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**Virgin Trains urges Scottish football fans to plan ahead for England match**

* *14,000 fans expected to travel from Scotland for Wembley match*
* *Virgin Trains expecting busy services between Thursday and Saturday*
* *Customers urged to plan ahead and arrive early for their train*

Virgin Trains is urging football fans to plan ahead as record numbers travel to London by rail for the Scotland-England match this Friday.

Customers are advised to book ahead and arrive early as queuing systems will be in place to cope with the high levels of demand.

Virgin Trains will ensure there are additional staff onboard and at stations and is working closely with the British Transport Police to ensure that customers have a safe, enjoyable journey.

Hundreds of additional seats have been added on services between Glasgow and London by replacing 9-car with 11-car Pendolino trains and two relief services have been provided, one on Friday at 09:30 and returning on Saturday at 12:34.

On the east coast route, the introduction of 42 extra Edinburgh-London services per week in May has also bolstered capacity. An additional London King’s Cross to York train has been provided at 23:19 on Friday.

Despite these efforts, but both routes are expected to be stretched by the very high levels of demand.

Trains leaving Glasgow and Edinburgh on Friday morning are expected to be particularly busy, as will return services on Saturday from Euston and King’s Cross stations. There will be no Virgin Trains services returning to Scotland after the match on Friday night, given the 19:45pm kick-off time.

A spokesperson for Virgin Trains said: “We’re expecting to see thousands of football fans travel from Scotland over the weekend to enjoy the big match. We’re asking for their patience and strongly suggest allowing more time than usual when arriving at the station and booking ahead if possible. We’re working closely with British Transport Police to ensure that all our customers have a safe and enjoyable journey.”

Superintendent Alex Carson, who is co-ordinating the BTP operation, said: “We want fans to enjoy themselves and for everyone to have a safe and peaceful journey, but we will have a highly visible policing presence to ensure any anti-social behaviour or crime is swiftly nipped in the bud.

“If you are travelling over the next few days, you will see more of our officers at the main hub stations and carrying out more on-train patrols to make sure everyone using the network at this busy time can do so safely and securely.

“However, passengers are the eyes and ears of the network and I’d encourage anyone who does have any concerns while travelling on the railway to report them to us.”

Anyone who wants to report crime or antisocial behaviour on the railway should do so by texting 61016 or by calling 0800 40 50 40 – in an emergency always call 999.

ENDS

**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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