World's oldest known underground carriage to be restored

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The project will mark the 150th anniversary of London's Underground – the oldest metro system in the world – and enable London Transport Museum to restore the carriage to full working order to become a key feature of the anniversary celebrations in 2013. The restoration of the historic carriage has been awarded to the Ffestiniog Railway, who are specialists in heritage railway carriage restorations. HLF will also help fund an apprentice to gain an NVQ Level 2 in Carpentry as part of the project, and a further 159 participants will be offered the opportunity to work towards a heritage and transport qualification via the National Open College Network.

Metropolitan Railway Jubilee Carriage Number 353 was built in 1892 and is the only known surviving example of 59 carriages built for the first steam-hauled London Underground line. Running on what we now know as the Circle Line, the carriage was part of a fleet known as 'Jubilee' stock after their introduction during Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. Withdrawn from service in 1905, when the Metropolitan Railway was electrified, the Jubilee carriage was acquired by London Transport in 1974. It is 27ft long, 8ft wide, and has a teak wooden body currently in an 'as found' un-restored condition. Once restored, it will demonstrate early Metropolitan Railway design and construction and will offer an exciting glimpse into the world of early underground train travel.

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for London, said: "It is the London Underground system that helped transform the capital from a small city in the early Victorian period to the massive conurbation that it is today. As such, this carriage is not only of national importance, but international significance, as our underground system was the first in the world. We wish the London Transport Museum and all the volunteers and apprentices involved in this project the best of luck with the restoration."

Christian Wolmar, Britain's leading transport commentator and author of *The Subterranean Railway - a new history of the London Underground*, said: "Restoring this carriage gives people the opportunity to experience what early Underground travel was like. It is difficult to understand today just how different the system was when it was operated by smoky steam trains hauling wooden coaches with passengers packed into individual compartments. This coach is an important part of Britain's heritage, since we were the first country to have an Underground system which was, in fact, the only one ever to be operated by steam locomotives."

Sam Mullins, Director of London Transport Museum, said: "The 150th anniversary of London's first underground railway in 2013 marks an important time in London's social and transport history. London Transport Museum is delighted to have been awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund which, along with support from the London Transport Museum Friends, will enable the museum to restore one of the oldest items in its collection and help to bring the heritage of the carriage and the London Underground to new communities and audiences across London."

Barry LeJeune, Chairman of the London Transport Museum Friends, said: "The Friends have welcomed the opportunity to provide additional funding alongside the HLF grant. Taken together, these two contributions will enable this exciting project to be undertaken in full. We will be able to restore a unique carriage from London's railway heritage, in time for the 150th anniversary of the world's first underground railway in 2013; and to link that restoration to a valuable programme of learning and conservation."

The restoration will take just over a year to complete. Following the 150th anniversary of the world's first underground railway, the carriage will be toured around heritage railways in London and the South East for 10 years.

Notes to editors

* The HLF grant to the project Restoration of Metropolitan Railway 'Jubilee' 1st Class Railway carriage is for £422,200 (76% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

London Transport Museum
For more information visit the London Transposrt Museum website.

Christian Wolmar
Find out more about Christian Wolmar.

Further information

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