

“Little engines can do big things”

**-Thomas the Tank Engine documentary will receive its UK premiere in Derby
- Alstom is releasing an additional 2,500 tickets for each day of the festival**

Alstom, Britain’s biggest and oldest remaining train factory, has announced that Thomas the Tank Engine documentary, [An Unlikely Fandom](#), will receive its UK premiere during this summer’s [The Greatest Gathering](#).

Alstom’s three-day festival in Derby will be the world’s largest-ever gathering of historic and modern rolling stock. It forms part of the wider festivities for [Railway 200](#), 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.

An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact of Thomas the Tank Engine explores the profound influence of the beloved children’s television series on popular culture and its enduring legacy. The documentary delves into the origins of Thomas the Tank Engine, its global impact and the passionate community of fans that have grown around it.

An Unlikely Fandom has been directed by Brannon Carty, an independent filmmaker from Greensboro, North Carolina. He will be travelling from the USA to take part in a Q&A following the screening on Saturday 2 August, where he will be joined by the film’s producers, Ahmad Akfa, Joshua Hood and Nicholas Maniscalco, along with co-producer James Garder.

“For many of us railfans, it was watching episodes of Thomas the Tank Engine as children that drew us into the wonderful world of trains and railways. Therefore, it was only fitting that we shone a spotlight on Thomas and his friends at The Greatest Gathering, and invite the filmmakers to premiere their fantastic documentary at our historic site. For visitors coming to our festival on Saturday 2 August, this will be a perfect way to end their day,” says Ben Goodwin, Director of Communications UK and Ireland at Alstom.

The popular character began his adventures in a book published in 1945 - the first in Rev. W. Awdry’s *The Railway Series*. These stories were later adapted by Britt Allcroft into a live action television show that starred the anthropomorphic railway engines, and which ran from 1984 until 2021.

“Collaborating with Alstom for the UK premiere of *An Unlikely Fandom* is an incredible honour. Longtime fans and newcomers can finally experience the film that moved audiences at our New York premiere in November 2023,” adds Brannon Carty, Director of *An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact of Thomas the Tank Engine*.

“At its core, this documentary tells the story of how one little blue train connects fans across generations, cultures and communities. Sharing our passion project at such a landmark event feels like the perfect way to celebrate Thomas’ 80th anniversary.”

The Greatest Gathering takes place on Friday 1, Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 August 2025 at Alstom’s Litchurch Lane Site in Derby. During that time, it will be home to more than 100 rolling stock exhibits from the past, present and future of the railways, with the site itself opening to the public for the first time in almost 50 years.

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.

Meanwhile, one of the site’s large paint booths will be transformed into a 250-seat auditorium - the Mobility Theatre - for the event, and which will host drop-in talks and engaging discussions from famous faces and industry leaders across the three days. It

will also host the screening of *An Unlikely Fandom* from 17.00 on Saturday 2 August, once the main event has closed for the day.

Tickets to the UK premiere of *An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact of Thomas the Tank Engine* are available to purchase only by existing ticketholders of The Greatest Gathering on Sunday 2 August only. Priced £10 per person (plus booking fees), they are available via the event's official [website](#) and [See Tickets](#).

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EDITORS' NOTES:

More tickets available from 27 June!

Click here for more details: www.alstom.com/press-releases-news/2025/6/worlds-most-famous-steam-locomotive-appear-alstoms-greatest-gathering-more-tickets-sale-friday-27-june

The [Greatest Gathering](#) will see about 100 historic locomotives and trains* coming together in one place later this year to mark the 200th anniversary of the first passenger railway. The three-day event is taking place in early August, and when tickets [first went on sale](#) in February, demand was so high that it crashed their website. After a replacement ticket sales website was found a few days later, all 30,000 tickets sold out almost immediately afterwards.

Now, Alstom is releasing an additional 2,500 tickets for each of the three days of the festival. These last remaining tickets will go on sale at 9am on **Friday 27th June** from [here](#).

The decision to release the additional tickets comes as they have confirmed that the Flying Scotsman locomotive will be attending the event. Ticketholders to The Greatest Gathering will get to see Flying Scotsman across the event's three days, where it will be joined in a steam cavalcade by fellow LNER Pacific locomotives, A1 No. 60163 Tornado* and A4 No. 60007 Sir Nigel Gresley.

*Due to operational availability, Tornado will be appearing at The Greatest Gathering on Friday 1 and Saturday 2 August only.

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