



19th Century Working Watermill

Acorn Bank Watermill
Temple Sowerby
PENRITH
Cumbria, CA10 1SP



**Acorn Bank
Watermill Trust**



www.acornbankwatermill.org.uk

Email: ab.wt@outlook.com



**TRUSTEE'S REPORT
FOR THE PERIOD
1st JANUARY 2023 TO
31st DECEMBER 2023**

**AS PRESENTED BY
THE CHAIRMAN TO
ACORN BANK WATERMILL
TRUST'S ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING ("AGM") ON
TUESDAY, 26th MARCH 2024**

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

On behalf of the Trustees, I am pleased to present Acorn Bank Watermill Trust's ("ABWT") Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2023.

The year started off with the good news that Eden District Council had granted National Trust ("NT") Listed Building Consent for the reinstallation of the second waterwheel. It's been a long time coming and has required a lot of hard work and perseverance from a number of our members as well as the support of National Trust colleagues. The support and enthusiasm we received from Historic England was also much appreciated. More about the project work schedule and timescales follow in the body of this Report.

Despite the economic hard times we are all experiencing visitor numbers remain steady and the sale of flour and donations remain good. We endeavour to operate the Mill as economically as possible and have managed to keep the price of our flour down despite the fluctuations in the grain market caused by bad weather and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

During the year we have expanded the number of retail outlets and will look to add more as resources allow. We have also made a number of improvements to the Mill and its facilities including most recently, with NT's support and funding, the installation of new wiring, light saving technology and a Smart Meter.

We continue to keep well ahead of our Business Plan predictions in all respects and over our three years of operation have managed to establish a stable financial base and are beginning to be recognised as a local attraction in our own right. Given that we are all volunteers and very few of us had any previous experience of running a charity it is very pleasing to see what we have achieved in a relatively short period of time.

Whilst it is important to remain prudent and ensure that we retain an adequate operating reserve and monies for ongoing maintenance, we feel confident that we are now ready to invest some of our surplus funds without undermining the ongoing operation of the Watermill and its availability to the public. The Trustees are considering a number of exciting new projects and as you will see from this report these will focus on expanding and developing our visitor experience, particularly in relation to improving our educational offerings for children and school visits. I am pleased that these projects were considered and endorsed by our membership at the March 2024 AGM.

One area of concern for us has been the ongoing problem of recruiting and retaining volunteers. I believe this is an issue across the whole of the charitable sector and whilst we have recruited new members during the year, including our first junior member, we have also lost a few. We can always use more volunteers and with this in mind the Trustees are looking at ways of attracting more.

In closing, I must again acknowledge and thank the membership for its hard work, dedication, and commitment throughout the last year. With the membership and NT's continuing support, we can continue to look forward to the future with much anticipation and enthusiasm.

To find out more about our work please visit our website or Facebook page.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees.



Bob Price
Chairman
Acorn Bank Watermill Trust

8th April 2024

1. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- 1.1. The Charity Commission registered Acorn Bank Watermill Trust ("ABWT") as an Associated Charitable Incorporated Organisation ("COI") on 29th January 2021 (Registered Charity No: 1193320).
- 1.2. Our Constitution provides all members with a vote (not just its Trustees) who have rights to make certain decisions (such as amending the constitution), appoint the trustees (who serve for fixed terms) and a general say in the work of the CIO. This approach ensures the active involvement of all members, provides a layer of internal scrutiny and accountability and in the longer term provides more comfort to NT, donors, suppliers etc.
- 1.3. ABWT's members, including its Trustees and Officers, are all unpaid volunteers. Between them they operate the Mill on a weekly basis throughout NT's Acorn Bank Estate's open season (effectively March to October) on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and on Bank Holidays. It is this same team of volunteers who carry out maintenance, preservation and conservation work on Tuesdays throughout the year.
- 1.4. The team is led by a Senior Miller who has day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the Mill and a Chief Engineer who between them ensure that it runs safely and efficiently. Our volunteers boast a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience including engineering, joinery, administration, project management and health and safety management. Following a review in January 2024 of information held by ABWT (to comply with GDPR) 5 members resigned and asked for their details to be removed from our records. Numbers will of course continue to fluctuate, but there are currently 28 members, 24 of whom actively volunteer in various roles.
- 1.5. Under our Constitution, overall responsibility for running ABWT and looking after the mill rests with nine Trustees and the various officers they have appointed. They execute this function primarily through monthly Committee meetings. ABWT's management structure is set out in the table at [Annex A](#) to this report. The AGM noted Frank Bradley's decision to resign as a Trustee on 11th January 2024 and to thank him for his service.
- 1.6. In line with Charity Commission rules all meetings are minuted and decisions recorded with copies filed in a Minutes Book held by the Secretary. Members have access to all documentation through a secure Microsoft file communication and storage system.
- 1.7. Under our Constitution, at every AGM, one-third of the trustees must retire from office. Bridget Davey, Carl Richardson, and Peter Simpson tendered their resignations, but sought re-election. At the AGM members voted:
 - To reappoint Bridget Davey, Carl Richardson, and Peter Simpson.
 - To elect Julie Owen as a new Trustee.
- 1.8. Bob Price, Geoff Bailes, and David Robertson were respectively re-elected unopposed as Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Sarah Dauncey's co-option onto the Committee in January 2024 was also confirmed.
- 1.9. The AGM also confirmed the appointment of Fiona Shoesmith as ABWT's Safeguarding Lead and Sarah Dauncey as the Deputy (see paragraph 2.3 of this report).

2. ABWT's OBJECTS, BEHAVIOURS & VALUES

ABWT's Objects

- 2.1. Under its Constitution, ABWT's Objects are:

1. *To preserve for the public benefit Acorn Bank Watermill, a Grade II* listed 19th Century watermill, located on the National Trust's Acorn Bank Estate at Temple Sowerby, Penrith, Cumbria as a building of architectural and historical interest.*
2. *To advance the education of the public by establishing Acorn Bank Watermill as a heritage centre which:*
 - *offers the public an opportunity to see a working water powered corn mill and associated machinery that mills wheat and produces merchantable flour thereby demonstrating the art of flour milling and the critically endangered craft of millwrighting using, as far as possible, traditional methods; and*
 - *enhances public knowledge and understanding of the watermill's role both in the context of the nation's wider agricultural and industrial heritage and its role in local cultural and social history, including its relationship with gypsum mining in Cumbria.*

Behaviours & Values

- 2.2. In support of its charitable objects ABWT is committed to maintaining and operating the mill for future generations by:

Working collaboratively and openly with colleagues and our partner the National Trust.

Engaging with the local community and relevant public bodies.

Ensuring visitors feel welcome by:

- *Offering a warm and positive attitude.*
- *Being polite, friendly, and showing an interest in their views.*
- *Valuing and respecting people as individuals.*
- *Sharing knowledge and experience in an engaging and enthusiastic way.*

Safeguarding, Dignity & Respect for All

- 2.3. Trustees have produced a safeguarding policy which is required because:

- It is a specific requirement of our public liability insurance to have a written safeguarding policy for Children and At-Risk Adults (it made sense to also produce the Dignity & Respect at work policy so all safeguarding issues in the workplace were covered).
- To comply with Charity Commission guidance.
- To meet nationally recognised standards and procedures generally.

ABWT is committed to creating a culture where everyone is treated with dignity & respect and promotes an environment which is free from harassment, intimidation, victimisation and/or bullying. ABWT has a particular responsibility to protect and safeguard children and at-risk adults and to this end follows national guidance and procedures.

ABWT expects all its volunteers to treat all visitors (and each other) with respect and has policy guidance in place. ABWT will not tolerate any acts, whether by physical contact, verbally or other unwanted forms of behaviour and will act promptly against any individual found guilty of such behaviour.

If anyone feels that we have not done this or sees anything that concerns them, please contact the Trust's Safeguarding Lead via email at ab.wt@outlook.com.

3. REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Production (Bob Price, ABWT Production Manager & Senior Miller)

- 3.1. ABWT is a member of the Traditional Cornmillers Guild ("TCMG"), a body representing quality in the operation of mills using traditional methods. Each individual approved as a miller by ABWT confirms annually that they are compliant with a Miller Syllabus derived from TCMG standards. In the 2023 milling season the 8 trained and approved millers produced almost 4 tonnes of good quality flour both from organic Mulika wheat and from the unusual Blacksmith wheat.
- 3.2. There were no serious production issues, partly due to the considerable improvement in the performance of the stones following their dressing in November 2022. Throughput was faster and the occasional instances of excess bran production during the previous year were virtually eliminated. We continue to sieve all our flour and this process was improved by replacing the previous Heath-Robinson motor and gearbox arrangement with a standard, well-engineered combination.
- 3.3. Grain supply and cost has continued to be an issue. The price remained at its £850 high throughout the season and the poor English wheat harvest in autumn 2023 meant that there was little grain to be had in the late season. Fortunately, we were able to share a scarce delivery with another local mill. For the coming season we have obtained a call-off order for 4 tonnes from our regular supplier at the slightly reduced price of £800 per tonne.
- 3.4. Information passed on by TCMG suggests that the proposal to make it a legal requirement to add Folic Acid to all flour is unlikely to apply to "small" mills. This is very good news as it would have been very challenging to mix the tiny quantity of additive involved uniformly.

Marketing (Martin Fagan, ABWT Sales & Marketing Manager)

Flour Sales

- 3.5. Flour sales were strong last year, both at the mill and at our retail outlets. Including associated sales (principally postcards and recipe books), the total sales value was £7,979, which was a 7% increase on the 2022 total. We are now also seeing marked repeat business from regular customers at the mill, as the quality of our product becomes more widely known.
- 3.6. We now have three regular retail outlets, at Kirby Thore PO, Natures Health in Penrith and the Alston Food Cooperative. In particular, Alston has been a strong addition, taking approximately 6 bags every month, whilst Natures Health take approximately 6 bags every two months. Both a picking up a steady client stream, but as ever our main outlets are through the mill itself and the Shepherds Hut.
- 3.7. With Little Salkeld Mill ceasing operation as a working entity, I am looking through this year to expand into their former client base, but still concentrating on small scale vendors, rather than trying to get entangled with their larger customers (for example, the likes of Cranstons) where we do not have the scale of operations nor the desire to get involved in their Purchasing chains and contracts. Our ethos is to stay as a small-scale supplier to independent retailers.

Bistro

- 3.8. The Tuesday Bistro was very well received and was largely responsible for a 68% increase in donations last year, from £3708 in 2022 to £6228 in 2023. Visitors greatly appreciated the hot drinks and cooked goodies. However, this came with several downsides for our team. Firstly, it posed a very heavy burden on our volunteers, both in being on site for the duration of a day in which the mill was not operational, and in giving so generously of their own time to produce the baked goods. Secondly, the "dispensing facilities" on the cart are not adequate to both serve food and drink and sell flour and other merchandise. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of fresh water and sanitary provision in the mill yard

severely compromises our ability to ensure the health and safety of both visitors and volunteers alike. To that end, we have taken the decision to withdraw the Tuesday Bistro offer for this season, a decision that the committee will revisit once the projected water supply to the yard is installed, and a final decision is agreed with the NT on a plan to provide sanitary facilities for at least Mill Volunteers. A separate plan to improve visitor seating, marketing and educational facilities is to be developed once the current Second Waterwheel Project is complete, freeing up project bandwidth.

Marketing

- 3.9. Last year's main effort was the production of a new recipe booklet, which quickly sold out the entire 100 copy print run. A new, extended, edition with an initial print run of 500 copies has been produced for the 2024 season, and over the last three weekends of the Snowdrop season at Acorn Bank we have sold approximately 20 copies already. Due to the discount on the bulk order these were produced at a cost of £1.00 each, enabling us to maintain last year's retail price of £1.50 per unit.
- 3.10. As far as the other items are concerned, the original recipe cards have been generally superseded, and will not be replaced. I suggest we continue, for the moment to offer them until stocks are run down. On the other hand, the watercolour post cards continue to sell well. The Mill Booklets sell slowly, partly because we do not at the moment give them enough prominence, and partly because, in my opinion, the booklet is in need of updating to match the current state of the site. I would like to have a revised booklet ready for next season.
- 3.11. Our offer of 500g sample bags has proved successful, and as long as we take care to offer these as "souvenir" items, and not as an alternative to our main product, I believe we should keep these on our list.
- 3.12. I have also occasionally had requests for other souvenir items, such as bags, badges, pencils etc, similar to the items you would usually find by the till in a normal NT shop. I am wary about the outlay involved for the potential return but would appreciate the feedback on whether we feel this is worth pursuing.

Volunteer Recruitment

- 3.13. Currently we have 24 active volunteers, spread over three broad and often overlapping categories, Engineers, Millers and "Visitor Welcome". We had instances last season where we had to hold operations because we had insufficient volunteers to safely open the mill. This is not down to any lack of enthusiasm from our existing crew, but we all have other calls on our time. It is important if we are to continue, and with luck expand our opening times that we expand our volunteer base, particularly for Millers and Visitor Welcome focussed volunteers.
- 3.14. To address the point about Millers, we are working to develop a syllabus for training millers, with a view to offering a "trainer day" course. This would then, we hope, lead to at least some becoming longer term volunteers. Incidentally, these courses are very rare across the heritage milling community, and might also gain us wider recognition, which brings us to...

Publicity & Press Releases.

- 3.15. Our main source of publicity is the Cumberland & Westmorland Herald, who regularly publish our press releases and articles on our activities. These are mostly published as I send them, apart from the sometimes-erratic efforts of their sub-editors! It also appears that my name is now A. Spokesperson.
- 3.16. Other than that, I keep the Tourist Offices in Appleby and Penrith with leaflets, along with the Ullswater Steamer Shop in Pooley Bridge.
- 3.17. We have also developed a very good working relationship with the NT Publicity Team and ensure that we develop publicity for events (Snowdrop Weekend, National Mills Weekend and Heritage Open Days) in tandem to maximise benefit for both parts of the site. To date, this has proved very successful, with high attendances at these events.

Engineering (Carl Richardson, ABWT Chief Engineer)

General Operations

- 3.18. The mill generally ran well all through the 2023 season with no downtime during this period. The newly dressed millstones performed well and seemed to solve some of the problems we had with excessive bran in the sieve.

Second Waterwheel Project (SWP)

- 3.19. As already reported, Listed Building Consent was granted on Friday 13th January 2023. However, construction work on the project could not start in earnest until November 2023, i.e., after the milling season because it would have required closure of the launder and the existing waterwheel. Nevertheless, there were some areas of work where progress could be made.
- 3.20. First, the required project management paperwork, including schedule of works and health & safety, was completed, and signed off by the Project Board, under the Chairship of NT on 28th April 2023. The Project Board authorised commencement of the works and released the first tranche of funding in November 2023.
- 3.21. Secondly, we were able to put in place arrangements for organising the casting of a new set of shrouds (the rims of the wheel) to replace the damaged ones using one of the good shrouds as a model. Making a pattern for casting is usually done in wood and is an expensive process requiring a skilled pattern maker. However, we were extremely lucky that a visitor to the mill from Lancaster University offered to 3D print a pattern for us. The University were involved in an EU funded project to use 3D printing in association with Heritage projects such as ours. The pattern would be provided to us free of charge.
- 3.22. The pattern was then taken to Trent Castings, a traditional iron foundry in Mansfield, to be cast. Our Chief Engineers went down to observe the casting of the first shroud. The six new shrouds were delivered in October 2023 and the plan is to start reinstallation of the second waterwheel during the course of 2024.

Modifying the Launder for the Second Waterwheel

- 3.23. The major task for the winter close season was to modify the launder in the wheelhouse so that we could direct a portion of the water to the second waterwheel. The plan was to split the flow in a ratio of 2:1, with two thirds of the water going to the existing pitch back wheel, and one third being fed through a central channel to the second wheel.
- 3.24. Scaffolding was erected in the wheelhouse in early November, soon after the milling season ended, to allow safe access to the existing launder and to where the new length of launder would be brought to the second wheel position.
- 3.25. The diverter box for the pitch back wheel was removed together with the existing launder back as far as the major joint just inside the wheelhouse.
- 3.26. A level was taken from where the launder enters the wheelhouse to the position of the second wheel shaft; this allowed us to make sure that the water would not have to travel "uphill" to the second wheel. In order to achieve this, we had to notch out the three launder support cross beams to allow the launder to sit level.
- 3.27. Construction of the new launder then began, together with a new diverter box for the pitch back wheel and the channel splitter to take water to the second wheel. A dump valve for the second wheel was inserted in the launder between the two wheels; its purpose is to ensure that water cannot leak onto the second wheel when the pitch back wheel is running.

- 3.28. A new set of penstocks (sluices) has been constructed to control the water flow so that one or the other, or both, waterwheels can be operated. This was tested in late February. The scaffold was removed in early March in good time for the new milling season. At the time of writing, we still need to test the mill to make sure that we still get sufficient water to power the machine when we are milling.

Mill Machinery from Felin Cwm

- 3.29. We have, for some time, been searching for some mill machinery – pit wheel, wallower, great spur wheel etc. – to replace the machinery for the second waterwheel that was (probably) stripped out of the mill when the second waterwheel was used to power equipment at the gypsum mine.
- 3.30. A chance telephone call to John Brandrick, a member of the Welsh Mills Society (“WMS”), led to the discovery of a full set of internal mill machinery located on a smallholding not far from Aberystwyth. This machinery had been rescued by the WMS from a mill, Felin Cwm, that had had to be demolished for safety reasons.
- 3.31. Having established that the WMS would be prepared to sell the machinery (they could not find a use for it themselves), a visit was made in mid-November to inspect what was available, and subsequently a deal was agreed to purchase all the machinery that was stored for £500.
- 3.32. The next challenge was to transport it to Acorn Bank; it turned out that a friend of the folks at the smallholding ran a transport company, and he was prepared to take everything to Acorn Bank for a fee of £900. It took a little while to organise, but everything was finally delivered to Acorn Bank on 26th January 2024.
- 3.33. The pit wheel was moved into the lower mill room in late February; the next challenge is to fit it to the second wheel shaft.

Viewing Platform

- 3.34. As reported last year, ABWT volunteers rebuilt the viewing platform over 2022/23 close season on behalf of NT. It was finished in time for the start of the 2023 season and had its official unveiling on Tuesday, 11th April. The platform, which also acts as a turning circle for wheelchairs, mobility scooters etc, now forms part of ABWT's lease.

Mill Improvements & Other Works

- 3.35. A number of improvements were made to the Mill complex during the course of the year:
- The internal lintel above the hole in the wall where the main waterwheel horizontal shaft comes through was very rotten and no longer supporting the stonework and required replacing in case it eventually compromised the masonry above it. This was drawn to NT's attention in November 2022 on a routine site visit who accepted ABWT's offer to replace the lintel. This work was completed by ABWT Volunteers in May 2023.
 - In March 2023, following discussions with NT, ABWT submitted proposals and plans for rewiring of the mill to provide new power sockets and lighting. NT agreed the proposals and appointed their electrical contractor to carry out the works which were completed in November 2023. This has allowed us to remove many “temporary” extension leads that had been used to power items in the Information room, wheelhouse and woodstore. The new lighting in the wheelhouse, woodstore and cart shed is a great improvement. Following completion of the works, ABWT arranged to have a Smart Meter fitted to better monitor usage. The lights are controlled by PIR detectors. As well as providing better and safer working conditions for the volunteers the improved and additional lighting enhances the visitor experience.
 - We cleared the area above the courtyard wall adjoining Mill Cottage garden. With NT's agreement and that of the Mill Cottage tenant we also updated the existing fence by adding screening boards. As well as improving the aesthetics, the work strengthened the existing fence and provided extra privacy for the tenant.

- 3.36. On behalf of NT work was completed in September 2023 on the repairs to the “landing stage” to the Beckside of the wheelhouse which over a period of time had been partly destroyed by recent flood events and was in danger of collapsing completely. The bed stones and some of the facing stones were still in the river adjacent to the damage site and were reinstated. The landing stage has been fenced off to prevent direct access to the beck. The area behind the wheelhouse has been cleared of weeds etc. Work has started on laying cobbles in the space between the back of the wheelhouse and the landing stage and the beck, with the aim of opening this space so that visitors can enjoy a different aspect of the mill and beck.

Other Works

- 3.37. Many other larger and smaller works have been completed; some to mention are:

- Work was almost completed on refurbishing two large picnic tables donated by NT Sizergh.
- The door on the shippon was constructed from plywood sheeting which was out of keeping with the Mill's heritage. It was agreed with NT that a more sympathetic door constructed with tongue and groove planking would be preferable. We constructed and fitted the new door in April 2023. More generally, both the stable and the byre have been cleaned and tidied.
- The lower mill room stable door was fitted with a double hinge allowing it to open fully back to the wall and meaning that it is no longer necessary to lift off the lower half of the stable door to give better access for visitors.
- The rather “Heath Robinson” motor drive for the flour sieve was replaced by a commercial motor/gearbox arrangement.

Conclusion

- 3.38. As ever, the primary objective of the engineering team is to keep the mill running; this will always be the focus of our work. Beyond that, numerous other larger or smaller works, some of which have been listed here, have been undertaken over the past year to improve the operation of the mill, making it safer and easier for the volunteers to accomplish all the tasks that are necessary to provide a good visitor experience, and to produce flour. I'd like to give my thanks to all those volunteers who have helped in keeping the mill running and carrying out major and minor works over the past year. We now have a strong core team of volunteers who work well and safely together, and who are prepared to take on all challenges.

4. FUTURE PLANS

- 4.1. Work on the reinstallation of the second waterwheel will continue throughout 2024 alongside the normal milling operation of the waterwheel. Whilst this will occupy the majority of volunteer's time this does not mean that there will be no progress on further developments at the mill.

Water Supply to the Mill

- 4.2. ABWT has been in discussions with NT over the need for a fresh water supply for improved personal hygiene and refreshments. At the moment we are limited to using the outside tap at Mill Cottage and the mobile sink in the Upper Milling Room. The idea is to run a pipe (underground) from Mill Cottage to a tap either inside one of the rooms below the Bank Barn or on the outside wall in the mill yard, via Bank Barn with a shut of valve for winter months. It will be separately metered. NT agreed in to the proposal and carried out a successful site inspection to locate the water feed to Mill Cottage. NT's Estate Manager is currently awaiting quotes for the works.

Toilet Facilities at the Mill

- 4.3. NT and ABWT agree that this is an essential development for the mill and NT has accepted in principle that it should pay for the construction of these facilities. The previous plans to site the facility in the pig

styles has been rejected due to lack of headroom and concerns about access adjacent to the adjacent plant quarantine area. NT will take the lead as owners of the building and professional contractors will have to be employed.

- 4.4. Listed Building Consent would be required and ABWT have offered to take the lead on preparing the required planning documentation - the basis of the application is already in place (SWP LBC application). NT has agreed that it will work with ABWT in 2024 to carry out initial development work. On behalf of NT, ABWT has agreed to take the lead on producing a project brief outlining the objectives of the project, its scope, the main deliverables, milestones, timeline etc. A first draft is expected to be ready in April 2024.

Improved Accessibility to the Watermill

- 4.5. Improved accessibility to the mill continues to be an issue. To provide full access to all would require substantial building works at considerable expense – funds for which are not available at the present time. Listed Building Consent may also be required depending upon the nature of any proposal. Nevertheless, all parties agree the need for improved accessibility to the mill.
- 4.6. Although the work is still at a very early stage and, currently with no allocated funding, NT is working on developing a fully accessible loop round the estate, involving sections of broadwalk & permanent paving (similar to existing) and would consider adding the Mill into his project. However, as with the toilet facilities ABWT is working with NT in 2024 to produce a project brief drafting of which is already in-hand.

Acorn Bank Riverlands Partnership

- 4.7. Trustees (Bob Price and Carl Richardson) are part of the National Trust's Riverlands project group, which brings together all parties with an interest in the Crowdundle Beck. Much of the focus is on the weir, which is in danger of collapse. We have been looking for a solution which provides improvements for aquatic wildlife while preserving the water supply to the mill. The favoured approach is to replace the weir with a series of "engineered riffles" to reduce the gradient while retaining the water level at the mill offtake. It may be necessary to provide a temporary pumped supply to the mill while the work is carried out (hopefully summer 2025) and permissions for this are already being sought. The Project Manager has confirmed that she has obtained funding for the project, projected to be over £750K.

5. VISITOR EXPERIENCE

General Information

- 5.1. In line with its Charitable Objects, ABWT is constantly looking to improve the visitor experience by involving the local community, including schools, and generally advancing the education of the public. In doing so we work closely with NT. Like NT, we have adopted the principles of the Visitor Journey Framework ("VJF"), an approach that centres on the leisure needs and expectations of its visitors. The framework follows the visitor through a sequence of events and emotions from the moment they arrive on site to the return journey and beyond.
- 5.2. By following the principles of the VJF we can help visitors to see and interpret conservation work at first hand thus creating a new experience for them and, for those making return trips to watch progress and reveal something new every time they visit. With proper marketing and publicity, we can get the public directly involved through special events, e.g., lectures, tours and open days.
- 5.3. At weekends and Bank Holidays when the Mill is open and operating volunteers will continue to be on hand to provide information about the mill and where possible guide visitors round the mill complex. ABWT will also continue to welcome visitors to the Mill on Tuesdays, its maintenance day, subject to it being safe to do so.
- 5.4. The Mill's Information Room is of course the first part of the mill complex visitors see and we continue to make improvements to the layout and presentation. The slide and video show is regularly updated to reflect changes and improvements, and this season includes progress on the work on the second

waterwheel. The Information Boards around the site were nearly all updated last year as was much of the general directional and warning signage. New Information Boards will be installed in the wheelhouse on completion of the second waterwheel project.

Education

- 5.5. ABWT welcomed a number of school trips in 2023. These were very well received. The hand quern and quiz continue to prove popular. ABWT already has a couple of bookings for the new season and with NT continuing to welcome group visits and coach parties to Acorn Bank we hope that this number will increase as the season moves into the Summer.
- 5.6. ABWT is keen to expand its offering to visitors, particularly children. To this end, Trustees propose to convert one of the existing spaces below the Bank Barn into an educational and information centre for school parties. Currently the spaces are used for storage. The space will need clearing out, a deep clean and some remedial repairs to the floors and walls. The space will also require new lighting, the addition of power sockets and suitable table, chairs, and storage cupboards.
- 5.7. In addition to developing a dedicated space in which to carry out group activities and gatherings ABWT would like to introduce a range of worksheets and mill-based activities so children can learn how watermills have been used throughout the ages to harness the power of water. It will also help the children's understanding of the watermill's wider agricultural and industrial heritage and its role in local cultural and social history in line with our Charitable Objects.
- 5.8. All of this will cost money (estimated to be about £5000) but given the ABWT's current healthy financial position the Trustees put the proposal to the 2024 AGM for approval. The membership wholeheartedly endorsed the plans and funding. Although work on preparing the space is unlikely to start until after the second waterwheel project is complete because of resources ABWT will work on developing its plans.

Facilities

- 5.9. In an effort to make the mill complex more inviting to visitors ABWT has gradually added to the available seating and picnic tables. The installation of improved and additional lighting, particularly in the wheelhouse, making it easier and safer for visitors to view the workings of the Mill.
- 5.10. As referred to above, following the repair of the Beckside "landing stage", work has started on improving the surrounding area. Once the recobbling has been completed, the intention is to make the area more inviting for visitors by making it into a garden with ABWT funding the purchase of planters and seating and improved fencing.
- 5.11. There has been much debate about the pros and cons of providing greater access to the Upper Mill Room so that visitors can see the grain tuns and bagging area. However, in 2023 Trustees agreed that this project should proceed subject to ensuring that there is safe access, and our food production area remains secure. The engineering team have been considering solutions and it is hoped that work will start during the course of 2024.
- 5.12. Again, the membership recognised the importance of improving the Mill's facilities and endorsed the expenditure at the 2024 AGM.

Industrial Heritage

- 5.13. ABWT has continued with its programme of work for improving and updating the interpretation and visual presentation of the mill as it would have appeared in the early 1920s when the second waterwheel powered the endless pulley system to the nearby gypsum drift mine. The idea is to develop the way in which the mill was presented and interpreted to provide a thematic thread which visitors can pick up again as they explore the surrounding estate.

- 5.14. To enhance this interpretation ABWT continued with its programme of guided Industrial Heritage walks round the gypsum mines on the Acorn Bank Estate throughout the 2023 season. They again proved popular and ABWT will continue to offer such tours subject to the availability of resources. ABWT are working with NT to recruit additional Volunteer Guides (with NT taking the lead) and in providing information packs and training for the guides. In addition, we are working with NT to provide a BSL interpreter supported tour to hearing impaired groups.
- 5.15. There are two recurring events in the AB calendar, National Mills Weekend (this year 11-12th May) and Heritage Open Day (this year, the preferred date is 7th September). At each event, we try some additional "attraction", and one of these has been additional detailed tours with one of the millers. We have also run a special grain (Blacksmith usually), which has proved very popular, so much that there have already been requests to information as to when we will run it again. The tours are popular but require additional volunteer stewards to marshal. Other ideas we might consider are special events, such as "visiting craftsman" demonstrations – for instance spinning, bodging, artists and so on, all of which would be much easier with a separate covered "display space".

6. FOOD HYGIENE

- 6.1. As has been previously reported since its inception ABWT has developed a close working relationship with Eden District Council's Environmental Health Officer ("EHO") leading to the gradual implementation of strict food hygiene rules. As a result, in June 2022 we were awarded a Food Hygiene Rating of 5 (excellent) and a Category E Food Safety Inspection Rating.
- 6.2. Although our next inspection is not due until May 2025, following a local government reorganisation we have a new local authority, Westmorland and Furness Council, EHO to liaise with. Whilst food hygiene standards will not necessarily change we will make early contact with the new council to EHO, so we do not fall foul of any different procedures and requirements.
- 6.3. ABWT is also registered with the local authority as a food business establishment with a number of our volunteers registered individually to produce the food at home. This register has been taken over by the new local authority, so ABWT is able to continue offering samples of baked goods using the Mill's flour (these are not sold, but visitors are asked to make a small donation), which are displayed and served in line with EHO's advice and guidance. These samples prove very popular with our visitors, particularly children.
- 6.4. In line with Trading Standards requirements allergen warning notices are displayed (our bags of flour also carry the appropriate warning) in the lower milling room and points of sale along with an allergen chart to complement the recipe cards and booklet. Every volunteer involved in food handling has Level 1 food hygiene certificates and many, including millers and baggers have Level 2 certification.
- 6.5. To sit alongside our "Flour Guide" and suite of Mill Risk Assessments, we have a specific Food Hygiene Risk Assessment. The procedure for handling any issues that should arise with any of our food, particularly the grain and flour itself has also been improved. Copies of ABWT's food related documentation is in hanging document wallet on the notice board in the Upper Milling Room. Electronic copies are posted ABWT's secure shared drive.
- 6.6. Thanks to all those involved for ensuring that our food hygiene rules are followed.

7. HEALTH & SAFETY

- 7.1. Staying on top of Health and Safety will continue to be a top priority for the Trustees. The Watermill can be a dangerous working environment if not managed and monitored properly, so it is important that hazards, risks, and remedies are clearly identified, accessible and adhered to by Mill volunteers to ensure both their own safety and that of the Mill. The Mill has a full Safety Management System ("SMS") in place, including a suite of Risk Assessments – all of which have been updated for 2024.

- 7.2. As our landlord, NT must carry out an annual Workplace Inspection, the aim of which is to prevent work related accidents and ill health by identifying new hazards, providing evidence of legal compliance, checking that preventative and protective control measures are implemented and effective and generally ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for active monitoring of the safety management system.
- 7.3. The 2023 inspection was carried out on 31st January 2023 (and regularly reviewed and updated during the course of the year) and the issues, of which there very few, identified and taken forward jointly by ABWT and NT. Any changes were reflecting in the Condition Survey, the current edition of which was updated in May 2023. This document establishes the baseline for monitoring & assessing any deterioration in the mill buildings. The 2024 inspection was carried out on 7th February. Again, there were no issues, and the assessment was signed off by NT on 19th February 2024. The Condition Survey has been reviewed, updated, and submitted to NT for sign off.
- 7.4. All members, particularly those active volunteers, understand that they must ensure that they are familiar with the SMS and its contents. Copies of ABWT's H&S documentation are contained in hanging document wallet on the notice board in the Upper Milling Room. Electronic copies are posted ABWT's secure shared drive.

8. INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 8.1 In August 2023 ABWT's Shared Drive was migrated to the new Teams System a more secure storage and communications system.
- 8.2 In October 2023 ABWT purchased a new SumUp card reader/printer machine which works with 4G networks to provide better connectivity and an extended life span.

9. TREASURER'S REPORT

Accounts

- 9.1 As the Chairman said in his overview, ABWT has established a stable financial base from which we can grow and develop. My commentary on the accounts is as follows:

Income

- Donations well up on previous year with Bistro making a significant contribution.
- Gift Aid well up in line with increased donations.
- The Government Grant was towards the cost of electricity.
- In 2023 ABWT registered for VAT. By registering for VAT we were able to reclaim all the tax going back to the start of our operations in 2021.
- NT Contribution to SWP. In November we received the first tranche of £6,725 + VAT. Rather than show the full amount as income (as this would have distorted our surplus for the year) I have matched the income against our costs to date and shown the balance as an advance payment in the Balance Sheet.

Expenditure

- Big ticket items are grain, electricity, insurance, and pest control.

Balance Sheet

- We have a surplus for the year of £8,554 which brings our reserves to £15,618. This is a healthy position to be in but as indicated elsewhere in this report we will start to make heavy inroads into this surplus over the course of next 12-18 months as work on new projects start.

- We have £16k in our Current Account at NatWest. When the dust from the SWP has settled I will look at transferring some of our funds to the Building Society.
- We owe £302 in VAT for the quarter to December. Usually, we are due a repayment but on this occasion there was a large amount of Output Tax on the NT invoice which we have to account for.

Reserves

- 9.2 In line with most charitable organisations ABWT will retain enough cash in our bank accounts to sustain ABWT for six months in the event of a loss of income and/or to meet any unforeseen expenditure that may occur.

Legacy

- 9.3 November 2023 saw the first of the funds released to ABWT from a £50k legacy left for NT in the will of Nancy Armstrong in 2017. Under the terms of the Will, the monies have to be used specifically "*for the repair, improvement, maintenance and preservation*" of the Mill. The first project to benefit from this legacy is the second waterwheel referred to at 3.19 above, which is estimated to cost around £20k.
- 9.4 To ensure transparency, ABWT's Treasurer is identifying and recording expenditure from the legacy in ABWT's accounts.
- 9.5 NT also used some of the legacy money to pay for the new electrical wiring and lighting, but this will not show in ABWT's accounts because NT paid the contractor directly.

Adoption of Accounts

- 9.6 A copy of our accounts, as adopted by members at the AGM on 26th March 2024 are appended to this report at [Annex B](#).

9. TRUSTEE'S DECLARATION

Following the adoption of the Trustees Report and Annual Accounts by ABWT's Membership at the AGM on 26th March 2024 the Trustees ratified the decision on 8th April 2024 and asked the Secretary to submit the documents and update the details of the Trustees on the Charity Commission register.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



ROBERT PRICE

Chairman of Trustees
ACORN BANK WATERMILL TRUST
8th April 2024

ANNEX A - ABWT CHARITY TRUSTEES & OFFICERS (AS OF 26th MARCH 2024)

	NAME	POSITION (if applicable)	START DATE	DATES ACTED (if different)
1	BOB PRICE CHAIR of TRUSTEES	PRODUCTION MANAGER	Re-elected as Trustee 30/03/22	Reappointed as Chairman at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024.
2	DAVID ROBERTSON	SECRETARY	29/01/21	Reappointed as Secretary at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024.
3	GEOFF BAILES TRUSTEE	TREASURER	Re-elected as Trustee 39/03/23	Reappointed as Treasurer at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024
4	MARTIN FAGAN TRUSTEE	SALES & MARKETING MANAGER	Re-elected as Trustee 29/03/23	
5	NEIL HANNAH TRUSTEE	BUSINESS & FUNDRAISING MANAGER	Re-elected as Trustee 29/03/23	
6	JULIE OWENS TRUSTEE	-	26/03/24	Elected as Trustee at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024
7	CARL RICHARDSON TRUSTEE	CHIEF ENGINEER	29/01/21	Reappointed as Trustee at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024
8	PETER SIMPSON TRUSTEE	MAINTENANCE MANAGER	29/01/21	Reappointed as Trustee at ABWT's AGM on 29 th March 2024
8	FRANK BRADLEY	-	01/04/22	Resigned as Trustee (and by default Committee Member) on 11 th January 2024
9	BRIDGET DAVEY TRUSTEE	CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGER	01/04/22	Reappointed as Trustee at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024
10	ROGER FRANK TRUSTEE	DEPUTY CHIEF ENGINEER	Elected as Trustee 26/03/23	
11	JOANNA REES	ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY MANAGER	29/01/21	
12	GLENIS PRICE	VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR	29/01/21	
13	FRANCES RICHARDSON	WEBSITE MANAGER & EDUCATION OFFICER	29/01/21	
14	MARTIN STORER	IT MANAGER	29/01/21	
15	SARAH DAUNCEY	NT LIAISON & DEPUTY SAFEGUARDING LEAD	26/03/24	Co-opted onto Committee on 17 th January 2024. Appointment confirmed at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024. Also appointed as Deputy Safeguarding Lead at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024
16	FIONA SHOESMITH	SAFEGUARDING LEAD	26/03/24	Appointed as Safeguarding Lead at ABWT's AGM on 26 th March 2024

ANNEX B – COPY OF ADOPTED ACCOUNTS

Acorn Bank Watermill Trust

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023

Income		2023	2022
Sales		7,979	7,466
Donations		6,228	3,708
Guided Tours		195	90
Gift Aid		1,448	902
Past VAT Reclaimed		1,708	
Government Grant		150	
NT Funding		4,867	
Building Society Interest		123	41
		£22,698	£12,207

Expenditure		2023	2022
Purchases		2,611	3,319
Fixtures		550	400
Equipment		638	1,327
Information Room Development			940
Second Wheel Project		4,867	443
Consumables		1,243	1,539
Rentokil		726	912
Electricity		528	665
Insurance		864	1,073
Maintenance		1,658	1,132
Sundries		458	257
		£14,143	£12,007
Surplus		£8,555	£200

Balance Sheet

Assets		2023	2022
NatWest Current Account		16,267	6,130
Penrith Building Society		6,677	6,554
Prepayment			648
Cash Floats		30	30
		£22,974	£13,362

Liabilities		2023	2022
Member's Loan		5,000	5,000
VAT Creditor		302	
Advance Payment NT		2,053	1,298
Surplus Funds		15,619	7,064
		£22,974	£13,362

Acorn Bank Watermill Trust - Registered Charity No. 1193320