

NHMF funding for last locomotive of its class

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The North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group has received £123,842 of COVID-19 recovery funding for vital restoration works to historic tank engine 'Joem'.

The last of its kind

113 [North Eastern Railway \(NER\) class E1/J72](#) steam locomotives were constructed between 1898 and 1951. They were rugged and reliable workhorses designed to manoeuvre railroad cars within rail yards, docks and coal yards – ready to be transported across country by larger trains.

All 113 J72s remained in service until 1958 when, one after another, they were steadily scrapped following the introduction of diesel locomotives. Today, only one remains.

In 1967, NER No. 69023 was purchased for preservation by a Mr R. Ainsworth. He named it 'Joem' after his father Joseph – who worked for 50 years on the London and North Western Railway – and his mother Emmeline.

North Eastern Railway (NER) class E1/J72 tank engine 'Joem'

Since 1982 it has been cared for and operated by the dedicated volunteers of the [North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group](#) (NELPG). The small and transportable train travels to public events up and down the country and is ordinarily enjoyed by around 100,000 people each year. It represents the thousands of unglamorous locomotives that once powered the UK's industry and economy.

Impacted by the pandemic

The effect of the pandemic on NELPG's finances has been stark. National lockdowns put an end to public events, and the organisation's usual fundraising for conservation work was more than halved. Joem is now in storage and inaccessible to the public.

Getting the train operational again is vital for future fundraising and public engagement. NELPG are particularly keen for Joem to take part in the celebration events of the 200-year-anniversary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first public steam railway, which takes place in 2025.

Back on track

Dr Simon Thurley CBE, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund said: "This steam locomotive is a fitting example of the rich steam and railway heritage of the north east and we at the National Heritage Memorial Fund are pleased to award this Cultural Assets Fund grant. Thanks to this funding the locomotive will be safeguarded from the risks it faced during the pandemic and will see the locomotive running again in 2025, enabling it to partake in the 200th Anniversary celebrations for the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway".

A grant of £123,842 from the Cultural Assets Fund element of [NHMF's COVID-19 Response Fund](#) will go towards the restoration of the train's boiler. The £20m Cultural Assets Fund has been made available by DCMS to safeguard nationally important heritage assets within England.

The remainder of the total £302,404 restoration costs are being covered by NELPG.