

The Living Barracks: a future vision for Berwick Barracks

A vibrant live, work, create and visit community

Our vision is to turn Berwick Barracks into a thriving cultural hub and visitor destination within Berwick. By bringing all the empty buildings and spaces on the site back into use, we will boost the town's economy and profile while ensuring the survival of this historic landmark.

Providing a striking new home for the town's archives and collections, contemporary visual art and the Kings Own Scottish Borderers Regimental Museum on a single landmark site is central to our vision - updating and improving the exhibition areas, storage facilities, physical access and related services so that we can significantly enhance their presentation and ensure the Barracks are open all year round.

Northumberland County Council is working to relocate the Berwick Archives to the Barracks, which will sit alongside new research rooms for people using the archives and those of the KOSB.

To address demand from local artists and makers, and the wider creative industries, there will also be studio / office spaces and new opportunities for showing and selling work.

The Parade Ground will continue to play an important part in the life of the town, still being used for the Minden Day Parade and local festivals, but also being further animated through a wider public programme including outdoor music, theatre and cinema, site specific work, workshops, heritage events, new lighting and sound displays.

To help secure the site's future, the West Block and Clock Block will be returned to residential use, providing high quality apartments and town house units. There will be a café / restaurant within the Officers Mess and also space for a shop in the Gatehouse.

If we are able to realise this vision, it will be a major step forward in repositioning Berwick as a town with a diverse and distinctive year round cultural offer. This will benefit local residents, whilst also broadening the town's appeal for visitors - encouraging them to stay longer and support the town's wider economy.

What do you think?

The vision for Berwick Barracks has been developed by the Berwick Barracks Partnership, building on work previously commissioned with the help of Berwick Town Council, all English Heritage's tenants at the Barracks, Berwick Guild of Freeman and other local groups. Current project partners are:

- English Heritage
- The Maltings (Berwick) Trust
- The King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB)
- Northumberland County Council
- Berwick Barracks Heritage Trust

We are now keen to share our vision with the local community and would like to hear your views - and give you an opportunity to put questions to the Partners.

You can provide feedback on this proposal via email to: TheLivingBarracks@english-heritage.org.uk

The Berwick Barracks Partners will be leading tours of the site for local residents and stakeholders to discuss the proposals at 10am, 11am and 12 noon on Saturday 14th August.

Why does this matter?

Berwick Barracks is the largest and finest purpose-built barracks in England, a grade 1 listed structure that was built to original designs by the renowned architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. This imposing and slightly forbidding structure has acted as a significant landmark on the border of England and Scotland for centuries, fulfilling a military role for some 250 years until its closure in the 1960s.

Since then it has remained an icon for Berwick, showcasing collections and displays relating to the site and the wider area, and hosting a rich mix of cultural activity and community events. Even so, more than two thirds of the buildings on the site are empty, with huge but as yet untapped potential.

As with many large heritage sites, finding a financially viable model that not only covers the day to day operating costs but also generates a surplus for the long term protection of the buildings has proved challenging. The partners have been working together in a rapidly changing context to identify a sustainable future for the site.

More detail on the Living Barracks

After exploring a range of options, we have identified one that we feel is deliverable and financially sustainable. The proposed mix of uses includes a dynamic combination of residential units, artists workspaces, gallery space, affordable offices, archives and a family and regimental history research centre, plus an exciting new heritage and cultural space with 21st Century visitor facilities.

These uses will bring diverse and year round footfall to the site and will generate the income that is required to support a professional operation. This model will also enable all buildings to be brought back into use for the first time in over 60 years, safeguarding their future.

Importantly, these different uses will also attract a mix of capital funding which will allow essential redevelopment and maintenance to be undertaken to protect these magnificent buildings for the future.

We are calling our future vision **The Living Barracks** because our plan is to bring new life and vitality to this significant Berwick landmark.

The Living Barracks will include:

- Transformation of O and A blocks (in the East Barracks) into a much-improved museum and gallery site for the town, which showcases the historic buildings and provides increased space for permanent and temporary displays.
- The redevelopment of the West Barracks and the Clock Block into striking residential units, which will provide much-needed additional housing in the town.
- Major improvements to the Gymnasium Gallery enabling it to open year-round as a venue for exhibitions and a wider programme of cultural events.
- A new temporary exhibition and gallery space with facilities to accommodate schools and groups, which will connect the main museum in the East Barracks to the Gymnasium Gallery.
- New, affordable artists and creative industries workspaces and an artists' gallery in B block (East Barracks), as a new hub for the town's creative community.
- Affordable and flexible office space for site partners and other tenants in C block (East Barracks).

- Relocation of the Berwick Record Office archives into the Mob Store with a new family and regimental research centre on the ground floor of C block.
- A new catering outlet in the Officers Mess, catering for visitors, workers and residents on the site.
- A shared public space in the central parade ground courtyard, providing an imposing venue for a variety of cultural, heritage and community activities.

What will it cost?

We currently estimate that to deliver the whole scheme would require an investment of around £12m. However, the scheme has been designed in a way that allows key elements to be delivered sequentially as funds can be raised and funding partners found. In the case studies we have reviewed, the most successful schemes have been delivered in this way.

As a result of Borderlands Growth Deal funding, the Maltings (Berwick) Trust and NCC are working in partnership to refurbish the Gymnasium Gallery and the Mob Store over the next two years. The partners at the Barracks will work together to raise the capital required to restore the East Barracks and to create the new museum, exhibition space, artists' resources and offices. English Heritage will take the lead in identifying a suitable residential development partner who will be responsible for securing the funding and delivering the redevelopment of the West Barracks and Clock Block into new homes.