Press Release

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Retirees depart after last shift signalling the end of era after 78 years' joint service

- *Duty Control Manager, Dave Leng, retires after a 40-year railway career*
- *Colleague Rich Green also leaves on the same day after 34 years' service*
- *Both have worked together for over 20 years in the West Coast operator's Control team*

Two Avanti West Coast colleagues who amassed 70 years' service together have bid farewell to railways after completing their final shifts.

Dave Leng and Rich Green, who both worked in the Control department at Avanti West Coast, where they oversaw the day to day running of the key west coast route, retired earlier this month. At their leaving party, Control managers and colleagues, attended to wish both good luck.

Duty control manager Dave enjoyed an unbroken 44 years' service, joining British Rail in September 1979. His first job was a Train Recorder, earning the princely sum of £26.50 per week at Saltley (Birmingham) signal box.

In 1981, Dave began his driver training at Saltley depot, passing out in April 1986, which saw him move to a driving role at Birkenhead. Next stop was a train crew supervisor's role in London, followed by a move back to the west coast route, and a Performance Controller's job in Crewe. His next, and final role was in the Control Team based in Birmingham.

Dave said: "I've loved my time on the railway and been really fortunate to meet so many good people, lots of whom I know regard as friends.

"No day was ever the same, with challenges presented on a daily basis. But that sense of pride you got, when heading home, knowing you have helped customers and colleagues, was worth all the hard times."

Rich, joined the Railway Training Scheme in 1990, aged sixteen. With no family link to the industry, Rich quickly fell in love with the railway, moving to the Traffic Office in Crewe after the completion of his training.

It was then back to his hometown Stoke-on-Trent for a period on the platforms, gaining valuable experience in a station environment. That understanding of operations, and dealing with customers, proved invaluable following his move to the Control Team in 2001. Over the next 20 plus years, Rich progressed to Duty Control Manager, where he oversaw the day to day running of the key west coast route.

Commenting ahead of his retirement, Rich Green said: "I look back with great fondness on the last 34 years. Time really has flown. Whilst the industry has changed beyond recognition, with greater use of technology, the consistent has been the importance of the railway family. And I'm proud to say I am, and will always be, a railwayman."

Both Rich and Dave, were the driving force behind the initiative to have one of Avanti West Coast's iconic Pendolino trains honour a colleague who lost his battle with cancer. With several of his Control Team colleagues coming from Stoke, 390129, which carries the name 'City of Stoke-on-Trent', was nicknamed the 'Pride of the Fleet'. It was a tag that stuck and one that Brett Hobson, who lived not far away in Crewe, was happy to play along with.

In his last few months Brett joked it would be funny if the train carried his name. And so it came to pass, with Brett's named proudly displayed on the cab ends of his favourite train. A fitting tribute to "a friend and a really good person", made possible by his railway family.

Paying tribute to the pair, Ashley McKenna, Head of Train Service Delivery at Avanti West Coast said: "The railway is all about its people. And in Dave and Rich we have two of the best. Whilst we are sad to see them go, everyone at Avanti West Coast thanks them for their wonderful support and commitment over the years. We wish them both a happy retirement and good luck for the next exciting chapter in their journey."

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About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos are returning to the rails, with a £117m investment that's delivering best in class comfort. Rebuilt using sustainable materials

wherever possible, including tables made from recycled plastic bottles, our upgraded fleet offers 25,000 brand new seats, free Wi-Fi, onboard recycling and much more.

New Hitachi trains are set to replace our Voyager trains from 2024, leading to a 61% cut in carbon emissions. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, the new 23-strong fleet is the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

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