

# FirstGroup and Trenitalia Announce New Managing Directors For West Coast Partnership Rail Franchise

November 26, 2019



FirstGroup and Trenitalia, the transport companies that will jointly take over the running of the West Coast Partnership on 8 December, today announced the appointment of two Managing Directors.

Phil Whittingham, Managing Director of Virgin Trains since 2013, will now become Managing Director of the InterCity West Coast business, running passenger rail services between London, the Midlands, North West, Scotland and North Wales. In this role, he will manage a company that will oversee a substantial programme of investment in new and refurbished trains, improved stations and additional services and capacity.

Phil joined Virgin Trains in 1999 as Group Management Accountant having worked closely with the company while working as an accountant at KPMG from 1996. He was appointed Finance Director in 2007 before taking over as Managing Director in 2013.

Caroline Donaldson, currently Bid Director at FirstGroup, will become the Managing Director of the West Coast Partnership Development that will provide a range of design and development services to support the future operation of high-speed rail services between the North and London in close collaboration with HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport.

As Bid Director, Caroline steered FirstGroup and Trenitalia's successful joint bid for the partnership. She has been Bid Director for FirstGroup since 2010, and previously held various positions across the transport sector, including senior positions at Network Rail and London Underground. She is a Chartered Accountant, and holds a degree in Mathematics from Cambridge University and an MBA from Cranfield School of Management.

Announcing the appointments, Steve Montgomery, Managing Director of First Rail, said: "We look forward to operating the West Coast Partnership. These appointments demonstrate our determination to deliver a

range of improvements for InterCity West Coast passengers during the first phase of the partnership and help deliver the railway of tomorrow. Our aim is to provide exceptional service as standard for our customers.

“Phil and Caroline bring great experience, insight and drive to deliver the significant improvements we’re committed to while also establishing the plans and initiatives which will form the bedrock of future high speed rail services.”

Ernesto Sicilia, Managing Director Trenitalia (UK), said: “We are delighted to confirm these management appointments which we believe combine the right balance of continuity and professional expertise to deliver our innovative and pioneering partnership operation and to guarantee a high-level service to our customers.”

FirstGroup and Trenitalia are also pleased to announce that the existing senior management team at Virgin Trains will transfer to the new Intercity West Coast business reporting to Phil Whittingham. They are: Mark Whitehouse, Executive Finance Director; Natasha Grice, Executive People Director; Sarah Copley, Executive Commercial Director; John Sullivan, Executive Chief Information Officer; and Richard Scott, Executive Corporate Affairs Director.

Bob Powell, currently Interim Executive Customer Experience Director at Virgin Trains; and Gus Dunster, Interim Executive Operations Director, will also transfer in their current interim roles to the new organisation while Sarah Kendall will join the team in the role of Projects Director. Sarah joins from the First-Trenitalia Mobilisation team.

FirstGroup and Trenitalia are also pleased to announce appointments to the West Coast Partnership Development team. Reporting into Caroline Donaldson, they are: Russell Evans, Train Services Director; Joost Noordewier, Customer Experience and Commercial Director; Adriano Scapati, Rolling-stock Director and Eileen Abbess, Project Management Office Director.

Further appointments to the executive team will be announced in due course.

The West Coast Partnership will operate intercity services between London Euston and the Midlands, North-West England, Scotland and North Wales. Passengers will benefit from a fleet of new intercity trains as well as the complete refurbishment of the existing Pendolino train fleet. There will be 263 more train services every week by 2022 with new routes added, and a much-improved on-board service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats, and improved catering. With immediate effect on 8th December, passengers will benefit from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by 15 minutes or more, compared to 30 minutes today.