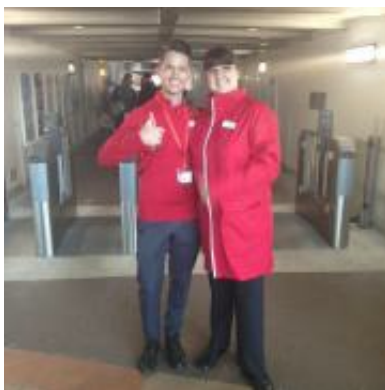




Welcome Hosts and Gating



As part of our franchise commitment Virgin Trains will be investing over £20m at stations along the West Coast Main Line on a range of schemes all aimed at improving the customer experience.

As part of our franchise commitment Virgin Trains will be investing over £20m at stations along the West Coast Main Line on a range of schemes all aimed at improving the customer experience.

As part of this programme Automatic Ticket Gates (ATGs) will be introduced at a number of stations listed below to help address the significant problem of ticketless travel, improve security and facilitate any plans for implementing Smart Ticketing in the future.

Stockport is the first station which went 'live' on 18th August. The remaining eight stations will follow between now and early 2016:

- Crewe
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Coventry
- Birmingham International
- Rugby
- Birmingham New Street
- Manchester Piccadilly
- London Euston

One hundred new jobs will be created to support the introduction of the ATGs across the network, with seven new 'Welcome Hosts' already in place at Stockport. In addition to overseeing the Gate Lines, the hosts will be there to meet and greet customers, acting as ambassadors for the town or city they represent and where necessary using their discretion to grant access to the platform for those not intending to travel.

Ticket Vending Machines and our retail offer

In addition to the ATGs we will also be introducing additional Ticket Vending Machines to reflect the increasing number of customers booking online and wanting to collect their travel tickets at the station.

Some stations will also see their ticket office and travel centre area transformed with a significantly improved retail offer.

Changes to railcards

From 6 September rail card holders will no longer be able to buy off peak tickets for use on our peak services. Customers can still use their rail card discount on peak time fares and there are many deals available, especially with some planning and flexibility. This brings us in line with the rest of the rail industry.

From 6 September rail card holders will no longer be able to buy off peak tickets for use on our peak services.

Customers can still use their rail card discount on peak time fares and there are many deals available, especially with some planning and flexibility. This brings us in line with the rest of the rail industry.

Virgin Trains has been the only train company in Britain to offer Railcard holders the opportunity to purchase discounted off-peak tickets for travel on peak time trains. This has been the case for many years, and while we have never promoted this easement very heavily, we recognise that many of our customers are aware of it and will have benefited from it over this period.

We have however decided that now is the time to end the discount, and bring us back in line with the rest of the rail industry. The date for the withdrawal of the easement is 6 September 2015 although any discounted off-peak tickets purchased prior to that date for travel after 6 September 2015 will have the existing easement honoured.

The change we are making will not alter the discounted price that Railcard holders currently pay for off peak tickets, but it will increase the restrictions on their use in line with the normal rail industry arrangement. Railcard users will still be able to enjoy discounts on peak time fares - the discounted anytime fare will be available as well as discounted advance tickets, which can offer significant discounts for peak time travel.

Introducing our new look website



Our new website, which launched on the 25 August, has had a facelift. New features include a seat picker, journey planner powered by Google, live departure boards and more!

Our website has had a facelift! So what's new? There are quite a few features that, according to research carried out last year, will improve the experience for our customers. There's the seat picker (a top 'I want' from customer research), journey planner powered by Google, enhanced station pages with interactive station maps, Google streetview tours, departure boards, and a fresh 'look and feel'.

Take a look: <https://www.virgintrains.co.uk/>

SuperVoyager enhancements

Interior improvements are now underway on our Super Voyager fleet. The first train with the interior modifications fitted re-entered service on Saturday 11 July.

Interior improvements are now underway on the Super Voyager fleet. The first train with the interior modifications fitted re-entered service on Saturday 11 July.

The key features include:

- Improved LED lighting in the saloon with wall lights fitted with 'lilac' LEDs,
- Gangway door synchronised opening (both sets of doors open together).



- Toilet automatic flush, new toilet tissue dispensers, new sinks and hand driers, and heavy clean to the waste tanks.

A separate program to fit two new luggage stacks in each of coaches B and C will commence in mid October. These will replace the luggage plinths in those carriages and allow for more economic use of space, as they have a floor level space and two shelves. The program will also see a refresh of seat covers and cushions in standard and the recovering of First Class seats in leather.

Wi-Fi at stations



We remain on schedule to have Wi Fi available at all of the stations we manage, and some areas of Network Rail managed stations, by the end of 2015.

We remain on schedule to have Wi Fi available at all of the stations we manage, and some areas of Network Rail managed stations, by the end of 2015.

The first station to go live, at the end of August, will be Manchester Piccadilly. This will be followed by Euston, Preston and Oxenholme at the beginning of September.

Community update



Abandoned bikes get a new lease of life and we welcome new apprentices!

Abandoned bikes given new lease of life

Old and broken bikes abandoned by passengers at Rugby Railway Station have been given a new lease of life in a partnership project between Virgin Rail, HMP

Onley/Halfords and local offender mentoring organisation Futures Unlocked.

Mountain and city bikes were among the unwanted cycles, left in various states of disrepair, which were stored in a warehouse on a platform of Rugby station. With no-one coming forward to claim them, they were decaying and looked set to be thrown away.

Instead Virgin Trains team leader Marlon Golding offered the bikes to Futures Unlocked, a Rugby-based project which provides a volunteer mentoring service to ex-offenders to help them resettle into the community. Futures Unlocked arranged for the bikes to be repaired by prisoners on a Halfords training scheme in nearby HMP Onley, Northants.

The bikes will soon be ready to be distributed to needy clients of the organisation, their families and local schools.

New apprentices

We have recently appointed two new apprentices - one has completed a traineeship with us and the other comes from our partnership with the Princes Trust.

We are also piloting a new apprenticeship in September for 18 months, which offers a new qualification in rail.