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Making a difference
2013-14

Draft Work plan
1 February 2013

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1. Introduction

Passenger Focus is the independent, official consumer watchdog for Britain's rail passengers and England's bus coach and tram passengers. Basing our work on research we aim to make a difference for all Britain's passengers. We will boost our representation of rail passengers in Scotland and Wales.

We will focus on the pressing consumer issues facing passengers as well as dealing with rail 'appeal' complaints. The views of over 100,000 passengers will be researched on a range of key issues that affect them. All of our research will be published and used to drive change, while being useful to Government and the transport industry in the process.

Passenger focus will concentrate on key passenger issues and work themes this year. We have learned a lot in the last 12 months about what Passenger Focus, in its current shape and size, is capable of. It is also likely that this work plan will be need to be revisited during the year – events dictate work priorities to a degree. The scale of some activities may change as we secure match funding for some research projects. It is likely that rail franchise replacement will still feature as a major part of this work – this is a still a key moment to influence long-term decisions.

We will continue to build our understanding of the needs of bus passengers by expanding our research base. If a Tram Passenger Survey is launched we will also, for the first time, be able to produce regional passenger surveys looking at the comparative experiences of bus, tram and train passengers in an area. This potentially powerful new product will give us the ability to really understand the choices facing passengers in given areas.

The following are the key areas of focus for the work plan:

- Passenger satisfaction – benchmarking, understanding and driving change
- Rail 'appeal' complaints handling where train companies and passengers are deadlocked
- Passenger trust: improving transparency and perception, particularly in relation to performance data
- Helping the industry to understand and respond to passenger experiences of disruption
- Fares, ticketing and value for money
- Articulating the passenger voice in franchise replacements, bus quality partnerships and contracts and other longer term planning issues

We will boost access to our data and research (including complaints data and trends) through a new website portal. We will also explore bringing together more information about the passenger experience of particular train and bus companies in one place –

this might not be hosted by Passenger Focus but could help boost transparency and accountability.

We will continue to improve and develop relationships with partner passenger organisations as well as local and national government, user groups, regulators and the passenger transport industry. This will involve a significant amount of stakeholder engagement work. We hope the board will meet in public in Scotland, Wales and outside of London. We plan to publish a monthly e newsletter – Passenger Voice – updating passengers and stakeholders on our work and plans.

Anthony Smith
Chief Executive

2. About Passenger Focus

2.1 Mission

Getting the best deal for passengers.

2.2 Values

- Focused on consumers - making a difference for all passengers
- Being useful
- Efficient
- Credible, basing our work on research
- Respect for our people
- Accountable and transparent

2.3 Priorities

Passenger Focus is a relatively small organisation. We make our work choices based on passengers' priorities. These are evidence-based from our research. In developing our work priorities we ask:

- Is the issue of direct concern to passengers? We will tackle issues that affect either a large number of passengers or which represent a more serious detriment to a smaller group
- Will addressing the issue improve the service and / or deliver significant improvements to the passenger experience?
- Do we have the resources to deal with the issue?
- Are we best placed to focus on the subject?
- Is the issue within our remit?

3. Longer term goals

What will Passenger Focus look like and be doing in 2016?

Passenger Focus has a number of longer-term aspirations. This work plan represents the first step in that direction.

Passenger Focus wants to:

- Re-enforce our position as the leading Great Britain passenger representative organisation.
- Boost the credibility, reach and accessibility of our research and evidence base.
- Increase match funding of research projects.
- Continue to have staff that want to work at Passenger Focus.
- Demonstrate high levels of accountability and transparency in our work.
- Clearly make a difference to the passenger experience in key areas

4. Research and projects planned for 2012-13

National Passenger Survey

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) provides a powerful network-wide picture of customers' satisfaction with rail travel. Passenger opinions of train services are collected twice a year from a representative sample of passenger journeys. Passengers' overall satisfaction and satisfaction with 30 specific aspects of service can therefore be compared over time. The research contains passenger ratings of their journey for each individual Train Operating Company (TOC). Ratings are also provided for each sector i.e. London and the South East, long distance, and regional operators.

An innovation with effect from the Autumn 2010 wave is publishing passenger ratings for certain specific aspects of service for all TOCs on one page and results for routes within TOCs. National results by journey purpose, age, gender and how passengers spend their time on train journeys are now also included. Over 65,000 rail passengers participate in the NPS every year.

Bus Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus has developed the Bus Passenger Survey to deliver a robust measure of bus passenger satisfaction – to provide detail at administrative area level and for bus operators within that area.

Passengers rate their satisfaction with a wide range of aspects of their bus journey as well as their overall satisfaction with that bus journey and their rating of value for money. Our research methodology has been widely acclaimed and is increasingly being seen as an industry benchmark

The main objectives of the survey are to (a) measure the availability of facilities at the bus stop; (b) measure satisfaction with a range of factors associated with bus travel – bus stop factors, bus boarding factors, on-bus factors, and bus driver factors; and (c) identify the drivers of overall satisfaction based on the range of factors in the survey.

It is impossible to cover all services falling within our remit in any one year, so a further objective of this continuing work is to maintain the potential to compare the results from future surveys with those from previous surveys. Over 28,000 bus passengers participate every year.

Coach and tram research

Passenger Focus will commission research on coach and tram travel when there is a good business case to do so, and where funds allow. We hope to pilot, with industry match funding, a coach passenger survey. Building on the early 2013 tram passenger survey pilot we would like to carry out a passenger satisfaction survey of all Britain's tram systems. This would allow comparative benchmarking among the systems but also between bus and tram. This would require match funding from the industry and local government.

Scottish passenger issues



- Carry out rail National Passenger Survey on ScotRail and cross-border services. Use results to drive change for passengers
- Explore possibility of Bus Passenger Surveys being carried out in Scotland
- Work on at least one specific Scottish passenger issue on conjunction with government and industry
- Try to ensure all rail research projects have a distinct Scottish element

Welsh passenger issues



- Carry out rail National Passenger Survey on Arriva Trains Wales and cross-border services. Use results to drive change for passengers
- Explore possibility of Bus Passenger Surveys being carried out in Wales
- Work on at least one specific Welsh passenger issue on conjunction with government and industry
- Try to ensure all rail research projects have a distinct Welsh element

Other research

Research conducted in addition to our flagship NPS and BPS will reflect key organisational priorities. Thus we will conduct a small number of surveys to uncover passenger priorities to feed into franchises, as these opportunities arise.

We will continue to look for opportunities to present the passenger perspective on major projects as we are doing with our 'released capacity' study on HS2. Such opportunities may include new trains or electrification, and will involve, as does our HS2 work, collaboration with other industry or government stakeholders wherever possible and appropriate.

Further bus research will be driven by what passengers tell us their priorities are, including information provision and multi-operator/modal ticketing.

The following represents our indicative list of potential research projects. This will change according to funding and other priorities:

Publish the following research which was started in 2012-13:

- Rail passenger attitudes to various potential smart ticket 'products'. The first output from our Department for Transport funded work on smartcards – passenger attitudes to the so called 'South East FlexibleTicketing' programme
- Exploring the bus passenger experience of the Oxford Smartzone project
- Exploring general passenger attitudes to smarter ticket products and ways of delivering them to passengers
- Rating passenger experiences of various transport smart phone applications – what works?
- Publishing the initial results from our Bus Punctuality Project – aimed at helping operators and local authorities understand performance issues
- Research looking at perceptions of value for money among bus passengers, probing how issues such as ticketing, trust and transparency. Research to further understand the bus passenger experience of disruption, as well as their needs in terms of information (both content and means of access).
- Further work on passenger attitudes to "on time" rail performance data publication

New research:

- There are a number of potential franchise renewals that could re-commence during 2012/13 that may require fresh research or a refresh.
- Other elements of smartcard development research, funded by the Department, covering both rail and bus, and potentially running over two years.
- We will consider research for bus quality contracts that adopts some of the concepts we apply to rail franchise renewal, dependent on internal resourcing and developments in the bus industry.
- Articulating the passenger voice in franchise replacements, bus quality partnerships and contracts and other longer term planning issues. This may include both quantitative and qualitative research, as well as work with non-users.
- Publish research on the specific needs of younger passengers.

- Develop a Tram Passenger Survey, working with Passenger Transport Executives and tram operators. This will build on the pilot exercise carried out in early 2013.
- Two pieces of work on rail crowding. Firstly, a review of current crowding issues and their causes. Secondly, a study on how train interior design affects passenger perceptions of crowding.
- Develop a survey of coach passenger satisfaction.
- Pilot new ways for train companies to communicate with passengers to help build trust, confidence and understanding. This will be done in conjunction with a train company and the Rail Safety and Standards Board.
- Research into passenger understanding of how the industry is structured and run, and the degree to which they wish be involved in holding operators to account.

5. Key themes

5.1 Rail passenger work

Passenger satisfaction:

- Rail National Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. We will continue to drive improvements for passengers and understand their needs. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. There is potential for a revised questionnaire and methodology.

Passenger trust:

- Examine the importance of trust and consumer confidence in forming passengers' perceptions of rail, especially when it comes to the provision of information to passengers and buying tickets
- Monitor how well train companies perform in key areas – e.g. on things like displaying ticket validities or the accuracy of information given to passengers
- Continue to work on improving levels of transparency on rail performance data including publishing more route based NPS data.

Disruption:

- Help the industry understand the passenger perspective on disruption management.
- Aim to reduce the impact on passengers during planned disruption.
- Maintain improvements to the way the industry keeps passengers informed during unplanned disruption.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Provide major input to fares review.
- Press for improvements to retailing including more consistent application of unpaid fare notice rules and commenting on ticket office closure proposals.
- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

Industry long term planning:

- Work with bidders and the Department for Transport to improve franchise specification and bids based on original passenger research.
- Provide passenger input to long term industry planning processes with particular attention paid to boosting capacity and monitoring of passenger focus of proposals
- Testing the rail industry promise to assist passengers who require pre-booked assistance – 'Passenger Assist'. The complexity of this research will require match funding
- Improving and commenting on Disabled Persons Protection Policies.
- Possible work on station improvements

Complaints handling:

- Handle some 15,000 enquiries from passengers and intervene in some 6,000 issues raised in 3,000 rail appeal complaints.
- Achieve at least 70% passenger satisfaction with how we handled appeal complaints.

5.2 Bus

Passenger satisfaction:

- Bus Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. We will continue to drive improvements for passengers and understand their needs. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. The research will be done in two waves, spring and autumn.

Punctuality:

- Use the findings from the Bus Punctuality Project to help improve bus timekeeping.
- Push for requirements that operators publish punctuality data.
- Findings to be presented to local bus operators and transport authorities through a series of workshops and events.
- Workshops could be expanded to include BPS “disruption” research

Disruption:

- Help industry understand the passenger perspective on disruption management.
- Monitor improvements to the quality of bus industry disruption management and information.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Research to probe bus passengers’ views on value for money and ticketing
- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.
- Monitor sample fares across England to determine how they are made known to passengers and how the fare levels change over time

Industry long term planning:

- Work with Passenger Transport Executives and urban local authorities on plans to improve bus passenger services including quality partnerships or contracts

Service changes:

- Following Passenger Focus guidelines on service change consultation – work with some councils and Confederation of Passenger Transport to improve quality of consultation and notification with passengers when there are major changes to network

Complaints handling:

- Continue our work with the Bus Appeals Body improving the quality of the handling of bus appeal complaints.

5.3 Coach

Passenger satisfaction:

- Coach Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. Potential for groundbreaking quantitative research on satisfaction partly funded by industry.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

5.4 Tram

Passenger satisfaction:

- Tram Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. Potential for new work co funded with PTEs and tram operators.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

6. Transparency – being more visible, and measuring and reporting our performance

Passenger Focus will:

Report

- Report four times a year in public at Board meetings on our plan delivery, including reports on our passenger and industry facing work. The Board will also receive reports from meetings of the Audit Committee, which supervises Passenger Focus's internal audit programme and management of risk, including information risk
- Use financial and key performance indicator data to manage the underlying performance of the business, compiled and reviewed monthly
- Publish an annual report on performance, activities and expenditure
- Explore how to gather and publish more information regarding our performance and effectiveness
- Maintain a useful, easy to use website as a key 'entry-point' into Passenger Focus, and seek and publish feedback on its usefulness
- Publish a wide range of research reports and other publications
- Maintain a proactive and well informed press office
- Publish on our website proceedings and decisions reached by our Board and management team

Track

- The number of passengers that we engage with thorough research and consultation.
- Major policy decisions within the rail, bus and coach industries and across local and central government that we have influenced
- Staff attitudes. Carry out annual staff attitude survey
- Stakeholders. What do those who we seek to influence think of us? Carry out stakeholder survey

7. Budget 2013-14

£000's	2013-14 Budget		2012-13 Forecast Outturn
Fixed pay	2,605		2,464
Fixed overheads	561		675
Variable overheads	301		323
Total running costs	3,467		3,462
Projects			
Research and other projects (net cost)	328		303
Bus passenger survey (net cost)	240		235
Total projects	568		538
Net operating costs	4,035		4,000
National passenger survey	865		865
Total net operating costs	4,900		4,865
Additional projects: Funded by the Department for Transport			
Office relocation	-		280
Smart ticketing project	400 ¹		200
Funded directly by operators			
Bus passenger survey	260		260

¹ Spend of up to £400,000 on agreed projects

