**15 September 2015**

**Flagship Pendolino named in honour of Stephen Sutton**

* *Mum Jane Sutton unveils nameplate in her son’s honour and encourages everyone to ‘make the most of every opportunity’*
* *Pendolino 3900002 only the fourth in the fleet to be named after an individual*

Birmingham International Station was the venue today for a very special ceremony as Virgin Trains named one of its trains in honour of a very extraordinary person.

Pendolino 390002 now carries the name ‘Stephen Sutton’ in recognition of a remarkable young man who touched the hearts and minds of so many.

“Stephen was an incredible person, someone from whom we can all learn so much,” commented Phil Cavender, General Manager, Virgin Trains.

“His train will be seen the length and breadth of the country from London to Liverpool, Manchester, Scotland and of course both his and our home, the West Midlands. It is only right Stephen’s inspiring story lives on and we are overwhelmed by the support of his family in allowing us name one of our Pendolinos in his honour.”

Unveiling the striking new name was a very proud mum Jane Sutton.

“Standing here today to unveil a nameplate bearing Stephen’s name, on this Virgin Trains Pendolino, makes me an unbelievably proud mum.

“I understand it’s only the fourth time (1) Virgin Trains has named one of its Pendolino trains in honour of an individual. So I do appreciate what a privilege this is. Thousands of people will see this train travelling up and down the West Coast Main Line which will only help to reinforce ‘Stephen’s Story’ and remind people of Stephen’s message - ‘to make the most of every opportunity’.

“Having a train named after him was certainly not on Stephen’s bucket list. But maybe it should be added posthumously?”

After the naming, Pendolino 390002 headed to London and the first of many services that will see the train travel around 300,000 miles in the next twelve months.

**Ends**

1. Previous individuals to be honoured are Chad Varah, Matthew Flinders and Chris Green

**About Stephen’s Story**

Stephen’s Story is a Facebook blog, created by the late Stephen Sutton MBE in January 2013, after he was told his cancer was incurable. Upon hearing the news he decided to create a bucket-list of 46 things he wanted to achieve and posted this list on his Facebook page, Stephen’s Story. Top of the list was to raise £10,000 for Teenage Cancer Trust - a charity he was passionate about as it had supported him throughout his treatment at its three units in Birmingham.

Stephen’s Story went viral when he posted what he thought was his last “thumbs up” photo from his hospital bed, on 22 April, 2014. Already an ambassador and major fundraiser for Teenage Cancer Trust, Stephen captured the public's imagination in an overwhelming way in the following weeks. He inspired people across the world to donate to Teenage Cancer Trust, with the total reaching £3 million by the time Stephen passed away on 14th May, 2014.

Within a few weeks of his passing, the total had risen to £5million.

Since Stephen’s death, his mother Jane has continued to blog via Stephen’ Story, inspiring people to continue their fundraising for Teenage Cancer Trust. In April 2015, Jane fulfilled her promise to Stephen to complete the London Marathon and at the same time raised over £22,500 for Teenage Cancer Trust.

The following month, Jane participated in the 2015 Great Midlands Fun Run, wearing what would have been Stephen’s official run number in 2014 had he lived to participate in the event he’d registered for in February of that year. In July, Jane along with 402 others, jumped out of a plane at 10,000ft to set a new Guinness World Record for the most tandem skydives, from one location, in 24hrs. That event, which generated £264,000, and hundreds of other fundraising events inspired by Stephen & Jane, has now increased Stephen’s fundraising total to over £5.5 million.

Stephen’s fundraising total is the most an individual has ever raised for Teenage Cancer Trust, and he’ll be remembered in the UK and beyond for his positivity, determination and courage.

**About Virgin Trains**

Virgin Trains is the brand name of Virgin Rail Group (VRG), which is owned by Virgin Group (51%) and Stagecoach (49%). Virgin Trains has operated the West Coast passenger train franchise since 1997, serving key UK cities including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. In June 2014 the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded VRG a new franchise until at least April 2017.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. We provide the most frequent long-distance rail service in Europe (London - Manchester and London – Birmingham, both every 20 minutes).

Since 1997, Virgin Trains has introduced over 70 new trains at a cost of £1.5 billion. The service carries more than 32 million passengers a year and Virgin Trains employs approximately 3,290 staff. Virgin Trains customers consistently rate the company as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Passenger Survey (NPS) commissioned by industry watchdog “Passenger Focus”.

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