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Charity train ride raises £22,000 as West Midlands Railway bids farewell to Class 323 fleet

A charity train ride to bid a fond farewell to an electric train fleet which has served rail passengers in the West Midlands for three decades has raised £22,000 for good causes.

Hundreds of rail enthusiasts boarded a pair of Class 323 trains for day trip between Birmingham and Liverpool yesterday (Sunday 29 September) as part of an event organised by West Midlands Railway (WMR) and the Branch Line Society. Money raised from the volunteer-led event will be donated to the Scotty's Little Soldiers and Brain Tumour Research charities.

The Class 323 fleet has been in operation on the Cross City Line through Birmingham since 1994, connecting the city with Sutton Coldfield, Lichfield, Redditch and Bromsgrove. Yesterday's trip marked their final passenger outing in the region after the fleet was withdrawn from the regular WMR timetable on Friday 27 September.

The Class 323 fleet has been replaced by brand new Class 730 electric trains as part of WMR's £1billion investment programme.

John Doughty, West Midlands Railway engineering director, said:

“For more than 30 years the Class 323 fleet was the backbone of the railway in the West Midlands, carrying millions of passengers. It was fantastic to see so many people turn out to say farewell and raise an amazing amount of money for charity in the process.

“We look forward to continuing to roll out our new Class 730 fleet onto more routes across the region. The fleet is proving popular with customers with its modern features like air conditioning, power points at every seat and significantly increased capacity.”

During their lifespan the Class 323s have cumulatively provided hundreds of millions of passenger journeys and travelled millions of miles across the West Midlands rail network. The trains are known for the distinctive whining noise they make when accelerating.

About West Midlands Trains

For further information on this release, email press.office@wmtrains.co.uk

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast Main Line to and from London Euston.

- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Snow Hill.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

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