

TRANSPORT Briefing

First plans standalone brand for West Coast

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First Group will adopt a franchise-specific brand for the West Coast route, rather than using the corporate identity in place at virtually all of its other UK bus and rail companies.

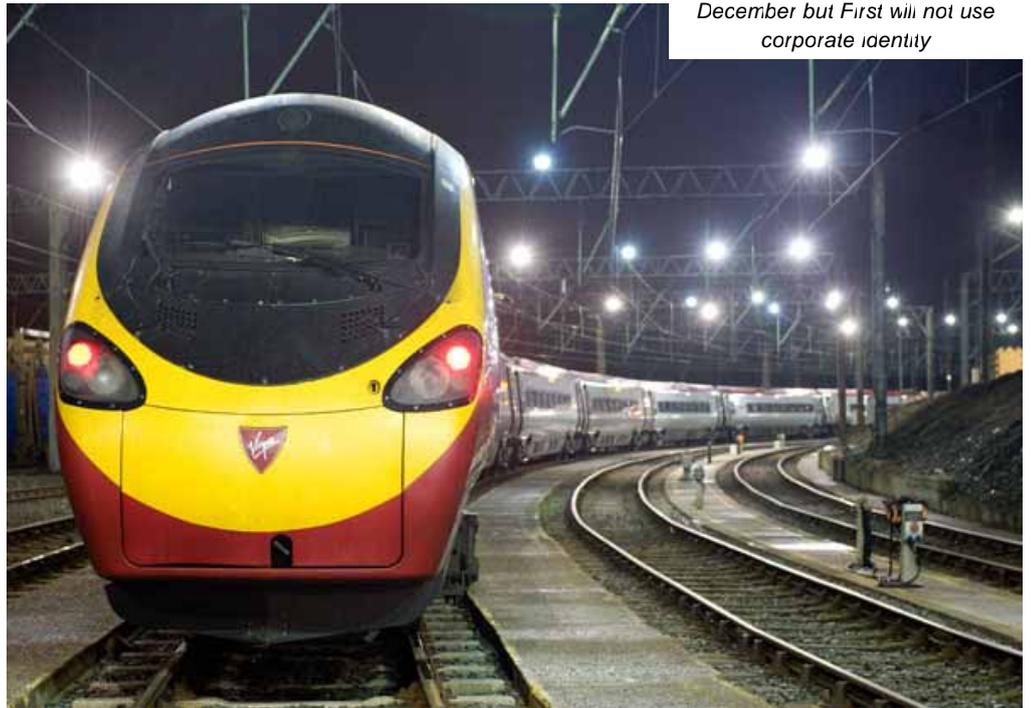
The news comes after the government announced last week that the Aberdeen-based group has won the new 13-year West Coast inter-city franchise (TB 8694). The group will take over the contract on 8 December bringing an end to 15 years of Virgin-branded West Coast Main Line services.

First's brand has also featured on the UK rail network since 1997 and is currently used by First Great Western, First Capital Connect and First TransPennine Express although not ScotRail, following an agreement with the Scottish Government. However, the corporate identity will not be used by First West Coast Limited.

Vernon Barker, managing director of First Group's rail division, said: "There will be a brand of its own for this franchise; it will not be the corporate First livery."

* First Group is looking for an advertising agency to handle what is expected to be a £7m account promoting West Coast rail services. As part of its successful West Coast bid First has pledged to increase promotional spend to £20m a year, up from incumbent Virgin's recent £2m annual budget.

West Coast: Virgin brand will disappear from railway in December but First will not use corporate identity



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PASSENGER TRANSPORT

This article was first published in *Passenger Transport*, the leading fortnightly magazine for the UK transport sector.

