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Virgin Trains Stakeholder Newsletter Issue 3 2019 Midlands and North . 01 October 2019



A final message from Phil



Welcome to this final edition of our quarterly newsletter, which provides a snapshot of the fantastic work we at Virgin Trains have worked so hard to deliver for our customers for the past 22 years. We look back with immense pride, having led the industry in delivering faster journeys to more destinations, harnessing new technology and always putting the customer first.

Our record is one of challenging the status quo. We introduced industry- first innovations like the tilting Pendolino trains and the onboard entertainment service, BEAM, and in July we became the first train operator to offer 100% of its ticket types digitally.

As you will be aware, First Trenitalia has been announced as the successful bidder to run the West Coast Partnership and will operate services on the West Coast Main Line from December 2019.

Looking ahead to the remaining months, our focus is to continue to deliver the best possible experience for our passengers and the communities that we serve across the country. We will be working closely with First Trenitalia to ensure a seamless handover for our customers, who are being reassured that they should book and travel as normal.

Up until the moment of handover, our charitable and community activities are continuing at full speed, from upcycled Virgin Trains uniforms for homeless charities, to working with the Community Rail Partnerships along the route. I hope you enjoy reading about some of our fantastic initiatives in this edition.

Phil Whittingham, Managing Director of Virgin Trains

Our trains

Virgin Trains upgrades Voyager services with Free WIFI & BEAM for all



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Virgin Trains is pleased to announce that free WIFI for all passengers is now available on all of our Voyager services, in addition to our Pendolino trains. This upgrade provides all passengers access to the full BEAM entertainment service on their personal devices whilst on board, which has hundreds of fresh-off-the-box-office movies and cult classics, as well as a whole host of boredom-banishing games. The change, which took effect on Thursday 12 September, will apply to all 20 of our Voyager trains. All passengers need to do is connect to 'virgintrainsfreewifi' in your

settings and we'll do the rest.

Liverpool City Region Upgrade Work



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Over the weekend, Virgin Trains services will be unable to serve Liverpool Lime Street and Runcorn - with services starting and terminating at Warrington Bank Quay. Rail replacement services will be in place between Liverpool Lime Street and Warrington Bank Quay to connect into our services to and from London Euston, extending journey times. More information about Virgin Trains' services can be found here:

<https://www.virgintrains.co.uk/spanner>

We recommend planning your journey in advance and checking the National Rail Enquiries and Virgin Trains websites before travelling. For more information about Network Rail's work in the Liverpool City Region, visit:

www.networkrail.co.uk/LCR

Virgin Trains flies the flag for Coventry



Virgin Trains has named one of its trains after one of Coventry's most famous historic icons in celebration of its UK City of Culture status in 2021. The Lady Godiva Express was unveiled by Lorna Bailey, presenter of BBC Coventry & Warwickshire's Saturday morning show, at a ceremony at London Euston in front of assembled guests including Coventry Lord Mayor, Councillor John Blundell, Pete Waterman and a group of young Coventry Ambassadors.

Pendolino 390039 also proudly adorns the city's first official flag on each cab end. The flag was chosen as part of competition run by BBC Coventry & Warwickshire, to mark the first anniversary of Coventry being awarded the UK City of Culture title. It showcases two hugely important parts of the city's history. Front and centre is Lady

Godiva, an iconic part of Coventry's long history. Edging the flag is two blocks of sky blue, the colour which represents Coventry City Football Club.

The train has already clocked up over 120k miles, helping to promote the city in towns and cities the length and breadth of the UK.

Business news

Virgin Trains offers 100% digital tickets



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digital tickets on an uncharged phone.

Virgin Trains uniforms put to good use for the homeless



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Virgin Trains will donate blankets, scarves and dog coats which have been made from old staff uniforms to homeless charities. The upcycled clothes – many of which are in Virgin Train's signature colour of red – were transformed by prisoners at HMP Northumberland at their onsite textile factory. Items will either be distributed by Virgin staff at London Euston, Birmingham New Street, Manchester Piccadilly, Liverpool

Lime Street and Glasgow Central or will go to local charities to give to the homeless.

Other items of clothing which could not be made into blankets have been used to make unbranded dog coats which will also be given out to those homeless people with four legged friends. Some branded dog coats with the Virgin Trains logo will be given to staff in return for a donation - with the profits going to charity. The remainder of the clothes – which are more than six years old – will be donated to charity or later recycled.

Virgin Trains supports MyTime project



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In June, Virgin Trains was delighted to support the MyTime Project, a small community-based project based in Merseyside that provides support groups for children who have a parent in prison. Virgin trains provided complimentary travel for a group of children, parents and staff travelling from Merseyside to London, to speak in Westminster to parliamentarians, policy makers and MPs to tell their stories and ask for help.

Some of the children's calls to action included more child-friendly prison visits and more sensitivity from the police and the media. These children suffer separation anxiety, worry about their parents' well-being, social isolation, unwanted attention from the media, misplaced self-blame, difficult prison visits, and bullying to name just a few. For more information about The MyTime Project visit www.themytimeproject.com.

Virgin Trains opens the door to the first ever Calm Corner



In June, Virgin Trains opened the doors to 'The Calm Corner' at Crewe station – a room which has been specifically designed to offer customers with hidden disabilities a safe and calm environment. The inspiration for the room, which is the first of its kind on a UK railway network, came from Megan Hughes who was on work experience with Virgin Trains. She came up with the suggestion based on her personal experience of having Asperger Syndrome. The idea was brought to life with the help of Network Rail, London Northwestern Railway and SLC Rail, with advice from Direct Access on room layout and Boss Design for choice of furniture.

To support the opening of The Calm Corner, members of the Virgin Trains team at Crewe have undergone training to help them identify those customers in need of help, distinguishing between the different types of hidden disabilities and how best to respond to and support someone that may be having difficulty with the station environment.

All aboard the Virgin Trains Chat Carriage



On 14 June, Virgin Trains customers were invited to strike up a conversation with a fellow traveller in our new 'Chat Carriage'. Coach C on a number of Virgin Trains Pendolino services were converted into the 'Chat Carriage' to support the BBC's Crossing Divides on the Move Day, an initiative designed to get people to better engage with each other, especially when travelling on public transport.

To help facilitate those conversations customers buying a hot drink on a select number of Virgin Trains services were given a second drink free of charge and encouraged to share it with a someone sitting close by as a means of sparking up a

conversation, be it about the weather, their destination or where they have travelled from or what they are up to at the weekend.

Charity open day raises in excess of £50k



Despite the best efforts of the British weather, over five thousand visitors descended on Crewe Station on June 8th, raising in excess of £50,000 for charity. The “Crewe All Change” open day was run in partnership between Virgin Trains, Locomotive Services (TOC) Limited and The Railway Magazine.

Charities who benefitted included NET Patient Foundation, Rethink Mental Illness, The Railway Children, St John’s Ambulance and a number of other local good causes.

The event was run in memory of Alison Austin, daughter of Lyn Gillan and brother of Melvyn, who both work at Crewe station. Alison lost her brave fight against Neuroendocrine Cancer last year. Virgin Trains’ Pendolino 390115 was named ‘Crewe – All Change’ by the family, with the help of Councillor Benn Minshall, Mayor of Crewe Town Council, to reflect the town’s key role in the railway both historically and in the years to come. The train also carries Alison’s name on its cab ends.

In addition to the train naming, guests were treated to a behind the scenes look at Crewe Diesel Depot – the doors opened for the first time in over a decade. Over 40 diesel and electric trains from around the network were on show, reflecting the Diesel Depot’s modern history.

Virgin Trains gets behind The Big LEGO® Brick Hospital



Runcom Station played host to The Big LEGO® Brick Hospital in early August. Customers were given the chance to buy a brick for £1 and help build the model which, when finished, will be one of the biggest ever LEGO® brick structures in the UK, measuring 1.6m x 2.8m x 1.6m.

In addition, Virgin Trains donated £4,000, with the station team showing their skills to build two specialist rooms for the model, which will contain more than 100 rooms and 200 mini figures, such as doctors and nurses.

The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity’s campaign is aiming to raise £500,000 towards construction of the specialist hospital in the centre of Liverpool and improvements to their Wirral site. The real new cancer hospital is set to open its doors in 2020.

CRP Corner

Community Rail Lancashire

Virgin Trains and CrossCountry by Arriva help Community Rail Lancashire to support local LGBT+ youth charity work



CrossCountry and Virgin Trains have enabled several young members of the Proud Trust to access a vitally important residential through their provision of travel for the group.

The Proud Trust is a life-saving and life enhancing organisation that helps young LGBT+ people empower themselves to make a positive change for themselves and their communities. They have been working collaboratively with the COLOURS network with lead worker Chloe Cousins, which brings together LGBT+ young people and youth workers of colour to share and learn together. Read more here: <https://www.communityraillancashire.co.uk/news/train-companies-support-lgbt->

[youth-charity-work/](#)

North Cheshire Community Rail Partnership (CRP)



North Cheshire CRP are proud and delighted to be part of the fast growing community rail movement. Each project gives a creative opportunity for everyone involved. Over the past few months we successfully held our first rail safety session at Elton Primary school and recruited new volunteers who help us to make a difference at the local stations. Together with our partners we launched an art project in Castle Park in Frodsham and celebrated re-opening of the Halton Curve, a short section of the railway track that connects North Wales and Chester to Liverpool airport and city centre. For more information follow us on [Twitter](#).

North Staffordshire CRP

New Planters at Stoke Station



Two new planters were installed on Platform 1 at Stoke-on-Trent Station in June. Funded by Virgin Trains and by the North Staffordshire CRP, these provide some welcome colour to the station. The planters were made by construction students Luke and Jake from Stoke-on-Trent College. In addition, a very tired existing planter on the same platform was replanted with herbs, available for picking by passers-by. A volunteer station adopter from Longton Station, Ruth Shaw, led on the plantings and is dead heading, weeding and watering as required.

North Staffordshire CRP

The Circus Train arrives at Stoke Station



Keele University MA Creative Writing student, Dean Brindley, has had his poem "Circus Train" displayed in the Platform 2 Waiting Room at Stoke-on-Trent Station. He reimagines the atmospheric arrival of the Barnum and Bailey's Circus Train at the station as the animals arrive in their hundreds to take up their winter quarters in the city. The poster was installed by Claire Sandys, Community Rail Officer for the North Staffordshire CRP.

Mark Taylor, Virgin Trains Station Manager at Stoke-on-Trent, said: "We have been proud to serve Stoke-on-Trent for over 22 years. It's a great city I thought I knew well but I was amazed to discover this part of our railway heritage, which is brought to life in Dean's poem, Circus Train. We work hard to champion the cities, towns and local communities we serve, and we're delighted to present this piece of work which reveals an usual part of Stoke-on-Trent's history to the thousands of people who travel through the station every week."

Women in Community Rail



Achievements so far in 2019 has seen WiCR's Code of Conduct adopted by the Department for Transport (DfT), Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) and many Community Rail Partnerships. It sets out standards of behaviour for anyone involved in Community Rail both paid staff and volunteers.

A film showing 'Opportunities in Community Rail' was launched on Friday 21st June at Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) offices to an invited audience. It was aired across the concourse at Manchester Piccadilly. Since then it has been shown at the West Midlands Trains conference in Liverpool where it was well received. The film commissioned by WiCR was funded by Network Rail, Northern Rail and highlights **careers** and **volunteering** opportunities in community rail.

A branch of WiCR in the South of England is being launched on 27th September in GTR, Monument Place, 24 Monument Street, London, EC3R 8AJ. If you live in the area please feel free to attend. For any further information on any of the above items please contact margebirch@icloud.com.

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