



THE NATIONAL TRUST



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## **LOCAL COMMUNITY INVITED TO HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF HOUSESTEADS ROMAN FORT**

The National Trust and English Heritage are launching a series of activities aimed at inviting the local community to help shape the future of Housesteads Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall. The two Fort partners believe local insight is key to making sure that the needs of its visitors and local communities are at the heart of the activities at the site.

Housesteads Fort is the best preserved and most dramatically positioned of all the Roman forts on Hadrian's Wall. Getting the opinion of those who live on its doorstep is a vital first step to ensuring that the National Trust and English Heritage can deliver experiences and learning opportunities that not only appeal to the masses of national and international visitors that flock to the World Heritage Site each year, but also to the local community. The input of Housesteads' neighbours' is vital in developing the fort as a vibrant experience, which is set to include a centre for visitor and education activity.

The process of public engagement will be carried out over a number of months starting this spring and continuing into early summer, with the aim of engaging a diverse range of local groups, organisations and other stakeholders in shaping future activity at Housesteads Roman Fort. The following events will kick-start the programme:

- Saturday 7 March, 9am – 4pm. Add your initial thoughts and ideas to consultation panels on display at the Wentworth Leisure Centre and Hexham Library at the Queens Hall, as well as the Library in Haltwhistle.

- Thursday 12 March, 9.30am – 11.30am. Staff from the National Trust and English Heritage will be joining a coffee morning at Haltwhistle Methodist Church Hall to test reactions to a range of activity ideas for the Fort as well as asking for their suggestions.
- Saturday 18 April. The Hexham and Haltwhistle Saturday markets are two thriving activities at the heart of the local community and we're asking residents to visit the Housesteads Fort stall, and give us their views on the future of the site.

Melanie Eve, Community, Learning & Volunteer Manager for the National Trust said:

“The public consultation programme forms part of a five-year plan that aims to transform the visitor experience at Housesteads Roman Fort. We want to bring to life the people of Housesteads’ past and display more important artefacts originally discovered at the site, as well as providing better educational and community facilities.”

Alexandra Markham, English Heritage Outreach Manager - North East said:

“Housesteads is the best preserved Roman fort along Hadrian’s Wall and we really want to offer the best possible visitor experience. We’re looking forward to introducing our plans for Housesteads to the local community and getting their feedback and ideas.”

This five-year plan is subject to the National Trust and English Heritage gaining external funding and support from philanthropic sources, individuals and public bodies, all of whom both organisations hope will develop a partnership role at Housesteads.

- Ends –

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### **NOTES TO EDITOR**

For more information on either partner log onto:  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) or [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

#### **About Housesteads:**

Housesteads is the most complete example of a Roman fort in Britain. It is one of 12 permanent forts built by Emperor Hadrian in about AD124 to secure the new frontier now known as Hadrian's Wall. Known as 'Vercovicium' – the place of effective fighters – it was garrisoned by a cohort of around 800 soldiers originally from Belgium and later reinforced by Germanic cavalry.

Excavations at the fort began in 1822 and have revealed four double-portal gateways, the turreted curtain wall, three visible barrack blocks and latrines. At the centre are the most important buildings: the commandant's house, headquarter building and hospital.

The significance of Housesteads lies in its unique historical context, geographical setting and biodiversity. Within the context of Hadrian's Wall it is an iconic property, and as much part of world, as of national and of regional, heritage.

Housesteads Roman Fort is owned by the National Trust and in the joint management of the Trust and English Heritage.