



Press Release

STRICT EMBARGO: 00:01 Tuesday 23rd October

Virgin Trains helps to fight homelessness with 'life changing' coffee from Change Please

- *Virgin Trains introduces ethically-sourced, award-winning coffee onboard from Change Please, which helps fight homelessness in UK*
- *Virgin Trains gives discount for customers who bring reusable cups to change habits and reduce waste*

Virgin Trains has partnered with Change Please to offer a premium coffee range onboard, whilst supporting the social enterprise, to help tackle homelessness in the UK.

The coffee, which won Great Taste Awards 2018, will see Virgin Trains expand its range in the onboard shop to include a Flat White, and introduce a new freshly brewed filter blend in First Class. In addition, Customers who bring along a reusable cup will benefit from 20p discount on their coffee.

Launched in 2015 with the support of Virgin StartUp, Change Please puts 100% of its profits towards reducing homelessness. They employ people without a place to live, provide full barista training, pay the Living Wage and support with housing, bank accounts and mental wellbeing.

Change Please will use their profits generated from their contract with Virgin Trains to train more baristas. It is estimated around 107 homeless people will be trained each year, as a result of the partnership. Virgin Trains will work with Change Please to include successful trainees in their recruitment process, to offer them a chance to use their new skills in a role with Virgin Trains.

In the last three years, Change Please has trained more than 84 people and expanded to 32 sites across London and Manchester. Their presence in Manchester will expand further with some profits from onboard coffee sales directed towards funding sites in the city.

Virgin Trains will use Change Please coffee beans to brew the one million cups it sells onboard each year, along with the countless cups poured in First Class. The beans, which are Rainforest Alliance certified, are carefully selected by master roasters and Virgin Trains to create a unique blend that has been taste tested by Virgin Trains customers.

In a further step to help tackle homelessness, Virgin Trains is encouraging its people to report rough sleeping at stations on its route to Change Please who will reach out and offer them support.

Cemal Ezel, founder of Change Please, said: "We're thrilled Virgin Trains has chosen Change Please to be their coffee provider, demonstrating their commitment to tackling the growing problem of homelessness. Not only does our partnership raise public awareness of this issue but with 100 percent of our sale profits going into our training programme, customers are literally changing lives with the simple gesture of buying a cup of coffee, every time they travel. What's more, because our



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coffee is an award-winning blend, they don't have to compromise on quality. So, they can sit back, relax and help change the world."

Sarah Copley, Executive Director of Commercial at Virgin Trains, said: "Coffee is a customer favourite and we're excited to be working with Change Please who have produced this unique blend especially for Virgin Trains. This ethically-sourced coffee gives something back to everyone involved in the process from the farming of the beans to the first sip from the customer's cup. Change Please share our values – they put people at the heart of everything they do and make a great tasting coffee that our customers will love. We're proud to be partnering with them to tackle homelessness - our new coffee range not only tastes good but will do good for the communities along our route."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About Change Please

Change Please was launched in 2015 with the help of Virgin StartUp and a partnership with The Big Issue. The social enterprise empowers the homeless community to rebuild their lives with its, 'hands up, not a hand out' model. In addition to providing barista training, Change Please supports its trainees with accommodation and mental wellbeing.

Change Please has grown rapidly in the last three years, and now has 32 sites in London and Manchester and is in discussions with bodies in New York, regarding bringing its programme across the Atlantic.

Change Please also has its own range of award-winning coffee stocked at Sainsbury's, and will be available to buy from further retailers in the near future.

[For more information, please visit: www.changeplease.org](http://www.changeplease.org)

For media enquiries, please contact Mongoose PR: changeplease@mongooseagency.com

How Virgin StartUp supported Change Please

Cemal Ezal launched Change Please after receiving a £25,000 Start Up Loan from Virgin StartUp. He also attended the Virgin StartUp Doing Business with Big Business event where he showcased his business to procurement professionals from Virgin Trains.

About Virgin StartUp Doing Business with Big Business

Doing Business with Big Business is a unique opportunity from Virgin StartUp for startups who want to trade with some of the UK's largest companies.

Attendees get the chance to sit opposite buyers from Virgin Atlantic, Virgin Trains and John Lewis and find out what it takes to do business with them. Participants gain an insight into the decision making at big companies



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and learn what these organisations are looking for from small suppliers. Doing Business with Big Business is an intensive half-day workshop followed by an exclusive meet-the-buyer session. More details can be found here: <https://www.virginstartup.org/content/doing-business-with-big-business>

About Virgin Trains

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the West Coast inter-city route under the Virgin Trains brand, revolutionising travel on one of the UK's key rail arteries.

The network connects some of the nation's most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester 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 ahead of other long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme, introducing the industry-leading onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM, and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Virgin Trains operated the East Coast route between March 1, 2015 and June 24, 2018. In that time, we invested £75m to create a more personalised travel experience, including over £40m in the existing fleet. Customers have benefitted from 48 additional services between Edinburgh and London every week, and an extra 22 Saturday services between Leeds and London – a total of 1.74 million additional seats since May 2015.

Working together, the partnership railway of the public and private sectors has published a long-term plan, called *In Partnership for Britain's Prosperity*, to change and improve Britain's railway. The plan will secure almost £85bn of additional economic benefits to the country whilst enabling further investment and improvement, and contains four commitments which will see rail companies: strengthen our economic contribution to the country; improve customers' satisfaction; boost the communities we serve; and, create more and better jobs in rail. For more information go to [Britain Runs on Rail](#).

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](#) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

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