

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date: Thursday 13 February 2014
Location: Fleetbank House
 London
Time: 14.00 - 15.11

Present

Board Members

Colin Foxall CBE	CF	Chairman
Dr Stuart Burgess CBE	SB	
Bob Linnard	BL	
Isabel Liu	IL	
Stephen Locke	SL	
Professor Paul Salveson MBE	PS	
Diane McCrea	DM	

Executive in attendance

David Sidebottom	DS	Acting Chief Executive
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Business Services
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of Passenger Issues
Ian Wright	IW	Head of Research
Hazel Phillips	HP	Head of Communications
Linda McCord	LMC	Senior Passenger Manager
Martin Clarke	MC	Business Services Executive
Francis Gahan	FG	Business Services Executive

One member of the public attended the meeting.

1 Chairman's Opening Remarks; Apologies

The Chairman welcomed the Board and members of the public. Marian Lauder, Paul Rowen and Philip Mendelsohn sent their apologies.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Cardiff 14 November 2013

The Board **approved** the minutes and **authorised** the Chairman to sign them.

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3 Action Matrix

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM233	12/09/13	Non-evident coordination of major disruption schemes	To remind devolved rail bodies to continue to ensure coordination on disruption	MH	Nov 2013	Ongoing as part of workplan. Complete, delete
BM234	12/09/13	Potential overlap between disruption and 2014 Scotland events	To consider the relative timings of disruption Scotland events	MH	Nov 2013	Network Rail now announced there will be no long term blockade at Watford Junction. This removes the potential disruption that would have been caused. Complete, delete
BM235	14/11/13	Traffic Commissioner Consultation	Follow-up and circulate consultation response	IW	Feb 2014	Senior Traffic Commissioner to produce a follow up consultation on statutory punctuality guidance in April 2014. Board members will see our response in advance of submission. Complete, delete
BM236	14/11/13	Passenger Queries	Provide a detailed breakdown of queries received and action taken	DS	Feb 2014	Breakdown provided in Passenger Team report at agenda item 7. Complete, delete.

DS commented that BM234 had originated from conversations around the impact the long-term closure of Watford Junction would have on passengers, particularly those travelling to the Commonwealth Games in the summer. Network Rail had recently announced that instead of a long-term closure, a series of shorter closures would occur during weekends, thereby removing the need for action on this point. On BM235, the Board had received a copy of the document that would be submitted as part of the consultation. A follow-up consultation from the Senior Traffic Commissioner would occur in early April; DS would ensure a draft copy of this was sent to members prior to the final submission of the response.

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4 Chairman's Report

Passenger Focus had attended an ORR board meeting, where a strong interest in consumer activities had been observed from board members. The ORR had been encouraged by Passenger Focus to seek further progress in this area, and a meeting would be held with the regulator later in the year to review whether this had been achieved.

The organisation had also been involved in assessing franchise bids from a passenger perspective.

A reaction to the consultation over the strategic road network (SRN) proposal was due around early March. Passenger Focus planned to hold discussions with consultees in order to clarify its role and answer any questions that remained.

A letter had been sent to Stephen Hammond regarding issues around penalty fares and the railway's treatment of those who were caught breaching ticketing requirements; Passenger Focus hoped to receive a positive response by the end of the month. Discussions were also being pursued with ATOC on this matter.

Guy Dangerfield would be producing a report on consumers' experiences of rail travel during recent months, focusing on the weather and disruption to services. The report would seek to highlight positive and negative performance from TOCs during the period and identify areas where lessons could be learnt. These would then be taken forward by Passenger Focus in discussions with the ORR and TOCs.

5 Chief Executive's Work Plan Report for Q3

DS commented that Passenger Focus's *Passenger Power!* campaign for the bus industry had been successfully launched. The coming year would see the organisation working with local authorities and bus companies to increase passenger engagement in this sector. Passenger Focus had also met with the new shadow ministerial team to promote the passenger agenda.

Passenger Focus had been monitoring the information provided by the rail industry during periods of disruption caused by recent poor weather. The organisation had subsequently written to the Rail Delivery Group to request a meeting with industry, aiming to determine how information services could be improved.

The most recent NRPS had been published in January, and the publication of the BPS was planned to occur in March.

5.1 Activity Report Including Research, Communications, Resources and Corporate Governance

HP stated that Passenger Focus was trialling an increased use of videos and online content in its communications. In particular, this approach had been taken with regard to the publication of the research on apps. As part of its efforts to gather feedback from passengers regarding the East Coast franchise,

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Passenger Focus had for the first time included an online form; a significant amount of feedback had been gathered in this way, and the data had been published on the website.

The Chairman sought further detail on the feedback exercise for the East Coast service. DS replied that Passenger Focus had gathered information on passenger aspirations and expectations for the future of the service, which could then be shared with groups bidding for the franchise. Areas of improvement had been determined with regard to future feedback exercises; there was a need to increase the time frame of the consultation and broaden the base from which feedback was gained.

5.2 Research Report

IW explained that in the year ahead, Passenger Focus would be engaged with several smart ticketing projects. The briefings for the autumn BPS and the first TPS were upcoming. Passenger Focus would also be publishing a report on the passenger assist system mystery shop exercise, a summary of which would be circulated to the Board prior to its publication.

The Chairman noted that it would be of interest to know whether interviews could be included in the report, as this had worked successfully in a previous report on ticket vending machines. It was suggested that the current report on passenger assist should be publicised more widely in the media than had been the case previously, in order to drive the changes that were necessary.

5.4 Finance Report

DS reported that there was no significant underspend or overspend anticipated for the end of the financial year. SL commented that the figure for variable overheads was substantial; whilst this was compensated for in the current year by savings to the ICT budget, care should be taken around this figure going forward. The Chairman suggested that more analysis of variable overheads would be useful.

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM 237	13/02/14	Substantial variable overheads	To undertake analysis of variable overheads and how these could be managed	NH	May 14	

JC stated that the feedback from Passenger Focus's recent conference in Cardiff had included requests for a future conference to be held in North Wales. JC would circulate a summary of the feedback from the Cardiff conference.

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM 238	13/02/14	Board Events feedback	Circulate a summary of feedback received from the events	JC	May 14	

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			held in Edinburgh and Cardiff			
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JC mentioned that a staff away day had been planned in March; the programme for this would be circulated. The Chairman suggested that as part of the away day, Board members could introduce themselves and comment on the work they were engaged in. JC undertook to include appropriate slots on the agenda.

6 Review of National Passenger Issues

MH said that with regard to bus travel, the main focus had been on the punctuality of buses. Passenger Focus had conducted research over what constituted punctuality. This had dovetailed into the ongoing work on *Passenger Power!* in the bus industry and the Senior Traffic Commissioner punctuality consultation. Passenger Focus had also published a report on bus fares and ticketing value for money. As part of this report, interesting feedback had been gained from 16-19 year olds; next year's work plan would aim to gather more information on the attitudes of this age group.

In terms of the rail industry, several research projects were being undertaken by Passenger Focus. Research would take place jointly with the ORR on the provision of information during periods of disruption and on measuring passenger experience. Passenger Focus's predominant concern during the quarter had been with franchising issues in the run up to the bidding process for Essex Thameside and TSGN.

The government had recently produced a response to the fares and ticketing review, containing considerable detail and many recommendations. Passenger Focus was currently engaged in analysing how these recommendations could be taken forward.

The organisation was presently building an evidence case around tickets for travel and prosecutions, and substantial efforts had been made to identify those cases that highlighted injustice in the system.

A three-way piece of research had been conducted on Passenger Assist by Passenger Focus, Network Rail and the DfT. SL asked how the ORR's research on passenger experience would coincide with the work of Passenger Focus. MH replied that the research had been aimed at establishing the experiences of passengers before, during, and after their journeys, in order to determine whether anything was missing from a consumer protection perspective.

PS expressed concern over the decline of bus services in rural areas, which had now become a national issue in England. PTE areas had managed more successfully due to the presence of experienced PTE staff who could negotiate with bus operators and ensure the continued running of certain services. However, particularly in the shire counties, very few County Council staff remained with bus expertise. DS noted that this issue had been given high priority at the last Bus Partnership Forum. The Association of Transport Coordinating Officers (ATCO) had stated that they were aware of areas where the successful

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co-ordination of funding had taken place between social services, education, transport and health departments in order to protect bus services. ATCO would be approaching those with experience in this area with the aim of producing best practice guidance.

The Chairman noted that there was a case for the creation of a body that could oversee bus services in the UK. Passenger Focus could undertake some research on this issue, with the goal of producing a set of recommendations for government.

Item	Date	Issue	Action	Owner	Due	Status
BM 239	13/02/14	Decline in bus services in rural areas	To conduct research, produce recommendations and liaise with ATCO on declining rural area bus services	DS	Nov 14	

MH noted that Passenger Focus had recently given evidence to a Select Committee on the subject of passenger transport in isolated communities. PS stated that the experience gained from Community Rail Partnerships could be applied to bus services.

7 Review of Passenger and Industry Facing Work

LM commented that there had been very positive use of the BPS by the operators in the West Midlands; positive engagement with the Survey could also be observed elsewhere. Milton Keynes had, after being placed bottom of the league table, enlisted the help of other authorities and operators that had performed well in the Survey in order to garner best practices. Bristol had also acted to improve their services following negative feedback in the BPS. These were examples of the positive effect that Passenger Focus's BPS had on the industry.

The Chairman asked whether there had been indication from either Bristol or Milton Keynes of the specific improvements they would targeted. LM replied that an action plan had been produced; this would be circulated to the board. The Chairman remarked that examples of the types of improvements that had been made could be provided to other authorities or operators with negative ratings in the BPS.

The number of complaint appeals resolved had decreased slightly, and the average handling time reduced significantly to 26 days. This reflected the efforts by Passenger Focus to acknowledge and escalate cases to operators more quickly. The most common reason for complaints in the current quarter had been around complaints handling procedures. Fares, retailing and refund issues were also responsible for a significant number of complaints. Passenger Focus had conducted reviews of complaints procedures, an activity that had already delivered useful insights. The organisation had in the previous quarter reviewed East Coast's handling of complaints, and had identified a lack of good process and several areas for improvement. Passenger Focus had liaised with an employee who had used this review to create a business plan for increasing resources for this area. More reviews of complaints procedures were scheduled to take place in the next quarter.

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Passenger Focus's open data programme had been well-received by TOCs. The programme would make it easier to deliver the results of the NRPS survey to operators, thereby helping Passenger Focus to bring the experiences of passengers to their attention. On the BPS, Passenger Focus would be making efforts to speak with all bus operators, local authorities and PTEs to discuss results with them. IL asked what had caused the decrease in Passenger Focus's average handling time for complaint appeals. DS responded that the number of complaint appeals open in the system pending a response from East Coast had decreased substantially following efforts by Passenger Focus to drive improvement in their processes. Although the number of complaint appeals was predicted to rise following the recent disruption to services, the fact that Passenger Focus had reduced its backlog of cases meant it was in a good position. The Chairman noted that in periods where fewer complaints were received, Passenger Focus should persuade TOCs to concentrate on improving procedures and performance, rather than on clearing as many complaints as possible.

8 Matters for Discussion/Approval

8.1 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (16 January 2014)

IL introduced the minutes from the ARAC. Passenger Focus was on target in terms of expenditure for the fiscal year. The DfT had given Passenger Focus a more unambiguous direction in terms of the re-charging of administration fees in cases where the organisation gave assistance to third parties by project-managing research projects. The NAO had determined the audit issues for the current year; this would include an examination of Passenger Focus's move to a new payroll provider. However, due to diminished resources at the NAO, this year's audit would not be completed by the submission date. A letter had been sent to the DfT informing them of the situation.

An internal audit had recently been carried out by PwC, looking at business continuity. Although there had been several issues identified, it was felt that the audit lacked somewhat in proportionality. Insufficient awareness on the part of ARAC members of the existing business continuity arrangements around IT infrastructure procedures and emergency contact procedures had been identified. As a result, the Committee would be conducting a detailed review into these procedures.

The ARAC had reviewed the risk reports on corporate risks, and was satisfied these complied with expectations. A change to the reporting of management activities to the Board had been considered based on a risk framework and Passenger Focus's seven key objectives. The Committee had reviewed and approved a new format, and in the coming financial year activities would be structured along the lines of objectives and risks. A change in the terms of reference for the ARAC had been proposed, along with some suggested amendments to the powers of the Board. This was based on new Treasury and NAO governance, and aimed to reflect the functioning of the ARAC.

A move to paperless meetings, both for the Committees and the main Board, had also been proposed by the ARAC. Passenger Focus staff were producing a cost-benefit analysis for this proposal. The Chairman said that it would be advisable to consider the use of paper management software for tablets.

The Board **endorsed** the minutes subject to adoption at the next ARAC meeting.

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8.2 Statistics Governance Group (12 December 2013)

IW stated that changes had been made to the wording of questions in some surveys. The accessibility questions had been reviewed and amended in light of current good practices, following liaisons with disability groups. A significant number of questions had been included in the NRPS after discussions with the BTP, who had made longstanding use of the Survey as a monitoring tool. Following the successful adoption of a mix of paper and online data collection for the TPS, this method would be piloted on both the NRPS and the BPS.

Some fieldwork issues had been identified around attempts by TOCs to influence passengers' opinions while the NRPS was being handed out. The SGG had therefore endorsed the decision to reduce the amount of notice and detail given to TOCs before the NRPS was conducted.

SL asked if it would be possible for Passenger Focus to fill the gaps in the TPS. IW responded that there was a possibility that TfL would include provision for the TPS in its budget. The other tram service not currently involved in the Survey, Tyne and Wear, had also expressed interest in using the TPS.

The Board **endorsed** the minutes subject to adoption at the next SGG meeting.

9 Draft 2014 – 2017 Corporate Plan

The Chairman stated that the Corporate Plan and the Work Plan had been revised following comments from Board members. The Corporate Plan and the Work Plan had also been reviewed by the management team and in staff forums. The text in the Plans around the representation of Strategic Roads Network users had been approved by the DfT. The Board **received** and **endorsed** the Draft 2014 – 2017 Corporate Plan.

10 Draft 2014 – 2015 Work Plan

The Board **received** and **endorsed** the Draft 2014 – 2015 Work Plan.

11 Revised Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference and Board Reserved Powers

The Board **received** and **endorsed** the revised Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference and Board Reserved Powers.

12 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

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Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman, Passenger Focus

Date