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



A message from Amanda Hines, General Manager (EBW)



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

We are 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, than the other way around.

Improvements are set to continue next year following our new partnership with West Midlands Rail Executive and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM). We have signed a new deal pledging to work together to improve rail journeys in the region, focusing on the greater use of sustainable transport to and from our stations at Coventry, Birmingham International, Rugby, Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford.

Our focus is on delivering the best possible experience for our passengers and the communities that we serve across the country. I'm proud of our work with the many Community Rail Partnerships in the region over the past year, including our first annual Community Rail Conference in Crewe.

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, HS2 works will start in earnest and we will work closely with our industry partners to keep the region moving.

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.

New café bar opens at Virgin Trains' Stoke Station



We have opened a new café bar at Stoke-on-Trent station, transforming the former First Class Lounge into a facility for both rail passengers and the wider community alike. We have also created 12 new jobs.

It is the second Titanic bod bar, a new concept from the Burslem based brewery, and it is open from early morning until late in the evening.

Dave Bott, joint Managing Director of Titanic Brewery, said the development represented an £80,000 investment at the historic station building.

New transport partnership in the West Midlands holds first meeting

In August, we have signed a new partnership deal with West Midlands Rail Executive and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) pledging to work together to improve rail journeys in the region.

We had our first board meeting in October where we focused on how we work together to manage key events such as football, with a view to sharing best practice ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and Coventry's City of Culture.

The focus of the partnership is around greater use of sustainable transport to and from Virgin Trains stations at Coventry, Birmingham International, Rugby, Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford. This includes the roll out of secure cycling schemes, improved signage and passenger information, in addition to closely working relationships with local football clubs and the British Transport Police, to keep passengers moving safely and comfortably on match-days.

HS2 works

HS2 works, which will start in earnest next year, will put pressure on all operators along the West Coast route. Our ability to run our existing timetable reliably will be a challenge, but one that we are confident we will be able to achieve. We are already working closely with HS2 Ltd. and Network Rail to 'Keep the West Midlands moving' and ensuring it is open for business. Integral to this will be timely and accurate information to allow customers to plan ahead and make more informed decisions.

Virgin Trains supports the launch of the Bear Grylls Adventure at 'Birmingham International'



We renamed Birmingham International 'Birmingham International' for a week to mark the launch of the Bear Grylls Adventure. The new attraction located in Birmingham is expected to attract over 250,000 visitors in its first year, and we've worked closely with Merlin to offer travel packages to make it as easy as possible for customers to get the venue by train.

Virgin Trains holds Employability Academies with offenders in the West Midlands

We are proud to have been actively recruiting ex-offenders and recruiting from within prisons since 2013. It is a smart way of attracting talent and it gives the chance for a new start to the people that need it most. Since rolling out our recruitment programme on the West Coast Main Line, we have hired more than 30 ex-offenders in roles across the business.

We have recently launched a partnership with New Leaf – a project which brings together partners as well as employers from across Warrington and Cheshire to change lives, create opportunities and make a positive contribution to local communities and the regional economy.

As part of this, we have recently held Employability Academies in conjunction with local Probation service. We are delighted to have successfully recruited two members of staff at Birmingham International and Coventry stations and we have more events planned for the New Year.

CRP Corner

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

North Staffordshire CRP



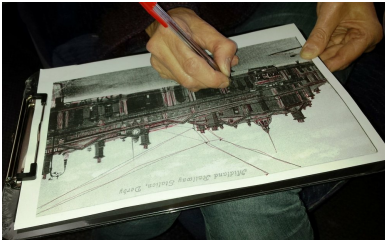
We held special activities throughout 2018 to enhance the environment of Alsager Station and build positive relationships with the local community. Our activities as part of the 'Jinty Project' have resulted in a new willow frame, a wild pollinator-friendly flower garden and more edible plants.

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.*

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