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Virgin Trains West Coast Regional Stakeholder Newsletter Issue 4 2018 (Scotland) . 28 December  
2018



## A festive message from Michael Stewart, General Manager Anglo-Scot



*It's been a busy end to the year here at Virgin Trains. With the festive season now fully upon us, I wanted to thank you for travelling with us this year.*

*I am proud of the team's achievements and milestones we have reached in 2018. Our multimillion-pound investment has continued to transform the West Coast route – introducing new services, abolishing Friday peak fares at London Euston and cutting the cost of a day return “Shopper” ticket to Glasgow by a third. Other industry-first innovations include the roll out of our digital season ticket and journey bookings through Amazon Alexa.*

*Bucking industry trends, we have been delighted to see passenger growth across the length and breadth of the West Coast route, including more journeys to Scotland.*

*I'm particularly proud of the leading role we have played in bringing together businesses, charities and government agencies working in Scotland to help people with convictions develop their potential in the workplace and contribute to a successful, growing economy. Our new partnership, Release Scotland, was launched to provide support for employers in Scotland seeking advice and help with recruiting ex-offenders.*

*These successes are the result of the dedication of our talented staff, and I'm thrilled that their efforts have been recognised at the recent RailStaff Awards, picking up the awards for Rail Safety Team of The Year and Training Team of The Year.*

*As you may have seen during your travel with us this Christmas, we have been spreading messages of kindness in partnership with our charity partner, Rethink Mental Illness. We have painted the script of Frank Capra's iconic 1946 festive film 'It's A Wonderful Life' on station platforms in 14 locations from Glasgow to London. This initiative is in recognition of how difficult the festive period can be for some, and the positive impact that simple acts of kindness can have.*

*Looking ahead to 2019, our focus is on delivering the best possible experience for our passengers and the communities that we serve across the country.*

*As ever, thank you for your feedback and support and we look forward to welcoming you on board our services next year.*

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### Business news

## Virgin Trains scraps Friday afternoon peak restrictions

*We have permanently removed Friday afternoon peak restrictions from London Euston, enabling thousands of people to start the weekend earlier, for less. We scrapped restrictions on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018, following a 13-week trial that has also helped dramatically reduce congestion on our key evening services.*

*During the trial, the popular 19:00 London Euston to Manchester service saw the average maximum number of passengers fall by 61%. Normally this would be the first service available for passengers with off-peak tickets.*

*Similar benefits were seen on our West Midlands route where the average maximum number of passengers on the 19:03 London Euston to Birmingham New Street fell by 75%.*

*Our move to scrap Friday afternoon peak restrictions has also led to a reduction in congestion by spreading passenger demand more evenly throughout the day.*

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## Investment in bodycams by Virgin Trains sees staff assaults drop by more than half

*We have become the first UK train operator to provide body-worn cameras to cover all our frontline people, resulting in assaults on staff falling by more than half.*



*Following a pilot scheme, we rolled out 275 cameras across the entire network. Assaults on our staff have reduced month by month in 2018, from 20 in March to 6 in September.*

*Results from a survey revealed that more than 80% of our staff felt safer at work while wearing bodycams and nearly 90% would recommend them to colleagues.*

*We have also given the British Transport Police (BTP) direct access to footage from the cameras, if needed, thanks to our state-of-the-art cloud-based system that allows them to view the footage when the cameras are docked – speeding up investigations and possible prosecutions. This has already led to one conviction so far, following an incident in April this year on a train in Wolverhampton.*

*Work is now underway between rail companies and the BTP to develop a joint rollout of the technology across the country.*

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## **Businesses set to benefit from Virgin Trains and Eurostar collaboration**



*Businesses are set to benefit from our new collaboration with Eurostar, which creates an end to end rail booking service between major routes and mainland Europe.*

*In the first partnership of its kind between Eurostar and a UK train operating company, our new initiative offers a “one-stop shop” service targeting the Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibitions (MICE) market, removing the logistics of having to book separate journeys.*

*Our new service also gives organisations and planners the ability to change or transfer tickets between delegates and to book out entire train carriages for events at discounted travel rates.*

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## **Virgin Trains launches ‘It's A Wonderful Line’ Campaign**



*Spreading a message of kindness this Christmas, we have painted the script of iconic festive film ‘It's A Wonderful Life’ on station platforms from London to Glasgow. Over 7.5km of script has been painted in 14 locations.*

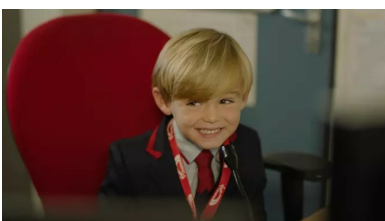
*Frank Capra's 1946 film, which is a staple of the Christmas TV schedules, is an uplifting story of family, love, hope, and redemption. But it is also the story of one man's struggle with a life that hasn't gone to plan. While the film may be over 70 years old, the message is as relevant now as it has ever been.*

*Our ‘It's A Wonderful Line’ initiative has been developed with our charity partner, Rethink Mental Illness, in recognition of how difficult the festive period can be for some, and the positive impact that simple acts of kindness can have.*

*Rethink Mental Illness has worked with us since May 2017, training our staff in how to deal with mental health issues that they might experience during their working day and in their personal life.*

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## **All aboard! Virgin Trains holds ‘Rookies Academy’ at stations during half term**



*During October half term, we launched ‘Rookies Academy’ – a brand-new series of free activity days for school children which took place at 13 stations across our West Coast route over the school break.*

*Our ‘Rookies Academy’ activity days offered children aged 5 to 11 a range of exciting experiences, including the chance to make a station announcement, learn how to dispatch trains from the platform, and meet a train driver for a tour of the driver's cab onboard a Virgin Train.*



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## Virgin Trains wins 'Training Team of The Year' and 'Rail Safety Team of The Year' at Rail Staff Awards

*We are proud to be awarded 'Rail Safety Team Of The Year', alongside the Milton Keynes Escalation Team, Network Rail, Samaritans, British Transport Police, Thames Valley Police and West Midlands Trains, at this year's RailStaff Awards ceremony.*

*Between July and November 2017, there was a series of suspected suicides on the rail network in the Milton Keynes Council area. In response to the incidents, the group was formed and we worked together to pursue a range of different workstreams covering information sharing, community engagement, increasing the chances of human intervention and promoting help-seeking.*

*We are also thrilled to be awarded 'Training Team of The Year' for our work to create a new training team to support the rollout of a system for ticket offices. Our new team had to train nearly 400 people across 21 stations, delivering first-class training on the biggest system and business change that our retail teams have seen for over 10 years.*

*Our Safety Director, Peter Bowes, was also award 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-up in the category of 'Lifetime Achievement Award'.*

*The RailStaff Awards ceremony took place on 29 November at The NEC in Birmingham to show appreciation for the people who deliver the railway – from drivers to cleaners, and engineers to station staff.*

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## Virgin Trains gets prisoners job-ready with innovative training programme



*We are proud to have launched the first in-prison employability training programme aimed at building the workplace skills prisoners need to make them job-ready on the day of release. Our three-week employment and business course has been piloted at HMP Styal, a women's prison near Manchester, in partnership with prison education and training provider Novus.*

*The training is aimed at providing skills that will be useful for a broad range of employers. At the end of the programme, trainees are guaranteed an interview with Virgin Trains as well as being taken through a mock interview in preparation for the real thing.*

*The latest group of trainees graduated on 5<sup>th</sup> October and of the 16 trainees on the first two courses, nearly half have been offered permanent positions.*

*We have been proactively recruiting those with convictions for five years and we currently employ more than 30 people who were recruited directly from prison. We are due to roll out the programme at other prisons along our West Coast route over the next year.*

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## Virgin Trains carries more Christmas shoppers to Glasgow



*The number of people taking advantage of our reduced day return fares from the North of England in the run up to the festive period has grown by more than a quarter in just three years.*

*On the back of this success, we have cut the cost of a day return "Shopper" ticket to Glasgow by a third, valid on any train after 9.30am.*

*Return fares are available for just £17 from Carlisle, £22 from the Lakes (Oxenholme and Penrith) and £27.50 from Preston. First Class returns are available from between £35 and £56 from Carlisle/Preston respectively until the promotion*

*ends on January 6.*

*Last year, nearly 15,000 people took advantage of our flexible Shopper tickets between November and early January, a 28% increase on 2014/5.*

