**Saturday 7 December**

**Virgin Trains lays on a special surprise for young railway fan Edan**

* *Little railway fan experiences the world of Virgin Trains, following father’s letter declaring favourite train operator has inspired his son*

A young train enthusiast was given a special surprise by Virgin Trains staff after his father penned an open letter to Sir Richard Branson about his son’s love for the railway operator.

Little Edan Sargent was invited to Carlisle station as treat when the letter to the Virgin Trains founder went viral on social media. And to mark his day, he was presented with a train nameplate to make it an unforgettable experience.

The six-year-old, who according to his dad loves Virgin Trains more than anything in the world, was invited to a behind-the-scenes tour after Virgin Trains colleagues became aware of the letter and discovered his love for the long-distance operator.

The youngster, who lives near Dumfries, has regularly visited Carlisle with his parents since the age of three to watch Virgin Trains services pass through the station. As a result, Edan knows the names of all 56 Pendolino trains and loves them all. But has a soft spot for the one named Clic Sargent, which shares his surname.

The railway fan was welcomed into the world of Virgin Trains at Blackpool North and Carlisle stations where he got to explore the driver’s cab, dispatch a train, make station announcements and enjoy a First Class journey on a Pendolino.

Being a familiar face at Carlisle, the Virgin Trains team invited him to enjoy the station’s Railway Day before finally presenting him with a special keepsake – the Clic Sargent nameplate.

Zina Nomicas, General Manager at Virgin Trains, said: “At Virgin Trains we like to surprise and delight, so knowing how much our trains have inspired Edan we wanted to welcome him into our world with an experience he’ll never forget. We had a brilliant time spoiling Edan and giving him an insight into the railway, which is a big part of his life. It was lovely to see him bursting with excitement and we look forward to seeing him again soon on our West Coast route.”

Edan’s father, Nik Sargent, said: “Since the age of three, Edan has been devoted to these trains and we’ve been devoted to travelling the length and breadth of the country to help him see them. Virgin Trains created a once in a lifetime experience for Edan that he will indeed remember for a lifetime. They handed over a part of their legacy that will keep their history alive and he will treasure it forever.”

ENDS

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin have worked 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. After operating this route for 22 years, Virgin Trains is due to hand over to First Trenitalia on December 8,2019.

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.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room](http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk/) - for the latest news, images and videos.

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