

Press release: National treasure on the move: Stephenson's Rocket to remain on long-term display in the North

- Rocket currently on display in Newcastle-Gateshead for first time in 150 years
- Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright welcomes Science Museum's plans to increase access to key part of Britain's railway history

Stephenson's Rocket, one of Britain's most iconic feats of engineering and part of the Science Museum Group's collection, will go on long-term display in the North of England.

Rocket, designed by Robert Stephenson, was built in Newcastle in 1829 and it returned to the city for the first time in 150 years for this summer's Great Exhibition of the North.

The move to keep the engine in the North has been welcomed by Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright as part of the Government and national museums' ongoing commitment to increase access to culture around the country.

Rocket was the clear winner in the locomotive trials held at Rainhill in 1829 to decide the best design to power the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. And it is to Manchester that the engine will travel next, going on display at the Museum of Science and Industry in September.

It will then return to the Science Museum for a short period to be prepared for a long-term move to the National Railway Museum in York. There it will take its place among other global icons such as Mallard and the Bullet Train as part of the museum's ambitious plans to tell the story of the past, present and future of innovation on the railways.

It comes as The Prime Minister held a regional Cabinet in Newcastle-Gateshead today to mark The Great Exhibition of the North, a 80-day showpiece of the best art, design and innovation from across the region.

The Culture Secretary then joined Ian Blatchford, Science Museum Group director, at The Discovery Museum which is exhibiting Stephenson's Rocket during the Exhibition. Its arrival has helped increase visitors to the museum by more than 100% compared the same period last year.

Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said: "Stephenson's Rocket is an iconic part of Britain's proud railway history and it is fantastic news that it will remain on long-term display in the North.

"It is right that our great art and culture reaches all parts of the country.

This bold move by The Science Museum Group will ensure more people can see this national treasure and is an inspiring example of what can be done to make culture available to the widest possible audience.”

Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum Group, said: “The Science Museum Group is a truly national organisation, and enthusiastic about bringing the world’s greatest science and technology collection to everyone. I warmly endorse the Secretary of State’s commitment to strengthening fair and excellent cultural provision across the UK. A country with such an amazing history of innovation deserves it.”

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