

# Sustainability, Design and Access Statement for the Reading Room at Kirknewton

---

## Summary

The Reading Room in Kirknewton is a traditional stone building in the same style as the workers cottages with which it is terraced. As the building's use by the community has now ceased this change of use to a private dwelling gives an opportunity to ensure its continued use and to make sure that it is well maintained and enhanced. I am making this application based on the premise that I will become a key-worker in the community, renting a workshop at Westnewton by an agreement which is place with the Estate. This workshop will be used as a base for two businesses, both of which will contribute to the strategic aims of Northumberland National Park in various dimensions. I view the potential for my living in the Reading Room and working from the Westnewton workshop in the Northumberland National Park as a valued opportunity to engage with the culture of the Kirknewton community. Because of this material relationship to the change of use for the Reading Room I have included considerations about the workshop and the businesses in this statement

**The Reading Room:** The impact on the Reading Room from this change of use would be minimal both internally and externally. Externally a permeable gravel hardstand for one car, located outside the front door, will be the only substantive change. Additionally the exterior of the building would be enhanced by repointing stone-work (using traditional lime-mortar), repairing rain-water goods and renovating the wood-framed windows and casements. The remaining land outside the Reading Room would be brought back into use as a garden using insect friendly plants. Internally the beautiful space which forms the major part of the Reading Room will be preserved as an open plan living area including kitchen and laundry facilities. An efficient wood burning stove will be installed in what is currently an open fireplace, with a back boiler. Radiators will be added taking water from a water tank fed by the back boiler with an immersion heater to top up. The current cloak-room will be reorganised so that a low flow-rate shower can be installed alongside a hand-basin and dual flush toilet. A 1500l rainwater harvesting system will be installed at the rear of the house collecting water from the roof to be used for laundry and flushing the toilet. The vestibule area will be partitioned, forming a corridor to the main living space and a small bedroom next to the shower and toilet. The false ceiling in this area will be removed to create a more open space for the bedroom.

**The Workshop, currently known as the Bothy:** The Bothy is included in this change of use application as both the work to enable its use as an office and workshop (thus making a base for my businesses), and the businesses themselves are integral to the change of use on the Reading Room. A separate change of use application is being made by the Kirknewton Estate for the Bothy in which changes to the building are detailed. As with the Reading Room these changes will have minor impact on the structure of the building but will significantly enhance the state of repair of the Bothy. Most importantly the proposed change will bring this building into use, extending the community of workshops being used within the Westnewton part of the Estate.

**Northumbrian Earth and Northumbrian Fire:** These two businesses, which it is proposed to base in the Bothy, have been developing slowly and organically alongside Northumbrian House. Northumbrian House is a Quality in Tourism 5 star, Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) Gold awarded B&B which I built from scratch and have been running in Berwick-upon-Tweed for the last 8 years generating my primary income. It is also taking most of my time. Northumbrian House is now on the market, giving an opportunity to grow Northumbrian Earth and Northumbrian Fire, which I welcome.

Northumbrian Earth was set up to tap into my primary expertise as a geologist and as a way of providing interpretation and access to the fine geology and landscape in this area. I have been successful in running many interpretative walks and talks and have been engaged in various community projects including extensive work with the Northumberland Coast AONB partnership. With a number of significant community projects requiring geological expertise close to fruition and a range of interesting possible projects as yet un-tapped through lack of time away from Northumbrian House, this is a good time to be able to set up this business on a firmer footing.

Northumbrian Fire is a creative foil to Northumbrian Earth and was set up to further my need to imagine, design and work with clay. Through Northumbrian Fire I have been successfully producing thrown stoneware as stock work for sale to guests and via a local shop. Various commissions have also been executed, including numerous pieces of bespoke thrown work and slab work including cottage signs. Latterly I have completed a series of commissions for Natural England, the RSPB and the Northumberland Coast AONB to make numerous ceramic little tern models to encourage them to nest on the coast. As with Northumbrian Earth there is a continued pipeline of commissions to complete, and many creative possibilities to explore and much networking and marketing which requires more extensive time spent, which the move to Kirknewton would allow.

Both of these businesses have been set up with the aim of providing services which are of value to the visitor economy as well as working within the community which I have lived in for the last 8 years. A move to Kirknewton is an excellent opportunity to continue developing both of these aims. In particular there are significant opportunities to develop the landscape interpretation, which has been successfully applied to the Northumberland Coast, within Northumberland National Park. The Cheviot and its enveloping landscape on the doorstep is going to be a major source of creative input which I hope will provide a way of reflecting back to our visitors another aspect of the beauty and tranquillity of the area. I also look forward to being able to offer both our visitors and the local communities an opportunity to understand more of the roots of this landscape and for them to get their fingers into some clay !

## Detailed response

### **a. Conserves and enhances the special qualities of the National Park.**

*(The special qualities are identified as:*

- *landscape rich in biodiversity and geodiversity;*
- *rich cultural heritage;*
- *true sense of tranquility;*
- *distinctive landscape character)*

The changes proposed to the Reading Room will be largely neutral, but will provide a way of ensuring the continued use and high quality maintenance of the property. In a wider sense, the change will facilitate my work with Northumbrian Earth and Northumbrian Fire, which will both celebrate the geo-diversity, rich cultural heritage and distinctive landscape of the National Park. This will be achieved through

- providing interpretation of the geo-diversity and access to it for both visitors and the local communities.
- creating ceramics inspired by the cultural heritage and distinctive landscape

#### **Consultation and scoping studies and detailed surveys and impact assessments**

The land associated with the Reading Room is limited and consists of mowed grass and unkempt flower beds which do not warrant consultation or surveying. The internal space offers no useful habitat for bats and no evidence of them has been found on the site.

#### **Design measures that encourage Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

The garden will be diversely planted to encourage bees, butterflies, moths, hover-flies, beetles and other insects. The house is built of a mix of andesitic lava and sandstone, which are representative of the local geology; this will be conserved.

#### **Rich cultural heritage**

The building is in a conservation area and will be maintained using traditional methods, for example using lime-mortar to repoint the stone work. Most of the original features of the building internally and externally will be conserved.

#### **True sense of tranquility and distinctive landscape character**

This change will maintain the status quo, with a building which is visually harmonious with the landscape. The only substantive change is a hard-stand for one car which will be finished in gravel in keeping with other adjacent properties and will be permeable.

### **b. Makes efficient use of land, materials, and infrastructure.**

#### **Land**

There is no change to the way in which the building integrates with the land

#### **Materials**

Internal wooden roof cladding and all other wood used will be sustainable FSC certified timber. Flooring will use a mixture of FSC certified timber, local stone and locally made ceramic.

#### **Infrastructure**

This change involves no changes to infrastructure.

### **c. Provides opportunities for all to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.**

Northumbrian Earth and its base in the Bothy will operate to provide interpretation of the geo-diversity of the area and will give opportunities for both the local community and visitors to the park an opportunity to access this diversity. This landscape in this area of the National Park is dominated by the ruins of a 350 million year old volcano which includes the vast magma chamber (now forming the Cheviot) in which molten rock built up before it was erupted as well as some of the ring of lavas spewed from its summit. There's plenty to interest visitor and community alike in this landscape.

**d. Promotes the local communities economic and social well-being and their ability to access services.**

**New business and business expansion**

This change of use will give the opportunity for two businesses, Northumbrian Earth and Northumbrian Fire, to be moved into the area and developed. This will employ one worker.

**Community facilities**

The businesses will offer interpretation and access of the local geo-diversity to the local community and will be able to offer opportunities to learn traditional pottery methods.

**Tourism and recreational development**

Both businesses will potentially attract visitors to the area and will offer activities giving greater diversity for people staying in the area. It is anticipated this will contribute to an increase in visitor numbers and an increase in the time spent by visitors in the area. This would benefit local accommodation providers, restaurants, pubs, shops and so forth.

**Transport and Accessibility and Designing out Crime**

Not applicable

**e. Reduces the causes and impacts of climate change, particularly by maximizing renewable energy generation and energy efficiency in buildings.**

**Renewable energy generation**

This is not a new build and the site does not offer the opportunity for renewable energy generation

**Energy efficiency**

An efficient wood burning stove will be installed in which locally sourced wood will be used, making the primary heat source sustainable and carbon neutral. Additional insulation will be installed under the roof to minimise heat loss from the roof. Shutters will be installed behind the windows to reduce heat loss through the windows.

**f. Demonstrates high quality design and sustainable construction.**

**High quality design, Sustainable construction, scale and appearance**

This change maintains the original design and construction of the building

**g. Promotes accessibility via public transport, cycling, or walking.**

**Distance from public transport**

The nearest public transport is bus at Wooler 5.5 miles away.

**Distance from designated cycle routes**

Cycles can be used directly outside of the house on the main road.

**Vehicular movement**

One car will be located at the house which will generate an additional 5 journeys per week either towards Kelso or Wooler.

**Parking**

There will be one new parking space created outside the house.

**Access**

The houses is accessible on the level and only has a ground floor and would therefore be suitable for ambulatory disabled and wheelchair access.

**i. Conserves water resources, air, and soils.****Water usage**

Low flow shower heads and taps will be fitted, a dual flush toilet installed and an A rated washing machine will be used to minimise water use. A 1500l water harvesting system will be installed to collect water from the large roof area and use it for laundry and toilet flushing.

**Soils**

Soils will be maintained and improved through cultivation of the garden. All surfaces including the hardstand will remain permeable.

**j. Reduces the amount of waste produced and increases the amount recycled.**

Plaster board removed from the false ceiling will be taken to the waste recycling station in Berwick. Wood from the studs will either be re-used or cut down and burnt in the wood burning stove.

Domestic waste will be recycled using the NCC scheme thereafter. Materials suitable for composting will be composted locally.

**k. Prevents inappropriate development in areas which are at risk of flooding or which contribute to the risk of flooding.**

The hardstand for car-parking is permeable. Water harvesting will take some water out of the drainage system. The Reading Room's contribution to water run-off will be slightly reduced in consequence.