**4.4.2016**

**Virgin Trains injects style into First Class travel with Edinburgh Lounge makeover**

* New space to meet, work and unwind in stylish environment
* Follows 6% increase in First Class passenger numbers over last year
* Edinburgh Lounge open to Virgin Trains and Caledonian Sleeper customers

Hearts director Ann Budge has opened Virgin Trains’ First Class Lounge at Edinburgh Waverley following a root-and-branch makeover.

The esteemed businesswoman was one of the first to sample the new-look Lounge, which provides a stylish environment to hold meetings, work and unwind before getting on a train.

Virgin has undertaken a major overhaul of eight First Class Lounges on its east coast network, doubling seating capacity, following growth of 6% in First Class travel on the route.

Refurb of the Edinburgh Lounge has been undertaken along with Caledonian Sleeper and will be used by customers of both operators.

Ann Budge, the CEO, chairwoman and owner of Hearts of Midlothian Football Club, said: “I’m delighted to have been asked to open Virgin Trains’ refurbished First Class Lounge.

“It is vital that Edinburgh continues to attract businesspeople to the capital, so that it can further enhance its reputation as one of the most enterprising cities in the United Kingdom.

“Providing top class facilities, such as this, will go a long way towards helping establish Edinburgh as Scotland’s gateway to the business community.”

A splash of red has been introduced into the innovative designs, which include new meeting points, desks for customers to work at and relaxation spots to unwind. Free wif and powerpoints have been provided throughout, along with soft drinks, snacks and newspapers.

The investment will help Virgin Trains drive further growth in First Class travel among business people who can prepare for meetings onboard and leisure passengers treating themselves to a luxury journey.

The latest improvements come after Virgin Trains embarked on a £21m refurbishment of its trains, including putting leather seat covers in First Class.

Lounges in King’s Cross, Edinburgh, Leeds, Newcastle, Berwick, Doncaster, Darlington, Berwick, Darlington and Wakefield have all been refurbished.

David Horne, Virgin Trains’ managing director for the east coast route, said: “This is the latest investment that will help us lift the experience for our First Class customers.

“We know that being able to relax ahead of a journey or prepare for that key business meeting is one of the things that our customers really value. We’re confident that providing some Virgin style to these Lounges will help us to meet this increasing demand for First Class travel.”

Ryan Flaherty, Caledonian Sleeper's Guest Services Director said:  “The completely refurbished facilities in the first class lounge at Edinburgh Waverley will provide a greatly enhanced experience for Caledonian Sleeper guests arriving into and departing from the Capital, with the new shower facilities giving our guests the best possible start to the day.

“We are delighted to have worked with our colleagues at Virgin on the redesign and with the resulting success of this project, delivering a tangible benefit for our guests in advance of our new rolling stock being introduced in 2018.”

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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. This includes a major fleet revamp, smarter stations and exciting new routes. From May 2016, there will be 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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