

Statement by Dr Ian Roberts on behalf of The Redesdale Society, objecting to Appeal Reference: APP/{2935/20/324389

My name is Dr Ian Roberts and I have lived for over forty years both in the North Tyne and Rede Valleys of Northumberland. I am a retired historian with degrees from London, Durham and Newcastle universities. I act as a consultant with the Archaeological Practice in Newcastle and have worked on many projects, including their well-known Northumberland Village Atlases.

I have served as Chair of the Bellingham Heritage Centre and published books and articles about North Northumberland, in addition to lecturing widely on diverse subjects connected with this area. I am the history consultant on the repair and consolidation of the Ridsdale Engine House, the last visible reminder of the Ridsdale Ironworks and Northumberland's industrial past and wrote the interpretative panel for the site. I am therefore very familiar indeed with the history and heritage of upper Northumberland concerned in this Appeal.

I am speaking now on behalf of members of The Redesdale Society, of which I am Chair. This society was founded in 1970 and is one of the oldest history societies in Northumberland. Its members are drawn for the most part from Upper Northumberland, and include active pre-historians, literary scholars, linguists and scientists whose opinions I have taken into account in preparing this statement and our previous objections.

The principal aim of the Redesdale Society is to conserve and protect our Northumberland heritage in its many guises for the enjoyment of its inhabitants and visitors, and for the benefit of future generations. Our Society's members are fully cognisant and appreciative of the history of Redesdale and its surrounding areas and are actively involved in preserving this heritage. At present, we are working closely with the Revitalising Redesdale Partnership Project, whose aim is to celebrate and protect the rich cultural heritage, landscape and wildlife of Redesdale.

Redesdale Society members object strongly to the Ascendant Landmark proposal. Contrary to the Appellant's claims about the sculpture fitting intimately into the landscape, we believe that such an erection on Cold Law would be an incongruous intrusion on this hill, totally out of character with the rural tranquillity of the surrounding landscape.

The Appellant claims that the design of Ascendant has been informed by the characteristics of the precise location in which it is sited. But the precise location of the Cold Law site is noted for its remote, open countryside and we question how an ugly, man-made, 55-metre high, steel sculpture of very dubious shape could be characteristic of this landscape, despite the many superficial claims made by the Appellant to the contrary.

In terms of heritage, it is actually the current repair and consolidation of the engine-house of Armstrong's nineteenth-century Ironworks which truly reflects the history of ironworks in its actual Ridsdale location, whereas the Appellant's association of the proposed modern Landmark with historical ironworking totally lacks credibility.

The preposterous claim on behalf of the Appellant that the design of the Landmark and viewing area: *"reflects the history of the tri-radial cairns in this area relating the sculpture to this historical astronomical association"* (quote < McCreedy submission on behalf of Appellant) and added that the blade points to the sun's zenith on Midsummer's Day, echoing the cosmic beliefs of the Bronze age people who constructed these cairns (< article by Richard Morrison, *The Times*, 18 February 2021). We queried the veracity of these statements with local archaeologists, who say they are "patent rubbish". Whilst it is true that the moors of Northumberland are an ancient landscape, littered with trackways, hill forts and burial cairns, including some of a triangular nature, these

spurious claims about the cosmic beliefs and astronomical associations of a Bronze Age people lack any scientific or historical credibility.

Moreover, the Appellant's proposal to erect this incongruous sculpture anchored in concrete, with its surrounding pathways and large carparks, will necessitate cutting a major slice out of the bedrock of a hill which has lain undisturbed for millennia, inevitably causing great destruction to the existing eco-structure and wildlife.

In short, the Redesdale Society contends that the Appellant's Ascendant proposal contravenes important principles of the Tynedale Local Development Framework Core strategy in that it:

- makes a negative contribution to local landform and topography;
- disrespects the local context and lends no enhancement to the natural or heritage environment;
and
- violates and destroys the highly-prized ecological assets of a tranquil, remote rural landscape.
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The Redesdale Society strongly urges that this ill-conceived Appeal is rejected.