



A message from Phil Whittingham, Managing Director



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, thousands more seats and abolishing Friday peak fares at London Euston. 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. We broke new records for passengers travelling between the West Midlands and London, as well as increasing journeys to Scotland. For the first time ever, we carried more passengers to Liverpool from the capital, rather than the other way around.

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 London to Glasgow. 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.

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 2nd 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 2nd 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.

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 5th 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.

Virgin Trains celebrates 170th birthday of Alsager Station - the Jinty Project

North Staffordshire CRP



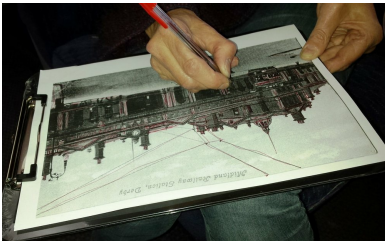
We held special activities throughout 2018 to enhance the environment of Alsager Station and build positive relationships with the local community. Our activities as part of the 'Jinty Project' have resulted in a new willow frame, a wild pollinator-friendly flower garden and more edible plants.

Adopters put on a week-long station history display in Alsager Library. Pupils from Excalibur Primary School and Alsager School also created permanent artwork depicting the history of the station. Along with the Chair of Alsager Town Council, the pupils attended the unveiling of the artwork at the station on 9th October.

The adopters were rewarded for their hard work with an ACoRP Silver "It's Your Station" award.

Moving Pictures Fun Palace on the North Staffs Line

North Staffordshire CRP



As part of the national Fun Palaces weekend in early October, the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership (NSCRP) welcomed Ceramic City Stories on board with their "Magic Drawing" activity facilitated by artists and a rail historian. Travellers were invited to create their own line drawing of an historic local railway picture, using carbon paper. There was a great atmosphere in the bunting-bedecked carriage with lots of creativity and discussion taking place.

<http://funpalaces.co.uk/>

Donna Louise art work at Crewe and Tutbury and Hatton Stations

North Staffordshire CRP



A large-scale art display has been hung at Crewe Station depicting stunning paintings and words by siblings of patients at the Donna Louise Trust in Stoke-on-Trent. It's great advertising for the Trust and a beautiful and moving addition to platforms 3 and 4. At Tutbury and Hatton Station the North Staffordshire CRP displayed some of the pictures as A3 vinyls on the inside of the two platform shelters, where they certainly brighten up the view for waiting passengers.

<https://www.thedonnalouise.org/>

Duke Street Walking Group take the train

North Staffordshire CRP



On 2nd October keen walkers from the Duke Street Day Centre for adults with learning disabilities travelled part of their route by train. The group travelled from Longport to Stoke-on-Trent, then walked back following the canal towpath. At both stations the travellers received informal travel training by using ticket machines and learning about safety features.

Future projects

North Staffordshire CRP

- The North Staffordshire CRP will be holding a public consultation at and around Longton Station between January and March next year, to inform improvements to the environment for passengers and pedestrians.
- Virgin Trains is working with the North Staffordshire CRP and the Friends of Longport Station to look at what we can do with the waiting room at Longport Station.

Conwy Valley CRP update

Conwy Valley CRP

Conwy Valley Rail Partnership beat off strong nationwide competition on a showcase night for the community rail movement, to win the Involving Children and Young People Award for their work to put the railways back into the heart of the communities they serve.

Melanie Lawton, Community Rail Officer led the award winning project. The partnership teamed up with Arriva Trains Wales, Conwy Council, Network Rail and community arts charity TAPE to work with Ysgol Maenofferen in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Pupils taking part had the to talk on camera or act as director, with the bi-lingual film, in both English and Welsh, needing two presenters and a supporting cast.

To view the video: <https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/case-studies/conwy-valley-rail-safety-video/>
Follow the Conwy Valley Railway on Social Media or visit www.conwyvalleyrailway.co.uk

Crewe - Manchester and South East Manchester CRP Update

Crewe - Manchester and South East Manchester CRP

The last few months have all been about art, with several of this year's projects coming to completion.

- The combined CRPs' line art project was launched at Manchester Central on 13th November, with support from High Peak and Hope Valley CRP, Women In Community Rail / Amazing Women, several friends groups, Northern and TransPennine Express.
- Friends of Rose Hill launched their Community Art Mural on the 17th November. The artwork was created in local schools and several multi-generational workshops.
- Friends of Rose Hill have had a busy few months with their community art project which was unveiled on 8th November.
- There were a number of successful friends group Armistice events along the Glossop Line involving Hattersley, Hadfield, Guide Bridge, Glossop and Friends of Reddish South.

After years of campaigning by the Friends of Goostrey, work has started on preserving Goostrey Station's historic wooden ticket hall at the station. The aim is to use the building for community activity once the repair works are completed.

The Crewe - Manchester and South East Manchester CRP is in discussion with Direct Rail Services to get their apprentices involved on Crewe Station. We hope the apprentices will engage with local schools to promote volunteering and to encourage the study of STEM subjects and employment within the rail industry.

