**Thursday 17 December**

**Virgin Trains supports Carlisle United fans hit by Storm Desmond**

Virgin Trains is offering free travel for Carlisle United fans going to Preston to watch their team on Saturday 19 December. The fans have been forced to travel for what should have been a home game because Carlisle’s ground is still flooded after Storm Desmond.

Not deterred by the recent weather, Cumbrians are travelling in numbers for the match against Notts County, which is now being played at Deepdale stadium – the home of Preston North End.

Virgin Trains, who sponsor Carlisle United, is working with the club and Reays Coaches to offer additional help for fans wanting to see their team.

Fans that have not yet arranged transport can travel for free on Virgin Trains services between Carlisle and Preston on Saturday for the match.

500 train tickets will be available for fans from 2pm on Friday 18th December.

Supporters wishing to travel with Virgin Trains will need to show their match ticket at Carlisle station on Friday 18th December to be allocated a ticket in advance for a specific Virgin Trains service. Train tickets will be available on a first come, first served basis at the station.

Anna Doran, General Manager of Anglo Scot at Virgin Trains, said: “Cumbrians aren’t beaten by the weather and here at Virgin Trains we share their spirit. Storm Desmond has not only affected our service but also our people, who live and work in the region, so we were really keen to lend a helping hand to the community and the Carlisle United fans with their enforced journey to Preston. We want as many fans to travel to the match as possible and cheer the Blues on this Saturday.”

Phil King, Sales and Marketing director with Carlisle United Football Club, said: “Both of our main travel partners have been fantastic with the help they’ve given us in getting our fans to this game, and we would like to thank them for their proactive approach. Key to us when rearranging these fixtures was doing everything we could to get as many fans as possible there with us. Gestures like this have made that task much easier. This particular offer has taken time to pull together, due to the logistics involved on an already busy travel day for Virgin Trains, but I’m sure it will be very well received by those supporters who are still looking at the options available.”

Carlisle United fans who have already purchased their train tickets for Saturday 19 December will be fully reimbursed for their journey. Those who have purchased tickets for travel are advised to claim a refund from their point of purchase.

ENDS

**Notes to Editors**

Fans claiming a refund will need to return to the point of purchase with the booking reference for their journey, along with proof of a ticket for the match against Notts County.

Tickets are available on Friday 18 December only, on a first-come, first-served basis from Carlisle station. They are available on the following services on Saturday 19 December:

**Carlisle – Preston**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Departs Carlisle | Arrives at Preston |
| 08:07 | 09:15 |
| 08:49 | 09:56 |
| 09:49 | 10:56 |
| 10:49 | 11:56 |
| 11:11 | 12:14 |
| 11:49 | 12:56 |
| 12:08 | 13:15 |
| 12:49 | 13:56 |
| 13:11 | 14:14 |

**Preston – Carlisle**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Departs Preston | Arrives at Carlisle |
| 17:53 | 19:04 |
| 18:41 | 19:49 |
| 18:53 | 20:00 |
| 19:41 | 20:49 |
| 20:41 | 21:50 |

Fans planning to collect or purchase their match tickets at Deepdale will need to show proof of purchase of their match ticket or a CUFC membership card.

**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.