

## VIRGIN FOR LONGER: WHAT DO RAIL USERS GET?

Virgin is to continue running West Coast services until at least the end of March 2017 and there is an option for a year's extension on that. Here are some of the details of the deal:

- All trains are to get superfast 4G wifi, free for all Virgin rail users, not just first class.
- The Virgin Trains website is to be upgraded and Nectar points will be given for website or app bookings.
- All 21 9 car Pendolinos are to have first class Coach G reconfigured with standard class seats. This will, however, reduce the number of cheap First Advance tickets that Virgin makes available.
- £20 million is to be spent on the stations that Virgin serves, improving waiting rooms and providing more ticket machines and help points.
- Ticket barriers are to be installed at Coventry and Wolverhampton, which should reduce ticketless travel by Virgin Trains in our region, and barriers are also planned for Platforms 4 to 7 at London Euston, the usual platforms for West Midlands trains.
- More staff are promised out and about on stations.
- Staff are encouraged to use initiative to give rail users 'a better experience', such as by helping with luggage or fetching things from the on board shop.
- 'Meet and greet' staff at Euston will help rail users find their seats and stow their luggage.
- Station and training centre facilities will be available for community use.
- Shrewsbury (and Blackpool) will get through trains to London from December this year.
- Virgin plans to run earlier and later trains serving Birmingham International.



This last point is soundly welcomed by Campaign for Rail, something we have sought for two years, during which we have had positive discussions with Birmingham Airport and Virgin Trains.

*Words and photo: Keith Flinders*