



Corporate Plan 2006-9

Consultation Draft January 2006

Passengerfocus 
putting rail passengers first

Contents

Section		Page
	Chairman's introduction	2
1	Our purpose	3
2	Who we are and how we have set our strategy	5
3	Our objectives	
3.1	Understanding the needs and experiences of rail passengers	6
3.2	Securing tangible and measurable improvements for rail passengers	7
3.3	Empowering rail passengers with information, advice and advocacy	8
3.4	Influencing major long-term decisions that affect rail passengers	9
3.5	Being visible, accessible and understood by rail passengers and stakeholders	10
4	Engaging and involving rail passengers and stakeholders	11
5	Financial information	13
6	Translating our vision and mission into actions	14
Annexes		
A	Statutory duty	15
B	Organisation structure	16
C	Three-year timeline of activity	17
	Your views	18

Chairman's introduction

Passenger Focus' mission is to get the best deal for Britain's rail passengers. To do this we have built a national organisation with two main aims: to influence both long- and short-term decisions and issues that affect passengers; and to help passengers through advice, advocacy and empowerment.

We have asked passengers what they want and clear messages come back. Trains arriving on time remains the number-one priority. But as punctuality improves, passengers' attention is shifting to other areas, such as value for money and getting a seat. We will concentrate on the industry pressure points where significant change can be achieved for passengers.

Understanding passengers' concerns and the journeys they take is vital. We have been asked by Government to carry out the National Passenger Survey. This is the largest piece of published passenger research in Great Britain – more than 50,000 passengers take part in it each year, giving us an invaluable bedrock of passenger opinion. It also gives us a solid platform for a mature debate with train companies and Network Rail about improving rail services. We will ensure that our research programme also engages with business users of the railways, a group whose needs have not been adequately represented in the past. We will also ensure that all our research takes into consideration access to services.

How we work will also be important. We are a Great Britain-wide organisation, and we must therefore establish strong working relationships with the Department for Transport, Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly. The cornerstone of Passenger Focus' success will be its independence. Government has clearly stated its desire for Passenger Focus to be a responsible, independent, authoritative voice that speaks up on behalf of passengers. We have a two-year budget which will allow us to plan properly. The structure of the organisation allows for maximum flexibility, responsiveness and focus. The Board is skilled, widely-experienced and has grown quickly into its role in the last few months. The staff are dedicated, hard-working and capable. However we cannot succeed on our own. We must work in partnership with passenger and industry organisations, such as London TravelWatch and other passenger transport user forums.

This draft plan sets out what we will do until 2009. Just as the rail industry is evolving, so are we, and we must prioritise our work. We would like your views on this plan and have suggested some areas you may wish to comment on in the section 'Your Views', on page 18.

I am very proud to be involved with the birth of a new national organisation. I know that we can make a difference and help secure a better deal for Britain's rail passengers.



Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman

1. Our purpose

Our **vision, mission, objectives and the values** have been developed by the Passenger Focus board to reflect their aspirations for the new organisation as well as its statutory duties.

Our **vision** is to ensure that the rail industry and government are always

putting rail passengers first

This will be achieved by our **mission** of

getting the best deal for rail passengers

Over the next three years, our work will be based on the following five **objectives**, which underpin the vision and mission:

1. Understanding the needs and experiences of rail passengers
2. Securing tangible and measurable improvements for rail passengers
3. Empowering rail passengers with information, advice and advocacy
4. Influencing major long-term decisions that affect rail passengers
5. Being visible, accessible and understood by rail passengers and stakeholders

Section 3 provides more detail for each of these objectives, together with some of the activity that will be done and the key performance target(s) that will show achievement.

Our values

In order to be influential and get the best deal for rail passengers, we need to ensure that we are recognised as being forward-thinking, proactive, enabling and prominent. This will be demonstrated through our four core values, which are to be:

- **Independent** – we will be impartial, objective and fair when undertaking all our activities
- **Open** – we will be accessible, available, transparent and approachable to rail passengers and other stakeholders
- **Trusted** - in order to be influential, we will demonstrate that we are respected, informed and credible
- **Engaging** - in order to campaign and lobby for changes, we will demonstrate that we are listening, understanding and responding to rail passengers and other stakeholders.

2. Who are we and how we set our strategy

Passenger Focus is the operating name for the Rail Passengers Council. We are the independent Great Britain-wide rail consumer organisation. We were formed on 24 July 2005 following the Railways Act 2005, following the abolition of the regional Rail Passengers Committees and former national Rail Passengers Council. Our sponsor is the Department for Transport.

The range and complexity of the issues facing passengers are considerable, yet we are a relatively small organisation. To make a difference and get the best deal for rail passengers, we must make choices about how we use our resources. Focusing on and tackling a number of key issues in depth will ensure a better chance of success. We will work to deliver our mission in two main ways:

- Translating knowledge and information about passenger issues into clear messages for the government, rail industry and other stakeholders. We will operate openly and publish as much of our research and information as we can. The main activities will be research, raising the profile of passenger priorities, working with train companies and other stakeholders on issues raised by passengers, and facilitating action for passengers among the diverse organisations involved in the rail industry.
- Helping passengers and passenger groups to help themselves. To do this we must be accessible. The main activities will be publishing consumer advice for passengers; working with passenger groups and panels to improve their capacity to help passengers; and mediating passenger complaints that have not been satisfactorily resolved by train companies.

Our priorities and how we set them

We have developed several questions to help us to prioritise the issues we should concentrate on:

- Is it within our remit?
- Is it of direct concern to rail passengers?
- How many passengers will be affected?
- Will it improve the service?
- Will it deliver significant improvements to the passenger experience?
- Do we have the resources to do it?
- Are best placed to focus on the subject?

Long-term focus

Major changes take a long time to achieve in the rail industry. Influencing the big, long-term decisions is vital to help get the best deal for rail passengers. Applying the questions above has led us to highlight four key areas of long-term work:

- **Route Utilisation Strategies**

Punctuality and frequency of services and getting a seat are key passenger concerns. Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategies will be the process by which crucial decisions that affect rail passengers are made on a route-by-route basis. We will contribute to the development of all these strategies as they arise.

- **Franchising**

The quality and level of rail services offered by train companies are crucial to the day-to-day experience of passengers. The Department for Transport's franchising programme sets the framework of what each train company will offer passengers. Around four franchises will be replaced each year, and we will engage in each franchise replacement to try to secure improvements in service levels for passengers.

- **Fares**

Value-for-money continues to be a major passenger concern. The government will soon make decisions about the regulation of fares. The ability of many passengers to afford tickets for long-distance travel bought on the day is being eroded. We intend to influence government policy on fares.

- **Investment**

Long-term investment in the railways must continue. The Department for Transport and the Scottish Executive's High Level Output Specifications will set the broad framework for what they want to invest in and what they want to achieve for years to come. We aim to influence these to ensure passenger priorities are actively considered.

Short- to medium-term focus

More immediate change in the industry will be pursued in three main areas:

- working with train companies and Network Rail through our Passenger Link Managers to secure improvements in service delivery;
- publishing consumer advice on passenger issues such as finding the most appropriate ticket and helping passengers get better value for money from their rail travel; and
- working in partnership with passenger groups to secure change. This will also involve helping these groups to promote passenger priorities and interests.

Concentrating on these key areas and allowing time to react to industry and government developments uses most of our resources.

3. Our objectives

3.1 Understanding the needs and experiences of rail passengers

Research and other sources of information, provides us with the evidence to ensure we are an authoritative voice of passenger opinion. We will identify and address gaps in our knowledge, providing a comprehensive evidence base to support our policy work on passengers' priorities.

All the information captured will be analysed and used as the basis for improving services for rail passengers by influencing and working with the rail industry and Government. Research will also help us to refine operational objectives, monitor performance, evaluate outcomes and redefine our strategic direction.

We will:

- undertake the National Passenger Survey and publish results twice a year;
- review the specification of the National Passenger Survey and consult stakeholders, including the Department for Transport, before tendering for a new contract;
- establish an National Passenger Survey Stakeholder Advisory Group;
- provide online access to the National Passenger Survey results;
- report back findings to those involved in the National Passenger Survey;
- develop a plan of research and consultation to ensure that we identify key areas and address key issues;
- ensure that all our research takes into consideration access to services;
- undertake research to understand the needs of specific passenger groups, for example commuters, business and leisure users;
- develop a range of channels to seek the views and opinions of rail passengers – in particular, to build a network of passengers who use each train operating company, including a mix of regular commuters, business and leisure users;
- work in partnership with other relevant stakeholders to undertake specific targeted research; and
- understand the passenger priorities by route and/or sector.

Key targets:

- Consult 50,000 passengers through the National Passenger Survey each year, and publish the results twice a year, in January and July.
- Involve at least 10,000 other passengers in targeted research and consultation each year.

3.2 Securing tangible and measurable improvements for rail passengers

We can achieve tangible improvements for rail passengers only by working in partnership with the government, train operating companies and other stakeholders. We will use the knowledge and information gathered from research and passenger consultation to take up issues with train operating companies and other stakeholders, concentrating on specific improvements to customer service.

Passenger priorities will form the basis of our response to any proposed changes in service, by assessing the impact on rail passengers.

We are still considering how this objective should be measured and we would welcome any comments you may have on developing this.

We will:

- work to secure service improvements, by highlighting key passenger issues from the National Passenger Survey and other research and sources of information;
- work with train operating companies and other stakeholders to establish and implement action plans to address issues; and
- develop strong working relationships with the Department for Transport, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly, regional assemblies, Network Rail and train operating companies.

Key target:

- Achieve at least 100 measurable improvements for passengers, mainly as a result of our work each year.

3.3 Empowering rail passengers with information, advice and advocacy

We provide free, impartial information and advice, and take up appeals by rail passengers who have been unable to resolve complaints directly with the rail companies. We help rail passengers understand their rights and, through our advice, make informed decisions and take appropriate action.

We will:

- develop and publish clear, comprehensive and useful information and advice for passengers;
- work with passenger groups to improve their ability to help passengers;
- develop a range of tools to empower rail passengers;
- continue to improve our complaint appeals service; and
- recommend areas for improvements to complaints policies and Passengers' Charters for new franchises.

Key targets:

- Increase the percentage of passengers satisfied with Passenger Focus' complaint handling year on year.
- Increase the percentage of passengers satisfied with the advice published by Passenger Focus year on year.

3.4 Influencing major long-term decisions that affect rail passengers

Our contact with the government, Parliament, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly, regulators, policymakers and the industry gives us the opportunity to represent rail passengers' interests directly, and assess new opportunities and threats. We must be in a position to influence debate and decision-making on the future of rail strategy. For example, the Scottish Executive's establishment of a National Transport Agency, and the new Regional Transport Partnerships offer opportunities to secure significant improvements for rail passengers as they develop their long-term transport strategies.

We will develop Passenger Focus as the voice for rail passengers with a significant presence in, and influence on, the industry. We will concentrate on a key number of issues, linked to passenger priorities, so that we can make a difference to a greater number of passengers.

To assist us in assessing our effectiveness, we plan to introduce an annual stakeholder survey to measure the success and outcomes of our work in this area.

We will:

- be involved in the shaping of the respective High Level Output Specifications (the Department for Transport and Scottish Executive's 'blueprint and vision' for the railways) to ensure that passenger priorities and concerns are highlighted as part of the public funding programme for the railways;
- work to understand passengers' views in order to influence Route Utilisation Strategies and the refranchising process;
- work to ensure that passengers' needs are assessed alongside investment requirements when the government and rail industry develop policies on fares;
- ensure that passengers' views are considered as part of the replacement process for high-speed trains (HST);
- campaign and lobby at national and regional events, including giving evidence at select committees, liaising and working with Members of Parliament, Members of Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly Members, speaking at conferences and other key events on passenger issues, to raise the profile of rail passenger priorities; and
- respond to proposed modifications to licence conditions for train operating companies and other stakeholders that have a direct impact on passengers.

Key target:

- For most of our major stakeholders to rate Passenger Focus as influential in getting the best deal for rail passengers, through an annual stakeholder survey.

3.5 Being visible, accessible and understood by rail passengers and stakeholders

An effective consumer organisation must have a profile and be recognised by the people whose interests it represents. Similarly, in order to be influential in raising passenger issues, we need to raise awareness and understanding of our role so that stakeholders and passengers understand our purpose.

We will:

- improve passenger accessibility to Passenger Focus;
- respond to and proactively seek opportunities to raise passenger issues in the media;
- enhance the reputation, profile and credibility of the work of Passenger Focus with stakeholders;
- promote the Passenger Focus website as a key source of information;
- have Passenger Focus articles published regularly in every train operating company passenger magazine;
- produce bi-monthly stakeholder bulletins;
- survey passenger awareness of Passenger Focus; and
- hold at least two public meetings a year.

Key target:

- For passengers to rate Passenger Focus as easy to contact and find out about.

4. Engaging and involving rail passengers and stakeholders

One of the key features of the new organisation will be our **engagement with passengers** in an effective and efficient way so that they can become involved in our work in a wide variety of ways.

We will do this by:

- undertaking the National Passenger Survey;
- working through the Passenger Link Managers;
- engaging with individuals and groups of passengers; and
- undertaking specific research and consultation.

National Passenger Survey

The National Passenger Survey provides a Great Britain-wide picture of passenger satisfaction with rail travel. Passenger opinions on 27 key aspects of service are collected twice a year from a representative sample of passenger journeys. The survey is conducted across the entire franchised railway, with approximately 50,000 completed questionnaires returned each year.

The results are shared with train operating companies, Network Rail, British Transport Police and special reports are provided to other organisations. The top-level results are also published on our website.

The results of the National Passenger Survey provide an indicator of customer satisfaction with their overall journey and with specific aspects, including punctuality/reliability, personal security, cleanliness, provision of information, car parking, facilities, catering, staff, complaints, ticket purchase, maintenance and repairs etc.

Looking ahead, we have established a Stakeholder Advisory Board with wide representation, to steer any changes to the scope or methodology of the survey. In particular, this group will feed into the specification of the survey when it is retendered. The group will also help identify priorities for further detailed research to gain insights and understanding of the NPS results.

Passenger Link Managers

Our Passenger Link Managers will work to influence service improvements with train companies and Network Rail. They are aligned with individual train operating companies, and their role is to:

- identify passengers' needs and concerns through liaison with passenger groups and stakeholders;

- work closely with train operating companies to influence service improvements based on passenger research;
- develop a passenger network that will inform our strategies;
- act as a media spokesperson for Passenger Focus;
- develop and build relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders including local government, Passenger Transport Executives and regional bodies; and
- provide a flow of information into the national decision-making process on rail planning.

Engaging with individuals and groups of passengers

We will ensure we are accessible to passengers seeking advice and information. A new consumer-focused website will provide a wide range of resources, including a dedicated section for passengers to post their experiences of rail travel and to exchange views with other rail users. The website will also be a key tool in engaging with individual passengers, using interactive features to enable users to participate in online forums and surveys. The National Passenger Helpline details will be widely publicised on trains and at stations so that passengers needing to make contact with us can do so easily.

We will undertake a range of campaigns to promote the issues that matter to passengers and will develop targeted consumer advice based on these issues. To ensure that Passenger Focus is visible to passengers, there will be a number of public events including meetings and station ‘surgeries’ to provide information and advice. We will also use the media to reach a wider audience.

We need to be able to tap into the wide knowledge bank that exists among ordinary rail passengers. One of the ways that this could be done is by developing a network of ‘passenger champions’, asking them to share their experiences and contribute to a national focus group of passenger opinion.

Specific research and consultation

Passenger Focus will identify and undertake research projects to inform gaps in knowledge. This may be through working closely with public transport user groups, representative bodies, or undertaking joint industry research projects.

Planned research will aid our understanding of route-specific passenger issues to inform the rail utilisation and franchising processes. The year ahead will also see a substantial activity to inform our view on the Government’s fares policy.

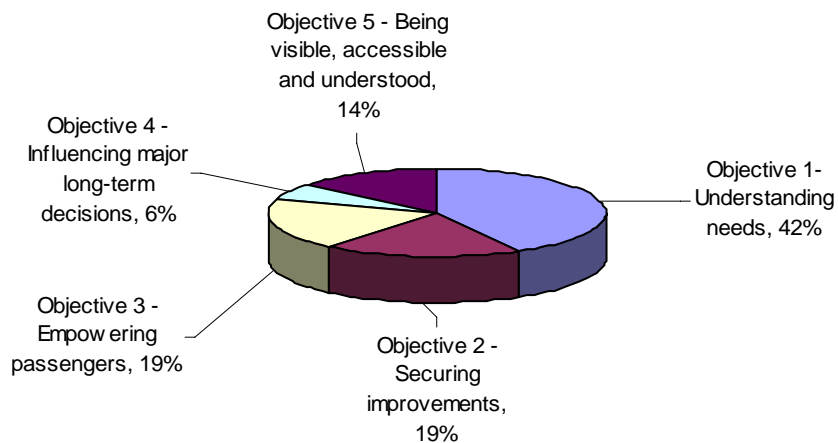
In addition, there are a number of rail user groups and regional passenger forums that Passenger Focus can work with in partnership.

5. Financial information

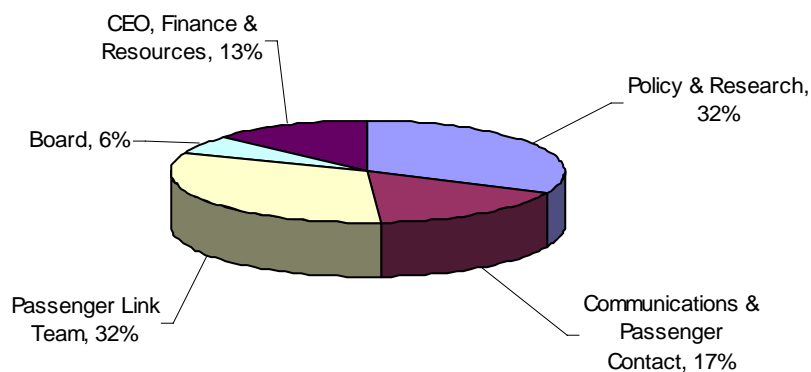
Passenger Focus has a **budget of £5.2 million** per year for 2006/07 and 2007/08, (including funding for the National Passenger Survey), which allows us to plan how we will deliver our Corporate Plan. The following charts indicate how the resources will be allocated over this period, both by our objectives and by function.

The cost of staff, premises, and other overheads, has been split among the objectives. We will continue to review on an ongoing basis how we can be more effective and efficient with the resources we have. We have a staff of 42, working from offices in London and Manchester, with 12 staff working and living in the areas served by the train operating companies.

Resource allocation by objective



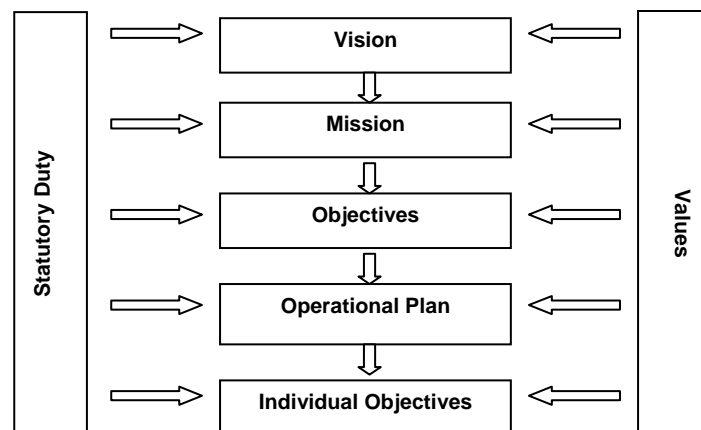
Resource allocation by function



6. Translating our vision and mission into actions

To **get the best deal** for rail passengers we will ensure that the focus of activity in the organisation is aligned with our vision..

The following diagram summarises how this links together and will be translated into actions.



The Corporate Plan outlines how we will work to achieve this over the next three years. This plan will be translated into the annual operational plan, and it is against this that specific targets will be set each year. These will be monitored by the board, and the achievements and outcomes will be published in our annual report, in the summer of each year.

We will actively participate in the Consumer Action Network, benchmarking ourselves against other consumer organisations, learning from them and sharing best practice.

In order to deliver our challenging agenda, we will ensure that we manage our resources effectively.

We will:

- better integrate planning and budgeting;
- implement a performance management framework, which aligns corporate strategy to business and individual objectives;
- improve the way we manage and develop our staff, targeting training based on individual needs, linked to the business plan;
- undertake an annual staff attitude survey;
- establish regular reporting of performance against the three-year corporate plan and annual operational plan to the board; and
- actively participate in the Consumer Action Network, to benchmark performance.

Annex A – statutory responsibilities

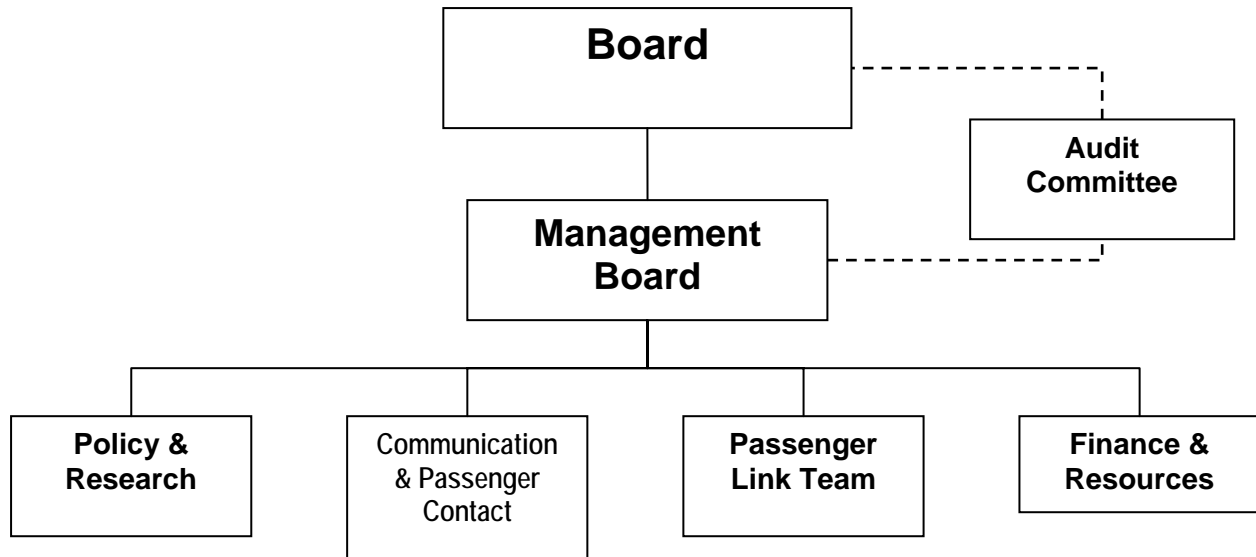
Rail Passengers Council is our legal name and the Railways Act 2005 and the Railways Act 1993 as amended by the Transport Act 2000 detail our duties and powers. We operate under the name Passenger Focus. We are an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, sponsored by the Department for Transport.

Our **statutory responsibilities** include:

- investigating any matters that relates to the provision of :
 - railway passenger services; and
 - station services by a licensed station operator;
- investigating representation made by a user of the railway (including passenger appeal complaint handling);
- referring any breach (or likely breach) of a franchise agreement or passenger/station licence to the Office of Rail Regulation;
- referring any matter that has not been resolved to our satisfaction to the Department for Transport;
- keeping under review any matters affecting the interest of the public in relation to railway services;
- co-operating with other bodies representing the interests of users of public transport services
- producing an annual report; and
- holding two public meetings each year.

For full details of the relevant legislation, see www.legislation.hmso.go.uk/acts

Annex B – organisation structure



We have adopted a risk management framework and risks are monitored and reported on a regular basis to the audit committee, which meets on a quarterly basis.

Annex C – Three year timeline of activity

	June 2006	Sept 2006	Dec 2006	March 2007	June 2007	Sept 2007	Dec 2007	March 2008	June 2008	Sept 2008	Dec 2008	March 2009
National Passenger Survey	—————▶											
Retendering National Passenger Survey	—————▶											
Specific research and consultations projects	—————▶											
Fares	—————▶		▶								
High Level Output Specification – England and Wales	—————▶						▶▶			
High Level Output Specification – Scotland	—————▶						▶▶			
Route Utilisation Strategies	—————▶											
Franchises	—————▶											
Replacement of High-Speed Trains (HST)	—————▶								▶▶	
Customer advice & advocacy	—————▶											
Specific service improvements	—————▶											

Key
 ———▶ Significant Activity
▶ Some Involvement

Your views

We would like to provide you with the opportunity to comment on our first corporate plan. The consultation period will last six weeks and will close on **Wednesday 8 March 2006**. This is a shorter consultation period than we would have liked. However, we want to publish our plan in April and finalise the annual operational workplan at that time.

When providing your comments on our corporate plan, you may wish to consider the following areas:

1. Is the new organisation focused on the right things?
2. How else could we help rail passengers?
3. What are the issues that we can influence and change?
4. What are the key performance indicators against our objectives to show that we have made a difference for rail passengers?

The above questions are only a guide, and we would welcome any comments on other areas that will help us in finalising this plan. If you would like a copy of this plan in Braille, large print, audio tape or any other language please contact us.

You can respond to the consultation on this plan, by:

	www.passengerfocus.org.uk
	contact@passengerfocus.org.uk
	<p>Kafil Badar Business Planning Manager Passenger Focus Whittles House 14 Pentonville Road London N1 9HF</p>
	<p>Contacting Kafil Badar, Business Planning Manager, on 0870 336 6005</p>

Following consultation, we aim to publish our Corporate Plan in April 2006.





Passenger Focus
Freepost WA1521
Warrington
WA4 6GP

08453 022 022
www.passengerfocus.org.uk
info@passengerfocus.org.uk