



THE NATIONAL TRUST



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# New Visitor Experience for Housesteads Fort

## - Fort Partners Select Architects to Deliver Their Joint Vision -

The National Trust and English Heritage today took a huge step forward together by announcing plans to transform the visitor experience and welcome at Housesteads Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland.

Housesteads is the best preserved and most dramatically positioned of all the Roman forts on Hadrian's Wall and, working with Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd., the fort's partners will deliver a world-class visitor experience worthy of, and sensitive to, the fort's setting within the World Heritage Site.

Both organisations recognise the need to improve existing access, interpretation and visitor facilities at Housesteads, and this has been confirmed by recently completed audience research. In order to respond to the views of the public and develop these ambitious plans, the National Trust and English Heritage have selected Gareth Hoskins Architects to work with them on this exciting new project.

Gareth Hoskins Architects are the team behind the award-winning Culloden Battlefield visitor centre in Scotland and have a well-proven background of working in the heritage and tourism industry. Both organisations were impressed by the innovative ideas and energy the firm brought to the project, in particular, understanding the need to develop a fresh visitor experience that reflects the international significance of the site.

David Ronn, Regional Director for The National Trust in Yorkshire & the North East said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with English Heritage to enhance everyone’s experience of Housesteads. With the help of the architects we can now develop our ideas further and seek external support to deliver our vision.”

Jeremy Reed, English Heritage’s Visitor Operations Director for the North of England, said: “Over the summer, we’ve asked visitors what they want to see at Housesteads and we are committed to realising their and our ambitions. Housesteads is one of the pearls along Hadrian’s Wall and, once delivered, the new visitor experience will see the magnificent fort become a first-class tourist destination, and one which will bring benefits to the whole of the north east.”

The new Housesteads visitor experience will begin in 2012 and coincides with England’s hosting of the Olympics. Visitors and tourists to Housesteads will discover a welcome worthy of the world famous Hadrian’s Wall, including:

- a new visitor experience and one which brings to life the people of Housesteads’ past as never before and places the Roman fort within the overall context of Hadrian’s Wall
- an enhanced display with more of the important artefacts originally discovered at Housesteads on display
- better educational facilities and community facilities to welcome school visits and host family activities

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

## **Notes to Editors:**

For further press information please contact Helen Clarke at the National Trust on 01904 771904 or at [helen.clarke@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:helen.clarke@nationaltrust.org.uk) and Michael Murray Fennell at English Heritage on 020 7973 3372 or at [michael.murray-fennell@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:michael.murray-fennell@english-heritage.org.uk)

Images of Housesteads are available if required, please contact Helen Clarke

## **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.

## **About Gareth Hoskins Architects:**

Gareth Hoskins Architects is an award-winning practice, now in its 10th year. Through a series of major competition wins, the practice has grown quickly and is now recognized as one of the leading design practices in the UK, producing creative, innovative, award-winning buildings and environments.

The practice's experience covers a wide range, from community and healthcare to major arts, cultural and heritage initiatives, and from regeneration and commercial projects to public sector projects. Their work has been widely published and exhibited, both within the UK and abroad, and it has been featured in major exhibitions in Glasgow, London, Parma and New York. More recently, the practice won the competition to design 'a Gathering Space', Scotland's first standalone pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2008. Gareth Hoskins Architects has also been selected as the first featured practice in The Lighthouse Architectural Series, a series that celebrates Scottish architectural talent and aims to raise the profile of

architects working in Scotland, giving them wider national and international recognition.

Current projects by the practice include a school and a music venue and cinema, both in Shetland, the redevelopment of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and the development of a major new mixed use scheme within the World Heritage Site of Edinburgh's New Town.