**Monday 27 May**

**Birmingham Pride kicks off Virgin Trains’ #RideWithPride season**

* *Virgin’s Pride Train rode into Birmingham this weekend to launch its #RideWithPride season, as it prepares to journey to festivities in other major cities on west coast route*

Virgin Trains joined tens of thousands of revellers at Birmingham Pride this Bank Holiday weekend for its biggest celebration yet of its diverse workforce, as Pride season gets underway.

Over the weekend, Virgin’s Ride with Pride Train, which is wrapped with the Pride colours, rode into Birmingham for the LGBT+ festival – marking the start of the train operator’s Pride celebrations.

Hundreds of people travelling to Birmingham Pride started the party early onboard the Pride Train – with entertainment from drag queen, Mary Mac, colourful face paint and tasters of rainbow biscuits and Pride cupcakes – before joining the Pride march and dancing the night away in front of the Virgin Trains Main Stage.

Mary Mac hopped onboard a Pendolino-designed float accompanied by Virgin Trains staff to perform for the thousands of festival-goers in the parade.

The two-day celebrations of the LGBT+ community in Birmingham, which is home to Virgin Trains’ Head Office, are the first in a series of celebrations Virgin Trains will mark along its west coast route this summer. The next stop is London. Throughout the Pride season, people travelling to Pride events are encouraged to share their journey using the hashtag #RideWithPride.

Victoria Whitehouse, Inclusion Lead at Virgin Trains, said: “We’re so proud of our diverse workforce at Virgin Trains and taking part in the Birmingham Pride Parade was a real privilege. We can’t wait to party onboard the Pride Train with our staff and customers for Pride celebrations up and down our route on the West Coast Main Line for the rest of the Summer.”

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**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the West Coast inter-city route under the Virgin Trains brand, revolutionising travel on one of the UK’s key rail arteries.

The network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester 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 ahead of other long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme, introducing the industry-leading onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM, and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Virgin Trains operated the East Coast route between March 1, 2015 and June 24, 2018. In that time, we invested £75m to create a more personalised travel experience, including over £40m in the existing fleet. Customers have benefitted from 48 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 2015.

Working together, the partnership railway of the public and private sectors has published a long-term plan, called *In Partnership for Britain’s Prosperity,* to change and improve Britain’s railway. The plan will secure almost £85bn of additional economic benefits to the country whilst enabling further investment and improvement, and contains four commitments which will see rail companies: strengthen our economic contribution to the country; improve customers’ satisfaction; boost the communities we serve; and, create more and better jobs in rail. For more information go to [Britain Runs on Rail](http://www.britainrunsonrail.co.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAr_TQBRB5EiwAC_QCq9OA-y_Al1Voo4ZvYjMvSBs86kuvjZLD8MfFvnOUU9UeVZ1T5CObLRoCasIQAvD_BwE).

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