Press Release

15.3.2016

Photos can be downloaded from: <https://virgintrains.box.com/s/gfl65nhtuy0dni3dfc4dqeq7wgf9i412> (credit Ian Rutherford)

**#LforLewis campaign takes to tracks**

A rail worker whose courageous fight with cancer sparked a social media sensation saw his fundraising campaign take to the tracks today.

Surrounded by friends, family and colleagues at Edinburgh Waverley, Lewis Vaughan was cheered as a Virgin Trains service bearing the #LforLewis hashtag pulled into the station, accompanied by a piper.

Passengers across the country have been encouraged to donate £1 to Marie Curie and post a picture of the train as it passes through their station. It follows on from the #LforLewis campaign which has seen hundreds of pictures posted in support of Lewis on social media channels and raised thousands of pounds for charity.

The link to the fundraising page is here: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-web/fundraiser/displaySomeoneSpecialPage.action?pageUrl=Lewisvaughan>

The 32-year-old, who worked as Customer Service Assistant in Edinburgh with Virgin Trains, was diagnosed with terminal cancer last April. He said he had been “overwhelmed” by the support that he has been given over the last few weeks.

“I’m absolutely blown away, just overwhelmed by the positive and generous human nature of this,” he said.

“I didn’t plan a fundraising campaign, it was just something to keep myself occupied during my illness. There’s an online concept of taking pictures of yourself every day, in the same place and with the same background for a year. I had planned to take a photograph of myself with a different hat on every day and it just evolved from there. I could have put depressing status updates on Facebook but instead I wanted to put up pictures that would be a pick-me-up for myself and other people in the same situation.

“I’m so thankful for everything that everyone has done.”

Lewis travelled to the station from the Marie Curie hospice in Edinburgh where he is being looked after.

In keeping with the theme of the campaign, Lewis wore a baseball cap that was originally worn by actor Russell Crowe during the filming of Robin Hood but then sold to a friend who was an extra in the film.

Colleagues and passers-by had started posting pictures of the #LforLewis train as it left Inverness at 7.55am and journeyed to London.

When it reached Edinburgh at 11.17am, dozens of rail workers, passengers, friends and family members had gathered to cheer on Lewis.

His father, Jim, said: “I want to pay tribute to my son Lewis and the way he’s battled this disease so bravely and with such humour. I also want to thank his colleagues at Virgin Trains for all the work they’ve done.

“Lewis has been through a tough time since last April and he’s handled it well.

“The response to the campaign has been overwhelming and Lewis has been overwhelmed by the whole thing. It started as a modest fundraising exersize but it’s snowballed and attracted national and even international attention.”

Adrian Bayne, a Virgin Trains driver who works with Lewis, added: “Lewis has united a workforce in his courageous fight with cancer. He has been a good friend and it's been an honour to help him with the Marie Curie fundraising.

“None of this could have been done without the tremendous support from the railway family and the members of the public who have backed the #LforLewis campaign.”

Fiona Bushby, a Community Fundraiser at the Marie Curie Hospice in Edinburgh, said: “Lewis’ friends and colleagues have come up with a fantastic campaign to raise awareness and funds for Marie Curie and we’re so grateful for their support. We hope everyone will be inspired to donate and share an #LforLewis.”

Emma Vincent, Virgin Trains’ General Manager for Scotland on the east coast route, said: “Lewis’ warmth and sense of humour is famous in Edinburgh and it’s no surprise that the #LforLewis has taken off and inspired so many people to take part. The support has been brilliant and I hope lots more people across the country get involved and support the good work that Marie Curie are doing.”

The service will operate on Virgin Trains’ east coast route for a further month in a bid to raise more money for the work Marie Curie does to support people with terminal cancer and other illnesses.

Lewis’ campaign coincides with The Great Daffodil Appeal, Marie Curie’s biggest annual fundraising campaign now celebrating its 30th anniversary which encourages everyone to give a donation in return for a daffodil pin during March. Money raised helps Marie Curie Nurses provide care and support to people living with a terminal illness and their families.

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**About Virgin Trains East Coast**

Virgin Trains East Coast is the brand name of InterCity Railways Ltd (ICR), which is owned by Stagecoach Group (90%) and Virgin Group (10%). Virgin Trains East Coast began operating services on the East Coast Main Line on 1 March 2015, serving key UK cities including London, Peterborough, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. In November 2014 the Department for Transport awarded ICR a new franchise until at least 31 March 2023.

Virgin Trains East Coast is committed to delivering a high speed, high quality service with new services, faster and more frequent journeys, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. More than £140m is to be invested in delivering improved service and a more personalised travel experience for customers.

Visit the Virgin Trains East Coast Media Centre at: <http://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/media-centre> for the latest news and images.

Contact the Virgin Trains Press Office: press.desk@virgintrains.co.uk or call us on 0845 000 3333.

**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 34.5 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”.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [www.virgintrains.co.uk/mediaroom](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/mediaroom) - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](http://www.mynewsdesk.com/follow/47939) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333. Company website: [www.virgintrains.co.uk](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/).

**About Marie Curie**

Marie Curie is the UK’s leading charity for people with any terminal illness. The charity helps people living with a terminal illness and their families make the most of the time they have together by delivering expert hands-on care, emotional support, research and guidance. Marie Curie employs more than 2,700 nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals, and with its nine hospices around the UK including Edinburgh and Glasgow, is the largest provider of hospice beds outside the NHS.

For more information visit: [www.mariecurie.org.uk](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/)
Like us at [www.facebook.com/mariecuriesco](http://www.facebook.com/mariecuriesco)
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Marie Curie Support Line 0800 090 2309\*

If you’ve got questions about terminal illness or simply want someone to talk to, call the Marie Curie Support Line for free confidential support and practical information on all aspects of terminal illness**.**\*Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.