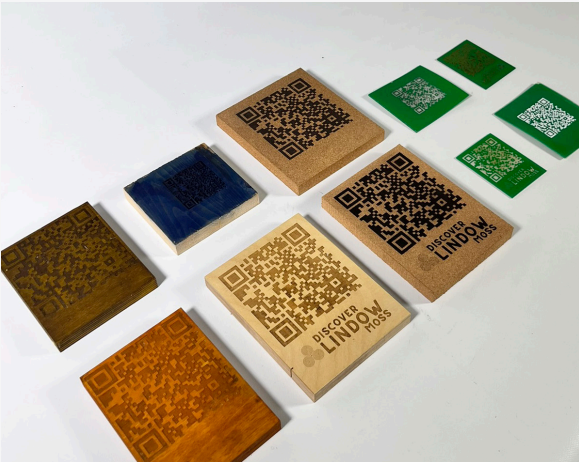
Making the plaques

Following the material research, we visited B15 Workshops. We trialed plaques using the highest performers from our research that were ready to hand; marine plywood, cork, natural wood and acrylic. Following laser etching each plaque was appropriately finished with stains, testing various colours to connect with the Discover Lindow brand identity. These were then sealed with Beeswax. Natural wood performed the worst. The grain rendered the QR code unreadable.

Cork etched extremely well. However, due to durability concerns, in situ testing would be conducted by the collaborator before making further plaques.

Marine Plywood was favoured by the client. They had used it previously and the natural material would work well with the liminal landscape.

Acrylic surprised us the most. Its durability would likely be the highest, whilst also being bold within the woodland setting. Whilst plastic is viewed as unsustainable, its durability and ease of labour would result in higher environmental sustainability over its life.





# Architectural Interventions

## Conceptual framework

Kengo Kuma presented a series of installations focused on 13 Japanese onomatopoeias, each expressing a different spatial or material quality. The aim was to explore the relationship between people and natural materials, challenging the idea of architecture as an object and connecting it with the natural landscape. The exhibit was created with materials from the aftermath of Storm Vaia across northern Italy (2018), using fallen trees in the design for sustainable practice. The installations allowed visitors to experience architecture through touch, sound, and atmosphere, instead of relying on just visual means of expression. We applied this perspective in our gateway design by using tree logs and willow branches in constructing the spiral branches wrapped around each arch of the gateway. Using durable willow branches and fallen trees found on site, the structure of the arches compliments the atmosphere of Lindow Moss to ensure symbiosis between the man made and wildlife.

Following our exploration of the site, we created three design interventions spread around the site so that we can encourage visitors to explore the conservation area and it. A gateway, located next to the car park, would invite visitors to the area and give them an initial impression of the site. The second is a sculpture located next to the information board close to Black Lake intended to capture tourists' attention and serve as a place for birds to land and nest. Finally, we decided to frame the existing artworks by creating both a passageway made of arches and sitting spaces where everyone can stop and admire sculptures throughout the peat bog.



## Design Process

Our first step was to sketch our ideas and discuss their materiality. Our main objective was implementing sustainability by using fallen branches or tree trunks for all the designs. Resorting to local resources and keeping their natural appearance resulted in the creation of more natural shapes that blended well with the surroundings. Additionally, willow was a preferred material due to its flexibility, which helped us create swirls inspired by the existing plants within the area, but it also helped us connect our designs to the artworks.

Our next step was to test our ideas by using branches collected from the site and wire to simulate the winding willow. We created different passageways and arches with various numbers of configurations and languages. Furthermore, the sketches based on our model testing helped us finalise our ideas and proceed to the final drawings.

For the final representation of the various structures, we used collages with pictures taken during our site visit as well as drawing the context. The final set of drawing show how the intervention interacts with the surrounding context, providing the collaborators with high level concepts to take to the council with the aim to create similar interventions in the future.





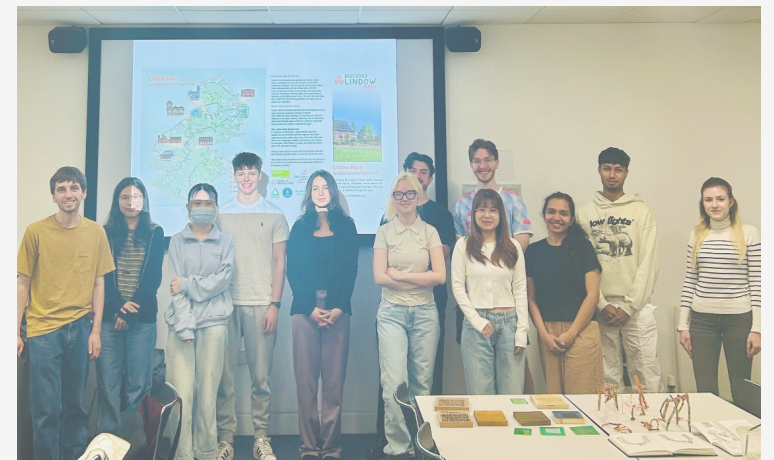
# Reflection

Presenting our Window to Lindow project to the collaborators was a meaningful opportunity to share our ideas and design approach for the Lindow Moss trail. As a team, we focused on celebrating the area's rural architectural heritage and deep cultural history providing the collaborators with outputs they could implement right away.

Three sculptural frames, a gateway and a sculpture were placed along the newly proposed route. These installations aimed to frame the moss not only as a site of archaeological significance but also as a cultural landscape shaped by communities which cultivated the site. The frame designs looked to engage with the liminal space of the conservation area, ensuring

the interventions worked with the surroundings and the proposed trail. The project pushed us to consider how design can both reveal and preserve these narratives.

Despite the pressures of academic deadlines, we worked collaboratively, sharing skills in physical modelling, establishing concepts, and graphic design to bring our vision to life. Engagement with the Lindow Moss Partnership reinforced the importance of collaboration, site sensitivity, and design with purpose. This experience has deepened our appreciation for architecture's role in heritage storytelling and the preservation of conservation areas through small scale, community led schemes.





## ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students with those in BA year 1 and year 2 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 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 are for community benefit or 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 650 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 40 projects with partners.

## QUESTIONS

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

**[msalive@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:msalive@mmu.ac.uk)**

## BLOG

**[live.msa.ac.uk/2025](http://live.msa.ac.uk/2025)**

## SOCIAL

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## WEBSITE

**[www.msa.ac.uk](http://www.msa.ac.uk)**