



## Welcome to the Red Letter

### A message from David



*It's been another busy three months here at Virgin Trains East Coast, with further improvements and exciting plans well underway.*

It's been another busy three months here at Virgin Trains East Coast, with further improvements and exciting plans well underway. May saw us add even more services to our timetable, and I'm delighted that we now offer passengers a half-hourly service between London and Leeds six days a week, ahead of the Azuma launch. It's exciting to see Hitachi begin working on our new fleet at their Newton Aycliffe depot, which will add even more seats to our services. With our fleet refurbishment complete, including rolling out our upgraded Wi-Fi and BEAM to our Hull - London service, we've now turned our attention to how we can innovate to improve our rail services. I look forward to working with the start-ups chosen through our Platform X venture to tackle some of the challenges we face, and

to our new website and app which we'll be launching soon.

Finally, on behalf of Virgin Trains East Coast, I would like to extend our congratulations and a warm welcome to all the new and re-elected MPs, Councillors, and Mayors on our route. We look forward to working with you to make our services as best as they can be for all the passengers that you represent.

### History made with east coast rail icons

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Four generations of trains representing the past, present and future of rail travel ran side by side in the same direction on the East Coast Main Line, a world first. The event took place in Yorkshire and featured the Flying Scotsman alongside two trains from our current fleet – the Intercity 125 (Class 43) and Intercity 225 (Class 91). The first new Virgin Azuma (Class 800) train was also featured. The journey through the Yorkshire countryside was enjoyed at points along the route, concluding at York station.

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## Launching our venture to find start-ups to revolutionise rail travel



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We've launched Platform X – our joint venture with Virgin StartUp to find the next generation of start-up firms to transform rail travel. On 21 June we hosted our pitch day to find eight start-ups that can help Virgin Trains tackle one of four challenges:

- Ensuring customers have a great end-to-end journey to and from their final destination when travelling by train: *Enterprise Bot and AirPortr*
- Helping Virgin Trains understand more about our customers and their preferences: *Living Lens and Peak*
- Innovative ways to tackle operational challenges during disruption: *Wyld Research and Warwick Analytics*
- Applying ideas that are already transforming the customer experience to the rail industry: *RotaGeek and Q-Shy*

The successful applicants listed will benefit from access to funding through our Innovation Fund, as well as mentoring from senior management at Virgin Trains. The programme will begin on 3 July and was launched by Sir Richard Branson and Nicola McGuinness-Brown, Head of Innovation, at King's Cross station.

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## Extra weekend trains and more lowest priced fares available



*We're now running 22 additional services on Saturdays between Leeds and London, and increasing the number of affordable fares on these trains.*

We're now running 22 additional services on Saturdays between Leeds and London, and increasing the number of affordable fares on these trains.

Our half-hourly service between Leeds and London will now run six days a week, benefitting passengers along the route. The new timetable means there will be an extra 600,000 seats available on our services compared to a year ago.

We've also made more of the lowest fares available, with 115,000 more seats

available for £16 between Leeds or Wakefield and London.

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## Advance purchase on the day fares to save customers £7.1m a year



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Customers can now make savings by purchasing an advance ticket on some routes, compared to the walk-up off-peak or anytime fares. These can be purchased via our website, at station travel centres and at ticket machines, and allow passengers to

reserve a seat.

An advance fare bought on the day for travel between Edinburgh and London could cost £69, saving customers 50% on the price of an off peak single purchased on the day (£137). We have been leading the way in tackling fare complexity and we are currently participating in a single-leg pricing trial with the Department for Transport.

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## Virgin Trains wins at the Scottish Transport Awards



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Our role in transforming rail journeys on the West and East Coasts has been recognised at the annual Scottish Transport Awards in Glasgow. We were named Public Transport Operator of the Year, cementing our reputation as the UK's leading long distance rail provider. The award reflected the work we have undertaken over the past year, including investment in our fleet, more frequent journeys and our free on-board entertainment service, BEAM.

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## Hitachi begins working on our Azuma fleet



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Hitachi has begun work on the Azuma fleet at their depot in Newton Aycliffe. Work on the bodyshells is taking place in Kasado, Japan, before arriving in the UK to be built by Hitachi's manufacturing team in the North East. The fleet of 65 trains will provide an extra 12,200 seats, making possible a big increase in direct services to destinations such as Bradford, Harrogate and Lincoln and cutting journey times across the East Coast.

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## Committing to tackling the stigma around mental health



*We have signed the Time to Change pledge and named a train, in a commitment to tackling the stigma around mental health.*

We have signed the Time to Change pledge and named a train, in a commitment to tackling the stigma around mental health.

As a signatory, we will invest over £700,000 a year to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our people, including educating our employees in recognising and supporting both other colleagues and customers with mental health issues.

Time to Change is an initiative from charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness which looks to encourage people to talk about mental health and improve public attitudes through training and awareness raising.

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## New shirt sponsorship deal with Doncaster Rovers

*We've secured a new shirt sponsorship deal with Doncaster Rovers, following their promotion to Sky Bet League One.*

We've secured a new shirt sponsorship deal with Doncaster Rovers, following their promotion to Sky Bet League One.

Earlier this year we confirmed we would sponsor the club's training kit, and our shirt sponsorship will run for two seasons. The shirt is now available for fans to pre-order on the club's website.



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## Supporting the Tour de Yorkshire



*We ran two additional direct services to Harrogate to take cycling fans to see the Tour de Yorkshire.*

We ran two additional direct services to Harrogate to take cycling fans to see the Tour de Yorkshire.

These services were timed to allow spectators to see the end of the second stage on Saturday. Virgin Trains also sponsored the Tour's pink King and Queen of the Mountains Classification jerseys for both the men's and women's races.

