**14 December 2015**

**Thanks for helping us put Shropshire on the map**

* *Virgin Trains celebrate first year of direct service from Shropshire to London*
* *An additional 30k journeys made in the last twelve months*
* *Sir Richard Branson thanks Salopians for their support*

Virgin Trains today marked the first year of their direct service from Shropshire to London with customers onboard treated to chocolates and cupcakes to help celebrate the birthday.

With journey numbers from Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford Central up by 19%, an additional 30k journeys were made to and from London in the last twelve months.

“It’s incredible to think it has been a year since we started running our direct service from Shropshire to and from London. How time flies when you’re having fun,” commented Sir Richard Branson.

“The response from Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford has exceeded all expectation. We’ve been blown away by your support. So on this first birthday I would like to say a very big thank you from me and of course the team at Virgin Trains who have worked so hard to make it happen.”

“The challenge now is how we build on this in 2016 and showcase what Shropshire has to offer.”

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said:

“It is great news that, one year on, Virgin Trains’ direct services from London to Shrewsbury are proving to be such an overwhelming success. Making journeys better across the UK is at the heart of our plan for passengers, and the popularity of these new services is proof that the UK’s railways are thriving.

“I look forward to seeing how Virgin plans to build on this success in 2016 and ensure that passengers in Shropshire and beyond continue to benefit from this investment.”

ENDS

**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 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 in March 2015, serving key UK cities including London, Peterborough, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. The franchise will last until at least 31 March 2023.

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