**23 October 2015**

**Air Ambulance Appeal Given Massive Boost**

* *Virgin Trains, Direct Rail Services and Railway Magazine donate £15k towards Great North Air Ambulance appeal*
* *Proceeds from charity charter train to Bournemouth*
* *North West Air Ambulance to also benefit by similar amount*

Cumberland News’ SkyCall appeal has been given a massive boost thanks to Direct Rail Services, The Railway Magazine and Virgin Trains. The three joined forces in the August to run a special train from the Chester to Bournemouth with all proceeds destined for charity.

With staff donating their time for free, the near sell out charter attracted over 450 customers, raising in excess of £30k, the figure helped by DRS not charging for their Class 37 locomotives that led the way.

The money will be split equally between two local Air Ambulance services, £15k going to the Great North Air Ambulance Service via the SkyCall Appeal and the same amount donated to the North West Air Ambulance Service.

Staff joined in the fun, dressing as Batman, Superwoman and Flash, to support the paper’s ‘Be a Super Hero for a day’ campaign, before handing over a cheque for £15k at Carlisle Station.

“The Air Ambulance teams are vital to their local communities, a potential life saving support that we might all need at some point,” explained Richard Stanton from Virgin Trains. “It is a cause close to our heart and we are delighted to have been able to help.”

“It was such a fantastic day out and we were overwhelmed by the support we received,” added Kyle Palmer, Marketing and Communications Manager for Direct Rail Services. “With Bournemouth Air Show taking place on the same day we felt it only right that the proceeds be donated to such worthy causes.”

"Supporting the two AAS is vitally important given the remoteness of many of the communities they cover. The Railway Magazine is delighted to be able to make a sizeable donation to this worthwhile cause, and also thanks its readers for their generous support,” added Chris Milner, Editor.

It is the second such venture for the three companies, last year’s trip to North Wales raising £20k for the Royal British Legion.

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.