



Update on Gayle Mill, Hawes, North Yorkshire, January 2018

North of England Civic Trust (NECT) is the owner of Gayle Mill. NECT is a charity that for over 50 years has been active in conservation of a wide range of heritage assets across the North of England. The mill's national significance lies in the completeness of its industrial heritage through several phases of development over several centuries, such that its evolution can be understood and its historic machinery operated. NECT acquired the mill when it was on the national Heritage at Risk Register because of its deteriorating condition and uncertain future. Working from the outset with all relevant agencies including the Parish Council and a specially convened local working group, NECT devised a project to bring the mill back to life. The nature of the mill and its water system meant that NECT would have to work in phases, cutting the cloth according to available funding. Phasing has been part of the history of the mill and is essential to its future.

As soon as NECT acquired the mill, the first phase was an urgent safeguarding phase to re-roof to protect the interior and its collection of tools and artefacts. The second phase was the main programme of repairs. These phases were made possible with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage (now Historic England). If no other funding had been secured, the project would have preserved the mill but without water power.

The third phase was a bonus made possible through *BBC Restoration*. The mill reached the final and though unsuccessful, it triggered new funding to enable the mill to work again: rebuilding the timber launder, and repairs to the historic water supply system, but also a new turbine and equipment to generate hydro-electric power for the mill and supply electricity into the grid. In addition, a biomass boiler enabled off-cut waste from the mill to be put to use heating it. For its time, it was an ambitious plan to reactivate an historic mill's machinery alongside a new chapter of technology.

Funding for these three phases was tight and so a range of work had to wait for future funding and phasing.

Once the mill was operational, NECT entered into a licence with Gayle Mill Trust (GMT) for five years to March 2016 to occupy and operate the mill. This provided a period of operation to see where the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for future improvements lay, and for GMT, which was a newly formed organisation, to find its feet. By January 2016 the needs of the next phase of work were becoming apparent and NECT advised GMT that the mill would need to close to the public during those works. As GMT already had publicised and prepared for the 2016 and 2017 seasons, NECT agreed to extend the licence for GMT to occupy the mill to the end of the 2017 season (September). During those eighteen months NECT's Vice-Chairman regularly met GMT trustees and all relevant agencies to formulate a proposal that would enable the next phase of works to be funded and undertaken, and move the mill to a more permanent arrangement from the short-term licence GMT held. By September 2017 GMT had not agreed to NECT's proposal. In the absence of GMT's agreement, the licence came to an end and under its terms NECT informed GMT it would need to vacate the mill. GMT currently occupies the mill without any formal basis.

The next round of works (Phase 4) will compromise operational access and public safety in a constrained site and building, hence the need to close the site while work is in hand. This will include engineering works to the leat (previously not possible and likely to include underpinning and riverbank stabilisation) and launder, upgrading the water power systems, upgrading and improving facilities, and recording and stabilisation works to the mill pond (also was not included in any phases to date). NECT can only proceed with engineering surveys and investigative works once GMT vacates the mill. If GMT does so as it has stated at the end of March 2018, NECT can begin the process of surveys, apply for a range of consents and tender for the works. The mill therefore will need to be closed during 2018 but will re-open by Easter 2019 having benefitted from the fourth phase of investment and improvements by NECT – a commitment that began in November 1996.