

Natural History Museum

Case Study

Designer: **Wilder Associates**

Architect: **Niall McLaughlin Architects**

Contractor: **Blakedown Landscapes**

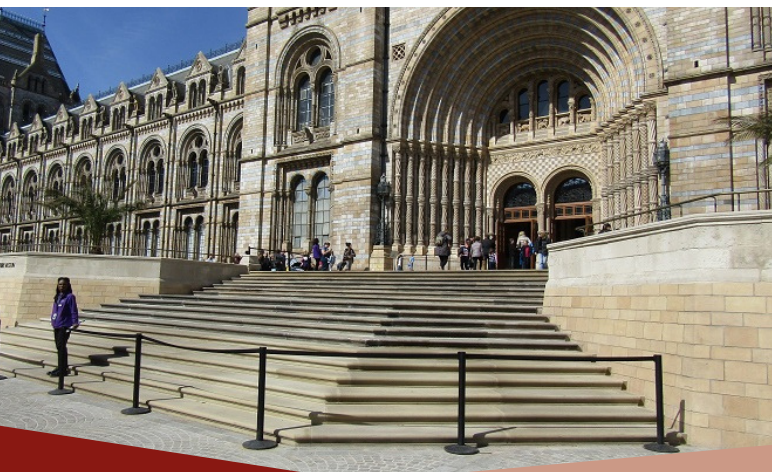
Founded as part of the British Museum in 1753, The Natural History Museum opened in the magnificent Alfred Waterhouse building in South Kensington in 1881.

The design, awarded as part of an extensive design competition, was realised at a time when Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection was rocking the very foundations of science.

Now, more than 135 years later, a design team consisting of Kim Wilkie, Wilder Associates and Niall McLaughlin Architects are undertaking a similar process within the grounds that have until now remained a fragmented and underutilised setting for the building.

The scheme, also awarded as part of a design competition, will not only explore the history of our planet but also the future of man's coexistence with nature.

The scheme looks immediately in keeping with the heritage of the building, so much so that many visitors will hardly recognise it as a new landscape.



Materials Supplied:*Bespoke Yorkstone**Green Schist Paving**Porphyry Setts**Swedish Granite Setts**Reclaimed Kerb*

The scheme started boldly, with a complete reconfiguration of the main entrance with the aim being to make the main entrance to The Natural History Museum wheelchair accessible and upgrade the aesthetics of the outdoor area.

Two bespoke Yorkstone ramps were added on either side of the entrance stairway. A Green Schist from Scotland was used as an edging for the Yorkstone, complimenting the blue-green porcelain banding in the museum's walls.

The lower vehicular frontage was completely transformed. Tarmac was replaced with porphyry setts laid in an arc pattern, with the arcs pointing towards the building. The setts had a special grey palette with a little brown tint, rather than the usual burgundy-violet and orange mix. The original cubes were modified to 60-60mm x 80mm thick because of limited build-up height and smaller setts were used where the arcs met, making the pattern fit better.

A line of setts laid in rows with granite 'wheeler' flags set at the width of a cart's wheels ran all the way up two ramps on either side of the building, set into more tarmac.

The tarmac was replaced with the same porphyry setts used on the lower vehicular frontage. The line of setts were extended using a Swedish granite produced in Portugal. Larger setts were used along the outer radius to allow for the curve of the ramp, and the new areas also had to include the same mix of sizes.

Reclaimed flat kerbs were identified as a colour match for the wheelers, however some were too wide so the final pieces had to be carefully selected, avoiding sawn edges which would have ruined the worn, reclaimed aesthetic.

