A Turner for the East – Walton Bridges is saved for the nation

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Joseph Mallord William Turner, Walton Bridges, oil on canvas. Courtesy of Sotheby's
Walton Bridges has become the only Turner oil painting to enter public ownership in the East of England.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded £2.1million towards the acquisition of the painting following a successful fundraising campaign led by the Norfolk Museums Service, in partnership with Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

It depicts the double-span bridge that ran across the Thames between the locks at Sunbury and Shepperton in Surrey at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

Originally sold at auction at Sotheby's in July 2018, a temporary export bar was placed on the early masterpiece due to its cultural significance to the UK. The 1806 work is believed to be the first oil painting that Turner created in open air - a practice which was to become an important element of his future work.

Although not a depiction of the East of England itself, the style of painting as seen in *Walton Bridges* was highly influential for the artists of the Norwich School, such as John Sell Cotman and John Crome, whose works will be exhibited alongside the new acquisition.

Yarmouth Jetty by John Crome

A four-year programme

Walton Bridges will act as a focal point for a wide-ranging and imaginative four-year programme of exhibitions, learning and public engagement across the East of England.

Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery will be the first stop for the painting from September 2019. It will then go on tour around the region, with exhibitions planned in Kings Lynn, Ipswich, Colchester and Great Yarmouth over the next three years before the painting goes back on permanent display at Norwich Castle in 2023.

The painting will also be an important focus of Norfolk Museum Service's National Lottery-funded Kick the Dust programme. The youth engagement initiative, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, aims to break down barriers, and encourage thousands of young people between the ages of 11-25 to engage further with arts and culture.