



Virgin Rail Calls 'Greedy and Foolish' – Daily Star, Sunday 11 February 2018

■ VIRGIN Trains has been labelled "greedy and foolish" for charging customers 58p per minute to call a booking line.

Most rail operators stopped using costly 084 and 087 numbers after a Government ban five years ago and switched to cheaper 03 or 0800 numbers.

But Virgin – headed by billionaire Sir Richard Branson – is still charging up to £5.80 for a 10 minute sales call to the number listed on the firm's website.

■ For example, dialling the Virgin Trains booking line from a mobile phone linked to a monthly contract with Three would cost 45p per minute in access charges and 13p per minute in service charges, giving a total of 58p per minute.

David Hickson of the Fair Telecoms campaign group slammed the company last night.

He told us: "Most businesses including nearly all train operators have now recognised that using 084/087 numbers for ticket bookings is greedy and foolish and have switched to standard rate

# VIRGIN RAIL CALLS 'GREEDY & FOOLISH'

■ by **JOE HINTON**

01/02/03 numbers, which most people call with no call charge.

■ "Virgin Trains should get to grips and switch their numbers immediately."

But a spokesman for Virgin said: "Customers can buy tickets from our website, mobile app, ticket machines or one of our ticket

offices without any charges at all. Buying through our website or app also gives extra benefits such as automatic compensation for delays. Fewer than 2% of tickets we sell directly are sold by phone."

■ We discovered the use of the premium number in the week it was revealed the Government had awarded the company the lucrative West Coast franchise.

The news came just hours after it was revealed a second franchise involving Virgin Trains, the Stagecoach-led London to Edinburgh route, had virtually collapsed financially.

Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT transport workers' union, branded the West Coast deal a "shameful fiasco".

