



# Designation Report of Handling

## Case information

<b>Case ID</b>	300059228 and 300061397
<b>Name of Site</b>	Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden, Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen
<b>Local Authority</b>	Aberdeen City Council
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	NJ 89230 05261
<b>Postcode</b>	AB15 8BJ
<b>Designation Type</b>	Inventory of Garden and Designed Landscapes; Listed building
<b>Designation No. (if any)</b>	GDL00412 LB52621
<b>Case Type</b>	Designation Proposal
<b>Received/Start Date</b>	20/06/2022
<b>Decision Date</b>	03/10/2023

## 1. Decision

<b>Inventory name (including designation number)</b>	<b>Action</b>
Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden (GDL00412)	Add site to the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
<b>Statutory Listing Address (including designation number)</b>	<b>New category of listing</b>
Piper Alpha Memorial, Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen (LB52621)	Category B

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals



## 2.1 Designation Background

There are currently no national heritage designations associated with this site.

## 2.2 Development Proposals

See 3.4 (policy considerations) below.

The Pound for Piper Memorial Trust launched a 'Gardens Redesign Project' on 13/05/2022.

Aberdeen City Council is currently considering next steps and will hold a public consultation later in 2023 to look at the options for the future and long-term sustainability of the memorial and gardens

(<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/update-piper-alpha-memorial-ahead-anniversary> (May 2023)).

## 3. Assessment

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### 3.1 Assessment information

We received an application to designate the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden on 20/06/2022.

When we receive a designation application, we contact the planning authority and those directly affected by the proposal.

Designations applications are published on our portal and will be available to view during the lifetime of the case and until 3 months after the case is closed.

The applicant provided the information and views in their [application](#). We have summarised the key points here:

- The Piper Alpha Memorial Garden plays a crucial role in the history of Aberdeen and Scotland's association with oil.
- It is a memorial and gravesite to those killed on Piper Alpha.
- The garden was designed by David Welch, who created Aberdeen's worldwide reputation as the City of Roses.
- The families who lost loved ones requested 167 roses to be planted around the memorial, one for each of the men killed.
- After consultation, the Memorial Committee approached Sue Jane Taylor to design the memorial. She had spent time on the platform and knew some of the men killed in the disaster.



Following a review of the designation application, we decided to assess the site for the [Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes \(Case ID. 300059228\)](#) and the Piper Alpha Memorial for [listing \(Case ID 300061397\)](#). (See Section [3.3](#) Assessment of ‘national importance’ (Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes) and ‘special architectural or historic interest’ (listing))

As part of our research and data-gathering, we

- visited the garden and memorial on 14/07/2022 and 23/11/2022;
- discussed the designation assessment process and the history and character of the site with the local authority and other interested parties;
- invited comments on the site through our [portal](#) from 14/10/2022 to 20/02/2023.

### 3.2. Comments received during our evidence-gathering stage

We encourage people who have views or information on a case to get in touch with us at an early stage. We welcome comments at an early stage to ensure that we have a full and inclusive understanding of the significance of a place, and to ensure that we are aware of all the circumstances of the case.

We received eight written submissions. We took into account evidence or comments received in our assessment where these were relevant to our decision-making. We have summarised below the key points we took from the submissions.

	Interested parties	Response
1	Private individual	The garden is cherished by those personally affected by the disaster
2	Private Individual	Was working in the North Sea when the Piper Alpha disaster happened. The individual taught Health and Safety and the site provided a place where they could highlight the importance of safety offshore. Any change to this garden would be a great disrespect to all families affected by the disaster.
3	Private individuals (joint response)	Would be horrified if there are changes to this spot. The memorial means much to the family and friends of all those named on the memorial and to those of the others who have since died. The garden is not only for friends and family of men who lost their lives but also for visitors from all over the world. It should be left in peace.
4	Private individual	Was working in the industry at the time of Piper Alpha disaster. Regularly visits the memorial garden to reflect and pay respects. No redevelopment should be undertaken without permission of those directly affected.
5	Private individual	The Piper Alpha Memorial and North Sea Rose Garden should be kept as they are and intended to be. It's important to recognise the cultural significance of the Piper Alpha Memorial and the North Sea Rose Garden. It is a place of solitude and remembrance which is



		appreciated and needed by all who visit. Totally in favour of the Piper Alpha Memorial and the North Sea Rose Garden being permanently included in Historic Environment Scotland's "Designed Landscapes of the Recent Past" project and the aforementioned listed status.
6	Private individual	The garden holds the memories of those who perished on Piper Alpha and how the tragedy impacted on families, friends, and the city of Aberdeen. Worked to support people at the time of the tragedy. The Memorial Garden provides a unique space to remember - in a peaceful and growing environment - those who have gone before.
7	Private individual	Concerned to discover proposals to redevelop the garden. As a citizen of Aberdeen, wishes to record support for HES listing of the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden and opposition to the development plans. Garden is a site of immense cultural and historic significance to bereaved, survivors and wider Aberdonian community. Any changes to the garden should only be made after extensive consultation and unanimous support from survivors and families. Designation would acknowledge the garden's major cultural and historic importance.
8	Private individual	Throughout the project, was not sure what to expect from the proposed garden, but the first sight of the memorial in situ on 6 July 1991 was unforgettable. The garden was perfect, bigger than expected, peaceful and beautiful. The Rose Garden is a very special place and can be likened to the First World War Memorial Gardens in Australia. It has many layers of meaning and enormous personal significance. It is culturally significant in relation to Aberdeen's role as Rose Capital of Europe. It deserves to be protected. It is a space that Aberdeen should be very proud of and do everything it can to look after.

We held three meetings with people who wanted to express their views.

We also met the local authority who confirmed their ownership of the site, advised us of any development proposals, and indicated that they had not come to any decision on proposed changes to the garden.

### 3.3 Assessment of 'national importance' (Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes) and 'special architectural or historic interest' (listing)

We carried out an assessment using the selection guidance for the Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes and for listing (see **Annexes A and B** respectively).

We found that the garden meets the criterion of national importance for the Inventory, while the memorial meets the criteria of special architectural or historic



interest for listing.

We consider the degree to which a site survives when assessing it for the Inventory. A garden or designed landscape must have enough integrity (wholeness and/or coherence) to be included on the Inventory. In this case, the survival, condition and overall coherence of the Memorial Garden are sufficient for inclusion on the inventory.

The designation selection guidance for the Inventory and for listing are published in the Historic Environment Scotland Designations Policy and Selection Guidance 2019, Annex 2, pp 11-13 and Annex 3, pp 14-16  
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

As a result of comments provided on the name of the garden, we consulted on a designation proposal that included different understandings of the garden's name (see **4.3 Consultation Summary**).

### 3.4 Policy considerations

Our policy on development proposals and designations is set out in Designation Policy and Selection Guidance, pp. 7-

8. <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>. Our policy states:

“We consider the individual circumstances of each case. In deciding whether to designate a site or place or amend an existing designation while there are ongoing development proposals, we will consider:

- the implications of designation on development proposals;
- the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the site or place; and
- the extent to which plans have been developed for the site or place – where these are particularly advanced, we will not normally list or schedule.”

In this case, we decided to proceed with designation for the garden as we understood that development plans are not particularly advanced.

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## 4. Consultation

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### 4.1 Consultation information

We consulted on a proposal to designate

- the garden on the Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes
- the memorial as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Consultation period: 25/07/2023 to 05/09/2023.



We consulted directly with Aberdeen City Council as owners and the planning authority.

The consultation report of handling was published on our portal for comment from interested parties.

Our online consultation page at <https://haveyoursay.historicenvironment.scot/> provided a link to the report and included a brief online survey via the survey platform, Citizen Space. The survey was promoted through local media outlets.

Through Citizen Space, we asked if people agreed with the proposed designations, and if they had further comments to make. We also asked for views on the proposed designation name of the garden because our research showed there are different understandings of its name.

## 4.2 Designation consultations

### *Comments we consider*

We consider comments and representations which are material to our decision-making, such as:

- Your understanding of the cultural significance of the site or place and whether it meets the criteria for designation.
- The purpose and implications of designating the site or place. We consider whether these are relevant to the case.
- Development proposals related to the site or place. Where there are development proposals, we consider whether to proceed with designation in line with our designation policy.
- The accuracy of our information.

### *Comments we don't consider*

We do not consider comments and representations on non-relevant/non-material issues, such as:

- Economic considerations
- Abusive or offensive remarks
- Whether you personally like, or do not like, a proposal

Our video about consultations explains how you can comment on our designations decisions, and what we can and can't take into account when considering your views. <https://youtu.be/ZlqU51tRA6g>.

## 4.3 Consultation summary

We received 27 responses to the consultation.

We received three written responses: one from the Local Authority and two from interested parties. We received 24 responses from private individuals via our Citizen



Space survey.

The overwhelming majority of people who responded to consultation expressed support for the designations. The responses to consultation did not raise any issues that put into question the special architectural or historic interest of the building under review, or the national importance of the memorial garden for the Inventory.

We have summarised the comments received from stakeholders that are material to our decision making and our responses as required in the table below.

	<b>Comment (Interested parties)</b>	<b>Response (HES)</b>
1	<p><b>Aberdeen City Council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm no comments to make on the consultation report</li> <li>• More clarity on the setting of the listed building in the list description would be beneficial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have made minor amendments to our Report on Handling (Annex B, 3.1.2 Setting).</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Proposer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciates research and detail in report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Anonymous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not agree with all the reported commentary of HES or others</li> <li>• The current name of the garden is the North Sea Memorial Rose Garden and the garden designation name should be Piper Alpha Memorial &amp; North Sea Rose Garden</li> <li>• Agrees the memorial and gardens play a crucial role in history of Aberdeen and wider UK.</li> <li>• Agrees the memorial constitutes a memorial site where unidentified remains recovered from the disaster site are interned. However the gardens should not be designated a gravesite.</li> <li>• Most of these rose beds have been replanted since 2013 and as such, no longer reflect the rose breeds listed on the signage.</li> <li>• Recognises that during initial fundraising the oil &amp; gas sector was 'delinquent' in their support. However, since rededication the community has given generously through workers welfare funds, company donations, volunteering and confirmed intention of providing future financial support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have made amendments to the Report on Handling in the light of new information on points of detail, where appropriate and relevant to the assessment of cultural significance.</li> </ul>
4	<p>There were 24 responses to our online survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 'strongly agreed' with the proposal to add the garden to the Inventory and one 'slightly agreed'</li> <li>• 23 'strongly agreed' with the proposal to list the memorial and one 'slightly agreed'</li> </ul> <p>Recurring themes in the comments were;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have published a summary of our consultation and a report that shows the responses in full, where we have the necessary permissions. Please</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of these sites to the bereaved, survivors, families and friends of those affected by the disaster and for Aberdeen in general</li> <li>• The importance of these sites for future generations to remember the disaster and those who lost their lives</li> <li>• That the sites should be protected from change and alteration</li> <li>• The importance of consultation on decisions affecting these sites</li> <li>• That the garden provides a peaceful, poignant and beautiful environment for remembrance</li> </ul> <p>Of those people who offered a view on the proposed designation name of the garden;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 were content with 'Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden'</li> <li>• 2 considered this name too long</li> <li>• 11 stated a preference for just 'Piper Alpha Memorial Garden' or 'Piper Alpha Memorial Rose Garden'. 1 further respondent did not state a preference, but thought that 'Piper Alpha' should be in the name</li> <li>• 1 noted that the name of the garden in documents and signage was 'North Sea Memorial Rose Garden' and indicated a preference for 'Piper Alpha Memorial &amp; North Sea Rose Garden'</li> <li>• 1 commented 'North Sea Memorial is quite general, and could stand for other loss of life in the north sea, but Piper Alpha sounds more personal and is more likely to encourage future generations to look at the history, after the incident has passed from living memory.'</li> </ul>	<p>see our <a href="#">consultation website.</a></p>
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After considering the comments received, we have made changes to our assessment (as above) and taken the following decisions:

- Listed the Piper Alpha Memorial at category B.
- Added the Memorial Garden to the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

*How the memorial garden is named.*

During the process of consultation, more people expressed a preference that the inventory designation name should be just the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden or Piper Alpha Memorial Rose Garden. We also received information that the name of the garden in records and signage is 'North Sea Memorial Rose Garden'. In light of the continued





different understandings of the garden name, we have opted for a joint name.

Our decision is that the designation name of the garden is **Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden**

We acknowledge that this will not be satisfactory to all. However, the designation name has no bearing on determining the official name of the garden or what people choose to call it. The name is solely for the purpose of identifying the designation. We would be happy to consider any updates to the designation name in the future on receipt of any new information.

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## ANNEX A

# Assessment of national importance for inclusion on the Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes

## Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden

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### 1. Summary

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**1.1 Type of site:** Formal memorial rose garden with central memorial sculpture

**1.2 Main phases of landscape development:** 1988–1991

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### 2. Location and setting

The Memorial Garden is located within Hazlehead Park, a large public park in the western suburbs of Aberdeen. The garden occupies a large rectangular plot in the southwest part of the park, immediately adjacent and to the east of the Queen Mother Rose Garden. The inventory boundary follows the garden perimeter as defined mainly by high hedges and encloses around 7770 square metres. The garden is known widely as the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden but is also titled as the North Sea Memorial Rose Garden.

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### 3. Site history

The Piper Alpha oil platform was the site of the world's worst offshore disaster. Located 110 miles northeast of Aberdeen in the North Sea, it had been built and installed in 1975–76 to exploit the newly discovered reservoirs of the Piper oilfield. This was a period of exploration and expansion for Britain's fledgling North Sea oil and gas industry, with Aberdeen emerging as the capital of the economic boom. Operated by Occidental Petroleum, Piper Alpha was, for a time, among the largest, most profitable, and most productive of all the North Sea installations (Guardian 04/07/2013).

On the night of 6 July 1988, Piper Alpha was destroyed by a series of explosions that caused major fires and the substantial collapse of the platform. Out of 226 men on the platform that night, 165 lost their lives, together with two crewmen from the *MV Sandhaven*, who were killed during the rescue attempt. Only 61 men survived, many with injuries and long-term trauma. Thirty bodies were never recovered.

A Public Inquiry into the disaster led by Lord Cullen from 1989–1990 revealed systemic failings in the management of safety and inadequate regulation as causal



factors (Cullen 1990). Piper Alpha was the UK's worst industrial accident for over half a century and the event is regarded as a defining moment in the history of the North Sea oil and gas industry (Kemp 2012: 614; Brotherstone and Manson 2007).

The idea for a public memorial to the Piper Alpha dead took hold amidst the shock and distress of the months that followed the disaster. Unlike other national tragedies of the 1980s (e.g. Bradford Stadium fire, Clapham Junction, Hillsborough), the North Sea disaster site was largely inaccessible, leaving no obvious place for the expression of grief or to reflect on the meanings and legacy of the disaster (O'Byrne 2011: 100). This was especially the case for families of men whose bodies were not recovered or could not be identified.

While Occidental Petroleum commissioned a book of remembrance and did not support another form of commemoration (Aberdeen Press and Journal 09/06/1989; 21/09/1989; McGinty 2008: 271; O'Byrne 2011; Taylor 2003), the survivors and bereaved recognised the acute need for a permanent physical memorial, not just for private grief, but as a public symbol of relevance for the future and a lasting reminder of the disaster. In 1988–89, the Piper Alpha Memorial Fund Committee and the Families and Survivors Group came together to consult with affected families as the basis for discussions on a suitable site and design.

Aberdeen City District Council offered two possible locations – Hazlehead Park in the western suburbs, or a city centre site. The Memorial Committee opted for the former as an appropriately quiet, contemplative setting. The site available was a new formal rose garden designed by Aberdeen's Director of Parks, David Welch, as a mirror-image extension to his 1980 Queen Mother Rose Garden, completed for the Queen Mother's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. In April 1989, the council announced that the new garden extension, underway at the time of the disaster, would be dedicated to the victims of Piper Alpha (Aberdeen Press and Journal 29/04/1989). With planting complete that year, the garden was recognised with a special award from the Beautiful Scotland in Bloom competition (Aberdeen Evening Express 13/09/89).

In the meantime, the Memorial Committee reached a consensus on the design brief for the memorial sculpture. It should be figurative, represent the offshore workforce and prominently display the names of the 167 men lost (McGinty 2008: 271; Taylor 2015: 152). The visual artist, Sue Jane Taylor (b.1960), emerged as the obvious choice for the commission. Although not a sculptor, her art focussed on the people and infrastructure of the oil industry. She had spent time offshore in the course of her work, including a week on Piper Alpha itself in 1987. Importantly, she gained the trust of the Piper families, consulting them before refusing Occidental rights to her work, and inviting them to a special exhibition preview of her work in Edinburgh in 1989 (O'Byrne 2011:100; Lives in the Oil Industry: Taylor 2003; Taylor 2015: 150). After accepting the brief, Sue Jane Taylor moved to the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Lumsden in January 1990 to start work.

The £100,000 cost for the memorial was raised following a hard-won campaign by the widows and mothers of the Memorial Committee. While fundraising had begun in



earnest in 1989, it stalled by that autumn with contributions from the offshore industries considered by many to be disappointing (Aberdeen Press and Journal 21/09/89). The cost was finally reached through public donations, including from the Piper families themselves, and a £40,000 government grant. From the combined oil and gas companies operating in the North Sea, the committee received a total of £14,000 (Aberdeen Press and Journal 26/01/90; McGinty 2008: 271–272; O'Byrne 2011: 99; Taylor 2015: 153).

The garden assumed its role as a dedicated space of remembrance even before the completion and installation of the memorial. On 6 July 1990, after the official service in St Nicholas Kirk to mark the second anniversary of the disaster, a blessing service was held in the garden. The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that it was “Here the anguish and grief of the past two years surfaced” as family members of those killed on Piper Alpha laid wreaths (07/07/1990 p.4, p.5).

On the third anniversary of 6 July 1991, Sue Jane Taylor's bronze memorial sculpture was finally unveiled by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at a ceremony attended by around a thousand guests. The chair of the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Group described it as ‘recognition’ of those killed and the devastating impacts of the disaster (Aberdeen Evening Express, 06/07/91). Leading the service, Rev. Alan Swinton said, “three years later, we have a place of pilgrimage, a monument and shrine” (Aberdeen Press and Journal 08/07/91). As chaplain of the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Swinton had been involved in the immediate aftermath of the disaster and presided over later remembrance services. The night before the unveiling, he held a service just for the survivors and relatives, when a casket of unidentified human remains was placed inside the memorial (Lives in the Oil Industry Record Description: Alan Christie Swinton).

Over the next ten years, maintenance issues in the garden prompted the launch of a new charity, the Pound for Piper Memorial Trust. Set up in 2012, its intention was to raise enough money to restore the memorial and garden in time for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster in 2013 (<https://poundforpiper.com/#story>). With more donations from the oil and gas industry this time, the Trust organised a major programme of replanting. Cockers Roses of Aberdeen supplied over 11,000 roses in a range of colours and heights and drew up a planting plan with the Council. Some 10,200 hybrid tea and floribunda roses (58 varieties) along with 599 ground cover roses, 171 hybrid musk roses and 350 rugosa roses were added to the garden (information from Country Garden Roses 2013). New signage was erected at the garden entrance. The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was marked with a remembrance and a rededication ceremony. Further renovation works to the garden in 2018 included replacement benches, an access path from the Queen Mother Rose Garden, and further replacement of rose beds (Pound for Piper, Facebook 2022).

The garden continues to be the venue for anniversary memorial services every summer with the reading of the names of the 167 killed on Piper Alpha, a minute's silence and the laying of wreaths and flowers. The Pound for Piper Memorial Trust remains active in raising money for the upkeep of the gardens and have noted that that in contrast to the original fundraising, the oil and gas sector has given generous financial support to the garden since the rededication ceremony of 2013



(2023). In May 2022, the Pound for Piper Trust launched a redesign proposal with the confirmed support of the oil and gas sector. In June 2022, a petition with 5000 signatures was submitted to Aberdeen Council requesting the rejection of the redesign proposal (BBC 2022: Petition [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)). In May 2023, Aberdeen City Council announced that discussions were ongoing to decide the next steps and agree a way forward for the gardens (Aberdeen City Council 2023).

Other objects and sites associated with the Piper Alpha disaster include a condolence banner gifted by the Victorian Trade and Labour Council in Australia, and now in the Maritime Museum in Aberdeen, a stained-glass window in Ferryhill South Church, Fonthill Road, Aberdeen, dedicated 1994 (Listed category B, LB20689), and a memorial stone in Strathclyde Country Park commemorating the men lost from that region (erected 1992). The Oil Chapel in St Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen (Listed category A, LB19966) was dedicated in 1990 to mark 25 years of North Sea oil. It contains a book of remembrance to all those who have died offshore in UK waters (The Oil Chapel, [www.ukoilandgaschaplaincy.com](http://www.ukoilandgaschaplaincy.com)).

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## 4. Landscape components

### Architectural features:

The **Piper Alpha Memorial** is the central focus of the garden. Unveiled in 1991, it was executed by the artist, Sue Jane Taylor (b.1960) following a design brief by the Piper Alpha Memorial Committee (see Annex B)

The memorial consists of three 7-foot-high (2.1 metre high) cast bronze figures standing on a large square plinth of Pink Coreennie granite. Representing the platform's offshore workforce, they comprise a central mature figure facing north to the entrance of the gardens, a 'roustabout' figure facing west, and a 'survival suit' figure facing east (Taylor 2015: 162). A short inscription on the north face of the granite plinth dedicates the memorial to the memory of the 167 who lost their lives. Their names and ages are inscribed in alphabetical order on the east, west and south faces of the plinth. The names of the thirty men with no resting place on shore are inscribed in the centre of the south face, above a Celtic cross, and a casket of unknown ashes is interred behind the cross. The names of the two crewmen of the *MV Sandhaven* rescue vessel are inscribed, slightly apart from the others, on the east face of the plinth.

A **rubble boundary wall** divides the garden from the Queen Mother Rose Garden to the west and **stone steps** lead down into the garden from its northwest corner.

### Paths and walks:

Straight axial paths cross the garden in a traditional formal layout and converge at the central Piper Alpha Memorial. Hard-surfaced paths lead to the memorial from the main north entrance and, since 2018, from the Queen Mother Rose Garden to the west. The remainder of the paths are mown grass.



## The Gardens:

Rectangular in plan, and measuring approximately 80 by 95 metres, the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden / North Sea Memorial Rose Garden is a large, formal-style rose garden conceived by David Welch in the later 1980s as a mirror-image extension to the adjacent Queen Mother Rose Garden. It was selected as a dedicated garden space for the Piper Alpha Memorial in early 1989. Planting was complete that year, and the garden won a special award in September 1989 (Aberdeen Evening Express 13/09/89).

The large granite and bronze memorial (unveiled 1991) is the central and dominant structural feature of the garden. Immediately surrounding the memorial are four central box-lined rose beds planted in the early years of the memorial garden with 167 separate roses, each symbolising a life lost. These are now maintained as simple rose beds (2023). Beyond these, mown grass paths separate rectilinear rose beds arranged in a repeating and symmetrical pattern, matching the design of the adjacent Queen Mother Garden. Each bed is planted with a different rose variety. A labelled plan on a mirror-faced information plinth at the garden's north entrance records the varieties in place in 2013, although many beds have been replanted with different varieties since then. Some beds are currently grassed (2023).

Wooden memorial benches are placed at the edges of the garden at regular intervals, facing inwards towards the memorial. Behind the benches, the garden is bounded and sheltered by deep planted beds of flowering shrubs, ferns and hedging that progressively step upwards in height. Some trees form part of the garden edge, for example at the entrance, the northeast corner, and along the southern edge. Beyond the garden perimeter, belts of taller, mature trees in Hazlehead Park give further shelter and enclosure.

The garden is open to the public as part of Hazlehead Park. Each year, on the anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, it becomes the venue of a formal memorial service during which the names of those killed on Piper Alpha are read out.

A memorial garden is a place where people and events can be remembered and commemorated within a tended environment. Often found within cemeteries and public parks, they are recognisable, bounded sites for private grief, contemplation, and shared mourning. They typically contain memorials, hard and soft landscaping, planting and garden furniture such as benches.

While their origins within the public realm can be traced back to the early garden cemeteries and crematoria landscapes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the memorial garden tradition developed most notably in the wake of the First World War when the sheer scale of loss and lack of individual foci for grief brought profound changes in attitudes to death and mourning (Grainger 2005: 267). This gave impetus to new forms of collective, public memorialisation.



Memorial gardens are no longer restricted to the context of wartime loss, but also commemorate other disasters involving major loss of life, such as Aberfan in 1966, Hillsborough in 1989, and in Scotland, the Auchengiech Colliery Disaster (1959), Lockerbie (1989) and the Dunblane massacre (1996).

More recent gardens respond to broader events engendering grief within a community, such as past practices around the cremation of babies (e.g. Rainbow Garden, Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen 2019), or the Covid-19 Pandemic, for example (The Good Grief Memorial Garden, Dundee, 2023).

While some war memorial garden sites are recognised through designation in the UK (e.g. Atholl Road, Pitlochry, Listed category C (LB47510); Walsall Memorial Garden, Walsall, Grade II Registered Garden (reference 1001423), more recent, non-military sites are generally less recognised in heritage terms. An exception is the Aberfan Garden of Remembrance, which was added to Cadw's Register of Parks and Gardens as part of a wider landscape designation in 2022 (Cadw, Register of Parks and Gardens).

People who study the significance and function of memorial gardens note their capacity to permit quiet contemplation set apart from the urban sphere and to encourage solace by evoking analogies between human life, the fragility and beauty of nature and the cyclical renewal of flowers and plants (Francis *et al.* 1999: 113; Garnaut *et al.* 2016; Gough 2007: 25). Bereavement practices in such spaces renew memories, create a sense of place and perpetuate meanings for individuals and communities (Cremaschi 2021; Gibbs and Phillips 2019). Meanwhile the careful tending of beds and plants by gardeners is thought to offer comfort as a “symbolic bulwark against disorder, decay and the...randomness of death” (Francis *et al.* 1999: 122), with roses emerging as a frequent planting choice, intensely symbolic of regeneration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid*; Historic England 2014: 7). In some cases, researchers note that particular garden components can be invested with a very strong symbolism of those who have died, and whose remains are not physically present, such as the Norfolk Island Pine Trees for the First World War soldiers commemorated at Victor Harbor, Australia (Garnaut *et al.* 2016).

For the Piper Alpha Garden, the evidence provided during this assessment through written submissions and conversations, together with other documentary sources highlights the cultural significance of the garden in ways that echo the observations above.

The evidence shows that both the physical and spatial properties of the garden and the various practices associated with it are strongly valued by people and serve to reinforce a strong connection to the Piper Alpha disaster and its many legacies.

- The garden itself is appreciated as a work of art in its own right. People report admiration for its overall scale and design, the beauty and colour of the roses and its quiet and secluded character, which allows for peaceful contemplation within the comforting everyday surroundings of a larger public park.



- The rose garden provides a uniquely dedicated and accessible place of intensely personal memory for those affected by the disaster. The centrepiece of the memorial enclosed by four central rose beds, previously planted with 167 roses to symbolise each life lost, holds special personal significance for some. During the anniversary service, when greater numbers gather, particular rose beds within the wider garden are 'adopted' by some family groups as areas to assemble around.
- The dormant stages of the rose bushes can be valued as much as, or even more than, the flowering stage – evoking the cycle of life and death, regeneration, and hope for the future.
- The garden is valued as a place of historic and cultural significance for the wider community to remember the disaster and its legacies within the context of the city of Aberdeen and its relationship with the North Sea oil and gas industry. The garden and memorial has also been a didactic space for teaching students about the impacts of the disaster and the evolution of Health and Safety legislation.
- The garden and memorial are valued as testimony to the efforts and tenacity of the community of survivors and bereaved in securing agreement and funding for a permanent public memorial. In this context, the name Piper Alpha (Memorial) Garden is viewed positively as specific to the disaster (information provided during meetings with members of the public). The name 'North Sea Memorial Rose Garden' is viewed negatively as a dilution of the specific association with Piper Alpha, and for its association with the wider North Sea Oil and Gas Industry, which is remembered by some for its lack of support and contribution to the original phase of fundraising for the memorial.

The memorial and the garden also have significance as rare physical markers of the cultural heritage of the North Sea oil and gas industry. While attention has focussed on the political and economic impacts of the industry, there is less recognition of its history, heritage and cultural impacts in the UK (Brotherstone and Manson 2007; Oglethorpe 2021). Two projects by the University of Aberdeen have responded to the challenge through the creation of a large archive of oral histories and through collecting and promoting the preservation of records (Lives in the Oil Industry (2000-2005) and Capturing the Energy (2016-)). However, there remains little recognition of the industry's built heritage. In this context, the Piper Alpha memorial and its garden setting remains a relatively rare physical expression in the public realm relating directly to the history and consequences of the industry (Brotherstone and Manson 2007: 33).

David Welch (1933-2000), the designer of the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden and the Queen Mother Rose Garden, was Aberdeen's Director of Parks from 1967–1992 (Sanders 2019: 151-154). He is remembered for introducing vast quantities of daffodils, crocuses and roses into Aberdeen's public spaces and for his renovation of the Winter Gardens in Duthie Park (GDL00166). During these years, Aberdeen became a repeat winner of Britain in Bloom. From 1992, David Welch became Chief Executive of London's Royal Parks where he is also known for his sensitive handling





of the 10,000 tons of flower bouquets, toys and messages left in the parks after the death of Princess Diana (Sanders 2019: 152-153).

## 5. Summary of Assessment

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### 5.1 Statement of national importance

The garden is an important site of public commemoration and memory. With Sue Jane Taylor's memorial as its centrepiece, the garden is dedicated to those killed on Piper Alpha, the world's worst offshore oil and gas disaster. Appreciated for its artistic qualities, the garden has outstanding historic interest for its association with an event of international significance and for the role it plays in connecting people to its meanings and legacies.

### 5.2 Artistic interest

**Level of interest:** Some

- Evidence gathered during our assessment (2023) indicates appreciation for the scale and design of the garden, the beauty and colour of the roses, and for its quiet, sheltered and secluded character.
- The garden was recognised by a special award in 1989.
- The garden is representative of the work of David Welch, Aberdeen's former Director of Parks, who is known for establishing the city's reputation for roses and floral display in its green spaces in the 1970s and 1980s.
- The central memorial is the only public sculpture commission by artist Sue Jane Taylor, who is renowned for her documentation of the technology, engineering and people of the offshore energy sector since the early 1980s.

### 5.3 Historical interest

**Level of interest:** Outstanding

- The garden commemorates a historic event of international significance. It is the only memorial site in Aberdeen specifically dedicated to the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster, and it is a rare physical marker of the heritage of the North Sea oil and gas industry.
- The garden is strongly valued as a public site of memory. It connects people and communities to the enduring legacies of the Piper Alpha disaster. This is reflected in various forms of engagement, including private mourning and contemplation, shared public rituals of remembrance, and the education of new generations.



## 5.4 Horticultural interest

**Level of interest:** Some

- The garden has a large collection of roses of different varieties, which is maintained on a regular basis.

## 5.5 Architectural interest

**Level of interest:** High

- The centrepiece of the garden is the monumental memorial sculpture by Sue Jane Taylor, which we are proposing to list in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest (see Annex B).

## 5.6 Archaeological interest

**Level of interest:** Little

- There are no known archaeological sites of interest within the garden boundary.

## 5.7 Scenic interest

**Level of interest:** Little

- Given its secluded character, the visual impacts of the garden design are limited to views within the garden space, and there is little contribution to the character of the wider landscape when viewed from outside of its boundaries.
- The garden is a component within a larger public park which contains various areas of interest.

## 5.8 Nature conservation interest

**Level of interest:** Little

- Roses are beneficial for insect life, like bees and hoverflies and it is likely that the extensive rose beds in this garden support nature conservation interest as part of the larger green space of Hazlehead Park.

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## ANNEX B

### Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

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#### 1. Statutory address

Piper Alpha Memorial, Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen

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#### 2. Description and historical development

##### 2.1 Description

Completed and unveiled in 1991, this is a large bronze figurative memorial sculpture by Sue Jane Taylor for the Piper Alpha Memorial Fund Committee and dedicated to the 167 men killed in the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988. It is located at the centre of a memorial rose garden in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen. A casket of unknown ashes is interred within the plinth.

The memorial consists of three 7-foot high (2.1 metre high) cast bronze figures standing on a square inscribed plinth of Pink Corennie granite, locally quarried at Tillyfourie, Aberdeenshire. Representing the platform's offshore workforce, they comprise a central mature figure facing north to the entrance of the gardens, a 'roustabout' figure facing west, and a 'survival suit' figure facing east.

The mature figure holds in his left hand a pool of oil sculpted in spiral form. His right hand points down, indicating its source. A fish and seabird motif on the helmet symbolises environmental aspects of the North Sea oil industry. The dynamic pose of the 'roustabout' figure recalls the physical nature of many offshore trades, while a tree of life motif on his sleeve with leaves gilt in gold leaf symbolises the exploration and production of crude oil. The 'survival suit' figure represents youth and eternal movement. His left sleeve has a sea-eagle motif, partly gilt in gold leaf. This is a reference to the symbol of the North American eagle as the patron of oil, but with the native sea eagle in its place.

The design of the 6-foot high (1.8 metre high) square polished granite plinth was a collaboration between Sue Jane Taylor and John Fyfe Granite Ltd (Taylor 1990). It is inscribed on all faces with gilt lettering. The inscription on the north face reads, 'Dedicated to the memory of the one hundred and sixty seven men who lost their lives in the Piper Alpha oil platform disaster 6<sup>th</sup> July 1988'. Their names and ages are inscribed in alphabetical order on the east, west and south faces of the plinth. The names of the thirty men with no resting place on shore are inscribed in the centre of the south face, above a rectangular slab of granite with a gilt Celtic cross, behind which is interred a casket of unknown ashes. The names of the two crewmen of the *MV Sandhaven* rescue vessel are inscribed, slightly apart from the others, on the east face of the plinth.



## 2.2 Historical development

The Piper Alpha oil platform was destroyed on 6 July 1988 by a series of explosions that caused major fires and the substantial collapse of the platform. A total of 167 men were killed, including two rescue crewmen from the *MV Sandhaven*. Only 61 survived, many with injuries and long-term trauma. Thirty bodies were never recovered.

The idea for a public memorial to the Piper Alpha dead took hold in the months that followed the disaster. In 1988–89, the Piper Alpha Memorial Fund Committee and the Families and Survivors Group came together to consult with affected families as the basis for discussions on a suitable site and design.

The site chosen was the centre point of a new formal rose garden in Hazlehead Park designed by Aberdeen's Director of Parks, David Welch. In April 1989, the council announced that this garden, underway at the time of the disaster, would be dedicated to the victims of Piper Alpha (Aberdeen Press and Journal 29/04/1989). In the meantime, the Memorial Committee reached a consensus on the design brief for the sculpture.

The artist, Sue Jane Taylor (b.1960), emerged as the obvious choice for the commission. In January 1990, she moved to the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Lumsden to start work on preparatory drawings (exhibited in September 1990) and creating scaled models. A survivor of the Piper Alpha disaster, Bill Barron, advised on costume detailing and modelled for much of the initial work and for the mature central figure. The other two models were a visiting sculptor at the workshop, and a recent arts graduate.

The cost of the memorial was £100,000. This was raised following a hard-won campaign by the bereaved women from the Memorial Committee from 1989–1990. Contributions from the offshore industries that were lower than expected by the fundraisers meant that the success of the project was sometimes in doubt (Aberdeen Press and Journal 21/09/89). The target was finally reached through a combination of public donations, including from the Piper families themselves, and a £40,000 government grant. From the combined oil and gas companies operating in the North Sea, the committee received a total of £14,000 (Taylor 2015: 153; Aberdeen Press and Journal 26/01/90; McGinty 2008: 271–272; O'Byrne 2011: 99; Taylor 2015: 153).

Sue Jane Taylor completed her plaster figures by early spring 1991, and the bronze casting took place at the Burleighfield Foundry in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire from March to June of that year. The gold leaf was applied by Pam Bramley, a visiting Australian artist to the Scottish Sculpture Workshop. The granite for the plinth was donated by John Fyfe Granite Ltd, who also collaborated on the plinth design.



The completed memorial sculpture was unveiled on the third anniversary of the disaster - 6 July 1991. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother performed the unveiling to a crowd of over 1000 people. The casket of ashes was interred within the plinth in a private ceremony for survivors and the bereaved the evening before.

The garden continues to be the venue for anniversary memorial services every summer with the reading of the names of the 167 killed on Piper Alpha, a minute's silence and the laying of wreaths and flowers. In 2020, all the engraving on the plinth was regilded.

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### 3. Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

To be listed a building must be of 'special architectural or historic interest' as set out in the [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#). To decide if a building is of special interest for listing we assess its cultural significance using selection guidance which has two main headings – architectural interest and historic interest (see Designation Policy and Selection Guidance, 2019, Annex 2, pp. 11-13).

The selection guidance provides a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions. The special architectural or historic interest of a building can be demonstrated in one or more of the following ways.

#### 3.1 Architectural interest

The architectural interest of a building may include its design, designer, interior, plan form, materials, regional traditions, and setting and the extent to which these characteristics survive. These factors are grouped under two headings:

##### 3.1.1 Design

The design of the memorial follows an established monumental, figurative style normally associated with notable war memorials of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prominent examples of this period in Scotland include the Glenelg War Memorial by Robert Lorimer, 1920 (listed category A, LB7236) and the Killin War Memorial, 1920 (listed category C, LB50326).

The choice of a figurative group for the memorial followed a brief set by the Piper Alpha Memorial Fund Committee in 1989. Inspired by a long tradition of prestigious and figurative war memorials, and in particular by the 1951 Second World War Commando Memorial, near Spean Bridge (listed category A, LB6842), the Committee agreed that the work should figuratively depict the offshore workforce to represent the men lost in the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster and prominently display their names on a plinth (Taylor 2015: 152; McGinty 2008: 271).





The use of this traditional design for a more recent, non-military disaster is unusual and adds to the architectural interest of the memorial. Additional design details that reference the offshore North Sea oil and gas industry (the dress, poses and small symbolic motifs) contribute to the interest of the memorial.

The Piper Alpha Memorial, completed 1991, remains the only public sculpture commission by the visual artist, Sue Jane Taylor (b.1960). Born on the Black Isle, Taylor is renowned for her documentation of the technology and engineering of the offshore energy sector since the early 1980s, and for her empathetic depiction of its workers (Sutherland 2005 in Taylor 2015: 196).

Taylor was the obvious choice for the memorial due to her personal connections with Piper Alpha. One year before the disaster she spent time on the platform observing, drawing and speaking with the men. In its aftermath, she gained the trust of the Piper families, consulting them before refusing Occidental the rights to her work and inviting them to a special exhibition preview (O'Byrne 2011: 100; Lives in the Oil Industry: Taylor 2003; Taylor 2015: 150). Taylor's well-documented connections with Piper Alpha and the people affected by the disaster, (including her working relationship with the Memorial Committee and her collaboration with the survivor, Bill Barron) contributes to the design interest of the memorial sculpture.

The memorial is built from high quality materials that are typical for a sculpture of this type. The figures are cast bronze and the Pink Corennie granite is locally sourced from Tillyfourie. John Fyfe Granite Ltd, who collaborated on the design of the plinth, was a major company in Aberdeen's local granite industry from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until its closure in 1998 (Herald 19/12/1998).

The memorial is a notable example of traditional figurative sculpture used to commemorate a later 20<sup>th</sup> century civilian industrial disaster, with the details of the design informed by personal connections to the place and event which the work commemorates.

### 3.1.2 Setting

The setting of the memorial sculpture is a large dedicated memorial garden known both as the Piper Alpha Memorial Garden and the North Sea Memorial Rose Garden in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen - an inventory garden and designed landscape of national importance (Ref. GDL00412) (also see Annex A for detailed designation proposal for garden).

There is a strong and reciprocal relationship between the design and function of the memorial and its garden setting, which retains its late 1980s formal design of axial paths, rectilinear rose beds in a repeating, symmetrical pattern and enclosing boundary planting (2023). Although the garden was originally conceived as a mirror-image extension to the adjacent Queen Mother Rose Garden, it was selected in 1989 as an appropriately quiet, attractive and contemplative site for the planned memorial sculpture. Sue Jane Taylor therefore commenced work on the memorial



knowing in advance that it would be installed as the central focus of a public garden newly dedicated to the memory of the 167 lost in the disaster.

A memorial garden is a place where people and events can be remembered and commemorated within a tended environment. Often found within cemeteries and public parks, they are recognisable, bounded sites for private grief, contemplation, and shared mourning. In terms of aesthetics, the Piper Alpha Memorial is the dominant focus within the garden. It is the only architectural feature of scale, and its size, figurative design and central position means that it has visual prominence from all vantage points within the garden space, including the north entrance point and the memorial benches, which face inwards towards the memorial from the garden edges. The garden as a whole is sheltered by deep boundary planting and belts of trees, making it a suitable environment for more peaceful remembrance within the wider setting of a busy public park (comments received 14/10/2022 to 20/02/2023).

The orientation of the memorial aligns with the overall orientation of the formal design of the garden. The inscribed faces of the squared plinth face outward along the axes of the four paths. Immediately surrounding the memorial are four central box-lined rose beds planted in the early years of the memorial garden with 167 separate roses, each symbolising a life lost. While these are now maintained as simple rose beds, some people report that the centrepiece arrangement of the memorial and four symbolic rose beds holds special personal significance (see Annex A).

The memorial functions within this setting as the physical focus of bereavement practices, including individual contemplation of the figurative sculpture and the names on the plinth, the laying of wreaths and flowers at its base, and for the formal anniversary service on 6 July every year. The garden setting allows for large numbers to gather in attendance.

The garden setting of the memorial contributes to the overall architectural interest of the memorial. Its character and components (seclusion, open grounds, plantings, memorial benches and paths) allow the memorial to function as intended as the focus of a site of remembrance for the Piper Alpha disaster.

## 3.2 Historic interest

Historic interest is in such things as a building's age, rarity, social historical interest and associations with people or events that have had a significant impact on Scotland's cultural heritage. Historic interest is assessed under three headings:

### 3.2.1 Age and rarity

The Piper Alpha Memorial was unveiled in 1991 to commemorate the 167 lives lost in the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988.



Memorials to collective loss of life can be found throughout Scotland. Most ubiquitous are those erected in a great variety of architectural forms in the period immediately after the First World War in remembrance of the fallen from a particular locality.

Memorials dedicated to those killed in other historical disasters, such as mining and fishing accidents, are becoming more common in the public realm. While some were dedicated soon after an event, such as the granite obelisk to the 1870s Blantyre mining disasters in Blantyre Cemetery ([Canmore ID 374819](#)), many date to more recent times, installed as lasting reminders of significant and traumatic local events.

Examples include the Blantyre Centenary Monument (1977), Valleyfield Disaster Memorial (1989), Gloup Fishing Memorial, Shetland (1981), 'Widows and Bairns' in Eyemouth, Cove, St. Abbs and Burnmouth (2007), Tay Bridge Memorials, Dundee (2013), and numerous local mining memorials (e.g. Muirkirk 2004, Moodiesburn 2010, Wallyford 2010 and Kingshill 2017). The Lockerbie Air Disaster of 1988 is also commemorated with an inscribed memorial set within a remembrance garden (Imperial War Museums: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/57967>).

These memorials occur in diverse architectural forms and materials. Few are comparable to the Piper Alpha Memorial in terms of their scale, or the extent and quality of their associated setting, and for the internment of associated ashes. The memorial is also rare in that the impetus for its creation and the brief for its design came directly from those personally affected by the disaster.

The Piper Alpha Memorial also has significance as a rare physical marker of the cultural heritage of the North Sea oil and gas industry. While attention has focussed on the political and economic impacts of the industry, and efforts to document its oral histories (University of Aberdeen, Lives in the Oil Industry) there remains little recognition of the industry's built heritage (Oglethorpe 2021). In this context, the Piper Alpha memorial and its garden setting remains a relatively rare physical monument in the public realm relating directly to the history and consequences of the industry (Brotherstone and Manson 2007: 33). An international comparator is the Broken Chain Kielland Memorial, Norway, unveiled in 1986 to the offshore Alexander Kielland disaster of 1980.

Other objects and sites associated with the Piper Alpha disaster include a condolence banner gifted by the Victorian Trade and Labour Council in Australia, and now in the Maritime Museum in Aberdeen, a stained-glass window in Ferryhill South Church, Aberdeen, dedicated 1992 (Listed category B, LB20689), and a memorial stone in Strathclyde Country Park commemorating the men lost from that region (erected 1998). The Oil Chapel in St Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen (Listed category A, LB19966) was dedicated in 1990 to mark 25 years of North Sea oil. It contains a book of remembrance to all those who have died offshore in UK waters (The Oil Chapel, [www.ukoilandgaschaplaincy.com](http://www.ukoilandgaschaplaincy.com)).



While lasting memorials to collective losses in society is a common building type of the 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Piper Alpha Memorial is a rare example of a traditional-style, monumental figurative memorial commissioned and erected in the immediate aftermath of a civilian disaster with the direct involvement of those personally affected. It is set apart from other memorials due to its associated garden setting and for its rarity as relating to the North Sea oil and gas industry.

### 3.2.2 Social historical interest

All memorials dedicated to collective loss of life have social historical interest. They contribute to our understanding of commemorative practices in society and how people represent their past, identity and values in the public realm.

Beyond this, the Piper Alpha Memorial also has particular significance for its relevance to the history of the North Sea oil and gas industry in Aberdeen and for the post-disaster response by the community of Piper Alpha survivors and bereaved families.

The discovery of North Sea oil in the 1960s and early 1970s marked the start of Scotland's oil boom. Aberdeen emerged as its capital as further offshore discoveries including the Piper and Ninian fields transformed the UK's energy sector. The UK became a net exporter of oil by the early 1980s. Aberdeen's infrastructure expanded during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and better paid job opportunities attracted a growing population.

Economic success came at a cost. Hundreds have been killed offshore in accidents on rigs, supply boats or helicopters, and many more have sustained serious injuries (Kemp 2013, vol 2: 517). The capsizing of the Sea Gem rig in 1965 with 13 fatalities and the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988 with 167 fatalities, were landmark incidents exposing the risks specific to oil platforms and the inadequacy of prevailing safety regimes and regulations (*Ibid*).

The campaign to erect a lasting memorial to the dead by the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Group and the Memorial Committee coincided with the official public inquiry into the disaster and a wider, heated political climate around issues such as compensation, causes of the accident, the accountability of Occidental, and the need to reform safety regulations within the industry. From the start, the families recognised the acute need for a permanent physical memorial, not just for private grief, but as a public symbol of relevance for the future and a lasting reminder of the enduring legacies of the disaster. The memorial and garden continue to be valued for their didactic role in understanding the evolution and importance of health and safety in the offshore industries (comments received 14/10/2022 to 20/02/2023).

The memorial, therefore, has interest as a potent symbol of a landmark event in the history of North Sea oil and gas, and the efforts and tenacity of the Piper families in achieving their goal. There is additional interest in the leading role of women in completing the project of memorialisation. The Memorial Committee, chaired by



Molly Pearston (who lost a son in the disaster), selected the site, artist, consulted with families and set the design brief. A small cohort of women successfully raised the funds despite a lack of support from Occidental and the wider industry (O’Byrne 2011). The sculpture was completed by a female artist. Fundraising for renovations in the garden for its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was also begun by women (Pound for Piper). Women in the past have rarely had opportunity to conceive, design, install and mark public space with permanence (Burk 2003: 329). The Piper Alpha Memorial is of interest as a rare example of this coming to fruition in a later 20<sup>th</sup> century context.

### 3.2.3 Association with people or events of national importance

The Piper Alpha Memorial has a close historical association with an event of national and international importance. It is a memorial to those killed in the world’s worst offshore disaster, which left 167 dead and only 61 survivors, many with injuries and long-term trauma.

Located 110 miles northeast of Aberdeen in the North Sea, the Piper Alpha platform had been built and installed in 1975–76 to exploit the newly discovered reservoirs of the Piper oilfield. Operated by Occidental Petroleum, Piper Alpha was, for a time, among the largest, most profitable, and most productive of all the North Sea installations (Guardian 04/07/2013).

A Public Inquiry into the disaster led by Lord Cullen from 1989–1990 revealed systemic failings in the management of safety and inadequate regulation as causal factors (Cullen 1990). The Piper Alpha disaster was the UK’s worst industrial accident for over half a century and the event is regarded as a defining moment in the history of the North Sea oil and gas industry (Kemp 2012: 614; Brotherstone and Manson 2007).

The Piper Alpha Memorial, together with its memorial garden setting are the only memorials of architectural significance in the public realm that are specifically dedicated to Piper Alpha, and which can function as a place for shared mourning, for public ceremony and other acts of commemoration. The association is evident in the planning, setting and design of the memorial, which depicts the workers, records the names the dead, and which contains a casket of unknown ashes.

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## 4. Summary of assessment

The Piper Alpha Memorial meets the criteria of special architectural or historic interest for the following reasons:

- As an unusual example of a later 20<sup>th</sup> century commemorative monument in the style of earlier figurative war memorials
- For its prominence within an intact garden setting, which has a strong reciprocal and functional relationship to the memorial.



- As a rare example of a commemorative monument related to the North Sea oil and gas industry and its history
- As a potent symbol of the post-disaster response by the community of survivors and bereaved families and for the leading role of women in completing the project of memorialisation.
- For its association with a historic event of international significance

## 5. Category of listing

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Once a building is found to be of special architectural or historic interest, it is then classified under one of three categories (A, B or C) according to its relative importance. While the listing itself has legal weight and gives statutory protection, the categories have no legal status and are advisory. They affect how a building is managed in the planning system.

Category definitions are found at Annex 2 of Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (2019) <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

### 5.1 Level of importance

The Piper Alpha Memorial's level of importance is category B.

Buildings listed at category B are defined as 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are major examples of a particular period, style or building type.

Category B is the most appropriate level of listing. It recognises that the monument is exceptional for its social historical interest but also takes into account the common and prolific building type of a figurative commemorative memorial.

## 7. Other Information

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The sculptor, Sue Jane Taylor, explains the significance of the figurative design in her interview for the Lives in the Oil Industry oral history project

– “It was saying, ‘Here are the workers who are the backbone of the industry, it’s these people that we’re thinking of’”, with the finger pointing down to the source of the oil being “A silent statement, a symbolic statement, saying this is the price we paid for our lives, the oil.” (Sue Jane Taylor 2003, quoted in O’Byrne 2011: 101).

## 8. References

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