

Alstom to host Britain's biggest rail celebration as part of Railway 200

- Locomotive that hauled the world's first passenger train on a public railway was built in 1825 by a legacy Alstom company
- Alstom's Derby site will be home to the UK's largest temporary gathering of historic rolling stock in August 2025
- Three-day festival aims to raise thousands for Railway 200 charities and the rail heritage sector

30 January 2025 – Alstom, global leader in smart and sustainable mobility, has announced that it will host the UK's largest ever gathering of historic rail vehicles – [The Greatest Gathering](#) – to mark the 200th anniversary of the modern railway.

On Friday 1, Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 August 2025, Alstom's historic Litchurch Lane Site in Derby will open to the public for the first time in over 50 years. Britain's biggest and oldest remaining train factory will be home to more than 50 rolling stock exhibits from the past, present and future of the railways.

The event forms part of the wider [Railway 200](#) festivities, a year-long celebration marking the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) on 27 September 1825 – and a journey that gave birth to the modern railway.

Senior figures from the rail industry attended the launch event on Thursday 30 January, enjoying speeches from Gian Luca Erbacci, Europe Region President at Alstom, Emma Roberts, Programme Manager at Railway 200 and Baggy Shanker, Labour MP for Derby South. His Majesty's Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire, Colonel John Wilson OBE DL, was also present, alongside legendary music and rail enthusiast Pete Waterman.

Historic locomotives – representing steam, diesel and electric traction – were exhibited at Litchurch Lane on the eve of tickets going on sale, and which will appear at The Greatest Gathering in August (or examples from the same in class):

- LNER Class A4 (60007) 'Sir Nigel Gresley', built 1937. Preserved steam locomotive provided by the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust, operated by Locomotive Services Limited
- Merchant Navy Class (35018) 'British India Line', built 1945. Preserved Southern Railway steam locomotive, operated by West Coast Railways
- Class 37 (37800), 'Cassiopeia', built 1963. Diesel-electric locomotive owned by Europhoenix and operated by Rail Operations Group
- Class 50 (50049) 'Defiance', built 1968. Diesel locomotive operated by GB Railfreight and owned by Class 50 Alliance Ltd, based at the Severn Valley Railway. 'The Greatest Gathering' headboard created by Newton Castings
- Class 57 (57307) 'Lady Penelope', originally built in 1965 as 47225 and rebuilt in 2002. Diesel locomotive operated by Direct Rail Services
- Class 66 (66315) converted for UK use in 2025. Diesel locomotive operated by GB Railfreight

- Class 69 (69004) originally built in 1979 as 56069 and rebuilt in 2022. Diesel-electric locomotive in heritage British Rail Research Division livery operated by GB Railfreight
- Class 507 (507001), built 1978. Preserved Merseyrail electric multiple unit (EMU) in heritage British Rail blue-grey livery, provided by the Class 507 Preservation Society
- Class 390 Pendolino (390016 – now renumbered 390200 for Railway 200), built in 2002. Electric high-speed passenger train operated by Avanti West Coast
- Class 701 Aventura (701003), built in 2024 at Derby Litchurch Lane. Electric multiple unit (EMU) operated by South Western Railway
- Class 720 Aventura (720503), built in 2024 at Derby Litchurch Lane. Electric multiple unit (EMU) operated by Greater Anglia

The first locomotive to run on the S&DR – Locomotion No. 1 – was built by the Newcastle-based Robert Stephenson and Company. It was the first company in the world created specifically to build railway engines and later manufactured several of the first locomotives for other countries around the world. Through successive mergers, Robert Stephenson and Company became part of Alstom in 1989, giving the company a direct link to the dawn of the railways and making it the custodian of a unique legacy.

“The Greatest Gathering, presented by Alstom for Railway 200, is a unique opportunity to celebrate not only the incredible progress of the past two centuries but also the bright future of rail,” said Gian Luca Erbacci, Europe Region President at Alstom.

He continued: “Since 1825, Alstom has played a pivotal role in shaping rail innovation and our Litchurch Lane site remains at the heart of that legacy. This event is about bringing people together to reflect on what we’ve achieved collectively and to inspire the next generation to push the boundaries of what’s possible in sustainable transport.”

Alongside displays of historic and modern, mainline locomotives, Britain’s biggest rail celebration will also feature rides along Derby’s test track and a variety of narrow-gauge trains will be in operation. Fairground attractions, street food and live music will also add to the festival feel.

Elsewhere, layouts staged by some of the biggest names in model railways – including a section of Pete Waterman’s record-breaking Railnuts layout – will take centre stage in the Model Railway Village, while historians and industry leaders will take part in engaging talks and discussions in the Mobility Theatre. Thousands of visitors are expected to be welcomed over the three days.

Derby Litchurch Lane is one of the world’s largest rolling stock factories, and the only UK facility that designs, engineers, builds and tests trains for domestic and export markets. The factory was opened by the Midland Railway in 1876, and the city of Derby has been building trains continually since 1839. In 2022, Derby was chosen by the Government as the home of Great British Railways following a vote by the public between contender cities.

“Railway 200 is once-in-a-generation opportunity to celebrate rail’s role in building connections and driving prosperity,” said Emma Roberts, Programme Manager at Railway 200.

She added: “Our railways are here for everyone. They bring friends and family together and enable us to enjoy new opportunities and experiences. It’s wonderful that Alstom is marking Railway 200 with this fun-packed festival for everyone to enjoy, in Derby, the new home of the railway.”

Alongside a brand new Derby-built Class 720 Aventra unit for Greater Anglia (720503), passenger operator Avanti West Coast also showcased one of their nine-car Pendolino sets. Further marking this milestone year, Alstom-built 390016 was named ‘Railway 200’ and renumbered 390200 at the launch event.

“Railway 200 is a chance to celebrate the important role the UK rail industry has played in history over the last two centuries. It’s our chance to tell the story and inspire the railway workers of the future,” said Andy Mellors, Managing Director at Avanti West Coast, who also spoke at the event.

He added: “We should be proud of the part we have played and look forward to its exciting future. Our newly named ‘Railway 200’ Pendolino will be seen the length and breadth of the West Coast Main Line, a route at the heart of the UK’s rail network, and just one of a number of events we have planned in the coming months.”

As a family-friendly event which is being supported by the wider industry and heritage operators, interactive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) activities will feature across Alstom’s 90-acre site at The Greatest Gathering. Meanwhile, career pathways into the rail industry will be highlighted among festival participants. Nameplate displays and trade stands will also feature, with a whole host of attractions to be announced by Alstom and partners over the coming months.

Tickets will be on sale from 9am on Friday 31 January at www.alstom.com/greatest-gathering priced at £30 for adults and £15 for children (ages five to 15), with a family ticket (two adults and two children) costing £65 – plus booking fees. Children under five go free. Tickets are being sold by the event’s media partner, Mortons Media Group Limited.

All profits will be split between Railway 200’s five chosen charities – Alzheimer’s Research UK, Railway Benefit Fund, Railway Children, Railway Mission and Transport Benevolent Fund CIO – and charitable railway heritage partners.

Movement planning for the launch was supported by Network Rail in conjunction with the Derby site team.

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Alstom**

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For more information, please visit www.alstom.com.

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