

Historic England awards £252,000 to repair the UK's oldest surviving railway goods shed

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Historic England has given £252,000 towards the repair and restoration of a railway goods shed in Darlington, thought to be the oldest surviving one in the UK.

Built almost two centuries ago in 1833, the Grade II*-listed **goods shed** formed part of the Stockton & Darlington Railway and was designed by its chief engineer Thomas Storey. The building was the main point for handling goods such as agricultural produce at the Stockton & Darlington Railway and was doubled in size with an extension in 1839-40 to meet increasing commercial demand. At the same time, a clocktower was added to the roof.

Experts believe that trains entered the shed through archways and stopped in bays where they were unloaded by local merchants using horse and cart for onward shipment.

The goods shed is thought to be the oldest surviving building of its type; the only comparable earlier building is the Grade I-listed railway **warehouse** at Liverpool Road Station in Manchester, which dates from 1830, which provided for longer term storage.

In 1857 the shed ceased to be the main point of goods handling for the Railway and sometime between 1870 and 1898, it was converted into a fire station to protect the growing complex of railway infrastructure in Darlington.

In 1951, the goods shed was converted again, this time into a maintenance depot for railway road vehicles and was then, until recently, tenanted by Darlington Railway Preservation Society.

Added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in 2019, the goods shed is in poor repair with the clocktower in a particularly precarious state.

Historic England's £252,000 grant will fund the repairs and help to transform the building into the main entrance to the Darlington Railway Heritage Quarter, the new £35 million visitor attraction, due to open next year.

This project is part of the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone, a five-year project focused on rejuvenating and restoring the 26 mile stretch of historic railway, and to help realise its potential to become a major heritage attraction and visitor destination in the build up to its 2025 bicentenary.

Giles Proctor from Historic England said: "The goods shed is one of the most important surviving railway buildings in the country and it's wonderful that we are able to help secure its future as part of a visitor attraction that celebrates the history of steam locomotion."

Mike Crawshaw, head of culture and heritage at Darlington Borough Council, said: "The goods shed is an important piece of Darlington's rail heritage and a key focal point of the new development, where it will welcome visitors from around the world looking to discover our rich past. We're delighted to have the support of Historic England to help bring the building back to its former glory."

Photo credit: Historic England