



Virgin Trains adds 42 services to Edinburgh-London route



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Seats went on sale last month after the Office of Rail and Road approved Virgin Trains' plans. The timetable boost is expected to lead to an upsurge in cross-border travel and has been welcomed by the UK and Scottish governments' respective transport ministers.

UK Rail Minister Claire Perry said: "This is welcome news for passengers travelling between Edinburgh and London and demonstrates that Virgin Trains are delivering on their commitment to bring extra services and seats to this important route. The UK government knows how important the railways are to keeping Britain connected, which is why we are investing over £38 billion on the network in this parliament. The increase to Scottish services is evidence that this franchise is delivering real improvements for passengers."

Derek Mackay, Scottish Government Minister for Transport and Islands, said: "This increased frequency of cross-border Virgin services between Edinburgh and London is good news, giving passengers more choice of services and helping to spread the pressure on existing services. I welcome these enhanced timetables, the greater connectivity they offer between Scotland and the south east of England and the benefits that they will bring to the rail passenger experience and economies of locations along the route."

David Horne, Virgin Trains' Managing Director on the east coast route, said: "This is a major boost for our customers travelling between Edinburgh and London who will be able to catch a train every half-hour for most of the day. We have seen how increasing capacity and frequency adds to the popularity of train travel and we're confident that customers will

respond positively to these changes. Feedback on our new train interiors, many of which have been fitted out at Craighentnny depot in Edinburgh, has been incredibly positive and customers are telling us they love the fresh, new look." More than a million people travel on Virgin Trains' Edinburgh-London services per year and the route already enjoys a half-hourly frequency at peak times.

The new timetable will see four new departures from Edinburgh on weekdays, at 09:00, 13:00, 16:00 and 19:35, taking the total southbound trains to London to 25. The new services previously started from Newcastle. In the northbound direction departures from King's Cross at 06:15, 10:30, 13:30 and 17:30 will be extended to terminate at Edinburgh instead of Newcastle, taking the total to 23 on weekdays. On Sundays, two new services will be added to the timetable, boosting capacity between Edinburgh, Newcastle and London. This will result in two additional Edinburgh-London services, one southbound and one northbound.

M-ticketing - a franchise first!



We are proud to be the first franchised train company to offer m-Tickets across all ticket types and routes, on both the West Coast and East Coast Mainlines. The bar-coded m-Tickets which customers download to their smartphones or other mobile devices will be offered for journeys on Virgin Trains services purchased through our (east coast) website or app.

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The app means that customers can both buy and use their tickets on their mobile for maximum convenience. It also means that customers wanting to buy their tickets on the day can download the app via the free Virgin Trains station Wi-Fi, avoid queues, and select their ticket via a simpler interface than ticket machines.

This follows on from our participation in the industry pilot scheme looking at making buying and using train tickets simple. As part of this pilot we have been able to more than double our overall mobile ticket sales to in excess of 170,000 since July 2015.

Both companies are looking at ways to bring m-Tickets to even more customers and move away from paper tickets completely, which are easily lost or confused with tickets for other journeys. We will only remove all tangerine tickets once we are sure all of our customers are ready for the change.

Rail Minister, Claire Perry commented, "We want to build a 21st century railway that provides better journeys for all, and much simpler and smarter ticketing is a vital part of that. We have been clear that we will support the industry with ticketing innovation but that we also want rail companies to do what is best for their passengers, without government interference. The expansion of mobile tickets means more Virgin Trains customers can enjoy the benefits of this new technology, and it will help us get rid of outdated paper tangerine tickets."

Graham Leech, Group Commercial Director, Virgin Trains added, "We always want to be on the side of passengers and make their experience with us the best it can be. That's why we love innovating for our customers, which is why we were the first train company to introduce automatic delay repay and why we're now the first franchised operator to bring in m-Tickets in this way."

*The go-live dates for m-Ticket are as follows:

- 23 February: West coast journeys can be booked via the app for mobile m-Ticket fulfilment (excluding season tickets)
- 1 March: East coast journeys can be booked via the east coast website for mobile m-Ticket fulfilment (Applies to all routes and ticket types except journeys to Leeds, Stevenage and North of Edinburgh where m-Tickets are available on Advance fares only). Excludes season ticket holders.
- Early April: the Virgin Trains app and the Virgin Trains (east coast) website will both sell m-Tickets for both franchises.

Anglo-Scot services resume on west coast

Anglo-Scottish services have been restored to full capacity after repairs to the Lamington viaduct in Scotland were completed ahead of schedule.

Virgin Trains has been working to win people back to rail after the extended closure of the West Coast Main Line at Lamington with a seat sale offering £14 fares between



London and Scotland.

Anglo-Scottish services were restored to full capacity on February 22nd after repairs to the Lamington viaduct in Scotland were completed ahead of schedule.

The three-day flash sale went live earlier this week, with tickets available for travel between 18th March and 2nd May. It has now closed, with thousands of discounted seats having been sold across the route.

Network Rail had worked since the beginning of the year to reinforce a damaged pier of the bridge, near Carstairs, and raise the track to its normal level. The crossing sustained heavy damage during unprecedented levels of rainfall in December which washed away foundations, weakening the second pier.

Customers travelling between Glasgow and Carlisle had been using an hourly shuttle service via Dumfries while Edinburgh passengers had a bus replacement as far as Carlisle, both of which added around an hour to normal journey times.

Network Rail had previously advised that the West Coast Main Line would open at the beginning of March but were able to accelerate the repair work after a run of dry weather.

Anna Doran, General Manager at Virgin Trains commented: "We're delighted to be back to normal sooner than anticipated, as Network Rail completed the works to

Lamington viaduct ahead of schedule. It has been great to see our Pendolinos at Glasgow and Edinburgh again and to welcome passengers onboard. We would like to thank our customers for their continued patience and support over the last few weeks and we look forward to them travelling with us soon."

Virgin Trains celebrates 1st birthday on east coast



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One of the things we're really excited this year is the £21m refurbishment of our entire train fleet. This involves ripping out old seat covers and carpets, a deep clean of the interiors and installing new lighting, kitchens, bathrooms and upholstery, including leather seat covers in First Class compartments. A lot of this work is taking place at the Craighentenny depot in Edinburgh, where the "125" fleet is being refurbished.

We've pulled together a short video showing highlights of this, which can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_yhbeyZgXw. There's also a timelapse

video showing the exterior refresh of the trains last year, which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1bcuWglugA>.

There have been lots of other improvements on the east coast route, from a direct early-morning Stirling-London service, new uniforms, catering innovations such as Prosecco & "Hop on Board" ale. And there are a whole lot more improvements in the pipeline, including refurbished First Class Lounges in April, more Edinburgh-London services in May, bean-to-cup coffee machines onboard and a new fleet of faster, greener trains introduced from 2018.

Leading the way on passenger satisfaction

The latest National Rail Passenger Survey report was published at the end of January.

The latest National Rail Passenger Survey report was published at the end of January and we are delighted that our customers who took part in the survey gave us a 91% overall satisfaction rating for our services operating on the West Coast route, and 89% for those operating on the East Coast. The result means we continue to beat the long distance sector average for overall customer satisfaction.

Full details of the survey, which is carried out by independent rail watchdog Transport Focus, can be found here: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>.

Engineering works

Easter improvement works are scheduled to take place from 25 - 30 March. We are working with Network Rail to minimise disruption during this time and ensure customers are advised of the scheduled improvement works. We are advising



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From 25 -28 March on the West Coast route: London to/from Birmingham New Street/Wolverhampton, Manchester Piccadilly, Liverpool Lime Street, Glasgow Central and Edinburgh services, will be affected. Along these routes there will be alterations or reduced services.

From 25 - 28 March on the East Coast route: from 22:45 on Friday until approximately 06:45 on Monday, no trains will run between Huntingdon and Peterborough. On Saturday and Sunday, a reduced level of service will operate to/from London Kings Cross, with other services starting/terminating at Doncaster, Newark, Grantham or Peterborough. On Saturday morning, Saturday evening and Sunday morning trains will be diverted via Cambridge with journey times extended by approximately 60 minutes.

Full details are available on our website.

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