

People inspecting the River Roch's medieval bridge Andrew Brookes

In the nineties a unique part of Rochdale’s heritage was uncovered – sparking surprise and interest. Now, nearly two decades later, it’s set to become an integral part of the regeneration of the town centre.

The heritage in question is an 800 year-old medieval bridge over the River Roch. The bridge and river are currently covered up in the town centre and, apart from that brief time in the nineties when engineering works were carried out, they have been for over a century.

Now a funding flow made possible by National Lottery players and the Environment Agency and Regional Flood and Coastal Committee will expose and restore the historical bridge and two sections of the river.

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An educational programme will bring to life the story of the town centre which grew up around the river and the important industrial role the bridge played in the transportation of wool from Yorkshire to be processed in Rochdale’s mills.

Richard Farnell, Rochdale Borough Council Leader, said: "This scheme will sit wonderfully alongside our Grade I Listed town hall as well as our historic gunnels and walkways."

And what of the river wildlife? A key feature of the project is to enhance the natural heritage of the river by encouraging river vegetation to grow once more and help creatures to return to the water – something which Rochdale residents will be very much involved in.

Work will begin in February and it’s expected to be completed and ready for visitors by the autumn.



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River reopening on course as Heritage Lottery Fund confirms £1.2m cash injection