

Newcastle College students working to save the world's oldest oil tanker

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Engineering students are applying their skills learnt at [Newcastle College](#) to save a piece of the UK's industrial history as they work to conserve the world's oldest oil tanker.

The tanker, which was manufactured in 1889 and used on railways until 1961, has been sitting outside resulting considerable damage. Students have been tasked with assessing the extent of these problems and developing solutions to fix them, to get it ready for its new life as part of a museum exhibition. The conservation project is the result of a brand-new, first-of-its-kind partnership between Newcastle College and railway museum [Locomotion](#), part of the Science Museums Group.

Higher Education Engineering Curriculum Lead at Newcastle College, David Harrison explained: "This is an excellent project for our higher education students because it's well within their capabilities, but it requires them to think like engineers, apply their practical skills and work alongside a client, something they'll experience in the real world.

"One of the biggest problems the industry faces is finding skilled people who are ready to jump straight

into work. It's fine learning the theory and applying it to individual, small-scale projects, but what we really need are graduates who have got hands-on, large-scale engineering experience, which includes learning how to solve problems you hadn't even considered. Projects like these are invaluable for that experience, and a great stepping stone to working in industry."

The partnership will see students supporting the museum on a number of conservation projects, something that will help them to develop their technical skills and provide them with vital work experience. Despite the UK's rich industrial past, a [report](#) by the Institution of Engineering and Technology has found that less than 50 per cent of new engineering recruits have the necessary technical skills or soft skills to work within the industry.

Locomotion's Engagement and Programming Manager Eileen Perrie explained: "It's important to us that we open up opportunities to as many people as possible, particularly around STEM subject knowledge and careers aspirations.

"We are delighted to be able to contribute to supporting students at Newcastle College through this live industry project, giving them authentic work-based experiences and an opportunity to contribute to a more unusual project.

"We chose Newcastle College because we were keen to find an opportunity to work in partnership, having been impressed by its Rail and Civil Engineering Academy and the engineering departments, and connecting with staff there. The College has a really professional and open approach to partnership working, as well as a forward-facing attitude to trying new things, which we have fully appreciated in our work with them to date."

Louis Matthews, a mechanical manufacturing engineering student working on the project said: It's great to be involved because it's an actual engineering project that we can talk about with future employers, whilst learning along the way what a real work environment is like.

"What I'm discovering is you can plan it all out, but a lot of the ideas don't actually work practically, so you have to think of another way. I feel like we're making good progress though. It's definitely a unique challenge!"

Once work is complete, the conserved oil tanker will form part of a permanent display at Locomotion, located in County Durham.

To find out more about STEM subjects at Newcastle College or Newcastle College University Centre, visit ncl-coll.ac.uk.

Photo credit: Newcastle College