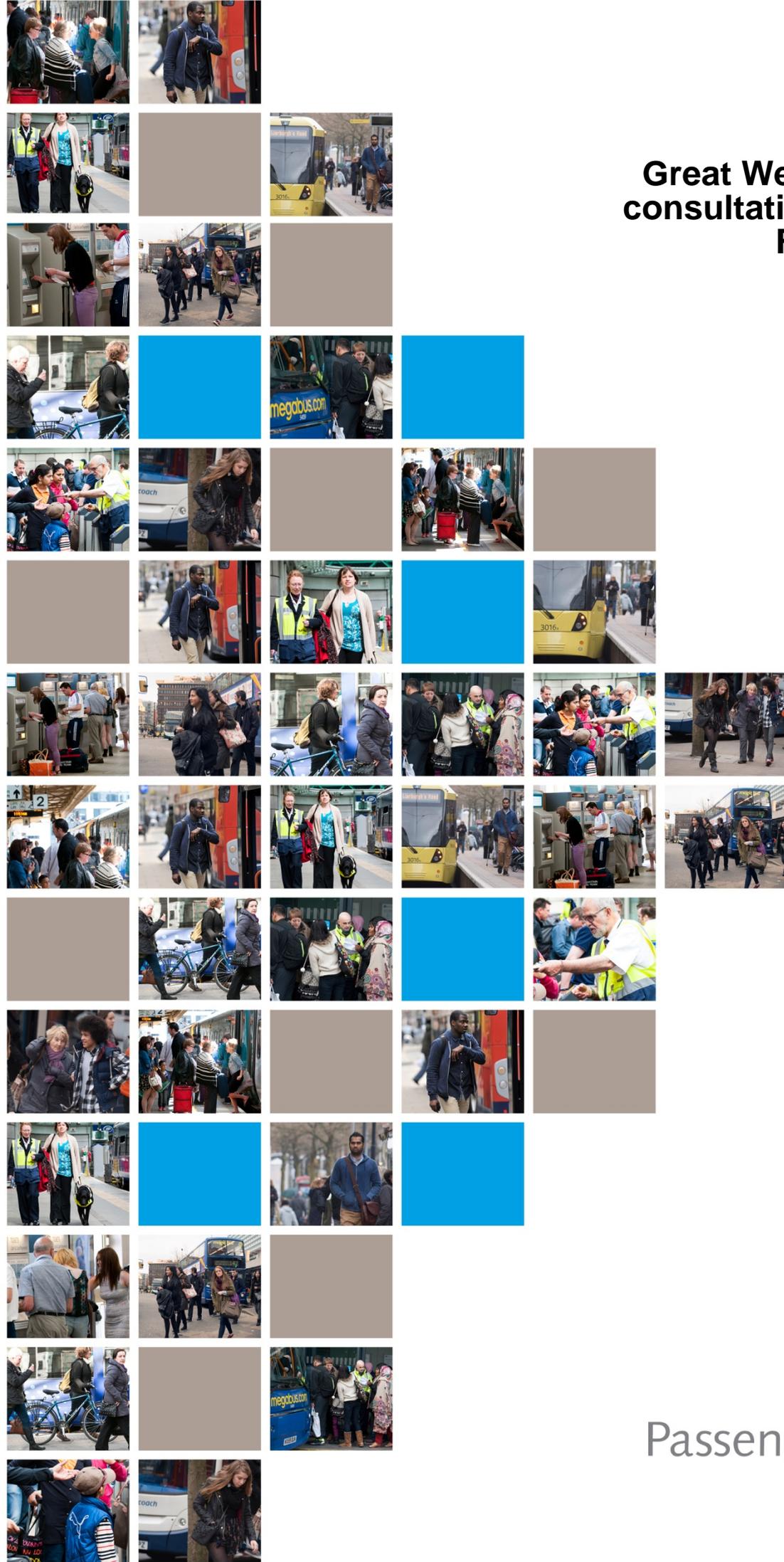


Great Western franchise consultation – Passenger Focus response

June 2014



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Great Western consultation response

Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus is the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers, England's bus and tram passengers outside London and coach passengers in England on scheduled domestic services. We are an independent non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground. We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and government to secure journey improvements.

1. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passengers' perspective as the specification for the next, important, five year period on the Great Western franchise is developed. When the requirements of the franchise are established it is vital that the needs of passengers, who use and pay for rail services, are placed squarely at the heart of the contract.

Our response draws on two rich seams of franchise specific data. It combines knowledge and understanding drawn from passenger reports on their current journeys on First Great Western (FGW)¹ with new information on passengers' priorities for improvement². Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

Our research, which will be detailed in further sections of this response, highlights the central importance to passengers of value for money, capacity and punctuality. These core needs must be the top requirements in the specification for the next five years.

It is imperative that, whatever the contractual arrangements that are put in place for the five years from September 2015, there is no repeat of the early stage failures of the contract that was in place in 2005. The specification must build on the existing framework of services and seek progressive improvements in all areas of performance. It is important that the franchise ensures that existing demands are adequately addressed and that, if necessary, franchise reviews can respond to any

¹ National Rail Passenger Survey, sample 3140 in Autumn 2013

² FGW passengers' priorities for improvement, March-April 2014 research, (unpublished), sample 1655

changes or inaccuracies in planning assumptions and ensure these are built into the plans for the ensuing periods.

The hallmark of the next five years on Great Western will be the delivery of complex infrastructure upgrades and the introduction of new rolling stock. It is vital that the delivery of the new trains proceeds along with the infrastructure improvements, as these are integral to unlocking the long-awaited capacity and service improvements on this franchise. Alongside such substantial change, however, there will inevitably be disruption. It is critical that comprehensive, passenger-centric plans are carefully developed and implemented throughout this period of change.

Our research into passenger understanding of, and desire for involvement in, the franchise process³ led to our Passenger Power! campaign and a call for more recognition of the passenger within the franchising system. Recent announcements of franchise policy have made welcome commitments to a greater emphasis on the quality of the passenger experience and enhanced arrangements for engagement and communication with customers. It is important these promises are brought to life in the specification for the next franchise and that passengers can see these ideals manifest in the services they receive.

Passenger Focus is committed to the promotion of passenger interests in this franchise and will continue to work closely with DfT on the specification, and the operator on delivery, to ensure that services address both current and evolving needs throughout the contract term.

1.1 Franchise consultation response

In this response we consider consultation questions for which we have relevant information and appropriate evidence of passenger needs and aspirations. We also provide a commentary on other significant issues which we believe should be addressed within the Great Western franchise specification and final contract.

Passenger Focus is adopting a strategic approach to this response, which focuses largely on higher level issues. Passengers and stakeholders will all have their own experiences and specific aspirations which they will want considered in future plans.

It is important that the DfT and the franchise operator listen carefully to the views expressed by those whose lives are impacted by decisions about the future of the franchise and the day-to-day operations which result from this.

³ Giving passengers a voice in rail services, June 2013

2. Summary

Our 2014 research provides a very clear picture of passengers' priorities for improvement on the Great Western franchise. Top, by some considerable margin, is 'price of train tickets offers better value for money'. Second, is 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train'. A strong third priority is 'trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel'.

The next group of important priority factors also feature what can be regarded as core elements of service. Passengers want improvements in punctuality and reliability, fewer disruptions and good information about their services. Reductions in journey time is also ranked in the top ten factors for improvement for most of the passengers on the franchise.

Analysis of the passenger priorities for improvement and drivers of passenger satisfaction/dissatisfaction highlight a number of factors that should be top level priorities for the next five years on the Great Western franchise. These are:

- value for Money
- capacity and frequency
- punctuality and reliability
- minimising and improving the handling of disruption
- Information

Beyond the clear priorities set out above, it is also important for the specification to seek ongoing improvements to the overall quality of passenger experience and in engagement.

Full details of our research, analysis and response to the consultation questions are set out in the main sections of the response.

3. Overview of the franchise

The Great Western franchise is large, complex and geographically diverse. Passenger rail services provide for a variety of needs and are delivered through three distinct service groups⁴, each of which has a number of additional sub-sectors within it.

Within the territory covered by the franchise there are some significantly different socio-demographic factors. The age and income profile of the far south-west, for example, contrasts strongly with some of the characteristics of the urban and suburban commuter belt around London.

⁴ Thames Valley, Long Distance, West – See Appendix 5 for details

Some Great Western services are busy and highly profitable. Other elements of the network fulfil important social functions and underpin economic activity. Many of these regional issues are covered in some detail in a previous submission by TravelWatch South West⁵. Local authorities and other agencies also have a role to play in identifying particular needs in specific areas and need to be engaged in the ongoing plans for the franchise.

The scale of change that will occur during the life of the franchise is immense. The future operator must demonstrate excellent skills in planning, project management and in collaborative working.

4. Passenger research and implications for the franchise

Consultation question 6 - Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which they believe should be considered in the development of the franchise specification

4.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base

Passenger Focus is committed to evidence-based influencing and has a considerable body of research on matters that are important to passengers. Much of this is directly relevant to the next term of the Great Western franchise.

In this section we highlight the findings of our latest investigation into Great Western passengers' priorities for improvement and some of the core information about the current experience on the franchise, drawing on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) data. Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

Other research is cited as applicable within the sections below.

4.1.1 First Great Western Rail Passengers' Priorities for improvement 2014

To calculate passengers' priorities, we used a statistical approach called 'Max-Diff' (Maximum Scaling Difference). This is a way of evaluating the relative importance of a large number of issues. Passengers were presented with lists of five priorities and they had to indicate their highest and lowest priority for improvement. 15 questions were asked in total which covered all 31 priorities. We used this approach because it is easier for the passenger to fill out the questionnaire, and it minimises the number of invalid questionnaires returned.

We previously carried out passenger priorities research in 2009, however the results from 2009 are not directly comparable with this survey. This is because we enhanced the survey by using the Max-Diff methodology (a ranking exercise was

⁵ Greater Western or Lesser Western, September 2011

used in 2009) and we refreshed the priorities for improvement statements to make them clearer and more focussed, as well as replacing some priorities with new ones.

Table 1(X) First Great Western Rail Passengers' Priorities for improvement 2014

Table X - First Great Western Rail Passengers' Priorities for Improvement 2014

	FGW		LTV		LD		West	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	483	1	489	1	473	1	488	1
Passengers always able to get a seat on the train	354	2	325	2	385	2	356	2
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	269	3	286	3	256	3	260	3
More trains arrive on time than happens now	173	4	191	4	159	4	162	5
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	162	5	165	6	153	5	168	4
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	157	6	177	5	144	6	144	6
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	132	7	146	7	122	9	123	8
Accurate and timely information available at stations	132	8	133	8	125	8	139	7
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	117	9	107	10	137	7	107	9
Journey time is reduced	108	10	112	9	110	10	97	11
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	92	11	93	12	88	14	95	14
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	91	12	85	13	96	12	95	13
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	91	13	82	15	98	11	97	12
Connections with other train services are always good	90	14	84	14	90	13	100	10
Less disruption due to engineering works	87	15	96	11	82	15	81	15
Good connections with other public transport at stations	67	16	61	16	66	16	78	16
Seating area on train is very comfortable	57	17	53	17	63	17	57	17
New ticket formats available such as smartcards, ticket Apps etc.	49	18	46	18	48	18	55	18
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	47	19	46	19	48	19	49	19
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	46	20	45	20	46	20	49	20
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	41	21	35	22	45	21	44	21
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	36	22	34	23	37	23	37	22
There is always space in the station car park	35	23	37	21	43	22	19	29
Improved personal security on the train	32	24	30	24	31	25	35	23
Improved personal security at the station	31	25	29	25	30	26	34	24
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	28	26	25	27	33	24	27	26
More staff available at stations to help passengers	28	27	28	26	27	27	30	25
Reduced queuing time when buying a ticket	20	28	20	28	20	28	21	27
More staff available on trains to help passengers	19	29	19	29	19	29	20	28
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	16	30	15	30	17	30	16	30
Safe and secure bicycle parking available at the station	11	31	9	31	11	31	15	31

The priorities in table 1 above are shown as an index averaged on 100. An index of 300 is three times as important as the average and an index score of 50 is half as important as average. So in table 1 we can see that the top priority 'the price of train tickets offers better value for money' is nearly five times as important as the average, and 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train' three and half times as important as the average.

This 2014 research provides a very clear picture of passengers' priorities for improvement on the Great Western franchise. Top, by some considerable margin,

with an index of 483 across the franchise as a whole, is 'price of train tickets offers better value for money'. Second, again by a substantial margin and indexed at 354, is 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train'. A strong third priority is 'trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel' with index 269.

Looking at the results in the round, we can identify some clear messages. Firstly, the value for money for price of ticket is confirmed as the out-and-out aspiration for improvement, on FGW as it is nationally. And it should be noted that this is influenced not just by price, but also by punctuality and reliability, whether the passenger can get a seat and provision of information when there are delays.

It is little surprise, then, that capacity and frequency are also very much in passengers' minds when they consider improvements. Passengers clearly want to get a seat when they make their journey, and have trains available when they wish to travel, with the corresponding result that more seats are available the more frequent the service.

The next group of important priority factors also feature what can be regarded as core elements of service. Passengers want improvements in punctuality and reliability, fewer disruptions and good information about their services. Reductions in journey time is also ranked in the top ten factors for improvement for most of the passengers on the franchise.

The fact that free wi-fi on the train is ranked high on the list of priorities for improvement confirms increasing recognition that connectivity is now an important element of the rail offer. It has been referred to as likely to become a hygiene factor and this indicates that aspirations for this provision are increasing.

The top priorities for improvement largely focus on the basic elements of the rail service – value for money, getting a seat, frequency, punctuality, delays and information. This is not to say the remaining priorities are not important to the passenger experience, it is just that they are not as important to improve as the top ranking.

The passengers' priorities research has a sample size of 1655 for FGW and contains a wealth of data which can be cut in many in different ways to explore how priorities vary by demographic and journey purpose, amongst other things. This information will be provided to the DfT as well as FGW and we encourage its use to enable a detailed understanding of the aspirations of Great Western passengers across the network.

4.1.2 Drivers of passenger satisfaction

Figure 1 - drivers of passenger satisfaction by First Great Western building block

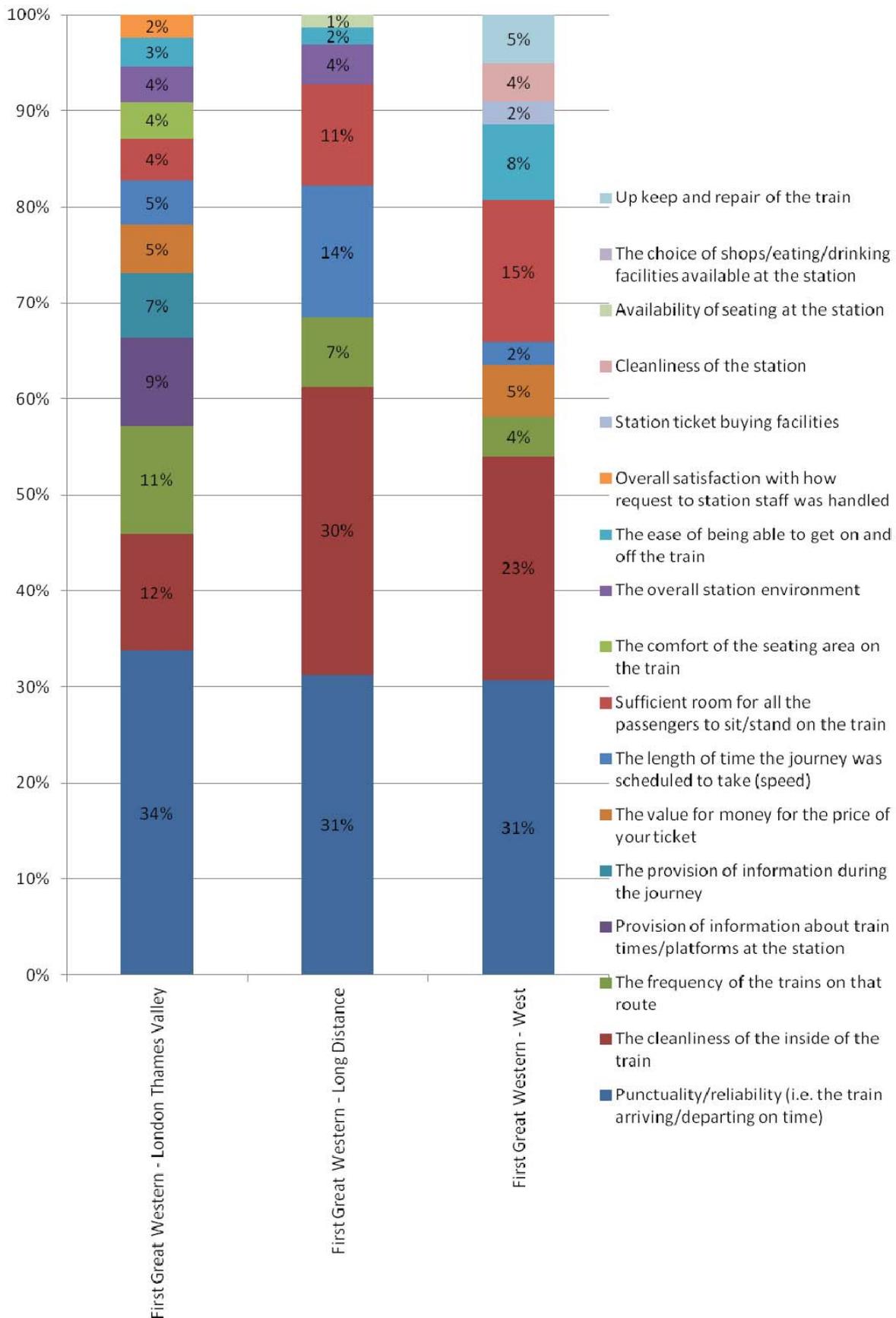
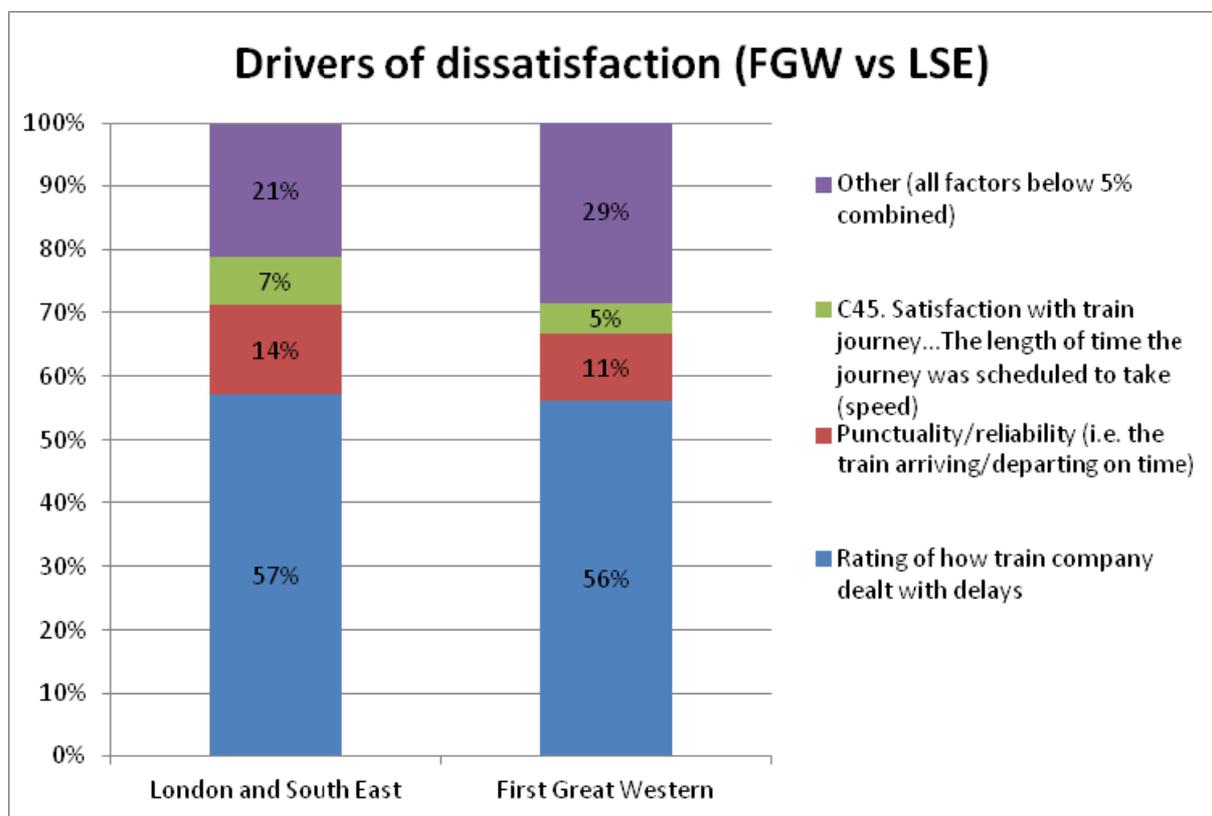


Figure 1 shows that punctuality and reliability is the prime driver of satisfaction for passengers on all three parts of the Great Western franchise (34 per cent for Thames Valley and 31 per cent for Long Distance and West). However, it is notable that the cleanliness of the inside of the train is very close in significance on both Long Distance and West, at 30 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. It is also the second highest driver on Thames Valley (12 per cent). Other factors notable on one or more of the service groups include frequency of trains, provision of information at the station and during the journey, length of journey time and sufficient room to sit/stand.

4.1.3 Drivers of passenger dissatisfaction

Figure 2 - drivers of passenger dissatisfaction



An analysis of the factors that drive passenger dissatisfaction also echoes the importance of key service factors to passengers. Where delays are not dealt with well, passengers will be dissatisfied. Poor perception of punctuality and reliability is the other notable factor that drives dissatisfaction.

4.2 Assessment of top level priorities for the franchise

Analysis of the passenger priorities for improvement and drivers of satisfaction/dissatisfaction highlight a number of factors that should be top level priorities for the next five year Great Western franchise to address. These are:

- value for money
- capacity and frequency
- punctuality and reliability
- minimising and improving the handling of disruption
- information.

5. Objectives for the franchise

Consultation question 1 - Respondents are encouraged to consider whether any additional objectives should be reflected in the franchise specification for the 5 year period from September 2015

Passenger Focus recognises the validity of the proposed franchise objectives but would emphasise the following points:

There will be upheaval and challenge during the five years ahead and the need to deliver a good service to passengers nevertheless should be explicitly referenced in the objectives. The extent of the transformation that will occur on the Great Western franchise cannot be underestimated and this will require skill and resource to deliver. Passenger interests should be placed at the heart of planning and delivery of change and the impact of disruption managed and minimised, whether this arises from the planned upgrade or maintenance of the railway or from unforeseen events such as the extreme weather that had such dramatic impact recently. The franchise operator should be required to demonstrate that they intend to provide sufficient planning and project management to handle perturbations, however caused, and provide quality information to passengers about all aspects of service at all times.

Capacity enhancements are a central passenger requirement and the substantial growth in demand on this franchise has been well documented. It is important that within the franchise contract there are mechanisms to enable the operator to respond to pressures which arise across the network. They must also be tasked with ensuring effective planning is undertaken for the future needs of the franchise in Control Period 6 (CP6) and beyond.

The emphasis on ensuring the overall passenger experience improves is welcome and appropriate. Passenger Focus believes that there is an important role for NRPS in assessing this, as a genuine measure of passenger views. Passengers will also expect more than simply steady-state in this area and the objectives should make clear that 'existing arrangements' are the baseline from which improvements will be driven, not a sufficient goal in themselves.

We should also like to see an explicit reference to engendering a culture that recognises passengers are the very reason the organisation exists, ensuring that passengers are valued and appreciated at every level of the operation. This approach needs to be driven from the top to achieve exemplary staff behaviours amongst a workforce that is, and feels, genuinely empowered. The ethos must be that passenger interests are central to the decisions and actions of the business, making a genuine and consistent demonstration of care for whether a passenger returns again.

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of cost efficiency and its relevance to fare-paying passengers. However, the role of staff in delivering many aspects of service valued by passengers, particularly relating to information and a sense of security, should not be overlooked.

A further objective of improving passenger engagement and building trust should be added. This should include a requirement for ensuring effective two-way communications, clarity on promises, feedback in relation to passenger input and a commitment to genuine transparency.

Transparency requirements should focus on the factors that are important to passengers. Clear expectations should be set for disaggregation to the lowest level possible to enable passengers to access data relating to the services relevant to them, including information about 'on time'/'right time' performance and the measurement of punctuality at stations served, as well as at destination. Indeed, we encourage complete granularity from which data are aggregated and not the other way round.

6. Enhancement schemes

Within this section, and those that follow, we will reference some issues that have come to our attention, either through feedback or identified through our broader work. These are not portrayed as either comprehensive or exclusive. Many other suggestions and ideas will be provided in input from local and regional stakeholders, including Travel Watch South West.

Consultation question 2 - Respondents are encouraged to consider and identify any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand, which should be reflected in the specification for the new franchise.

Experience has shown that it is difficult to accurately forecast and model demand on Community Rail lines (see response to question 12 for more details). It will be important that any assessment of future demand is built on robust evidence of current actual usage. More generally, we observe:

- any flexibility to revise timetables when required in light of changes in demand has to be subject to appropriate consultation
- the long lead times for rail developments – this needs to be faster, to provide effective solutions when they are needed
- Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Local Authorities (LAs) must liaise – and LAs should consider rail's role in meeting economic and social objectives and providing links to new developments or regeneration schemes.
- it is vital that the operator has a mechanism to handle interactions with a range of partners – a stakeholder manager is not enough; it needs someone to manage the projects and the interfaces between LA/any third parties/Network Rail (NR)/DfT and the TOC themselves.

Consultation question 3 - Respondents are encouraged to highlight interfaces with any other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the next five years, which the operator may need to consider.

In addition to the schemes listed in the consultation document, we note the potential interplay with integration in the Cardiff city region with South East Wales Metro, which plans to link up a network of rail and bus services for passengers in the region, together with smart ticketing.

The specification must also accommodate the need for forecasting and planning services in the light of line-speed improvements and re-signalling, plus the impact of any other external schemes.

Consultation question 5 - Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this consultation, as well as any supporting business case or value for money (VfM) analysis.

Regarding the potential for decrements, experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well planned and effective mitigations, including clear passenger information, put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

7. Potential franchise remapping

Consultation question 4 – Respondents are invited to identify any changes or reorganisation to the routes served by the Great Western franchise that they would recommend; and to explain their rationale.

Passenger Focus has not examined passenger views regarding any potential franchise remapping. However, in research with passengers on Northern /TransPennine Express routes⁶ we explored passenger attitudes to both brand

⁶ Northern and TransPennine franchises – passenger research, November 2012

loyalty to operators and potential devolution of rail responsibilities. The principal findings from this research indicate clearly that passengers' requirements focus on the delivery of an effective service more than who runs the rail operation.

The significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of remapping must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers. There may be benefits and drawbacks associated with transfers and the overall balance of these for the majority of passengers must be the key to any decision. There should also be a transparent evaluation of the costs of any re-organisation and clarity about how they will be met. Passengers should not have to bear the price of transfers initiated principally for organisational reasons.

A critical factor that must be assessed is which operator is best placed to manage the services, maintain the trains, and provide the best response to passenger needs. Proposals should be subject to proper consultation.

Should any Great Western services transfer to another franchise then existing arrangements for passenger access to discounted tickets for certain journeys (e.g. Groupsave and Weekend First) should be maintained or comparable products provided. Passengers should not suffer as a result of reorganisation.

Should services to any destinations transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption, connections and the management of station facilities. There must also be a clear agreement over responsibilities for complaints handling and compensation claims during the transition period.

Notwithstanding the caveats above, we note that Great Western is a large, complex and highly differentiated franchise and a product of combining three previously separate franchises. We agree that there may be merit in exploring the synergies between franchise areas and the potential benefits to be gained by reviewing which services should sit in which operation.

A number of possibilities that might be explored come to mind:

- Once Crossrail is fully open to Reading and Heathrow, the West Ealing to Greenford shuttle will be notable as a DfT-specified service wholly within the TfL area. It will also be a diesel outpost on what will, by then, be a largely electric railway.
- Until 2003 FGW ran a through train from Paddington to Fishguard connecting to/from the night Stena Line sailing from/to Rosslare (sailings are currently at 0245 and 1430 from Fishguard, with arrivals from Rosslare 0015 and 1230) – until (the year) 2000 the day boat had a through service to/from Paddington, too. Since then, the ORR station usage figures show a doubling of use of Fishguard

Harbour station. There may be benefit in DfT and the Welsh Government discussing the potential merits of one or more of these trains (now covered by ATW, but requiring a change of trains if making a through journey to England) again becoming part of the Greater Western franchise. This could reflect similar arrangements for the boat trains to Holyhead, which are part of Intercity West Coast. The possibilities which any transfer might open up could also be linked to future service options, discussed below, for Carmarthen and Llanelli, through which a Fishguard train would pass.

- Outliers at the further extent of the GW network, such as Reading to Gatwick and services to the South Coast, may also warrant some thought, although passenger concerns, particularly about the latter, must also be taken into account.

8. Service specification and service patterns

Alterations to service patterns will inevitably flow from electrification and changes to the train fleet. Local input may also identify other circumstances which require recognition in the service specification. As infrastructure allows, and markets grow, the opportunity to provide discrete local/regional/inter-city services should be taken.

However, whatever the drivers for change, there are some principles that should be embedded in the franchise specification to be followed whenever timetables are revised:

- Early consultation must be a prerequisite, and followed by informative feedback relating to the way in which the ultimate decisions have been made.
- Existing basic features such as first/last trains and frequency/connectivity, if satisfactory, should remain.
- Aspirations for improvements should be met if possible.
- Capacity and resources should be matched as closely as possible.

Passenger Focus believes that the train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. Specification should therefore focus on journey opportunities rather than defining train services. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be the available opportunities provided by existing services and the aim should be to optimise these based on passenger demand. A minimum requirement should be established in situations where compromises are required to make an overall improvement for passengers. The provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, particularly for times of peak demand.

Our view is that origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding existing travel requirements. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders. Without access to this key data and other relevant

information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible to derive a properly balanced judgement. However, when considering choices and bringing forward proposals, the decision makers, whether DfT, Network Rail (NR) or the operator, should ensure that the rationale that underpins these is properly set out to all who have an interest.

Passenger Focus believes that the specification is the key to the entire franchising process. We note the DfT's intention to provide greater flexibility for operators to respond to demographic and market changes and commercial opportunities. However, it is only against a sufficiently detailed franchise specification that a train operator's performance can be effectively monitored. And, in the worst case, it would be the standards set out in this specification that would provide the framework for determining if an operator should be removed for poor performance. For the Government to ensure it gets what it pays for with taxpayers' money there must be specification to set out what is required of the new franchisee.

The franchise specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers: commuter, business and leisure, from all parts of the network. Timetable opportunities must be optimised with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning. Within the acknowledged capacity constraints of the franchise the distribution of train services should be appropriate to passenger demand.

There will undoubtedly be significant changes to train service provision during the franchise and there must be a requirement for timely, transparent and meaningful consultation that allows all stakeholders views to be listened to prior to changes being finalised. Engagement with local communities should be regarded as a starting point for service developments. Feedback, irrespective of whether it has been possible to accommodate the recommendation or request must be provided.

8.1 Passenger Priorities and perceptions relating to the service specification and service patterns

Based on the results from the passengers' priorities study, section 4.2 above identifies service-related elements as the top priorities for the franchise. The service specification should therefore seek to deliver improvements in capacity and frequency, within a timetable that also contributes to effective management of punctuality and reliability and minimising disruption.

Table 2 NRPS scores for train service-related attributes by building block with typology comparator to show:

Autumn 2013 per cent satisfied	FGW Long Distance	High Speed Average	FGW West	Rural Average	FGW Thames Valley	Long Commute Average
Sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand	71	76	61	69	61	64
The frequency of the trains on that route	82	87	74	75	70	76
Punctuality & Reliability	76	84	77	81	70	75
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take	84	89	87	85	79	81
Connections with other train services	73	81	71	73	71	73

Autumn 2013 NRPS scores indicate that passengers travelling on routes that make up all three Great Western building blocks are, with just one exception, less satisfied than others using services of similar types for the attributes of frequency, punctuality and reliability, length of journey (except those on West), connections and sufficient room. This indicates that the specification should focus attention on what is required to deliver improvements in these important aspects of the passenger experience.

Consultation question 8 - Respondents are invited to say whether they value a faster headline journey time, or more intermediate stops, on a particular journey that they make (and to identify that journey).

We are perplexed by the phrasing of this question and the value that might be derived from responses. It seems predictable that any passenger would value a fast journey time for the particular journey they make on any given occasion. Perhaps this question needs to be distilled into a number of different components that may enable finer judgements about relative needs, to better inform future plans. Some of the issues to explore would seem to be:

1. Is your journey time quick enough?
2. Do you want one or more trains a day on that route to be as fast as possible?
3. Would you mind the journey taking longer because it stopped more often to provide a more frequent service to some stations?

Autumn 2013 NRPS shows that passenger satisfaction with journey time on Great Western ranges between 79 per cent on Thames Valley services, through 84 per cent on long distance, to 87 per cent on West. The passenger priorities analysis shows that, nationally, reduced journey time is the 9th highest priority for

improvement with an index score of 105. Overall on FGW it is 10th at 108, but for High Speed Services 10th at 110 and for London and Thames Valley 9th at 112.

8.2 General issues relating to service specification and service pattern

Consultation question 7 - Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and to explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which they consider should be reflected in a revised specification.

Consultation question 9 -Should any elements of the indicative modelled intercity service pattern be mandated, and can it be improved? What should the priority be for intercity services where IEP trains are not planned to operate?

Consultation question 10 - What do you feel the Great Western operator's priorities on the suburban network should be once it is electrified in 2016 e.g. for additional higher capacity, fast commuter services, or improved journey times?

The specification should emphasise the importance of providing appropriate services for early morning and later evening and also recognise that, for many, Sunday is a working day . Boxing Day⁷ is also a significant day of travel - whether for work, visiting, shopping or leisure activity - and service provision should reflect this. More generally, development of a co-ordinated approach to bank-holiday service patterns which respond to passenger demand should be encouraged, both on the franchise and between those serving adjoining areas.

Feedback we have from the user group at Severn Tunnel Junction (STAG) is that a number of stops are in place over and above the current franchise specification. They are concerned to ensure that timetables are devised from current practice, rather than the previous franchise specification, in order that additional stops that have been agreed with the operator are not lost. This point is relevant across the franchise as the benchmark for passenger expectations will be set by the existing provision.

8.3 Specific timetabling issues

In the sections that follow we set out some thoughts about aspects of the timetable where we are aware that there are live issues, or unresolved questions, about current proposals. In common with other sections, our comments and suggestions are not exhaustive or exclusive and should be considered in the light of all the demand information available to Network Rail and the operator, and in the context of the local aspirations expressed by stakeholders across the franchise.

⁷ Understanding rail passengers – is there an ‘average’ commuter? July 2013
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/understanding-rail-passengers-the-average-commuter>

8.3.1 IEP

In finalising the post-IEP timetable it is important to balance the needs of passengers who wish to make intermediate journeys with those seeking a fast end-to-end journey. The indicative timetable suggests that the balance may not be quite right, with a number of currently through-train journeys in future requiring a change of trains. Consultation with passengers will be essential and compromise may ultimately be necessary.

8.3.2 The Thames Valley and Crossrail

Passenger Focus and others have previously noted a number of issues with merging Thames Valley and Crossrail, particularly the balance between capacity, frequency and journey time. It is important that DfT and Transport for London (TfL) work together to ensure that the combined Great Western and Crossrail service meets the need of passengers, particularly those using stations Maidenhead to Reading inclusive.

Timetable proposals should seek to address passenger needs and be subject to full consultation. Transparent information about the respective characteristics of the various services must be available to enable passengers to make fully informed choices about the relevant elements of their journey.

8.3.3 West of England

There is a very clear and strong aspiration from stakeholders for faster services to Exeter, Plymouth and Cornwall.

There is also a desire to create an inter-connecting timetable throughout the west of England. For example: good connections at Temple Meads between London services and CrossCountry to Plymouth/Penzance, to provide much better connectivity between Swindon, Chippenham, Bath and stations beyond Taunton. The timetable needs to create a sensible, inter-connected hierarchy of services on the main lines from Reading and Bristol that also has good connections with all the branches.

Stakeholders have also raised the issue of improving north-south connectivity. This involves:

- the link between the South West Main Line and the Weymouth line at Yeovil Junction to provide connections from Exeter, etc, to Dorchester and Weymouth, and also for intermediate stations from Exeter to stations Castle Cary to Bath
- the potential to make more use of the south coast-Salisbury-Westbury- Trans Wilts route.

Frequencies on all the branches should, at minimum, be maintained.

8.3.3.1 Local issues for consideration

- Plymouth. The first through train from Paddington to Plymouth (225 miles) gets in at 1117 (0730 from Paddington), although it is possible to arrive at 1042 by changing en route. In contrast, the first through train from Paddington to Swansea (192 miles and also around 250k-300k inhabitants) gets in at 0859 (0519 from Paddington). Without suggesting that the market is identical between Plymouth and Swansea, it seems reasonable to question whether 1117 is the best the railway should be offering for the first train into a major city that is only 225 miles from London. In comparison with Plymouth, where the first arrival is hardly far off lunchtime, the first train from London to Edinburgh (393 miles) gets in at 1122! Should proposals for December 2014 not effectively address this issue then the next Direct Award should seek to make improvements.
- First and last trains on the branches. We suggest that the operating day could be usefully extended on some of the branch lines. Some give a very late first arrival into Paddington (e.g. from Barnstaple 1124, from St. Ives 1338) – which is unlikely to discourage people from driving to the main line. Further analysis and consideration of the appropriate service response is recommended.
- Carmarthen and Llanelli. The through train from Carmarthen to Paddington leaves at 0730, stopping at Llanelli and taking the 0828 path from Swansea and arriving in London at 1132. We suggest that the DfT discusses with the Welsh Government and the business community in West Wales whether this train would be better as either 0530 or 0630 from Carmarthen? The current London arrival seems very late for what may well be regarded as a business train. The return train is 1715 from Paddington which may be timed right, but, again, there would be merit in exploring if it is ideally timed for passengers' needs. The service needs and potential for improvements for Carmarthen and Llanelli would be sensible to consider alongside the Fishguard arrangements, mentioned in section 7 above.

8.3.4 Electrification to Newbury

Consultation question 11 - After the electrification to Newbury, expected in 2016 would passengers' needs be best served by a diesel service from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Newbury connecting into a fast service to London Paddington, or a diesel stopping service from Bedwyn to Reading connecting to a fast service from Reading to London Paddington, or other options? The former would give faster journey times to London but add a change at Newbury for passengers to Reading.

Ideally, solutions here would only be required in the short term, until further electrification can be confirmed and delivered. In the meantime, we suggest that the DfT and operator should think long and hard about the acceptability of depriving well-established commuting routes of even peak hour through-trains to Paddington. The prospect of the loss of through services is clearly contentious and there is genuine

and understandable concern from passengers who believe their travel patterns will be adversely affected.

8.3.5 Branch lines

Consultation question 13 - While maintaining end-to-end service frequency, could the needs of passengers be better met by providing the operator with some flexibility over calling patterns on branch lines?

It is imperative that local views are taken closely into account when considering options to change service patterns on branch lines. Whilst faster journey times may be welcomed by some, and may generate additional patronage, the impact on connectivity between stations along the route may have adverse consequences for others. The importance of ensuring that key journey opportunities remain, to work or school, for example, should not be overlooked.

9. Capacity

Consultation question 16 - Respondents are encouraged to consider what steps the GW operator should be expected to take when reacting to changes in passenger demand, and what targets for capacity should be set.

Passengers regard provision of capacity as a fundamental requirement of the rail service. After value for money, ability to get a seat is the second-most and highly significant priority for improvement. It is also influenced by frequency of trains (thus increasing the overall total of seats available by running more services), the third highest priority for improvement. Importantly, capacity also has a strong influence on passenger perceptions of value for money so has a further role in passenger satisfaction.⁸

Quotes from some recent qualitative research undertaken to inform our input to another franchise consultation are reflective of many passengers' feelings

You shouldn't have passengers standing on a train...why should you pay the same amount to stand
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

It's 'down-time', you can't get your laptop out if you haven't got a lap
(Manchester/Leeds-Glasgow – Business)

The other galling thing is that it's more expensive to travel at busy times, when they are ram jam full
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

The severe crowding on commuter services is well documented and, even with the planned interventions on infrastructure and enhancements to the train fleet, provision

⁸ Passenger Focus response to the Government's rail fares and ticketing review, June 2012
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passenger-focus-response-to-the-governments-rail-fares-and-ticketing-review>

of sufficient capacity will be an ongoing challenge. Capacity challenges also spread across the GW network.

Table 3 Peak and off-peak satisfaction with frequency and capacity⁹

Factor	% satisfied	
	FGW	FGW Thames Valley
The frequency of the trains on that route PEAK	73	66
The frequency of the trains on that route OFF-PEAK	76	71
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand PEAK	49	42
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand OFF-PEAK	68	67

Table 3 shows how current passenger satisfaction with the capacity-related factors of ‘frequency of service’ and ‘sufficient room for passengers to sit and stand’ varies across FGW and on the Thames Valley building block service group in the peak/off-peak. The low level of passenger satisfaction with sufficient room to sit and stand on peak services, particularly on the Thames Valley, illustrates the scale of the capacity challenge. There is also room for improvement in off-peak capacity and also in frequency.

9.1 Making better use of capacity

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise contract should require the operator to take all reasonable steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. We recognise this will present some significant challenges, especially whilst infrastructure works are underway. However, this issue is too important to passengers to be ignored.

It is imperative that an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise. Targets should be for crowding levels to be lower than currently exist, with a requirement to plan to stay ahead of growth in demand.

To effectively manage crowding, a train company needs high quality loadings data with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week and seasonal impacts. The available capacity must then be carefully allocated to optimise the response to demand pressures across the network.

⁹ Autumn 2013

We welcome the Government's procurement of a rail passenger counts database which is intended to provide accurate data on train loadings and crowding levels. The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures across the range of routes and services to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate. Published data should make the crowding levels on different services easily comparable so that decisions about allocation of resources can be scrutinised.

NRPS satisfaction measures for relevant factors, including overall satisfaction and room to sit and stand, should be published alongside capacity data to demonstrate the impact this has on passengers.

A careful review of all timetables must be undertaken to explore how services can best be matched to passenger needs. There may well be opportunities to adapt frequencies and stopping patterns to provide a better match of capacity with demand, whilst still ensuring the needs of all passengers are balanced appropriately. Where this is the case, Passenger Focus would expect clear evidence to be produced and comprehensive consultation to be carried out with passengers prior to any changes being made. Resources need to be available to enable a sophisticated and responsive approach to train service development, combined with a positive strategy of stakeholder engagement to explain the rationale for service proposals.

The service specification and service pattern issues outlined in the sections above must give full consideration to the capacity implications of all proposals. Monitoring and publishing the extent and frequency of short-formations should also be a requirement.

The prevailing standard that no passengers should have to stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey, should remain the benchmark. The operator should be incentivised to ensure that available rolling stock is never sitting in sidings when there is evidence of need for additional capacity on services where it could be deployed. In addition, the franchise specification should require that the particular needs for additional capacity for special events must also be planned for and managed within the overall framework of train availability.

Other approaches to management of capacity should also be implemented. Transparent information about the loadings of specific trains provides passengers with the knowledge that may enable them to make an informed decision. Recent research¹⁰ found that over two thirds of passengers who had seen information about the levels of crowding on specific train services had found it useful and just over a fifth of these people had made a regular or occasional change to the trains they used as a result of the information. Similarly, incentivising passengers to sometimes swap

¹⁰ The impact of publishing more information on seat availability: South West Trains case study, ORR July 2012

peak journeys with travel in the shoulder or off-peak, or perhaps work closer to home on some days, may also make a contribution to capacity pressures.

A traffic-light system of information should be made available to passengers to help them understand the likelihood of getting a seat, or even getting onto, a particular train. This allows passengers who have more flexibility to make an informed choice about their travel options and, even where there are more defined patterns of travel, some passengers may appreciate the option of being able to make small adjustments or trade-offs to have a comfortable journey.

Technological solutions should also be adopted. Crowding can now be monitored in real time and information systems and apps are becoming available to indicate where available seats on trains are located.¹¹

Where investment in additional rolling stock would provide the necessary capacity to meet identified requirements, the onus should be on the operator to build a business case to enable this to happen. If there is a commercial case then there should be prompt action to deliver the necessary vehicles. Where additional subsidy will or may be required, Passenger Focus expects the operator and the DfT to work together to seek an affordable solution. Where required, assessments should look beyond the immediate franchise into the longer term to create a viable mechanism to respond to identified demand.

Over the lifetime of the franchise the operator must be required to work with Network Rail and within the wider industry processes to develop proposals to further increase capacity to meet the expected rise in demand and ensure this information is available to inform future High Level Output Specification (HLOS) plans and investment cycles.

Additional efforts should be made to respond to passengers who have physical difficulties in standing for any length of time. Initiatives such as priority seating and cards that the holder can show to identify a proven need should be part of the overall plan for improving accessibility within the franchise.

9.2 Off-peak capacity

There are two distinct issues relating to making better use of capacity in the off-peak. On certain routes at various times of day there is insufficient capacity for the off-peak demand meaning that passengers experience crowding. Bidders should be required to adapt service provision and train availability to meet off-peak capacity shortfalls where these are identified.

Secondly, to improve the financial performance of the franchise and maximise use of the rolling stock, the operator should have clear proposals for promoting usage in the off-peak. Marketing strategies and ticket offers will have a role to play here, as will

¹¹ For example, Dutch Railways - iNStApp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc6R3qt6SXI>

the delivery of high quality services that passengers will find an attractive travel option, especially if their journey or modal choice is discretionary. As noted below there are parts of the franchise where joint initiatives with Community Rail Partnerships should be further developed, or established, to extend the reach into wider communities and promote off-peak travel.

10. Reliability and performance

Consultation question 17 - Respondents are invited to highlight if there are specific stations or services where they feel particular attention should be paid to reliability or punctuality.

In NRPS, the most significant 'driver' of passenger satisfaction with First Great Western, as it is nationally, is punctuality and reliability of the train.

We recommend that, throughout the next five years, there is a requirement for a strong focus on delivering excellent operational performance and ensuring a culture of genuine transparency about how well things are going. As well as helping engender trust among passengers and stakeholders, we believe transparency will of itself increase the incentive on the operator to drive up performance.

Specifically, we feel there should be:

- Targets to improve PPM, 'on time'/'right time' and cancellations across all routes. Reliance on a service group average, let alone a whole TOC average, risks exposing passengers on individual routes to poor performance.
- Targets for PPM and 'on time'/'right time' at key intermediate stations in addition to at the train's destination. Measuring performance at the destination station alone runs the risk that a large number of passengers are late even though the train does not show as such. This is a particular problem on longer distance routes with numerous sub-markets and relatively few end-to-end passengers. But even on shorter routes, including commuter routes, punctuality based on measurement at destination can be markedly at odds with the experience of passengers using intermediate stations. The impact of late running at intermediate stations can be dramatic when passengers are making connections with other trains or with buses.

Take Swindon arrivals from London, an example of the situation at numerous intermediate stations – and by no means only on the FGW network. In the four weeks to 28/05/14 Network Rail data show seven in 10 trains arriving from Paddington achieved an on time or up to 5 minutes late score in the 70-89 per cent range, with a few in the 50-69 percent range and a very small number at 90 per cent and above. However, for the same period the 'on time'/'right time' arrivals at Swindon show three in four trains achieving a score of 49 per cent or less, including a small number at 0 per cent.

- A requirement to make historic train performance information easy to obtain and understand. Passengers should be able to view the performance of individual trains they catch (or a group of trains) between the stations they use. When journey planning, the performance record of individual trains should be one of the elements presented to assist passenger decision-making.
- A requirement to report publicly the number of trains each period that appear in the public timetable, but are excluded from the ‘plan of the day’ and therefore do not count officially as cancellations. The fact that any cancellation – if declared by 2200 the day before – does not appear in performance statistics fuels many passengers’ underlying suspicion and mistrust of the industry. Being open about what is going on would help.

10.1 Resilience

Passengers Focus recommends that the Direct Award is let with a strong emphasis on service resilience, including in the face of severe weather. Specifically, we feel the operator:

- should be required to engage fully in developing discussions about ensuring the long-term resilience of services to Devon and Cornwall post-Dawlish and Bridgwater.
- should be required to set out the extent to which they will be reliant on overtime and rest day working to deliver the train service, including on Sundays.
- should be required to show that their rolling stock availability assumptions are achievable for each class of train and do not put passengers at continual risk of short-formation and cancellation. Areas to ensure there are credible plans include:
 - Capacity to release rolling stock for periodic heavy maintenance, refurbishment, PRMTIS adaptations etc. without compromising service delivery
 - That tyre-turning capability is sufficient to ensure fleet availability remains high throughout the autumn and winter
 - Contingency arrangements if incidents result in lengthy repairs to rolling stock (for example striking road vehicles, collisions with livestock, etc.), including that key components are held in stock rather than manufactured to order

11 Managing disruption

Consultation question 14 - Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the GW operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the GW franchise as a result of planned upgrade works and when ‘force majeure’ events such as extreme weather, impact the network.

Consultation question 15 - Where the provision of temporary, alternative service is unavoidable, respondents are invited to suggest what alternative provisions they would prefer the GW operator to put in place.

Consultation question 20 - Respondents are encouraged to consider...how best to keep passengers informed during times of disruption (See also section 14)

11.1 Managing service disruption – engineering works

Passenger Focus welcomes the sentiments in paragraph 7.29 that the operator will be expected to work with Network Rail to minimise the use of ‘all line’ engineering blocks, especially during the coming infrastructure upgrades. Culturally, the default assumption must be that routes remain open while maintenance, renewal and enhancement takes place, with exceptions made where this is impractical. Too often, across the railway, it appears to be the other way round. Recognising that 55 per cent of passengers say they would not travel at all if a replacement bus is involved¹², we encourage DfT to secure a joint, public commitment from the operator and Network Rail that wherever practically possible they will keep passengers on trains and transfer them to buses only as a last resort. Use of diversionary routes is an important way to minimise the number of passengers using replacement buses. FGW have been innovative in this area; the specification for the next five year period should retain and build on these arrangements. It is nevertheless inevitable that engineering works will cause alterations to the train service, including provision of replacement buses in some circumstances.

In addition to these overarching cultural points, Passenger Focus encourages DfT to ensure that the operator has credible proposals in the following areas:

- for regularly submitting a high quality bid to Network Rail at T-18 so accurate amended timetables are in the public domain and reservations open at T-12. We recommend that the operator should be required to report, period by period, on the level of post T-12 change to the train plan.
- for working with Network Rail to minimise the risk of possession over-run, and for communicating information about alternative arrangements to passengers in the event that it does happen.
- for maintaining a regular through service from Bristol Parkway to London when engineering work requires South Wales services to be diverted via either Gloucester or Temple Meads – historically, Parkway has tended to be overlooked.
- for managing the transfer of passengers seamlessly from train to bus and vice versa (and from train to train where a normally-direct journey involves a change

¹² Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works - [http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/f20ebdf252a73e3f61c63c3b76d335f84c155829/Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works - September 2012 %28normal res%29.pdf](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/f20ebdf252a73e3f61c63c3b76d335f84c155829/Rail%20passengers%20experiences%20and%20priorities%20during%20engineering%20works%20-%20September%202012%20normal%20res%29.pdf)

of trains), recognising the key role to be played by well-informed, people-orientated staff at interchanges.

FGW achieved an excellent reputation in this area with the Reading blockades, but that needs to be replicated generally and not confined to the major 'set piece' events. The litmus test is the level of customer service experienced by passengers encountering mid-week night possessions – for example on the journey below in the early hours of Thursday 29 May 2014:

Travel by	Leaving	From	To	Arriving
Train	00:15	Reading [RDG]	Slough [SLO]	00:36
Bus	00:44	Slough [SLO]	Taplow [TAP]	01:04

- For ensuring it is clear to passengers where they should wait for replacement buses and clear to bus drivers where they should stop, in particular where replacement buses do not drive up to the station itself. In terms of physical infrastructure, we regard Southern's use of permanent, high quality signage as best practice (see picture in Appendix 1). The operator must also ensure that passengers making online enquiries or ticket purchases are specifically told the replacement bus will, for example, "depart from outside the White Swan P.H. in the centre of the village" and not from the station.
- For ensuring that the needs of passengers with disabilities are met when travelling during engineering works, including but not limited to those who have booked through the Passenger Assist service.
- For ensuring that passengers making journeys involving a replacement bus, or a diverted train taking significantly longer than usual, are aware of that before they purchase a ticket – whether buying online, from a Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) or at a ticket office.
- For tracking the location of replacement buses in real time and feeding that information automatically to Darwin for onward distribution to station information systems (CIS), passengers (and railway staff) via National Rail Enquiries channels and any outlet using Darwin as its data source.
- For recognising that passengers travelling by replacement bus expect a discount on the rail fare they would normally have paid.
- For giving passengers answers to the questions "what is being done?" and "how do I benefit?" Passengers tell us that knowing what is happening helps sugar the replacement bus pill, yet it is commonplace to see nothing more informative than "Engineering work is taking place between Reading and Westbury / Basingstoke with all lines closed."

11.2 Managing service disruption – unplanned

In NRPS, the most significant ‘driver’ of passenger dissatisfaction with First Great Western, as it is nationally, is how the train operator handles delays.

Later in 2014 Passenger Focus will publish new research looking at passengers’ needs and experiences during unplanned disruption, including around the provision of information. We have made a number of recommendations, included as Appendix 2, and which we would encourage DfT to ensure that the operator addresses. However there are two key points to emphasise from our conclusions which it is vital are tackled during the five year period.

- The cultural issue, across the industry, that deficiencies in passenger information at times of disruption persist in a way that would not be tolerated if they were operational or safety failures.
- That the operator must measure the quality of information provided during disruption on a robust and ongoing basis, in terms both of ‘factory gate’ quality and the ultimate test of passenger opinion.

In addition to the recommendations in Appendix 2, we encourage DfT to secure as part of the Direct Award/further franchise two important prerequisites for providing effective passenger information during disruption.

- Visual and audible information at all stations served by FGW; and
- Train movement data sufficiently granular to deliver accurate live departure predictions for all stations (fitment of GPS devices to all FGW trains, allowing positional data to be fed to Darwin via the under-construction “GPS gateway”, being – presumably – the most effective means).

12 Regional and rural services and community rail

Consultation question 12: Respondents are invited to suggest ways in which Community Rail Partnerships could deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far.

Great Western partnerships

Great Western routes currently encompass four partnerships:

- Devon and Cornwall – covering eight lines
- Severnside – covering five lines
- Heart of Wessex – covering one line
- Cotswold – covering one line

In addition, there are ten stations with friends or adopters groups.

12.1 The value of Community Rail Partnerships

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) bring distinctive attributes to local rail compared to other parts of the national rail network, including:

- creating a sense of involvement
- information and marketing activities
- implementing local schemes
- providing a focus for investment.

The report on the Value of Community Rail Partnerships¹³ shows that they can be extremely successful. Focussing on the regional and local level, results can be seen in increased footfall at stations along CRP lines. In the South West between 2002 and 2006, footfall on the Tarka line grew by 19 per cent, against the rest of Devon at 8 per cent, showing the CRP activity having an impact of 11 per cent growth in passengers. The report goes on to show that economic appraisal of community rail schemes are typically in the Department for Transport's highest possible value for money category, showing a worked example with a benefit to cost ratio of 4.6:1.

12.2 Passenger growth

The Community Rail Steering Group report¹⁴ shows high level sustained year on year growth in passengers travelling on community rail lines and local rail services in the last ten years. Many community rail lines have recorded growth more than double both the overall national and regional sector growth rates. The results from the far South West set out in Table 4 below are typical of many lines:

Table 4 Patronage growth on far South West lines¹⁵

Line	Patronage growth 2002-2012
Exeter-Paignton-Plymouth	+108%
Exeter-Barnstaple	+159%
Exeter-Exemouth	+75%
Plymouth-Penzance	+184%
Plymouth-Gunnislake	+47%
Liskeard-Looe	+57%
Par-Newquay	+107%
Truro-Falmouth	+208%
Penzance-St.Ives	+56%
Total	+109%
National regional rail sector	+52%

¹³ The Value of Community Rail Partnerships (June 2008), Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) in partnership with Department for Transport and Passenger Focus

¹⁴ Community Rail Line Development (September 2013), ATOC and ACoRP

¹⁵ Source: *The South West Spine report*¹⁵ (February 2013)

National rail all sectors	+55%
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Current modelling of rail passenger trips massively underestimates the growth of trips on community rail services, as compared with the trends of the last ten years.

- The National Transport Model (published 2011) predicted growth on Regional rail services through to 2030 of only 1 per cent per year.
- The Network Rail Strategic Business Plan and the Rolling Stock Strategy Report (issued 2013) uses growth rates of 3-4 per cent per annum.
- The Network Rail LTPP draft Regional Urban Market Study (2013) predicts growth no higher than 3 per cent per year for the next 10 years and through to 2043.

These predictions are so far below the year on year growth recorded consistently for the last 10 years, that the actual passenger trips on far-South West services already exceeded the Network Rail forecast for 2019 in the Great Western RUS¹⁶ by 2012. Actual growth on most lines has exceeded 10 per cent year on year, compared with the highest national forecasts of 4 per cent. Even over 10 years this is a doubling of patronage compared with the 40 per cent increase assumed in rail industry planning.

12.3 Recommendations to enhance CRP effectiveness

Passenger Focus recommends:

- Greater transparency and sharing of data and methodologies by DfT, Network Rail and train operators with CRPs.
- The new franchise should make provision for the collection of robust data about usage and make it available to DfT, CRPs and other interested parties for the purposes of forecasting and planning, especially for capacity and rolling stock requirements.
- The franchise embeds secure long-term core funding for existing community-rail partnerships and provides for supporting additional CRPs where a strong case can be made.

12.4 Development opportunities

Passengers expect the stations they use to be welcoming and attractive. Local involvement, typically by “friends of” groups, and supported by the railway industry and local government, can achieve significant improvements to the attractiveness of stations, and in stimulating the use of redundant station buildings by local businesses and organisations, including those involved in local tourism.

Passengers expect transport to be integrated – which should, of course, mean that it is more effective in attracting users as well as being more useful. Increasing “localism” should help this task, which will improve accessibility to local areas and help with the development of “gateway” stations to access areas of natural beauty along rural lines.

¹⁶ Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (March 2010), Network Rail

Innovative marketing schemes have become the hallmark for community rail. Local enthusiasm is a powerful tool in generating links with visitor attractions that can be accessed from local stations.

The Value of Community Rail Partnerships report¹⁷ asserts that CRPs contribute to social capital in a number of ways:

- promoting awareness of local history, culture and landscape through guided walks, leaflets and local events
- engaging with schools and other local groups, including marginalised groups
- engaging with volunteers
- contributing local input to development of rail
- contributing to local regeneration strategies through tourism development, station gateway schemes and working with local businesses and organisations.

The paper on The Sustainable Branch Line¹⁸ goes further in saying that CRPs have an excellent record of winning back passengers to rural lines through innovative marketing and community involvement. Adding that it is possible to develop a scenario whereby such partnerships take on more and more 'peripheral' commercial activities and build up commercial expertise which – at a future stage – enables them to take on actual train operation. A model could be developed which is based on such a gradual progression:

- 1 Operation of rail-link bus services and on-train catering
- 2 Take over marketing of the service from train operator
- 3 Further development of rail-link bus services, including bus operations
- 4 Taking on station cleaning and maintenance contract for the line
- 5 Develop other commercial activities – station shops, tourism packages
- 6 Station staff employed by partnership (minor stations only, currently unstaffed)
- 7 On-train retail staff (conductors) employed by partnership

Volunteers can provide important back-up through 'additionality' – looking after station gardens, acting as conductors on the bus services, and assisting with catering services.

12.5 Further recommendations relating to CRP development opportunities

Passenger Focus recommends:

- funding a community rail post, employed by the operator, to develop and support the opportunities for enhancing CRP activities and regional and rural services; promote and co-ordinate activities across the Great Western lines and provide liaison with county councils/LEPs/LTBs (but not at the expense of funding for existing route-based posts)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ The Sustainable Branch Line (2010), Prof Paul Salvesson

- a formalised group to meet periodically for policy/investment discussion, to include the operator, Network Rail, DfT, CRPs, county council/LEP/LTB representatives, Passenger Focus and other partners as appropriate
- Supporting wider community involvement, particularly to boost the local stations environment and improve passenger satisfaction. The introduction of a Community Investment Fund, in line with other recent franchise requirements, might prove a useful means of facilitating this.

13. Rail value for money

Consultation question 18 - Are there any areas of the GW franchise where you feel cost savings could be made?

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for taxpayers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. We made a detailed response¹⁹ to Sir Roy McNulty's rail value for money study, highlighting the important issues from a passenger perspective.

We are supportive of those strategies which enhance efficiency and create closer collaboration, reduce duplication and overlap and generate further income by increasing the attractiveness of rail.

However, there are also some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will be welcomed, but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that do not deliver on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

Partnership working between Network Rail (NR) and the new operator should form part of the arrangements for the franchise. It is particularly relevant given the scale and complexity involved in the delivery of the various aspects of the Great Western programme. This will require all parties to work cohesively and constructively together to manage the challenges of significant infrastructure works, deployment of new rolling stock, commissioning new train control systems and the introduction of a comprehensive new timetable.

Application of whole-life costing would significantly improve the chances of resilience projects. The TOC should start planning with all the relevant partners, firstly deciding where and what needs doing, then rank in order of costs and time to implement, quickest benefits and greatest benefits.

¹⁹ *The Rail Value for Money Study, A Passenger Perspective: Comments by Passenger Focus*, July 2011
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-rail-value-for-money-study-a-passenger-perspective-comments-by-passenger-focus>

Beyond the demands of the Great Western programme there are further operational challenges associated with such a large scale franchise stretching across a number of different NR routes. This will require an over-arching approach to partnership and service delivery across the franchise as a whole, with formal structures providing a joint mechanism at senior level for strategic planning and co-ordination and setting a coherent framework for a consistent development of alliance-style engagement at the route level.

Aligning incentives and working more closely together can certainly help improve efficiency. We know from our research that passengers want a sense of someone being in charge when it comes to the delivery of services, especially during times of disruption. But it cannot just be a case of aligning NR and train company processes to achieve cost savings; such processes must also be aligned with passengers' priorities.

If the end-game is better services for passengers then internal processes and systems must work towards this, rather than vice versa. Two particular areas stand out: increasing punctuality and reducing service disruption. Any approach must be mindful of the consequences for passengers when considering how to manage restoration of services following disruption.

Closer working may provide the opportunity to revisit previously successful practice and have the operator's staff, especially those on stations, trained as first responders to minor local operational incidents (e.g. signal and point failures or road vehicles hitting bridges) to get trains moving without having to wait for the arrival of a Network Rail staff member who may be some distance away.

A further opportunity presented by closer partnership is the achievement of a step-change in transparency. The open data agenda is driving the industry towards higher levels of information being in the public domain. We know from our research with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)²⁰ that passengers want access to more tailored information (i.e. data that is relevant to their route/journey). A new, more responsive, alliance could make a very public commitment towards accountability by promising greater transparency from the outset.

14 Delivering improvements for passengers

Consultation question 21 - Rail Executive is considering what the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise would be. Respondents are invited to say what matters most to them (for example, cleanliness of trains and stations, or the helpfulness of staff) in terms of the service quality they receive.

²⁰ Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

Passengers will undoubtedly expect proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered during the next five year term. Passenger Focus recommends that the specification sets out clear requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas. Section 4 above includes details of FGW passengers' priorities for improvement and the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction which, together, provide a clear indication of the quality factors of greatest importance to passengers on stations and on trains.

Passenger Focus has also published research on many aspects of passenger experience, some of which is cited in the consultation document. The specification should require that passenger research which has been considered is identified, along with the steps the operator will take to ensure that the issues important to passengers will be addressed in their service proposals.

14.1 Better railway stations

Consultation question 19 - Respondents are encouraged to consider which locations merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.

The specification for the next five years should require the operator to commit to ensuring that a minimum level of standards - appropriate for the size, footfall, location and reflecting local passenger aspiration - are delivered and maintained at all stations. The Better Station standards could provide a starting point for the assessment of requirements which can then be adjusted for local circumstances.

Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

We suggest consideration is given to specifying a rolling programme of steady improvement to stations on a line of route basis, to concentrate benefits in a way that should create a bigger impact than spreading improvements around randomly. This should also create greater synergies in the works.

In addition to utilising all available industry funding schemes, the operator should also look beyond these and work with stakeholders and other partners to seek opportunities to bring in funding for allied improvements where these address wider objectives such as promoting economic development, improving transport integration, increasing safe access or enhancing the public realm. Holistic improvements to investments in and around stations are likely to deliver better results and increase efficiency and value.

14.1.1 Station investment should focus on passenger needs

Whilst Passenger Focus is supportive of the principle of funding streams allocated to specific purposes, it is important passenger needs are central to the investments made and that resources are directed to the factors valued by the users of stations and the rail services from them. To this end, proposals should be required to

reference how they address the findings of research into passenger requirements and perceptions of stations, including NRPS satisfaction scores.

Table 5 NRPS scores for station attributes

NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY – AUTUMN 2013

Building block/route data for First Great Western

Station attributes	Long Distance	High Speed average	West	Rural average	Thames Valley	Long commute average
Overall satisfaction with the station	83	82	76	77	74	77
Ticket buying facilities	78	78	74	79	72	73
Provision of information about train times/platforms	85	86	89	86	78	80
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	74	76	72	71	72	70
Cleanliness	80	80	75	74	77	75
The facilities and services	68	69	50	53	59	56
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	76	77	78	76	75	72
Connections with other forms of public transport	76	79	67	65	68	73
Facilities for car parking	59	62	63	59	47	51
Overall environment	73	73	72	68	69	69
Your personal security whilst using the station	75	75	70	69	70	70
The availability of staff	66	65	58	61	60	61
The provision of shelter facilities	71	72	71	71	66	66
Availability of seating	48	47	55	55	46	43
How request to station staff was handled	90	90	89	86	87	86
The choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	55	59	36	40	48	48

Blue font aspects of journey which are particularly important to passengers

Passengerfocus 38
outlining passengers first

Table 5 above shows NRPS satisfaction scores for station attributes by First Great Western building block, and the relevant typology comparators. These indicate fairly low levels of satisfaction with availability of seating, choice of shops, eating and drinking facilities and facilities and services more generally, as well as car parking. Whilst passengers are fairly pragmatic about what facilities should be provided at different category stations, low scores for these factors would suggest that in many instances stations fail to meet even basic expectations.

Passenger Focus research conducted at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations following the Better Stations report²¹ shows that at individual stations there are often specific areas of improvements that passengers want to see and that priorities can vary according to location and circumstance. Bidders should seek station feedback from local passengers and community rail partnerships to identify aspirations for specific locations and gather information about relevant accessibility issues.

²¹ The Better Stations Report identified 10 of the worst category B stations in the country. Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton, all featured in that list.

Appendix 3 includes information about passenger priorities for station improvements based on station footfall which illustrates how needs can vary at different station types.

14.2 The importance of staffing and information

Passenger Focus research on stations consistently demonstrates that, in addition to station facilities, there are two key factors that operators need to consider when thinking about how to improve passenger satisfaction with stations: Information and staff.

14.2.1 Passenger information – please see also section 11 above

The way the industry manages delays is the biggest single driver of rail passenger dissatisfaction; the key to improving this is through the provision of real-time information on delays. Despite the increasing use of technology many passengers still only tend to find out about disruption once they have arrived at the station. It is therefore crucial that operators look at how they can best pass on accurate information to the passenger once it is known to the industry. This is particularly important at unstaffed stations where the passengers' only source of information might be a CIS screen. Real time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

Other types of information are also important to passengers. It is important that the franchise specification requires high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey: This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station and, particularly, when there is disruption. The operator should be required to adopt strategies that maximise the effective use of evolving technology throughout the next five years. (See Appendix 4 for details of information used by FGW passengers at different stages of the journey).

It is also important that, at all times when trains are running, passengers can have access to someone who can provide information and, if disruption means that journeys are curtailed, is also empowered to help stranded passengers by arranging/authorising alternative transport, accommodation or other appropriate responses.

14.2.2 Staffing

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Passenger Focus is concerned that the franchise operator for the next five years does not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

Staff are an important and trusted source of information for passengers. This role can encompass information about journey planning, cover wider issues relating to ticket retailing, where there remains considerable complexity about terms and

conditions applicable to tickets, and, of course, sale of tickets that are unavailable from TVMs.

During disruption staff have a central role in providing information and advice to passengers, helping them with queries and to make further plans for their journey.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

Passengers cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security. Passengers consistently identify staff presence as important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. The industry therefore needs to give serious consideration to how it can best deploy staff. Our publication “Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways” sets out passengers concerns in more detail. The specification should include a requirement to set out how these issues will be addressed across the franchise.

It is important that staff are trained, managed and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service. Expectations of customer service continue to rise as standards do across the range of passenger experience, both within and beyond the rail industry. The organisational culture must recognise that passengers are the very reason the organisation exists, ensuring that passengers are valued and appreciated at every level of the operation. This approach needs to be driven from the top to achieve exemplary staff behaviours amongst a workforce that is genuinely empowered. The ethos must be that passenger interests are central to the decisions and actions of the business, making a genuine and consistent demonstration of care for whether a passenger returns again.

14.3 Security and safety

In Autumn 2013 NRPS asked passengers whether they had had cause to worry about personal security in the last six months whilst making a train journey. Nationally the number of passengers saying yes stood at 11 per cent, but on First Great Western it was a lower figure of 8 per cent.

NRPS then went on to ask those passengers who said that they had been concerned why that was, both in term of their experiences at the station and on train. As figures 3 and 4 below illustrate, the main causes for that concern, both on the train and at the station, were attributed to the anti-social behaviour of others and a lack of staff.

Figure 3

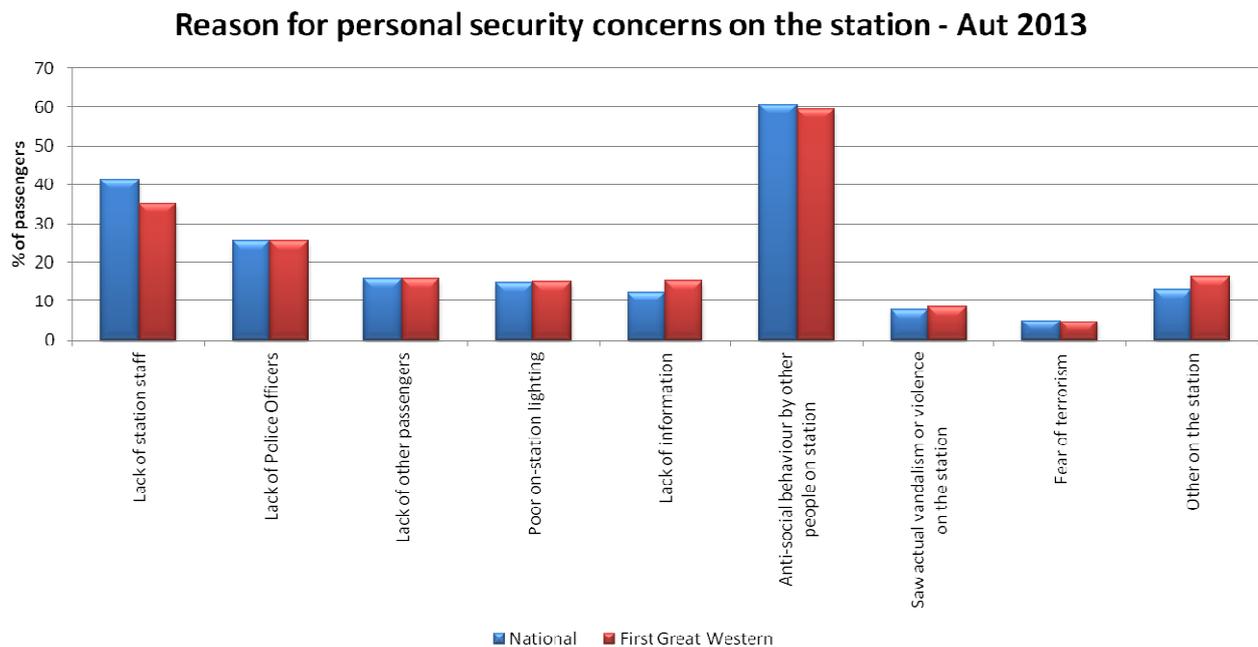
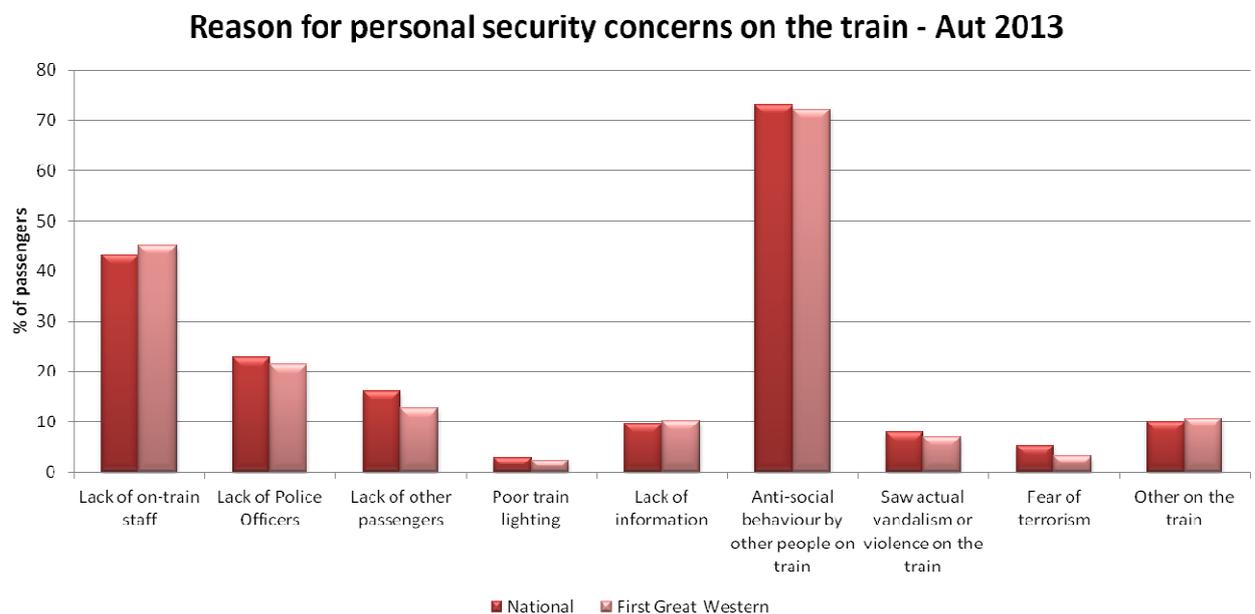


Figure 4



In addition to the above passengers are asked whether concerns about personal security have prevented them from making trips by train. Nationally 4 per cent said that they either travelled by another mode or did not make the journey they wanted to, due to concerns over personal security. On First Great Western the figure was slightly lower (3 per cent).

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities. Where stations are currently unstaffed during any part of the day when trains operate, they should be priorities for such investment. We believe that virtually every station should have appropriate technology to enhance personal security, although we acknowledge that it may be appropriate to specifically exempt this requirement for a few particularly lightly used stations in order to ensure best use of limited resources.

Passenger Focus also supports accreditation of stations and car parks through the established industry schemes.

14.4 Improving station access

When passengers decide what mode of transport to take they are swayed by three overwhelming factors: how convenient will the journey be, how much will it cost and how long will it take²². This applies to the whole door to door journey. The way passengers access the station can affect both overall journey cost and time. If getting to the rail station becomes too inconvenient passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car; adding congestion to the roads and to transport's carbon footprint.

The passenger growth forecasts for Great Western mean increased attention will need to be given to how passengers are going to access and pass through stations throughout the life of the franchise.

At some locations the solution to station access needs will be to improve public transport links and parking provision; but at others the solution will be more complex and could be more creative. With limited space for car parking at some stations, and the industry's desire to look at more sustainable options, Passenger Focus is supportive of the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups and Community Rail Partnerships should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

The specification should encourage commitment to station travel plan schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise. The stations selected should not just be those with the highest footfall, as the 2011 Network RUS (Stations) demonstrated that congestion does not just occur at those stations with the highest number of passengers starting or ending their journeys.

The operator(s) should be able to demonstrate how they will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to improve accessibility to stations by all modes, including cycling. Where identifiably beneficial schemes for passengers can be delivered by other partners, they should be encouraged and their future assured.

²² Door to door by public transport – improving integration between National Rail and other public transport services in Britain, June 2009 http://www.cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/690.pdf

The franchise should accommodate commitments to the future operation of any facilities provided.

Given that FirstGroup UK Bus operates in parts of the FGW area, we suggest that 'virtual branch lines' might be possible using existing scheduled bus services, with bus times and through fares available through railway journey planning and retail systems to/from towns with no railway station. Similar arrangements may be possible with other bus companies.

14.5 Better train experiences

Beyond the core journey requirements relating to the timetable, service delivery and information, the key influencer of passenger satisfaction on trains is the cleanliness of the inside of the train. The specification should require demonstration of how high standards for this important aspect of experience will be established and maintained, including the arrangements for maintenance and cleaning of toilets.

Table 6 below shows NRPS satisfaction scores for train attributes by First Great Western building block, and the relevant typology comparators. They show variation in satisfaction with the cleanliness of the inside of the train across the three service groups and low satisfaction with the train toilet facilities across the board.

Table 6 NRPS satisfaction scores for train attributes

NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY – AUTUMN 2013

Building block/route data for First Great Western

Train attributes	Long Distance	High Speed average	West	Rural	Thames Valley	Long commute average
Overall satisfaction with the train	82	88	77	77	79	78
<i>The frequency of the trains on that route</i>	82	87	74	75	70	76
<i>Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)</i>	76	84	77	81	70	75
<i>The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)</i>	84	89	87	85	79	81
Connections with other train services	73	81	71	73	71	73
The value for money of the price of your ticket	45	51	57	56	45	38
Cleanliness of the train	77	85	69	69	75	72
Upkeep and repair of the train	78	85	64	65	77	71
The provision of information during the journey	69	78	54	64	64	67
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	72	78	70	76	59	58
The space for luggage	57	62	49	56	49	47
The toilet facilities	45	56	40	41	36	35
<i>Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand</i>	71	76	61	69	61	64
The comfort of the seating area	77	81	65	69	71	69
The ease of being able to get on and off	76	84	74	81	76	79
Your personal security on board	83	86	78	80	77	77
<i>The cleanliness of the inside</i>	77	85	67	69	76	72
The cleanliness of the outside	78	82	61	65	74	70
The availability of staff	49	60	53	61	34	36
<i>How well train company deals with delays</i>	48	50	45	46	32	40

Blue font aspects of journey which are particularly important to passengers

The 2014 passenger priorities for improvement study identified a desire for free wi-fi on trains. The specification should ask how this aspiration will be addressed. The specification should also require the operator/bidders to set out how they plan to assess and address passenger requirements for on-board catering.

14.6 Service quality, targets and transparency

Targets, measurements, and monitoring are fundamental to delivering improvements to service quality. Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NPS results and periodic reviews of TOC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Disaggregated targets for all measures should be set and performance against them published widely. A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

There should be a requirement for the franchise operator to commit to high levels of transparency about all aspects of the franchise, including operational performance and service quality.

14.6.1 National Rail Passenger Survey

We have long advocated more use of qualitative targets within a franchise. Our strong preference is for targets based on what passengers think, the best judge of quality being those who have used the services in question. NRPS provides this measure and, with an existing sample size of over 3000 on FGW each wave, this already enables robust measures across three building blocks.

We recommend, in line with practice on other recent franchises, bespoke targets should be established on each of the building blocks to measure passenger satisfaction with station, train and customer service attributes. Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses. An annual assessment of the combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year.

Passenger Focus will continue to discuss the application of NRPS targets for the franchise with the Department and the operator/bidders as required.

14.6.2 Key Performance Indicators

The KPI assessments should be conducted across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the major train service groups. Standards of satisfaction with the customer services function, complaints handling, and the level of appeals to Passenger Focus should also be measured. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for regular reviews based on collated information.

14.6.3 Performance targets

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers, the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Transparency will promote greater accountability by making clear to rail passengers, staff, management and other parties how key aspects of the rail service are performing at different places and at different times. The provision of detailed information will enable rail passengers and others hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares paid. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them as a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and is also a vital management tool.

Punctuality data only provided at the overall operator level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Passenger Focus supports the provision of performance data (PPM, 'on time'/'right time' and cancellations) in a fully granular way, allowing data to be aggregated as required. This would allow those who use only the '0719' and '1720' to see the performance of those trains – because that is all that matters to them.

Equally, there is currently next to nothing in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger's journey and an area where greater transparency can generate improvements for passengers.

In the medium term we also see value in looking more closely at the choice of performance measurement used. The existing measure (PPM) allows a five minute leeway on late arrival; a train is not late until it exceeds this allowance. However, we know from our research²³ mapping passenger satisfaction against train performance that a delay begins to have an effect on passengers well before that. This might mean addressing the suitability of the current thresholds or even introducing a secondary measure based on right-time arrival. Recent steps by the industry towards publication of right-time data on particular trains make this increasingly feasible and more likely to be the measure on which performance is publicly judged.

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on an operator's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically only creates an obligation on factors within the train company's control. Clearly there are limits to how far one organisation is willing to be held accountable for another's performance but, from a passenger's perspective, it is overall punctuality that matters - not just how well the train company did. There are obvious benefits in aligning operator and Network Rail incentives and there is much work going on to address this, not least in terms of joint improvement

²³ Towards a 'right-time' East Anglian railway, Passenger Focus. March 2010

performance plans and potential alliances. We would like to see the franchise specification encourage and cement this joint working approach. To this end we would ask DfT to consider the scope for introducing joint targets within this franchise.

Passenger Focus has worked with the Office of Rail Regulation and National Rail Enquiries, on behalf of all train operators, to explore passenger views on performance and other data and to understand how this may best be made available to them. This qualitative research²⁴ should inform the approach to data publication in the new franchise.

14.6.4 Input vs. output measures

The balance between input and output measures is a fine one. For instance, the franchise could specify that the bidder purchases 50 new ticket vending machines (an input target) or that it increase passenger satisfaction with retailing (an output target). The latter follows the pattern set in the 2009 South Central franchise with the bidders setting targets for passenger satisfaction and these becoming contractual targets with fines for non-compliance.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Some input targets will clearly remain important to passengers e.g. to cover 'hard' targets for things like punctuality, cancellations and crowding; while output targets (based on passenger satisfaction) may be better placed to address some of the 'softer' qualitative elements of a journey. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

15 Other important issues for the specification

Consultation question 22 - Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think Rail Executive should consider consulting on and that have not already been addressed during stakeholder engagement.

15.1 Passenger and stakeholder communication and engagement

Central to improving the passenger experience of rail services are effective mechanisms for passenger and stakeholder engagement, particularly for gathering intelligence on local aspirations and developments, and for consulting on future proposals.

Our report, Giving passengers a voice in rail services²⁵, found passengers are often unaware that a new franchise is being negotiated in the first place; they want to know more about plans for letting a new franchise and for their views to be taken into consideration. They also want to be able to hold the operator to account.

²⁴ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/presenting-righttime-performance-information-to-rail-passengers>

²⁵ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/giving-passengers-a-voice-in-rail-services>

In common with other recent franchises, Passenger Focus recommends the specification requires the establishment of a Customer and Communities Investment Fund, the production of at least an annual customer report and clear plans for an engagement strategy that accommodates the needs of different passengers. This should include a mechanism to alert passengers to prospective changes when the next franchise period expires.

Passenger Focus advocates that a wide range of means should be employed to communicate with passengers and wider communities to allow people to access information and provide input in the ways that are most suited to each individual or group.

15.2 Fares and Ticketing

Value for money was the highest priority for improvement in our 2014 priorities for improvement research – it is also traditionally one of the lower areas of passenger satisfaction (only 47 per cent of FGW passengers were satisfied in the NRPS Autumn 2013 wave of research).

An important factor to assist in delivering value for money is to ensure that fares and ticketing processes are fair, impartial and clear, enabling passengers to purchase the cheapest appropriate ticket for their journey.

- Making buying a ticket easier
Passenger Focus's research²⁶ has identified a number of issues with both ticket vending machines (TVMs) and websites – much of which was reflected in Government's own Fares and Ticketing Review²⁷
 - Printing any restrictions on passengers' tickets to remove confusion over validity
 - Displaying outward and return ticket restrictions on ticket vending machines prior to a passenger committing to purchase
 - Making it impossible to buy an Advance ticket on the internet at a higher price than the 'walk up' fare available on the same train
- Smart ticketing and extending the range of products
 - Fares and cost of living pressures are a major concern for many passengers. A range of initiatives to improve this should be fostered which include, but are not limited to, smart technology. For example:
 - Carnet style arrangements, providing discount on a number of tickets for the same journey purchased together
 - Cash-back/early-bird/part - time season tickets that 'reward' passengers when they travel less frequently or outside the peak. At the heart of a new commuter fares structure should be the principle

²⁶ Ticket vending machine usability, Passenger Focus, June 2010 and Ticket retailing: website usability, Passenger Focus, June 2011.

²⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249001/fares-ticketing-next-steps.pdf

of rewarding passengers who avoid the busiest times, rather than penalising those who cannot.

- Schemes that spread the cost of an annual season ticket over the course of a year
 - An additional benefit from season tickets being loaded onto smart technology could be that lost or stolen tickets can be 'stopped' electronically, removing the, at times, financially devastating ruling about the non-replacement of season tickets if lost/stolen more than twice within a 12-month period.
- Complexity and consumer confidence
Research by Passenger Focus and others²⁸ has found that some passengers are not confident that they bought the best value fare for the journey they have made. Passengers should be able to buy the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is purchased at a ticket office, online, at a ticket vending machine (TVM) or through any other method.

Our report (Passenger Focus response to the Government's rail fares and ticketing review- 2012) made a series of recommendations designed to improve consumer confidence. These include:

- The use of single-leg pricing (to avoid the return sometimes just being £1 more than a single. By pricing Off-Peak Singles at 50 per cent of the current return fare the industry would allow passengers to mix and match between Advance and other ticket types and would create a reasonably-priced, semi-flexible product mid-way between Advance and Anytime.

This latter point is also consistent with our research among employer²⁹s which shows that business passengers find the lack of flexibility within the ticketing structure a real problem –e.g. to allow for a meeting that overruns by 30 minutes. Prices for those passengers who can buy well in advance and stick to their plans can be fantastic value for money. However, the options for those travelling at short notice, or requiring even a small degree of flexibility, are in some cases extremely expensive and result in value-for-money scores plummeting.

The new franchise should maintain, and ideally take further, the existing single-leg scheme operated by FGW.

²⁸ Passenger Focus and ORR, May 2014
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-passenger-experience-the-full-research-report>

²⁹ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2526>

- That if a passenger misses the train on which they booked an Advance ticket, the sum paid already should count towards the new ticket they need to buy (less a reasonable administration fee).
- That passengers wishing to change previously-purchased Advance tickets for a different date or time should pay one £10 administration fee to cover all the tickets in the transaction (at present, a family of four needing to change out and back return tickets would face £80 in administration fees, which feels utterly disproportionate to the train company's costs and makes many Advance tickets de facto "no refund, no change")
- The 'cut-off' time for buying Advance Single tickets be moved to the latest practicable time to allow the production and positioning of seat reservation labels. The remaining as-yet-unsold Advance tickets should stay on sale until the latest practical time – CrossCountry's Advance Purchase On the Day (APOD) setting the benchmark.

In addition, we wish to see the existing range of 'rover/ranger' tickets in the south west given greater prominence and awareness. These can offer good value and can be attractive for tourism. We also wish the specification to make clear that the next operator(s) must continue with and expand where appropriate the current provisions for:

- Groupsave tickets for parties up to 9
- monthly season tickets offering three weekdays' and also weekend travel at an advantageous rate; extension of this product to other routes not currently covered should be considered.
- season tickets offering first-class accommodation in the eastbound (to London) direction and standard on the return. Extension of this offer to other routes should be considered where capacity permits.
- maintain Advance tickets .
- retain Weekend First supplements for travel on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and other specified days
- innovative single-leg pricing to enable more flexible walk-up mix-and-match ticketing (as noted above).
- fares regulation
- the level of flexibility that can be applied to increases in individual fares should be maintained at (or below) the +/- 2 per cent level announced as part of the DfT's Fares and Ticketing Review Conclusions.

15.3 Revenue Protection

Our research (Passenger views of Northern and TransPennine rail franchises - December 2012) showed that passengers found the issue of fare evasion very frustrating. There was a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid for a ticket when some passengers are known to be travelling for free. They also felt that this reduced the amount of money available for investment.

Passengers believed that the main solution to fare evasion would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and better checking procedures and enforcement. This must include:

- clarity and consistency over when it was permissible to buy a ticket on board a train – the current system is felt to be too arbitrary
- managing ticket queues effectively (at TVMs and offices)
- providing ticket restrictions in an easy to access form and in plain English
- providing the passenger with verification of permission to travel without a ticket
- providing the passenger with verification of attempt to purchase a ticket if a card is declined due to bank security measures or signal issues
- having a revenue protection system that filters out those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system. Our 2012 report, Ticket to Ride³⁰, provides numerous examples of where this did not happen.

We acknowledge that it is not always easy to determine the latter so we recommend that Great Western's revenue protection strategy addresses the following core principles/issues:

- clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the enforcement of penalties. We would welcome the introduction of some basic underpinning principles:
 - Stated criteria on which decisions are based for Unpaid Fare Notices, Penalty Fare Notices, settlements and prosecutions
 - Presumption against enforcement action where there has been no loss to the train company (and therefore no gain to the passenger). The most obvious examples being when a railcard has not been presented at the time of the ticket inspection but can subsequently be proved to have been held, not printing off 'print-at-home' tickets.
 - Consideration of alternative forms of verification of purchase e.g. where a passenger has three parts of a four part ticket and can also prove purchase through a receipt or bank statement
 - Information about revenue protection and the criteria for decision taking should be readily available to the passenger on the TOCs web site. Some TOCs already provide full information and have not found it jeopardises revenue

³⁰ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/ticket-to-ride-full-report-may-2012>

- Train companies need to retain overall accountability even when they have outsourced revenue protection to a third party (especially when third-party bodies are involved).
- The ability / right of the passenger to appeal against the decision of the operator.

Appeals should be considered not only on the grounds of technicalities and correct application of the rules.

- If additional information is provided by the passenger this information should be checked.
- When an appeal is made “the clock must stop“ and no admin charges should be added until a decision is announced.
- If an appeal is upheld the passenger should never be charged a penny.
- Letters should address the issues raised by passengers not simply make a statement about strict liability
- The system should be subject to external audits to show that appeal criteria are being followed properly. This move could actually help generate some confidence in the process.
- The rail industry has considerable power available to pursue ticketless travel, including mounting criminal prosecutions. Indeed, using the ‘strict liability’ nature of the Rail Byelaws means that they do not even have to prove any intent to defraud on the part of the passenger in order to do so. We are concerned that the operator acts as investigating officer and prosecutor whilst also being the complainant; and that there are currently no external checks or balances to how this power is exercised. Strict liability makes it extremely difficult for a passenger to prove their innocence.

We recommend:

- A commitment not to go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless they suspect (and have proof) that there was intent to defraud.
- Letters sent to passengers about prosecution or offering a warning in lieu of prosecution should enlighten not intimidate. Information about penalties that are irrelevant to the case should not be included.
- A PFN is a civil debt it should not be converted to a prosecution simply in order to encourage the payment of a debt.
- Penalties should be proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator.
- Greater transparency and accountability
A requirement on train companies to publish details on the number of PFNs, UFNs issued and prosecutions brought; and the number successfully challenged.

We welcome action to reduce fare evasion. However each franchisee should be able to demonstrate that at each stage of the process there are safeguards for the honest

passenger who has made a mistake, and that they can actively filter them out of the penalty and prosecutions route.

15.4 Compensation policies

For various reasons, the existing FGW Charter retains the arrangements applicable on its three constituent parts at the time the Greater Western franchise was created in 2005. All three retain the “exclusions” arrangements inherited from British Rail and no compensation is due to season ticket holders experiencing ‘one off’ delays.

Passenger Focus believes that the Direct Award should be let on the basis that a single set of compensation arrangements is introduced from day one with the following provisions:

- Delay Repay applicable to all ticket holders experiencing delays of 30 minutes or more, irrespective of cause (50 per cent 30-59, 100 per cent 60 minutes or over)
- additional compensation – a ‘safety net’ – for season ticket holders who experience regular delays under 30 minutes (such passengers are currently protected by discount on renewal arrangements which delay repay on its own does not offer)

A formal definition of sustained poor performance to cover these latter circumstances and some firm proposals about how this will be reflected in additional compensation to regular travellers should be required. The definition should take into account both the frequency of sub-30 minute delays and their cumulative total in any period. The assessment of poor performance should also reflect the proportion of time the passenger was delayed in relation to the scheduled journey.

The proposals for additional compensation should be subject to consultation.

More also needs to be done to increase passengers’ awareness of their rights to claim compensation. This right should be promoted through a range of channels, including on trains that are delayed and at stations where delayed services are calling, as well as within the passenger charter, on websites and via Twitter etc. Mechanisms to identify passengers who have been delayed and provide automatic recompense should also be developed and introduced.

15.5 Complaints handling

In our role as the statutory appeals body³¹ Passenger Focus has extensive experience of working with passengers and rail operators to seek resolution of appeal complaints. We have found a number of recurring issues with either the operators’ complaints processes or response quality. We have been working with the industry in an effort to improve customer service, reduce complaint handling times

³¹ For British rail passengers outside of London

and focus on operators providing quality complaints handling, which should in turn, decrease the number of passenger appeals to train companies.

It is important that the specification for the franchise requires detailed information about policies and procedures for dealing with complaints. These should demonstrate a clear commitment to best practice and should encompass the following points:

Process issues

- Empower customer service advisors to apply ‘natural justice’ when dealing with poor passenger experiences and allow redress to go beyond the minimum levels of the Passenger Charter or National Rail Conditions of Carriage.
- Ensure mechanisms to monitor and manage response times and to acknowledge complaints if they cannot be resolved within the target time, which should be published.
- Implement a process whereby appropriate issues are proactively investigated by the customer service advisor, and other relevant staff members, and feed back the findings to the passenger.
- Establish mechanisms to feed complaints into service improvements, where possible, and feed information about this back to the passenger.
- Ensure a clear and well communicated escalation process is in place for complaints handling, including referral to, and cooperation with, Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch.

Response quality

Train and empower customer service advisors to identify and address all the points in the complaint and give heavy weighting to ‘addressing all issues raised by the passenger’ in internal quality monitoring processes. A focus on first time resolution reduces ‘comebacks’ and the need for a subsequent response by the operator.

- Provide clear explanations about why the passenger is/ is not receiving compensation and/or gesture of goodwill.
- Make careful use of appropriately worded standard paragraphs, supplemented as necessary by bespoke responses.

- Ensure customer service advisors use clear, jargon-free English with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing responses.
- Implement a culture of continuous improvement and use complaints handling as an opportunity to restore a customer's faith in the train operator.

15.5.1 Legacy complaints

It should be explicit that the First Great Western entity operating this Direct Award is responsible for handling complaints from passengers about the service provided previously, whether under the original franchise or the initial Direct Award.

15.6 Accessibility, the Equality Act 2010 and minor works fund

We expect the specification to include requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). Passenger Focus also recommends a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

In addition to the provisions set out in DPPP guidance, Passenger Focus believes the franchise specification should also require the following provisions:

- Scooter policy – ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance scheme is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines – e.g. Scootercards. Blanket bans are no longer acceptable – always understanding that some models will be too wide/heavy ever to be accepted on to trains.
- Provide a priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now adopted as good practice by a number of operators) to help passengers demonstrate a specific need for a seat, backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are easily located and recognised. This is especially important in the case of trains where no reservation facility is available.
- Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the groups considered eligible for it.
- Clearly clarify priority of usage in 'shared' spaces – i.e. wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.
- Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties, so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.
- Comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring – proper management, e.g. perhaps the number of assistance requests delivered, rather than satisfaction, which can be deceptive. This could be included in the Passenger's Charter and the DPPP.
- Best use should be made of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – e.g. enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.

- Training of staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone.
- Examine all possibilities to improve station accessibility: e.g. induction loops; help points; adjustable-height counters; automatic doors etc.

16 Further information

For further information about this response to the Great Western franchise consultation please contact:

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Southern bus replacement sign – an example of good practice



Appendix 2

Passenger Focus's PIDD recommendations, for publication later in 2014
Passenger Focus's recommendations arising from this research, drawing also on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and our observations of passenger information quality during Autumn and Winter 2013, are set out below, broadly in order of priority.

1 Measurement and continuous improvement

- Introduce ongoing quantitative research to measure improvement in passenger satisfaction with the handling of service disruption. There should be a common methodology and a sample size sufficient to give statistically robust results for each train company. It should be noted that the industry almost did this in 2011 under the auspices of the National Taskforce "Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) Workstream 4", but the plan was abandoned. We believe robust data at train company level is essential if managers are to be tasked with, and held to account for, achieving improvements in passenger experience. The research should be published.
- Develop a measure of 'core message'¹ quality to complement the quantitative measures in place. Only by measuring the quality and quantity of core message production can a meaningful picture of performance become part of a senior management Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 'dashboard'. Passenger Focus is aware that some advocate weakening the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) requirement to update a 'core message' at least every 20 minutes, arguing that it encourages a focus on quantity not quality. We believe measuring quality as well is the solution, not weakening the quantitative target. Research already shows frequency of update to be a weaker area of current provision.

¹ 'core message' is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe the update message to be sent by 'control' every 20 minutes during disruption

- Significantly boost arrangements to 'sense check' if online information is accurate, consistent and up-to-date. This should cover train companies' own websites, National Rail Enquiries, third party retailers and other key information providers such as the BBC. The need is not for high-end forensic analysis: it is for basic "that can't be right, what's going on here" skills that ensure inaccuracies and inconsistencies are spotted and put right. Two recent examples: i. replacement buses and the trains they are replacing showing simultaneously in journey planning systems and ii. two train companies running over the same track telling passengers to travel with the other, despite the line being closed entirely. The industry should consider including a 'what to look for' checklist in the ACOP.
- Report the level of adherence within each Network Rail 'control' to the "Guidance Note for Control, Response and Station Staff: Information During Disruption", which covers the production and dissemination of Prioritised Plans during disruption. This must be quantitative and qualitative, becoming a regularly reported KPI for each Network Rail Route Managing Director.
- To supplement regular post-incident analysis, carry out an independent in-depth review of at least one Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2)² disruption incident per train company each year. This should focus on the passenger impact, identifying what was handled well and what should have been better, including passenger information and other aspects of customer service. A transparent method of selecting incidents for review will be essential. Findings and recommendations should be published.

² 'CSL2' is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe disruption that is significant enough to trigger an enhanced level of customer service

2 Trust and honesty

- Give information controllers the tools to accurately describe the cause of disruption. Passengers want the truth, not generalised stock descriptions some believe are intended to hide the facts. A tree across the railway is just that: don't call it "an obstruction". If a car has driven into the level crossing barriers say so: don't say "a problem at a level crossing". The term "signalling problems" is used to describe faults that are simply not signalling problems, fuelling some passengers' suspicion that they are not being told the truth. It should be noted that in 2012 the industry agreed significant changes to address this, but they have never been implemented.
- In seeking to improve the quality of messages during disruption, consider how to more effectively 'tell a story', or 'paint a picture', of unfolding events. The objective should be to give passengers a continually-evolving sense of the

activity going on to restore the service. Understanding what is being done helps passengers practically and emotionally. If told that the rescue locomotive has set off but is 45 minutes away, or the website shows a photograph of a tree across the railway, passengers can relate to why they are stuck.

- To increase trust and believability the industry should make live announcements during disruption, whether at stations or on trains, in particular avoiding automated apologies. Can an organisation be truly sorry if it uses a computer rather than a human to say so?
- Reinvigorate efforts to ensure all passengers entitled to compensation know that they are and that it is simple to claim and receive what is due. Smart ticketing will give the potential for automation, but in the meantime when a train is delayed by more than the compensation trigger there should be, at least, an announcement encouraging passengers to submit a claim. On trains with a guard or other onboard staff freepost claim forms should be distributed wherever possible. Passengers who have booked online on a train that is delayed by more than the trigger should be sent an email inviting them to apply online.
- To increase transparency and accountability, each 'local plan' issued under the ACOP (as well as the ACOP itself) should be published on the relevant train company's website, accompanied by an annual progress report. The Network Rail National Guidance document should also be published and an annual progress report provided.

3 Help me avoid the problem in the first place

- Address the low proportion (17 per cent) of passengers aware of disruption before they arrive at the station. Research is required to understand what is preventing a higher proportion of passengers signing up to receive some form of push alert, whether by text, email, in-app alert or Twitter. Is there an awareness problem? How well do current alerting services meet passengers' needs? What could be improved? Is the signup process off-putting? It is unlikely, but perhaps 83 per cent of passengers are just not interested in knowing in advance?
- Introduce (reintroduce, in some instances) and promote free text alerts as quickly as possible. Text was selected by more passengers than any other method as the best way to tell them about disruption before they arrive at the station.
- Provide free alerts to passengers who have bought tickets online for trains that are cancelled, significantly delayed or where the schedule is amended after purchase. The sentiment of passengers is "they know I was booked on it, but they couldn't be bothered to tell me".
- Ensure critical passenger messages, such as that there is a significantly reduced service operating tomorrow, are highly prominent on websites. Too many train

companies present such information in their 'house style', resulting in vital information blending in with the rest of the webpage or feeling like a "will you accept our cookies?" message.

4 Accuracy and usefulness of information

- Significantly improve capability to estimate the delay. This would include the delay a passenger will encounter if they set off now; how long passengers on particular trains will be stuck; how long it will take to fix the problem; and how long it will be until the train service is fully recovered. Messages like "delays of up to 60 minutes" are backwards-looking, reporting what has happened (i.e. that some trains are running up to 60 minutes late), not forward-looking giving an estimate of what to expect if you set off now. Not knowing, if your train has stopped in the middle of nowhere, if it will be 20 minutes or two hours causes real frustration. Too many disruption incidents go from "until further notice" to "cleared" with no estimate ever given about likely duration. Although it has improved, there is still a tendency to sound the 'all clear' before understanding the knock-on consequences of congestion, trains and crews being in the wrong place etc.
- Deliver the capability, and then use it, for train company 'control' staff to speak directly to passengers in any train via the GSM-R system.³ We believe this change will substantially improve the quality of information provided to passengers during disruption, particularly on driver only trains.

³ GSM-R refers to the Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway, an international wireless communications standard

- Review CSL2 thresholds to ensure enhanced arrangements are triggered in line with passengers' expectations, not playing catch-up. We again suggest that CSL2 triggers should be consistent with the point at which 25 per cent of passengers regard a delay as "serious". Analysis of NRPS data between Autumn 2008 and Autumn 2013 shows the tipping point between minor and serious delay to be, in passengers' eyes, 16-20 minutes for London and South East train companies, and 21-25 minutes for long distance and regional train companies.
- Evaluate whether 'control' is sufficiently resourced, in terms of humans and systems, to ensure that Darwin is always accurate, even during major disruption. Arguably, staffing 'control' for the workload on a normal day will guarantee failure on a day of disruption. In an era when passengers are checking websites and apps before and during travel, making sure journey planners and live departure boards are accurate is vital. Yet too often trains continue to show as "on time" right up until, and sometimes after, the time that they should have left.
- Develop the capability to implement a revised timetable, and revert to the normal schedule, significantly more quickly than current processes allow. Day A for Day

B⁴ is clearly an improvement on the underlying Day A for Day C arrangements, but its limitations are significant:

- i. Train companies currently have to decide by 1100 on Day A if a revised timetable is required on Day B. If it becomes clear at lunchtime that horrendous weather will affect the railway tomorrow it is already too late
- ii. If a train company has decided to run a reduced timetable, but the severe weather warning is downgraded, it is difficult to revert to the normal timetable
- iii. The process assumes that train companies have provided a fully worked up contingency timetable to Network Rail in advance, to be implemented in its entirety. This 'all or nothing' approach appears insufficiently flexible to respond to weather, or anything else, affecting routes – or sections of route – in different ways
- iv. Day A for Day B is envisaged to be available only in the winter. For example, the St. Jude storm (28 October 2013) fell outside the coverage period, although Network Rail did its best to accommodate train companies seeking to amend timetables.

⁴ 'Day A for Day B' is the phrase used to describe an enhanced process by which a train company can advise on a particular day that it wishes to operate an amended timetable the next – the normal process (Day A for Day C) requires a further day before the amended timetable will appear in passenger-facing information systems

- Ensure those responsible for passenger information have the authority, and the means, at any time of day or night to refocus their website to provide information of immediate value to passengers, where necessary suppressing marketing material. Too often we hear of interdepartmental battles and 'out of hours' practicalities getting in the way of giving passengers the information they need.
- When a section of infrastructure is unexpectedly out of use for many weeks the industry must stop showing trains running normally. The practice of bidding changes to the base timetable only a week or two ahead, and leaving the normal timetable in place beyond that, ignores T-12⁵ information obligations and leaves tickets on sale on trains that cannot run (Dawlish and the Cambrian Coast being recent examples).

⁵ T-12 is shorthand for the requirement that timetable information in passenger-facing systems must be correct 12 weeks in advance

- Work with online retailers and information providers to develop an automatic means to identify which trains are affected by a particular incident, allowing them to be 'flagged' and a contextual message shown to passengers making relevant journey enquiries and/or ticket purchases.
- The ACOP currently envisages a 'core message' comprising "problem, impact, advice", but the research suggests that "impact, problem, advice" may be better-aligned with some passengers' needs. In essence, those passengers are

saying “give me the implications for my journey, then tell me what’s wrong with the railway”.

5 Staff

- Ensure staff are at least as well informed as passengers with a smartphone. The fact staff sometimes know less than they do, baffles and frustrates passengers who cannot fathom why train companies do not equip staff with a tablet or smartphone and solve the problem. This should be a given, yet the ACOP has it only as “ideally”. Staff need appropriate equipment: the rail industry has tended to play catch-up, issuing staff with Blackberrys when passengers were buying smartphones and issuing smartphones when passengers were moving on to tablets.

But it is also about training and the expectations that staff use the devices to passengers’ maximum benefit.

- Require drivers and guards to acknowledge a halt between stations within two minutes, and measure if it is happening in practice. Research continues to show that saying something quickly, even if it is simply “We’ve stopped at a red signal, I’m going to find out why” is powerful in demonstrating that the train company knows the train has stopped and cares enough to acknowledge it.

6 Fares and ticketing

- Ensure passengers do not pay more as a result of service disruption. Closing seat reservations because of uncertainty about the timetable does not stop passengers being sold tickets, but it often increases fares significantly (because Advance tickets cannot be sold). The industry must ensure that during sustained disruption Advance tickets are immediately available where they would normally be, even if a replacement bus is now involved.
- Change aspects of the national ticketing rules to give passengers greater protection during disruption, specifically:
 - i. Passengers choosing not to travel because it is highly likely, even certain, that they will be delayed after leaving or their journey cannot be completed should have the same rights to a full refund (in other words with no administration fee) as a passenger intending to catch a train that is already delayed or cancelled
 - ii. Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who choose not to travel because of known or likely disruption should be refunded for both legs of the journey without an administration fee (if you couldn’t get there, you don’t need your ticket to come back)
 - iii. Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who are delayed on their outward journey should be permitted to return on a later train than they have booked. If you had been looking forward to four hours sightseeing somewhere, why should you cut short your day because disruption meant you arrived late?
- Ensure industry retailing systems can reflect any temporary fares policy that is proposed. During the Dawlish closure, systems proved incapable of reflecting CrossCountry’s laudable policy that, given the replacement bus from Exeter to Plymouth, an Advance single to Exeter was good for travel to Penzance. As a

consequence it is highly likely that some passengers paid more than the policy required.

7 Additional recommendations

- Train companies should continuously review how they communicate with the National Rail Communications Centre (NRCC) and online retailers during disruption, especially in relation to supplementary contextual information. Do all relevant staff, including communications/press office staff, appreciate how vital it is to keep the NRCC and online retailers informed; understand what those organisations need to know; and have the right email addresses at their fingertips?
- The industry should revisit its 2012 decision that the PIDD ACOP would no longer be a joint ATOC/Network Rail document. Given that in many cases the raw material a train company uses to produce passenger information originates with Network Rail, together with the existence of many joint controls, would a single document be more effective?