



## Virgin Trains names train after Scottish cultural icon Charles Rennie Mackintosh



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The Charles Rennie Mackintosh Express departed Scotland's biggest city on Monday, March 19 in support of Mackintosh 150, a year-long programme of events throughout 2018 celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Glasgow's renowned artist,

architect and designer.

The 390008 Pendolino train, adorned with Mackintosh's trademark moustache on the front and his name displayed in his own lettering on plaques on either side, arrived into Glasgow Central Station at 09.45am before its nameplate was unveiled by Michael Stewart, Virgin Trains' General Manager for Scotland on the west coast route, and Councillor David McDonald, Chair of Glasgow Life and Deputy Leader of Glasgow City Council.

Virgin Trains' customers across the west coast route are being encouraged to take photos of themselves while standing on the platform next to the moustache or nameplate. They can find out where the Mack Express will be on any particular day by tweeting the @VirginTrains team with the #trackthemack hashtag.

Passengers who take the best selfies with the train will be eligible to win two First Class return tickets for travel from London, Birmingham or Preston to Glasgow between April 16 and June 30 and free entry to a major new Mackintosh exhibition taking place in the city.

It is the first time in nearly 15 years that Virgin Trains has named a train in Scotland on its west coast route. Two other trains have previously been named after Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the first in 1982 and the second in 1996, shortly before Virgin Trains took over services between Glasgow and London.

The last train named after the Glasgow artist was withdrawn from service when Virgin introduced its fleet of tilting Pendolino and Super Voyager trains, allowing regular journey times between Glasgow and London to be cut from more than five hours to 4hr32min.

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## Testing of Virgin Azuma fleet gathers pace in Scotland



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Azuma will transform travel on the east coast route, with the first train due to enter service in December this year and services to Edinburgh due to start in March 2019.

This week's Azuma visit to Scotland will enable driver trainers to be put through their paces on the newly-built trains, ensuring they have the knowledge to train the rest of Virgin Trains' drivers on the east coast route.

Aileen Jordan, Azuma Director at Virgin Trains, said: “This is another key milestone in our journey to bring the Azuma fleet into service and transform travel on the east coast route. This is an important step ahead of our driver training programme getting underway in summer and we're delighted to see the Azuma stationed in Edinburgh Waverley for such a long period, allowing passengers the chance to get their first peek of the train.”

Azuma is part of a £5.7bn investment by the Department for Transport in new inter-city trains. Hitachi is building the Azuma fleet at its Newton Aycliffe factory in the North East of England, which is home to 1000 train builders, including 50 apprentices.

The firm has invested £18 million to modernise depots at Aberdeen, Inverness and Edinburgh to ensure they are able to service the new fleet, securing long-term engineering jobs at all three locations.

The driver training programme comes nearly two years after Virgin Trains launched the biggest driver recruitment campaign on the east coast route since the 1980s.

As well as allowing regular journeys between Edinburgh and London to be accelerated to just four hours, the Azuma is far greener than the existing fleet of east coast trains and will contribute to greater carbon savings on cross-border travel. The bi-mode trains are capable of running under electric power as far as Edinburgh but can switch to diesel power when travelling further north to Aberdeen and Inverness.

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## Making Wi-Fi free for passengers along our west coast route



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The £7.5m investment is part of the recent direct award agreed with the Government. The upgrade works will start in May 2018 and will be undertaken by the UK-based rail supply chain, supporting skilled jobs in the sector. The new technology will be 'future-proofed' so it will be compatible with 5G mobile networks as they come on stream and offer further speed improvements.

We will also be investigating how to eliminate 'not-spots' - places without mobile phone coverage - across the west coast route to enable our customers to work more effectively during their journeys.

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## Launching the UK's first train driver apprenticeship scheme



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Working with Aslef, the train drivers' union, we recently advertised for three people to join a year-long training course to become a driver. During the programme, apprentices receive training in all aspects of being a train driver, as well as additional learning opportunities and shadowing staff across the organisation to get a full understanding of how the driver's role fits within the business.

The scheme follows last year's successful pilot which received over 1,200 applications. The upcoming apprenticeships will be based at Glasgow, Wolverhampton, and London Euston.

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## Transforming old uniforms in pioneering recycling scheme



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With around 30 million tonnes of corporate wear sent to landfill each year in the UK, we looked for a creative solution to transform our old uniforms. Under our new scheme, these clothes will now become new items such as blankets, bags, and coats to help those living on the street. They will be donated to the Albert Kennedy Trust, which supports young LGBT homeless people, HMP Askham Grange and our charity partner, Rethink Mental Illness. The partnership is also part of a rehabilitation scheme that helps to prepare prisoners for employment and life outside of prison.

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## Leading the way in passenger satisfaction

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We use the results of the NRPS and other surveys to inform the improvements we make to our services, including ticket buying facilities and station environment enhancements.