

HINCHLIFFE'S Farm Shop is getting back on its feet just weeks after a devastating fire.



But they've had to let some staff go and jobs are on hold until they can fully re-open.

The well-known shop, restaurant, office and butchery were destroyed in a blaze on July 5.

But today the Netherton business will take a big step on the road to recovery.

Workers will start to clear the blackened blaze site in readiness for the farm shop to re-open.

General Manager Simon Hirst will be glad to see the back of the scorched debris which is still giving off a powerful smell nearly a month after the blaze.

"There's an appalling smell of burning which could be a health hazard. It will be a relief to get rid of it," he said.

"I'm glad the insurers have given us permission to clear the site and, hopefully, the job will be done in two weeks."

Mr Hirst also hopes to have a marquee in the car park by this weekend, allowing the business to sell eggs, bread and potatoes.

He said: "At the moment we're selling a few eggs out of a cattle-box, which is very basic."

Then Mr Hirst intends to ask Kirklees Council for planning permission to set up a large temporary structure in the paddock next to the car park.

He said: "It might have to be in place for 12 months for as long as it takes us to get the shop re-built on its original site."

Around 200 chickens died in the fire at Sunnyside Farm on Netherton Moor Road. The rest of the livestock, including three alpacas, survived the blaze.

Mr Hirst is using these animals and others at his farms in Meltham and Slaithwaite to generate funds while the farm shop is re-built.

He said: "Most of the farm was unaffected which means we still have an income from our poultry and livestock."

Some of the 60 staff have now left the business.

"We've kept a skeleton staff on but most of them we've had to let go," said Mr Hirst.

"A few of the staff are going away to college and things like that, but most of them would like their jobs back when we re-open. They've been very understanding."

Customers have also offered their support to the business, which was one of the first farm shops in the country when it opened in 1974.

Mr Hirst said: "Some people have told me they don't know where they're going to get their meat from, which is a touching thing to say.

"Wherever I go people ask me when we're going to re-open.

"We've had lots of cards and letters and lots of people wishing us well in the Examiner."