

Major restoration works due to close National Railway Museum in the new year

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The National Railway Museum's historic Station Hall will be temporarily closing in the New Year to enable urgent structural repairs to take place as part of the museum's ambitious redevelopment plans.

Station Hall will close on 3 January for an expected 18 months, but the museum will remain open to the public during the conservation project, with people able to visit Great Hall and North Shed.

Charlotte Kingston, head of interpretation, design and communication, said: "Station Hall is one of the most popular parts of the National Railway Museum and home to the museum's royal carriages, but the condition of the roof meant that temporarily closing the hall was the only viable option to enable us to protect and preserve this unique listed structure.

"The museum's main collection buildings such as North Shed and Great Hall will remain open and visitors will still have more than 9,000m² of museum space with more than 40 rail vehicles and thousands of objects on display to tell the story of the railways and engineering."

The new roof will provide a thermally efficient and weather-tight solution to protect the collection and

preserve the historic Grade II-listed structure. As well as work to the roof, the wooden doors at the rear and side of the hall will also be removed and replaced by thermally efficient glazing.

The £10.5 million programme of work will be funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. Experienced heritage architects Buttress have been appointed to design the roof and are lead consultants on the project with a main roofing contractor due to be appointed in March.

Before the roof work can begin, the rail vehicles in Station Hall will need to be protected by the conservation team to enable building work to take place without disturbing the priceless exhibits below.

Visitors hoping to see Station Hall's highlights such as the museum's collection of six royal carriages and Stephenson's original Rocket, are encouraged to visit the museum before the end of the year.

Station Hall is a former goods station built between 1875-77 with later 20th century alterations. It was designed by Benjamin Burleigh for the Great Northern Railway along with the two-storey office building now called the Goods Office. The building is one of a number of original railway structures on the National Railway Museum site, which includes stables, a weigh office and a former engine shed with turntable (Great Hall).

To enable the Station Hall work to take place, the museum's South Yard outdoor area will also close to the public from 3 January. This part of the museum will eventually benefit from a programme of regeneration and landscaping to create a welcoming outdoor museum area with train rides, event spaces and hospitality outlets.

A project to redisplay Station Hall's permanent exhibition announced in 2020 and funded by the Friends of the National Railway Museum, will go ahead ready for the refurbished hall to reopen in 2024.

The conservation of Station Hall is part of a wider redevelopment project called Vision 2025 which aims to celebrate the past, present and future of railways and engineering and to inspire future generations.

Vision 2025 projects include Central Hall, a new building which will sit at the heart of the site, and a new interactive gallery for families called *Wonderlab: The Bramall Gallery*. For more information, visit www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/2025.