

Museum plans in the spotlight

January 11, 2022



Both [Locomotion](#) and the [National Railway Museum](#) are putting major plans under the spotlight. Locomotion is showcasing a new building, whilst plans are now at the 'reserved matters' stage regarding the National Railway Museum's new Central Hall.

Locomotion

Locomotion is asking the public and visitors to have their say on its plans for a new £5.9 million collection building.

The museum, based at Shildon, is displaying the plans at a free exhibition from 19 January until 23 January. This will give people a chance to see the plans before they are sent for planning approval later this year.

On 19 January from 3pm until 7pm there will also be a face-to-face open session, giving people the chance to ask the project team whatever questions they might have about the proposals. Another drop-in will take place at Shildon Library on 24 January (11am -3pm).

The 2000m² collection building is expected to open in 2023 ahead of celebrations to mark the bicentenary

of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 2025.

The building is the centrepiece of a programme of improvements at Locomotion as part of the National Railway Museum's 'Vision 2025' masterplan. Other improvements include repairs to the site's historic buildings, the display of the original Locomotion No.1 and the relocation of the historically-significant Gaunless Bridge.

The proposed new building will house up to 45 rail vehicles, in addition to the 87 already on display in the existing collection building, to create one of the world's largest collections of rail vehicles.

Dr Sarah Price, head of Locomotion, said: "I am excited to share our latest plans for Locomotion's newest collection building which will give our visitors a better experience and create a safe and sustainable environment for our collection."

"This project will help us move towards our goal of achieving net-zero carbon across the site, and the new building will enable us to display an additional 45 vehicles from the national collection. This will create a lasting legacy for the area as we celebrate the bicentenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 2025."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said: "We are approaching a significant year in our county's history with the upcoming bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Locomotion has some truly exciting plans in place to celebrate this key milestone, including the new collection building. This will not only revitalise the site and attract more visitors but also showcase the dynamic culture and rich industrial heritage of County Durham, which is a key reason why the county is bidding for UK City of Culture 2025. I hope visitors will get involved and give their views on this exciting new proposal."

The development at Locomotion will also provide opportunities to tell the story of Shildon as the world's first railway town. This will include examples of the importance of coal to the development of the area and the town's post-war railway history, with several vehicles built in the Shildon Works on display.

Locomotion opened in 2004 and is part of the Science Museum Group. Prior to the pandemic, the museum received up to 200,000 visitors a year. In December, the museum was awarded the 'Special Recognition Award' at the 2021 County Durham Together Awards for supporting the local community during the pandemic.

The museum also received a share of £3.5 million regional 'Levelling Up' funding following a successful bid by Durham County Council. This will see upgrades to the visitor car park, assistance with landscaping and further repairs to the historic coal drops.

Designed by AOC Architects, the new building was originally due to open in 2022 but was delayed due to the pandemic.

The exhibition [will also be available to view online here](#) from 19 January to 31 January.

Exhibition dates may be affected by changing Coronavirus restrictions and visitors are advised to check

online in advance. All comments on the plans must be received by 31 January.

Locomotion is a partnership between the Science Museum Group and Durham County Council, which is a major funder of the museum.

National Railway Museum

The National Railway Museum in York has submitted a 'reserved matters' planning application for a new Central Hall.

'Reserved matters' applications are usually submitted when outline planning has been granted and finer details are being put forward.

This follows a public exhibition at the museum, supported by a virtual consultation. As a result, the project team was able to consider all feedback to inform the vision for the Central Hall.

The Central Hall is intended to be a new welcome space and gallery which will be located between the museum's Great Hall and Station Hall. If successful, the new hall will unite the museum buildings and be a cornerstone of Vision 2025 – the museum's five-year journey to transform its offering and become the World's Railway Museum.

It will also include a new Wonderlab, aimed at inspiring children through an experiential, interactive play space.

The Central Hall will feature a gallery showcasing the latest innovations in rail technology, a café overlooking the new museum square, shop, flexible event space and new visitor facilities.

Sustainability is at the heart of the Central Hall design, with environmentally friendly design principles and materials in keeping with York's rich railway history and the surrounding area.

Judith McNicol, director of the National Railway Museum, said: "We are very pleased to reach this milestone and submit the planning application. Central Hall is a major part of the wider Vision 2025 strategy which will not only improve our offer, but also help us to inspire the next generation of engineers.

"We would like to thank everyone who came along to our engagement sessions and to those who viewed the exhibition and contributed feedback online — it's helping us to ensure that our plans for Central Hall reflect what our visitors and community wants us to be now and in the future. We are looking forward to continuing these relationships as the scheme progresses."