

Mayer paper mill, the demolition of the 400-ton tower.

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After the **removal of the asbestos**, the hydraulic shears began today, Monday October 23rd to “**bite**” **into the reinforced concrete tower overlooking the Olona river** from the southern end of the vast industrial wasteland of the former Vita-Mayer paper mill complex.

This is a new beginning, or rather the first step towards a new beginning for the paper mill of Cairate and towards a planned salvage of the whole area. The demolition started simultaneously with the signing of an agreement between Regione Lombardia and the two local municipalities (Cairate and Fagnano). The agreement consists in a **declaration of intent** between the signers to embark on a project for the **reclamation** of a large chunk of the vast industrial area.

The Vita-Mayer paper mill of Cairate is one of the most important archeological site of Valle Olona, but has remained abandoned for decades. Between the '50s and the '60s, when the mill was at the peak of its splendour and activity, its facilities employed 2400 people. Then the rapid and sudden decline led the company to the final closure 11th August 1977.

The paper mill, owned by Sogeiva since the late '80s, is now **a vast and abandoned industrial wasteland** following the abandonment of the original requalification project. A tragic incident in 2015 pushed forward the schedule to secure and reclaim the area.

After a wait of forty years “it looks like the area is **destined to find new life** thanks to a well laid project which will be able to reclaim the area for a new use. This is an historic date for the Regione Lombardia. Signing this agreement states that salvaging the former Mayer area is of **strategic importance**. This is the **first state-funded project that involve former industrial areas**.”

Those are the words of the Major of Cairate, **Paolo Mazzuchelli** in his opening speech.

The area is indeed owned by a state-funded enterprise. **William Malnati**, representative of Prealpi Servizi, concluded reminding the audience of the history of the area which despite having been acquired by Sogeiva in the late '80s (to build a waste management facility), has been abandoned for decades without any prospect for the future. The destiny of the area is still unknown but according to the involved local authorities, starting the reclamation work will make **finding a private investor easier**.

“Valle Olona is a beautiful place, rich in history and culture. Today marks the **first step towards the salvaging and reclamation** of the former Vita-Mayer paper mill. We will return **an important area, not only for Cairate, but also for the whole Valley**, back to the citizens,” stated the member of the regional council **Francesca Brianza** who signed the agreement as a representative of the regional government together with the Forza Italia council member **Luca Marsico**. Due to the post-referendum environment no representative for the opposition was present.

At the ceremony also attended **a group of former employees** of the paper mill, both as witnesses of the history of the area and as acknowledgment of their “very important divulgation work” stated the mayor of Cairate.

They watched from afar as the hydraulic shears begin the demolition of the **400-ton reinforced concrete tower**, the first of the building scheduled for demolishment.

The demolition, like the previous removal of the asbestos, is commissioned to the highly specialized company **Edam of Gallarate**: “We had to carefully study how to intervene” explained the manager from Edam, **Oliviero Bistoletti**. “The tower stands on one side of the valley, next to a power line and in front of the Olona river. We originally considered collapsing the tower with explosives but it was not feasible.” In the end a small artificial hill had to be built in order to enable the demolition machinery to cut away pieces of the tower one by one down to the foundation. (the whole procedure will take a few days).

The next step will be the **demolition of the buildings next to the wells** for extracting water in order to make the work of the technicians who periodically do maintenance work on the industrial site safer.

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