



Press Release

Wednesday 2 May 2018

Record year for Virgin Trains on the West Midlands to London route

- *Journeys on the West Midlands to London route top 12.2m, up 4.6% year on year*
- *A third more journeys were made on the route compared to five years ago*
- *Growth driven by improvements in customer service*
- *Average fare paid on journeys to and from London falls year on year*

Virgin Trains has broken new records for passengers travelling between the West Midlands and London.

As the intercity operator celebrates 21 years of operating the west coast route, new figures show it carried more than 2.2m customers between the West Midlands and London between April 2017 and March 2018, an increase of 4.6% compared to the same period the previous year (1).

In the four-week period leading up to Christmas 2017 (2) a record number of journeys were made on the route. Over 200k journeys were made Virgin Trains between London and Birmingham New Street in the same period; the highest ever number and up 10.8% on the previous year. Significant increases in customer journeys were also seen between London and Coventry (7.1%), Rugby (8.3%) and Sandwell and Dudley (4.5%). (2)

The new figures coincide with a year that saw punctuality reaching its highest ever level since privatisation and the roll out of Virgin's revolutionary new onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM.

The growing availability of advance fares, including the ability to buy tickets on the day for as little as £33 between Birmingham and London, has also played a big part in encouraging more customers to leave the car at home and travel by train, both for business and staycation trips. The average fare paid by customers on the journeys to and from London fell by 2.0%. (3)

The increase in numbers was warmly received by Paul Faulkner, CEO of Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, "As our region continues to go from strength to strength, it's essential we have first class rail links to support this growth. It's great to see Virgin Trains investing heavily in improving services between the West Midlands and London.

"Not only are Virgin Trains putting the needs of the customer at the heart of the travel experience, they are playing a massive part in enriching regional connectivity – all of which will help unlock the economic potential of the Midlands and bring prosperity to the country as a whole."



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Amanda Hines, Virgin Trains' General Manager for the Midlands, said: "The West Midlands is an integral part of our west coast route, a region we have been proud to call home for the past twenty one years. In that time journey times have been slashed and service innovations such as BEAM and more availability of low fares have helped drive increased customer satisfaction and boost our local communities as more people are attracted to rail."

Over the last year, Virgin Trains has doubled the booking horizon from the industry standard of three months and made M-tickets available across all its west coast services, in addition to becoming the first train operator to offer its customers automatic compensation in the event of a delay.

In June 2016, Virgin launched BEAM, the industry-leading app that allows customers to stream more than 200 hours of entertainment including Hollywood films, box sets and documentaries straight to their device.

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Notes to Editors

1. In the 12 months to end of 31 March 2018, 12,298,896 journeys were made on Virgin Trains' services between the West Midlands and London. This compares to 11,758,115 in the previous year, an increase of 4.6%.
2. 1,117,979 journeys were made on Virgin Trains services between London and the West Midlands in the four weeks ending 9 December 2017. Over 200k journeys were taken between London and Birmingham New Street for only the second time, the figure of 202,950 the highest ever recorded. 96,958 journeys were made between Coventry and London, 48,433 to and from Rugby and a further 13,589 to and from Sandwell and Dudley.
3. This is based on the average single fare paid on Virgin Trains services from the West Midlands to and from London between April 2017 and March 2018. Customers on average paid 1.8% less for their journey between London and Coventry, 6.1% between Rugby and London, 1.2% between London and Birmingham New Street and 3.1% less between Wolverhampton and London.

About Virgin Trains

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK.

The combined network connects some of the nation's most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.



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On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. We have already invested £21m to completely revamp our existing fleet and customers can now benefit from 42 additional services (22,000 extra seats) per week between Edinburgh and London. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

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