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Virgin Trains East Coast Stakeholder Newsletter Issue 4 2017 . 20 December 2017



A message from David



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Following last year's complete refurbishment of our fleet, we've continued to make improvements at our stations and on-board. We completed our investment programmes in our car parks and cycle compounds, providing over 900 new car parking spaces and 250 new bike spaces across our network.

One of our focuses this year has been on improving the digital customer experience, to respond to passengers' changing use of technology. We've installed new ticket machines across the network, replacing some machines that were over 15 years old. These machines use new software to make them more user-friendly for customers, and we've installed over 50 additional machines in response to more customers buying tickets online and picking them up at the station. We launched our new website ticket booking engine, which was developed in-house and is completely unique to Virgin Trains and last month, we added extra functionality so customers can now pay for their tickets using PayPal. As more industries choose to accept tickets on smartphones, we've now introduced barcode mTickets that customers can get via our app. BEAM is now available via enjoybeam.co.uk as well as via the app, making it even easier for our customers to use our complimentary on-board entertainment service.

In this month's issue you'll also read about the latest set of timetable changes we've made to our services, bringing our Saturday service levels to nearly the same as on weekdays and giving passengers more choice over when they travel. This year we've seen our passenger satisfaction rise, scoring 91% in the latest independent National Rail Passenger Survey, which puts us at the top of franchised long-distance operators.

You may also be aware that the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, recently announced that a new East Coast Partnership will take over the running of the East Coast Main Line in 2020. This new long-term partnership, which will bring together track and train operations, will be the first of its kind and is a development on the strategic direction of the Department for Transport which the Secretary of State outlined a year ago. We know the benefits of bringing these operations closer together, and are already making progress on a range of initiatives through our existing partnership with Network Rail. We have made clear that there will be no changes to our promise to meet our commitments to customers and colleagues on the East Coast until 2020, as Stagecoach has done in every franchise it has operated over the past 20 years.

In the meantime, we continue to have positive discussions with the Department for Transport about putting into place new contractual terms to support the transition to the Partnership. We are continuing to progress our transformation programme for customers, and the introduction of the Azuma will transform journeys on the East Coast from the end of next year. The test programme is continuing to make sure the trains run safely when they go into service. As well as the Azuma test train we have that recently ran to Inverness, three more of our new trains are at Hitachi's depot and will be used for testing in 2018. Three more are in storage awaiting commissioning, and there are three more currently being shipped to the UK, with more in production in Japan!

As ever, thank you for your support and feedback over the last year and we are looking forward to working with you in 2018.

Launching TrainMapper, an industry first tool to help passengers during disruption

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TrainMapper is powered by Google Maps and National Rail Enquiries and provides a one-stop shop, showing customers information about disruption on all operators, as well as predicting delay lengths and alternative routes. The aim is to provide



passengers with more information during disruption, allowing them to make decisions about alternative routes. The app is currently exclusively available to Virgin Trains customers on the east coast, but will be made available to other operators in the New Year.

Azuma visits the Highlands



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The test run by manufacturer Hitachi is part of a programme to prepare Scotland for the 65-strong Azuma fleet. The first of these will enter service from December 2018 as part of a two-year rollout programme, with Azuma services due to operate from five of Scotland's cities from 2019. Hitachi have also invested £18 million to modernise depots at Aberdeen, Inverness, and Edinburgh to ensure that they can service our new fleet, securing long-term engineering jobs at these locations.

Saturday services transformed on the East Coast

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In total, 151 services will operate every Saturday, bringing our Saturday services to nearly the same as on weekdays and making it easier for passengers to secure cheaper fares. From December 2017, there are a further 24 Saturday services on the East Coast, an increase of 45% compared to when we took over the franchise in March 2015.

York passengers also now benefit from a new 4.40am service, which reaches the capital by 7am and was introduced following calls from the business community for a service that allows them to attend early-morning meetings in London.

Expanding our advance purchase on the day tickets



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In May we began offering advance purchase on the day fares, which typically save passengers around 35% rather than purchasing an Anytime or Off-Peak fare. Since their introduction these fares have been popular with passengers, with more than 40,000 already bought. The new fares include Newcastle and Durham to London from £44 each-way, York to London from £36 each-way, and Doncaster to London from £25 each-way.

Supporting the launch of the Tour de Yorkshire 2018



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We supported the launch of next year's Tour de Yorkshire by taking World Champion cyclist Mark Cavendish MBE to Yorkshire in the cab of one of our trains. Virgin Trains are also sponsoring the King and Queen of the Mountain for the Tour, and will welcome people on-board as they travel to Yorkshire for the race, which has been expanded from three to four stages and will take place between 3- 6 May 2018.