About Apsley Paper Trail

Apsley Paper Trail is a registered charity (number 1079008) and company limited by guarantee (number 03416760) operated as a social enterprise. It was founded in the year 2000 and its charitable objects cover industrial heritage conservation and education. The charity provides educational, community and business services from its two sites at Apsley, just outside Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire.

Usually known as The Paper Trail, the charity was chosen as an East of England winner of Enterprising Britain, due to its success in transforming disused industrial buildings and an historic manufacturing business into a vibrant education, business and heritage centre.

The charity’s two locations are Frogmore Paper Mill where paper’s industrial revolution started in 1803, making it the world’s oldest mechanised paper mill and Apsley Mills, the former John Dickinson Stationery Company site, famous for stationery products such as Basildon Bond, Croxley Script and Lion Brand. Frogmore Paper Mill continues to make paper on a 1903 paper machine.

Built on a business model with charitable aims, the charity optimises the use of its assets; its buildings, heritage papermaking equipment, staff and volunteer skills. Through these it offers a wide range of opportunities and income generating activities including the heritage centre with mill tours, boat trips, recycled papermaking, schools’ activities, adult leisure courses, an exhibition and art gallery, IT training centre, conferencing facilities and an innovation centre at Frogmore Paper Mill, and at the John Dickinson Enterprise Centre at Apsley Mills, 30+ work spaces/offices for start up and small businesses.

The Trustees

A board of 8 active and enthusiastic Trustees is responsible for the management of the Apsley Paper Trail charity. All Trustees are volunteers and many perform voluntary tasks for The Paper Trail over and above being a Trustee. The Trustees delegate the day-to-day management and operation of all the charity’s activities to a team of 11 employed staff (5 full-time and 6 part-time) including the General Manager.

Trustee expertise covers law, education, leisure management, finance management, research and development, building and construction, business management and museum curatorship.

Vision and Goals

Apsley Paper Trail is a unique world industrial heritage site, working for a better environmental, enterprising and socially inclusive future.

Our vision is to create a living industrial heritage centre which will:

- CONSERVE Apsley’s unique industrial heritage
- Provide EDUCATION activities to excite, enthuse, entertain, and inform learners, leisure and corporate visitors
- Promote SUSTAINABILITY & INNOVATION in skills, materials, activities, enterprise and the community
Recent History
The trustees, staff and volunteers have been responsible for raising over £4 million through grant funding to develop the sites, augment the staffing and keep the historic paper machines running. This funding has also been used to pump-prime new income-generating activities to ensure the financial stability of the charity. In 2008 the charity built a new visitor centre with a £1 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Simultaneously, the trustees decided to sell a piece of development land at the Apsley Mills site to provide match funding for the project and for essential restoration work on its 1890 paper machine. Unfortunately, the credit crunch and subsequent recession had the opposite effect, potential buyers withdrawing and forcing the charity to protect itself through a Company Voluntary Arrangement. We are delighted that in 2013 the land sale was agreed and the charity is now in a stable financial position going forward.

So far The Paper Trail has:
- Invested over £4 million in grant funding to restore buildings and provide a new visitor heritage experience for the Borough of Dacorum with over 60,000 visitors to date
- Enrolled 300 schools on Recycle for Learning (R4L), our unique closed-loop paper recycling scheme
- Diverted over 600 tonnes of waste paper from landfill through R4L collections
- Kept heritage papermaking machines running at Frogmore Mill producing over 2400 tonnes of recycled paper for commercial sale since 2002
- Delivered educational activities to over 30,000 school, college and university students
- Provided business training for over 500 delegates and conference facilities for a further 7,000
- Offered work experience activities for over 250 young people and adults with learning disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Delivered free IT training to over 650 people in our UKOnline centre
- Offered family learning courses for over 300 families
- Provided locations and featured in documentaries for TV including Silent Witness, Flog it, Whitechapel, Salvage Hunters, Narrow Boat Afloat, The Making of London, The One Show
- Launched 40+ businesses at the John Dickinson Enterprise Centre, creating over 125 jobs
- Supported 8 sustainable technology innovation projects
- Kept the factory band tradition alive by providing rehearsal space for the award-winning Hemel Hempstead Band
- Launched the Heritage Fire Brigade, restoring the British Paper Company’s 1938 Fire Engine to full roadworthy working order & created the WW2 Blitz Experience

Volunteering at The Paper Trail
The charity could not operate without its dedicated team of volunteers carrying out a wide variety of roles, working together to achieve and maintain The Paper Trail vision.

Volunteers are a valued and essential part of the work of The Paper Trail. Our volunteers work in a wide range of roles at various times and dates to suit the individual and the needs of the organisation. These roles are matched to the interest, experience and skills of the individual volunteer. The Paper Trail holds its volunteers in high esteem and aims to provide a professional environment that is friendly and supportive to all its volunteers.

Next Steps
Plans for the future include restoring buildings and heritage machinery at Frogmore Paper Mill; increasing volunteer numbers; creating artists’ studios and further business units on the site; selling paper/paper products via e-sales; developing and extending education, training and work experience opportunities; developing the visitor experience, gallery and cafe.