

## Case study for Heritage Counts 2015

Theme demonstrated by case study:	Repair and re-use of redundant historic building
Name of project/group:	Blackfell Hauler House - Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust
Location:	Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne
Duration (if applicable):	

Short description of project:

Bowes Railway is a 21 mile long, scheduled ancient monument and one of the earliest and best preserved rope haulage railways in the UK. Attributed to George Stevenson, it was a system for transporting coal from the North Durham coalfields to the Tyne. Built in 1913, Blackfell Hauler House is one of two remaining hauler houses on the line. Since the railway ceased carrying coal in the 1970s, the building and its surviving machinery has been unused and has gradually fallen into disrepair.

Of all the buildings on Bowes Railway, Blackfell has been the subject of the most anti-social behaviour. Metal theft and vandalism has wrecked the machinery and the building became a location for alcohol, drugs and graffiti abuse.



The interior of the Blackfell Hauler House before the project (Photo: Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust)

The main objective of this project was to repair the building, making it safe, and to bring it

back into sustainable use. The Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (the Trust) worked with the Bowes Railway Trust and Gateshead Council to make the project happen. The funding came from the Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic England, the Challenge Fund and the Pilgrim Trust, the Joicey Trust and the Lamsley Ward Fund.

What would have happened without this project/group?

The fabric of the building was deteriorating so quickly that it was likely that the building would have shortly collapsed, resulting in the loss of this significant piece of heritage.



The exterior of the Blackfell Hauler House (Photo: Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust).

How did the project achieve its objectives?

The Trust secured the building from the Bowes Railway Trust, raised the funds and worked with a specialist team of professionals and a historic building contractor to undertake the work. It also cleared an acre of land adjoining the building and secured the site for the future by finding a tenant to use the building.

What difference has it made? Main outcomes and outputs.

The project has saved the building from dereliction by making it fit for a new purpose and created 100m<sup>2</sup> of new workspace. It has also benefited the local community by transforming the site from one with major problems of anti-social behaviour to one which provides employment, allows public access, and is a source of local pride.

The project is a crucial step in preserving the wider Bowes Railway Scheduled Monument. It has acted as a catalyst for further projects and brought stakeholders together to discuss/plan the future of the railway. It has also supported the work of the Bowes Railway Company in their quest to promote the entire system, attract volunteers, and operate a museum for visitors.

In September 2015, the Trust won the “Best Rescue of a Historic Industrial Building or Site” for the project at the annual Historic England Heritage Angel Awards.

What were the main lessons learnt or challenges? Would anything be done differently?

Overall, this was a successful project, which was delivered as planned. However, it is worth noting that the project would not have been achievable without the 100% initial funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund’s Cold Spot funds. There were also challenges in the speed of the project, where funding had to be spent swiftly but other elements of the project such as planning were not moving at the same speed.

What is the future for the case study?

The building is now in good use and its future maintenance is secured by having a tenant. The Trust is moving on to other projects, but this project has created good relationships between all partners so is likely to result in future collaboration with the Bowes Railway Trust. The experience of the project has been shared as a case study through the Architectural Heritage Fund Review and through UK Association of Preservation Trusts networks.

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