

# Go green with the trains, not planes

Virgin Trains are polishing up their green credentials. They say Pendolino trains emit 76% less CO<sub>2</sub> than the same trip by car or plane.

They launched a major environmental marketing campaign in March. Virgin Trains tempted domestic flyers with thousands of free First Class train tickets.

In a campaign to get people off domestic flights and on to more environmentally friendly trains, it offered 12,500 air passengers free train tickets.

Actors dressed as doctors and nurses dispensed promotional Plane Relief Plus "prescriptions" over a two-week period in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow.

Air travellers were told they could swap their used airline boarding card from flights between London and Manchester, Liverpool or Glasgow for a free First Class return train journey anywhere on the Virgin trains West Coast network to sample environmentally-friendly train travel and reduce their carbon footprint.

Plane Relief Plus allowed flights taken during April and May to qualify for the offer, with free First Class train tickets available for use until October.

Passengers received a code in return for their boarding pass, which enabled them to book their rail journey free online at [www.planerelief.com](http://www.planerelief.com)

Trains can also return 17% of electricity used back to the National Grid every time they brake - enough to provide power for 11,825 homes for a year or to brew 2.6 billion cups of tea.

Virgin Trains is also carrying out a biofuel test using one of its engines with a view to running its Cross-Country Voyager fleet on biofuel.

The campaign formed part of a company-wide environmental effort to address the effect our transport choices make on the environment.

The aim is to encourage passengers to take the train instead of the plane when travelling in the UK, and to be aware of the negative effects of domestic air travel on the environment.

"This is an opportunity for flyers to enjoy their journey with a clear conscience by significantly reducing their carbon footprint," said Craig Inglis, Virgin Trains sales and marketing director.

"Our long-term aim is to continue the erosion of domestic air travel, and this offer underlines our confidence that once customers try us they will stay with us."

Virgin Trains also ran a "Go Greener. Go Cheaper" marketing campaign.

They say Pendolino trains are at least four times less polluting than cars or planes.



## Plans for new trains

Virgin Trains is hoping to get the go-head for 106 new coaches to boost the length of all its Pendolino train sets to cope with growing numbers of passengers. The fastest time from London to Manchester will soon be two hours, which will make it impossible for road or air to compete - as long as there is continued pressure from campaigners to keep ticket prices reasonable.

## Electricity meters

Plans to make the UK rail network more energy efficient by using greener fuels and introducing electricity meters on trains, were announced in May by the Associa-

tion of Train Operating Companies. Train companies are also making more widespread use of regenerative braking systems.

Meters are being fitted on a trial basis to the cabs of a number of electric trains to allow train operators to monitor the amount of power being used per service.

## Noisy roads

Traffic noise in towns and cities across England exceeds international guidelines for safe levels, according to a report by experts at University College, London.

"Noise pollution in our towns and cities is a growing problem and can have a serious long-term impact on

our health and wellbeing," said the report's author Professor Deepeak Prasher. "Noise not only annoys but also can raise our stress levels and associated hormone levels."

The worst city for noise was Newcastle, followed by Birmingham, London, Darlington, Doncaster, Gillingham, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool and Stoke.

## High speed north

Railtrack considered rebuilding the former Great Central Railway (London-Manchester) as a high-speed line from London to Rugby where it would have divided into two - one going to the north-east and one to the north-west, said the company's one-time chairman Sir Philip Beck. He believes Network Rail would find the plan has practical and cost advantages over trying to upgrade the busy East Coast main line for higher speeds.

The Great Central, completed in 1897, was built to the Berne gauge and was intended to be a link to the Channel Tunnel.

Berne gauge allows a width of around 10ft and a height of 14ft compared to the normal British loading gauge of 9ft by 13ft.

## Lib-Dem talks

A Railfuture delegation met Alistair Carmichael, shadow Transport Secretary for the Lib Dems in March, writes *Norman Bradbury*. Mr Carmichael said the Lib Dems would correct the fragmentation of the rail industry but nationalisation was not practical.

He thought the Department for Transport had an unhelpful level of control of micro-management and agreed franchises should be fewer and longer, perhaps 20 years.

Railfuture was represented by Keith Dyall, Howard Thomas, Ian McGrath and Norman Bradbury.

## Alloa delay

A late change in the specification for a level crossing at Cambus on the Stirling-Alloa rail reopening scheme means the line will not open this summer. It is now likely to open in December.

## Railfuture AGM 2007: Resolutions

### User group directory

This AGM notes with concern that Passenger Focus no longer maintains a publicly available list of rail user group contacts, and urges that appropriate external funding be sought to enable Railfuture to provide and maintain details of these organisations on its own website and eventually to publish this directory again in printed form.

### Thameslink

Railfuture is concerned over continuing Government reluctance to arrange funding for the Thameslink project, particularly in view of competing demands on funding from other projects in London and the South East including those

relating to the Olympics. We therefore call upon the Government to commit funding to the Thameslink project.

### Eurostar services

This AGM welcomes the shorter journey times between London, Paris and Brussels that will be gained from the opening of High Speed 1, and calls on the appropriate national and local government agencies to deliver improved rail access and direct through services from major traffic centres south of the Thames to Ebbsfleet, and to provide incentives to Eurostar to deliver a timetable with stops at Ashford that meets the needs and aspirations of local people.



## Join Railfuture

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