**Monday 12 December**

**Virgin Trains opens new Bike Hub at Preston station**

Today Virgin Trains officially opened its new Bike Hub at Preston station, transforming the facilities for cyclists at the station.

Designed to enhance the experience for customers travelling to and from Preston station by bicycle, the Bike Hub offers a secure space for up to 200 cycles – making it the largest on the West Coast Mainline. It also features a specialist cycling shop, managed by a family-run business, Leisure Lakes Bikes, who are based in Preston. The shop offers bike maintenance services, bike hire and access to a wide range of cycling products including bikes, clothing, parts and accessories.

Working in partnership with the Department for Transport (DfT); Lancashire County Council; Leisure Lakes Bikes; Preston City Council; and the Rail Delivery Group; Virgin Trains created the Bike Hub using funding from the DfT’s Cycle Rail Fund.

Virgin Trains, who are a member of British Cycling’s Choose Cycling network, have invested nearly £500,000, as part of its latest scheme to improve facilities for cyclists on the West Coast Mainline.

Mark Hendrick MP for Preston officially opened the Bike Hub in front of guests from the city’s cycling community.

Shirley Ross, Virgin Trains Station Manager at Preston, said: “At Virgin Trains we want to make our customer’s end-to-end journeys seamless and supporting cyclists is a great way to achieve this. With a growing cycling community in Preston, we want to make it easier for cyclists to integrate a bike into their rail journey. We’re really proud of the Bike Hub and hope it encourages more people to get on two wheels before and after they board our trains.”

Jimmy Khan, Head of Sport & Leisure at Preston City Council and Chair of Preston Cycling Forum, said: “Preston City Council welcomes this exciting opportunity for cyclists, which will provide them with the comfort that their bikes will be kept safe and, if required, maintenance for them too. What is particularly pleasing is that those who wish will be able to hire bikes to get about the city. Virgin Trains should be congratulated on having the vision to develop this Bike Hub in Preston.”

Lucy Noy, Manager of Leisure Lakes Bikes at Preston station, said: “We’re really excited to be a part of this project that is continuing to improve cycling in Preston. Our new bike store will give people the opportunity to travel to Preston and hire bikes right from the train station, so they can enjoy the Guild Wheel and surrounding bike paths. We’ve seen the government-backed Cycle to Work scheme get lots of people switching from driving to cycling for their local commute. It’s not only helping the environment by getting cars off the road but also saves money and improves fitness on the daily commute. We’re confident Virgin Trains’ Bike Hub will increase the number of people cycling to work, as the 200 spaces give commuters a safe and easy place to secure their bike during the day.”

The Bike Hub is located near to the entrance on Butler Street and offers direct access to Platform 7.

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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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Press Office: 0845 000 3333.