

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

South West

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Passengers score South West rail services

Passengers travelling in the South West have rated the region's services as part of the independent watchdog's National Passenger Survey (NPS).



Passenger Focus's NPS, in which over 56,000 passengers participate each year, gives a clear indication of how satisfied passengers are with First Great Western (83%), South West Trains (85%), Arriva Trains Wales (88%) and CrossCountry (85%).

These results show a pretty good picture of the region's railway. As more trains arrive on time, Britain's rail passengers are becoming more satisfied. Particularly good news is passengers say train companies in the region have improved value for money following many fares staying the same or even falling in January 2010 as a consequence of the lower inflation rate in mid-2009. First Great Western also delivered on passengers' need for better information during disruption up nine points to 48%.

The publication of this comparative data is one of the most

Spring 2010			
Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain result	83% (up 2%)	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (2%)
CrossCountry	85%	Value for money (6%)	Train toilet facilities (7%)
Arriva Trains Wales	88%	Facilities for car parking (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside (9%)
First Great Western	83%	How well the train company deals with delays (9%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (5%)
South West Trains	85%	Value for money (7%)	Overall station environment (5%)

cost effective ways of driving improvements on the railway. As operators vie with each other for pole position it also allows

valuable comparisons between routes and the widely different scores operators achieve for various aspects of their services.

Passenger complaints

The short-forming of trains and some recent peak-hour signal failures across the region have increased the number of complaints Passenger Focus has received. Passengers have told the watchdog problems revolve around the quality and quantity of information given both on-train and at stations. Passenger manager Mike Greedy has experienced many of these disruptions first hand and is able to feed observations directly into the senior management team at

First Great Western. This, coupled with reports received from Passenger Focus's disruption passenger panellists (see page 2), assist the company to assess areas where it can make simple changes which have a major impact on customer service delivery. Passenger Focus has received several reports recently where the passenger has experienced considerable delay but satisfaction has been reported as good due to the quality of the information provided by the train manager.



Reviewing complaints

Passenger Focus has been working with South West Trains (SWT) as the company reviews its complaint procedures. Phil Berry of SWT commented that: "We work closely with our partners at Passenger Focus and where possible take on their comments to resolve a case in a more satisfactory manner". SWT has recently changed its in-house quality monitoring to mirror the process used by Passenger Focus, and Passenger Focus is reviewing SWT's new standard responses to passengers.



On buses, coaches and trams now too!

Passenger Focus now represents bus, coach and tram passengers in England outside London. To learn more about the work Passenger Voice is doing in the South West, subscribe to Passenger Voice Bus, Coach and Tram or visit our website www.passengerfocus.org.uk



Southern rail meeting

Rail user groups from around southern England have met with Passenger Focus to discuss capacity, engineering work and punctuality on the railway.

Passenger Focus hosted the one-day event for rail user groups (RUGs) with the aim of the conference to discuss key topics which effect all the RUGs in the South and give them an opportunity to network with other groups and industry representatives. The event also provided an opportunity to discuss the work the industry is doing to improve passenger information during disruption and to highlight further work required.

The event was held at National Express East Anglia Stratford staff training academy and was attended by representatives from London TravelWatch and the British Transport Police.

Passengers talk disruption

The way train operating companies (TOCs) handle disruption consistently falls short for passengers.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey only 35% of Great Britain passengers said they were happy with this aspect of train services. To provide constructive feedback from passengers to TOCs, Passenger Focus has set up a nationwide disruption panel to collate responses with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

The specific nature of reports has helped the watchdog to provide focused comments

on good and poor practice at stations on First Great Western (FGW), where performance generally has improved to the point where there have been fewer disruption reports.

South West Trains (SWT) is well aware that it still has a long way to go to improve information provision during unplanned disruption; for example, there was a mismatch of information between SWT's website and information at stations during last winter's snow. Passenger Focus manager Jocelyn Pearson has been working with SWT and Network Rail to go through all the processes and actions that need to be reviewed and improved.

Passenger Focus plans to publish the research findings from the disruption panel later this year.



Planning for disruption to Reading Station over Christmas

Passengers in the Reading area face major disruption to their train services between the 24 and 30 December this year as the station re-modelling project takes another step forward. Engineering work will happen during this period to facilitate the transfer of the signalling to the new control centre at Didcot, bridge widening and changes to rail layouts in the Reading area. This means that buses will replace trains in the area over the six days. Passenger Focus has been working with Network Rail and First Great Western (FGW) to ensure passengers are considered in plans and that communications are timely and accurate.

Passengers travelling to London from Wales will be able to remain on trains diverted via Banbury and passengers from the West Country will retain direct services to London Waterloo during the affected period.

Following a meeting with Passenger Focus manager Mike Greedy, Network Rail and FGW agreed to undertake a consultation exercise with passengers likely to be affected by the engineering works.

The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures actually cater for the needs and concerns expressed by the passengers during the course of this research. Focus groups will be held across the region to ensure that the needs of long-distance passengers are also taken into account.

More information will be published in the next edition of Passenger Voice.

Findings from ticket machine research

Passenger Focus's research on the benefits and shortcomings of ticket vending machines (TVMs) and queuing times at stations will be published soon. The research asks why passengers queue to speak to a staff member when there is no queue for a TVM. What is it about some TVM programs that passengers find off-putting and drives them to wait longer to buy their ticket from the booking office? The need for reassurance is compounded by the complexity of tickets and fare structures. If you would like to see the research email info@passengerfocus.org.uk or see www.passengerfocus.org.uk

