Railway 200: celebrating two centuries of



The Flying Scotsman, back in service. Credit: ARG_Flickr, via Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic.

Over the past 30 years, we've supported 600 projects, from Bo'ness to Basingstoke, that connect people with the history of the UK's railways.

From restoring locomotives and stations, to establishing walking trails and exhibitions, money raised by National Lottery players has backed projects that tell the story of how rail travel transformed society. Since 1994, we've invested over £105million in this important heritage, ensuring it is valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.

On 27 September 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway opened, the first modern railway. Railway 200 is a year-long UK-wide anniversary celebration of the global impact of rail travel – which connected places, people, industries and ideas, and sparked change across the world.

To celebrate this historic bicentenary, join us on a journey through five projects that demonstrate the variety of ways our funding has made a difference.

Restoring the Flying Scotsman

Back in 2004, our grant of £270,000 helped restore the iconic Flying Scotsman for a decade of mainline operations. It also supported the National Railway Museum to create an exhibition that engaged visitors while the locomotive was both in residence and steaming through the countryside.

The first engine to officially reach 100mph and to circumnavigate the globe, the Flying Scotsman returned to service in 2016 and remains so today, a draw for visitors from around the world to the York museum, which is also celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025.

Hopetown flourishes in Darlington

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The museuem at Hopetown, Darlington. Credit: Ellen Hunter.

Hopetown was built on the site of the former Head of Steam Museum in Darlington. The museum, goods shed and carriage works have all been refurbished and now house an exhibition space, archive and open store. A new café and improved access across the site have further improved the visitor experience.

Our funding has also made an impact up and down the length of the Stockton and Darlington's 26-mile route, supporting school art projects, live music, mural painting and a creative writing competition.

Welcoming everyone to the Foyle Valley Railway Museum

The project to restore and reopen the Foyle Valley Railway Museum in Northern Ireland did things differently.

Our grant of £242,100, awarded in March 2020, enabled Destined – a charity that empowers and supports people with learning disabilities – to re-imagine this heritage hub for new audiences.

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Tour guide training at Foyle Valley Railway Museum. Credit: Destined.

Schools, the local council and railway enthusiasts came along for the ride too, with a popular activity programme that connected them to the area's proud railway heritage.

Three decades of impact at Ffestiniog

We are proud to have supported one of Wales's most treasured heritage railways for almost 30 years.

Our first grant supporting the Ffestiniog Railway was awarded in 1997 – an award of £375,000 to restore and conserve vital rolling stock. In 2016, our grant helped the team at Ffestiniog establish a heritage skills trainee programme. More recently, the Boston Lodge Works project, funded in 2019, further boosted training and volunteer opportunities in the world's oldest continuously operating engineering works. The project has addressed skill gaps in the sector and provided passengers with insights into Ffestiniog's long history.



Visitors exploring behind the scenes at Ffestiniog.

As the pandemic struck in 2020, it was one of several railways to which we awarded urgently needed funds, helping them endure the crisis and plan for the future.

Celebrating Railway 200 at the Bluebell Railway

The Bluebell Railway has hosted the largest Railway 200 event in south-east England. Over a nine-week period this summer, the railway welcomed around 100,000 attendees, including more than 20,000 school children.

Our grant – totalling £250,000 – has supported two exhibitions. At Horsted Keynes station, Rail Present and Future told the story of rail from the 1960s through to future innovations, while Sheffield Park's Rail Past charted the journey from the industrial revolution onwards.



No. 32424 Beachy Head at Horsted Keynes station. Credit: The Bluebell Railway.

Beyond the Railway 200 celebrations, the grant will leave a significant legacy – helping the Bluebell to undertake vital repairs to railway buildings and create a free downloadable guide for future visitors to enjoy.

Find out what's happening in your area for Railway 200, or learn more about how our funding protects industrial, maritime and transport heritage across the UK.



A behind the scenes tour of the newly renovated Boston Lodge. Credit: Chris Parry.



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Joanna Jarvis , Imogen Watmore, Ashlynn Hudson-Welburn and Harvey Barker holding Pride banner in front of HST loco in Great Hall, National Railway Museum, (NRM) York. © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum.



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A Transport for Wales train

Boosting biodiversity at Welsh railway stations