

# Crafting bespoke homes in rural Scotland



I returned to my hometown in Aberdeenshire not long after the financial crisis of 2008, after working at an architectural practice in New Zealand. It became apparent very quickly that this was not the best time for a young architect to look for work in Scotland. With few savings and no responses to my endless job enquiries, I was forced into doing what I had always wanted to do, starting my own practice.

No longer wanting to live or work in a city I was drawn back to my roots of being raised on a small farm in Aberdeenshire where the ambition of becoming an architect was first nurtured. My father was a joiner and ran his own (small) construction firm building homes and extensions around the Northeast – he had built every house I had lived in growing up. The years of living and working with my

father created a solid foundation and influenced my choices on the road to becoming an architect.

Today Fiddes Architects have a team of four, three of whom are architects. Our projects span all over Scotland with the majority in Aberdeenshire. As a team our roots are deeply invested in the local landscape, each project begins with a profound appreciation for the land, its unique character and every site offers its own narrative waiting to be told through architecture. Our process is guided by a robust understanding of the local environment, its history, and its people, ensuring that each home is a reflection of its surroundings and the aspirations of its inhabitants.

One of the foremost challenges we face when building in remote Scottish locations is the huge logistical complexities.

#### Above

New Workshop –  
Aultnacoille, Auchattie,  
Aberdeenshire

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#### Opposite page

New Dwelling – Tummel,  
Torphins, Aberdeenshire

© David Barbour







**Above**  
New Dwelling –  
Affrusk, Strachan,  
Aberdeenshire  
© David Barbour

**Left**  
New Dwelling –  
Affrusk, Strachan,  
Aberdeenshire  
© Eoghain Fiddes



**Above**  
New Dwelling –  
Gellan, Strachan,  
Aberdeenshire  
© David Barbour

**Right**  
New Dwelling – Sable,  
Torphins, Aberdeenshire  
© David Barbour



Limited access to sites, unpredictable weather conditions, and rugged terrain can all present formidable hurdles that constantly demand innovative solutions. Almost all of our designs have their timber frame elements prefabricated off-site and are then assembled on location, which not only streamlines the construction process but also reduces our environmental footprint - a principle deeply ingrained in our practice.

Sustainability lies at the heart of good architecture. We believe in harnessing the natural resources available to us, minimising waste, and creating homes that are environmentally responsible. From passive solar design to heat pump and micro power generation we integrate sustainable features into every aspect of our projects, ensuring that our homes tread lightly on the land.

Another significant obstacle in rural housing development is the scarcity of essential services and utilities, for the most remote areas lack access to mains electricity, water, and sewage systems.. Installing new infrastructure such as power lines and running water supplies can be prohibitively expensive and environmentally disruptive, requiring careful consideration of alternative solutions.

By honouring traditional building techniques and materials, we pay homage to the rich architectural heritage of Scotland while creating homes that meet the needs of modern living. Each home is a testament to the enduring bond between architecture and landscape, a celebration of the beauty and resilience of Scotland's remote places.

We hope that when clients set foot inside their new home, they are enveloped in a sense of belonging, a feeling that they are not just occupants but custodians of a cherished piece of land. Building bespoke homes in remote Scottish landscapes is not just a profession but a passion, a labour of love that allows us to connect with the land and its people in profound and meaningful ways. With my father turning 80 years old this May and completing his final build in the Northwest Highlands I aspire to be doing the same, no matter the weather, in the foreseeable future. ■

**Eoghain Fiddes**  
Director, Fiddes Architects