

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date: Thursday 14 November 2013
Location: The Millennium Centre
 Cardiff
Time: 10.15 – 11.45

Present

Board Members

Colin Foxall CBE	CF	Chairman
Dr Stuart Burgess CBE	SB	
Marian Lauder MBE	ML	
Bob Linnard	BL	
Isabel Liu	IL	
Stephen Locke	SL	
Diane McCrea	DM	
Philip Mendelsohn	PM	
Paul Rowen	PR	
Prof Paul Salveson OBE	PS	

Executive in attendance

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Passenger team director
Ian Wright	IW	Head of research
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of policy
Jon Carter	JC	Head of business services
Martin Clarke	MC	Business services executive
Katie Armstrong	KA	Passenger team manager
Matthew Andrews	MA	Passenger team executive
David Beer	DB	Passenger executive
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Passenger issues manager
Francis Gahan	FG	Business services executive
Dervish Mertcan	DM	Communications officer

Four members of the public attended the meeting.

An interpreter was present to translate from Welsh to English (and vice versa) as required.

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1 Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed the board, executive and guests to the meeting and remarked that a very positive programme of events had preceded it. This included an encouraging meeting with the Minister. There remained a high level of interest in transport issues in Wales with radical thinking (such as creating a transport authority for the whole of Wales) in evidence.

The England-Wales cross-border issue had featured heavily in discussions, not least because service changes on one side of the border could have a radical effect on services on the other. This had been the subject of a Select Committee investigation in the past but firm conclusions had been elusive. Passenger Focus had offered to facilitate future discussion in its position as an organisation that operated on both sides of the border.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chairman presented the minutes, which would be re-circulated for approval subject to corrections to the list of those present and the following amendments: the last line on page 4 should read 'without evidence of intent' and the last line of page 6 should read 'challenging', not 'challenged'. In the penultimate paragraph on page 7 it should read 'substantial reassurance'.

3 Action Matrix

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM228	16/05/13	Unpaid fare notices	Present fares and ticketing progress report to Board	MH	Oct 2013	Complete, delete
BM232	12/09/13	Clarity of Research Matrix	Add clarity to the research matrix and provide background information on ongoing research	IW	Nov 2013	Complete, delete
BM233	12/09/13	Non-evident coordination of major disruption schemes	To remind NR <i>devolved routes</i> to continue to ensure coordination on disruption	MH	Nov 2013	Ongoing as part of work-plan Complete, delete
BM234	12/09/13	Potential overlap between disruption and 2014 Scotland events	To consider the relative timings of disruption Scotland events	MH	Nov 2013	Ongoing, expected completion in 2013

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5 Chief Executive's Work Plan Report for Quarter 2

5.1 Activity Report

The work on franchise engagement was coming to fruition and would likely go public in time for the next board meeting. SL commented that London TravelWatch had a strong interest in the topic; it had been in discussion with the DfT and could contribute to Passenger Focus's work. The Chairman agreed and hoped the DfT could accommodate their working together on this important issue.

The recently issued East Coast prospectus indicated that there had been a step-change in thinking by the DfT. Bidders were now expected to place passenger interests at the heart of everything. The Chairman noted that, using the 'ammunition' of passenger feedback, Passenger Focus had been a catalyst for this shift.

PR sought an update on the Traffic Commissioner's consultation on punctuality and in relation to issue of information systems at stations. IW stated that a response to the Traffic Commissioner's consultation had been sent and would be circulated.

The rail information systems research was being scoped. AS noted that the industry's current response had much improved on previous occasions; companies made a clear decision what to do in advance of disruptive events and this was communicated. The certainty this provided was welcomed. GD agreed, but commented that there remained issues under the surface that required improvement, particularly Network Rail's capacity to process timetable alterations on Sundays. The Chairman said he would urge the ORR to study live events and take heed of situations on the ground, rather than undertaking purely an administrative exercise. IW highlighted upcoming work partly funded by the ORR to review its Code of Practice. The research aimed to capture an element of passengers' live experience as responses were collected

PR thought it should be possible to have real-time information systems across the network; it was not satisfactory for many passengers to have information that did not reflect the reality. The Board agreed. GD commented that within the next two years information systems would be fed by a single source and the onus would be on that single source to keep the information accurate.

AS noted that the Traffic Commissioner's guidance on bus punctuality appeared severe in its implication that 100% of buses should run on time. Passenger Focus had consulted passengers on their expectations, and they appreciated that traffic conditions sometimes led to delays. Generally passengers accepted up to five minutes' delay, but considered being early to be unforgivable.

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM235	14/11/13	Traffic Commissioner Consultation	Follow-up and circulate consultation response	IW		

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5.2 Research Report

IW outlined activity in the last quarter. There had been qualitative research on the extent to which passengers trusted TOCs and other rail players. There had also been joint research with the ORR on passenger experience and research into improvements at Edinburgh Waverley.

Looking forward, the inaugural Tram Passenger Survey (TPS) was underway and would deliver results in the New Year. IL noted that the TPS represented the first occasion in which respondents had the option of submitting an online survey. IW stated that this methodology had been shortlisted for a Market Research Society Award. It had also been piloted for the BPS. AS commented that the TPS was a novel development, and it was important to proceed carefully and to review it periodically.

5.3 Communications

There were no comments further to the Communications Team report, which was **noted**.

5.4 Resourcing

AS related that Passenger Focus was currently interviewing for the acting Head of Communications post and had shortlisted three very good candidates.

5.5 Corporate opportunities and risk register

ML sought clarification on the process for the recruitment of the new Chairman. JC related that Passenger Focus would assist in the recruitment campaign as managerial lead and primary response centre. The recruitment process was developing and the DfT had developed an information pack for potential applicants. This would be released once signed off by the Secretary of State, but first had to go through Number 10 and the Cabinet Office. It was anticipated that the campaign would go live from mid-January.

AS stated that further comments from board members on the risk register and the seven objectives were always welcome. JC advised the Board the document would be public henceforth. SL asked if the reputational risk posed by further *Which?* surveys was included. The Chairman considered it was certainly covered within the existing register but would inevitably need further thought at future meetings.

5.6 Finance report

Passenger Focus was operating within budget and profile. The board **noted** the finance report.

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6 Review of National Passenger Issues

MH outlined that the main theme in bus research had been punctuality. GD had worked on complementary research, particularly in terms of the impact on passengers of not having disruption data. Passenger Focus had now developed a strong catalogue of bus work and looking forward would consider the role played by the 'face of the bus driver'.

Rail franchising work continued apace, centred on embedding NPS and passenger satisfaction into contracts. Delivery against passenger feedback was increasingly being written into contracts; bidders were approaching Passenger Focus for clarification. Passenger Focus could help facilitate broader and deeper public consultation.

There had been some good outcomes from the fares review, both in what did and did not happen. Fares regulation had been under threat but remained, and the super-premium concept ended. Passenger Focus was now working on how it could be involved in trials around smart ticketing.

PM asked if there was scope for any work on highlighting the possible cost savings for passengers from breaking down long train journeys into several ticketed journeys. MH was aware that there could be numerous ways to split fares and save money; there were literally millions of potential route combinations. The Chairman commented that TOCs had previously been somewhat coy about the provision of multi ticketing options, but Passenger Focus had always been clear that all permitted route options should be available to passengers.

MH noted that, with open data, there were now apps making it possible for the passenger to identify routes where savings could be made. The Chairman cautioned against widely publicising the matter because of the danger that the beneficial anomalies built into the system could actually disadvantage passengers longer term. Passenger Focus should focus on cheap options that could be safely publicised.

The Chairman commented that there was much going on in research and policy. He was cautious of Passenger Focus accommodating an ever-increasing workload because resources were limited. At present, the workload was being managed well and there was considerable work in addition to that which had been highlighted.

7 Review of Passenger and Industry-Facing Work

DS noted that much of the Welsh work had been detailed at the 13 November conference. In addition to it, a lot of work was being undertaken to influence transport operators and industry stakeholders to make a difference, particularly in response to Passenger Surveys. Northern Rail, for instance, was keen to demonstrate that it took NPS results seriously, and was working with Passenger Focus to improve its satisfaction ratings. BPS results were becoming central to decisions at Central and West Midlands Transport Authorities and hopefully that impact could be spread widely. BPS was expanding and anticipated over 30,000 responses for 2013-14.

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The increasing stability of the Passenger Contact Team was reflected in its performance and strong satisfaction figures. The Chairman stressed the importance of being fleet of foot in identifying and acting on trends early. IL asked how many enquiries were typically in the in-tray. DS stated that there were between 35 and 50 cases for each team member, and related that the majority of enquiries progressed to cases and most of those achieved a useful result.

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM236	14/11/13	Passenger queries	Provide a detailed breakdown of queries received and action taken	DS		

MH related that there had been some engagement work looking at how people were accessing the BPS data. The numbers were healthy in terms of getting messages get to the wider industry.

PS questioned whether Passenger Focus made enough of the impact of its work with regard to strong individual cases. Specific case studies could influence debate and were particularly useful in addressing more general issues. The Chairman noted, though, that the Contact Team dealt with a narrow area of issues that did not reflect the full spectrum of the Organisation's work. It was important to follow up enquiries, learn from incidents and deal with the operating company responsible. AS added that the monthly newsletter already featured one case in each issue and that this was its most read page.

PR asked whether East Coast's position on passenger satisfaction was due primarily to the reliability of its trains or the attitude of staff. DS noted that there were often complaints about complaints-handling. He also noted that when a franchise changed hands, the vast bulk of its staff remained the same. The cultural change, therefore, still demanded focus when there was a change of owner.

8 Matters for Discussion/Approval

8.1 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (17 October 2013)

ML stated that Passenger Focus's financial position was healthy. Nigel Holden had confidence that spend against budget would be allocated fully by the end of the year. The DfT had committed £400,000 for smart ticketing, but Passenger Focus did not anticipate using more than £200,000. The Chairman commented that this was largely a result of spending the money wisely and demanding good value for money.

ML highlighted that the Cabinet Office aimed to deliver savings through central management contracts. Passenger Focus would be expected to use more framework contracts and would monitor the impact of the Crown Commercial Service on its work and budget.

The DfT was currently altering the format of its half-yearly assurance standards report. This meant that the October report had been delayed until December. It contained some useful questions, however, and would be revisited.

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The results of the third party funding research audit had attracted a 'substantial assurance' rating. Actions arising from the audit would be monitored by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Board **noted** the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting.

8.2 Passenger Priorities Research

MH outlined the proposal to obtain passenger priorities for improvement to transport services and align these with the areas of research with the greatest scope for improvement. Similar research had been conducted before and could be applied for England, Scotland and Wales. IW commented that the research would be undertaken at a higher level than previously, but with the same methodology. The Chairman commented that priorities research was effectively the bedrock of the organisation's work and refreshing this was therefore critical.

MH highlighted that the proposal would not preclude bespoke franchise priorities, focusing instead on the 'big picture'. SL asked whether the research would have sufficient breakdown in research to identify the London Travel Area. IW thought it would, although MH added that it was a function of the sample size.

PM asked whether similar activity had been undertaken for bus and tram; interconnectivity was important and research should not be conducted in silos. MH said that interconnectivity was covered in terms of connections between bus and rail. AS asked if the whole door-to-door journey was covered. MH thought that too broad a focus. The Chairman recommended sticking close to past research; the cleaner it was, the more use the priorities would be. The door-to-door journey, though, was worth bearing in mind.

The Board **approved** the research proposal. MH would share its final scope with the board.

9 Half Yearly Risk and Assurance Committee Report

ML stated that there were no issues evident for the last six months. Analysis against risk of the top seven objectives had been a useful exercise in achieving an understanding of the mitigating actions to undertake. The annual fraud and bribery risk assessment had been completed. Once mitigating actions had been applied, all areas dropped to amber or green.

The Chairman thanked ML for the committee's report and its helpful, clear format.

10 Renaming the National Passenger Survey

Given that the name of the NPS was anomalous alongside the bus and tram surveys, IW **proposed** altering its name to the 'National Rail Passenger Survey'. The Chairman noted that the rail survey incorporated rail patronage nationwide and so the proposed name was pertinent. Bus and tram surveys, on the other hand, were not fully national.

The Board **approved** the new name.

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11 Any other business

There was no further business. The Chairman remarked in closing that it was to be welcomed that Passenger Focus continued to travel to different parts of the country despite limitations imposed by austerity measures, and thanked Martin Clarke and Francis Gahan in particular for the excellent arrangements over the two days.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:



Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman, Passenger Focus

21/11/2013

Date