

World's Oldest Operating Railway Bridge Given an Upgrade



The Skerne Bridge

Network Rail has carried out improvement works to the Skerne Bridge in Darlington. It comes ahead of the bridge's 195th anniversary, which will be celebrated over the weekend of the 26th/27th September. The Skerne Bridge is the oldest railway bridge in the world that is still in continuous use.

Teams in Darlington have removed plants and weeds which were growing out of the stonework on the bridge and have cut back some of the trees next to the railway. Managing the vegetation has made Skerne Bridge more visible for people in Darlington and will help to keep trains running safely and reliably. Work has also taken place to remove the graffiti on the bridge and repaint sections of it.

Network Rail East Coast Route director Paul Rutter said: "Skerne Bridge is a vital part of our railway history, and I'm proud of our teams for carrying out this work ahead of the 195th anniversary, so it can be celebrated by people in Darlington and showcased to those visiting the town. The bridge carried the first passenger trains and it will remain an essential part of Darlington's railway for years to come."

The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust's Graeme Bunker-James said: "The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust is pleased to have been able to help deliver a step change in the appearance of this important structure as the countdown to 2025 gets underway. As the custodians of Darlington's modern manufacture of steam locomotives, it is wonderful to see the world-famous location recognised as the birthplace of the public railway fit for the celebrations."

Skerne Bridge officially opened on 27 September 1825 to carry the Stockton and Darlington Railway over the River Skerne. This was also the first time that members of the public could travel by steam train. Today, services on the Darlington to Bishop Auckland line run over Skerne Bridge.

Darlington Borough Council leader Heather Scott added: "I am delighted that this work has been carried out by Network Rail in time for the bridge's 195th anniversary. Darlington has a rich railway heritage and this bridge forms a key part of it and will no doubt feature in our forthcoming plans to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the railways in 2025. This is an important piece of railway history and it is vital that it is protected and maintained for future generations to use and enjoy."