



WALTHAM ABBEY ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS

Appointment of
Chief Executive
Officer

April 2025 PBBSRA

Saxton Bampfylde

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WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN **MARK PEMBERTON OBE**

Just off the M25 lies one of the most extraordinary places in London. Home for three hundred years to Britain's top explosives factory, then a secret military research establishment until the end of the Cold War, the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills is a unique environment of factory buildings, abandoned canals, woodlands and open spaces, and one of the world's most important sites of industrial archaeology.

In the past twenty-five years the site has established itself as a visitor attraction showcasing the history of explosives production on the site. But there so much more – wild nature alongside conservation, science and innovation, social history amid a living present.

We are now embarking on a new phase in our history, with ambitious plans to develop the

site as a living place, with commercial uses alongside leisure ones, and at the same time broadening the visitor offer.

This is a really exciting opportunity for someone to make their mark, not just running a visitor attraction but contributing to and taking forward a vision and strategy of transformation for this unique and wonderful place.

We do not mind where candidates have gained their experience and welcome applications from anyone who thinks they have the vision, skills and experience to take this unique heritage site forwards and realise its full potential.

Mark Pemberton OBE
Chairman of Trustees



INTRODUCTION

The WARGM Charitable Foundation (the Foundation) owns and is responsible for the Waltham Abbey site which was the home of explosives production for over 300 years and a secret MOD Research Centre from 1945. In 1991 the Ministry of Defence decommissioned the site, and handed to the newly created WARGM Charitable Foundation, with a small endowment. The site reopened as a visitor attraction in 2001.

The Foundation is responsible for managing the endowment, the day-to-day operation of the site as a visitor attraction, the conservation of the historic structures and for developing a strategy to secure its long-term future.

The site covers over 175 acres most of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) containing some 250 structures once used to produce explosives. It has 20 listed buildings, with one at Grade 1 and seven at Grade 2*. It has extraordinary potential, but the original business model – that a visitor attraction could on its own finance the conservation of a site of this scale – has proved unworkable.

Over the past two years governance has been overhauled and a new vision identified for the site as a multi-use place, where commercial and leisure uses sit alongside the visitor attraction to sustain the underlying heritage. The visitor proposition is being expanded to reflect a broader approach and appeal to a wider range of audiences – not just explosives, but industrial and technological change in its broadest sense, wildness alongside conservation, scientific development alongside nature.

The current Chief Executive plans to step down this summer but will be joining the Board as a trustee. The Foundation now seeks to appoint a new Chief Executive to take this work forwards, a suitably qualified senior leader who will build on the work done so far, finalise the vision and develop and implement a strategy to realise the potential of this significant and unique heritage site.



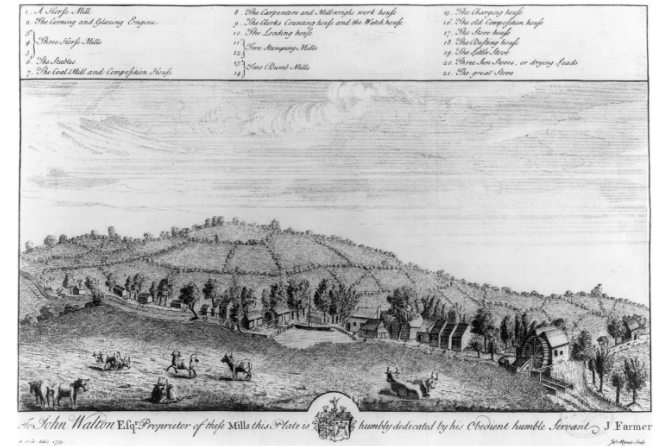
300 YEARS OF HERITAGE

The first water-powered gunpowder mills were established at Waltham Abbey from the mid-16th century onwards. Initially privately owned they were nationalised by the government in 1787, keen to produce a consistent standard of powder.

Many of the major technological improvements of the next two hundred years were pioneered here, from the harnessing of steam power in the mid nineteenth century, to the creation of nitro-glycerine plants, the production of cordite, and the development of chemically-based high explosives.

The Waltham Abbey site is important because many of the processes used in this international industry were invented and developed here; because the works survive in a remarkably complete state; and because many of the structures themselves are rare nationally and internationally.

When production ceased and the mill buildings were repurposed for research after 1945, much of the site was abandoned. Taken back by nature, this area is now a SSSI, remarkable for its alder woodland and varied natural habitat which has taken ownership of what man has left behind.



Earliest known image of the site from John Farmer's 'History of Waltham Abbey' 1735



The extensive narrow gauge railway on the site

300 YEARS OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

Gunpowder

The saltpetre melting and the ingredient mixing houses adjacent to the exhibition centre date from the time of Government purchase in 1787. The steam powered gunpowder incorporating mills to the east of the Millhead are an impressive expression of the growing power of the nation in the Victorian period and the underfloor drive train reflects the weight and bulk which characterised Victorian engineering.



Chemical Explosives

The end of the dominance of gunpowder coincided with the end of the Victorian era in the last years of the 19th century.

The north of the site containing the chemical explosive production area is an evocative industrial landscape with grass covered blast mounds, prominent features such as the nitrating hill and deserted process buildings such as the mixing houses where a large part of the cordite requirements of the British Forces passed through the hands of skilled workers engaged in the dangerous task of mixing the ingredients.



Waterways

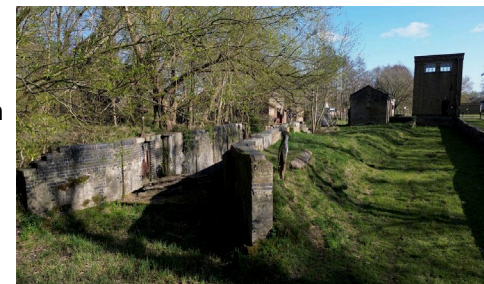
The waterways of the Mills are a unique two level industrial canal system, originally extending to five miles, with two locks between the levels and a cut to the Lee Navigation to enable the transportation of finished product by sailing barge to magazines on the Thames. Smooth shock free water was preferable to road for transport of materials between the process buildings.

Industrial Railways

When the first steam powered incorporating mills were built in 1857 a hand pushed tramway was introduced linking the mixing house and the mill. An industrial railway with authentic rolling stock is being re-created on the site.

Rocketry

One of the main activities of the post WWII research era was investigation of rocket propulsion materials. Test firing was carried out in the buildings of a disused nitro-glycerine factory in the New Hill area.



The Archive

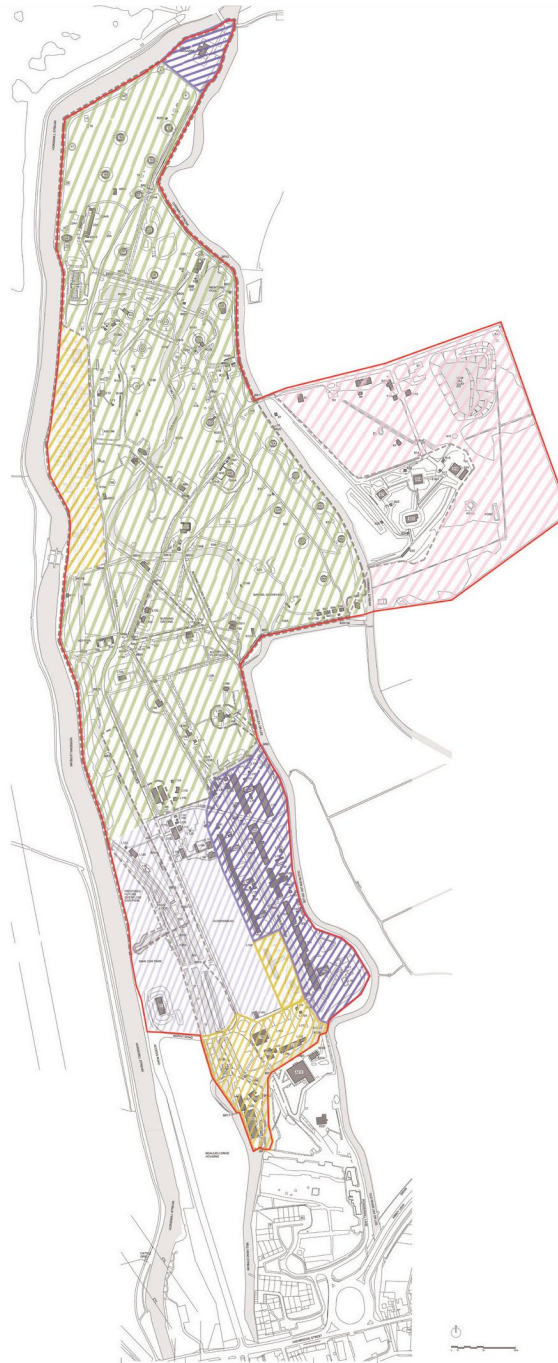
Reflecting the industrial archaeology of the site, the Mills Archive has an extensive holding of historical maps dating from 1590 and building drawings from the 1850s. In addition, around 5000 documents and 80,000 images are held, covering the history of gunpowder and explosives.

THE VISION

The mission of the charity is to manage, conserve and display the heritage and natural environment of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills for the benefit of the public

Recognising that a visitor attraction alone cannot support a site of this significance and scale, our vision is to create not just a visitor attraction but a living place for people and business – inspired by a unique mix of wildness and conservation, amidst the heritage of 300 years of technological change and innovation.

A framework for development into a mixed-use site has been developed which has broad consensus with key stakeholders including local planners, Historic England, Natural England and the neighbouring Lea Valley Park:



KEY



Zone providing opportunity for commercial activity/ income generating uses including repurposing of listed structures, conservation and sensitive new additions (plus inclusion of some localised interpretation possible).



Zone for delivering core heritage / tourism/ education attraction - building upon the existing provision and with room for expansion as need dictates.



Zone for potential expansion of heritage attraction/ access/ mixed use and flexible open space for outdoor events.



Whole of the SSSI and much of the SAM site included within this zone - to be preserved and protected - suspended decay/ sculpture park/ ruin - with carefully controlled access.



Zone for potential camping/ glamping/ leisure related accommodation, and ancillary uses (such as adventure play, for example) - to be sensitively sited.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Transforming and developing the site in this way will enable us to present the stories of the Royal Gunpowder Mills by sharing our unique mix of wildness and conservation, science and innovation through the landscape, buildings and structures which created it.



RENEWING THE BUSINESS PLAN

- Establishing a business model that sustains the long-term preservation and appreciation of the site, its heritage and biodiversity.
- Not just a visitor attraction but a living place.



REINVENTING THE VISITOR ATTRACTION

- Create one of London's most exciting days out, where you can take part in Britain's heritage of inventing and making.
- Opening up the site to greater public access with more effective interpretation and modern presentation.
- Renewing the commercial hire.



REINVENTING THE COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY

- A centre for invention and creativity, with workshops, studios, labs and conference spaces.
- Creating a destination, a place to visit like no other, where families can holiday and try out new ways of living.
- Opportunities for development.
- A model of green innovation.



REALISING THE EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL

- A centre for research at the intersection of science and nature.
- Realising the broader educational potential.



ENCOURAGING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- Supporting the development of the regional economy.
- A new cluster of activity.
- A new network for industrial archaeology.
- Innovation and growth for the local area.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

The Foundation has a small permanent endowment that delivers core funding which contributes to the costs of managing the site but does not cover them in their entirety nor can it fund the future development of the site.

The aim is to become more commercial in terms of daily operations, using venue hire and location filming alongside visitor-related income to cover the operational budget, and raising funds to support the learning and schools programme, while at the same time developing projects and securing partners and funding to transform the wider part of the site.

The Foundation has benefitted in the past from significant funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Heritage Memorial Fund and has good relations

with both. In line with the vision for the mixed use of the site, moving forwards will involve raising funds from a variety of sources:

- a) Commercial development via leases or rentals to commercial operators or developers of those parts of the site identified for commercial use;
- b) Public sector funding including funding from Natural England and Historic England for conservation management and repairs to the Scheduled Ancient Monument and Site of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) National Lottery and private trust and foundation funding for projects to bring areas of the site into wider public use and realise the vision for a visitor attraction with broader appeal.



OUR TRUSTEES

Mark Pemberton OBE, Chairman

Mark is Chairman of the WARGM Charitable Foundation. He spent his entire career in the heritage sector, at the Science Museum and finally at English Heritage where he was Director of National Collections. He is Chairman of the Trustees of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, a Trustee of Barts Heritage and a trustee of Trent Park Museum Trust, and a non-exec Director of NMRN Operations Ltd-the operational arm of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Fiona Baxter, Vice-Chair

Fiona has had a career as a senior HR practitioner, working for several large firms throughout her career. Her most prominent roles have concerned change management and culture shift to ensure successful delivery of strategy. Joined the Board in 2018.

Je Ahn

Je Ahn is founding Director of Studio Weave, an architecture practice devoted to the social significance of architecture and the technical accuracy within which it is executed. He lives locally.

Andrew Coates

Andrew is a director of CO2 Architects. He was formerly a director of Real Live Leisure Group and Grant Leisure Group. He was, for 5 years Chief Executive of the WARGM Company.

Rosanna Lawes

Rosanna Lawes was Executive Director of Development London Legacy Development Corporation responsible for the delivery of development programmes on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, one of the largest and highest profile urban regeneration projects in the UK and Europe. She was also the SRO for East Bank, the new creative and education hub.

Andy Mciver

Andy trained as a Chartered Accountant and Investment Banker before undertaking senior finance roles in large international retail and leisure companies. For the last twenty years he has operated in the online gaming industry, being Chief Executive of two UK listed companies and is currently Chairman of a private equity owned Italian operator. Joined the board in 2021.

Kate Miners

Kate is Director of Public Engagement and Commercial at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and was previously Head of Visitor Experience and Head of Commercial Partnerships.

Will Palin

Will Palin is currently the CEO of Barts Heritage Trust and Chair of Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust. A heritage professional, he has served as Conservation Director at the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich and as Director of Save Britain's Heritage.

Oliver Pearcey

Oliver served for 21 years at English Heritage finally as Director of Conservation. He has been a trustee of the Historic Houses Association and Chair of the London Water and Steam Museum

James Richardson

James is a Chartered Accountant, having trained with PwC before specialising in Mergers & Acquisitions. He has 25yrs experience working across a variety of international consumer focussed financial services, payments, property, gaming, airports and technology businesses and is currently Chief Financial Officer at Inspired Entertainment Inc.

OPERATIONS TEAM

Administrator

Lorraine Matthews

Learning and Outreach

Isabella Crook

Events and Filming

Julia Ryan

Volunteering

Liz Went

Maintenance and Facilities

Rob Brennan

Conservation & Grounds

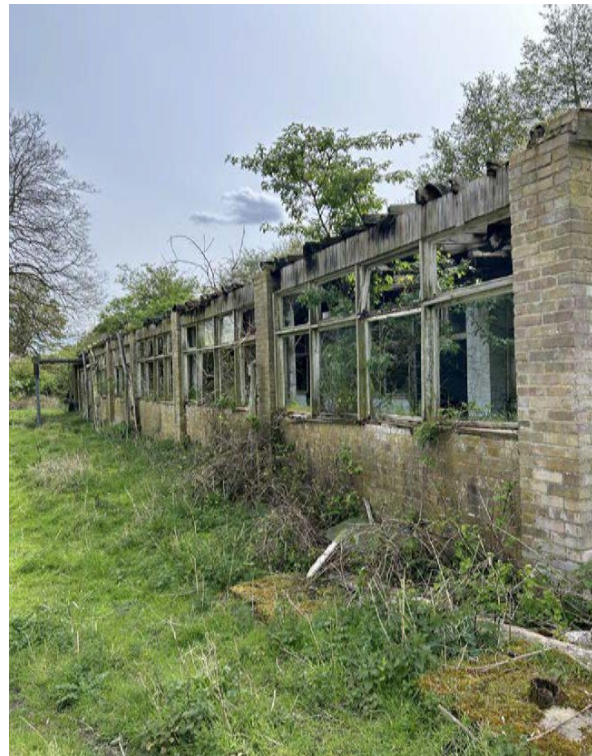
Julie Matthews

General Manager

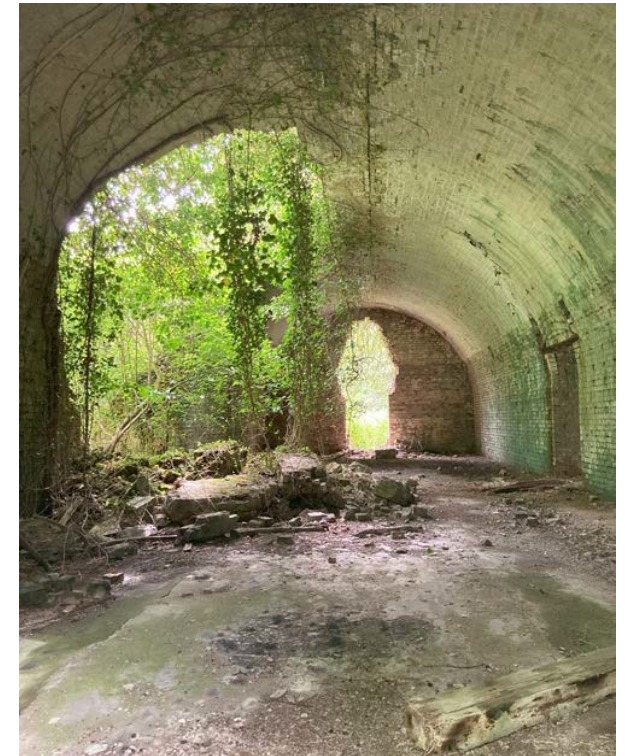
Serena Avery

Chief Executive

Andrew Macdonald



One of many declining structures on the site



Grand Magazine interior

ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS



Nature tower, lock and bridge over Middle Stream



Hydraulic press house



Incorporating mill

THE ROLE

Over the past two years the focus has been on maintaining a visitor and educational offer while rethinking how the site can develop in future. The Royal Gunpowder Mills closed during the pandemic and opened on a limited basis in 2022/23 which has continued.

Budgeted visitor numbers of c10k in 2025 reflect a 50% reduction from pre pandemic levels. It is envisaged that they will build up to 20k pa but not exceed that number. The majority of visits are from educational groups.

Funding was secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project - Reimagining the Gunpowder Mills - to enable this to happen.

Last summer, a series of workshops resulted in a Stakeholder Engagement Report which set out a framework for the future development of the site which has consensus from all stakeholders.

The Chief Executive's main task will be to take forward the report's recommendations, test them and

produce and implement a strategy to secure the long-term financial future of the site, address the conservation deficit and realise the underlying potential for a broader public to experience this extraordinary place.

The Chief Executive will also be responsible for overseeing day to day operations, budgeting, financial management, Health & Safety, HR and will be the public face of the site to stakeholders, the community and funding agencies.



MAIN ACTIVITIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive will report to the Chair and to the Board of Trustees. They will also be a Director of the wholly-owned subsidiary company WARGM Trading Limited.

Key responsibilities will be:

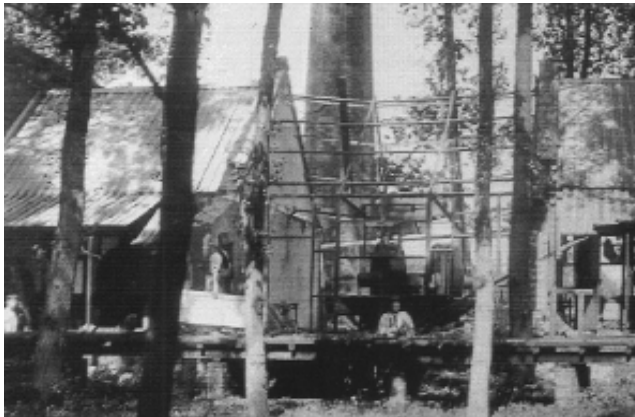
- To refine and own the longterm Vision and Strategic Plan, as agreed by the Board.
- To implement measures that ensure its delivery working with funders, statutory consultees, other stakeholders and commercial partners.
- To be the public face of the Royal Gunpowder Mills representing and promoting it locally and nationally including taking a leading role on fundraising.
- To oversee the day-to-day operation of the site ensuring that it meets its targets for visitor access within the agreed budget and in line with the Management Agreement.
- To agree and deliver a 3 Year (2026–2028) Business Plan.
- To oversee and complete projects already underway, including the NLHF Reimagining the Mills project.
- To agree and deliver the schedule of capital and maintenance projects, including any actions arising from the Rewatering the Canal Network Feasibility Study currently under way.
- To be responsible for Health and Safety policy and governance and compliance requirements.
- To undertake any other duties as may be required by the Chairman and the Board of Trustees.
- Line Management responsibility for:
 - General Manager
 - Volunteer Manager (3 days pw)
 - Site and Maintenance Manager
 - Learning and Outreach Officer
 - Business Development Officer (3.5 days pw – NLHF funded)
 - Grounds and Conservation Coordinator (3 days pw)
 - Finance/Admin Assistant (3 days pw)



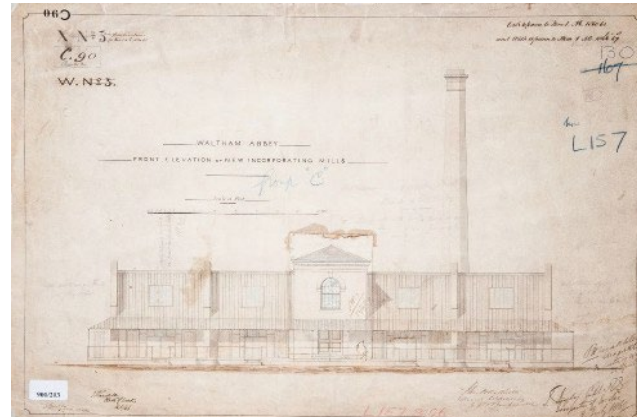
Walton House (A200) - used as WARGM offices



Mixing House and Saltpetre House - used as teaching spaces



Damage to one of the incorporating mills



Drawing of the Grade I listed Incorporating Mill

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We are seeking an energetic, self-starter with project management and operational experience within the heritage and/or visitor attractions/property sectors who sees this as an opportunity to utilise their skills to realise the potential of the Gunpowder Mills and in doing so “make a mark”.

Essential Skills

- Able to demonstrate leadership skills at a senior level
- A self-starter willing to innovate, take responsibility, implement decisions and inspire staff to deliver outstanding performance in all areas of the business
- Proven experience of developing and implementing a vision and business strategy and the ability to motivate and lead staff and volunteers
- Able to identify opportunities for revenue development and grant applications
- Strong stakeholder management skills, good political acumen with excellent communication skills
- Strong organisational, commercial and financial skills coupled with excellent interpersonal and negotiating skills and able to maintain open and productive working relationships
- Ability to manage complex programmes, build strong collaborative teams to drive outcomes and a sustainable business plan

- Proven ability to identify and develop commercial opportunities
- Experience of the management of capital projects
- Understanding of Health and Safety and other statutory and compliance requirements
- Educated to degree level or equivalent experience or professional qualification
- Full driving licence
- Strong ICT skills

Desirable

- Fundraising experience within the public and private sectors
- Experience of working with planners, Historic England and other statutory consultees
- An interest in the historic and natural environments

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

The Foundation is committed to diversity and equality in its workforce. We welcome applications from Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse backgrounds and from candidates with disabilities.

Location: Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills

Salary: £75,000

Annual leave: 25 days rising to 28 days over 3 years, plus bank holidays.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



HOW TO APPLY

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code PBBSRA. Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Wednesday 7 May**.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.



ROYAL
GUNPOWDER
MILLS

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