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**Old meets new as Virgin Trains joins Flying Scotsman’s return to East Coast Main Line**

*Iconic locomotive 60103 Flying Scotsman officially returns to the East Coast Main Line alongside Virgin Trains’ modern day Flying Scotsman liveried train*

Railway history is being made today (Thursday February 25, 2016) as Flying Scotsman officially returns to the East Coast Main Line to launch a season celebrating its return to the track. The celebratory season, which is sponsored by Virgin Trains, starts with today’s inaugural London-to-York run.

The iconic locomotive is being showcased alongside Virgin Trains’ own ‘Flying Scotsman’, complete with its brand new interior, at King’s Cross station before setting off on its five-hour journey to York. The Virgin Trains Flying Scotsman express service takes passengers between London and Edinburgh in just four hours – around half the time of the original steam train. It was unveiled in autumn by Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. Virgin Trains is investing £40m improving its fleet on the East Coast, including new leather seats in first class, new seats in standard, new carpets and lighting.

Virgin’s Flying Scotsman is the first electric train in the fleet to have the new investment and enters service on Thursday. It also showcases the new mood lighting which is being installed in 1st class in all electric powered trains.

David Horne, Managing Director of Virgin Trains on its East Coast route, said: "The Flying Scotsman has an incredible history. It was the first locomotive to reach 100mph in 1934 and, in the pre-war era, it symbolized speed and style - service qualities which remain important to our customers today.

“We’ve embedded these qualities in our own Flying Scotsman which has had its own refresh, including luxury leather seats in First Class, a new red hot look for Standard Class, new carpets and coloured mood lighting. Looking forward to the future, new Virgin trains arrive in 2018 which will make the four-hour Edinburgh-to-London journey the norm - half the time it took the Flying Scotsman to do the journey non-stop before the war.”

Virgin Trains’ fleet upgrade is part of its investment in the London-Edinburgh route, which has just seen it granted permission to run an extra 42 services a week on the route, boosting seat capacity by 22,000.

The original Flying Scotsman will be on display in York until March 6. Virgin Trains runs in excess of 60 services a day to York providing a great way for train enthusiasts to visit the National Railway Museum and see the enormous heritage of the East Coast line. Additionally, Virgin Trains is offering 30 per cent off Advance fares to York to encourage visitors to the region as part of a joint promotion with Visit England.

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**Notes to editors**

The National Railway Museum’s Scotsman Season is sponsored by Virgin Trains. “Starring Scotsman” runs from 25 February – 19 June. “Stunts Speed and Style” and “Service with Style” run from 25 March – 8 May 2016. For the latest conversations about the return of Flying Scotsman, use or track #FlyingScotsman. For photos or stories about Flying Scotsman track #MyScotsman or visit [www.flyingscotsman.org.uk/my-scotsman-story/](http://www.flyingscotsman.org.uk/my-scotsman-story/)

**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 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.