

## Contacts:

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**Virgin unveils the Virgin Azuma!**

Livery and name for Virgin’s new fleet of East Coast trains unveiled for first time

Azumas will revolutionise East Coast travel from 2018

Customers will experience faster journeys, quicker acceleration and better comfort

Virgin Trains has unveiled the first of its new fleet of trains in a ceremony at King’s Cross attended by Sir Richard Branson. Set to revolutionise travel on the East Coast from 2018, the Virgin Azuma will be one of the most advanced trains on the UK’s rail network, and will embody the customer-centric approach which Virgin Trains is famous for.

Literally translated as “East” in Japanese, the VirginAzuma pays homage to the new train’s lineage and to the East Coast route. With 65 trains providing an extra 12,200 seats for a new and expanded timetable, the fleet of Virgin Azumas will increase capacity into King’s Cross by 28 per cent during peak time.

Whilst the trains will initially reach speeds of up to 125mph, Virgin Trains has today announced the creation of a cross-industry working group, including Network Rail, to investigate the potential for the East Coast route to enable their operation at 140mph.

Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, said: “The state-of-the-art Intercity Express trains heading to Virgin will transform rail travel for passengers between London, the north east and Scotland. These new trains, combined with Virgin’s exciting plans for the franchise, will provide more services, more seats, and faster journeys, helping to place passengers at the heart of the railway.”

Sir Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group, said, “This is a hugely important moment for passengers on the East Coast. A line which has witnessed the historic Flying Scotsman and Mallard will now see passenger services transformed with the UK’s most advanced long distance trains. Our customers on the West Coast have already seen what Virgin can bring to train travel and how the Pendolinos have made a huge difference to speed and comfort. Our new fleet of Azumas will bring a similar transformation to the East Coast, and propel one of the UK’s most prestigious lines into the 21st century.”

The new trains will also have:

Faster acceleration: The Azumas will accelerate more quickly, slicing up to 22 minutes off East Coast journeys and making 4hr London-Edinburgh journeys, and 2hr London-Leeds journeys, the norm. They will accelerate from 0-125mph around a minute quicker than the current fleet1

New direct services: The faster journeys will make direct routes to new destinations such as Middlesbrough and Huddersfield possible, as well as a big increase in through services to places such as Harrogate and Lincoln

Greater comfort: The trains will have some of the best leg-room on the rail network, as well as ergonomically designed seats in both first and standard

Virgin’s unique feel: Both the interior and the exterior of the new fleet with have that distinctive Virgin atmosphere

Lower emissions: The trains will be lighter and more energy efficient, making them some of the most environmentally friendly in the UK

Improved facilities: The trains will have faster and free Wi-Fi, an improved traffic-light reservation system2, power sockets for every seat and more overhead luggage space

Buffet cars: An onboard shop is a key part of the experience for passengers

David Horne, Managing Director of Virgin Trains on the East Coast, said, “Since Virgin Trains launched services on the East Coast in 2015 we have committed more than £40m to improving our existing fleet for passengers. As part of this we’re bringing in brand new interiors with new seats in both first and standard, new carpets and mood-lighting – a first for trains in the UK. I’m delighted that today we have been able to showcase how that transformation will continue, with the first of our brand-new Azumas alongside one of our existing spruced-up fleet. We’ve already celebrated the return of the restored Flying Scotsman to the route and now we are able to celebrate the stars of tomorrow, count down to 2018, and usher in a new era for the East Coast.”

The Azumas are being made by Hitachi at their rail vehicle manufacturing facility in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham – meaning the Virgin Trains fleet is being made on the East Coast for the East Coast.

Karen Boswell, Managing Director of Hitachi Rail Europe, said, “Hitachi has a long and proud heritage producing top quality, high-speed trains, going back to 1964 when our first ‘Bullet Train’ entered passenger service in Japan. We are, therefore, thrilled to be delivering the trains which from 2018 will transform the journey experience for tens of thousands of Virgin Trains customers travelling between London and Scotland along the East Coast. We are doubly proud that these new trains for the East Coast are being manufactured right here in the UK, creating some 730 new long-term jobs, engineering careers and apprenticeships.”

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Notes to editors:

1) Azumas will reach 125mph in around 4 and a half minutes, compared with around 5 minutes 10 seconds for our current electric-powered trains and nearly 7 minutes for our current diesel-powered trains.

2) Traffic light reservation system: If the indicator is red, the seat is reserved. If the indicator is amber, the seat is currently available but has been reserved from a station later in the journey. If the indicator is green, the seat is available through to the train’s final destination.

The train that was unveiled at King’s Cross this morning is a test train which has measuring equipment on board rather than seats. An artist’s impression of what passengers might expect on board the new trains is available on the Virgin Trains (East Coast) media site.

Virgin Trains highlighted improvements for the East Coast:

Investment in current fleet - £16m on new engines, £21m on new interiors including new seats in standard, leather seats in first, new carpets and mood lighting

New routes - Sunderland and Stirling now have new direct services

Edinburgh - London improvements – 42 extra services a week from mid-May, meaning 22,000 extra seats with tickets on sale 24wks in advance

Catering – new first class menus, Prosecco and ‘Hop on Board’ ale, and plans for at-seat ordering

Lounges – refurbished first class lounges along the length of the route opening this month

Wi-Fi – free Wi-Fi coming to our managed stations over the next few months, as well as free onboard Wi-Fi to all customers who book through the Virgin Trains (East Coast) website

Fares – 10% cut in standard anytime long-distance fares to and from London, with those fares also frozen in the January fares review

Parking – extra 500 spaces being provided at our stations as part of a £25m improvement plan, which will also see a 50% increase in cycle facilities

New timetable – Virgin will introduce a completely new timetable including new destinations such as Middlesbrough and Huddersfield, more frequent services for places like Bradford and Lincoln, faster regular journeys such as 2hrs London-Leeds and 4hrs London-Edinburgh and an increase in fleet capacity of 12,200 seats

Accessibility - investment in disability improvements, including induction loop and tactile station maps

Technology - interactive touchscreen information points at major stations, portable technology for staff and a move to m-ticketing and the end of the orange ticket

Community engagement – apprenticeships for young people, graduate and ex-offenders programmes, dedicated communities fund, support for small businesses and regeneration in disadvantaged areas

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.​

**About Hitachi, Ltd.**

Hitachi, Ltd. (TSE: 6501), headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, delivers innovations that answer society’s challenges with our talented team and proven experience in global markets. The company’s consolidated revenues for fiscal 2014 (ended March 31, 2015) totaled 9,761 billion yen ($81.3 billion). Hitachi is focusing more than ever on the Social Innovation Business, which includes power & infrastructure systems, information & telecommunication systems, construction machinery, high functional materials & components, automotive systems, healthcare and others. For more information on Hitachi, please visit the company's website at [http://www.hitachi.com](http://www.hitachi.com/).

**About Hitachi Rail Europe Ltd.**

Hitachi Rail Europe Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hitachi Europe, Ltd. and is headquartered in London, UK.

Hitachi Rail Europe is a total railway system supplier offering rolling stock, traction equipment, signalling, traffic management systems and maintenance depots.

Hitachi draws on many years of experience as a leading supplier of high-speed trains such as the Shinkansen (bullet train) for the Japanese and international markets. In Europe, Hitachi Rail Europe’s first rolling stock contract was to deliver a fleet of 29 Class 395 trains, the first domestic high-speed train in the UK, which are maintained at Hitachi’s state-of-the-art depot in Ashford, Kent. As part of the British Department for Transport’s Intercity Express Programme, Hitachi Rail Europe will replace the UK’s fleet of intercity trains, and will establish a new rolling stock manufacturing facility in Newton Aycliffe, UK for this purpose. The trains will be maintained and serviced in a number of new maintenance depots along the Great Western Main Line and the East Coast Main Line.

For more information about the company, please visit: [www.Hitachirail-eu.com](http://www.hitachirail-eu.com/) .