

Snipies' Bothy – Green Policy

History

Snipefield dates back to about 1720. When we purchased it in 1981 the original farmhouse was in a state of near dereliction and the steading in agricultural use. After converting the steading to a family home we had the problem of what to do with the house, and nearly demolished it. This seemed to be a waste of a building and after several ideas came up with the notion of a holiday cottage. The conversion was carried out between 1993 and 1995 and was completed as time, money and materials became available. (See photographs in the hall) It was first let as a holiday cottage in June 1995.

In converting the former farmhouse into a self-catering holiday cottage, and in its management, it was, and remains our aim to minimise the impact on the environment.

Conversion.

In planning the layout of the building, maximum utilisation of the features of the original building were incorporated in order to make the best use of space. This allowed the compact conversion to be possible, with the minimum use of materials. The alcoves in the thickness of the gable walls were used; for the bookshelves in the small bedroom, the dressing table in the main bedroom, the laundry recess in the kitchen and the lavatory space in the bathroom. The south sitting room window was originally the front door and the internal layout was designed around all the other window openings being left in their original position.

During the partial demolition prior to conversion, all surplus wood that could not be salvaged was used as fuel in the wood burning central heating system of Snipefield. As much of the surplus undressed stone as possible was used to fill in the solum and to make the front patio.

Where ever possible materials used in the construction were either salvaged, bought second hand or were surplus from other works.

This included

- ◆ All the structural timber including the internal stud walls.
- ◆ The stone to make the windows in the small bedroom, the blind end to the west gable wall, the chimney and the chimney pot.
- ◆ The granite fireplace was taken from the 'chaumer' at Snipefield, the hearth was the original front door step, the fire back was from one of the original upstairs bedroom fires and the wood for the mantel shelf and fender were surplus wood salvaged from the old Aberdeen Gas Works.
- ◆ The beams in the sitting room were surplus from an extension being built in Aberdeen which the owner intended to burn!

The sarking boards were sawn on site from windblown timber grown at Snipefield; the surplus was used to board the loft floor.

The surplus dressed stone from the construction was used to make the patio, and the pump feature on the west side also includes a salvaged local metal cattle water trough. It is interesting to note that the original fireplace that was on the west wall of the kitchen

had two granite lintels, one of which forms part of the front of the patio; the other is now above the wood burning stove in the kitchen at Snipefield.

The roof slates were bought second hand and the ridge tiles salvaged from a local agricultural building. The original Scotch slates on the roof were sold to be reused on the extension of a local building.

The use of tropical hardwoods was kept to a minimum, consistent with durability. The internal doors, door facings, skirting boards, window returns, architraves, dados, kitchen splash backs and much of the shelving is made from European softwood. The laminate flooring in the kitchen and bathroom is from European oak.

The hall cupboard unit and the doors to the crockery cupboard are made from surplus materials from previous works, and the main storage heater was bought second hand.

Environmental Impact on Guests.

There is a substantial environmental benefit for the public to holiday in the UK thereby reducing the damage caused by air travel. We therefore do all that we can to ensure that our guest's stay is an experience that encourages them to return. We aim to provide a high, 4 star standard of accommodation and to relate to our guests in a manner that adds to their enjoyment of their stay. We do not do anything that will make guests feel that their own life style is being criticized, scrutinised or is wrong. To that end we do not evangelise, try to educate or preach to our guests on environments issues. Our only interface with our guests on environmental matters is to set a good example by providing all the facilities for re-cycling/composting etc and by pointing these out on their arrival brief. The success of this policy is borne out by our high return rate of over 70%.

In addition to the Welcome Schemes that we offer we will continue to identify other similar marketing themes that have an environmental benefit.

Energy Usage.

Whilst guests are staying in the Bothy we have no control over how much energy they use. That is dependant upon their own life style and it will not encourage them to return if they are made to feel guilty about their usage. The only way in which we can affect efficient usage of energy is to provide the high standard of insulating, have in place the most suitable control systems and fit/provide low energy appliances. All of which we aim to do.

Due to the differing usage by guests, the seasonal changes and the changes of season occupancy no statistics can be obtained from monitoring energy use that can be of any benefit in future planning and therefore such records are not kept except on an annual basis.

All heaters, with the exception of the bathroom fan heater, have individual thermostatic and time control systems. These time controls are pre-set to ensure a correct balance between comfort, convenience, tariff and economy. The storage heater in the sitting room and one of the immersion heaters are run on low tariff electricity available only when electricity demand is low. Both this, and the day immersion heater which is on a time switch, have their thermostat set to below 60 degrees C. With the exception of the kitchen and where not otherwise possible all lights are either low energy or controlled by dimmer switches. The outside lights are controlled by a PIR system.

The fuel for the wood burning stove is sourced either from windblown timber, salvaged material, i.e. old fence posts, or thinnings. If none of these are available it may be supplemented by wood briquettes. The Bothy shares the benefit of a 6kw wind turbine with Snipefield. The time switches for individual electrical items are co-ordinated with Snipefield to maximise this benefit.

A shower is fitted instead of a bath not only to maximise on space but also to reduce energy use.

The designed layout of the interior has all the plumbing along the west wall in order to reduce materials and to minimise heat lost in pipe runs.

Laundry is carried out at Snipefield. In the winter, the water is heated by a wood burning stove which burns windblown timber, thinnings or scrap wood. A solar system preheats the water. In summer when the wood burning stove is not required for space heating, a night immersion is used, but the output of the solar system is very much greater. The washing machine operates on a time switch to utilise low tariff electricity. Laundry is air dried, either outside or from a ceiling rack. As there is time between lets, laundering can be carried out to fit in with suitable environmental drying conditions.

Insulating

The building is insulated to a higher standard than was required by regulation at the time of conversion. The external walls are 500-750mm of stone. The internal face is tanked to 1000mm from below the damp proof. The outside is painted to reduce moisture absorption and subsequent cooling due to evaporation. Inside the stone wall there is a 50mm air gap before a stud wall which is made up of 4mm plywood treated with bitumen to form a vapour barrier, 75mm insulating, foil backed moisture resistant building paper and 12.7mm plasterboard. The loft is insulated to 200mm or more except where there is a requirement for heat sink for frost protection. The section that is requires frost protection has further insulating on the underside of the rafters and is partitioned from the rest of the loft space. All windows and the door, including the letterbox are fully draught proof and all the windows are double-glazed. The hot water cylinder is insulated to over 50mm and the plumbing to a similar standard.

Water

The water is drawn from a 5 metre deep well. To meet the latest EU regulations the water is filtered to remove ions of manganese and iron. The back flushed water is returned to the water table via a soak away and the potable water treated in a UV filter to kill any bacteria. As there is minimal environmental impact of water usage, it all ending up back in the water table less than 200 yards from where it was extracted, water usage is not monitored or restricted.

The water supply pipe to the Bothy is heat traced where it is liable to be frost damaged in order to reduce the waste of materials caused by a burst pipe.

The hand pump at the water feature next to the Bothy is still connected to the original well that served Snipefield. This provides an emergency limited water supply and has also been subject to a full analysis.

There are four water butts on Snipefield and its outbuildings. The water from these is used for watering the plants and hanging baskets as well as pressure washing the paths, patios and vehicles.

Waste

Before any item is removed from the Bothy consideration is given to whether it can be repaired, refurbished, or modified to remain in service. If items are removed that are serviceable all efforts are made to find an alternative location where they can continue to be used until becoming unserviceable by, for example selling them second hand or donating them to a charity shop/the local community hall etc. Unserviceable items will in the first instance be use as salvage i.e. reduced to rag or fire wood. Any remaining waste will be recycled if collection facilities are available at the main recycling point in Inverurie. We take the waste for recycling when it is convenient to combine with another journey.

When hygienically possible we sort waste left by guests to remove items for recycling which includes food waste that can be fed to our dogs, pony, hens, cats, or wild birds. A compost bin is provided for biodegradable household waste. All lawn and hedge cuttings from around the Bothy are also composted.

New Technology.

We will monitor the availability of new technologies that could result in an energy saving or other environmental benefit. In considering when to incorporate these we will strike a balance between the benefit and other factors such as safety, quality grading, environmental or financial cost of replacing a serviceable item and any other appropriate factors.

Activities.

As there is an environmental benefit in guests staying at the Bothy or its environs by saving road journeys we provide a wide range of equipment and activities. These range from the availability of woodland walks and paddocks to play ball games to peddle go-carts and children's bicycles.

Complementary Items.

When available, home grown organic vegetables, flowers, fruit and eggs will be provided from Snipefield as will seasonal decorative foliage and a Christmas Tree if needed. A basket of produce will be provided selected from quality locally produced items.

Management.

In managing the administration of the Bothy we will always take into account the environmental impact of our methods, ranging from the use of recycled paper/printed material to the energy management during times of no occupancy, and from the increased use of e-mails to the combining of necessary road journeys.

Provision of Information

Information is provided on;

- ◆ Local public transport routes and timetables.
- ◆ Walks
- ◆ Mountain bike areas
- ◆ Cycle Routes
- ◆ Cycle hire
- ◆ Cross country skiing
- ◆ Nature reserves
- ◆ Local fisheries

In addition to this we are able to give you more detailed information on all of the above tailored to guests needs.

We are able to provide suitable storage for cycles or other outdoor recreational equipment if required.

Finally.

It remains our aim to ensure the minimum impact on the environment in running our self catering holiday cottage. In focusing on ensuring that our guests have an experience with us, Scotland and the UK we recognise that also has a very real but less obvious environmental benefit.