

Safety work starts on Hill Paul area

SAFETY work has begun at the Hill Paul factory in Stroud now a local campaign group has saved it from demolition.

Engineers appointed by the Hill Paul Regeneration Group, which exchanged contracts to buy the landmark building on Monday night, moved onto the site at Cheapside yesterday, said group spokesman Glenn Hall.

"Initial safety works have begun to get the road open," said Mr Hall.

"Contractors have begun to move onto the site to make it safe."

Late last week, the Cheapside road beneath Hill Paul was closed by Stroud District Council as a safety precaution.

That was after two independent structural engineers agreed with the authority's own inspector that Hill Paul was in imminent danger of collapse.

Believe

Meanwhile, the regeneration group was locked in lengthy negotiations with Hill Paul's owners, Harper Homes, to try to save the controversial property from demolition.

The campaigners, who believe Hill Paul is a part of Stroud's industrial heritage, then clinched their 11th-hour deal to complete their purchase of the factory in staged payments within a year.

They now hope to raise the remainder of the £1.3 million purchase price over forthcoming months and to launch their plans to convert Hill Paul, possibly into a cafe-bar, offices, an art gallery and penthouse flats.

It is also expected a giant piece of ma-

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by Jo Barber

chinery brought in by Harper Homes' contractors to knock down Hill Paul, will be removed tomorrow.

A former clothing factory, Hill Paul has been empty for years while its fate hung in the balance.

The regeneration group has also bought the adjoining former builders' merchant land from Harper.