



A vision for 2020 and beyond

Context

Coultershaw Heritage Site is a place of historical importance to Petworth and the Rother Valley. The site has developed around the water wheel driven Beam Pump, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and was built in 1782 to pump water up to Petworth. Following the demolition of the neighbouring mill in 1973, the beam pump was restored by the Sussex Industrial Archeology Society and opened in 1980.

Coultershaw has had a variety of mills since at least the Domesday survey in 1068, and is also an important example of 18th & 19th century rural industrialization. It is on the routes of the Rother Navigation (1794-1888), the Petworth to Chichester Turnpike (1800-1877) and the Pulborough to Petworth Railway (1859-1966). The busy A285 currently passes over the narrow bridges.

The Coultershaw Trust was formed in 2002 and took on the care and operation of the site. In 2006 the Heritage Lottery Fund supported the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan and in 2012 they, with others, grant funded the restoration project, which included:

- The restoration of a Warehouse to provide space for school visits, meetings & exhibitions.
- The refurbishment of the Pump House with new display panels.
- The restoration of the engine house as a space of hands on exhibits
- A bridge above the sluice gates and a boardwalk from the Engine House to the Navigation channel and the west bank of the mill pond.

These developments were formally opened in 2013 and transformed the Heritage Site as it began to demonstrate the real importance of Coultershaw to the Petworth rural economy and community over the last 220 years.

Central to the story of Coultershaw since the demolition of the Mill has been the team of volunteers who have driven the project forward to become the important heritage site that it is today. They have restored the Beam Pump, Engine House and North Warehouse, built the boardwalk across the river, created river bank walks and ensured that the site was regularly open to the public. The site delivers a significant and ongoing well-being role for all its volunteers (providing social engagement through stewarding and events), and particularly for the Tuesday site maintenance team where it operates as an informal open-air men-in-sheds activity.

The future

In 2018, the Leconfield Estates offered the South Warehouse to the Trust. Whilst the restoration of the building will be a challenge, we welcome the opportunities this new space provides, to rethink and strengthen our learning and engagement offer for volunteers and the wider community.

The Vision

To ensure that Coultershaw is a lively heritage hub that actively engages the local community and visitors, physically and educationally, through volunteer-led activity in appropriate spaces, for the enjoyment and well-being of all.



Making it happen

1. Community engagement and research.

- Contract a Community Engagement & Research Worker to widen and increase the volunteer base and develop their local history skills.
 - Develop the links with the local community in exploring and studying the history of Petworth and the local rural society and economy.
 - Set up a local history group of new volunteers to develop short term exhibition material – with potential for semi-permanent display.
 - Contribute to local publications such as the Petworth Society Magazine and Petworth Pages.
- Develop display panels for South Warehouse on topics such as:
 - The use of the Western Rother as a source of power – the locations of the various mills, furnaces and hammers.
 - How the transport links at Coultershaw fit with the wider transport networks, why & how they were built and how they were used. (expand on material in the Pump House).

2. Build an archive of local history material – including the 'Petworth Society' archive.

- Provide temporary archive storage space for Petworth Society material
- Install internet links and digital technology to access other archives.
- Provide quality archive storage and study space

3. Using volunteers, restore the South Warehouse.

- Restore the fabric of the building - *to provide*:
- A large exhibition space that can, in conjunction with the North Warehouse, be used for:
 - Learning space for schools and others - U3A etc.
 - Craft and art workshops.
 - Short Term and permanent exhibition space for our own material and that developed by others in the area – particularly heritage sites.
- A well-being workshop for current and new volunteers to develop, consolidate and share their manual heritage-preservation skills.
- Workshop and storage space plus a garage for the tractor.
- Improve kitchen facility in the North Warehouse and provide Archive & Study space.

4. Expand our educational offer to schools and colleges using the existing Warehouse.

- Increase the number of schools' days – initially to two (+ special visits).
- Expand the breadth of curriculum topics and subject areas.
- Extend to include Key Stages 3, 4 & 5
- Invite schools from a wider geographic area.

5. Improve the visitor experience.

- Regularly update guides and signage
- Improve access to river banks
- Investigate feasibility of putting a footbridge downstream to allow for a circular walk
- Provide access under the bridge to Canal Lock and the Toll House.
- Introduce special attraction days such as hand's on activities and heritage machinery displays.