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Welcome!

Virgin milestones on cross-border rail

The two biggest cross-border rail operators serving Scotland have celebrated important milestones this month. Virgin Trains East Coast last week reached its landmark 100th day of operating long distance intercity services on the East Coast Main Line. Meanwhile, on the West Coast Main Line, Virgin Trains is a year into the Direct Award contract that has allowed for continued investment in the franchise.

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Meanwhile, on the West Coast Main Line, Virgin Trains is a year into the Direct Award contract that has allowed for continued investment in the franchise.

Both businesses have ambitious plans to further improve these vital arteries, ensuring that Scotland's businesses, visitor economy and citizens are supported by modern, environmentally sustainable transport services. Customers are at the heart of all our plans and you can read more about what we're doing in this e-newsletter.

Investment in Virgin Trains East Coast

Plans to make improvements for customers using Virgin Trains East Coast are already well underway.

Having reached the 100th day of the Virgin Trains East Coast franchise, investments



that will make a real difference to customer experience are now well underway.

We're planning to invest over £140 million to deliver a better service for our customers and communities. We've got plans to spend £25m to enhance our stations and on car parking provision. During the first two years of the franchise we'll invest £21m to improve the existing train fleet and increase reliability. We will refurbish toilets, introduce new seat covers, new carpets and enhanced on-train signage.

We'll also significantly improve our timetable and introduce at-seat dining in Standard Class and better value fares. We've already met one of our commitments this month when we introduced a 10% reduction in Standard Anytime fares to London.

However, we don't just want to provide a great service. As a company that works across the length and breadth of the country, we want to ensure that we play our part in helping the communities we serve. To support this, we'll be launching a £3m 'Customer and Communities Improvement Fund' to support projects suggested directly by stakeholders, customers and communities.

We'll be able to discuss this fund in more detail when we meet stakeholders as part of a series of stakeholder summits in early 2016, but we'd really appreciate any feedback in the meantime. You can get in touch with us by emailing damien.henderson@virgintrains.co.uk.

Virgin bids for East Coast track access



Virgin Trains East Coast has applied for a new nine-year track access contract to help us achieve major improvements to our timetable from 2019.

Virgin Trains East Coast has applied for a new nine-year track access contract to help us achieve major improvements to our timetable from 2019. This would involve using the new Hitachi fleet with up to 206 services per day (up from 155 trains per day today), with 75 new stops, reduced journey times and a 33% increase in seats.

However, there are three competing open access applications to run services on the East Coast Main Line which could put our plans to better serve communities and customers at risk, as well as substantially lower premium payments to the

Government as part of our franchise agreement. The Office of Road and Rail is now considering our plans and is expected to make a decision later this year.

For more information about this, please contact us at stakeholder@virgintrainseastcoast.com

Pendolino Coach G Conversion



The project to convert a First Class carriage to a Standard Class carriage on the 21 9-coach Pendolinos we operate is fully under way...

The project to convert a First Class carriage to a Standard Class carriage on the 21 9-coach Pendolinos we operate is fully under way with the first batch of reconfigured sets now in use, and further sets being converted at a rate of one per week.

When the full program is complete in September 2015, we will have an extra 2,100 seats per day on our route, and a better balance between the provision of First Class to Standard seating particularly in the off-peak.

This investment was agreed as part of the Direct Award contract with the Government signed in 2014 and follows strong growth in passenger numbers under Virgin Trains stewardship of the West Coast Main Line. When it took over the franchise in 1997, Virgin Trains carried 14m passengers a year. Last year that increased to 34m, with growth on Anglo-Scottish services being particularly strong. In 2014 three times the number of people caught the train between Glasgow and London as five years earlier.

Wi-Fi on West Coast

All of our 56 Pendolinos and 20 Voyagers operating the West Coast Main Line are now fitted with enhanced Wi-Fi.



All of Virgin Trains fleet operating the West Coast Main Line are now fitted with enhanced Wi-Fi. All 56 Pendolinos and 20 Voyagers have now been fitted with improved equipment which has led to a significant improvement to the speed of connections. Wi-Fi remains free in First Class and chargeable in Standard Class. Our clear ambition is to make Wi-Fi free and fast for all passengers but that requires substantial investment in trackside infrastructure to supply the bandwidth needed, and we are in discussions with interested parties.

We will shortly be installing Wi-Fi across our 17 managed stations and some areas within Network Rail managed stations on the route for access by all passengers free of charge. Euston and Preston are due to be ready in June, and several others by July 2015.

First IEP train arrives in Britain



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The first Hitachi-manufactured Intercity Express Train (IEP) has arrived in Britain, three years ahead of entering service on the East Coast Main Line. A fleet of 65 new trains will be operated by Virgin Trains East Coast from 2018, allowing it to increase the number of services and destinations served while bringing down journey times. Edinburgh to London will take just four hours, with a fast service scheduled every hour, followed by a service in the half-hour intervals stopping at more destinations.

"Train One" is pictured here arriving at Southampton port on March 12. It has already started work on the East Coast Main Line in a special testing zone which includes the stretch from Peterborough to Grantham.

Hitachi will deliver one train per week from 2018, with the entire rollout of the fleet due to be complete by 2019, with phased changes to the timetable complete a year later.

OnBoard catering improvements



Both East and West Coast franchises are making improvements to their catering offers. Bean-to-cup coffee is being rolled out on all Virgin Trains East Coast services while, on West Coast, Virgin Trains have carried out a refresh of the product range onboard The Shop and are shortly investing in new onboard catering equipment.

Virgin Trains has carried out a refresh of our product range onboard The Shop, and we are shortly investing in new onboard catering equipment, such as standard trolleys and crockery on all our West Coast services.

We have also gone live with a new coffee supplier "Aroma by the Nero Roasting Coffee". Aroma is the new coffee brand created by Café Nero which will be exclusive to Virgin Trains for six months. There are other exciting changes to the product range, covering toasties, sandwiches and snacks, plus hot and cold drinks.

Meanwhile, Virgin Trains East Coast is introducing bean-to-cup coffee on all its services next year and making other improvements to the catering offer. This includes a mobile app that will allow customers in Standard to order food before boarding which is then delivered straight to their table.

Employing people with convictions



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The Working2Change summit in Edinburgh heard a video address by Sir Richard Branson about the important role that business have to play by helping rehabilitate

people with criminal convictions by ensuring they can find meaningful careers.

Virgin Trains has played a leading role in this work and now holds regular recruitment events in prisons which have proved highly successful in identifying people. Virgin Trains East Coast has committed to roll this programme out over its own eight-year franchise.

Delegates to the summit heard from Kathryn Wildman, Virgin Trains' Lead Recruiter, who delivered two workshops aimed at encouraging businesses to think about recruiting people with criminal convictions. Virgin Trains has worked with St Giles Trust and a number of prisons to identify and recruit people for frontline positions within the business.

The conference also heard from Matthias Stausberg, Virgin Groups's Advocacy Director, who called on more businesses to take up the challenge of recruiting former offenders.

Sir Richard Branson's video address can be found here: <http://www.virgin.com/richard-branson/business-must-play-a-role-in-rehabilitating-ex-offenders>

People news



Graham Leech, has now taken on the new position of Group Commercial Director, while Andy Sparkes moves from VTEC to head VT bid team.

Graham Leech, currently Executive Director Commercial at Virgin Trains, has now taken on the new position of Group Commercial Director. Graham has led the Commercial team since 2004 and has played an important part in the rapid growth of the Virgin Trains business.

In his new role, Graham will oversee commercial strategy on both West Coast and East Coast, as well as leading co-operation between the two franchises. Graham will report to the respective MDs of Virgin Trains and Virgin Trains East Coast, Phil Whittingham and David Horne.

Virgin Trains' Executive team will be strengthened by the appointment of Andy Sparkes, who led the successful East Coast bid. Andy will join Virgin Trains as Business Development Director and will be heading up our bid for the next West Coast franchise.

The latest move follows completion of the senior management team at Virgin Trains East Coast in March. This comprises:

Managing Director - David Horne
Group Commercial Director - Graham Leech
Finance Director - Richard Bodicoat
People Director - Clare Burles
Engineering Director - Jack Commandeur
Major Projects Director - Tim Hedley-Jones
Safety & Operations Director - Warrick Dent
Marketing & Sales Director - Danny Gonzalez
Customer Experience Director - Alison Watson

Virgin Trains East Coast is the brand name of InterCity Railways Ltd (ICR), which is owned by Stagecoach (90%) and Virgin Group (10%).

Virgin Trains East Coast began operating services on the East Coast Main Line on March 1, 2015.

Virgin Trains is the brand name of West Coast Trains Ltd, subsidiary of the Virgin Rail Group Ltd, which is owned by Virgin Group (51%) and Stagecoach (49%). Virgin Trains has been operating services on the West Coast Main Line since 1997.

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