



# MANCHESTER HISTORIES

Connecting people through histories and heritage

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## **Celebrating Two Centuries of Inter-City Rail Travel**

*The 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the world's first inter-city railway has huge potential for cultural and regeneration reach and impact. The story of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway has colossal opportunities to connect areas of interest around engineering, built heritage and landscape, trains, the history of many communities, and a sense of place across the North West, uniting cities, towns, and villages along the route.*

A group of key stakeholders (including Science Museum Group, National Museums Liverpool, Liverpool City Council, Manchester City Council, Network Rail, Metal, and Manchester Histories) has come together to begin thinking about the opportunities of the anniversary.

We plan to the milestone of the bicentenary to deliver:

- Large and small-scale cultural and artistic projects and festivals.
- Improvements to heritage assets.
- Skills focus in the region on (railway) engineering and creative industries.
- Research programmes between the region's universities in a range of subject areas.
- Increasing focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics by providing a real-world example of creative innovation.
- Improvements to transport infrastructure.
- A Community Rail Partnership (CRP) as the delivery vehicle for a legacy.

Development of these outcomes will start now, with a focus on delivering the heart of this project from October 2029 (200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rainhill trials) to September 2030 (200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the railway).

Rocket 200 has the potential to reach very diverse audiences including those who want to celebrate and enjoy the historic and contemporary railway aspects of the anniversary, and those who want to explore its social history including the financing of the line, the (largely) Irish labour force that built it, and the impact of the railways which developed at such pace in the North of England on technology, engineering, economics. politics and culture.

Rocket 200 will be a collaborative project – between cities and towns, between private, public and third sectors, between science and the arts, and between large institutions and grass-roots organisations, who we hope will take the lead, so that local communities can connect to the programme in a way that is most relevant to them and their place.

Rocket 200 will look back to an extraordinary period of history for the North West, and look forward to a better connected, cleaner, greener, and more equitable approach to public transport and community assets. It will chime well with national, regional, and local aspirations for communities and with Combined Authorities' ambition for creative industries, skilled citizens, and green engineering activity. It will allow a new focus for the visitor economy across the region, attractive to a global market.

**Our key next steps and needs are:**

- As we enlarge the governance team, include more partners, and begin to formalise the organisation, we are looking for a project Chair who can help power Rocket 200 forward.
- We are also looking for volunteers and partner organisations to lead and participate in workstreams in areas including cultural and heritage events, skills, research, and community.
- We are planning to undertake public consultation on the project, with a particular emphasis on considering project elements for each station along the route.
- We are looking for grants and sponsorships from a range of partners and donors towards a modest funding package for 2024 to 2027 to include, initially, one member of staff.