

BIRDING ICELAND



BIRDING AS A BRAND

A strong birding brand is important in order to attract birders from across the world. Most often this will be based on a series of bird species that is characteristic of the destination. For example birding in Varanger is characterised by Steller's Eider and King Eiders. While visiting birders will see many more birds than these but these are the ones that they travel the distance for. These are the target species. A destination requires a variety of species to appeal to the birders, but having an iconic species defines an area from being good to great. Iceland can very easily position itself as a destination that can be characterised by target species, these being the Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, breeding Red Phalarope and Gyrfalcon which most defiantly will be the main draw.

"Harlequin Duck, a must see for any birder visiting Iceland. Being good looking and having restricted occurrence is a good start in becoming a target species"



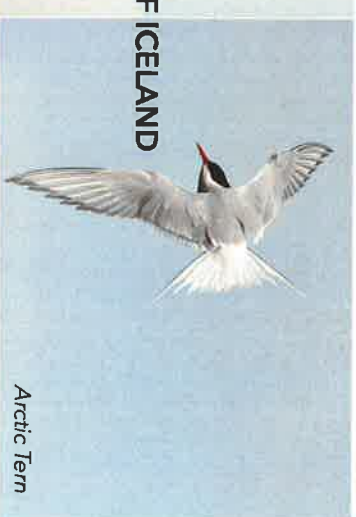
Harlequin Duck

Torodd Amundsen © Bioro

Gyrfalcon



BIRDS OF ICELAND

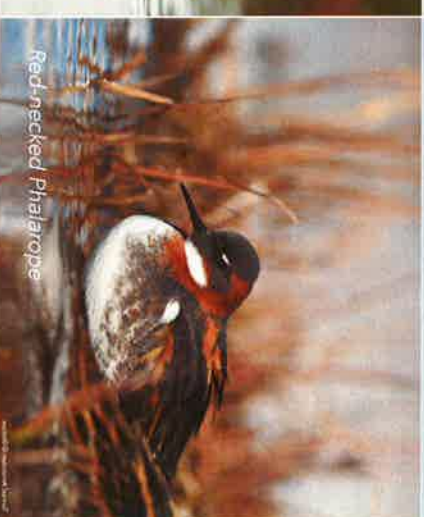


Arctic Tern

Grey Phalarope



Red-necked Phalarope



Brünnich's guillemot



Barrow's Goldeneye



Atlantic Puffins



Great Northern Diver

Torodd Amundsen © Bioro

BIRDING & BIRDWATCHING

Birding or birdwatching is on the rise. As the world becomes smaller and more accessible, travel is easier and cheaper. The digital age lets people connect on a person to person level. The keen birders have always found ways to connect and share information. It lies in the essence of birding itself. You can only discover more when you have a grasp of the present knowledge. Birding is for the curious minded. The tourist who, when travelling, will not call himself a tourist, but rather consider himself to simply pursue his passion, wherever it takes him. The fascinating thing with birding is that there is always more to explore. When dedicated people meet and connect you develop a culture and a common understanding of things. This is why being a birder anywhere in the world seems almost effortless. Connections are made in an instant. Connections are made in an instant. Catering to birders can be a tricky thing if you don't understand the culture. A birder can travel to a new country and a new culture, but once he meets with a local birder chances are he will instantly connect. The culture of birding is a worldwide culture, complete with its "language", ideals, morals, websites, businesses and so much more.

Bird watching is a hobby, or rather a lifestyle, growing rapidly. Birders or ornithologists as they are sometimes called, can probably be safely placed in the category above average nature interested! Millions of people worldwide are birdwatchers. These travels more than most people and often to exotic destinations in search of bird experiences and special species. BirdLife International estimates that 7 million birdwatchers travel internationally to various destinations worldwide every year. For example, there are in England, according to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, over 6 million birdwatchers! Birdwatching recently surpassed fishing as the main hobby (after football). There are countless bird organisations and associations in the world, with millions of members. BirdLife Global Partnership has over 2500000 members. In North America there are over 18 million birdwatchers.



BIRDING - KEY MARKET FACTS

- Most birding holidays last for 1-3 weeks, and are made with birding friends, however birding will and can be done with anyone.
- Independent travel is by far the most popular.
- Birding is the main focus. Everything else is secondary!
- Pay-for photo hides are not widely used by travelling birders. But is requested amongst a growing number of wildlife- and bird photographers.
- Photographers will very often like to use pay-for photo hides however birders/birdwatchers prefer windsnelter/birdhides.
- Sometimes a good photo hide is a reason to go. Preferably a destination needs more than one kind of photo hide to become attractive to an international audience.
- When travelling to Iceland one often spends considerable money on travel and having more attractions available will make it more worthwhile.
- Public bird hides and / or wind shelters are very often used. They make birding more comfortable and more easily available. They are also often a sign of a good birding location. Such facilities also makes it easier to bring family on trips. Bird hides and wind shelters come at a low cost compared to the high value they provide.
- Make sure unique experiences become available products.
- There are enough birders in the world to have birding happening at every price range. However birders are often willing to spend considerable amount of money of their passion and hobby.
- Birders most commonly travel internationally once or twice a year. However some travel much more.
- Birders are very focused on the birding experience but 60% still prefer to pay more for comfort and / or good food.
- Birding happens at every age, from teenager to retired. Birding is a lifestyle. Once you have chosen birding it will stay with you for life.
- Birders are by many hotel and lodge owners considered to be some of the best kind of guests. They are often very skilled about local conditions (every birder research a lot before a trip). Birders are also very often easily satisfied (providing the birding is good!). They are also often return customers for many years.
- Birding destinations are popular based on 1) being easily accessible and safe 2) being exotic and / or adventurous 3) providing a very high diversity of bird species

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

The invention of the internet has changed the game for birders. Limitless information can be found on millions of websites: optics equipment can be bought, photos browsed, holidays planned and bird sightings scoured. If you took 100 “ordinary” people, most certainly less than 5% would run a blog. This is different with birding, where the community is very focused on sharing information. Most serious birders run a blog, or if not, they certainly follow a good number of them. It is the easiest way to share photographs, news and itineraries from birding trips.



Biotoppe 7 likes

Taking a swim in the Arctic.
- Gårsdagen ble tilbrakt i en tørrdrakt i et par timer i Kiberg havn. Målet var å komme lett på den berømte stelleranda. Se bloggposten i linken for bilder fra går 🙄
<http://www.biotoppe.no/.../stellers-elders-snow-caves-living-h...>
!!! Spending a couple of hours in freezing water is ok when the reward is amazing views of the worlds coolest duck...

71 740 personer nådd

230 K visninger

Liker Kommenter Del

Waldi Raab, Andrey Yokuev og 384 andre

27 kommentarer

253 delinger

Social media is very popular within the birding community. This is because birders are, on the whole, extremely social. Birders are very often not the “lone wolves” seeking solitude, although for many that is a part of it. They love to share news, to debate issues and learn from others. Rarely an unusual bird turns up now without being discussed at length online. The increase in smartphone use has meant a birder can be out in the field and notifying others of any birds they see at the same time.

Facebook is still the most widely used social media platform for birders. In UK most counties or regional areas have their own Facebook group. Wildlife photographers share their images on personal pages. A niche within the niche group like the Facebook group “European Gulls” has 1177 members, purely discussing the identification, moult and distribution of gull species. There is even a car-sharing Facebook group for British twitchers to offer and ask for lifts to rare birds. It has about 250 members¹³.

Twitter has become increasingly popular, particularly with British birders. Birders now have a way to share their experiences with other birders instantly. Pre-internet, twitchers would pay a subscription for a rare bird news pager which would alert them to the discovery of rare birds. With Twitter, most rare birds are reported almost instantly thanks to the bird finder’s need to get the information out there. Messages can be conveyed in a simple concise format. Hashtags make finding information easier, for example a birder wanting to see tweets about rare birds in the county of East Yorkshire simply needs to search for #bnEYK, thanks to the Twitter account @RareBirdNetwork (13,000 followers).

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Tourism in Iceland has exploded and it is still growing. In 2010 some 488 000 tourists visited Iceland. Today, in 2016, it is estimated that 1.73 million tourists will visit Iceland. The tourism is concentrated around Reykjavik, while the furthest corners of Iceland see very little of this development. Declining rural communities struggling to make ends meet is still very much a reality in many places. These places also happen to be some of the most bird rich and unique places, but they are found outside of the most travelled touristic places. This huge increase in traffic is having a profound impact on the current infrastructure and landscape. Therefore by looking at sustainable development and thinking to the future by building an infrastructure in the rural areas that support and attracts nature enthusiasts, birders, nature photographers, it will have a positive effect to the local rural economies as well as encouraging tourist traffic to mobilise from the mass tourists area and explore the wider areas.

Iceland has all the raw materials to be a world class birding destination, Outside of the capital, Iceland retains a feeling of a wilderness, with dramatic scenery, harsh but beautiful weather, it also has great seasonal differences providing the birders with different experiences throughout the year, both in terms of scenery and wildlife. These variations provide good reason for visitors to return in different seasons in order so that they can see the changes the country and its wildlife undertakes. Spectacles such as Northern lights and midnight sun and Whale sightings are considered bonuses for any birder visiting Iceland.



However in order to accommodate a growing number of bird tourists and also to stimulate and develop the rural areas as top birding sites, specific infrastructure is required to facilitate such activities. Identifying and developing key areas that are known to have good birding and wildlife opportunities, marketing and promoting these areas as well as highlighting additional attraction within the wider area is one aspect of the development lifecycle. The other aspect of development is ensuring that there are physical structures that enhance the birding experiences at key locations. Birders and photographers are not looking for stunning architecture, however appearance and sensitivity to nature is important and striking strong architecture has its place when designing a hide that appeals to a wider audience. Birders are looking for facilities that can enhance their experience of the area, provide more comfortable conditions to carry out birding and offer good sight lines and viewing opportunities. If such facilities are available it will most certainly have a positive effect on attracting more birders and photographers to the area. Varanger in Northern Norway is evidence of this, since the development of birchhides and wind shelters in the area, there has been a significant increase each year with the number of birders and photographers coming to Varanger. Local tourism actors such as hotels have seen an increase in occupancy and now tourism providers are seeing the opportunity and developing bird related products and attractions.



ABOUT BIOTOPE

Biotope is Norway's first and only architectural office, with special expertise in birds and birdwatching (birding). We combine the field of architecture with over **25 years of experience in field ornithology**. We specialise and focus on architecture which enhances outdoor experiences. We at Biotope are dedicated field ornithologists and outdoor enthusiasts. This has allowed us to develop a sense of what is required of a facility: We consider the needs of the various target audiences, the facilities functionality and ensure the surrounding natural environment is not compromised. Biotope see the importance of creating realisable projects, which can be implemented within a relatively modest cost. Our dedication, expertise and continuing success in this niche area has resulted in an award-winning architectural office, winning the Northern Norway Architecture Prize in 2014 and becoming the first architecture office to be sponsored by Swarovski Optik

Biotope have extensive knowledge in the field of nature based tourism destination development, particularly in the area of bird tourism. Biotope have been the pioneers in developing Varanger as a world class birding destination and as a result tourism actors in the area have seen a significant increase in tourist traffic. Biotope have undertaken a number of destination development projects in Norway, Iceland and the UK and have provided consultation to many private actors wishing to develop unique nature based products that target the niche nature based market.



Photo: Havnshavn & Natur



THE PROJECT

Biotope since 2014 has been conducting a feasibility study in Iceland relating to Birding destination development, the study covers areas in the North West and North East Iceland. The project kicked off in Autumn/Winter 2014 when we were invited by the people behind the North East Birding trail. Our invitation was based on our work as birder architects and destination developers in Varanger, Northern Norway. The people behind the development of the birding trail had already done a great job in successfully developing a solid birding concept that allows birders to experience the best sites within the region.

Our mission was to further build upon this success and further identify new sites in the region that would benefit from having photo hides, bird hides and wind shelters.

We started our visit with meeting the key man Hermann Bárðarson in Husavik and then the birding trail people. During our 8 days in the northeast we collected a wide range of site photos, info about possibilities, infrastructure, etc. Everything was documented, mapped and GPS-located. We then visited again in summer 2015 to experience the summer birding and again further identify sites.

The most important aspect was the recording of sites for potential bird hides, photo hides and wind shelters and meeting with local tourism actors; Ytra Lon Farm, The Nest Guesthouse, Nordurljos Hotel, Sel-Hotel Myvatn, Fjallasyn guide company and Geotravel that will all play a crucial part in developing the area as destination.



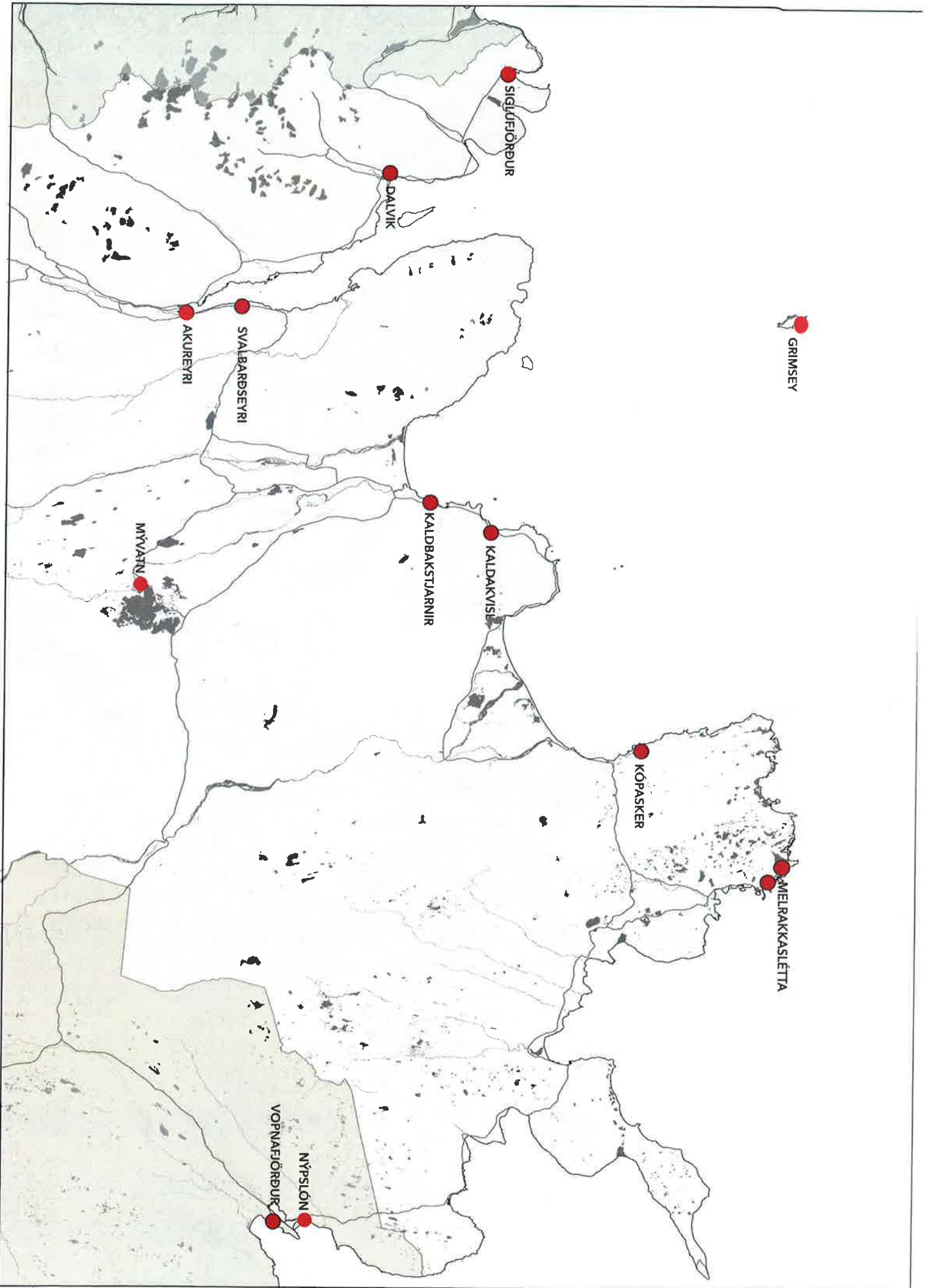
During our time in the North West we visited, researched, measured and *photographed a wide range of sites. We are now in the final stages and out of the hundreds of sites we have visited and surveyed we have prioritised 21 projects, these sites/projects have been prioritised as they are sites that will have the biggest impact in developing Iceland as a top birding destination.*

In Iceland we were amazed by the nonstop birding qualities of this region (very similar to Varanger). The numerous wader sites, ponds and river deltas hold impressive numbers of birds. Even in mid October, which is considered something of a slow season, we saw good numbers of birds. Duck wise it was beyond amazing! Visiting Iceland is not "just" a birding thing: The landscape, the mammals and the people you meet are equally an important part of any visit to this cool destination.



NORTH EAST





GRIMSEY

SÍGLUFJÖRÐUR

DALVIK

AKUREYRI

SVALBARÐSEYRI

MÝVAÐN

KALDBAKSTJARNIR

KALDAKVISI

KÓPASKER

MELRÁKKASLETTA

VOPNAFJÖRÐUR

NYPSLÓN

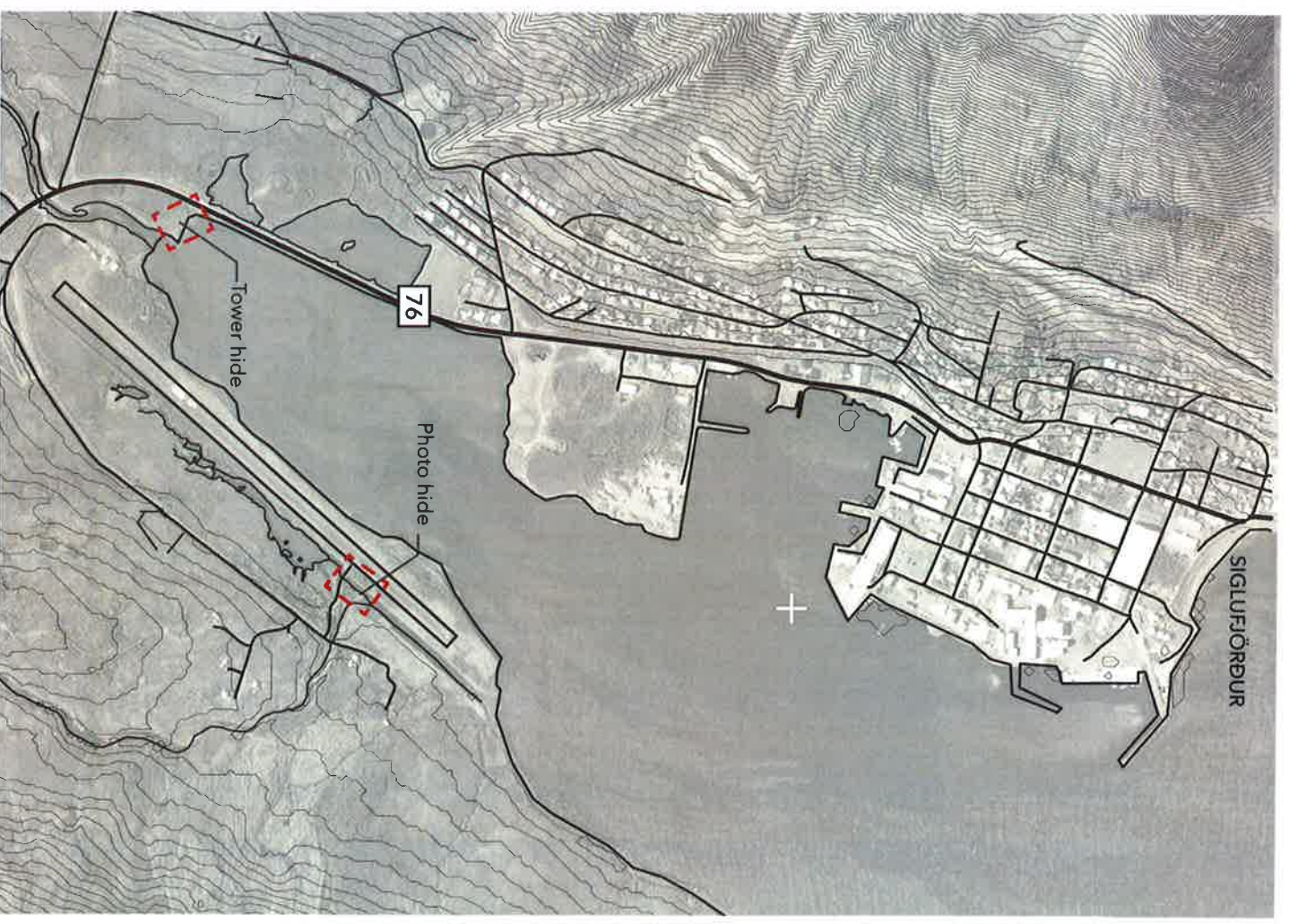
SIGLUFJÖRÐUR I & II

Bird watching tower & Photo hide

The sites are located just a short drive out of the fishing town of Siglufjörður, there are many good birding opportunities to be had here and also good diversity in the bird species. All the sites are easily accessible and parking opportunities provided.



Red Knot

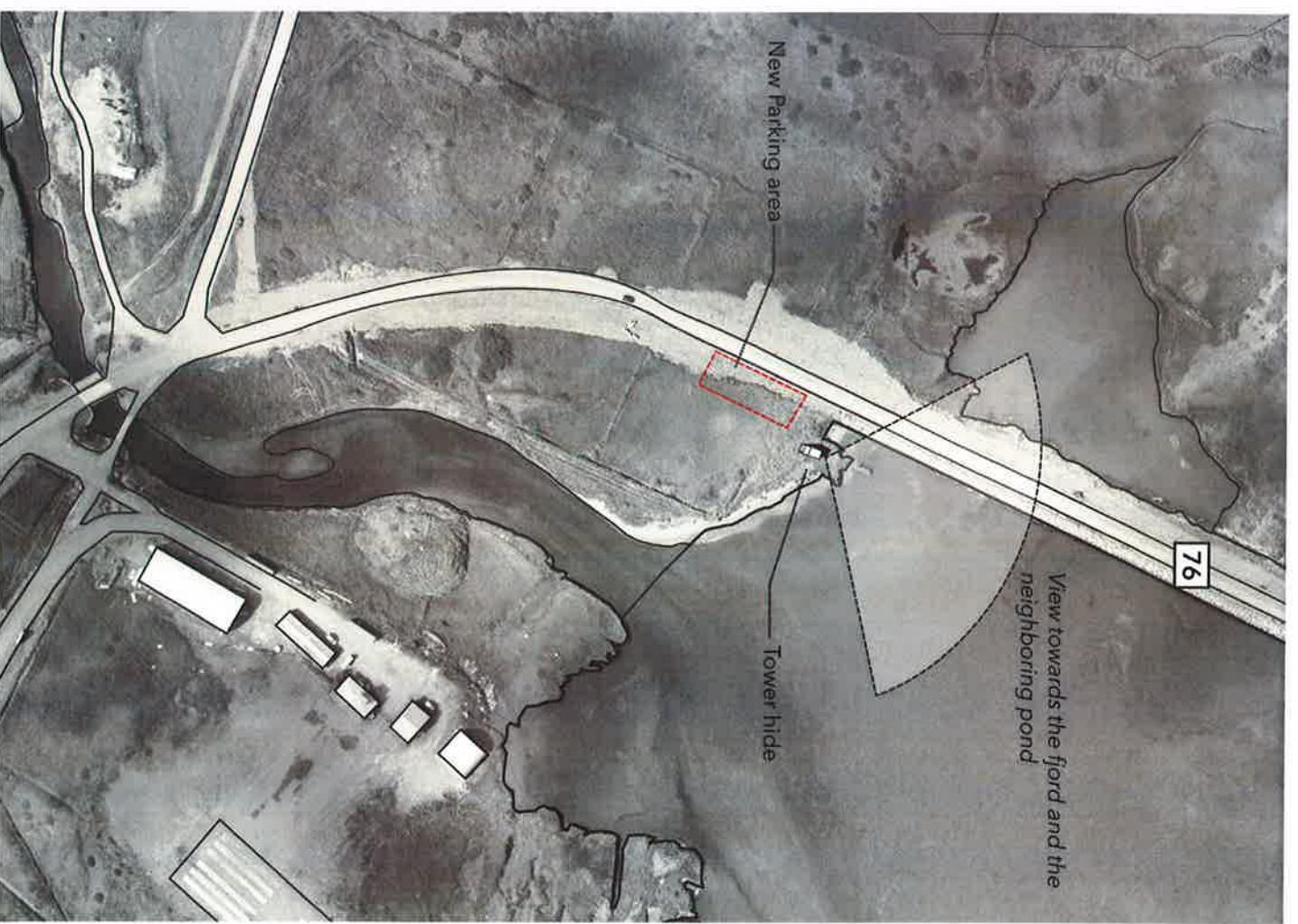


SIGLUFJÖRDUR I

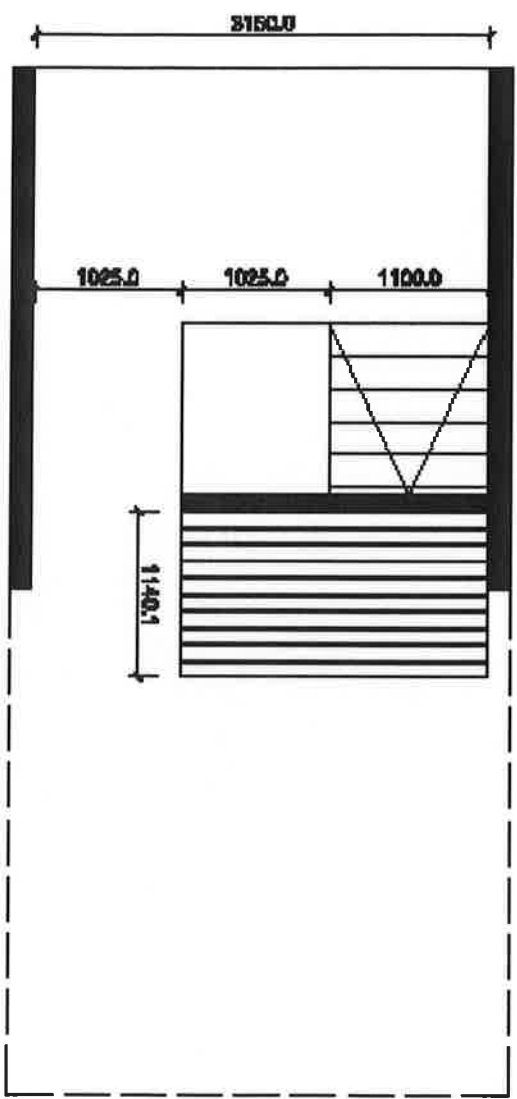
Bird Tower

The first site is located at the bottom of the fjord and the tower will be positioned so it provides an overview of the fjord and the tidal flat. The tower will split into 2 levels, providing viewing opportunities at the lower level and upper level. The hide will be accessible to wheelchair users at the lower level, and have a seating area, so ideal for general viewing opportunities, families stopping for a picnic and also birders. The upper level will be open and provide opportunities for birders to gain panoramic viewing and uninterrupted views of the birds.

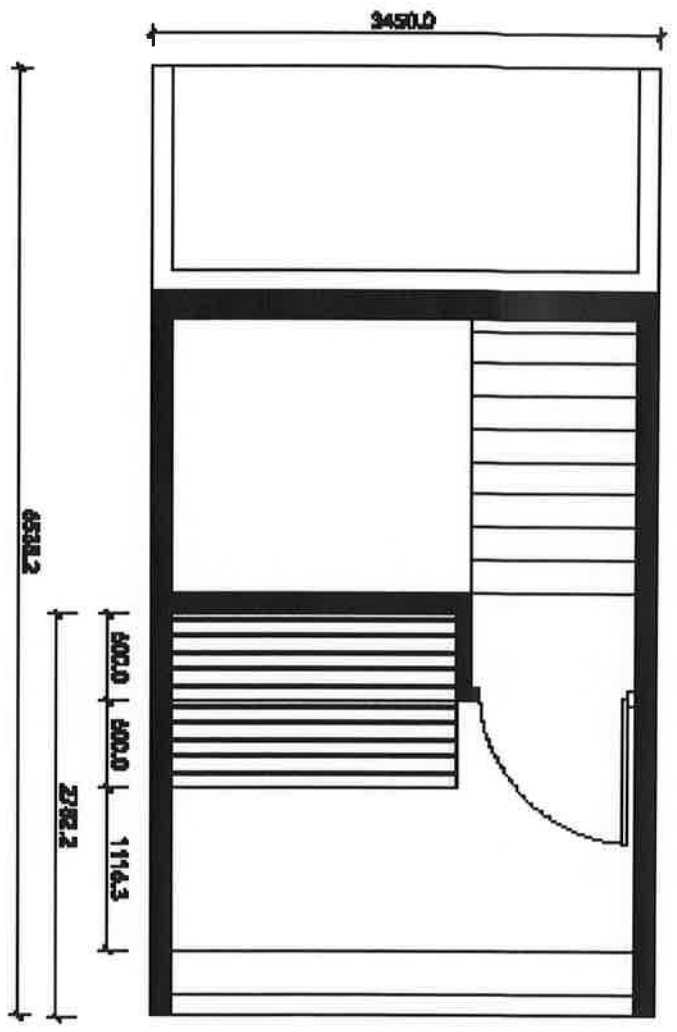
Target Species: Whooper swans

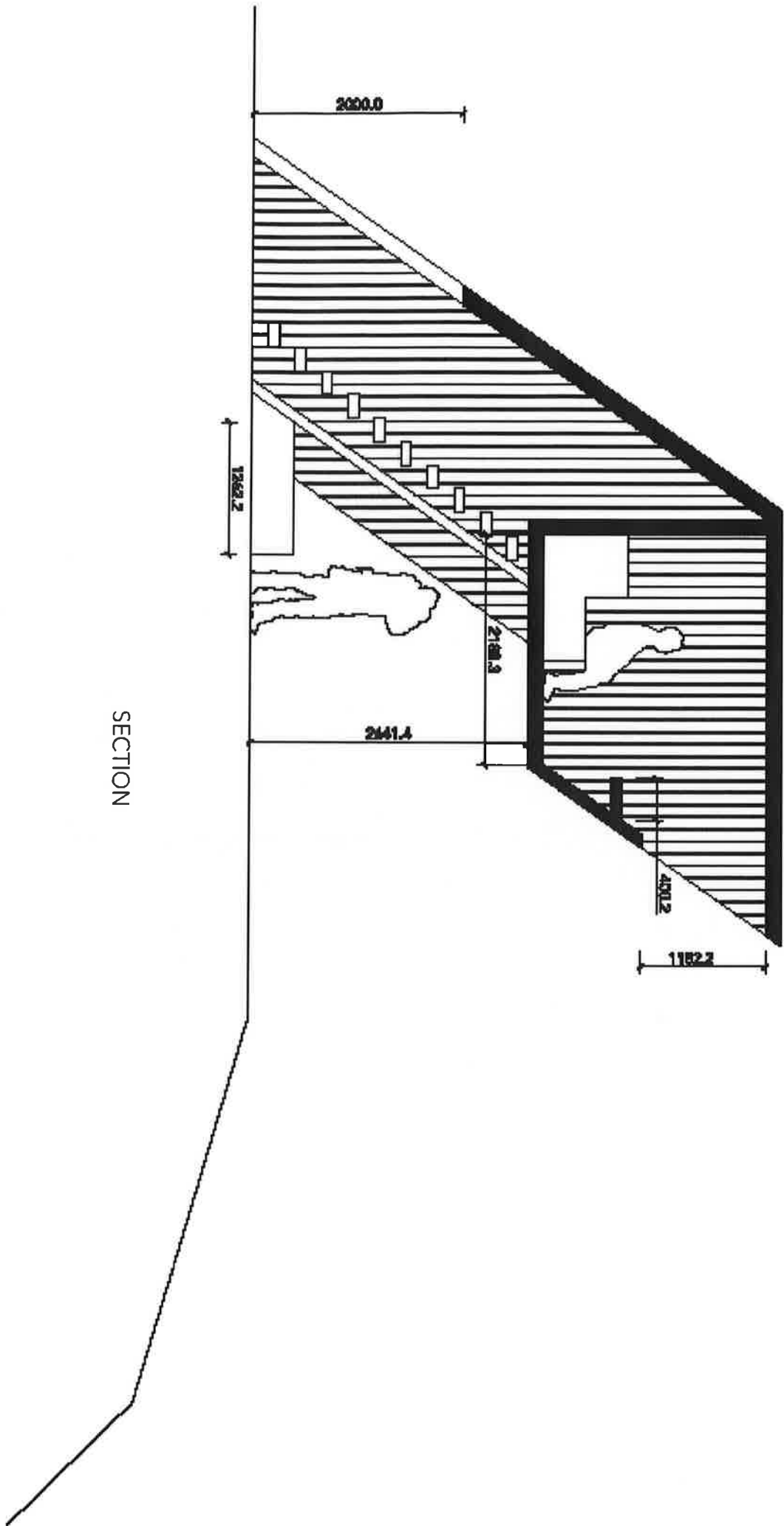


GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN





SIGLUFJÖRÐUR II

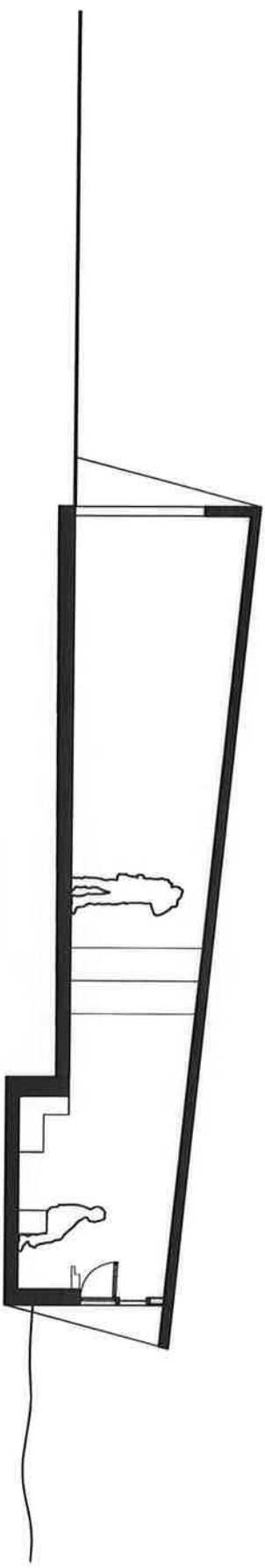
Photo hide

This second site is located just to the side of the disused airfield. The hide will be located so it overlooks the the mouth of the river. This area provides good viewing opportunities for Harlequin Ducks and also the Arctic Tern colonies that can be found on the small islands where the river splits. Because of the close viewing opportunities here we propose a photohide, the hide will be a low level hide that is narrow and long and set into the ground. This clever design ensures that users entering the hide are hidden and do not disturb the bird, the long narrow sections reduce the amount of light, which ensures when photographers are using the window openings that light and reflection is limited to the birds.

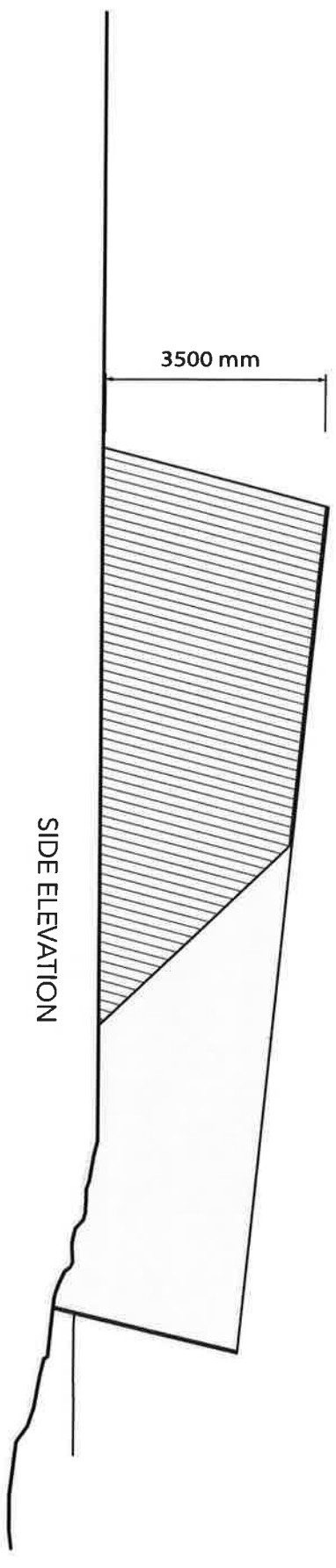
Target Species: Harlequin Ducks and Arctic Tern



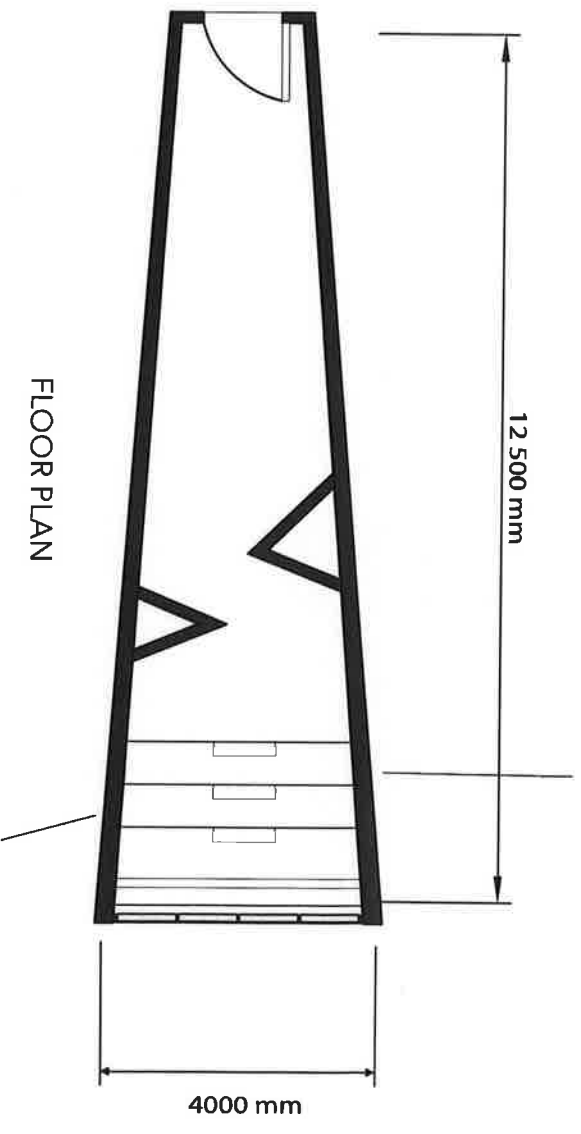
SECTION



SIDE ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN

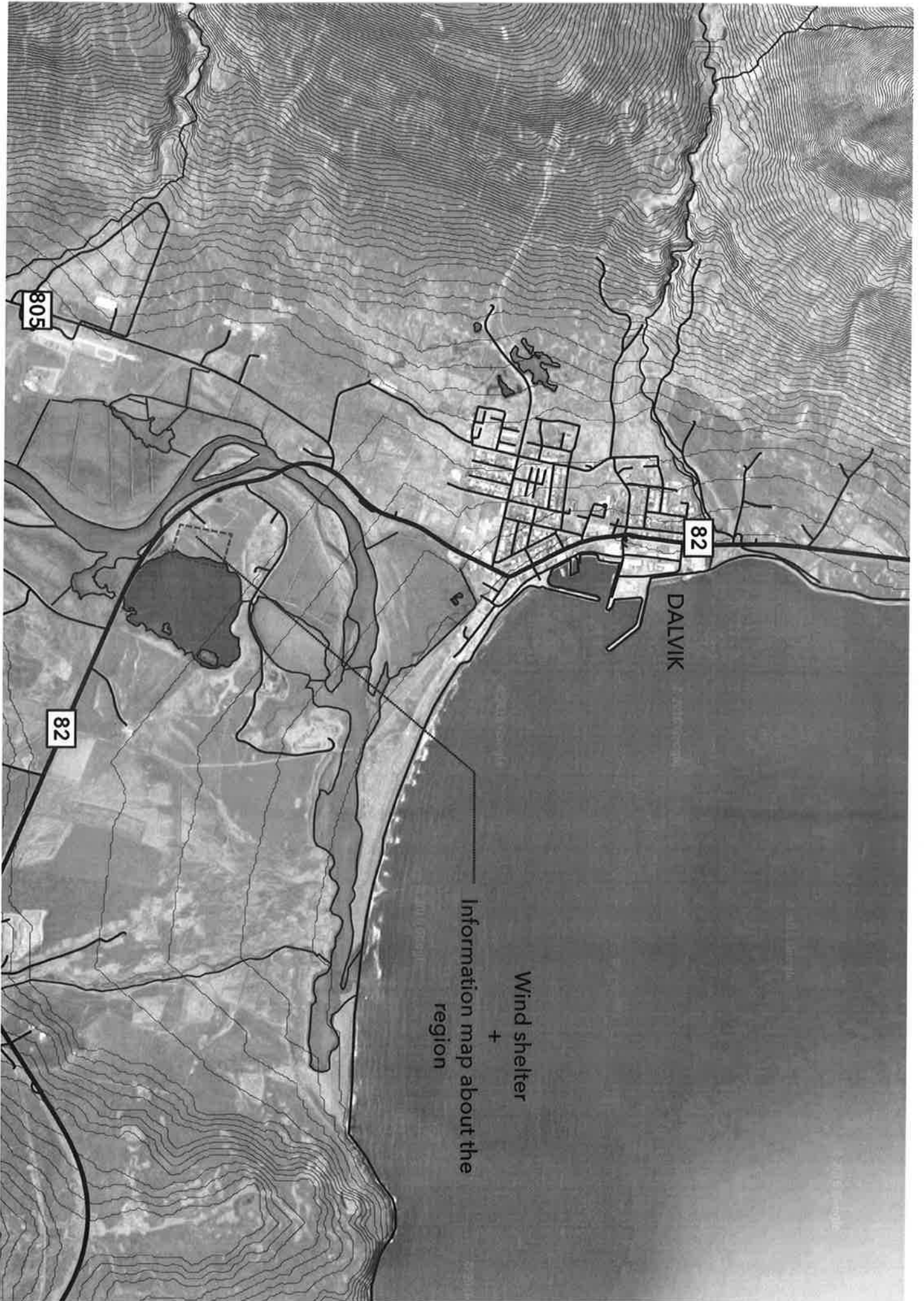


DALVIK

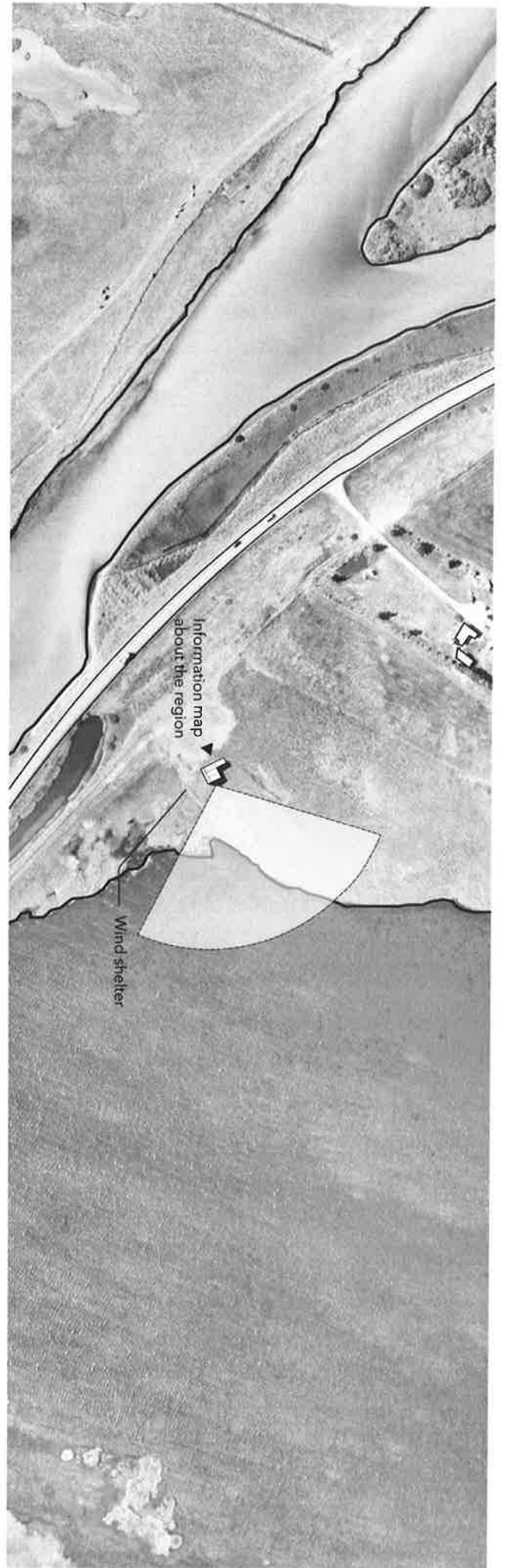
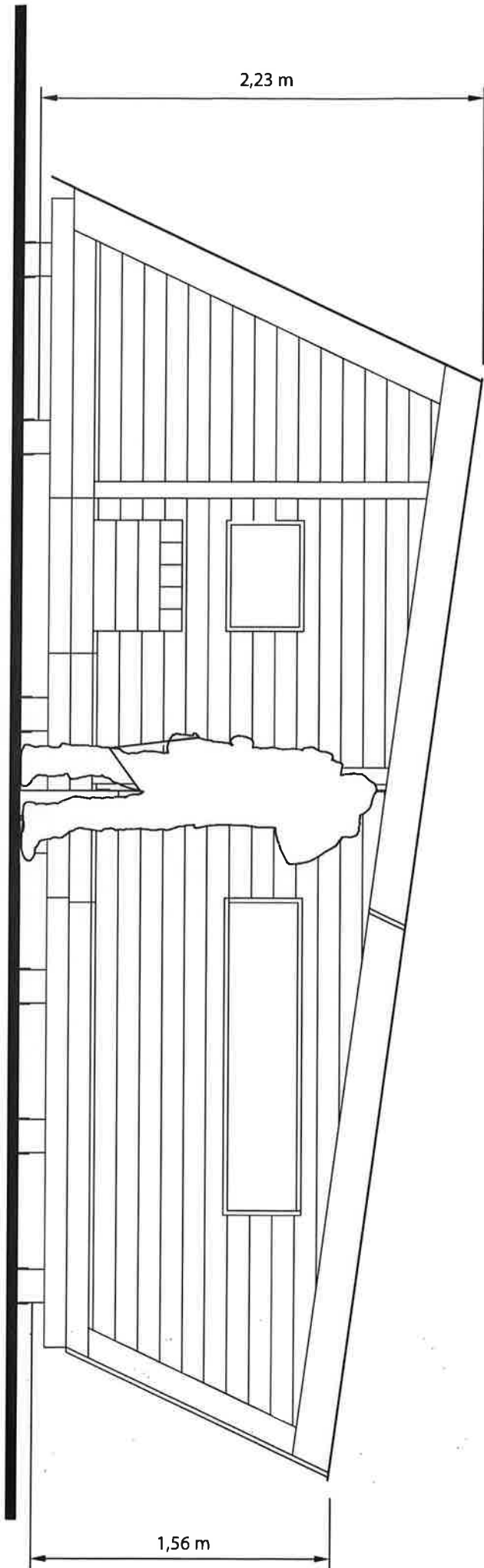
Bird hide / wind shelter

Dalvik hide is situated close to the road and next to a lake that has great viewing opportunities of the White billed Diver, Slovenian Grebe and Red necked Phalarope. Dalvik is effectively the first birding stop before driving further into the valley, the site can be developed as a birding site and view point. The lake has areas of lush vegetation that attracts the birds, the hide will be situated so it overlooks these areas. Information can be displayed on the back of the hide, the aim here is for it to be visually striking and informative, we propose a map that displays the key information about the Dalvik area and its birding and nature attractions. The hide will be good for general viewing opportunities, and large enough to accommodate birders and general visitors wishing to stop and have a picnic and enjoy the sites views. parking area will be created as well as a path to the hide.

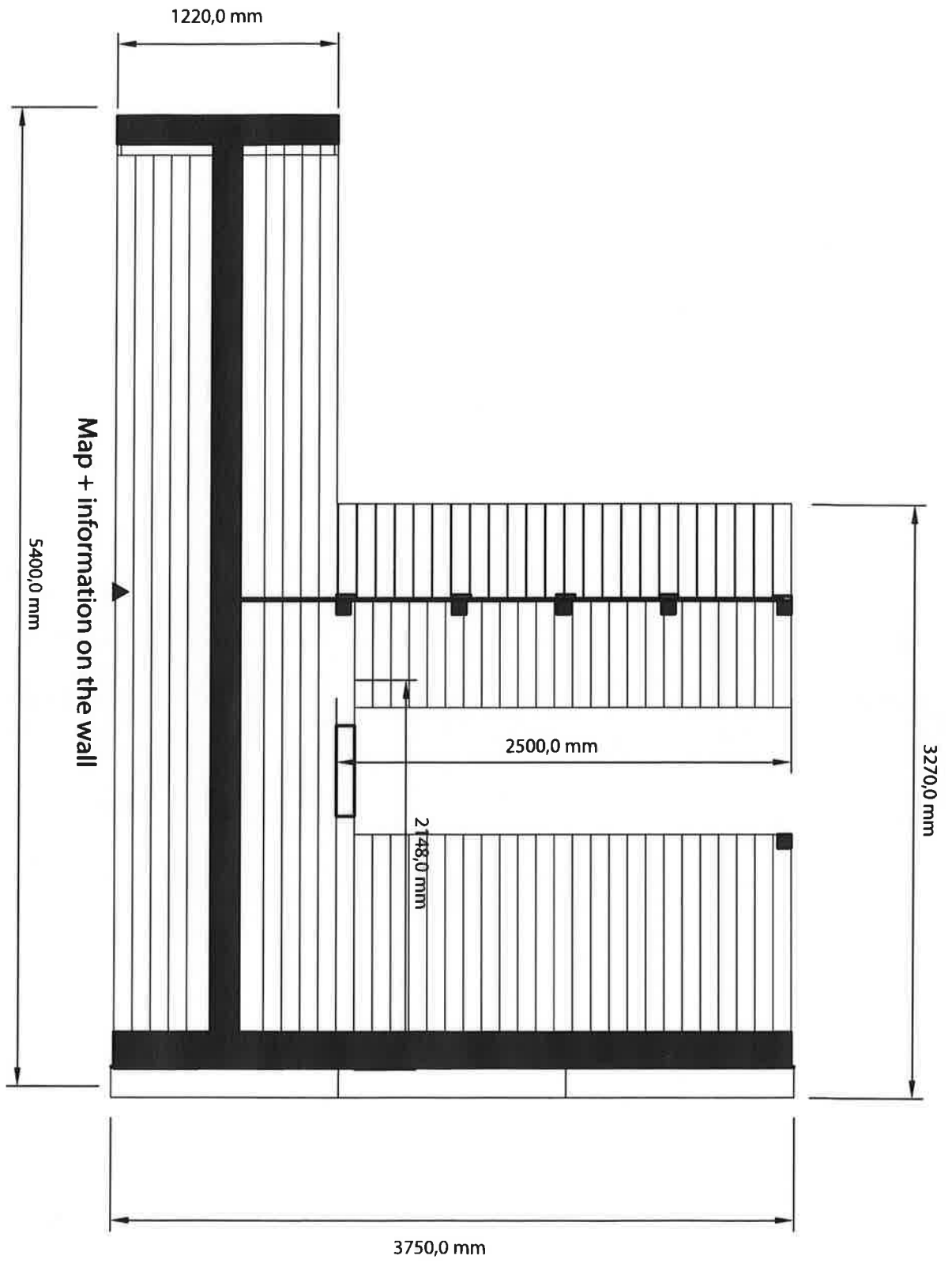




SECTION



PLAN



GRIMSEY

Cliff hanger

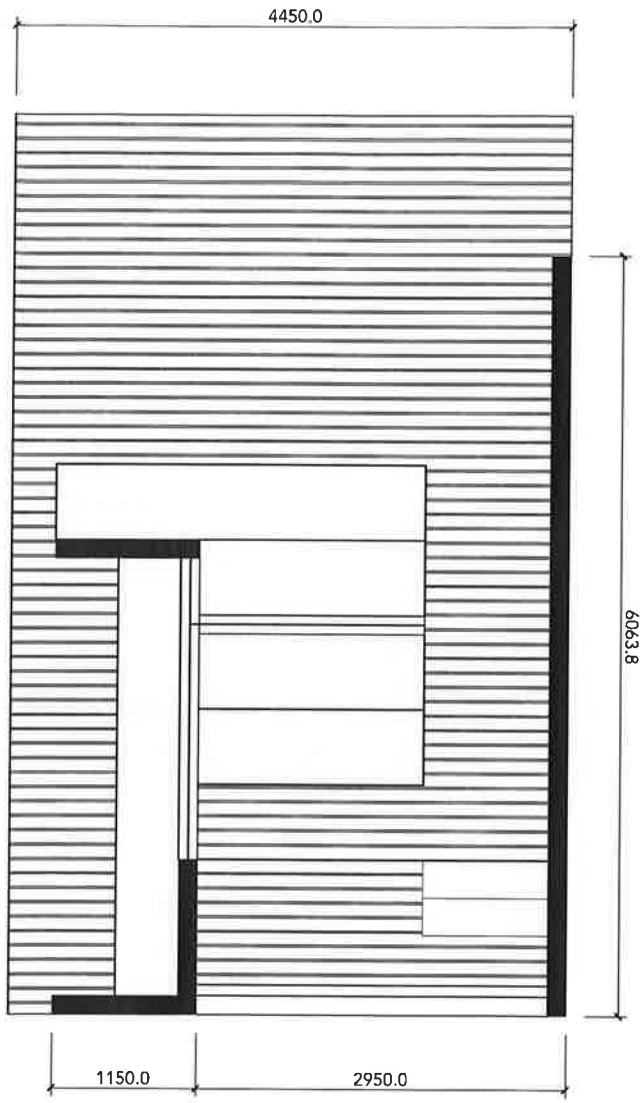
Bird life on the island is flourishing and boasts large populations of seabirds such as Guillemots, Fulmars, Razorbills and is also home to Icelands largest Puffin colony. The ocean surrounding the island is rich in nutrients attracting Whales and Seals. The island has a number of established walking trails that provide excellent viewing opportunities of the bird species on the island. The area is already a popular tourist destination with established attractions that will appeal to the birder and wildlife watchers. To further develop area and promote the island to the niche birders and wildlife watchers, we propose to build a birdhide/windshelter that has strong features, the hide will be perched at the top of the cliffs on the North east of the island. The hide will have a large window at the front which will provide protection from the elements yet provide panoramic views out to sea and close viewing opportunities of the puffins and other seabirds nesting on the cliffs.

Target species: Puffins

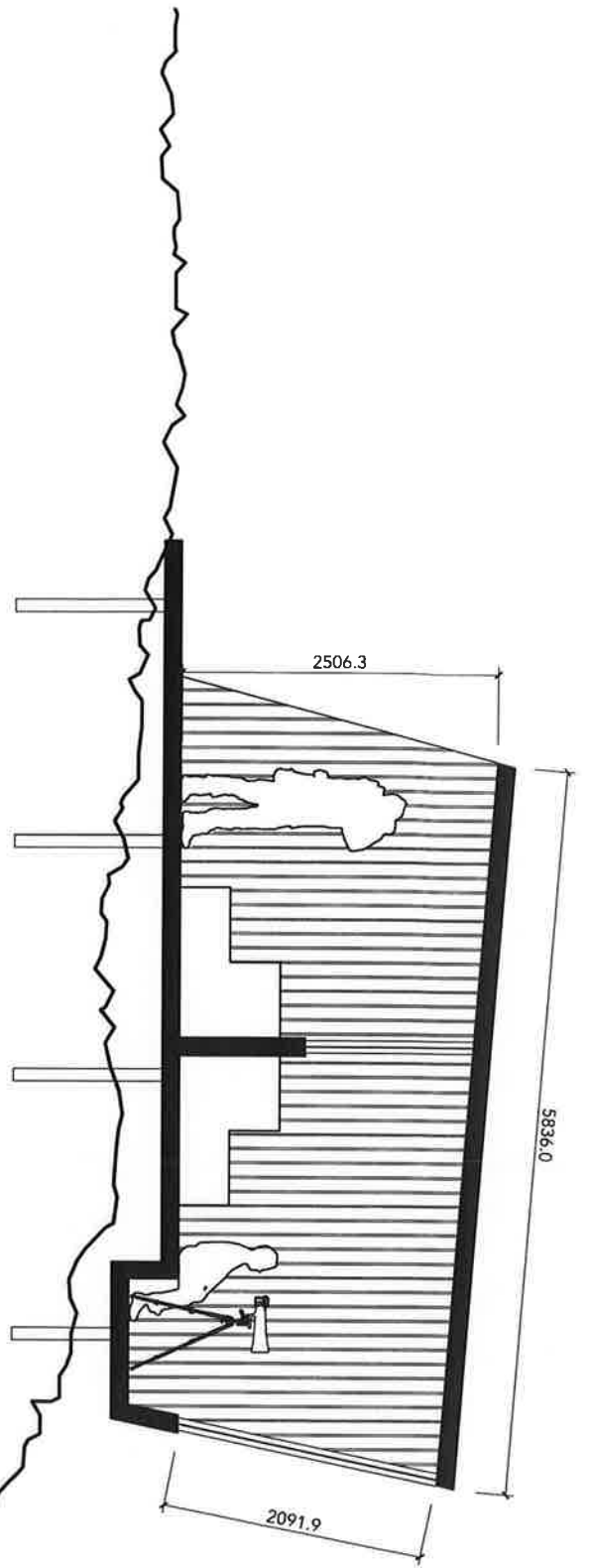




PLAN



SECTION



AKUREYRI

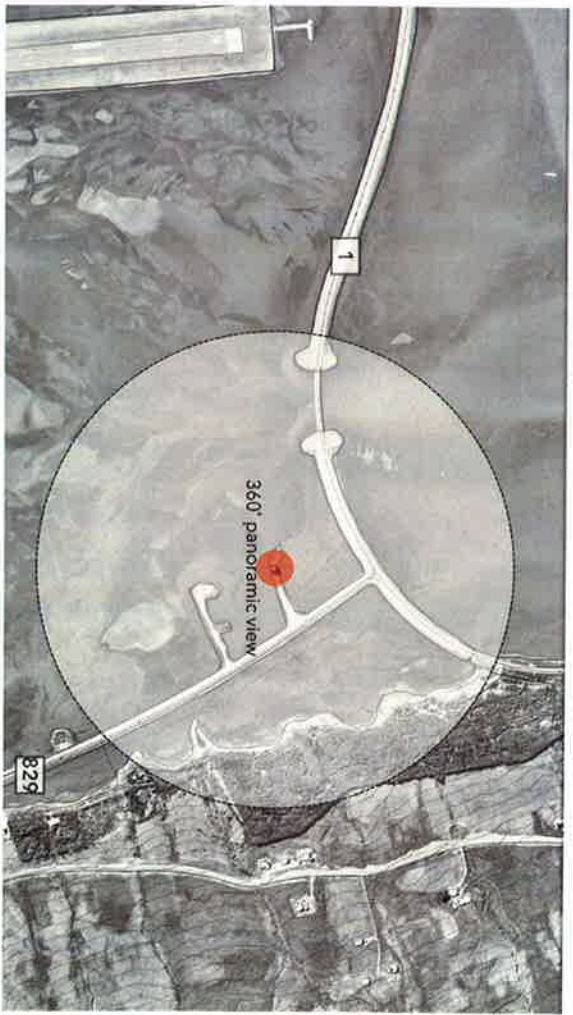
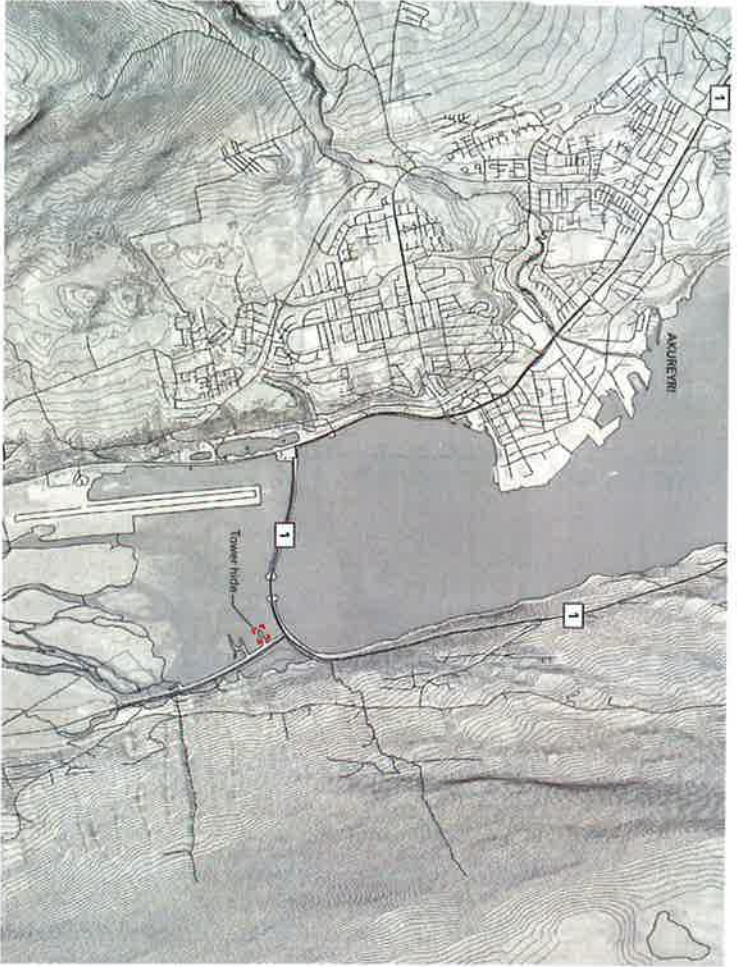
Bird watching tower

The Capital of North Iceland, Akureyri is an important port and fishing centre and is a popular tourist destination. Akureyri offers superb birding opportunities just outside of the city centre. The site has been carefully chosen so it will appeal to both birders and non birders.

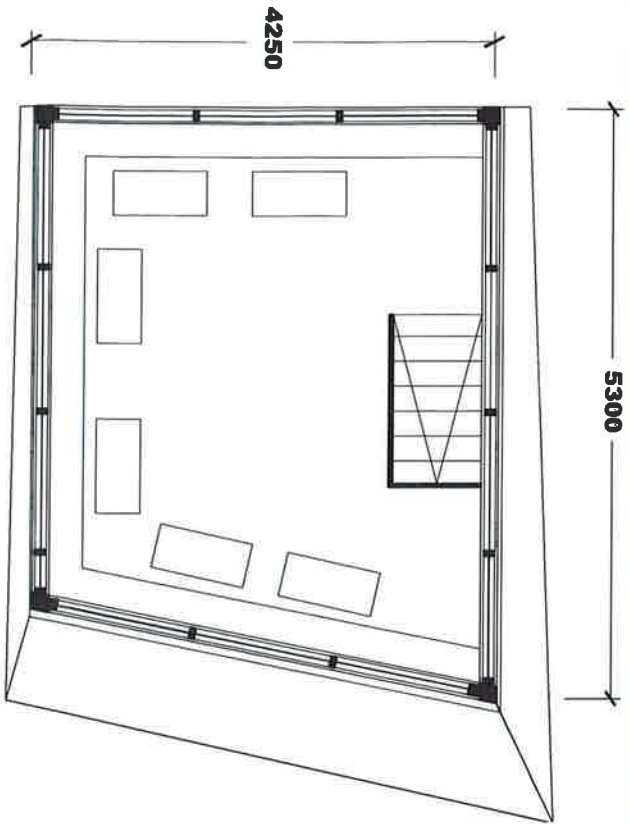


The site overlooks the river delta and the aim is to provide users with a 360 degree overview of the river delta. The hide will be a tower hide and will high enough so that it is higher than the road, providing clear uninterrupted views of the river delta.
Target species: waders

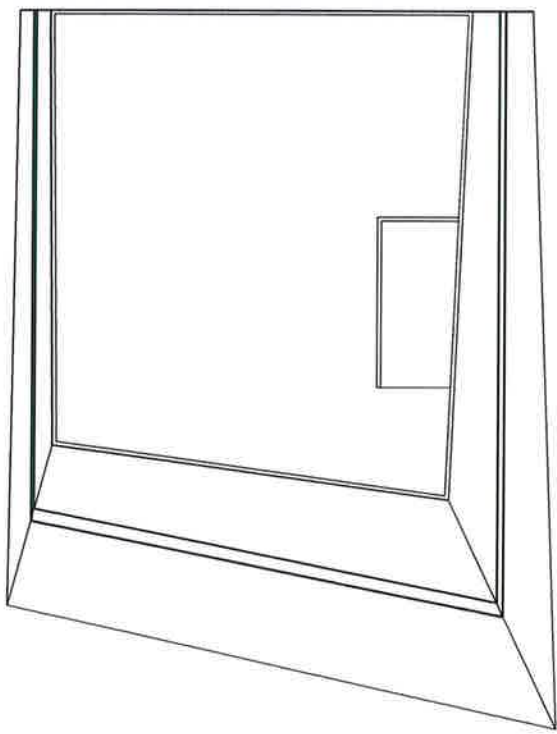




The hide will most certainly attract attention and be popular with both birders and general tourists due to the spectacular views and rich birdlife in the area. The hide will accommodate up to 10 people at a time.



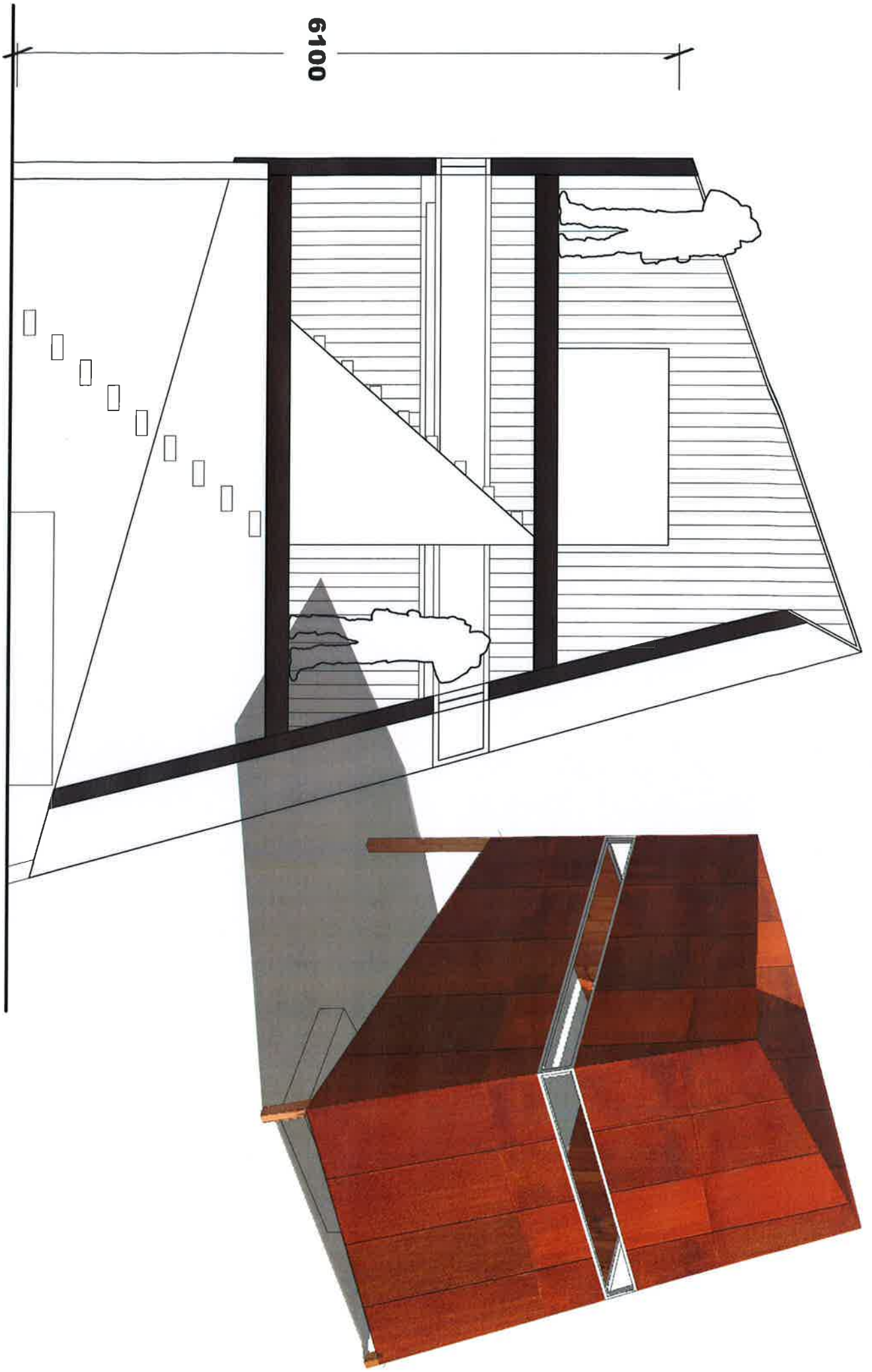
First floor



Roof plan

SECTION

6100



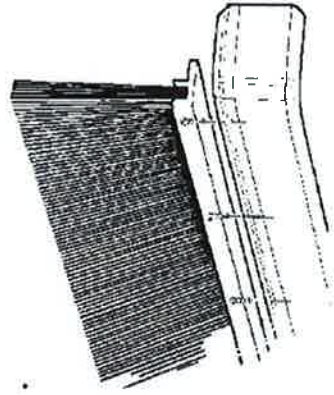
SVALBARÐSEYRI

Photo hides

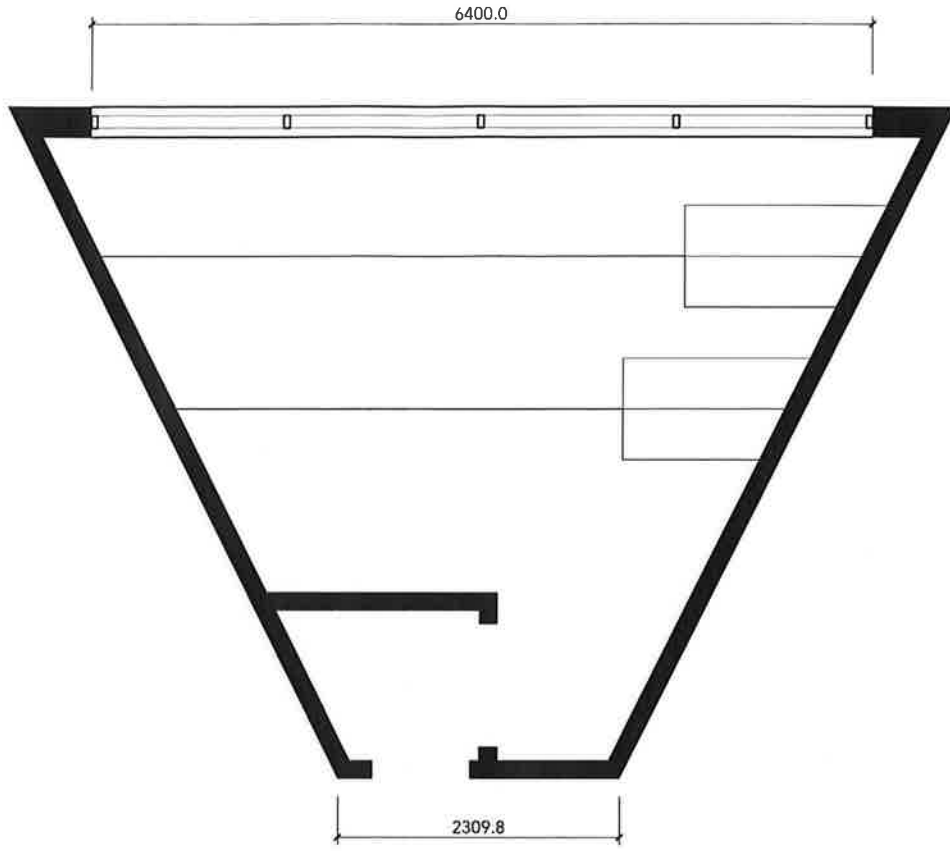
Svalbarðseyri is home to a lake that holds a variety of waders, there is one area of the lake that is nutrition rich and attracts the waders. This nutrient rich area narrows, and forces the birds into a small area, which provides superb photo opportunities of the waders. The photo hide will be located near to this nutrient rich area. The hide needs to be situated as low as possible and we propose to build a semi submerged hide, which will allow photographers to take pictures of birds at water level. This is a very desirable feature amongst bird and wildlife photographers.



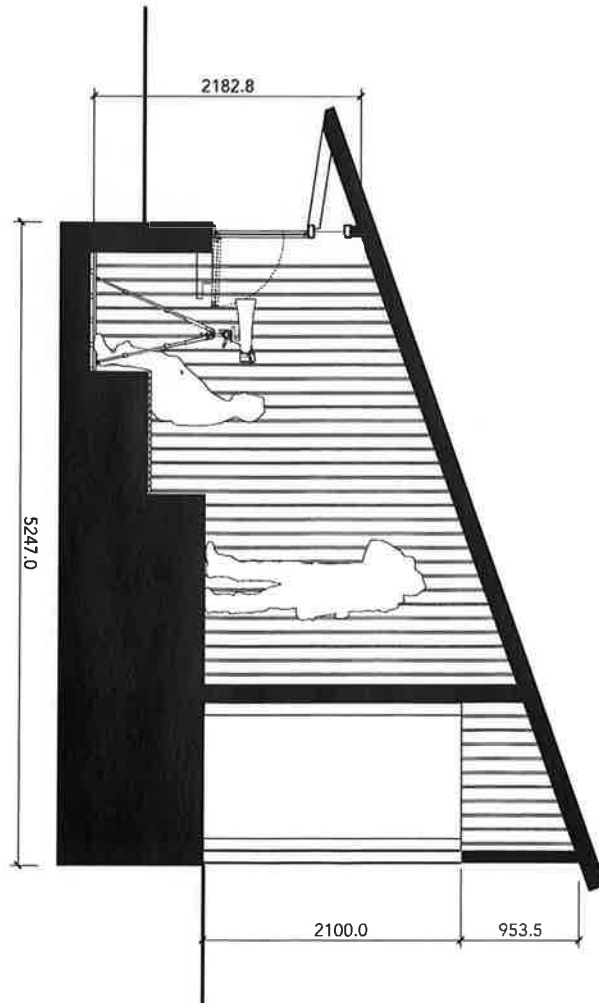
SECTION



PLAN



SECTION



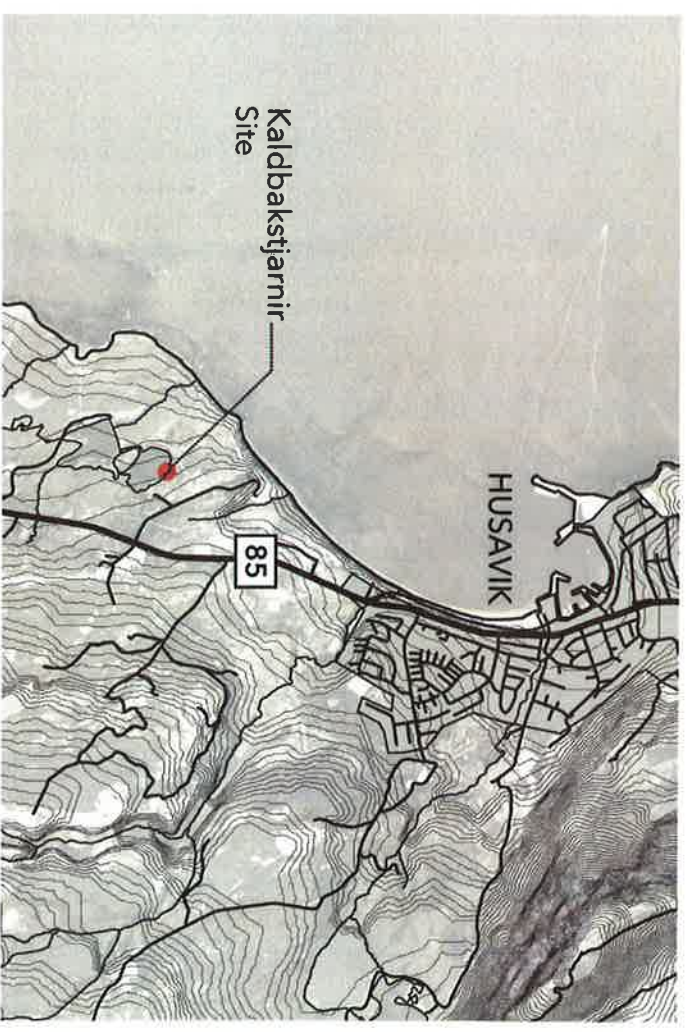
KALDBAKSTJARNIR

Outdoor amphitheatre & Photo hide

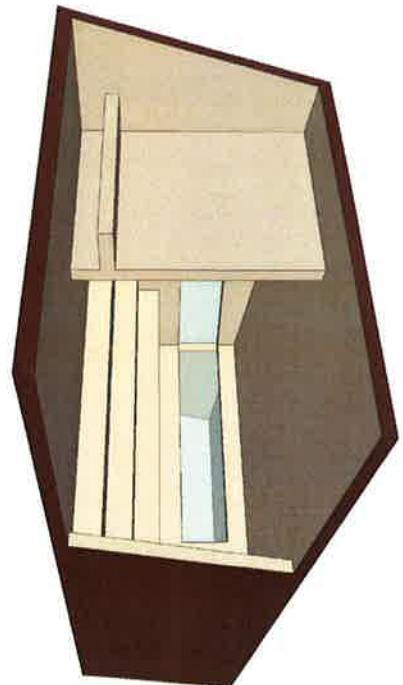
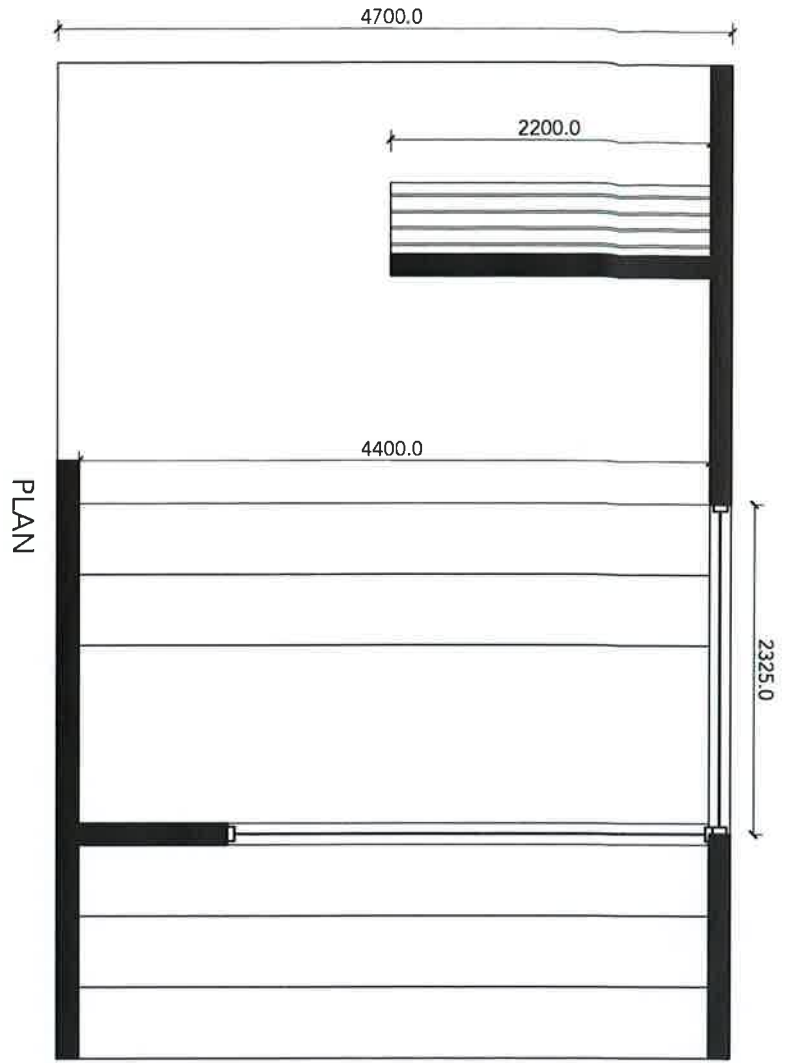
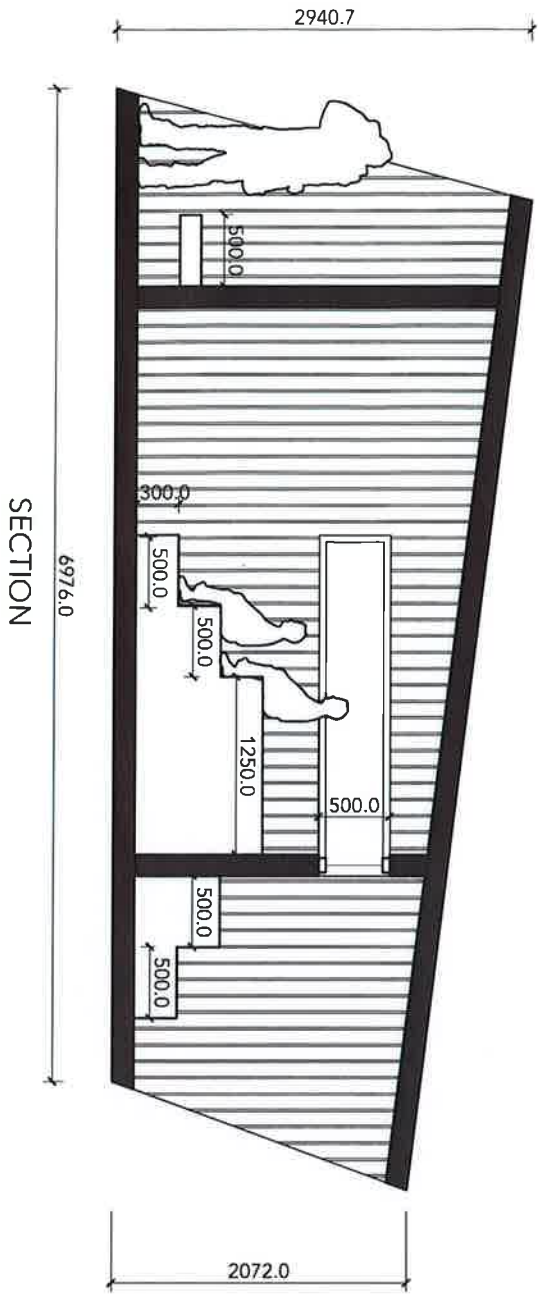
Kaldbakstjarnir lake is already a popular attraction with visitors, there are already established walks that are great areas for picnics, horse riding and summer berry picking. The habitat in this area is very rich and attracts a variety of species such as Horned Grebe and the Red Breasted Merganser and the Great Northern Diver. The location is only a short distance from Húsavík and is easily accessible with parking opportunities.

Due to the site having a steady population of Great Northern Diver's and therefore opportunities to photograph these species at close range. This site can be enhanced by locating a low level bird hide next to the lake. The low design and close situation to the lake will provide close up photos of the birds, whilst providing sheltered facilities to the user and less disturbance to the birds.

Target Species: Great Northern Diver







Great Northern Diver



Torrey Amussen © 2019



KALDAKVISL

Photo hide

This site is located next to river and is a fantastic spot for watching and photographing Harlequin ducks. There is an existing bridge over the river which can provide great viewing opportunities of the ducks from a higher position. To prevent disturbance of the birds we propose to convert the bridge in to a bird-hide that will provide excellent viewing opportunities. The bridge hide will also then provide access to the photohide which will be situated to overlook the areas where the Harlequin ducks gather. The bridge hide acts as a screen so at all times, the users of the hides are hidden, this reduces the chance of the birds becoming nervous, resulting in all round better viewing and photo opportunities of the target species.

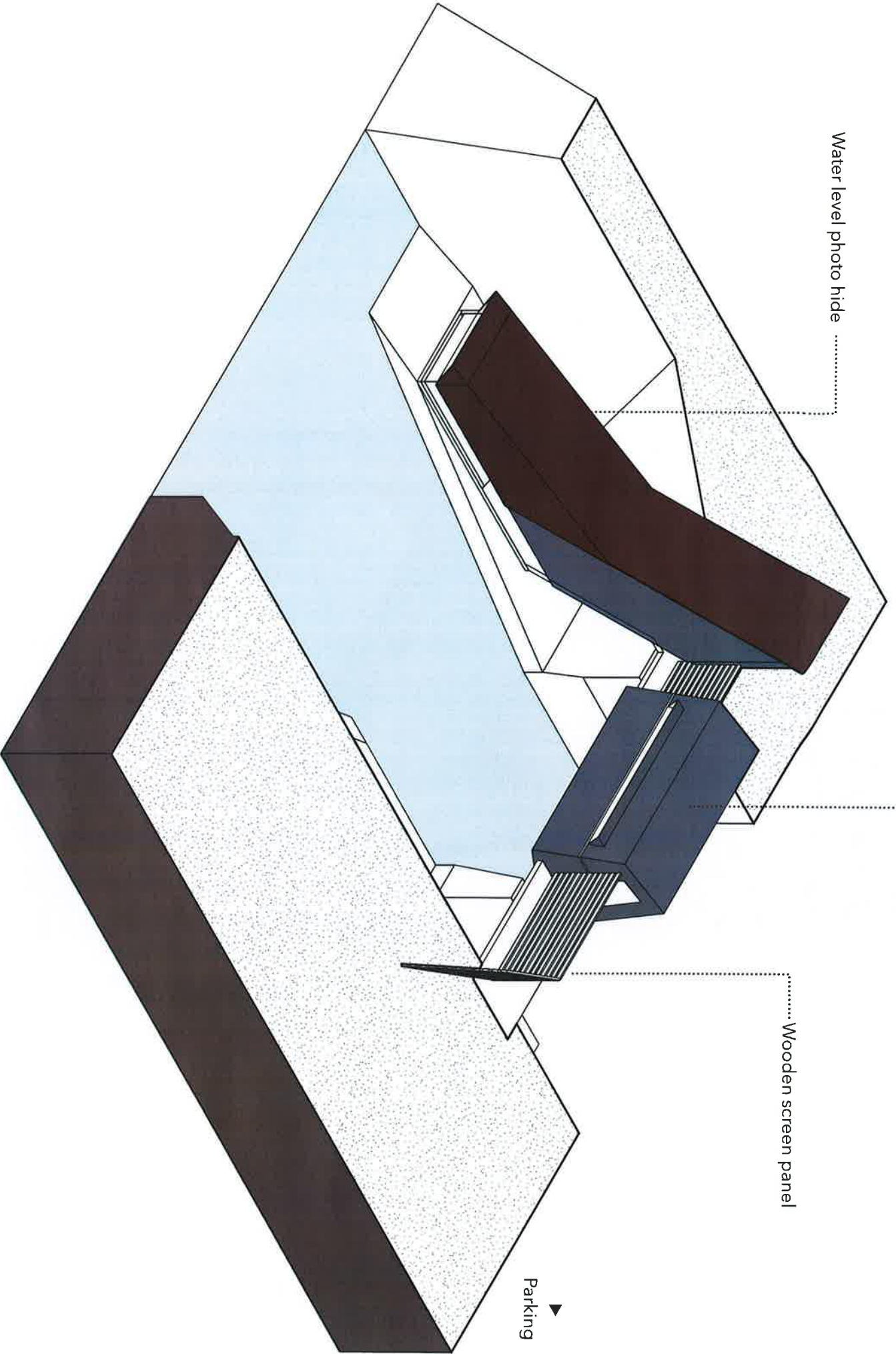
Harlequin Ducks





Harlequin duck
photo hide



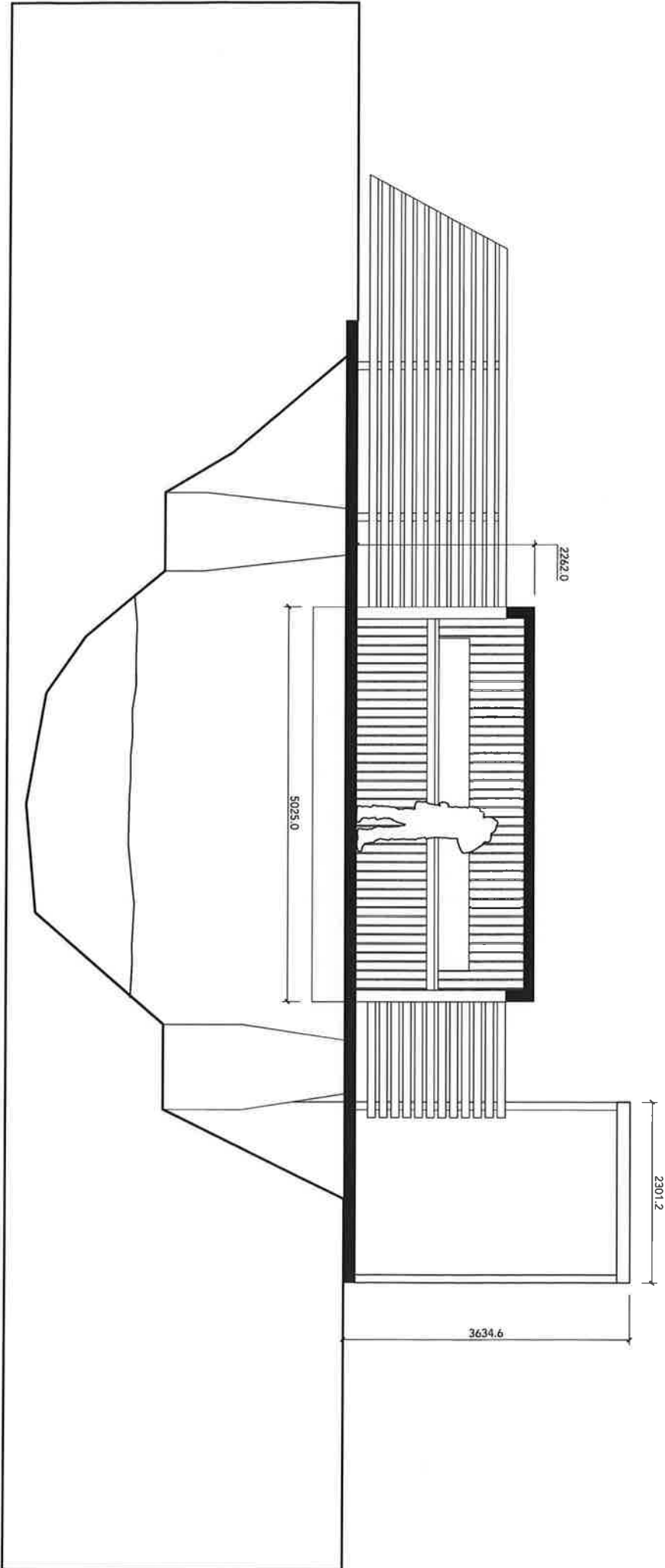


Water level photo hide

..... Bird hide crossing the river

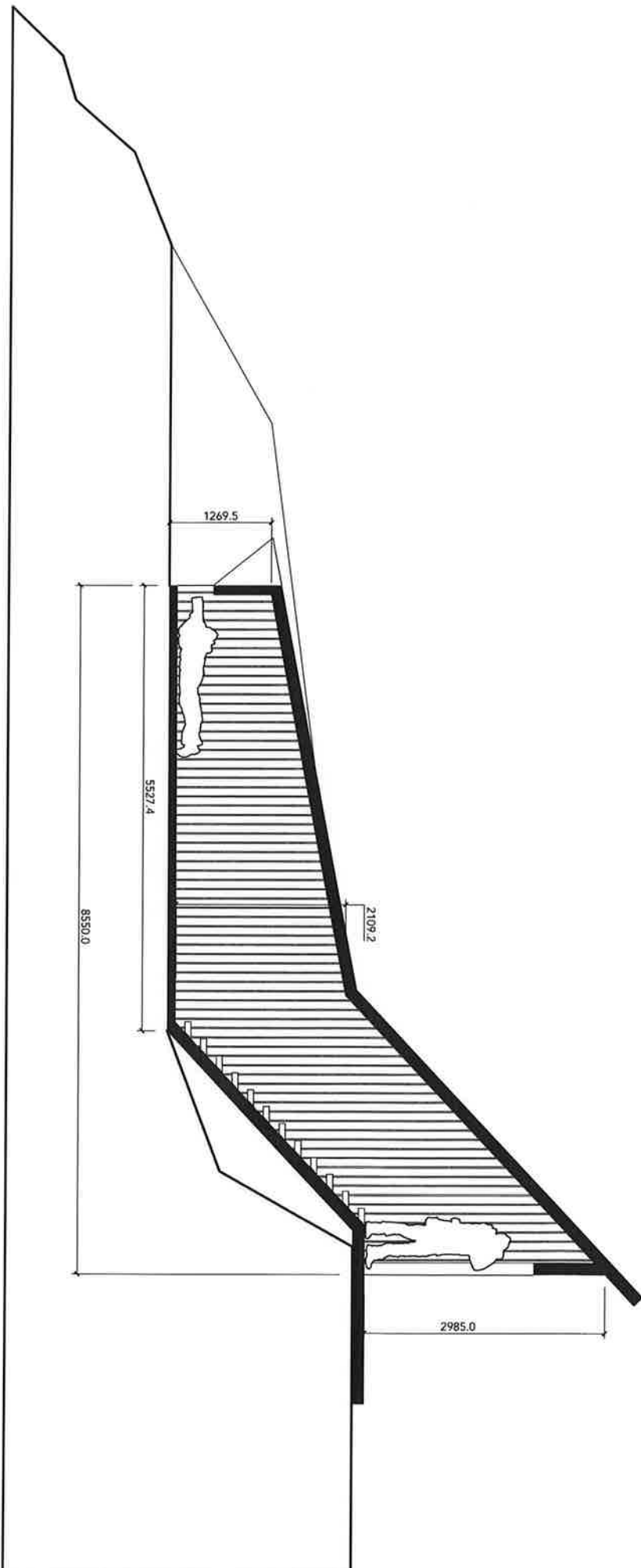
..... Wooden screen panel

Parking ▼



SECTION BRIDGE HIDE

SECTION PHOTO HIDE



KÓPASKER

Sea watching shelter

Kopasker is a fishing village on the eastern shore of Óxarfjörður which provides good sea watching opportunities for birders. To develop the site further we propose to build a windshelter that will provide protection from the elements and viewing opportunities out towards the sea. The windshelter will accommodate up to a maximum of 8 people at one time .

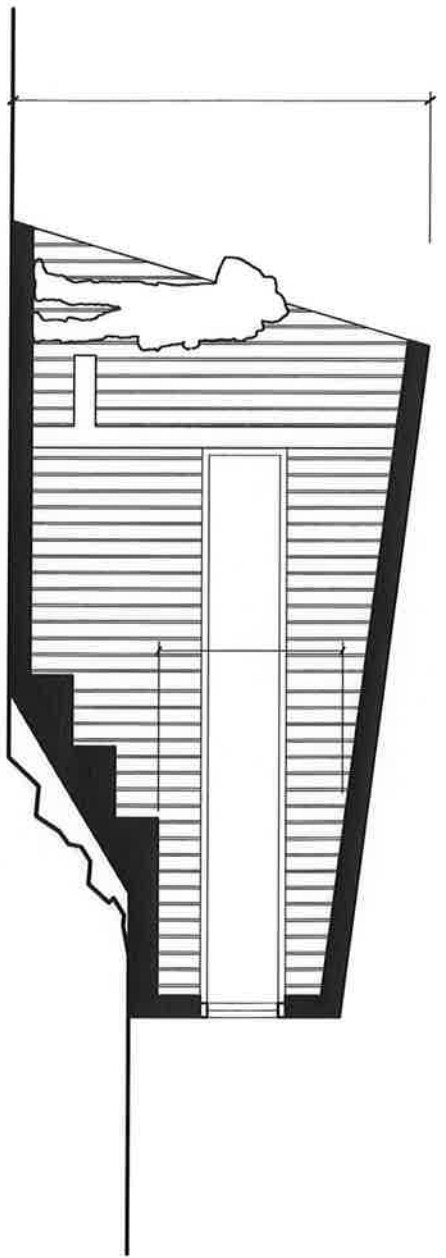




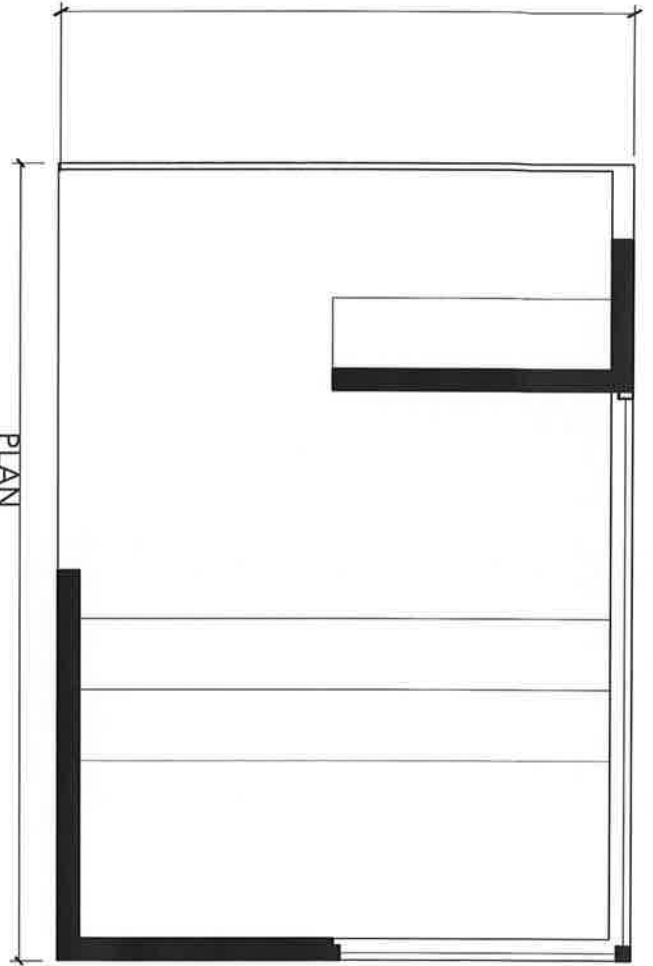
Torvald Amundsen © BirdLife



SECTION



PLAN



MELRAKKASLÉTTA

Wind shelter

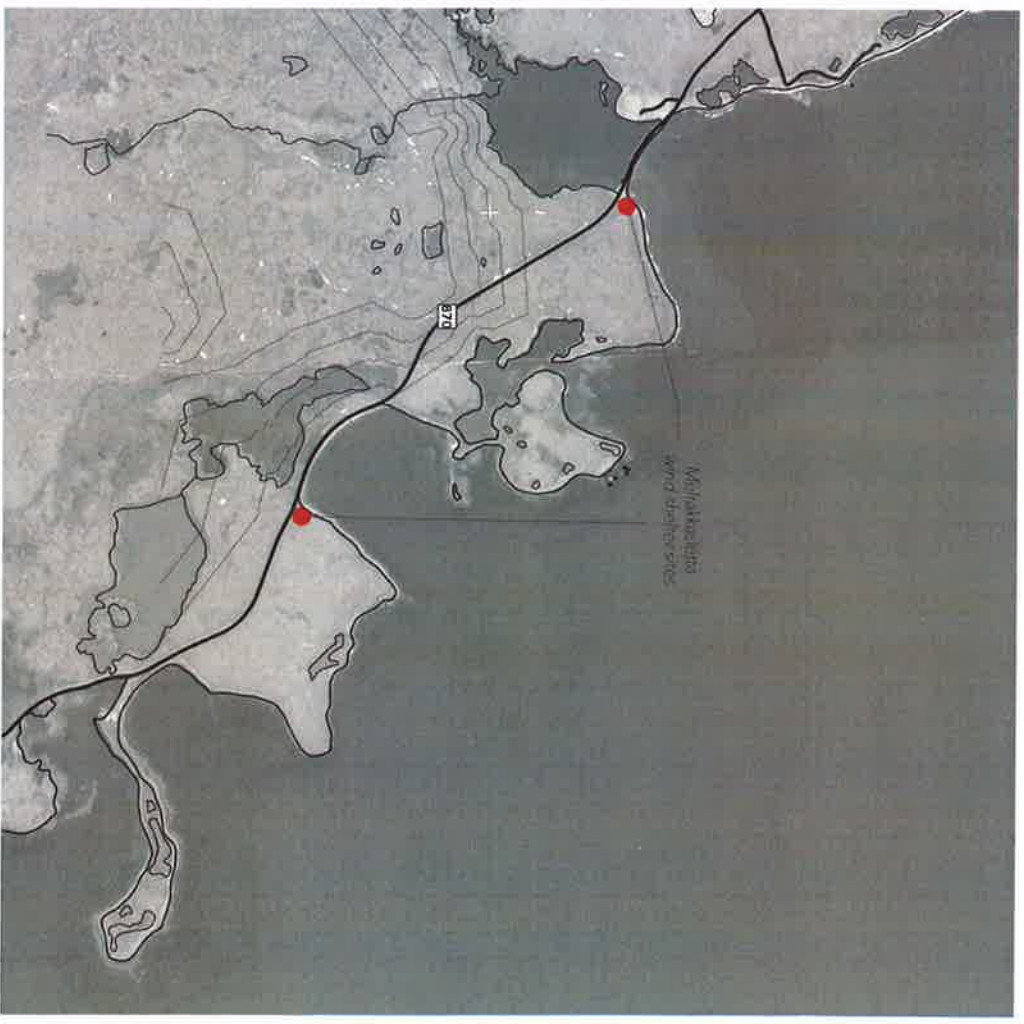
The area is a rich habitat for birds and wildlife. The area is a popular stopping place amongst a wide variety of bird species. The populations of bird species here is high and therefore is an ideal area to be developed into a birding attraction. The area is vast and open and with a mix of fiord, wetlands and lagoons that all provide unique viewing opportunities. The area is also a very good place to see the mid-night sun in summer and northern lights in winter.

Aerial showing Höskuldarnes towards Raufarhöfn



Grey Phalarope

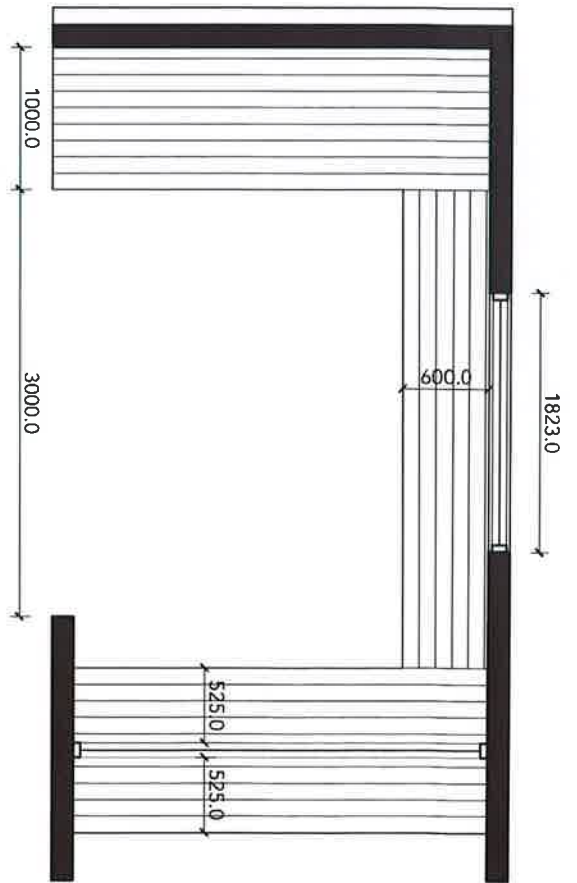




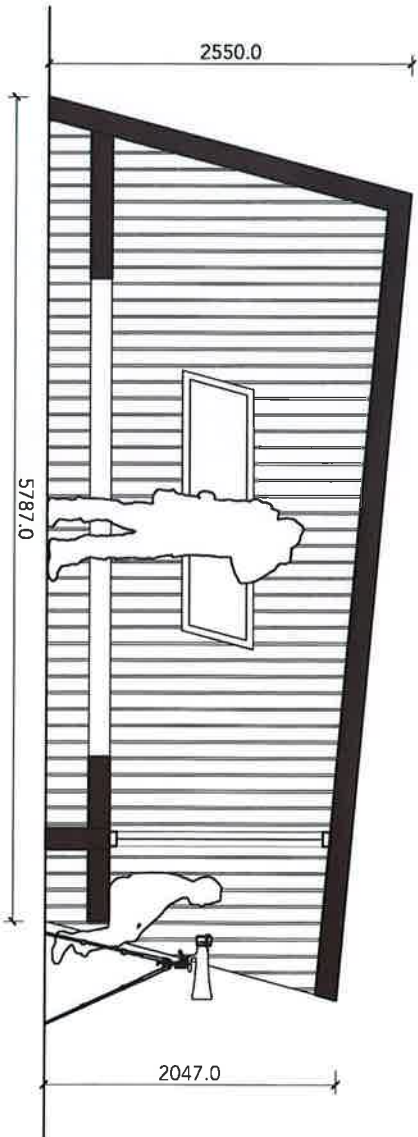
Two hides can be built in this area to take advantage of the rich habitat and large bird varieties and populations. The sites are located just off highway 870 and is accessible to a variety of audiences.

Hide 1 can be a wind shelter that is aimed at providing an overview of the beach and tidalflats, it will be large enough to accommodate small groups of people.

The second hide can be located in a situation where it provides closer viewing opportunities of the bay and fjord area.



PLAN



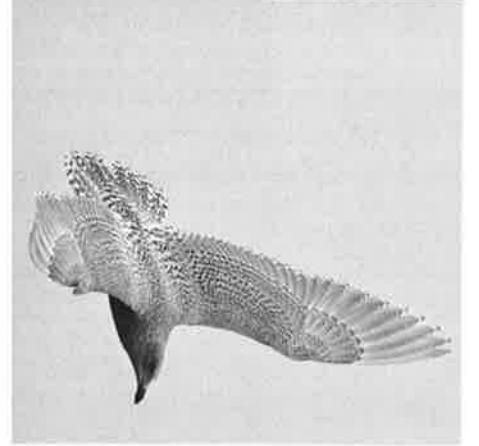
SECTION

VOPNAFJÖRDUR

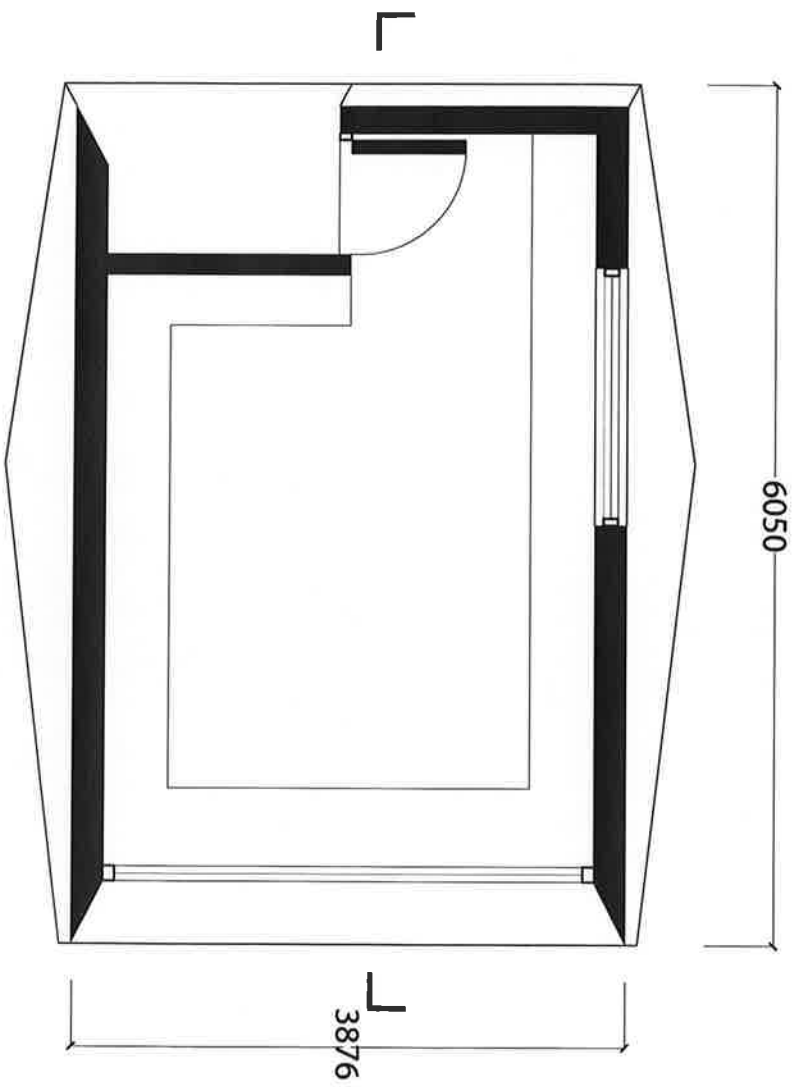
View point

The fish factory provides good feeding opportunities for the Gulls and therefore the area has good populations of a wide variety of Gulls. This provides great photo and viewing opportunities for birders and photographers. The ideal location for the hide is at the end of the spit which is already an established walking trail, this location provides good viewing opportunities of the gulls in the bay/harbour and is easily accessible to a variety of audiences.

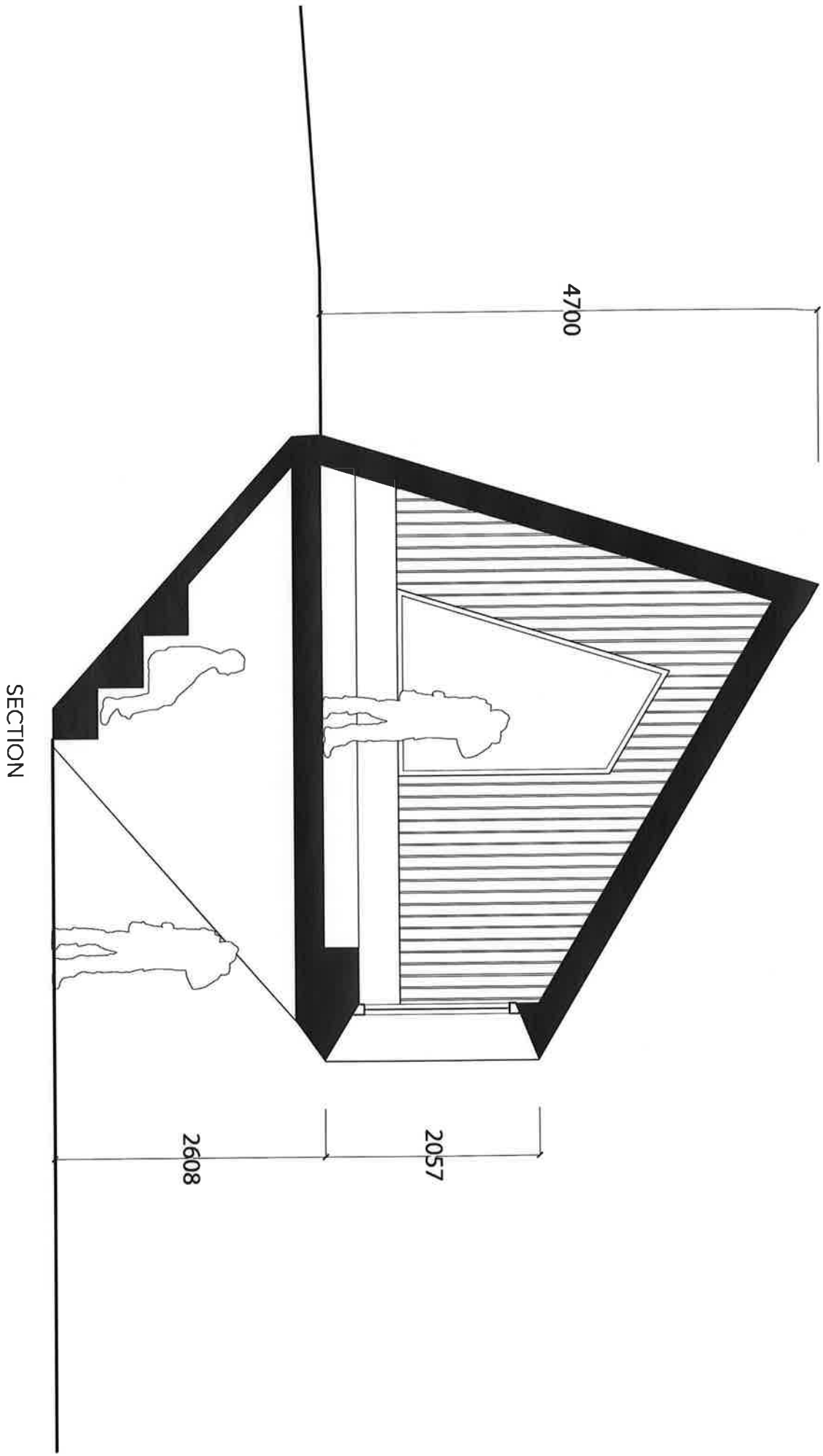








PLAN



4700

2057

2608

SECTION



