**Friday 29 April 2016**

**Virgin Trains signs sponsorship deal with Darlington Football Club**

Virgin Trains has teamed up with Darlington Football Club in a two-year deal which will see the train company feature on all first team and replica kits.

The new home and away kits will appear from next season which gets underway in August.

Martin Gray, Darlington FC Manager, said: “The new shirt looks fantastic and to have such a well-known and successful brand on the kit shirt reinforces the history and tradition of our great Club in attracting such interest.”

The sponsorship deal is the latest initiative by Virgin Trains to support customers and communities on the east coast route since launching in March 2015.

Phillip Peacock, Brand Partnerships Manager for Virgin Trains, said: “It’s an exciting time to be working with Darlington FC. It’s a club with real heritage with an exciting future ahead. Working closely with organisations and people along our route, and being part of the community are important to Virgin Trains.

“We are delighted to be supporting a club that has such strong community links and we’re looking forward to being part of the club’s exciting future.”

The new Avec shirt, featuring the Virgin Trains logo will be available to purchase from the end of May.

Jenny Chapman, MP for Darlington, said: “It’s great to see a national company investing in Darlington FC as the club continues on its journey back to the town and on its rise back up the leagues.”

There are more than 60 Virgin Trains services each day to and from Darlington, offering customers great value fares to destinations across England and Scotland.

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**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.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. This includes a major fleet revamp, smarter stations and exciting new routes. From May 2016, there will be 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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