**Journeys soar on Virgin’s Blackpool route**

* *Record journeys on Virgin’s Blackpool route one year after introducing iconic Pendolino trains*

Virgin Trains has today revealed figures for record journeys taken on its Blackpool route one year after introducing electric Pendolino services, which strengthened connections to and from the resort.

Latest figures from Virgin Trains show over 150,000 journeys have been made on the 36 Pendolino services that launched in May 2018 – with 34% (51,000) made between Blackpool and London Euston. Adding journeys taken on the original services, a total of 56,000 journeys have been made between the resort and the capital – a record number since Virgin Trains first reintroduced a direct link in December 2014.

The electric services, which launched following Network Rail’s work to electrify the line between Blackpool and Preston, have also generated growth in local journeys in Lancashire – with 7,000 journeys between Preston and the seaside resort over the last year.

Following the boost in services, journeys on Virgin’s Blackpool route have increased by 1600% since May 2017 – when Virgin Trains only served Blackpool with two direct services a day Monday – Friday.

The inter-city operator now operates eight direct services each weekday and five services on a Saturday between Blackpool and London. A direct service from Birmingham on Saturdays also offers the West Midlands a direct service to Blackpool, contributing to the growth of tourism and the local economy along the West Coast Main Line. To celebrate one year of Pendolino services, customers will be treated to Blackpool Rock – made by local SME, Coronation Confectionery Promotions - and birthday cupcakes.

Zina Nomicas, General Manager at Virgin Trains, said: “We are delighted to have reached another milestone on our Blackpool route – celebrating one year of our electric Pendolino services, which have helped to transform and strengthen connections to and from the town. We have enjoyed serving the resort for nearly five years and would like to thank the people of Blackpool for their continued support as we announce record journeys on the route. The increasing popularity of our services illustrates travelling by train is a great way to reach Blackpool, so it’s the perfect excuse to enjoy a short break to the seaside resort this summer.”

Paul Maynard, MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys, said: “Having fought so hard to deliver this increase in service I hope passenger numbers will continue to grow. I am pleased that Virgin Trains has continued to show faith in Blackpool and worked so hard to make these new services a success.

“There is no doubt of the benefit to our local economy of the direct link to London and other new markets and believe there is a strong case for innovation and the delivery of further direct services.”

Cllr Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader of Blackpool Council, said: “This is great news and are delighted more and more visitors are using this city to seaside direct link to experience our fantastic beaches, attractions, shows and world-class events.”

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.