**3 OCTOBER 2016**

**World’s smallest exhibition on display at King’s Cross celebrates ‘Icons of the East Coast’**

* *Micro sculptures showcase evolution of passenger rail travel from Flying Scotsman to the upcoming Virgin Azuma*
* *Exhibition staged to mark one hundred weeks until Virgin Azuma comes into service*

Commuters were invited to feast their eyes on intricate micro-sculptures of locomotive ‘Icons of the East Coast’ through the ages, which are on display in the world’s smallest exhibition at King’s Cross station, London, for today only (October 3).

The beautifully crafted micro-sculptures showcase the evolution of British passenger rail travel, from the early days of Flying Scotsman right through to the Virgin Azuma, which is set to revolutionise UK travel when it arrives on the east coast in 2018.

Visitors to the free exhibition used magnifying glasses to view the tiny and detailed sculptures, which are near impossible to appreciate with the naked eye. Visitors were able to feast their eyes on the microscopic steam engine of Flying Scotsman, in service from 1923, the windows and doors on the Virgin Flying Scotsman, launched in 2015, and the advanced, sleek lines of the Virgin Azuma, coming in one hundred weeks time.

When it arrives, the Virgin Azuma will be one of the most advanced trains on the UK’s rail network, and will embody the customer-centric approach which Virgin Trains is famous for.

David Horne, Managing Director at Virgin Trains on the east coast said: “The Virgin Azuma is set to be one of the most state of the art trains on the network when it arrives in 2018. What better way to celebrate one hundred weeks to go than to showcase its elegance alongside other landmark trains with these stunning intricate sculptures. We think they are a fantastic way of highlighting the progression of rail travel in Great Britain through the years, while also looking forward to the future and the coming of Azuma, the next and, arguably, most exciting, chapter in the wonderful story of rail.”

Paul Kirkman, Museum Director at National Railway Museum commented: “The National Railway Museum is home to over 300 years of rail history and we’re always looking for interesting ways to make this history come to life. We’re delighted to see Flying Scotsman in this exhibition, which is a fun way to showcase to the public a snapshot of the incredible advancements in passenger train travel over the ages.”

The exhibition closes at 7pm today.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

About Virgin Azuma

* With 65 trains providing an extra 12,200 seats for a new and expanded timetable, the fleet of Virgin Azumas will increase capacity into King’s Cross by 28 per cent during peak time
* Faster acceleration: The Azumas will accelerate more quickly, slicing up to 22 minutes off East Coast journeys and making 4hr London-Edinburgh journeys, and 2hr London-Leeds journeys, the norm. They will accelerate from 0-125mph at least a minute quicker than the current fleet
* New direct services: The faster journeys will make direct routes to new destinations such as Middlesbrough and Huddersfield possible, as well as a big increase in through services to places such as Harrogate and Lincoln
* Greater comfort: The trains will have some of the best leg-room on the rail network, as well as ergonomically designed seats in both first and standard
* Virgin’s unique feel: Both the interior and the exterior of the new fleet with have that distinctive Virgin atmosphere
* Lower emissions: The trains will be lighter and more energy efficient, making them some of the most environmentally friendly in the UK
* Improved facilities: The trains will have faster and free Wi-Fi, an improved traffic-light reservation system, power sockets for every seat and more overhead luggage space
* Buffet cars: An onboard shop is a key part of the experience for passengers

**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.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk](http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk/) - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](http://www.mynewsdesk.com/follow/47939) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

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