**Virgin Trains breaks Scottish passenger records a year after west coast closure**

* *Glasgow-London passenger numbers rebound after Lamington bridge closure*
* *Record punctuality levels, low fares and customer service improvements drive growth*
* *More passengers choosing train over plane on route*

Virgin Trains has broken new records for passengers crossing the border on its west coast route, a year after it was closed during floods.

As the intercity operator celebrates 20 years of operating the west coast route, new figures show it carried 294,000 customers between Glasgow and London over a 24-week period to March 31, an increase of 28% compared to the same period two years ago.

The bounce back has coincided with punctuality reaching its highest ever level since privatisation and the introduction of Virgin’s revolutionary new onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM.

And an increase in availability of £30 fares between Glasgow and London has been credited with driving more customers choosing train over plane on the route.

It is a marked turnaround from the start of 2016, when the West Coast Main Line was closed to all cross-border trains for seven weeks when heavy rainfall eroded the supporting structure of Lamington Viaduct, near Abington.

Anna Doran, Virgin Trains’ General Manager for Anglo-Scottish services, said: “The closure of our west coast route at Lamington on New Year’s Eve last year was a blow but we’ve worked really hard to get our service back on track. Service innovations such as BEAM, improved punctuality and more low fares have helped drive strong customer satisfaction ratings and attract more people to rail.”

Following the closure of Lamington viaduct, Virgin Trains worked with the ScotRail Alliance to put a replacement service in place, using the rail route via Kilmarnock and Dumfries, while Network Rail worked to repair the bridge.

The number of Virgin Trains that arrive on time has increased by eight percentage points to 89% over the last 20 years thanks to working with Network Rail and other industry partners.

Over the last year, Virgin Trains has doubled the booking horizon from the industry standard of three months and made M-tickets available across all its west coast services.

In June last year, Virgin launched BEAM, the industry-leading app that allows customers to stream more than 200 hours of entertainment including Hollywood films, box sets and documentaries straight to their device.

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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 £21m to completely revamp our existing fleet and customers can now benefit from 42 additional services (22,000 extra seats) per week between Edinburgh and London. 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.

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