**Tuesday 1st September**

**Virgin Trains’£20m station investment programme creates 100 new jobs**

Virgin Trains is investing over £20m to improve stations across the West Coast Main Line, enhancing customer experience and creating 100 new jobs.

New Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) will be the main change. The number of TVMs at many stations will increase to meet the growing demand from customers purchasing tickets in this way.

Automatic Ticket Gates (ATGs) will be installed at 8 stations as part of the project. Stockport was the first station to have ATGs installed last month. Stoke-on-Trent, Crewe, Rugby, Coventry, Birmingham New Street and International and Manchester Piccadilly will follow in the coming months.

Coventry, Crewe, Stafford, Preston and Stoke-on-Trent stations will also benefit from more significant changes, including improved retail space.

The project has created 100 new jobs, in the form of “Welcome Hosts” who will deliver improved customer service to people visiting stations. “Welcome Hosts” have already started work at Stockport, Crewe and Manchester Piccadilly.

“These improvements are driven by our customers. We seek out comprehensive feedback and we have incorporated this information into our plans.” explained Steve Tennant, Executive Director, Customer Service for Virgin Trains. “As a business it is important we continue to listen to our passengers. We also feel really positive about creating new jobs through our “Welcome Host” team who will be there to meet and greet customers, acting as ambassadors for their towns and cities. They can’t wait to get started.”

The enhancement work at Crewe and Preston has already started with work at the remaining stations expected to start within the next few months.

ENDS

**Editors’ Notes**

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| **Station**\*managed by Virgin Trains | **TVMs** | **ATGs** | **New Jobs** |
| Birmingham International\* |  YES | YES | 7 |
| Birmingham New Street |  YES | YES | 32 |
| Carlisle\* | YES |   |   |
| Coventry\* |  YES | YES | 7 |
| Crewe\* |  YES | YES | 7 |
| Edinburgh | YES |   |   |
| Glasgow | YES |   |   |
| Lancaster\* | YES |   |   |
| Liverpool | YES |   |   |
| Macclesfield\* | YES |   |   |
| Manchester Piccadilly | YES | YES | 26 |
| Oxenholme\* | YES |   |   |
| Penrith\* | YES |   |   |
| Preston\* | YES |  |  |
| Rugby\* | YES | YES | 7 |
| Runcorn\* | YES |   |   |
| Stafford\* | YES |  |  |
| Stockport\* | YES | YES | 7 |
| Stoke-on-Trent\* |  YES | YES | 7 |
| Warrington\* | YES |   |   |
| Wigan\* | YES |   |   |
| Wilmslow | YES |   |   |
| Wolverhampton\* | YES |  |  |

Additional notes:

Stafford – The access to platform 1 will be widened to improve customer flow at the station.

Preston – Enhancements include improvements to the existing ticket desk area and the construction of a new enclosure which will allow a bank of Ticket Vending Machines to be created. Phase 2 of the scheme will see a newly created entrance serving Butler St by platform 7, together with the development of retail opportunities. This is all with a view to improving customer flow at the station.

Stockport - The Customer Information Point will move platforms to make it easier for customers.

Crewe – Creation of a new ticket desk area, and also enclosure for a bank of Ticket vending machines, creation of new retail opportunities

Stoke on Trent – Re- opening of the historic main entrance to the station. This will allow the Automatic Ticket gates and Ticket Vending Machines, to be constructed within this entrance serving platform 2. ATG’s and TVM.s are also included at platform 1

**About Virgin Trains**

Virgin Trains is the brand name of Virgin Rail Group (VRG), which is owned by Virgin Group (51%) and Stagecoach (49%). Virgin Trains has operated the West Coast passenger train franchise since 1997, serving key UK cities including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. In June 2014 the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded VRG a new franchise until at least April 2017.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. We provide the most frequent long-distance rail service in Europe (London - Manchester and London – Birmingham, both every 20 minutes).

Since 1997, Virgin Trains has introduced over 70 new trains at a cost of £1.5 billion. The service carries more than 34.5 million passengers a year and Virgin Trains employs approximately 3,290 staff.

Virgin Trains customers consistently rate the company as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Passenger Survey (NPS) commissioned by industry watchdog “Passenger Focus”.

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