



Embrace Abbeydale FAQs March 2026



What's been happening at Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet?

Sheffield Museums has completed *Embrace Abbeydale*, a series of improvements at the Hamlet generously supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project represents the first phase in work to safeguard and enhance this, one of Sheffield's most significant heritage treasures.

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

Below you can find the latest information on both projects.

Embrace Abbeydale

How was the Embrace Abbeydale project funded?

A £235,000 grant from [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) was awarded to support Sheffield Museums in the delivery of a series of improvements to the site. The work was also supported by further funding from Sheffield City Council and the JG Gravers Charitable Trust.

What improvements have been made through the project?

Over the last two years, Sheffield Museums has been working with visitors, schools, contractors, heritage experts and a range of stakeholders to develop and deliver the programme of improvements onsite. Those improvements include:

- The refurbishment of two of the Worker's Cottages to create the Hamlet's new Welcome Hub. The Hub includes a new shop and new displays and activities for families telling the story of the Hamlet and the people who lived and worked there.
- Installing the Hamlet's new timber-framed play area for children aged 3 to 8. Featuring equipment voted for by visitors, this natural wood play area has been thoughtfully designed with the historic environment in mind. The construction of the play area was undertaken following comprehensive archaeological investigations to ensure that proper care was taken to safeguard the Hamlet's rich history.
- Completing the restoration of the water wheel which drives the Blowing Engine. This major undertaking saw the old timber shaft removed and a brand-new oak shaft delivered to site, where it was fitted with cast iron ends before being fitted in position in the waterwheel. Once the shaft was in position, the wheel was restored, rotten boards were replaced and held in place with bespoke bolts and the outside was painted to protect it.
- Introducing new display signage in several of the key historic spaces, highlighting their stories and those of the people that worked in them. Developed through new research and contributions from people with connections to the Hamlet, this new interpretation tells a compelling story of the workers and the role they played in Abbeydale Works' success.
- The introduction of new soundscapes in the Tilt Forge and Crucible Furnace bringing the sounds of the past to life.
- Creating brand-new schools' workshops inspired by the site's history and developed through consultation with teachers on how they could best support children's learning.
- Completing the Hamlet's new workshop, which is used by our skilled volunteers who generously help us look after the site.
- Introducing new, free highlights tours, conceived, written and delivered by volunteers.
- The development of a new sensory map created by illustrator, Emma Clements. The map offers a more inclusive way for people to understand the site and what to expect from their visit.
- Installing artificial swallow nests in key areas around the site, providing more places for them to breed.

- Improvements to and extension of the car park, including improved drainage and ramp, as well as new markings and a new boundary fence to make it easier and safer for visitors and tenants to use. **Please note:** *Parking onsite is currently limited due to work by Sheffield City Council and their contractors Esh Construction to repair the Hamlet's historic dam – see below for more information.*

Alongside the main project, we've also:

- Converted the Davy Bros steam engine to use an electric motor so visitors can now see it in action, all thanks to the expertise and support of Sheffield Transmissions.

Is that end of improvements at the Hamlet?

No. Work is currently underway on a masterplan for the site, which will identify further opportunities to develop and enhance the site.

Stay up to date with what's happening at the Hamlet

For all our latest news and updates on all our upcoming events and exhibitions, 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](#)

Help safeguard this jewel of Sheffield heritage

We're dedicated to conserving and celebrating the rich history of Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet – we can only do that with your help. Please [donate today](#) and ensure the Hamlet, and the Sheffield stories it tells, can be enjoyed for generations today

Repairs to the Dam & Millpond

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

Why is the millpond still empty?

A leak in the dam is allowing water from the millpond to enter the historic site and posing a risk to its structures, particularly the Grinding Hull. Sheffield City Council (SCC), who are responsible for the dam's maintenance, lowered the millpond water level to stop the leak and enable repairs, which are currently being undertaken by Esh Construction on the Council's behalf.

When will all the works be finished?

SCC aims to complete most of the repairs by mid-2026, however this date is greatly affected by the weather. Another factor impacting the completion date is the need to wait for the end of the fish spawning season so work can be undertaken in the Sheaf to stabilise the undercutting to the rear of the Hamlet buildings by the river, as identified with the Environment Agency.

When will the dam be refilled?

The exact date for refilling the dam is not yet confirmed, as this will be dependent on weather conditions which could affect the repair works. SCC are currently seeking advice from ecology experts as to the best time and rate for the refilling to minimise impact on the local wildlife. To do this refilling will be done gradually and managed carefully, therefore it is possible that the dam will not be entirely full until winter 2026.

Why is the Grinding Hull still closed?

The safety of visitors and staff at the Hamlet is the top priority of both SCC and Sheffield Museums, so while the works are ongoing access is strictly limited to those undertaking the repairs. Repair works within the Grinding Hull have addressed both the immediate issue of the water leakage and other areas that would have needed repair in the future and are now mostly complete. As soon as it is safe, the Grinding Hull will be reopened to the public.

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 has happened 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. There are some considerations regarding maintenance that could affect the fish, however SCC 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.

Are there any other impacts on visiting the Hamlet when the works are undertaken?

Because the Hamlet is a small site, ensuring everyone's safety while the work takes place remains the priority. While the works are underway there will be some disruption onsite, however SCC and Esh are working hard to minimise the impact on visitors and tenants. Due to the need for welfare cabins, deliveries and materials,

there is some temporary reduction or closure of car parking spaces, and restricted access to some areas of the Hamlet.

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

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033. 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.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

www.heritagefund.org.uk