**Friday 24 August**

**Virgin Trains invites railway fan to ride with pride to Manchester**

* *Pendolino train adorned with Pride colours travels to Manchester for city’s Pride celebrations*

Virgin Trains has invited a railway fan making his first visit to Manchester Pride on board its specially decorated #RideWithPride train, as it transports hundreds of visitors to the city for a long weekend of celebrations.

Chris Tomson, who is from Trent Vale in Stoke-on-Trent, made his journey to Manchester on the Pride train, which boldly displays the Pride colours and highlights Virgin Trains’ passion for celebrating diversity.

A self-confessed railway fan, Chris, had been eagerly awaiting a sighting of Virgin’s Pride train after first seeing it on social media. He snapped it whilst waiting on the platform at Stoke-on-Trent station earlier this month.

After seeing Chris’s post on Instagram, the Virgin Trains Social Media Team invited him to join customers and Virgin’s own people to travel in style to Manchester on the Pride train.

This morning the train arrived into Manchester in a joyful celebration of the LGBTQ+ community. There was a true party atmosphere on board the train where everyone got involved in games/a quiz, applying colourful face paint, sampling delicious Pride biscuits and waving #RideWithPride flags.

A photo booth and props were available for customers to post photos of their journey to Manchester using the #RideWithPride hashtag.

Speaking of his opportunity to ride to Manchester Pride with Virgin Trains, Chris, 28, said: “I couldn’t believe it when Virgin invited me onto their Pride train. I only uploaded the photos of the Pendolino to Instagram to show my followers, as I love trains that have unique liveries. To be invited on the train was a real honour and one I knew I had to accept – especially as this is the first time I’m going to Manchester Pride. I’m really excited to experience the city’s celebrations and I’m sure it will be a day I’ll never forget.”

Victoria Whitehouse, Inclusion Lead at Virgin Trains, who hosted Chris on the Pride Train, said: “At Virgin Trains we’re always looking at ways to surprise and delight our customers and we’re happy we did just that with Chris. We couldn’t wait to welcome Chris on board our Pride train and make his first trip to Manchester Pride one to remember. We’re really proud of supporting a diverse workforce at Virgin Trains and to bring our customers and our people together to celebrate this is fantastic. We’ve had a great time on our journey to Manchester and we’re sure it helped get everyone in the spirit of Pride before they enjoy the city’s celebrations this weekend.”

Ends

**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).

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room](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.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333.