



# Embrace Abbeydale FAQs October 2024



## What's happening at Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet?

Sheffield Museums is currently midway through *Embrace Abbeydale*, a two-year series of improvements at the Hamlet, generously supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Separate to *Embrace Abbeydale*, Sheffield City Council are also planning the delivery a programme of remedial work to repair a leak in the dam and weir that supply the Hamlet's waterwheels.

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## Embrace Abbeydale

### What are the plans for the Embrace Abbeydale project?

The £235,000 grant from [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) will support Sheffield Museums to deliver a series of improvements to the site, including:

- Improvements to the visitor experience, such as:
  - An improved car park
  - A new welcome area including a shop
  - New interpretation and displays that better tell the story of Abbeydale and the people that lived and worked here.
  - An enhanced learning programme for schools
- Restoration of the Blowing Engine Waterwheel and the Boring Shop.
- New family resources, including the introduction of a play area.
- Development of more volunteering opportunities linked to the site and the work needed to care for it.

### What has happened so far?

Last winter, we carried out some exploratory work that helped us plan for the delivery of a series of improvements which has been taking place over the last few months and will continue throughout winter 2024 and spring/summer 2025.

We've begun speaking to visitors, local residents and wider stakeholders on site and at local events and their input is helping to shape the development and delivery of the project. We've also been undertaking additional research into the site and the people who lived and worked here.

We're currently in the process of appointing a contractor to create the new play area, and working with Historic England to plan the archaeological exploration of that will precede that.

We're also working with visitors, local groups and schools to explore the stories the improved interpretation will share and the new schools session we'll be introducing.

### **What's happening over the winter and spring?**

As the shorter days approach, the site will close for the winter from Mon 4 Nov. During this time, we'll be planning and delivering the next phase of improvements.

We'll shortly be kitting out a workshop space for volunteers who'll be supporting our Historic Engineering team in caring for the waterwheels, the machinery they run and the wider fabric of the site.

Over the next couple of months, we'll also be continuing to ask for visitors, local communities, schools and stakeholder groups to help us refine the plans for the improvements on site. We'll also be continuing our research into the site's history.

Towards the end of the year, we'll begin archaeological explorations on the site of the play area (just next to the Manager's House), an important aspect of any development at a site of historical significance. Once the exploration is complete, the subsequent work on the play area will commence in late spring.

In the New Year, we'll be carrying out key restoration work on the waterwheel, creating new timber spokes and repairing the historic water controls to get the waterwheel ready to run again once the millpond is refilled (more on that below).

In late spring we'll be introducing the new suite of interpretation to better tell the Hamlet's story. Finally, the improvements to the car park will take place once Sheffield City Council's repairs to the dam have been carried out.

The Hamlet café, Joni, will be open as usual throughout the winter.

### **Who are the funders?**

The project has been generously supported by a major grant from [The National Lottery Heritage Fund thanks to National Lottery players](#), alongside further support from Sheffield City Council, the J G Graves Charitable Trust and match funding from Sheffield Museums.

## How can I help?

If you would like to be kept informed about ways you can get involved, please sign up to the Sheffield Museums mailing list <https://www.sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/sign-up-for-our-newsletter/> or follow us on social media:

Facebook: [@sheffieldmuseums](#)  
Instagram: [@sheffmuseums](#)  
X: [@sheffmuseums](#)

You can donate to Sheffield Museums through donation stations and boxes at our sites, or through <https://www.sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/support-us/>

## More Information

You can find out more about the project at <https://www.sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/visit-us/abbeydale-industrial-hamlet/a-bright-future-for-abbeydale/>

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## Repairs to the Dam & Millpond

Sheffield City Council (SCC) have provided the following information on the remedial work needed on the dam.

### Why is the millpond empty?

A leak has been identified in the dam, allowing water from the millpond to enter the historic site and posing a risk to nearby structures, particularly the Grinding Hull. Sheffield City Council, responsible for the dam's maintenance, has lowered the millpond water level to stop the leak and conducted investigations to determine its cause. The Council has appointed a contractor who is currently in the process of developing a detailed repair plan, in collaboration with Historic England and the Environment Agency, with repairs expected to commence in spring 2025

### Why is the dam still empty, why hasn't the work been undertaken yet?

SCC have appointed a contractor and are working on the best way to undertake the repairs with the advice of a specialist consultant. Unfortunately, because of the difficulty of getting access to the damaged areas, the complexity of working with a heritage building and the understandable regulations to protect the site, it has taken a little longer than hoped to build the plan of works.

SCC need to ensure we protect both the people undertaking the works and the Hamlet. As you can appreciate some of the areas of work are not straightforward for people to get to, let alone heavy items such as materials, tools and machinery. Until the works are undertaken, we have been advised by specialists to keep the dam empty to avoid further damage in the interim.

### **When will the dam be refilled?**

A definite date has not been confirmed because this will depend on the weather, however SCC are hoping to have the majority of the works undertaken by mid-2025. SCC also want to make sure that when the dam is refilled it is done with care, so this may happen slowly. SCC are also looking to work on the weir that directs water into the dam via Beauchief Gardens as this also needs repairs and hopefully both can be reopened together.

### **Are there any impacts on wildlife?**

According to specialists consulted by SCC, the temporary emptying of the dam is expected to have minimal impact on wildlife, especially since the area has alternative habitats that can support species during this time. Once the dam is refilled, the environment should return to its usual state, ensuring the well-being of local wildlife.

### **What will happen to the fish?**

The fish that were in the millpond have been safely removed. SCC are currently evaluating the best approach for restocking the millpond. While there are some considerations regarding maintenance that could affect the fish, they recognise the importance of the millpond for fishing and are carefully assessing all options to ensure the best outcome. The goal is to make a decision that balances the well-being of the fish with the community's needs.

### **Why is the Grinding Hull still closed?**

The safety of our visitors and staff is the top priority of both SCC and Sheffield Museums. Although the immediate risk from water leakage has been addressed by lowering the dam's water levels and installing structural props, the Grinding Hull remains a high-risk area due to ongoing structural concerns. The scaffolding and support structures are temporary solutions as preparations are made for comprehensive repairs over the next year. Given that the wall's stability is still compromised, strict safety regulations must be followed to prevent any potential accidents. Unfortunately, allowing public access in the current circumstances, even on a limited basis, presents significant risks.

### **Will there be any other impact on visiting the Hamlet when the works are undertaken?**

There will be some disruption while SCC carries out the work, but plans are being explored to minimise this. SCC will need some space for the works, welfare cabins, deliveries and materials, so there may be some temporary reduction or closure of car parking spaces, areas of the Hamlet and accesses. As the site is small the priority is

ensuring everyone's safety. SCC will notify everyone in advance of what will happen and when and ask for your cooperation to allow us to get the work completed.

**How can I get in touch with Sheffield City Council about the work that's taking place on the dam at Abbeydale?**

You can email Sheffield City Council about the work at [PFMContactCentre@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:PFMContactCentre@sheffield.gov.uk)

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**About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

[The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) is the largest funder for the UK's heritage. Using money raised by National Lottery players we support projects that connect people and communities to heritage. Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. From historic buildings, our industrial legacy and the natural environment, to collections, traditions, stories and more. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.