



Glasgow City Council

**Environment and Liveable Neighbourhood City Policy
Committee**

**Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability**

Contact: Francine O'Rourke

Legal Graffiti Wall Pilot Update

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update on the legal graffiti wall pilot and the development of the Glasgow City Council approach to graffiti and street art across the city.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee note the content of the report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐

consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Background

This report builds upon the GCC approach to Graffiti and Street Art approved in 2022 and provides an update on the implementation and evaluation of the Legal Graffiti Wall Pilot. The pilot forms part of a broader programme of work developed by the Council over recent years to support street art and creative expression across the city, building on work previously progressed through City Conveners, officers, Glasgow Life and engagement with the street art community.

The pilot represents a key action arising from the Street Art Culture Motion in September 2022 and supports Glasgow's wider ambitions relating to culture, placemaking, community participation and environmental improvement.

Street art and graffiti are both recognised forms of visual expression. Street art is generally created with permission and seeks to enhance public spaces, while graffiti may occur without permission and can present environmental and enforcement challenges. The purpose of the legal wall pilot is not to encourage tagging or wider vandalism, but to provide a managed and constructive space for creative expression, while making clear the distinction between permitted street art and unauthorised graffiti on public or private property.

A Street Art Stakeholder Group was established bringing together arts organisations and street artists, community representatives, GCC Officers, Glasgow Life, Elected Members and Police Scotland, to support the delivery of the pilot. The pilot sought to balance support for artistic expression with the Council's ongoing commitment to removing offensive, racist, sectarian, homophobic and obscene graffiti from public spaces.

The agreed objectives were to:

- Provide legal opportunities for artists to create and showcase work.
- Encourage community engagement and participation.
- Improve the appearance of underused spaces.
- Contribute to wider city centre regeneration and cultural activity.

Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability continue to implement a targeted approach to removing racist, sectarian, homophobic, offensive and explicit graffiti across the city.

2. Pilot Locations

Following engagement with artists, stakeholders, community representatives and Council services, three pilot locations were identified to test the suitability of different environments for Legal Graffiti Walls and to inform future policy development. The locations were selected based on existing graffiti activity, accessibility, opportunities for artistic expression and their potential contribution to placemaking objectives.

2.1 Custom House Quay

Custom House Quay was selected as the first pilot location due to its long-established association with street art and graffiti activity. The site was already being used informally by artists and provided an opportunity to formalise and manage artistic activity within a designated legal space. The location continues to attract regular use and has become an established destination for artists and organised events.

2.2 Cowcaddens Underpasses

The Cowcaddens pedestrian underpasses were identified during the second phase of the pilot. The location was selected due to its accessibility, visibility and the high levels of tagging and graffiti already present within the space. The site provided an opportunity to assess whether a managed legal wall approach could support improved artwork quality and contribute positively to the appearance of an area already affected by unauthorised graffiti activity.

2.3 Walkway from Partick to Riverside Museum

The walkway between Partick and the Riverside Museum was identified during the final phase of the pilot following engagement with SWG3 and local artists. The location was recognised as an established area of street art activity and offered an opportunity to support creative expression within a highly visible route connecting local communities and visitor destinations. The site also provided an opportunity to assess the benefits of Legal Graffiti Walls within a location with significant pedestrian movement and public visibility.

Collectively, the three pilot locations have enabled the Council and partners to test different environments, gather feedback from users and local communities, and develop a stronger evidence base to inform the future development and expansion of Legal Graffiti Walls across Glasgow.

3. Legal Graffiti Wall Consultation

An evaluation survey was undertaken to gather feedback on the Legal Graffiti Wall Pilot from Community Councils and local stakeholders within Ward 10 where Legal Graffiti Walls have been operating. The survey was issued to all city centre Community Councils, who were asked to share it with residents, local networks and wider community stakeholders. A total of 424 responses were received.

3.1 Public Support for Legal Graffiti Walls

The consultation demonstrated strong overall support for the continuation and development of Legal Graffiti Walls. Of those surveyed, 86.6% expressed support for the initiative, while 12.5% opposed the proposal and 0.9% expressed no

opinion. Respondents identified a number of perceived benefits associated with Legal Graffiti Walls.

The most frequently cited benefit was the provision of opportunities for creative expression (88.2%), including providing artists with a legal space to develop skills and contribute to Glasgow's cultural identity. A significant proportion of respondents also highlighted the enhancement of public spaces (78.5%), noting the positive impact of artwork in transforming previously neglected or unattractive locations. Youth engagement (78.3%) was also viewed positively, with respondents recognising the role of Legal Graffiti Walls in encouraging participation in arts and culture and providing constructive creative outlets. Increased cultural value (75.7%), attraction of visitors and tourism (68.1%) and the potential contribution towards reducing unauthorised graffiti (64.3%) were also identified as key benefits.

Additional themes emerging from respondent comments included:

- Community pride and inclusion.
- Mental health and wellbeing benefits.
- Activation of underused spaces.
- Opportunities for artists to collaborate, network and showcase their work.

3.2 Concerns Raised by Respondents

Whilst 62.9% of respondents reported no concerns regarding Legal Graffiti Walls, a number of issues were identified through the consultation process. The most commonly raised concern related to the suitability of locations (19.8%), particularly the appropriateness of some underpass environments. Concerns were also expressed regarding the potential for legal walls to encourage tagging or graffiti activity beyond designated areas (17.4%), safety considerations (16.0%), maintenance requirements and associated costs (11.9%), and the potential for noise or disruption (9.1%).

More detailed feedback highlighted concerns relating to environmental conditions at certain locations, including ventilation and lighting within enclosed spaces, the potential for overspill tagging onto adjacent infrastructure, community consultation, maintenance arrangements and perceptions of anti-social behaviour. Some respondents also expressed concerns regarding the visual impact of graffiti on the character of particular locations.

3.3 Consultation Findings

The consultation findings indicate a high level of public support for Legal Graffiti Walls and recognise their potential contribution to artistic expression, youth engagement, cultural participation, placemaking and the enhancement of public spaces. The feedback also highlights the importance of careful site selection, effective stakeholder engagement and ongoing management arrangements to ensure that Legal Graffiti Walls contribute positively to their surrounding environment. Consideration should be given to location characteristics, community

context, maintenance requirements and wider placemaking outcomes when assessing future sites.

While feedback from artists and visitors will continue to be gathered through ongoing engagement and the Glasgow Legal Walls website, the consultation has provided a valuable evidence base to inform future development of the programme and the identification of additional Legal Graffiti Wall locations across the city.

4. Governance Arrangements

The Street Art Stakeholder Group will continue to provide strategic oversight of the programme, consider proposals for future legal wall locations and support coordination between artists, communities, property owners and public agencies. A review of the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) will be undertaken to ensure they are consistent with the governance arrangements of the Stakeholder Group.

5. Budget Investment

The pilot has largely been delivered through existing Council and partner resources, supported by stakeholder collaboration. £60,000 capital funding was allocated to NRS to provide materials for Jams, support maintenance and development of Legal Walls and explore pathways and opportunities for local street artists /art organisations across Glasgow communities.

The project has established a Terms of Reference and framework (Appendix 1) allowing artists, community groups and partner organisations to seek funding for materials, events, maintenance and engagement activity. Additional funding sources include local Area Partnerships and partner contributions, with governance arrangements agreed through the Stakeholder Group.

6. Outreach Programme

As part of the approved £60,000 investment allocated to support the development of Legal Graffiti Walls and street art culture across Glasgow, the Street Art Stakeholder Group agreed that a proportion of funding should be directed towards a structured community outreach programme delivered in partnership with Glasgow Life. The programme aims to complement the Legal Graffiti Wall initiative by providing positive pathways into creative activity, particularly for young people who may be at risk of involvement in unauthorised graffiti activity.

Through a series of community-based programmes delivered across the north east, north west and south of the city, the initiative will call on experienced street artists, third-sector organisations and local communities to provide workshops, mentoring, skills development and opportunities for artistic expression. The programme seeks to support creative development, improve understanding of the distinction between legal street art and unauthorised graffiti, encourage civic pride

and community ownership, and create opportunities for participants to apply their learning through the creation of legal artwork within their communities.

Delivery will be aligned with the objectives of the Legal Graffiti Wall programme and will contribute to wider outcomes relating to youth engagement, community wellbeing, placemaking and the enhancement of public spaces across Glasgow.

7. Pilot Outcomes

The pilot has demonstrated positive progress against its original objectives. Support for street artists has been successfully achieved through the ongoing use of designated legal walls, artist-led events and organised "Jam" sessions, providing opportunities for artists to create, collaborate and showcase their work. Community engagement has also been a notable strength of the programme, with positive involvement from artists, stakeholders, partner organisations and community representatives throughout the pilot period.

The legal wall locations have contributed to the revitalisation of previously neglected or underused spaces through regular artistic activity, helping to create more vibrant and visually engaging environments. In relation to graffiti management, while the pilot has provided legal opportunities for artistic expression and enhanced the quality of artwork in designated locations, there is currently no conclusive evidence that legal walls alone reduce levels of unauthorised graffiti across the wider area. Ongoing monitoring, engagement and evaluation will therefore be required to better understand any longer-term impact on graffiti behaviour and environmental quality.

Throughout the pilot period, artwork at each location was photographed and catalogued to monitor changes over time. This evidence demonstrates a noticeable improvement in the quality and character of artwork within the designated legal wall spaces, with a reduction in tagging, offensive graffiti and fragmented works, and an increase in larger-scale, planned and more visually cohesive pieces. The pilot has therefore succeeded in creating opportunities for artists to produce higher-quality work within a managed environment, contributing positively to the appearance and identity of these spaces. Examples of this progression and improvement in artwork quality are included within Appendix 2.

7.1 Cowcaddens

The Cowcaddens site has provided important learning in relation to site suitability, environmental conditions, maintenance and community impact. In response to feedback received, work will be progressed with the Street Art Stakeholder Group to identify an alternative legal wall location, ensuring that lessons from the pilot inform future site selection and that street artists, residents and wider stakeholders are involved in supporting the transition to a more suitable space.

7.2 Custom House Quay

Custom House Quay has demonstrated the cultural and visitor value of legal wall provision, with the site becoming a recognised location within walking tours and visitor itineraries, complementing Glasgow's wider street art and mural offer. As redevelopment plans progress, work will be undertaken with the Street Art Stakeholder Group, WASPS and relevant partners to support a planned transition to an alternative legal wall location, ensuring continuity for artists while minimising any impact on the completed development at Custom House Quay.

8. Data Collection

Chart 1



The chart illustrates monthly graffiti levels in Ward 10 between January 2023 and December 2024, highlighting both publicly reported incidents and those identified through operational inspections.

Publicly reported graffiti activity generally increased throughout the first half of 2024, peaking at 97 reports in May 2024, which represented the largest year-on-year increase, with 42 more reports than were recorded in May 2023. Elevated reporting levels continued through the summer months, reaching 93 reports in July 2024.

The Legal Graffiti Wall pilot commenced during July 2024. Following the introduction of the pilot, publicly reported graffiti levels showed a sustained downward trend, falling from 93 reports in July to 68 in August, 39 in September, 37 in October and 29 in November. Notably, October and November 2024 were the only months during 2024 to record fewer public graffiti reports than the corresponding months in 2023, with reductions of 8 and 13 reports respectively.

While it is not possible to attribute these reductions solely to the Legal Graffiti Wall pilot, the timing of the decrease coincides with the pilot period and marks a reversal of the year-on-year increases observed during most of 2024. This suggests that the pilot may have contributed to a reduction in unauthorised graffiti activity or encouraged a displacement of activity towards legal provision. Continued monitoring will be required to determine whether these reductions are sustained over a longer period and can be more directly linked to the intervention.

Additionally, GCC own operational observations remained at consistently low levels throughout the pilot period, indicating that any reduction in public reporting was not

offset by a corresponding increase in graffiti identified through routine inspections. It should be noted that a graffiti service reform was introduced during 2023, reducing dedicated graffiti resources., which should be considered when interpreting overall trends.

9. Lessons Learned

Several key lessons have emerged from the pilot. Legal Graffiti Walls can successfully attract artists, encourage creative participation and contribute positively to the appearance and activation of public spaces, particularly when supported by organised events, artist-led activities and ongoing stakeholder engagement. The success of "Jam" events has demonstrated the value of artist-led programming in generating interest, encouraging responsible use of legal spaces and fostering collaboration between artists, communities and partner organisations.

From an NRS perspective, one of the most significant areas of learning relates to the identification and assessment of suitable locations. The pilot was deliberately designed to test a variety of environments and understand the factors that contribute to successful legal wall provision. The findings highlight that location selection should consider not only the availability of suitable wall space but also levels of pedestrian activity, visibility, accessibility, community context, maintenance requirements and the overall impact on the surrounding area. While underpasses and similar environments can provide opportunities for large-scale artwork and creative expression, their suitability requires careful consideration alongside wider placemaking objectives and community outcomes. The experience of the Cowcaddens site has provided valuable learning and reinforced the importance of assessing each location on a case-by-case basis.

It should also be recognised that many locations considered for Legal Graffiti Walls already experience significant levels of unauthorised graffiti activity. In these circumstances, the introduction of a managed legal wall can provide an opportunity to enhance the look and feel of a space, encourage higher-quality artwork and support a transition from repetitive tagging towards more considered artistic expression. While Legal Graffiti Walls are not intended to eliminate unauthorised graffiti, the pilot indicates that they can contribute positively to the management and visual improvement of locations that have historically been subject to graffiti activity.

The pilot has also highlighted the importance of strong partnership working between the Council, artists, community representatives and partner agencies in balancing creative opportunities with community expectations and wider environmental considerations. Feedback further identified a need to improve public understanding of the distinction between legal street art, illegal graffiti and commissioned murals. The findings suggest that legal spaces alone will not address all forms of unauthorised graffiti, underlining the importance of continued communication, education and engagement alongside any future expansion of the programme. Collectively, these lessons provide a stronger evidence base for the assessment of future locations and the continued development of Legal Graffiti Walls across Glasgow.

10. Next Steps

- Continue operation of the Custom House Quay Legal Graffiti Wall until future redevelopment works commence.
- Continue operation of Riverside Walkway Legal Graffiti Wall.
- Deactivate the Cowcaddens Legal Graffiti Wall location and progress proposals to repurpose the space through a commissioned mural project.
- Explore alternative locations that offer improved visibility, accessibility and community benefit.
- Further develop the Glasgow Legal Walls website and online guidance to support communities, artists and property owners.
- Continue partnership working with Glasgow Life, Police Scotland and community organisations to deliver outreach, mentoring and early intervention programmes.
- Monitor site usage, community feedback and graffiti reporting trends to inform future decision-making and programme development.
- Maintain oversight through the Street Art Stakeholder Group and report progress and future opportunities to Committee as appropriate.

11. Conclusion

The Legal Graffiti Wall Pilot has demonstrated that designated legal spaces can support artistic expression, contribute positively to placemaking objectives and enhance the appearance of public spaces. Consultation findings indicate a high level of public support for Legal Graffiti Walls, with respondents identifying benefits including creative expression, youth engagement, cultural participation, community pride and the enhancement of previously underused spaces.

The consultation also identified a range of considerations that will require ongoing attention, including the suitability of locations, maintenance requirements, safety considerations, and concerns regarding potential impacts on surrounding areas. Particular issues raised in relation to underpass locations included ventilation, lighting, and perceptions of safety. These findings highlight the importance of continued engagement with local communities, robust management arrangements and regular monitoring of sites.

While further evaluation will be required to assess the longer-term impact of Legal Graffiti Walls on levels of unauthorised graffiti and wider community outcomes, the pilot has established a strong foundation for the continued development of legal wall provision and street art culture across Glasgow.

Opportunities will continue to be explored to establish additional Legal Graffiti Wall locations across the city, particularly where proposals support placemaking, youth engagement, cultural participation, community wellbeing and regeneration priorities. Future development will be informed by the lessons learned through the pilot and the views expressed through the public consultation process.

12. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:

Legal:

Personnel:

Procurement:

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 4 Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods.
Mission 1: Deliver the Clean Glasgow programme, aligning services to local need while supporting communities to take action locally and promote behaviour change.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29? Please specify.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

Positive Impact. The proposal supports access to cultural participation, creative expression and community engagement opportunities for a broad range of individuals and communities. The outreach programme will provide opportunities for participation, skills development and mentoring across Glasgow. No significant negative equality impacts have been identified.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

The proposal may help address socio-economic disadvantage by providing free access to creative and cultural opportunities, supporting skills development and mentoring programmes for young people, and contributing to the improvement of public spaces and community wellbeing.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Climate plan Theme 3: Well Connected and Thriving City. Improving the public realm to encourage active travel choices.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

As above.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

As above.

Privacy and Data

Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report

No

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

13. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee note the content of the report.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference

Legal Wall Pilot

Street Art Stakeholder Group

1. Background

Due to ongoing challenges with city wide illegal graffiti, the city centre in particular, GCC along with partners, artists and stakeholders will lead on the development of a pilot project in relation to legal graffiti walls and development of street art culture. The lack of understanding of graffiti culture exacerbates the level of public reporting which contributes to the strain on existing resources whilst marginalising individuals who practice street art.

This new approach will be assessed in relation to the impact to overall illegal graffiti, levels of reporting from members of the public and incidents of ASB. It is hoped the pilot project will have a positive impact in neighbourhoods and locations with derelict and abandoned wall space across the City.

2. Structure

The Street Art Stakeholder Group (SASG) will be chaired by, GCC Neighbourhood Liaison Manager, who will report back to NRS Leadership and associated Committee Structures on the progress of the Pilot Project.

3. Purpose of the Group

The SASG initial objectives are:

- Identify suitable potential locations for legal graffiti walls across the city, based on criteria such as accessibility, visibility and community input.
- Conduct site visits to assess suitability, infrastructure requirements and potential impact on surrounding areas.
- Work with graffiti artists and community members to develop concepts and themes for the selected walls / sites.
- Develop, deliver and co-ordinate events involving a range of graffiti artists and arts organisations.
- Consider relevant research, practice and planning associated with successful graffiti art programmes and how this can be used in the Glasgow pilot areas.
- Promote and support Jam Events and the ethos of Legal Walls.
- Develop safety protocols, guidelines and a Code of Conduct to promote responsible and respectful graffiti practices, prioritising public safety and property protection.
- Create a Risk Register to identify potential hazards and outline the mitigation measures put in place.
- Maintain on going communication between all members of the Stakeholder Group and the graffiti art community to foster transparency, trust and collaboration during the initial 6 month pilot period.
- Agree funding parameters for any requests for materials, equipment, resources that will support a legal wall, mural event or art projects during the 6 month pilot period. See Appendix 1a

4. Membership

4.1 The membership should reflect the continuing development of this pilot project and should include graffiti artists, Glasgow Life,

4.2 Chair: GCC City Centre Neighbourhood Liaison Manager

5. Meetings

The SASG will meet every 8 weeks during the course of the pilot period and thereafter quarterly.

6. Decision Making Process

The SASG will operate on the basis of consensus. Consensus, in respect of any item under consideration will be taken to constitute a majority rather than unanimity and the Chairperson will consider the degree to which consensus exists in respect of any item of business.

7. Confidentiality

All members of the SASG will be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all members of the Group. The Chairperson will rule where necessary to advise on the confidentiality of documents. All members will seek permission of the group prior to any social media / press coverage of discussions, actions or decisions.

8. Reporting Arrangements

8.1 The SASG will provide a regular updates/report to the GCC Leadership as required.

8.2 Members of The SASG will be responsible for ensuring their organisation and all associated groups are informed of the work of the Group.

Appendix 1a

Conditions of Funding for Legal Graffiti Wall Pilot

1. Purpose of Funding

Funding is allocated to support the development, implementation, and maintenance of a legal graffiti wall pilot project. The project aims to provide a sanctioned space for graffiti art, foster community engagement, and enhance the local cultural landscape.

2. Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants: Must be artists, community groups, or local organisations involved in the graffiti wall pilot.
- Project Alignment: Activities must align with the objectives of the graffiti wall pilot, promoting legal graffiti art and community participation.
- Community Benefit: Projects should demonstrate a clear benefit to the local community.

3. Funding Use

- Permissible Expenses:
 - Materials and supplies for graffiti art (e.g., paint, brushes, protective gear).
 - Costs related to workshops, events, and community engagement activities.
 - Maintenance and upkeep of the graffiti wall.
 - Promotional activities to raise awareness of the project.
- Non-Permissible Expenses:
 - Personal expenses unrelated to the project.
 - Activities outside the scope of the legal graffiti wall pilot.

4. Funding Amount

- The maximum funding per project or applicant will be determined based on the total available funds and the number of eligible applications received.

5. Application Process

- Submission: Applicants must submit a detailed proposal outlining the project's objectives, planned activities, budget, and expected outcomes.
- Deadline: Applications must be submitted by the specified deadline to be considered for funding.
- Approval: The Stakeholder Group will review and approve applications based on predefined criteria.

6. Reporting and Accountability

- Financial Management : NRS Neighbourhood Liaison will have financial management control of the fund as outlined per the criteria above.
- Reporting : Recipients must submit outcome feedback including photos summarising the project's impact and financial expenditures.
- Financial Records: Recipients must maintain accurate financial records and receipts for all expenditures and make them available for review upon request.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Stakeholder Group will monitor funded projects to ensure compliance with the funding conditions and project objectives.

8. Compliance with Legal and Safety Standards

- All funded activities must comply with local laws and regulations, including health and safety standards.
- Any artwork produced must adhere to community guidelines and respect public decency and cultural sensitivity.

9. Termination of Funding

- Funding may be terminated if recipients fail to comply with the conditions outlined, misuse funds, or fail to demonstrate progress toward project objectives.
- In the event of termination, recipients may be required to return unspent funds.

By accepting the funding, recipients agree to abide by these conditions and work collaboratively with the Stakeholder Group to ensure the success of the legal graffiti wall pilot.

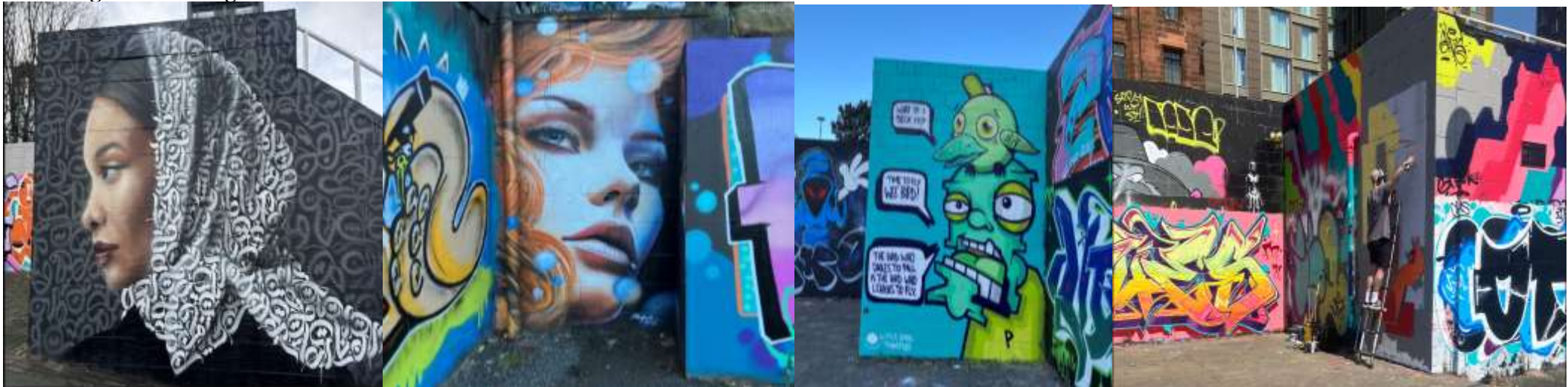
Appendix 2

Custom House Quay

Before Legal Wall Designation



After Legal Wall Designation



Cowcaddens Underpasses
Before Legal Wall Designation



After Legal Wall Designation



Partick Underpass
Before Legal Wall Designation



After Legal Wall Designation



