

# Design and Access Statement

## *Installation of star cairn on land north of West Woodburn*



*Prepared for Northumberland  
Wildlife Trust*

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# Installation of star cairn on land north of West Woodburn, Northumberland

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This supporting statement contains information to support a planning application for the installation of a star cairn as part of a dark skies project which is being joint funded by Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund. The star cairns have been designed by local artist Steve Pardue.
- 1.2 The Northumberland National Park and Kielder Forest Park were designated a 'Gold Tier' International Dark Sky Park in 2013, making it the largest dark sky protected area in Europe and the best place in England to view the night sky.
- 1.3 This proposed star cairn is one of five cairns which are to be situated at various points within Redesdale and within the International Dark Sky Park. Other star cairns are proposed in Rochester, Byrness, Otterburn and Elsdon and separate planning applications have been submitted for these. Two of the star cairns are in the Northumberland National Park area and have now been permitted.
- 1.4 These star cairns will provide an attraction for visitors to Northumberland who are interested in visiting the area for its renowned dark skies. Each star cairn site has been selected in consultation with Parish Councils and the Northumberland National Park Dark Skies lead officer. Northumberland County Council Highways department have also been consulted in this case due to the proximity to the highway. A number of options were put forward, and this application is for the preferred option.

## 2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The site proposed for the star cairn at West Woodburn is a short walk from West Woodburn village (1000m from the village up a quiet unadopted highway; the U5019). This route is on one of the village's waymarked walking trails, the Sandstone Way Cycle Route and the Three Churches Walking Route. It is therefore regularly used by walkers and cyclists and this star cairn will highlight the significance of dark skies in this area.
- 2.2 It is therefore expected that most visitors will park in West Woodburn and walk up to the star cairn. The star cairn could also be accessed by parking on the A68 layby and walking some 500m east along the same unadopted road. The star cairn position is shown on the photograph below and on the site and location plans submitted with this application. The location has been specifically chosen because there is very little artificial light in the area, and

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the site is safely and easily accessible. Original plans had been to situate the star cairn at the A68 layby, but this was considered to be unsuitable due to the amount of light from car headlights. This alternative site nearby has now been chosen.

2.3 There are no designations on the site and the site is not within the setting of any listed buildings and is not in a conservation area. The site is a short distance from the Northumberland National Park boundary.

2.4 The photograph below shows the area in which the star cairn is proposed to be situated. The star cairn itself will sit on a concrete base, with a small whinstone aggregate area around the outside. No paths will be required as the site is dry with good level access. Very little excavation will be necessary to install the base. All dimensions and groundworks proposed are shown on the attached plans.

2.5 The cairn will be situated 20m south of the bend in the road (as shown on the location and site plans) and just over 2m from the edge of the carriageway; and 1m from the boundary wall. Although there are informal areas where it is possible to park, the promotional literature for this star cairn will encourage people to walk up from the village of West Woodburn (about 1km distance) or park in the layby on the A68 (where the original star cairn was proposed) and walk down the road. This site is considered to be the safest, and is well away from the main road, thus reducing the impact of car headlights on the reading of the star cairn.



*Figure 1: Photograph showing location of area shown on site plans; this will be surfaced around the star cairn with stone chip aggregate*



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Figure 2: Aerial view of star cairn position

- 2.6 The plans submitted with this application show the detail of how the star cairn will be installed, and the dimensions of the piece. In summary, the star cairn will consist of rubble stonework 500mm diameter at the top and 550mm diameter at the bottom. The stone will be graded in sizes up to 100mm thick and will be sourced locally. A lime mortar mix will be used with the ratio of lime to sand varying depending on the type of stone to be used in construction. The star cairn will appear externally as a dry-stone wall but mortared internally for strength. A local dry-stone waller will be commissioned to build the star cairn and all stone will be locally sourced. Very little groundworks will be required, and certainly no works that would require machinery. The below-ground depth will not exceed 250mm to include a 150mm subbase.

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- 2.7 Stone will form the main part of the structure. On top of this will sit a steel internal lightbox under the zinc-etched disc, with a small aperture through which a light can be shone (for example by using a mobile phone light) which will illuminate the surface through light holes to give the viewer an impression of a constellation in the night sky. Each star cairn will have a different constellation visible. The star cairn itself will not be illuminated.
- 2.8 The star cairn will sit on concrete base with a gravel/chip surround of approximately 1m. The surrounding surface will be free draining and will blend into the surrounding grass over time.
- 2.9 The diagram below gives more detail of the proposed star cairn. Scale drawings have been submitted with the application. The total height (above ground level) will be just under one metre (diagram below shows 915mm in height).

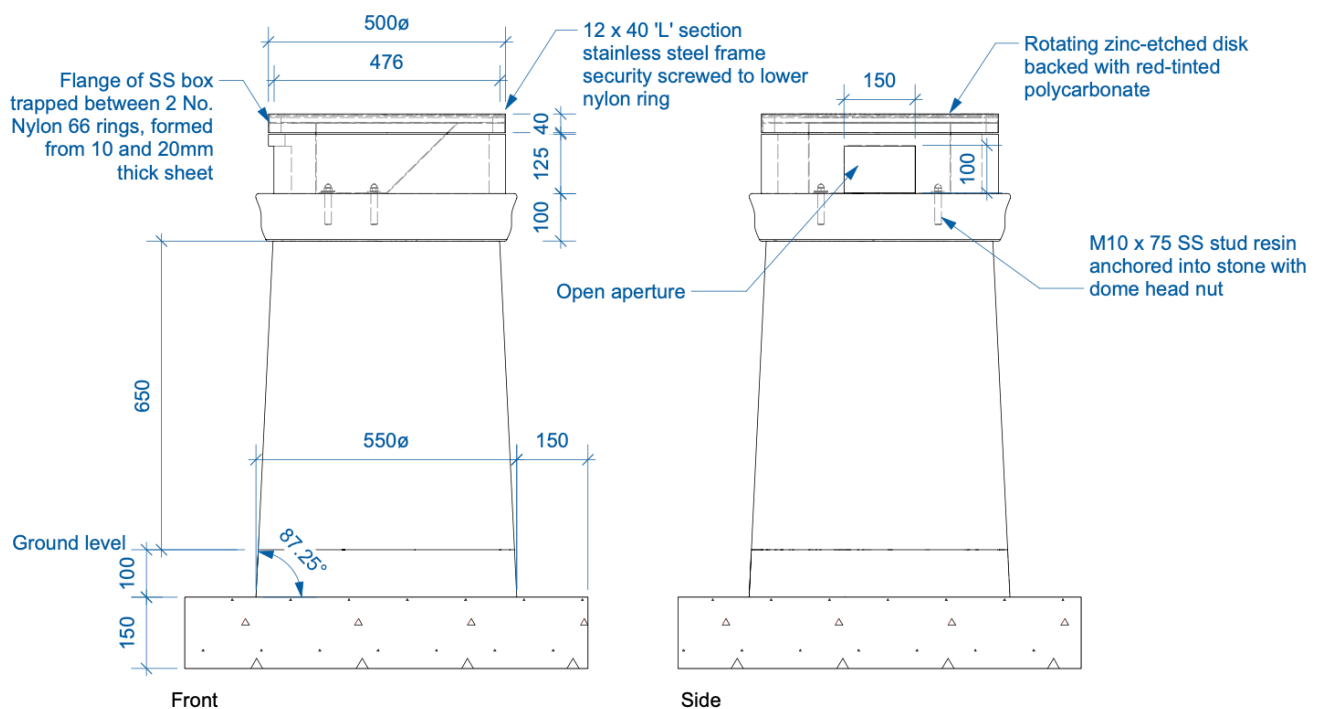


Figure 3: Elevations of proposed star cairn

### 3.0 Planning Policy

- 3.1 Planning decisions are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Local Plan for this area is the Northumberland Local Plan (adopted March 2022).
- 3.2 There are no specific policies about art installations of this nature. However, the proposal is

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in line with other planning policy, and in particular policies related to rural tourism development. Policy ECN15 (Tourism and visitor development). Part 1 of that policy states that Northumberland will be promoted and developed as a destination for tourists and visitors, while recognising the need to sustain and conserve the environment and local communities. As far as possible, planning decisions will facilitate the potential for Northumberland to be a destination for *inter alia* dark sky visits. Part 2 sets out a set of principles that will apply to new visitor attractions and facilities. These principles and criteria are not relevant to this proposal, which is a very small-scale development.

3.3 There is no lighting proposed in this development, and these star cairns will further the understanding and enjoyment of the dark skies in this part of Northumberland.

3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) sets out national planning policy and is a material consideration. Overall, it is considered that his proposal is in accordance with the NPPF.

### **4.0 Conclusions**

4.1 It is hoped that this proposal will be supported. It does not harm any features of importance, and it will provide an interesting and topical installation that will promote the enjoyment of dark skies and be a positive development for tourism. Due to the timescales for the project it is hoped that an early decision can be made on this application.