



ARGOS HILL WINDMILL TRUST

DECAYING LANDMARK THROWN LIFELINE

A group of local enthusiasts have launched a high-profile fundraising campaign to save a listed windmill from risk of collapse.

Standing astride Argos Hill, between Mayfield and Rotherfield, the Grade 2* listed windmill is a sorry sight of decay and demise. A shadow of its former self, this historic windmill has spent the past 5 years shrouded in scaffolding.

But the future looks bright for the Argos Hill Windmill as a group of local enthusiasts have formed a Trust and are seeking charitable status. The Trust have leased the windmill from Wealden District Council in order to restore it and preserve it for future generations.

Chairman of the Argos Hill Windmill Trust, Geoff Daughtrey, said: *"This year will be make or break for the mill. We are launching a high-profile fundraising campaign with a target of £100K in 2011. This will enable us to shore up the mill with a temporary steel framework, while the main structural timbers can be repaired or replaced. This is the first phase of an ambitious five year plan leading to full restoration."*

Councillor Graham Wells, Cabinet member for Corporate Assets at Wealden District Council, said: *"Wealden warmly welcomes the formation of the Argos Hill Windmill Trust. District Councils are called on today to carry out a vast range of duties. The restoration of such a magnificent wooden post mill is much better in the hands of determined local enthusiasts, and we will be supporting the Trust and its fundraising."*

"We are excited about the Trust's five year plan which could see the windmill back in operation again and we hope local people and windmill enthusiasts from further afield will get behind it."

The mill has been on the English Heritage "Buildings at Risk" register since 2002. In 2005 its four patent sweeps were taken down to reduce its structural load and in 2008 there was a very real threat to dismantle the entire mill. Fierce opposition from local residents and mill groups put a stop to that. However it has now been discovered that the main structural beams are severely decayed leaving the mill at serious risk of collapse.

Time is fast running out for Argos Hill Windmill which has been described by one the country's leading millwrights, Vincent Pargeter, as *"one of the most complete and important post mills in England today and a fine example of the Sussex tradition in millwrighting"*.

The restoration will rely on the specialist skills of a professional millwright and a dedicated band of local volunteers. Geoff said: *"There is already a lot of local support for the mill, but we really need everyone to rally around and support the fundraising campaign. We want to make sure that the mill is not lost to posterity"*.

Our ultimate goal is to restore the mill to working order, so that one day the sweeps will be seen turning again over the picturesque hamlet of Argos Hill. The Trust would love to hear from anyone who is able to help with fundraising or restoration. Please contact us via our website, www.argoshillwindmill.org.uk, or on 01892 852857.

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For Your Information

Windmills are generally located in exposed positions in order to catch the wind. They are highly susceptible to damage, but the post mill variety is most at risk due to its timber-framed design. In the past 25 years alone, three post mills are known to have collapsed, leaving less than 50 original post mills remaining in the whole of England.

Stepping inside Argos Hill Windmill is like going back 100 years in time. It is unusual in that it retains nearly all of its original machinery and much of its original fabric.

The mill has a number of unique features such as the extension to the rear of the mill body, the lock on the spout floor, and the buttress-like tunnel leading to the bin floor. The rare tailpole-mounted fantail arrangement can only be found on one other mill in the UK. It is for these reasons that the mill is highly regarded by windmill enthusiasts across the country.

The mill is a local icon, steeped in history. Its distinctive red roof was used by fighter pilots during World War II to aid navigation. Once restored it will be open to the public on a regular basis, and will be a valuable educational resource for local schools.

The transfer of heritage buildings to community groups is welcomed by English Heritage which believes the enthusiasm and skills of local people have a valuable role to play in protecting the historical assets in their neighbourhood. More information about community initiatives can be found on the English Heritage website: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/get-involved/take-ownership/>

"I am delighted with the progress being made with the formation of the Trust. This represents a great step forward for the future restoration of the windmill" said the local Wealden District Councillor Brian Redman.

The Trust is keen to keep everyone informed of developments, and have launched a website, Facebook page and Twitter page to post the latest news.

For more information on Argos Hill Windmill and/or the newly formed Trust please give us a call on 01892 852857 or e-mail us at info@argoshillwindmill.org.uk

We are more than happy to provide photographs of the mill or arrange for a photographer come out to the mill to take photographs.



Former glory: the mill in 1985



*The mill as it stands today,
without sweeps and shrouded
in scaffolding*