Press Release

EMBARGOED TO 00:01 THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER

Avanti West Coast launches new low alcohol beer 'Safety Thirst' for festive campaign

- *Rail safety just got tasty as train operator launches low alcohol brew for Christmas campaign*
- *Stats show accidents during Christmas where intoxication was a possible factor increase by 45 percent*
- *Avanti West Coast choir enlisted to use festive cheer to communicate safety messages*

Avanti West Coast has launched a new low alcohol beer as part of a safety campaign to help reduce customer accidents at stations and on board trains during the festive period.

Named "Safety Thirst", the 0.5 percent pale ale, will be stocked onboard the intercity operator's trains to encourage those enjoying festivities to drink responsibly while travelling on the rail network.

The initiative is being backed by UK's leading alcohol charity Drinkaware and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB). Figures compiled by the RSSB show the number of accidents on the GB mainline network last year where intoxication was a possible factor increased by 45 percent during the Christmas period.

This is the second phase of Avanti's West Coast's "Take care. Get there" campaign which aims to help customers navigate railway stations safely. Launched in August, the first stage of the awareness drive saw the train operator personify parts of station buildings through bespoke artwork to highlight how they improve safety. It was created with the help of behavioural scientist, Richard Shotton.

This time the focus is on the festive period – when people taking the train for Christmas markets, a night out or shopping may want to enjoy a drink – highlighting the pitfalls of consuming too much alcohol while using the railway.

To promote the campaign, a choir made up of Avanti West Coast colleagues performed a reworked version of the song "Jingle Bells" replacing it with Safety Thirst focusing on safety messages.

Served in a bold, vibrant can, the design of Safety Thirst draws inspiration from heritage railway wayfinding signage with the catchline: "Rail safety just got tasty". The limited-edition brew has been created in partnership with Birmingham Brewing Company, who

are local to the West Coast Main Line, and is based on their award-winning low alcohol pale ale, Sober Brummie.

Dave Whitehouse, Director of Safety, Security and Environment at Avanti West Coast, said: "We want the railway to be the transport of choice when people are heading out to enjoy themselves during the festive season and while our customers are out on the network, we want them to be safe too.

"This time of year, our network is busier and our staff are on hand to help everyone get to their destination safely. The Safety Thirst campaign is a great reminder to drink responsibly to create a more enjoyable travel experience for everyone taking a journey with us as well as our colleagues."

Mark Phillips, CEO at the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) said: "This is a fantastic initiative by Avanti West Coast. Every year in the run up to Christmas, our data shows an increase in passengers being injured after enjoying a little too much seasonal hospitality.

"Everyone should enjoy themselves, but by drinking responsibly they will stay safe and help reduce pressure on the railway at one of its busiest times."

Karen Tyrell, CEO of Drinkaware, said: "This is a great move. Our research shows that low and no-alcohol drinks are increasing in popularity, with around a third of people now using them to moderate their drinking.

"Creating a low alcohol option for those travelling on Avanti West Coast will help people cut back on their drinking. It will also keep within the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines, of 14 units per week spread over three or more days, with several drink-free days as well as no bingeing."

Andy Milford, Sales and Brand Manager at Birmingham Brewing Company, said: "We are delighted to be working with Avanti West Coast on such an important campaign. The festive period is a time everyone loves and cherishes being together, and we want to ensure that everyone gets home safely to be able to enjoy it to the fullest. This way people can enjoy a fantastic pale ale on their journey and keep their celebrations on track."

ENDS

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 returned to the rails in June 2024 following a £117m investment programme that's delivered the best in class comfort. Known as the UK's hardest working fleet, all 56 of these iconic trains have been transformed and now boast better seats, improved lighting, new interior carpets, customer-friendly passenger information screens, additional luggage space, power points at every seat and refurbished toilets.

Our new Evero fleet was introduced in June 2024 and will replace our Voyagers. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, will serve routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West, leading to a substantial cut in carbon emissions with an increase in seats, and offering improved comfort. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, these new trains are 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.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Centre:
https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

Press Office: 0845 000 3333

About RSSB

The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) is the independent safety, standards, and research body for Great Britain's rail network. We help to make an evolving railway safer, more efficient, and more sustainable.

About Drinkaware

Drinkaware is an independent charity which aims to reduce alcohol-related harm by helping people make better choices about their drinking.

We achieve this by providing impartial, evidence-based information, advice, and practical resources, raising awareness of alcohol and its harms, and working collaboratively with partners.

About Birmingham Brewing Company

Birmingham Brewing Company, brews accessible craft beers that Brummies can be proud of. Specialising in award-winning gluten-free and vegan beers, the brewery operates with a socially conscious attitude, using 100% renewable energy. Based in Stirchley, just a few miles south of Birmingham city centre, their beers are loved nationwide. Visitors can also enjoy them fresh from the source at the brewery's vibrant onsite taproom, open Thursday to Sunday. Cheers, bab!'