Marvellous mills to explore this National Mills



The ultimate in sustainable energy, hundreds of windmills across the country are opening up their doors to the public for National Mills Weekend (11-12 May). We've chosen some of our favourites.

Heckington Windmill, Lincolnshire

This Grade I listed tower windmill is the world’s only working eight-sail windmill.

Like other windmills, Heckington Windmill harnesses the power of the wind to generate environmentally friendly energy.

The smaller set of sails on the back of its rotating top is called a fantail. Set at a right angle to the main sails, the fantail automatically turns the cap so that the main sails face into the direction of the wind. Winderful!

Find out more on the Heckington Windmill website.



Heckington Windmill. Credit: Heckington Windmill Trust.

Windmill Hill, Sussex

Heckington has it easy with its auto-rotating top. At The Windmill at Windmill Hill, the miller originally had to use a large pole to haul round its 10-ton top section to face the wind – phew!

Following its National Lottery-funded restoration, the largest post mill in the country now has a computer-aided turning mechanism, which makes life easier.

Find out more on the Windmill Hill website.



Windmill Hill. Credit: Adrian Gates Photography.

Upminster Windmill, Havering

Grade II* listed Upminster Windmill is currently being restored to full working order so that it can grind wheat again for the first time since 1934. Restoration started in 2016 and will be finished by the end of 2019.

Upminster is a smock mill, so-named because its sloping sides resemble a countryman's smock. The city built up around this countryman and he now finds himself in the London Borough of Havering.

Find out more on the Upminster Windmill website.



Upminster Windmill. Credit: Friends of Upminster Windmill

Mills of the Norfolk Broads

The Norfolk Broads are home to the largest concentration of pump mills in the UK**.**

Originally, the mills drained the land so it could be used to graze animals and grow crops.

No longer used as pumps, thank to National Lottery funding, 12 mills will be restored and will have owl and bat boxes installed. Stones Windmill will become a full Habitat Mill, with its drainage lane transformed into a home for snakes and other reptiles.



Holgate Windmill, York

Most of Britain’s thousands of roundabouts are unremarkable, but the one on Windmill Rise in York is different. Holgate Windmill, York’s last surviving windmill, sits atop the roundabout and stretches up five stories into the skyline.

Built in 1770, it is the oldest five-sailed windmill in the country.

Find out more on the Holgate Windmill website.



Holgate Windmill. Credit: Nicholas Ansell

Find out more

There are many more types of mill out there, including those that are powered by water and steam rather than wind.

- Find one near you on the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings website.
- Read more about mills in the National Lottery-funded Mills Archive.