

MEDIA RELEASE – Thursday, April 12 2018

Work on The International Centre for Shared Reading gets underway at Calderstones Mansion

The Props Assist the House, Emily Dickinson
Until the House is built
And then the Props withdraw
And adequate, erect,
The House supports itself...

The Reader is delighted to announce that work to redevelop the Grade II-listed Calderstones Mansion House has begun. Hoardings and scaffolding have been erected around the building at the heart of the park as builders from John Turner Construction Group arrive on site to complete the multi-million-pound project which will transform the Mansion House into The Reader's *International Centre for Shared Reading*.

The charity, which aims to get great literature into the hands of people who need it most, has been based in Calderstones Park since September 2014 and has secured major funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, Liverpool City Council and private funders to bring the Mansion House back to life as a community hub built on reading and well-being activity.

Phase One of this ambitious project was completed in 2015 with the opening of the much-loved children's literature centre, The Storybarn, and The Reader Ice Cream Parlour, a new social enterprise, in the courtyard at Calderstones Park. The Mansion House closed its doors to the public in early 2017 to allow Phase Two to get underway. Park users will have noticed an increase in activity on site in recent months as the popular Reader Café moved into a temporary building in the courtyard and the arrival of a temporary toilet block which will allow much-needed repairs to get underway at the Mansion House.

Dr Jane Davis, founder and director of The Reader said: *"It's fantastic to see fences up and builders on site. So much of the planning and the work so far has happened behind the scenes, now that park users can see the signs of progress, the excitement has gone up a notch.*

"Now we can really focus on what Calderstones is going to be when the doors open again next year - a community based around readers, the rich heritage of the site and the experience of nature offered by the park. It will be a place where you can learn, get involved, meet other people, and build relationships. There will be readers and reading rooms, wellbeing activities, heritage, volunteering, food and fun all within a beautiful public park. And our social enterprises will continue to generate jobs and volunteering opportunities. All these things will be held together by the ideal of a warm, kind, connected, lively community of readers."

Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson said: *"We know that reading is crucial for a child's development and that reading for pleasure can provide a wealth of opportunities for people, whatever their age or background. What The Reader is creating here at Calderstones Mansion House is fantastic – it will give people the chance to discover reading for pleasure and for better health and wellbeing, but it will also create jobs, volunteering and learning opportunities. It will be fantastic to see this beautiful building brought back to life."*

The International Centre for Shared Reading will celebrate the history and rich heritage of the Mansion House, built in 1828 for Joseph Need Walker and later owned by the Mclver family of Cunard Shipping, and of the park itself. The Reader can confirm that the Calder Stones, the internationally important Neolithic monuments which once formed part of a chambered tomb and give the park its name, will be temporarily taken off-site for conservation and cleaning work. The Stones, which are currently housed in a glasshouse in the park, will return to take pride of place at the centre of a new heritage offer in time for estimated project completion in Spring 2019.

With building work underway there will be an increase in traffic on site but wherever possible this will occur during quieter times in the park. The Reader hopes to keep disruption for park users to a minimum and welcome any questions or concerns from the local community. There are also opportunities for the local community to be apart of this project, The Reader invites anyone who is interested in supporting the project as a volunteer or donor to get in touch.

You can contact The Reader by calling 0151 729 2200 or emailing info@thereader.org.uk.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

This refurbishment project is supported by Liverpool City Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Garfield Weston Foundation, Tudor Trust, AKO Capital, Ravensdale Trust, and The Pilkinton Charities Fund. For further information, please contact: Emma Walsh, Communications Coordinator, emmawalsh@thereader.org.uk 0151 729 2200 / 07565 816022

About The Reader www.thereader.org.uk

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England, The Reader is an award-winning, charitable social enterprise which brings people together, changes lives and builds communities through sharing great literature. Our unique *Shared Reading* model brings small groups together each week to read aloud poetry, short stories, novels or plays with informal, personal group discussion led by a trained Reader Leader.

For over a decade The Reader has been working in partnership with CCGs, Public Health Bodies and NHS Trusts across the UK to support thousands of people with a wide range of health and social issues including, mental health conditions, dementia, chronic pain, isolation and recovery from substance misuse. Whether delivered by volunteers or Reader staff, *Shared Reading* offers people a practical way to improve well-being, build confidence and connect with others.

SOCIAL - @thereaderorg #SharedReading Charity Number 1126806 (SCO43054 Scotland)

About Calderstones

The Reader has a 125-year lease for Calderstones Mansion House and will transform the site into *The International Centre for Shared Reading*. On completion, *The International Centre for Shared Reading* will become a hub for Shared Reading and well-being activity, create new businesses and provide opportunities for people to reach their full potential through employment, volunteering and training.

Phase one of this development is now complete with The Reader Ice Cream Parlour opening in the courtyard in 2015, followed by interactive children's story centre, The Storybarn, the following year. We are now in phase two which includes a full refurbishment of the Mansion House and conservation work on the Neolithic Calder Stones.