**Thursday 8 March 2018**

**Virgin Trains Station Announcer pedals past fundraising target for charity bike ride**

* *Keen cyclist and Virgin Trains employee, Iain Robinson, has raised over £6,000 for Railway Children and Rethink Mental Illness*
* *Iain will cycle across India, as part of Ride India 2018*

A member of the Virgin Trains team at Carlisle is taking to two wheels to ride across India, after doubling his fundraising target.

Iain Robinson, 29, who is a Virgin Trains Station Announcer, has begun the 450km journey (called Ride India) after raising £6,000 for Railway Children and Virgin Trains’ charity partner, Rethink Mental Illness.

Since November 2017, Iain has been gearing up for Ride India with support from the Virgin Trains team at Carlisle who have organised various fundraising activities at the station, including a car wash, bake sales and cheering Iain on whilst he cycled 600 miles on a stationary bike at stations along the West Coast Main Line, all to reach the fundraising target of £3,000 by Christmas.

Spurred on by support from his colleagues and Virgin Trains customers along the west coast route, Iain set himself a new challenge to double his original fundraising target to £6,000, which saw him shave off his hair and beard.

Along with three other representatives from Virgin Trains, Iain will pedal nearly 300 miles over six days, tackling a variety of terrains across India.

A cycling enthusiast, Iain cycled over 5,000 miles last year – nearly the same distance from Carlisle to India’s capital, Delhi. But despite clocking up around 100 miles each week on his bike, this is the first time Iain has taken part in a cycling event for charity.

During his time in India, Iain will meet some of the children who are benefitting from the money raised for Railway Children and see how the charity’s ‘Child Friendly Stations’ project is making the railways safer for children forced to live in dangerous environments.

Iain, who lives in Currock, said: “I’ve had a great time raising money and awareness for Railway Children and Rethink Mental Illness and would like to thank people across our west coast route who have supported me in my fundraising efforts. I’ve been overwhelmed by the support and generosity – especially from the people of Carlisle and my colleagues. I can’t wait to start this amazing adventure.”

To support Iain and help raise money for Railway Children and Rethink Mental Illness, visit: <https://www.sponsorme.co.uk/iainrobinson/ride-india.aspx>

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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. We have already invested over £40m in our existing fleet, including £21m refurbishing interiors and £16m towards improving the engines of our trains. Customers can now benefit from 42 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 2016. 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.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room](http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk/) - 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.

**About Rethink Mental Illness**

Rethink Mental Illness supports millions of people affected by mental illness by challenging attitudes and changing lives.

They support almost 60,000 people every year to get through crises, live independently and realise they are not alone. Rethink Mental Illness run 190 mental health services and 130 support groups across England.

Rethink Mental Illness runs an advice and information service for people who are affected by mental illness. Lines are open 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) and the number is 0300 5000 297 or you can email advice@rethink.org

For more information, go to: [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

**About Railway Children**

Railway Children is an international children’s charity working in Africa, India and the UK to reach children fighting for survival on the streets and keep them safe.

Over the last 22 years the charity has protected 300,000 vulnerable children, reaching them before abusers do and keeping them from the violence and exploitation they risk every day. Railway Children works with families and communities, so they can become stronger and safer together and campaigns for governments and policymakers to ensure the system is changed to support them.

Railway Children will not stop fighting until no children ever has to live on the streets.

For more information, visit: [www.railwaychildren.org.uk](http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk)