



Virgin wins prestigious Scottish transport award



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Virgin Trains has seen strong customer satisfaction levels and record passenger numbers on its east coast and west coast routes over the past year following a raft of investment, innovation and customer service improvements.

On the east coast route between Edinburgh and London, passenger numbers grew by 8% last year as train interiors were overhauled on its entire fleet and 45 additional services between the capitals were added.

On the west coast route, punctuality has improved to record levels and passenger volumes between Glasgow and London have rebounded following the closure of the route in early 2016 due to a bridge failure at Lamington. In a 24-week period to the end of March, passenger numbers were up by 28% compared to two years ago.

Both routes have been boosted by the introduction of the innovative and industry-leading onboard entertainment service, BEAM, which allows customers to stream more than 200 hours of Hollywood blockbusters and popular box sets straight to their device.

Patrick McGrath, Virgin Trains' Executive Director for Human Resources on the west coast route, said: "This is a wonderful recognition of the hard work Virgin Trains has put in over the last 20 years to transform customer services and improve rail connections between England and Scotland. We have seen investment, innovation and a relentless focus on customer experience which has helped make rail more popular than ever and we want to play a leading role in continuing that

great success story.”

David Horne, Managing Director of Virgin Trains’ east coast route, added: “We started our Virgin Trains journey just over two years ago and have already seen a root-and-branch overhaul over the service we provide to customers. Brand new train interiors, more frequent journeys, introduction of an industry-leading entertainment streaming app, BEAM. These have helped drive the amazing 8% growth in passenger numbers between Edinburgh and London last year and we couldn’t be more pleased to be recognised by Transport Times for putting those improvements in place.”

Virgin Trains shortlisted for next west coast/HS2 franchise



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Virgin Trains has been shortlisted for the next combined West Coast/HS2 franchise. We will partner with the French high speed operator, SNCF, in our bid with Stagecoach. The Government has announced the West Coast Partnership will run from 2019 to 2026, which will include the first few years of HS2. Consequently, bidders must have high speed experience and SNCF brings that to our partnership. The shareholding for the bid is Stagecoach 50%, SNCF 30% and Virgin 20%. We have already submitted the expression of interest which is the first stage of the bid. The next stage is preparing for the invitation to tender, which is expected to be issued by the end of the year.

History made with east coast rail icons



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Matt Litton honoured for standing up to racism



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His actions were praised by Sanaa, who said: “Matt’s actions restored my faith in humanity and gave my son and I immense comfort during a very difficult period.”

Matt, a Preston-based train manager, was working on a London to Glasgow service on December 29 when Sanaa and her son Zayn were subjected to racist abuse by fellow passenger Alexander MacKinnon.

Matt stepped in to prevent any further abuse from MacKinnon, ensuring he was taken from the train and arrested at Carlisle, and stayed with Sanaa and Zayn to offer comfort and reassurance.

Mackinnon later pleaded guilty to a Racially Aggravated Public Disorder offence and was fined more than £1000.

A career railway man, Matt was recruited as a trainee for British Rail in 1991 and has worked through in number of roles at Warrington, Wigan and Preston stations before taking on the job of Train Manager on Virgin Trains’ Anglo-Scottish route 15 years ago. He lives near Wigan with his wife and two children.

His actions have been praised by the panel judges, British Transport Police and Scotland’s Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf MSP, who attended last night’s ceremony in Glasgow.

Sanaa has spoken in support of Matt’s submission and said of his award last night: “I am very pleased Matt has received the recognition he deserves. He was the only person in that carriage who came to our help. I believe he genuinely went

above and beyond his call of duty when he stood up for my son and I that day by telling Alexander Mackinnon his behaviour will not be tolerated any further and arranging his swift removal from the train. We need more people like Matt around us, who aren't afraid to speak up when they see injustice.

Virgin Trains' smartphone revolution sees millions of customers switch from paper tickets



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Unlike traditional paper magstripe tickets, which have been an industry standard for

30 years, digital tickets can be easily downloaded to smartphone devices or printed at home and then scanned at automated ticket barriers.

Between March and May, 18% of Virgin's ticket sales were for digital tickets, a dramatic increase on a year earlier when this represented only one in 20 sales.

Their rapid take-up is a positive boost to Government and industry ambitions to roll out digital ticketing across the rail network and has been praised by independent passenger watchdog Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains' east coast business is aiming to emulate this success as part of a comprehensive digital refresh strategy being rolled out this year. Last week it launched mTickets which can be downloaded straight to mobile devices.

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



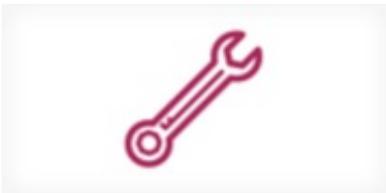
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Customers can now make savings by purchasing an advance ticket on the east coast route between London and Scotland compared to the walk-up off-peak or anytime fares. These can be purchased via our website, at station travel centres and at ticket machines, 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.

August Bank Holiday HS2 improvement works



Various improvement projects will be taking place between London Euston and Milton Keynes Central in preparation for HS2, which means there will be no access into or out of London Euston all day on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 August.

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London Euston station will be completely closed on these two days. Services will operate from Milton Keynes Central to destinations along the west coast.

We expect our services on Thursday 24, Friday 25, and Monday 28 August to be extremely popular. For customers who do choose to travel, we strongly recommend making a reservation on a specific train before travelling.

More information on these engineering works and timetables can be found at virgintrains.com/spanner.

