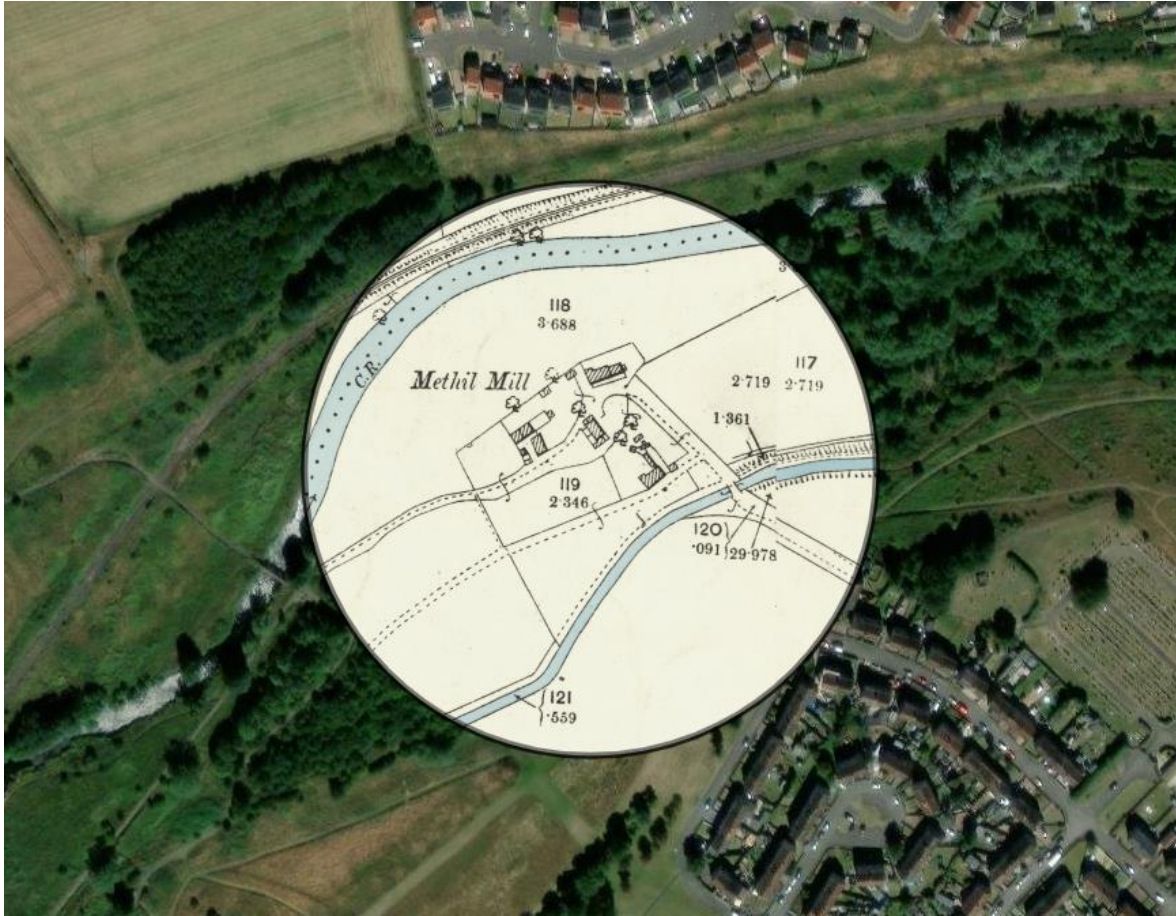


# Methil Mill



## River Parks Project - Feasibility Report for Methil Mill



This report was commissioned by Green Action Trust and Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Report was prepared by Archaeology Scotland

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## Introduction

### The Leven Programme and River Park Project

The Leven Programme is a partnership that aims to deliver a range of activities and infrastructure improvements that will enhance the River Leven Catchment and address a variety of local issues. The partnership, in a range of capacities, that is delivering this project is made up of a range of local and national organisations made up of The Green Action Trust, SEPA, Fife Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Sustrans, NatureScot, Scottish Water, Coal Authority, Rivers Trust, Scottish Enterprise, Fife College, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Diageo, and Keep Scotland Beautiful.

The River Park Project is an initial way that a sub-grouping of Leven Programme partners will achieve benefits for people and place. This will be achieved through the development of networks, paths, engagement activities, community growing and skills programmes that will share, celebrate, and improve the area for and with people.



Figure 1: The Rivers Park Area



## Methodology

As part of the River Park Project's development phase, the Methil Mill feasibility assessment aimed to understand the mill complex, its survival and the potential for its future use, with different degrees of consolidation or reconstruction possible. This was aimed at supporting the production of a NLHF stage 2 application for the programme but also delivered community engagement and built interest in local heritage during this phase.

The Methil Mill feasibility assessment set out to:

- Evaluate the nature and quality of the remains.
- Undertake desk-based research to establish what is currently known about the site.
- Carry out community and stakeholder engagement to establish degrees of interest in the project.
- Assess the cost benefit of opening either the whole or part of the complex of mill buildings.

This feasibility assessment reports the results of the desk-based assessment and the identification and exploration of the remaining mill buildings either through trial excavation or ground recognition. Due to the nature of the vegetation cover a topographical survey of the site was not possible at this time. Site Investigation to understand the geomorphological nature of the site was not undertaken as part of this project works were undertaken by Archaeology Scotland as the geotechnical investigations of the River Park Project were undertaken by Kiloh Associates.



Figure 2: Volunteers at the end of a wet dig at Methil Mill

This report was developed over a six-month period by the Team at Archaeology Scotland based on both the site investigations through consultations with local heritage groups, communities and the other consultant teams working on the River Park Project's development phase.

#### *Evaluate the Archaeological Remains*

Vegetation clearance and trial excavations were conducted between September and October 2023 in order to establish the presence of and nature of the mill remains. The excavations were conducted by Archaeology Scotland staff, local volunteers, Archaeology Scotland volunteers and pupils from Levenmouth Academy.

#### *Desk-based Assessment*

A rapid desk-based assessment was undertaken of the known historic environment of the Mill site. With a rapid initial assessment, it has not been possible to comprehensively study all potential sources of information, rather sufficient key sources have been referenced to assess potential and inform project planning for the delivery phase of future archaeology, historic environment and heritage related activities and projects as part of the Mill feasibility assessment. Due to limitations of time, we have not studied Aerial Photographic collections held by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and there may be primary documentary records in a variety of archives, such as National Archive of Scotland and ON Fife (See Appendix 1), which provide additional information. These are unlikely to change the extent of the proposals in the report in substantive terms, rather the Aerial Photographs could potentially identify other currently unknown prehistoric or Medieval sites and the other archive sources provide more specific insights.

Key sources that have been used to identify sites assessed included:

- Historic Environment Records- including information from Canmore and HES Designation Portal
- Historic Maps including Ordnance Survey (OS) Maps (see appendix 1 – Cartographic Sources)
- OS Name Book
- Readily Available Documentary Sources including: Statistical Accounts of Scotland (Wemyss Parish)- see references in Appendix 1 below.

A rapid initial assessment of the potential impacts of other aspects within the River Park Project was carried out based on the same mapping exercise. This comprised: the Mill Lade Heritage Trail and Accessibility Proposals; the River Restoration project; the Nature Networks project; and the Leven Community Hub Site Location Proposals.

#### *Community and Stakeholder Engagement*

The Mill Feasibility assessment team engaged with community and heritage organisations in Leven and Methil in order to establish the information held within the community and the need for and desire to take part in and deliver a heritage project for Methil Mill. This included conversations with individual stakeholders. Joining partner events and activities and attending meetings with organisations in person. Originally, we had set out to arrange bespoke events and to undertake an online survey. However, once the project began it became clear that the scale of the River Parks Consultancy Teams was putting pressure on local stakeholders. It was therefore decided to make use of established mechanisms for engagement. Namely, join existing networks, meetings and stakeholder led events. Our excavations also provided us with a great opportunity to engage local people in the project, directly in the River Park area. Details are set out in the discussion below.

## Location and Background

The River Parks project focuses on the brown-field and amenity greenspaces along a c 3 km long stretch of the River Leven to the north of Methil, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century were heavily industrialised. This had its origins before 18<sup>th</sup> century with smaller mills, such as Methil Mill, largely focused on cereal processing, the emergence of larger mill complexes, often focused on textiles, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the Kirkland Works, and then emergence of heavy industries the 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century use. The extent and nature of previous activity means there is a probability that several areas of the site comprise made up ground, particularly from the demolition of Kirkland Works and / or from the activities relating to the foundry.

The solid geology (BGS 1999a) comprises sandstones, siltstones and mudstones, relating to Lower Coal Measures in the western part of the site, while to the east sandstone, siltstones and mudstones relating to Middle Coal Measures are present, running broadly north to south within these measures are a series of coal seams. The drift geology (BGS 1999b) is predominantly in the higher part of the site and comprises Devensian sands and gravels, while the lowest lying portions are predominantly alluvium. While along the southern bank of the Leven, in the east part of site are, two river terrace deposits and to the west side of the site are Flandrian marine deposits. A band of glacial till is present in the south east part of the site.



## Discussion

### Desk-based Research

Methil Mill comprises the remains of a group of mill buildings, with the mill lade situated to the south, built along the southern side of the River Leven just off Poplar Road in Methilhill. The Mill is shown on Roy's Military (1744-47) map as three buildings and a yard (Figure 3). On the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (Fife, Sheet 25, Surveyed: 1854, Published: 1855) the mill is shown in greater detail, showing a range of possible smaller out-buildings (Figure 4). The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map depicts at least 14 structures, showing the central building as having been enlarged and a number of additional out building developed (Figure 5). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition OS Map (1950) the site is partially in ruins with only three buildings depicted as being roofed at this time (Figure 6) which remains the same on the 1956 and 1693 maps (Figure 7, Figure 8).

The mill complex layout changes over time but a core set of structures and access paths remain present throughout, and the majority of the remains appear to be present on the sub 50cm Lidar (Figure 9).



Figure 3: Extract of Roy Map (1747-55) showing location of Methil Mill on south side of the River Leven [Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755 - Map Images - National Library of Scotland \(nls.uk\)](#)





Figure 4: Fife, Sheet 25, Surveyed: 1854, Published: 1855 (6-inch) [View map: Ordnance Survey, Fifeshire XXVIII.3 \(Kennoway; Markinch; Scoonie; Wemyss\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, 1892-1949 \(nls.uk\)](#)

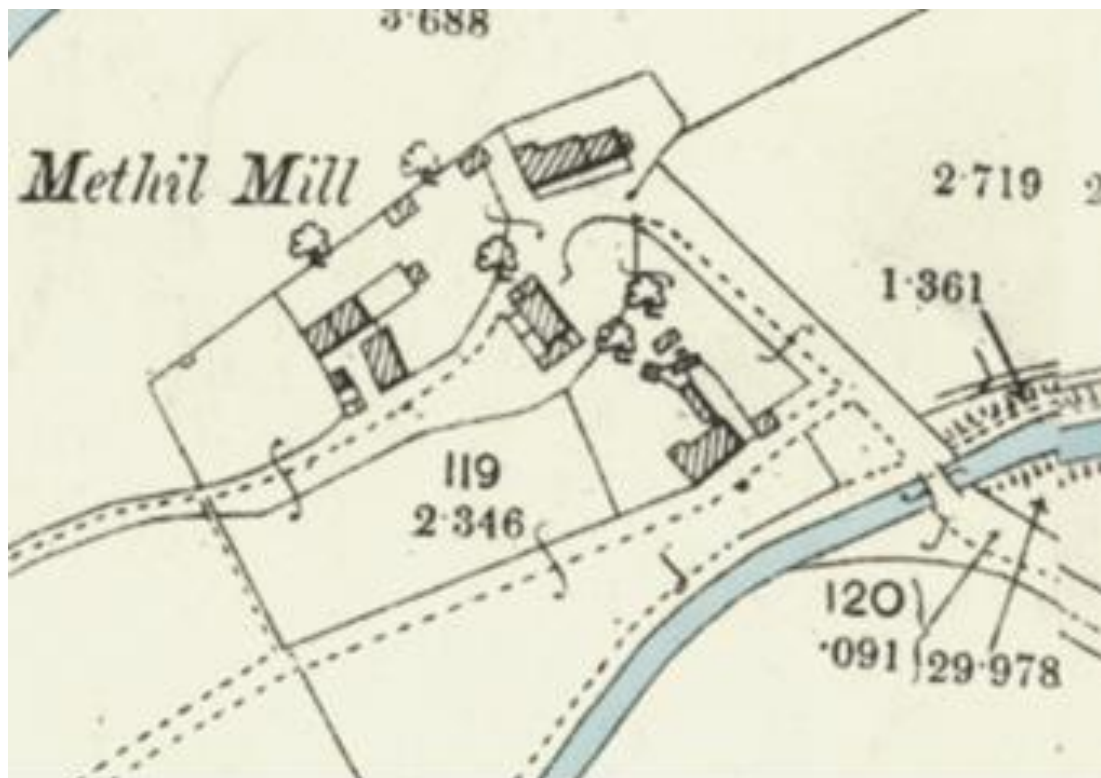


Figure 5: Fifeshire XXVIII.3, Revised: 1893, Published: 1895 (25-inch) [View map: Ordnance Survey, Fifeshire XXVIII.3 \(Kennoway; Markinch; Scoonie; Wemyss\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, 1892-1949 \(nls.uk\)](#)

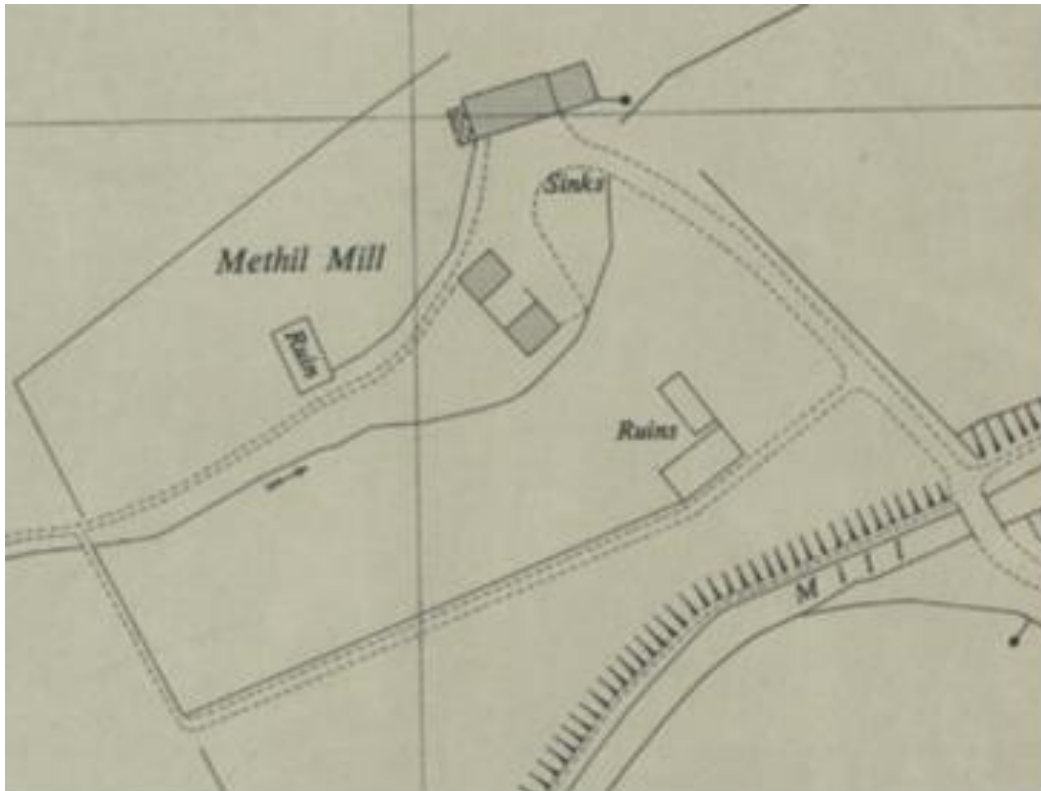


Figure 6: 1944-1972 1: 2,500- NO3500NE - Surveyed/Revised: 1949, Published: ca. 1950 [View map: Great Britain. Ordnance Survey, NO3500NE - A - Ordnance Survey National Grid Maps, 1940s-1970 \(nls.uk\)](#)

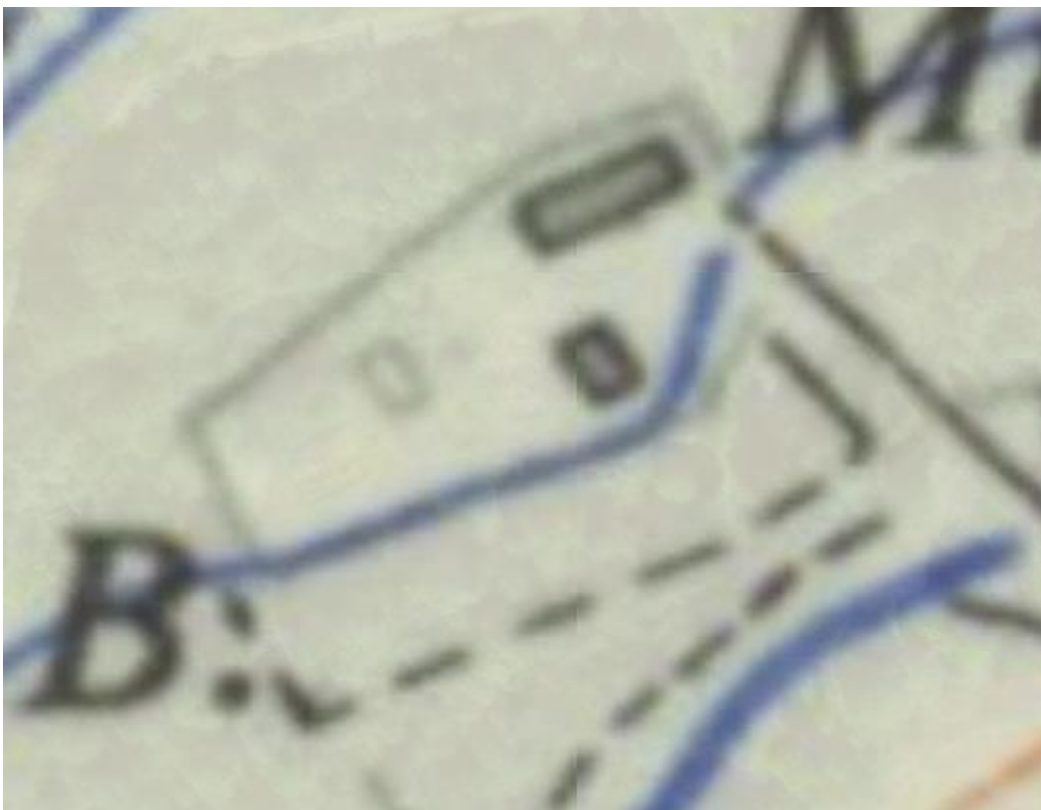


Figure 7: 1937-61 1:25000- NO30 Revised 1938-1954 published 1956 [View map: Great Britain. Ordnance Survey, NO30 - C \(includes: Ceres; Cults; Kennoway; Kettle; Largo; Markinch; Scoonie\) - Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 maps of Great Britain, 1945-1969 \(nls.uk\)](#)



Figure 8: NO30SE - A, Surveyed/Revised: 1949 to 1965, Published: 1968 [View map: Great Britain. Ordnance Survey, NO30SE - A - Ordnance Survey National Grid Maps, 1940s-1970 \(nls.uk\)](#)

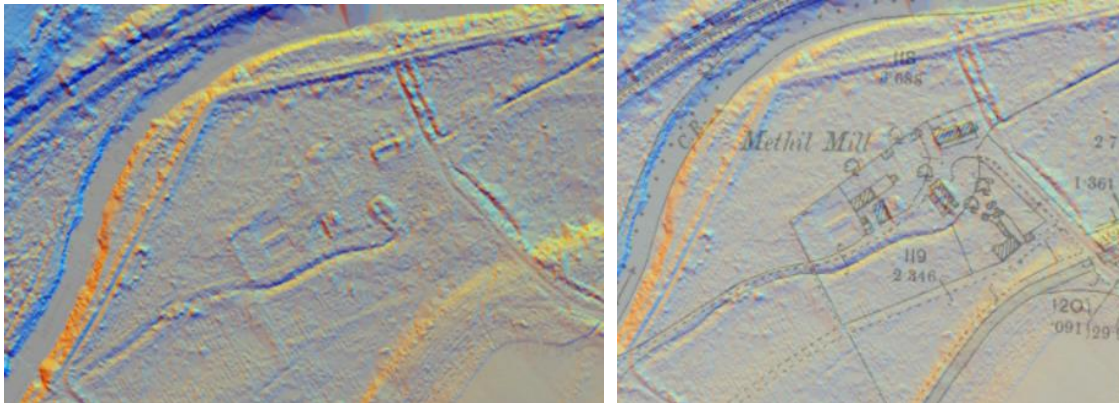


Figure 9: 50cm Lidar for Methil Mill. Available from National Library of Scotland



## The Site Complex

The Mill site is made up of a range of different buildings, with different uses. Following the desk based and site-based investigations we can propose the following layout of surviving and currently obscured structures (see figure 10).

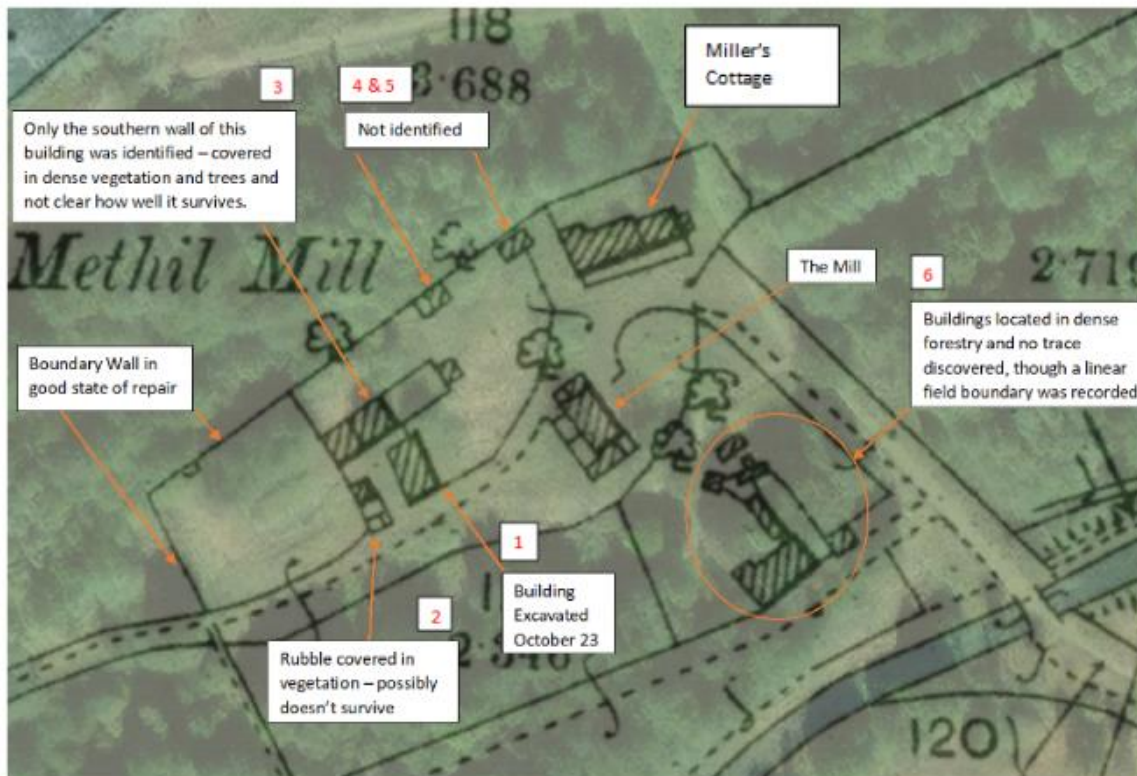


Figure 10: 1st edition Ordnance survey map showing buildings identified and those presumed lost as well as the Mill and the Millers House

## Excavations

### Previous Investigations

#### The Mill Building

Methil Mill was investigated as part of the Leven Valley Development Trust Methil Mill Community Excavation Project in 2004. The focus of the 2004 excavations was the Mill building. This building still survives but is covered in dense vegetation as well as several trees and it is difficult to ascertain the state of its preservation. However, the walls, which are of brick and roughly cut stone, can be seen, standing to the height of around 1m, and it can be assumed that it is in a good state of repair.

The following extract from the unpublished interim report (Spiers 2004) summarises the findings:

*“the building was constructed in two phases and that it was powered by a single south gable mounted undershot water wheel, with the water being fed down a ditch-cut lade to the wheel recess pit.*

*From the nature, character, extent and form of the building, it is likely that the mill was originally constructed c.1720 as a single-phase build on a previously unoccupied site. However, the fabric of the*



*building clearly indicated that the mill had been extended to the north. The form of this extension suggested that it was a kiln that was added, probably sometime around 1820.*

*It was apparent that the mill was principally a square planned rubble build structure. It was originally based around two rooms although a third chamber, probably a corn drying kiln had been added to the north gable. The internal superstructure would have been of wood and a sufficient quantity of red terracotta tiles were recovered to indicate that the building had had a pan tiled roof.” (Spiers 2004)*

Following these excavations, it was thought that excavations below the level reached during the 2004 phase of work may reveal additional details as to the use and foundation of the building. It may also indicate if there were any earlier phases of activity below this structure, as well as revealing further evidence about the changing use of the mill and the different technologies employed here at different times. It was also concluded that the building would lend itself to conservation work and traditional building repair.

#### The Miller’s Cottage

The other building that was partially excavated during the 2004 work was the Miller’s Cottage though the interim 2004 report does not lay out in any detail the results of this work.

This building lies to the northeast of the mill, close to the footpath that runs to the east of the site. It is almost completely obscured by dense vegetation and trees, but the layout can be seen, and it appears to survive to a good state of repair. The walls are of roughly cut stone and brick and it survives to a height of 1m in places.

Further excavation of this site would allow for a more detailed picture of its use and history to be determined as well as investigating if there were any earlier phases of activity. This building would also lend well to consolidation work and repair.

#### Other structures and features

The investigators that carried out the 2004 work identified five other structures within the mill complex, though it is not clear what these buildings are as no indication of their location was given in the interim report. Of these buildings, one formed the focus of excavations during this project, while the other four were either not visible on the ground, due to the dense nature of the vegetation or have been partially destroyed or eroded.

The circular structure identified as a possible corn drying kiln was not seen during this project. A large oval shaped mound that was covered in vegetation may be the kiln and would require further excavation and vegetation clearance to identify.

Of the four other buildings identified in 2004 they were assessed as being *“ancillary buildings such as a coal store (for fuel for the kiln), a grain store, a flour store and stables”* (Spiers 2004). It is presumed that one of these buildings formed the focus of excavations during this project (Structure 1), while the other three buildings are either partially destroyed or severely obscured (Structure 2 - 5) and were not identified on the ground.

A further complex of buildings (Structure 6) depicted on historic Ordnance Survey maps to the southwest of the mill building were not identified on the ground, as the area where they are located is covered in an area of densely planted forestry. While the possible remains of a boundary wall were seen in this location, these should be investigated in future programmes.

In addition to the buildings within the mill complex there are two other historical features that were identified. The boundary wall of the complex is relatively well-preserved, running around the

northern and eastern portion of the site. The wall is of dry-stone construction and survives to a height of 0.5m in places. This boundary wall feature appears to be relatively old in nature, due to large mature trees growing from it, and it is possible that it is from the 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, relating to the early phases of use of the site. It also represents an element of the wider historical landscape use. Another landscape feature is the mill lade that runs through the center of the site, to the south of the mill building. The lade is approximately 4m in width and is filled with water and vegetation. Both features would lend themselves to some enhancement work to make them more visible to the public and to highlight the wider landscape scale of the site.

### 2023 Excavations

As part of the NLHF funded River Park Project development phase at Methil Mill, field work took place over three days between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of October. Two trenches were opened over the remains of one of the buildings identified within the mill complex (Structure 1). Five local volunteers took part in the excavations, with the eight pupils from the local high school, Levenmouth Academy, attending for one afternoon.

The building was rectangular in shape, aligned north to south, measuring 9m in length and 6.3m in width externally and 7.7m in length by 4m in width internally. There is a possible revetment wall or second phase of walling along the eastern length of the exterior of the building. The walls were built with roughly cut stones and boulders and pointed with a lime mortar. There was some evidence of repair and different phases of use in the northern gable where bricks could be seen, possibly indicating a blocked entrance or window, though this was not investigated. The walls stand to a maximum height of 1m.

A 2m wide gap in the southwest corner of the building may be the area of an entrance and it was in this location that a small exploratory trench or Test Pit 1 (TP1) was located. The interior of the building was covered with moss and grass while the walls and surrounding area was also covered in grasses and shrubs. The topsoil and overburden in the northern half of the interior was removed in order to investigate this part of the building.

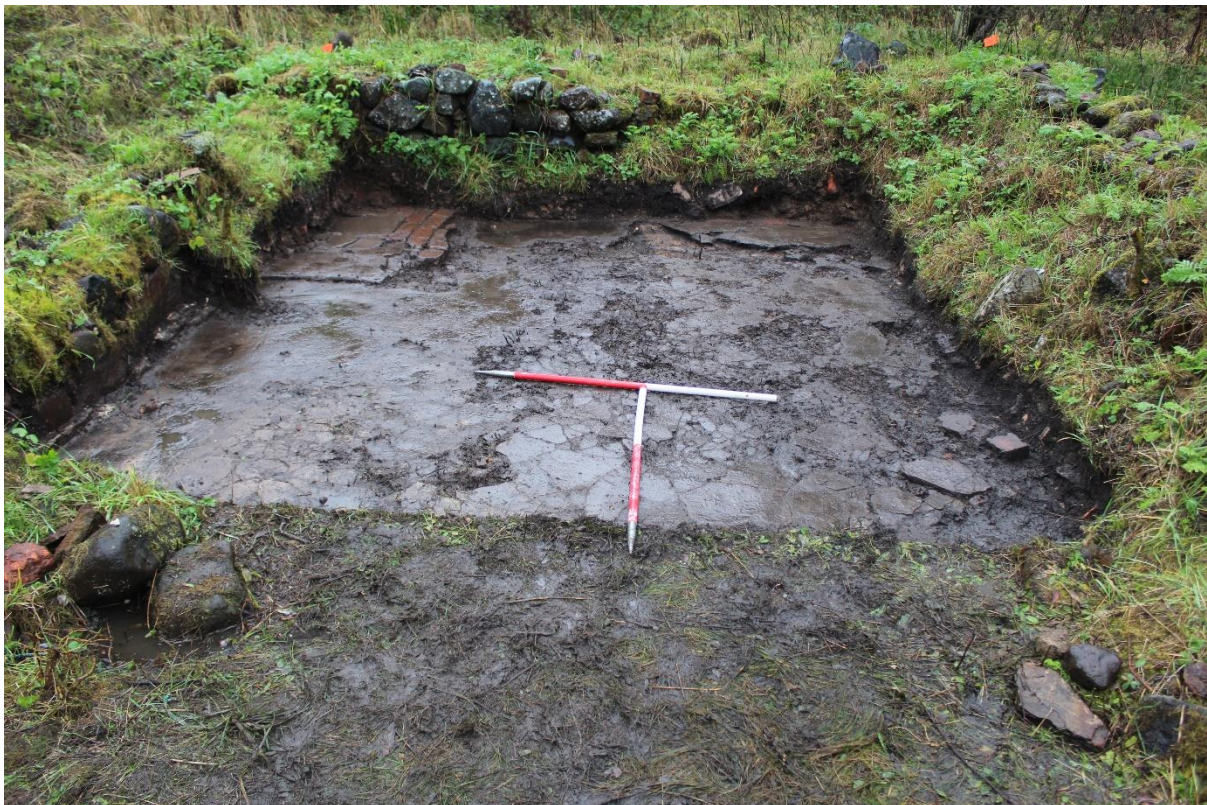


*Figure 11: Trench 1 in entrance area of building showing earlier cobble surface*



The Test-Pit measured 3m by 1m and revealed evidence for several phases of construction and use of the building. Below the topsoil and over burden there was a layer of evidence of wall collapse which sat directly on top of a linear arrangement of bricks and tiles, that may form part of the foundation of the wall or possibly indicates the entrance area. A flat rectangular stone sat on top of this feature, which may have been an entrance or threshold stone. Below these features was a cobbled surface and another linear arrangement of stones, on a different alignment to the wall. Within the cobbled surface was a fragment of green glazed pottery which may be several hundred years old indicating that there was an earlier phase of building at this site which pre-dates anything identified during the previous excavations.

Within the northern portion of the interior of the building, the removal of vegetation and topsoil revealed a concrete surface as well as several discrete concentrations of brick and stone. These may represent internal features indicating something of the use of the building but may also be different phases of flooring. The concrete surface was laid on a made ground deposit of ashy material that contained a small assemblage of white and grey glazed china fragments. This will be able to provide a date for this phase of building activity and floor use. Below the made ground deposit was a deposit of heavily mixed and disturbed clay which may be an old ground surface on which the building was first constructed.



*Figure 12 Northern portion of interior of the building showing different phases of flooring*

## Consultations and Engagement

The project team set out to understand the future possibilities to deliver a heritage project focused on Methil Mill through a series of consultations, meetings and engagement activities in date 2023. This meant that the project team engaged local heritage groups, local historians, local organisations and the River Park Consultancy Teams. As well as discussion with volunteers on the various field work activities.

Discussions were held that focused on the history of the site and its importance with Methil Heritage Group, Fife Council and the local historians Mary Reily, Sue Oak and Gordon Sutherland. This helped establish the nature of the site and build the background for the project. The team consulted with local organisations in order to understand whether such groups would be interested in any programme and activities that could be delivered by the project, this included discussions with meetings with or join events with the Methil Heritage Centre, On Fife, Leven Local Tourism Association, the Fife Heritage Railway, BRAG, Corra Foundation, Doon the Dam amongst others.

Skills and engagement were also a big part of the development phase works. Discussions were held with Levenmouth Academy, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Developing Young Workforce, Fife College, KSB, Fife Countryside and Coastal Trust and Rural Skills Scotland in order to understand the potential for engagement and skills development within the project. The team also joined Arc Architects with their co-design workshop for the Community Hub, attended both BBQ community events, supported Ice-cream Architecture's Women and Girls Wellbeing Afternoon session with MCCI, supported the Heritage Group at the Doon the Dam event and the attended various meetings such as the Levenmouth Connectivity Steering Group, Leven Local Tourism Association Heritage Group and the Methil History Group.

The following the individuals and organisations were consulted:

- Levenmouth Connectivity Steering Group
- Corra Foundation
- Fife Archaeologist
- Fife Historic Buildings Trust
- BRAG (Benarty Regeneration Action Group)
- On Fife
- Fife College
- Fife Council
- Methil History Group
- Fife Heritage Railway
- Leven Local Tourism Association
- MMCI (Methilhill Community Children's Initiative)
- Doon the Dam
- Levenmouth Academy
- Department of Works and Pensions
- Fife Countryside and Coastal Trust
- Methil Heritage Centre
- Trade Hub
- CLEAR



- STAND (Striving Towards A New Day)
- Sue Oak
- Clued Up
- Restoration Trust
- Rural Skills Scotland
- KSB (Keep Scotland Beautiful)
- Gordon Sutherland
- Mary Reily
- Leven Local Tourism Association Heritage Group
- Developing Young Workforce
- Save Wemyss Ancient Caves

Just a little note to say how much I enjoyed working with you and the team on the digs at methil.

It was interesting to learn about the local history of an area that I knew very little about, and although a couple of the trenches proved to be uneventful the others were, and I found the whole experience very interesting and rewarding, also it provided me with another avenue to my volunteer archaeology journey, being able to do the section drawing in one of the trenches also added to my ongoing experiences and understanding of what's involved in recording a trench.

I think that myself and the rest of the volunteers achieved a lot in the few days considering the sometimes inclement weather, but that did not deter us from having a great time over the days of the dig. I think that we all worked well as a team and all knew each others capabilities and achieved a well balanced team. I think it is a good idea for community volunteers to get involved in local archaeology projects and I hope it will continue. On a final note the backfill on the last Saturday was fun in the rain and we all had a laugh! Many thanks John Marshall

Text Box: Feedback from Methmill evaluation excavations in 2023

#### [Other River Park Project links](#)

The development phase work undertaken also established links with the other consultant teams working on the River Park Project and developed connections with the relevant projects in development in order to assess the impact of proposed works on the archaeology of the area. This included reviewing and providing supporting information for the Mill Lade Heritage Trail and Accessibility Proposals, the River Park Restoration programme, the Nature Networks programme and the Leven Community Hub Site Location Proposals.

#### Hidden Heritage

Hidden Heritage project will deliver engagement activities that explore the wider archaeological and historical roots of the River Park Area. The Methil Mill project compliments and enhances the Hidden Heritage project and will add further engagement, skills development opportunities and historical information. It has been identified that the Methilmill Church site has opportunities for integration with the green skills academy due to the nature of the proposed works.

This is set out in the Impact Assessment Table below:

Proposed infrastructure	Potential site impact
Board walks	Methil Mill (1); Methil lade (a)
Hub Option 1	Methil Lade (a); Rifle Range (c)
Hub Option 2	Kirkland Mansion House and grounds (17/18)
Nature Networks	<p>Methil Mill (1); NN22- Mill Ponds for Methil Mill. NN19 Flood scrapes and the spinning Mill.</p> <p>Methil Mill Church (15); NN26 Wood around cemetery. Does the Planting affect Bridge End Cottage (19) and Mayfield (22)?</p> <p>Methil Mill Lade (a); NN 25 Kirkland Lade Habitat</p> <p>Kirkland Manor (12); NN 41- Wheels Park on old blaes pitch</p> <p>Rose Cottage (18); NN 33 &amp; 34 community growing?</p> <p>Curling Pond, footbridge, sluice and Burn Mill Lade (20/b); NN 35 &amp; 37?</p>
River Park Restorations	<p>Reach 1 affects the spinning mill- new scrapes and ponds (2)</p> <p>Reach 2 affects Methil Mill (1)</p> <p>Reach 3 and 4- ponds and scrapings could impact Mayfield (22)</p> <p>Reach 3 and 4- Green bank protection could impact Swiss/Saw Mill Cottage (6/d)</p>

Table 1: River Park Project Impact Assessment

#### Community HUB

The project links well with the plans developed by Arc Architects for the Community Hub; both in terms of interpretation and storage space for equipment, tool stores and training facilities skills programmes. The Hub plans for displays/exhibitions spaces for has synergies with similar possibilities at Methil Heritage Centre and Together Levenmouth Hub on the Leven High Street for 'rolling' displays/exhibitions. There are also links with the River side 'Banksy' project and possibly the Fife Heritage Railway in terms of art and young people throughout the River Park area.

As discussed in the River Leven Park Community Hub Design and Management Options Report, Section 4.3.1- Heritage

*'The heritage strategy for the Park is defined and delivered through the Hidden Heritage Project, whose principal aims are to enhance and diversify the understanding and appreciation of local heritage. The key mill heritage sites are located away from the Hub, which supports heritage in the following ways:*

- *Providing a meeting space for indoor and outdoor heritage activities within the Park*
- *Providing a gateway to the Park for visitors to experience its heritage through a Heritage Trail on the active travel network.*
- *Having external displays interpreting local heritage, in the main public & visitor locations*
- *Facilitating workshops on local motorcycle heritage with Kingdom Off-Road*
- *Providing facilities to support conservation of heritage sites within the wider Park.'*

This reflects the project being developed for the Mill Site.

## Option Appraisals

Following the assessment of the archaeology and the consultations, the Methil Mill site was assessed for a range of options to explore the future use of the site. The options assessed were:

1. Full restoration of the principal mill buildings and creation of outdoor museum.
2. Excavation and engagement project linked to and included in the Hidden Heritage project.
3. Excavation, building consolidation and skill development programme in order to develop a visitor attraction through active participation in heritage.

Option	Description	Site Assessment	Factors which came out of Community Consultation	Other factors to be considered
1	Full restoration of the principal mill buildings and creation of outdoor museum.	Low level survival of architectural remains limits restoration potential of full site.	Significant interest in the mill site and the social history aspects of the project.  Need for young people to learn and develop skills – Including employment.	Overlap with the proposed community Hub in terms of competition for commercial space and use of restored building.  High maintenance costs.
2	Excavation and engagement project linked to and included in the Hidden Heritage project	Great potential for further archaeological exploration and research.	Would fit neatly within the Hidden Heritage thematic sub projects. However, the cited lack of ‘visible’ heritage within the River Park Area highlights the need to increase the scope of the project.	Excavation would enable more complete interpretation.
3	Excavation, building consolidation and skill development programme in order to develop a visitor attraction through active participation in heritage	The site survival and archaeological potential will enable greater research, engagement and creative use of the space that makes the site visible and useable.  The site was discussed as an option for an outdoor classroom in the original discovery in 2004. The archaeological remains would lead neatly to that as an option.	As above the lack of cited visible heritage/archaeological features in the park area means the establishment of a clear and useable, consolidated, space appropriate.  Options to address skills and employability opportunities can be delivered through this option.	This option would complement the Proposed Community Hub in terms of facilities, activity areas and through interpretation.  A consolidated and active space will complement the Nature Networks and other access initiatives and create further visitor opportunities

Table 2: Options Appraisal

Given the nature of the other River Park projects, the close physical link to the community hub (creating potential competition for audiences and revenue streams), the costs of the project and its future maintenance and sustainability, Option 1 a full restoration project was quickly ruled out. When considered together with the nature of the mill survival (with the majority of walls greatly reduced in height or completely removed to ground level) this option would have been too expensive and would have been difficult to maintain.

Whilst the Methil Mill project has synergies with the Hidden Heritage project and overlaps in many ways, a couple of key bits of feedback came from the community consultation; namely that the heritage of the area was not visible and that there was a need for points of interest to be developed along the River Park Routes related to heritage. This led us to rule out Option 2.

Therefore, Option 3, that builds on community excavation and research for the mill site have been considered more fully. The site has been assessed as having a high potential for further community excavation and post-excavation analysis and publication. There is also high potential for additional engagement and interpretation at the site, due to the enhanced surviving structures and the results of the archaeological explorations. Furthermore, there is high potential for skills and employability related activities, in particular as part of the Green Skills Academy but also potentially complementing the proposed Hidden Heritage *Power of Participation* sub-project.

## Activating Methil Mill

The option taken forward is Option 3: to activate Methil Mill in the NLHF delivery phase is the creation of an outdoor learning environment and programme that will appeal to participants, local community groups and visitors alike. This will include the development of a community excavation programme; consolidation of the mill remains and a skills development programme in order to create an outdoor space that can be used as an outdoor classroom and recreational space that will link to the wider River Park Project elements.

It is proposed that the delivery phase programme:

- Excavates the archaeological remains
- Consolidates mill structures
- Develop a visitor and recreational space

In order to achieve this the site will be excavated and three of the buildings will be consolidated and made readable, or to put in more succinctly, visible to visitors. Currently the site is covered in vegetation and survives in patches, with either rubble or vegetation obscuring architectural features or obscuring the outline of individual buildings. The remedy this the Activating Methil Mill Project will clear the vegetation and remove and restore fallen masonry as it is found on the site. In that way the site will be a clear, visible, and useable outdoor space. This will be delivered as part of an engagement and skills development programme.



The following table sets out these opportunities for future work at the site.

<b>Site</b>		<b>Degree of Preservation</b>	<b>Recommendations for further work</b>
Methil Mill	Mill Building	Upstanding remains of building can be seen through heavy vegetation cover. Walls made of stone and brick	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance, that complements or supplements the Methil Garden Nature Network Project in the wider River Park Project, of the buildings and access paths. Further excavation expanding on 2004 work to investigate earlier phases of activity and use.
	Miller's Cottage	Upstanding remains of building can be seen through heavy vegetation cover. Walls made of stone and brick	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance. Further excavation expanding on 2004 work to investigate earlier phases of activity and use.
	Structure 1 – building evaluated in 2023	Upstanding remains of building clearly seen after vegetation removal. Walls made of rough stone with mortar bonding.	Excavation revealed earlier phases of building and further excavation would look to investigate date and use of this earlier phasing.  Site was very wet and this must be a consideration on planning future work.
	Structure 2	Possible eastern wall survives below dense vegetation.	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance and archaeological survey.
	Structure 3	Possible southern wall survives below dense vegetation but appears to have been demolished.	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance and archaeological survey.
	Structure 4	Buildings present on mapping though not located in 2023	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance and archaeological survey.
	Structure 5	Buildings present on mapping though not located in 2023	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance and archaeological survey.
	Structure 6	Large collection of buildings now located in dense forestry	A Programme of vegetation clearance and maintenance and archaeological excavation and survey.

Table 3: Structure Assessment

The focus will be on the excavation and vegetation management of the area within the mill site boundary wall with excavations focused on the Miller's Cottage, the Mill itself, Structure 1 and in particular the cluster of structures 6 within the trees but also look to characterise related activity in the areas outwith the buildings and characterise the lade.

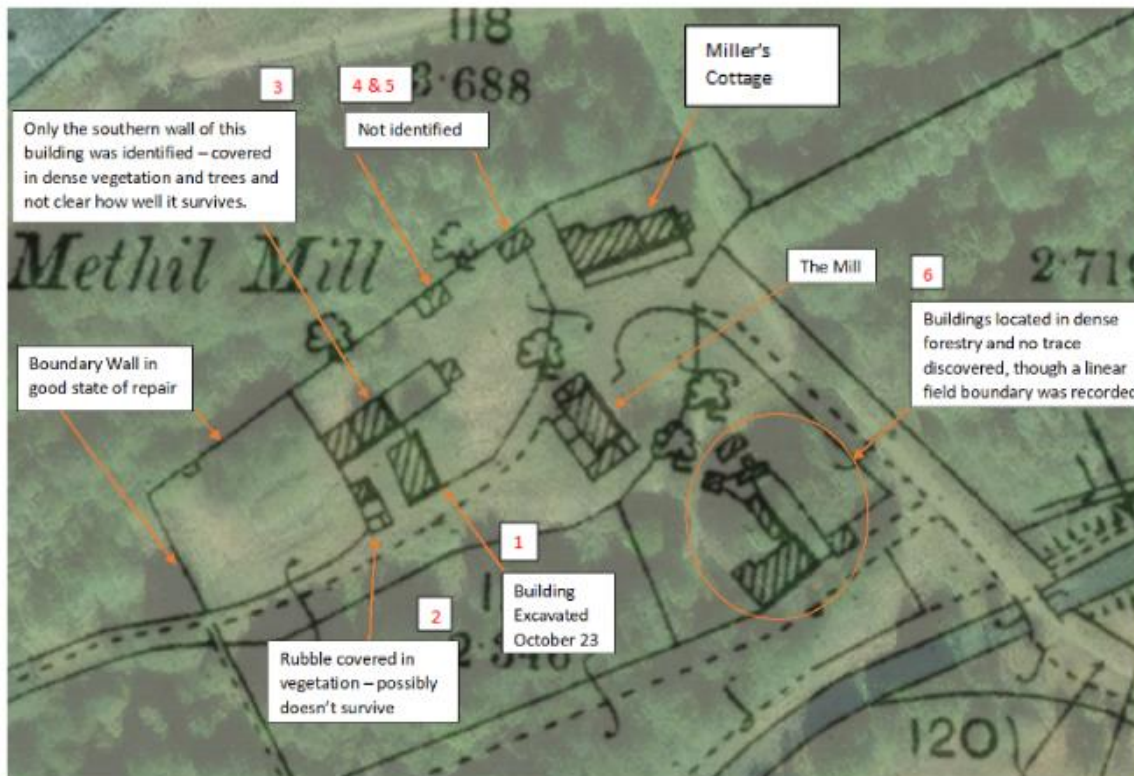


Figure 13: 1st edition Ordnance survey map showing buildings identified and those presumed lost as well as the Mill and the Millers House

The consolidation works will focus on the Miller's Cottage, the mill itself and Structure 1. These are the buildings with the highest level of survival, the best location within the area for visibility and the best possibilities for future use. The remains survive to a maximum of 1.5m high and more often less than 0.5m high. The fabric of the buildings is made up of stones, bricks and concrete and therefore offers the opportunity to develop a range of traditional skills training activities. This will include vegetation management, recording, stone building, brick laying and lime mortaring.

These works will be delivered through a programme of engagement activities and skills development. The intention is to offer focused activities and / or informal participation activities so that the project can support as wide a range of participants as possible. The programme will be delivered with local heritage groups, volunteers and through partnerships developed with KSB, Rural Schools Scotland, Levenmouth Academy and Fife college.

The outcome will be:

- A fully understood mill complex
- An improved and readable heritage feature
- A useable and welcoming space for recreation and learning- a sub-hub linked to the community hub
- Improved interpretation
- Health and wellbeing improvements for participants
- Trained volunteers





Figure 14: Concepts for project delivery

The project will provide a great opportunity to activate and improve a remarkable heritage site and to support local people through engagement and skills training all in order to provide a safe relaxing and interesting experience for locals and visitors.

Initially envisioned as a vehicle to improve participation and skills development the project will have long term use post the project period. Suggestions have ranged from outdoor classroom, visitor

experience, long-term skills programmes building on the current offer, meditation, outdoor meeting space, artistic installations and yoga. There is no reason that an improved space cannot be used for all of these and more.

## Delivery Methodology

The Mill Project is designed to appeal to a wide range of people. It is proposed that project setup, that activities extend over three years to allow for longer term outcomes to be delivered. The broad sequence of the project and activities is shown in the table below. It should be noted that, depending on the delivery mechanism (e.g. through a project partner as opposed to contractors), there is flexibility to compress the timetable to a degree but this may inhibit the identification of pathways to progression (such as through the Green Skills academy) and development of broader programme legacies.

Methil Mill GANTT	2025				2026				2027			
KEY ELEMENTS 2025 - 2028	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Project Set up	█											
Project Launch	█											
Methil Mill Community Walkovers and Co-Design of Project		█	█	█								
Methil Mill Archaeological Fieldwork and skills programme		█	█	█								
Methil Mill Year 1 Reporting and Evaluation				█	█	█	█	█				
Methil Mill Perd Implementation					█	█	█	█				
Methil Mill Consolidation						█	█	█				
Methil Mill Training Programme							█	█	█			
Methil Mill Project Engagement and communications					█	█			█	█		
Methil Mill Project Publication and Legacy									█	█	█	█
Methil Mill Project Evaluation												█

The delivery phase of the Methil Mill project will comprise several key elements of with a range of activities, including:

### 1. Community investigations of the Methil Mill complex

- Seven Community Walkover and Codesign Days
- Production of Project Design
- Community Archaeological Excavations.
- Production of Technical Reports, such as Data Structure Report (DSR) and Post-excavation Research Design (PERD).
- Post-excavation analysis, reporting and archiving
- All key steps in the processes will involve community participation and training opportunities. Including the potential for Two 10-day Skills development programmes for 10 participants on each.



## 2. Enhancement and repair of three mill buildings.

- Existing walls are in poor condition. There is some rebuilding required.
- Removing some of the internal hearting along wall top and replacing with lime Morter/local river aggregates to bind together the top course of stone wall.
- Point sections of external walls to make wind and watertight. Also include this as a training opportunity.
- Cap wall heads with turf
- Provide/repair stone sills for both windows and sit using lime mortar.
- Repair/windows and door apertures using traditional building skills, where appropriate. Finished with lime pointing
- Rebuild fallen sections, anticipating much will be done during training course
- Make good ancient and exposed foundations.
- This has the potential for Two 10-day Skills development programmes for 10 participants on each.

## 3 Training, Skills and Participation activities

- Deliver 40 days of training on site to volunteers on all aspects of the project, teaching traditional rural skills and building techniques. Facilitating volunteers and groups during workdays. Aiming to work with 10 volunteers per day. Including the potential for Two 15-day Skills development programmes for 10 participants on each.
- Deliver 20 general volunteer workdays where skill exchange may be less of a focus than other outcomes such as team and group experience; mental and physical benefits of being active outdoors; achieving visible outcomes together. Aiming to work with 10 volunteers per day and deliver for 10 voluntary and local organisations.
- Deliver at least one, family open days where a relevant skill, arts project, game, task, or tasks will be available for accompanied children visiting the site.

The training accounting for the needs and existing abilities of the trainees. Each volunteer day or training day will begin with safety briefings. The general work will where possible be broken down into skill specific days, provisionally:

- 4 days retaining wall/revetment
- 8 days stone walling repairing
- 4 day Using lime mortar for rubble wall building
- 4 days pointing with lime mortar
- 20 volunteer workdays, including tidying up and making site safe, surfacing and making access routes safe/functional for time being.

## 4 Communication and Engagement Activities

- Social Media and Press Content Opportunities will be developed.
- Identify and support other local groups, to visit and trial activities at Methil Mill, who may wish to use the activated space in the future.

### *The Delivery model*

As set out above would deliver four 10 day skills development programmes and two 15 day skills development programmes across the archaeological fieldwork, mill consolidation and traditional

skills training provision. This would be directed principally towards young people seeking experience and employability skills.

However, the scale of the mill project would allow for greater engagement with participants and therefore the opportunity for them to develop skills and progress through the various programmes. This is equally, if not more the so the case with the River Park Project as a whole. The full project would be able to support greater capacity for skills development, greater number of participants and more resource for delivery. A combined approach focused on the Mill project but with opportunities to engage across the River Park Project delivery projects could create a broader and more vibrant skills and employability programme (see River Park Capacity Building Report for more detail).

## Conclusion

This project provides a key opportunity to deliver on the Leven Heritage Framework and focus on how we work with community and partners towards developing legacy and sustainable use for the Methil Mill site that will have a real impact on contemporary society. Actively learning about, caring for and enhancing such a locally important heritage site will contribute greatly to the River Park Project aims and the benefit of the people of Levenmouth. It is anticipated that this project will contribute to:

- increased membership and active support of existing Heritage Groups.
- wider participation in the heritage of the Levenmouth area through regular ongoing support in volunteering activities.
- better understanding and celebration of the stories of the Levenmouth area which matter to people through ongoing educational and cultural activities.
- increased numbers of visitors who spend longer in the area through using a Leven Heritage Trail running from Leven mouth to Loch Leven
- new heritage inspired enterprises and employment opportunities through the development of heritage skills programmes and linking heritage to the green skills academy employability programmes. The aim should be to continue such programmes after the Activating Methil Mill Project ends

The project will develop skills, improve heritage, support visitors and enable sustainable use of an important archaeological site.

## Appendix 1: References

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