



Embrace Abbeydale FAQs October 2025



What's happening at Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet?

Sheffield Museums is completing *Embrace Abbeydale*, a 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.

Below you can find the latest information on both projects.

Embrace Abbeydale

What are the plans for the Embrace Abbeydale project?

The £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, including:

- 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.
- An improved car park
- Development of more volunteering opportunities linked to the site and the work needed to care for it.

What has happened so far?

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

- Welcoming contributions from a wide range of people telling us about the types of stories they would like the information in the historic spaces to include, as well as sharing their own insights about the Hamlet and the people that worked there.
- Consulting with families to plan the Hamlet's new play area, and also with teachers to develop and roll out our brand-new schools workshops
- Carrying out comprehensive archaeological investigations on the site of the new play area to ensure that proper care is taken to safeguard the Hamlet's rich history.
- Completion of 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. Then the wheel was restored, rotten boards were replaced, and new ones held in place with bespoke bolts before 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 completion of the Hamlet's volunteer workshop, used by our skilled volunteers who generously help us look after the site.
- 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.
- Installation of the Hamlet's new play area (more on that below), including a wider, gently sloped path by the Manager's House to help visitors access it. Featuring equipment voted for by the public, this natural wood play area has been thoughtfully designed with the historic environment in mind. The play area will be completed over winter with improvements to the surrounding fencing and a new gate.

- The development of a new sensory map created by talented illustrator, Emma Clements, the map offers a more inclusive way for people to understand the site and what to expect from their visit.
- The introduction of new, free highlights tours, conceived, written and delivered by volunteers.
- Installing artificial swallow nests in key areas around the site, providing more places for them to breed.

Alongside the main project, we've also:

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

What's happening next?

Over the winter, work will be finalised on the remaining aspects of the improvement project, including:

- The opening of the Hamlet's new play area
- The refurbishment of two of the Worker's Cottages to create a new welcome hub, including a new exhibition and shop. The new space will introduce the story of the Hamlet and the people who lived and worked there through new displays and family activities.
- The introduction of new soundscapes in the Tilt Forge and Crucible Furnace bringing the sounds of the past to life.

Find out more and stay up to date

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

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 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 (SCC), who are responsible for the dam's maintenance, has lowered the millpond water level to stop the leak and conducted investigations to determine its cause. SCC 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 2026 and complete by autumn that year.

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

The dam remains empty because the repair work is still in the planning and approval stages. SCC has appointed a contractor and is working with a specialist consultant to develop the best repair strategy. However, progress has been slower than anticipated due to the complex challenges of working within a historic site.

Accessing the damaged areas safely while preserving the Hamlet's heritage is particularly difficult. Contractors must navigate restrictions on moving heavy materials, tools, and machinery, which adds to the complexity. Additionally, obtaining statutory consent from Historic England is a lengthy process, taking several months, and construction work involving water can only be carried out during drier months.

Until repairs are completed, specialists have advised keeping the dam empty to prevent further damage.

When will the dam be refilled?

The exact date for refilling the dam is not yet confirmed, as it depends on weather conditions. However, SCC aims to complete most of the repairs by mid-2026. Refilling will be done gradually to ensure it is managed carefully. SCC is currently evaluating the costs for repairing the weir that channels water to the dam, aiming to

open both structures simultaneously. They are also looking into the possibility of a fish passage or ladder, especially with the return of Atlantic Salmon to the River Don. Therefore, they are seeking additional external funding to support this extra work.

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 visitors and staff at the Hamlet 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 risk.

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

When SCC are ready to progress the work there will be some disruption onsite, but we are exploring plans 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, and restricted access to some areas of the Hamlet. 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 we ask for your cooperation to allow them 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

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.