



Reacting to extreme weather on the railways

July 2015

National Task Force

transportfocus 

Summary

Whenever extreme weather affects train services, questions are asked about whether Britain's railways are sufficiently well prepared. Transport Focus is pleased to have worked with the industry, through its National Task Force, to research passengers' views about the subject. In particular, to understand their expectations of what the railway should deliver in these circumstances and what can be done differently to meet their needs as fully as possible. The key findings are set out below, but they amount to three core principles that the rail industry should embrace:

- provide timely, accurate information so passengers can make informed decisions about their journeys
- be transparent – help passengers understand why timetable changes and service suspensions have been made
- demonstrate that train companies and Network Rail are doing their best on behalf of passengers, despite the weather.

Key findings from the research are:

- That passengers' expectations are high and possibly unrealistic. There is an expectation that the rail industry takes steps that allow a normal service to operate despite extreme weather. There is a strong sense that snow, heavy rain and high winds happen every year and that the industry should invest and plan to negate these effects. To the extent that passengers consider practicality and safety at all, they tend to assume that the right level of investment and planning can overcome the problems. Even once the practicalities are explained, the desire for a normal service irrespective of the weather remains strong. Some passengers even feel that a *better* than normal service should be provided during extreme weather, based on a presumption that more people will choose rail over road and people may need to travel earlier or later because the weather has affected their day in other ways. However, some passengers observe that service disruption for other reasons causes them more problems and so question how high a priority it is to address those caused by extreme weather.
- Notwithstanding this desire for normal service, it is clear that good information has a vital role to play in meeting passengers' expectations when it is impossible to deliver a normal service. Information during extreme weather must deliver on two fronts:
 - Provide accurate, timely, consistent and useful information that allows passengers to make an informed decision about their journey – in this respect it is no different from passenger information during any type of disruption
 - Where the industry has decided to run a reduced service, passenger information must explain why the changes are necessary. Without the rationale, passengers tend to assume that rail companies are changing timetables to save money or avoid fines.
- When asked about their priorities when it is not possible to run a perfect service, there is a strong preference for frequency and as near-normal a timetable as possible, even at the expense of punctuality. There is strong negative reaction to starting trains later in the day and finishing earlier, particularly among commuters and especially where delaying first trains until 11am was mentioned. This was partly because passengers have no awareness of the operational and safety reasons for doing so, but it is also because many commuters *need* to get to work for a variety of reasons, including financial loss and reputational risk with employers and clients. In separate Transport Focus research in March 2015, passengers were divided over whether train companies should be permitted to introduce amended timetables during extreme weather. Those saying 'yes' expected that punctuality would be better if there was an amended timetable (although with the important caveat that changes had to be publicised sufficiently in advance). Those saying 'no' feel that train companies should at least attempt to run the full service and not admit defeat in advance.
- The research reveals more about the question of trust in the relationship between passengers and the rail industry, and how critical good communication is in achieving it. Passengers want their train company to demonstrate that it is doing its best for customers. That includes running as near to normal a service as is possible whenever it is safe to do so. The notion of suspending services until mid-morning was seen as an example of an industry not on its customer's side. Some passengers in Scotland feel that rail companies are now too cautious and suspend services too quickly in the face of extreme weather – which, in the absence of effective communication of the reasons why, has led to cynicism.
- Passengers believe that train travel during extreme weather is safe in comparison with travel by road. This is partly because passengers see trains as big and invincible in comparison with road vehicles which can skid on icy roads or be hit by other vehicles and partly because passengers trust the rail industry not to run trains when it is unsafe to do so. As a result, passengers tend to think of safety during extreme weather only in terms of slips and trips at stations or overcrowding resulting from service disruption.
- While not conclusive and, again, in the context of a desire for normal service whatever the weather, the research suggests that those London and South East train companies which make a formal change to their timetable during extreme weather, and those long-distance train companies which set out to deliver the normal timetable to the greatest extent possible, have adopted approaches broadly in line with passenger opinion.

Transport Focus recommendations

In the light of this research, Transport Focus makes a number of recommendations. They fall into two categories: maintaining a normal service wherever possible and passenger information.

Maintaining a normal service

Recognising passengers' desire for a normal service during extreme weather and to avoid the risk of being – or being seen to be – overcautious, the rail industry should:

- Put forward proposals for Control Period 6 (2019-2024) to further increase the rail network's resilience to extreme weather
- Publicly commit to run the full timetable during extreme weather unless safety would be compromised or there is a strong likelihood that doing so would result in severe disruption
- Develop means of 'route proving' lines that do not rely on manual inspection at first light (please see point iv. in Appendix B, page 4). Delaying start of service until 11am attracts strong negative reaction from passengers. There is a big difference between the message "no trains until 11am because there *are* trees across the track" and "no trains until 11am while we see *if* there are trees across the track". The industry should strive hard to run trains from the normal start of service on all unaffected routes.

Passenger information

This research underlines the importance of good passenger information in allowing passengers to make informed decisions during extreme weather, including about whether or not to travel at all. The need for the National Task Force 40 actions to be delivered as quickly and as fully as possible across the industry is clear. Transport Focus's recommendations about information during extreme weather are:

- That train companies should be transparent about the reasons for running fewer trains, extending the journey time, starting the service later etc. The industry must help passengers understand why the changes are necessary and what will be achieved by making them. It must help passengers trust that decisions are being made for legitimate reasons and that rail companies have their passengers' interests at heart.
- That details of any temporary timetable should be provided as far in advance as possible – ideally 24 hours, but certainly no later than 4pm the day before. If passengers, in particular commuters, can head home the day before knowing about tomorrow's trains they have the chance to re-plan. If this is currently impossible to achieve, the industry must increase the agility of its train planning system and processes – please see our existing recommendation, item 3 of Appendix A.
- That train companies make latest route by route information available prominently, providing both the current service status *and* a forward view. Industry systems are generally set up to report what is happening now, not to provide advice about the service to expect later or tomorrow. And yet passengers, aware that weather forecasters are warning of travel disruption, want to find out if they will be affected. In these situations guidance about what to expect tomorrow is vital, including – if it is the case – reassurance that a full service is planned and disruption is not anticipated.

Appendix A

Existing Transport Focus recommendations relevant to disruption are restated below for completeness. Those in bold indicate recommendations where it is unclear to Transport Focus that the rail industry has specific plans to address.

Our existing recommendations are that the rail industry should:

- 1 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 **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 B* is clearly an improvement on the underlying Day A for Day C arrangements, but its limitations are significant:**
 - Train companies currently have to decide by 11am 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
 - 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
 - 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
 - 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 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.
- 5 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-12** information obligations and leaves tickets on sale on trains that cannot run (Dawlish and the Cambrian Coast being recent examples).
- 6 **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.**
- 7 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.
- 8 **Change aspects of the national ticketing rules to give passengers greater protection during disruption, specifically:**
 - 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
 - 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)
 - 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?
- 9 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.

*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.

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

Appendix B

For completeness, we set out below an extract from Transport Focus's response to the Department for Transport's Transport network resilience review in May 2014. In answer to the question "How well did the UK's transport network respond to the extreme weather? In particular, what worked well and what do you consider needs to be improved?" we said:

It is important to acknowledge that, given the severity of the succession of storms that battered parts of Britain from late October until well into the New Year, things could have been considerably worse for rail passengers. The fact they weren't had a lot to do with planning and mitigation that has gone on in recent years, as well as the immense professionalism shown by numerous railway staff who worked tirelessly in very trying conditions. In certain areas information was markedly better than in the past, particularly around 'early calls' on the service to be provided the following day.

Nevertheless, there are areas where it appears more needs to be done, particularly as it is expected that Britain is going to experience more extreme weather in the coming years:

- i** Structures, earthworks and location of signalling cabinets. Network Rail's funding settlement for Control Period 5 2014-19 contains monies for structures and earthworks. A legitimate (albeit with the benefit of hindsight) question on behalf of passengers is whether this is sufficient to renew or weather-proof the largely Victorian railway infrastructure that was either not built with such weather in mind or was built without 21st century understanding of earth mechanics. There is also the question of relocating signalling cabinets to avoid flood or groundwater incursion. In the light of numerous landslips and flooding incidents in the last six months, should work in these areas be significantly accelerated?
- ii** Routine maintenance. And as well as potentially increasing capital investment, is the level of routine maintenance on drainage and other weather-mitigation systems adequate? Is it something Network Rail Route Managing Directors, indeed ORR, routinely monitor?

- iii** Disruption caused by trees. A feature of the Autumn/Winter 2013 disruption was the effect of trees on the railway. Either physically blocking the track; causing damage to the overhead line electrification (OLE) equipment; requiring speed restrictions to reduce the risks in the event that a train hits one; or causing train services to be suspended in the mornings for 'route proving', i.e. a check that trees are not blocking the line. Does Network Rail do enough to reduce the risk that trees on its own land will topple and prevent trains running? How does it go about reducing the risk from trees on private land adjacent to the railway? It is notable that there was very little disruption to Southeastern High Speed services, with the absence of lineside trees said to be a key factor.
- iv** Route proving. In Autumn/Winter 2013 some train operators announced that operations the following day would not start until, say, 10am or 11am. One issue being the need to 'route prove' in daylight, even when storms have abated hours before. These 'early calls' gave passengers certainty about the following day (a marked improvement on previous years), but did not alter the fact that people could not get to work. On routes where there were trees on the line this caution will have reduced the overall disruption passengers experienced. Where there were no trees down, it was galling for passengers that nothing would have prevented the morning peak service running as normal. It may be that there is no other way to 'route prove' than waiting for first light and sending an empty train slowly along each line checking for obstructions. However it strikes us that Network Rail should investigate if there are better ways to do it. Could technology play a part? If proceeding slowly and with powerful headlamps, does it have to be light? Light or dark, are sufficient resources available to complete 'route proving' and get unaffected lines open as rapidly as possible?

There is also the question of whether some strategic routes are so inherently vulnerable to extreme weather, causing either short term disruption or an extended closure, that diversionary options should be seriously considered. We recommend that a nationwide analysis takes place: Dawlish may not be the only 'Dawlish'.



REACTING TO EXTREME WEATHER ON THE RAILWAY

Summary Report for: Transport Focus

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Extreme weather poses a challenge to Britain's railway network. These challenges have been apparent in recent years with damage to railway lines and severe disruption to train services and passengers.

The overall aim of this research has been to gather passenger expectations for how the railways prepare for severe weather events, and attitudes towards pre-emptive measures that the rail industry may take to prepare for such events.

1.2 Research methodology

Qualitative research has been carried out to gather detailed feedback from passengers. This included 12 mini-group discussions each lasting 1 hour 45 minutes with 4-5 participants, one paired depth interview lasting 1 hour 30 minutes, eight face-to-face depth interviews lasting 1 hour and one telephone depth interview lasting 1 hour. The sample was constructed using the following criteria:

- Location, to include England (London, Exeter, Leeds and Manchester), Scotland (Glasgow) and Wales (Cardiff) ensuring that participants were using a broad spread of different train companies
- Journey purpose, to include commuters and those travelling by rail for business, leisure or personal reasons
- Journey types, to include long and short journeys, those using high and low frequency services, those using branch line and mainline services, and those eligible for passenger assistance (including those with mobility impairments, the elderly and those travelling with luggage or a push-chair)
- Demographics, to include a spread of gender, age and socio-economic group.

The research was carried out 21st-29th January 2015. It should be noted that during this time Scotland experienced heavy snow which impacted on rail services and accordingly Glasgow passengers were able to draw on this current experience during the research sessions. Exeter passengers similarly reflected on experiences resulting from the 2014 landslip at Dawlish/Teignmouth.

2 Key findings

2.1 Defining extreme weather and perceptions of resilience in Great Britain

Passengers in this research define extreme weather as severe or excessive seasonal weather, typically associated with snow, rain, wind, ice and fog. Whilst it is agreed that extreme weather can be forecast and therefore rail companies can put plans in place to pre-empt this, passengers feel that weather forecasts are not always reliable leaving rail companies to react to unexpected extreme weather.

Overall, views regarding extreme weather rail resilience in Great Britain are strongly influenced by perceptions of how other countries cope with such events. Many feel that rail

services in Great Britain are behind the curve in terms of investment in infrastructure and technology. Views regarding resilience are impacted by recent experience of extreme weather events. In particular, those in Glasgow and Exeter recall recent events and express mixed reactions. Whilst first-hand experience has made some passengers more realistic and understanding of extreme weather resilience, others express frustration with the perceived lack of resilience. Frustration is also expressed by those who experience delays due to extreme weather on a regular basis and feel that the rail industry's response has not improved over time.

Whilst there is strong agreement that resilience needs to be improved, there are mixed views on who should be responsible for funding the investment required. Most passengers in this research feel that they already pay high fares and therefore should not be burdened with any additional financial responsibility. However, there are mixed views regarding the role for taxpayers in supporting increased resilience. Whilst some passengers note that the rail industry is a public service and therefore feel it is acceptable for taxpayers to provide some support, others firmly feel that this responsibility lies with the rail companies whose profits it was felt can provide the necessary finance.

Thinking further about responsibilities, passengers note that there is a lack of clarity about who has responsibility for different aspects of the rail service (e.g. rails and rolling stock). Some cite Network Rail but query what their responsibilities are. Whilst passengers recognise this lack of knowledge, few feel that this is essential information for them suggesting that this information will only be necessary should the general public be required to provide additional financial support; in this instance greater transparency will be needed.

Overall, whilst passengers agree that rail resilience should be improved many envisage that this should be done with the aim of improving a range of service issues, including signalling problems and defective trains, as well as extreme weather. Some query whether extreme weather should be a priority when other service issues are experienced on a more frequent basis.

2.2 Passenger expectations for when extreme weather is forecast

Passengers were asked how they expect the rail industry to prepare for forecast extreme weather. Spontaneous views from passengers demonstrate that their expectations are high and probably unrealistic. Passengers express a strong desire for normal service during extreme weather and, indeed, feel that train companies should put in place enhanced measures to ensure this. However, once made aware of the types of safety and operational considerations that need to be taken into account by train companies, passengers become more tolerant of the idea that normal service may not be possible.

Across the research it is clear that these expectations are driven and influenced by a range of factors. Figure 1 summarises these and they are discussed in turn below.



fig. 1

2.2.1 Drivers of expectations

Passengers' expectations are driven by three factors:

1. Passenger type

Two passenger types emerge across the research. The first type are those who *always try to travel*. These passengers often feel work-related pressures to show a physical presence at work. This pressure is amplified where passengers, typically commuters, feel they risk loss of pay, enforced annual leave or creating a poor impression of their commitment to their employer. These passengers will always attempt to travel if train services are running and they consider their journeys to be essential. Other essential journeys that would result in an attempt to travel include travel for a hospital appointment, special occasions (e.g. Christmas) and travel for a pre-booked event such as a theatre performance or flight. Other reasons for always attempting to travel include: a desire to seek clarification that a pre-booked ticket can be used on an alternative day; those for whom seeing if it is possible to travel is simply convenient (e.g. they live close to the station or are able to easily use an alternative mode should train travel not be possible); those who have previously attempted to travel during extreme weather and been successful so are optimistic that travel will be possible; and those who strongly dislike alternative modes so will always attempt to complete their journey by rail if possible. When combined with low awareness of operational and safety factors, expectations for rail travel during extreme weather are very high for this passenger type.

The second type of passenger identified are those who will *decide not to travel*. This includes those who can work from home, those whose journey is local or social and can easily be rescheduled, and those who are simply unable to get to the station safely. Those who have concerns about travelling during extreme weather are also likely to decide not to travel. This includes those who have previously been unable to get home due to extreme weather, those who are concerned that they will be unable to get a seat (a particular concern for mobility impaired passengers), and those who are concerned that changes to services will mean that they will be required to make a change between trains or modes (this is a particular concern for mobility impaired passengers and those who are less confident with rail travel). Whilst these passengers are less likely to consider their journey essential, they still have high expectations of rail travel during extreme weather based on their perceptions and limited knowledge of operational and safety factors.

2. Operational factors

Tolerance for delays to service and impact on the timetable is much greater for unexpected extreme weather events; passengers expect that train companies will need time to put appropriate measures in place. Additionally, passengers have very low spontaneous knowledge and awareness of any operational factors taken into consideration by train companies when planning for extreme weather. On this basis, passengers express low tolerance for delays to services and impact on timetables when extreme weather is forecast. Passengers expect that advance warning of weather events means that train companies have sufficient time to put measures in place and action protocols and strategies. Passengers envisage a range of measures might be implemented including:

- **Measures to support the provision of normal service:** mobilisation of additional staff and maintenance teams; use of snow ploughs; use of overnight depots to avoid snow and ice damage to trains; use of information systems to ensure quick relay of information to stations; provision of bus replacement services; allowing tickets to be used on any service; and identification of hub stations leaving smaller stations unserved
- **Measures to provide an enhanced service:** run services earlier in the day; run services later in the day; extend peak hour services; put spare trains/carriages into service; and run longer trains with more carriages
- **Measures to reduce over-crowding** (which could be applicable to other situations where service disruption/delays are experienced): declassify first class carriages; provide standing only carriages; and remove refreshments carriages replacing them with seating carriages.

It was clear across the research that passengers' expectations often contradict the types of measures that train companies will be likely to put in place in reality. When passengers are informed of the types of measure that might realistically be put in place they express some frustration, but also acquire greater awareness of and tolerance for why normal service might not always be maintained. Whilst there is still a desire for normal service, where this is not possible, passengers seek reassurance that they will be able to make a journey within a reasonable timeframe, in reasonable comfort. With this in mind, passengers cite the following priorities when train companies are planning for extreme weather:

- **Providing a frequent service:** most passengers feel that provision of a frequent service is more important during extreme weather than punctuality of services. They envisage that a frequent service will increase the likelihood of being able to board a train within a reasonable timeframe and with the possibility of getting a seat. Punctuality is cited as most important by those who like to plan to specific train times – these are often passengers who use low frequency routes and are used to planning their day around specific trains times (and not a turn up and go service).
- **Running the full timetable with extended journey times:** passengers are keen to see measures put in place that aim to be as similar as possible to a normal service. With this in mind they are keen to see the full timetable retained and are tolerant of extended journey times (assuming these are reasonable) as they are keen to progress their journey as soon as possible. Passengers dislike the idea of a reduced timetable, expressing concerns that this option will be less comfortable (with increased overcrowding) and feels less reliable. Reflecting this preference, passengers often react negatively to the idea of last trains running earlier than usual, and first trains starting

later than usual. With a particular focus on the latter, commuters feel strongly that this will negatively impact their journeys and express concern regarding employment pressures. Even when provided with the rationale for starting first trains later, commuters feel that a significantly later time (e.g. after 7am) is not reasonable and in some cases, scepticism is voiced suggesting that later times are a result of prioritisation of main lines and London routes.

- **Avoidance of overcrowding:** passengers express concern that overcrowding might lead to passengers becoming agitated which would directly impact on fellow passengers and staff. With this in mind they react negatively to the idea of shorter trains as they envisage this will result in overcrowding.
- **Being able to get a seat:** whilst typically considered a lower priority during extreme weather by many commuters, getting a seat is important for those making longer journeys and those with mobility impairments or travelling with children. Those with a strong dislike for overcrowding also express a preference for getting a seat during extreme weather.
- **Support in continuing journeys:** passengers have mixed views about leaving smaller stations unserved and stopping trains short of their destination. Overall, these measures are less popular amongst those living on a branch line, those who have limited confidence in navigating unknown journeys, and mobility impaired passengers who seek to avoid unexpected interchanges and to keep journeys simple. Should these measures be necessary the suggested steps to support people in continuing their journeys are mixed. Some passengers feel that given enough notice passengers should be personally responsible for arranging continuation of their journey, whilst others suggest a bus replacement service or sign-posting to relevant scheduled bus services.

3. Safety

Passengers spontaneously cite a limited number of safety issues relating to extreme weather. These tend to include factors such as overcrowding, falling in icy station/platform conditions and irate passengers. Overall there are very few mentions of wider safety issues such as derailment, landslips or collisions with trees on the line. Passengers feel that trains are a safe mode of transport during extreme weather noting that they rarely hear otherwise in the media. At a spontaneous level it is clear that safety of trains is not factored into passenger expectations of service delivery during extreme weather. Once made aware of the range of safety considerations passengers express mixed reactions. Whilst passengers trust that train companies will run trains only if safe to do so, some query whether all decisions made by train companies are driven by safety. The most sceptical passengers query whether some decisions are actually driven by prioritisation of main line and London services or choosing options that require the least short- and long-term financial investment. With this in mind the research suggests that any measures planned for extreme weather need to be justified to passengers to help overcome any scepticism.

2.2.2 Influencing expectations

It is clear that improving both passengers' relationship with train companies and information provision will help manage expectations for measures put in place for extreme weather.

Relationship with TOC

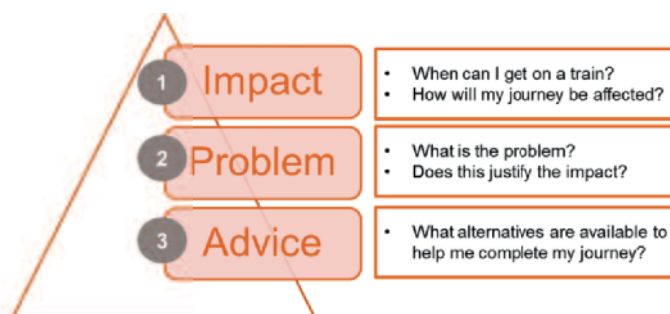
Most passengers were thinking about their local train company when discussing measures taken for extreme weather, although it should be noted that some did not explicitly mention their train operator's name and some displayed a lack of clarity regarding the role of bodies such as Network Rail.

The mix of trust and scepticism felt by passengers regarding decisions made by train companies when planning for extreme weather results in a range of attitudes towards such measures. Whilst a few cite a sense of 'community spirit' when facing extreme weather and the need to pull together to make a positive experience, many passengers express frustration. These frustrated passengers comment on a perceived lack of improvement over time in their experience of delays and disruption caused by extreme weather and other events/issues. These passengers are very focused on their individual needs and quickly become frustrated, displaying limited tolerance for situations where their individual journeys are impacted. Whilst a sense of cynicism is prevalent amongst this group, this is often due to dissatisfaction generated over time regarding delays and poor information provision during disruption. However, the most cynical are typically the most politicised passengers, citing concerns with profiteering and general management within the rail industry. These views are often driven by media coverage which fuels the perceived lack of focus on the passenger – these passengers often feel that decisions made within the rail industry are based on the easiest and most cost-effective options.

With these varied views in mind, it is clear that any communications with passengers regarding steps taken to prepare for extreme weather should give a clear rationale (enabling passengers to believe in the decisions made) and should demonstrate that train companies put the interest of passengers at the heart of decision making.

Information provision

Passenger information needs reflect findings from previous Transport Focus research¹. As shown in figure 2 the core information need is for detail regarding the likely impact on a journey, followed by information about the problem and advice for how passengers might continue their journeys.



¹ <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passenger-information-when-trains-are-disrupted>

fig. 2

Passengers agree that lack of clear and consistent communication results in frustration. With this in mind, the following attributes emerge as important to passenger experiences:

- Accurate, up-to-date communications with consistency across all channels
- Believable communications that provide a rationale for decisions made when planning for extreme weather so as to drive greater tolerance and understanding of the measures taken
- Images of steps being taken (e.g. figure 3) are suggested as a good way to communicate with passengers but these should be used cautiously to avoid generating fear about safety of services. It is further noted that over-promising or adopting a worst case scenario approach can drive cynicism when not realised
- Informative communications providing pertinent and concise information with the option to access more detail if required, for example via a hyperlink
- Timely information that gives as much pre-warning and time-specific information as possible to help passengers make an informed decision about whether to use the train
- A tailored approach to communications, using text, app and email alerts to directly provide relevant information to passengers. This is considered a particularly good way of letting those with booked assistance know how their journey assistance will be affected by extreme weather measures
- In the context of a PDF on a train company website and for a relatively short journey, clear emergency timetable information provided to passengers well in advance, detailing only the services running (not cancelled services) and with extended journey times built into the new times shown
- In the context of station displays and long-distance journeys, it appears that passengers' preference is for the normal timetable to be displayed with any delay shown (rather than an emergency timetable with extra running time built in). Passengers envisage this will be most useful as passengers will be likely to look for normal running times as it could not be guaranteed that all would be aware of the emergency timetable before arriving at the station.



fig. 3 (Scotrail Twitter)

A range of channels are cited as currently being used by passengers and communication provision should reflect these. Channels that are accessed proactively to check train services on a regular basis include social media sites (Twitter and Facebook) as well as websites and apps for train companies, National Rail and retailers such as the trainline.com. Other passengers note that they come across general travel advice on radio and television. Text, email and app alerts are considered the best way for passengers to be warned about any changes to service.

3 Conclusions

At a spontaneous level there are high and probably unrealistic expectations for what the rail industry can deliver during extreme weather, especially amongst those who perceive their journey to be essential. This is particularly the case where extreme weather is forecast as passengers feel that advance warning should enable train companies to put in place enhanced measures that avoid the need for changes to the timetable or disruption to services. It is clear that previous experiences of disruption caused during extreme weather impacts on tolerance towards such measures. Whilst some express understanding of the challenges facing train companies, other have become sceptical over time and feel that train companies do not always have passengers' interests at heart. Overall, a lack of awareness and understanding of operational and safety factors promotes high expectations and limited tolerance for the measures put in place for extreme weather.

These passenger expectations can be influenced and to some extent managed through better information and communication with passengers. This in turn will help build a more positive relationship between passengers and train companies. With this in mind, passengers regard it as key for train companies to:

- Put measures in place to run a normal service wherever possible

- Put passenger safety and interests at heart
- Make sensible decisions as to when it is safe to run trains
- Be transparent and provide information that enables passengers to make informed decisions, including whether to travel at all
- Provide clear information clarifying the impact that the extreme weather and pre-emptive measures will have on their journey
- Provide rationale for decisions, demonstrating that the train company is doing its best and helping passengers trust that decisions that are made for legitimate reasons
- Reflect communication preferences in all passenger communications (not just those regarding extreme weather) to help build a more positive relation with train companies.



REACTING TO EXTREME WEATHER ON THE RAILWAY

Qualitative Research Findings

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BACKGROUND AND METHOD

Background and objectives



Extreme weather events pose a challenge to the GB railway network, infrastructure and service delivery. A gap has been identified in rail industry knowledge and following the storm damage earlier this year, it has become clear that the rail industry would benefit from a greater understanding of passenger expectations and preferences for how the railway prepares for extreme weather events

EXPECTATIONS FOR HOW THE RAILWAYS PREPARE FOR SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS:

- How passengers categorise weather events
 - What is regarded as extreme weather?
- The extent to which passengers accept that trains will be affected by extreme weather
 - What are expectations for how trains will be affected?
 - Do passengers expect the industry to simply 'cope' with no impact to service?
- Spontaneous passenger expectations and considered expectations in light of contextual information encouraging passengers to reflect on the steps taken by rail to ensure passenger and staff safety and avoidance of damage to infrastructure and rolling stock

ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRE-EMPTIVE MEASURES THAT THE RAIL INDUSTRY MAY TAKE TO PREPARE FOR THESE EVENTS:

- Whether passengers would prefer reduced level of service or no service if an emergency timetable is going to be put into operation the following day
 - How best to provide this information
- Envisaged reaction to situations where extreme weather measures are pre-emptively put in place, but the forecast does not materialise/ is not as severe as anticipated

Method and sample



The research comprised mini-groups containing 5 participants in each, and individual depth interviews. All included a mix of demographics and journey type, the detailed sample can be found in the appendix

Location	Commuters	Personal/Leisure/Business
London	2 x mini groups 1 x paired depth 1 x telephone depth	2 x mini groups 1 x depth
Exeter	1 x mini group	1 x mini group
Leeds		1 x mini group 2 x depths
Manchester	1 x mini group	2 x depths
Glasgow	1 x mini group	1 x mini group 1 x depth
Cardiff	1 x mini group	1 x mini group 1 x depth

Before and during the research

Research was carried out 21st-29th January 2015
 Extreme weather events before and during the research resulted in participants in Glasgow and Exeter drawing on recent experiences throughout the discussion

At the time of the research Scotland had experienced heavy snow



Before the research, Exeter had experienced landslips on the lines around Dawlish and Teignmouth



Image taken from:
<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/timetables-and-travel/storm-damage/>

SETTING THE CONTEXT

- DEFINING EXTREME WEATHER
- VIEWS ON RAIL RESILIENCE

Defining extreme weather

For most, extreme weather is associated with severe or excessive seasonal weather

Mixed recent experience of extreme weather events

Mixed views regarding the reliability of weather forecasts

Glasgow
Recall of Met Office warnings

Exeter
Met Office (based locally) sometimes unreliable



storms
ice
leaves

heat

rain

fog

snow

wind

<http://www.wordle.net/create>

Extreme weather is not perceived to be a key reason for delays

→ Some felt that it was a rare occurrence

Signalling problems

Trespasser on track

Staffing problems

Defective train

→ But not always aware/ informed of reasons for delays

Industry resilience to extreme weather



Perceptions of how other countries cope with extreme weather result in the view that rail services in GB are behind the curve

Lack of resilience is aligned with lack of investment in technology and infrastructure

During disruption there was a live TV relay of workmen moving an obstruction on the line
“You could see there was a reason...you could see they were doing something about it and it wasn't stopped for no reason”

“I don't think snow should be extreme, I used to live in Germany and there was always snow...every winter there was thick, think snow and the trains used to come perfectly”

Expectation that delays will happen during extreme weather but frustration that fares are costly and there are limited signs of significant upgrade/ investments

Greater feeling of resilience in Exeter...

Recent experience of how disasters are dealt with | work being visibly carried out re Dawlish landslip | greater levels of realism?

Investing in resilience

Agreement that greater resilience needed but mixed views on fare payers or tax payers financially supporting this

- Fares are expensive already
- Private rail companies make profits and should be making the required financial investments

Strongly against

Some acceptance

- It is a public service open to all so it may be acceptable for tax payers to support some investment
- *Exeter and Cardiff*

However, some questions cited....

Who is responsible for tracks, rails, trains?

What involvement do Network Rail/ government funded bodies have?

Should extreme weather resilience be a priority when day-to-day issues are not resolved?

Overall, whilst participants noted that this information was unclear few spontaneously requested further information

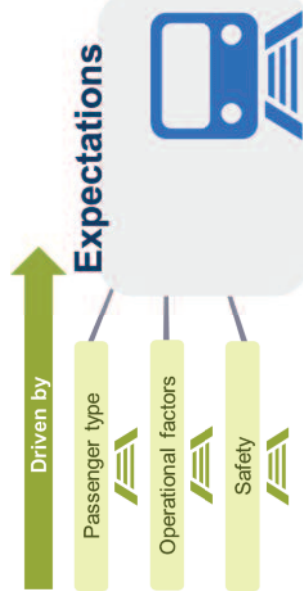
EXPECTATIONS WHEN EXTREME WEATHER IS FORECAST

Expectations (1)

Spontaneous expectations are high and possibly unrealistic

Expectations

- Desire for normal service during extreme weather
- TOCs should plan to put enhanced service measures in place to maintain normal services



These high expectations are driven by:

- Passenger type and how essential passenger journeys are perceived to be
- Preference to travel by rail as often perceived to be more reliable than other modes (e.g. bus and tube)
- Low awareness/ spontaneous consideration of operational factors
- Low awareness/ spontaneous consideration of safety factors

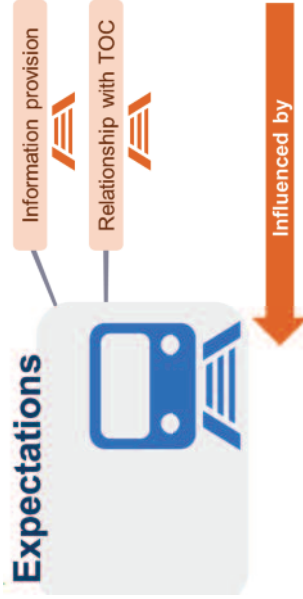
Expectations (2)

Once made aware of operational and safety factors passengers become more tolerant to the idea that a normal service may not be possible

Expectations



- However, they still desire a normal service during extreme weather where possible
- Scope to improve information and influence tolerance

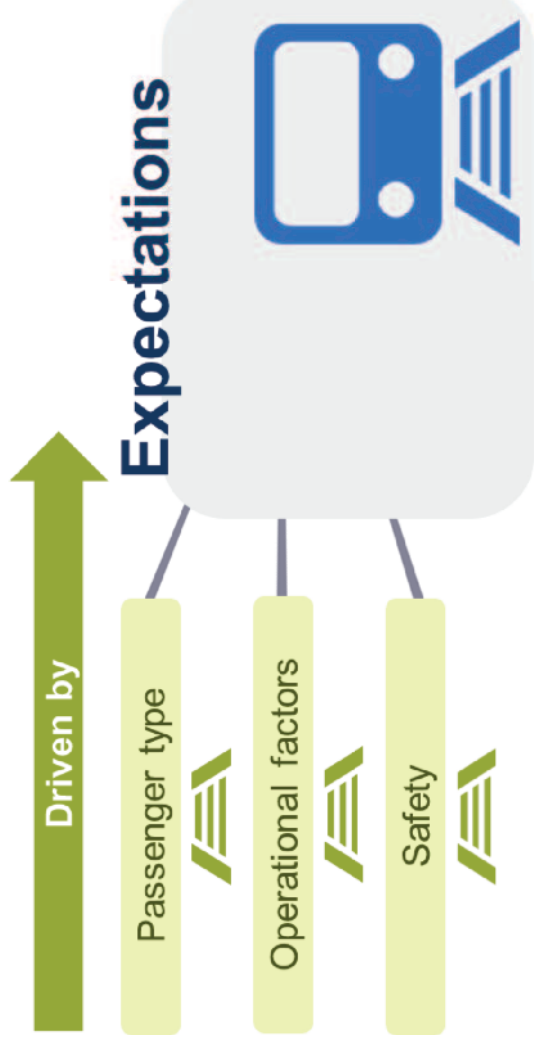


Influence these expectations by:

- Good information provision that is clear and reliable
- Positive relationship with TOC so that passenger believe in rationale for decisions made when planning for extreme weather

This will also help passengers make an informed choice about whether to attempt to travel

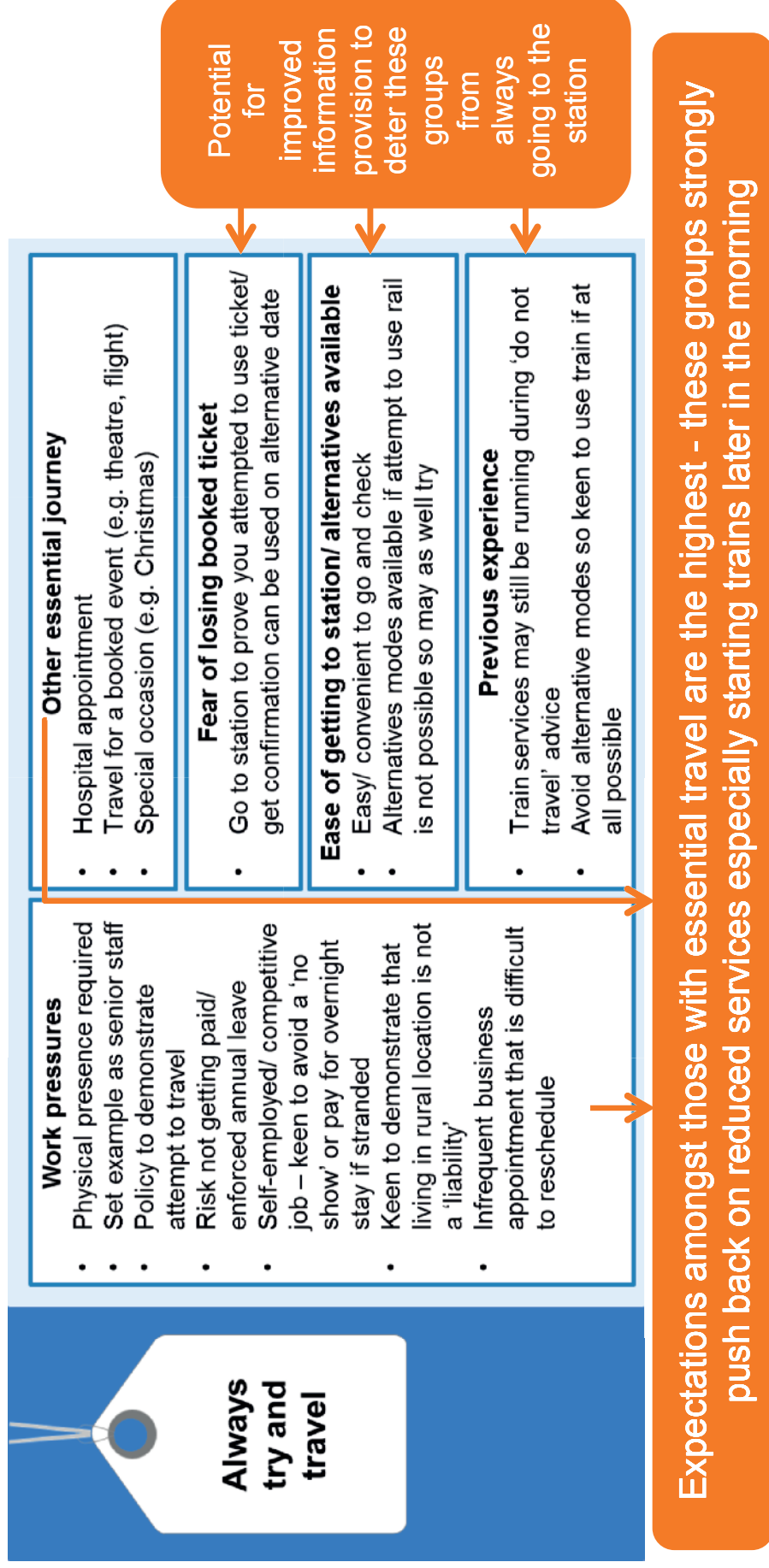
DRIVERS OF EXPECTATION



PASSENGER TYPE

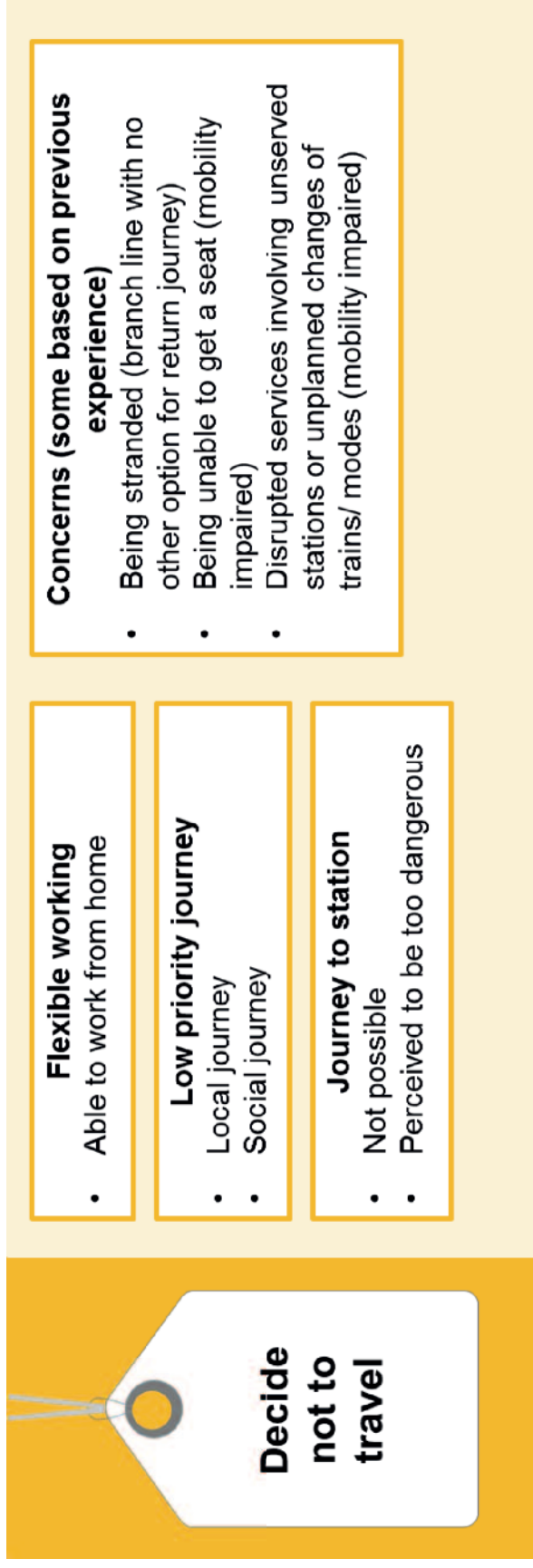
Passenger type (1)

Commuters (often in London) who feel pressure to be physically present in the office or demonstrate a concerted travel effort are most likely to **always try to travel**



Passenger type (2)

Decisions not to attempt to travel are made on the basis of whether a journey is considered essential and recall of previous negative experiences of travel during extreme weather



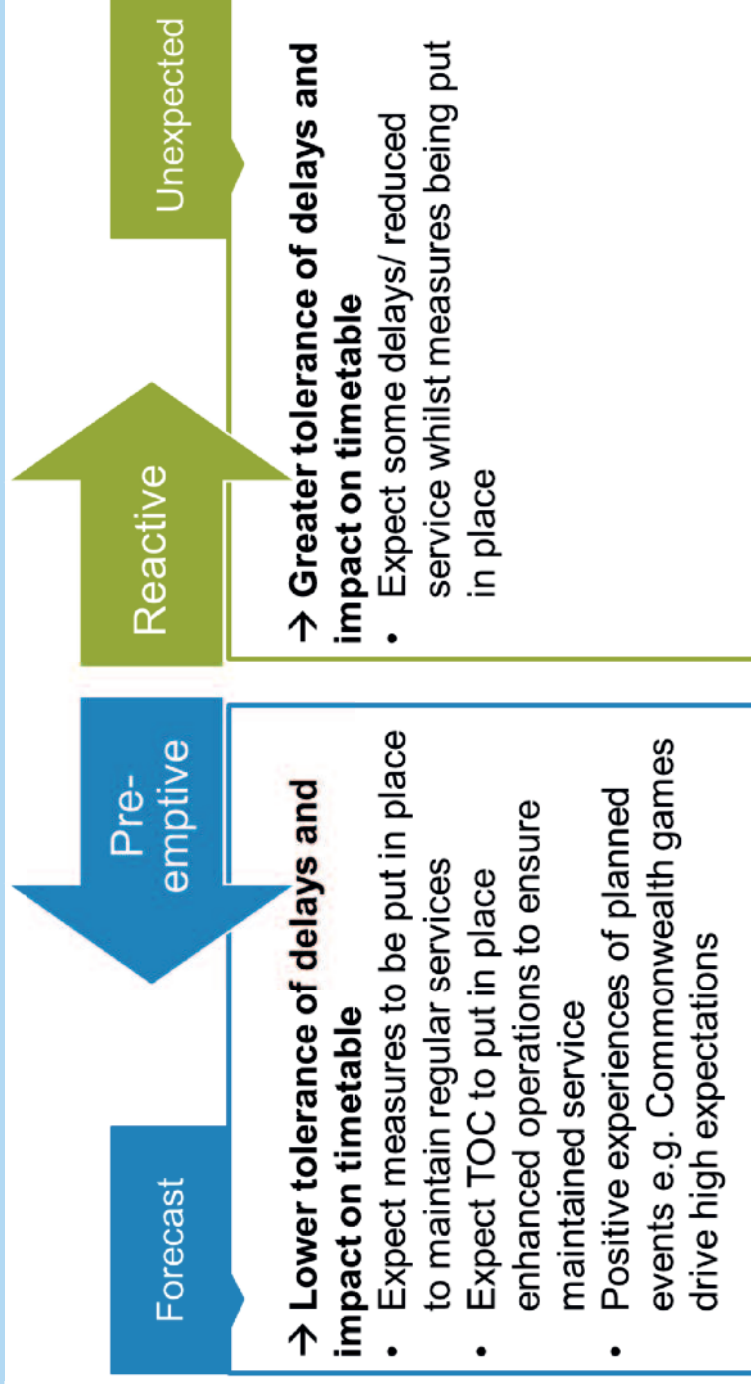
Whilst journeys for this group of passengers are less essential their lack of awareness regarding operational and safety factors mean that they still have potentially unrealistic expectations of the types of steps that TOCs can take in planning for extreme weather.

This means that many still expect a normal service

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

Pre-emptive vs. reactive measures

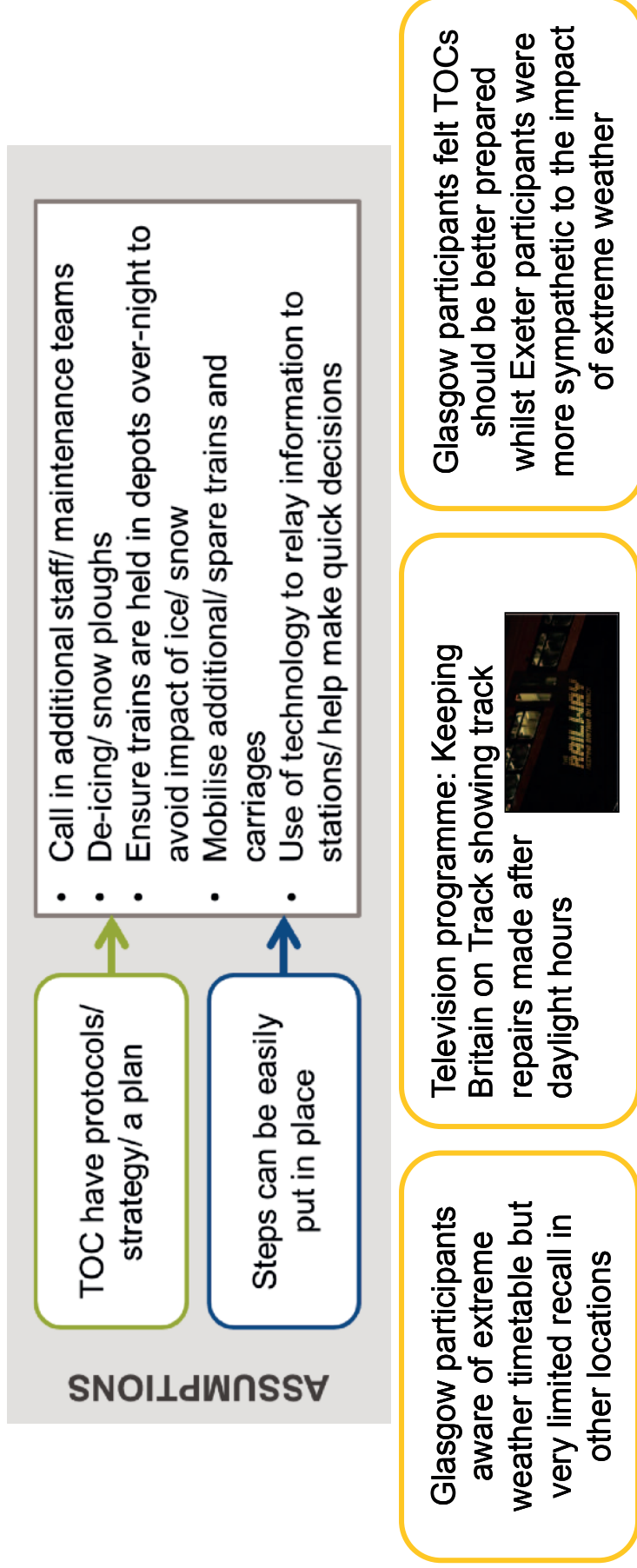
Expectations and acceptance of delays and disruption different for pre-emptive vs. reactive measures



Many are unsure whether TOCs are taking pre-emptive or reactive steps to extreme weather but there is potential for pre-emptive actions to drive high expectations for services

Operational awareness

Overall there is very low awareness of how rail companies plan for forecast extreme weather



Low awareness of how TOCs plan for extreme weather mean that spontaneous expectations for rail services are possibly unrealistic; passengers expect an enhanced service provision to maintain normal service

Operational priorities

Frequency of service is considered the core priority for services during extreme weather

1

FREQUENCY

- Turn up and get on a train
- Less likelihood of over-crowding
- Greater likelihood of getting a seat
- High expectations of frequency in London (10-15 minutes)

2

PUNCTUALITY

- Prefer timetables/ knowing when a train will arrive
- Punctuality is more important where there is a low frequency service as used to relying on specific train times
- Travelling with children

3

GETTING A SEAT

- More important for longer journeys, mobility impaired, those with strong dislike of over-crowding
- Typically less important for London commuters

“You know it’s going to be a bit chaotic, it’s better if you have more trains so you think okay, I won’t be able to get on that one, but I can get on the next one”
London, Commuter

Overall low awareness of financial penalties. When prompted some participants felt that day-to-day TOCs are measured/ penalised on the basis of frequency or punctuality. However, most felt that financial penalties would be waived during extreme weather and therefore would not and should not impact on TOC decisions

Preferences focus on the ability to get on a train reinforcing that passengers want to be reassured about the impact to their journey – passengers want to know that they will be able to make a journey within a reasonable timeframe, in reasonable comfort

Timetable measures (1)

Participants were asked to consider two options for timetabling when extreme weather is forecast

The full timetable runs with extended journey times, but few if any disruptions

- Strong preference for this option
- Greater consistency
- Preference to get on with journey rather than wait (especially London)
- Assumption that delay is reasonable (e.g. not hours)

DEMONSTRATES THAT TOC IS DOING THEIR BEST TO MAINTAIN NORMAL SERVICE

Or A reduced timetable runs with less likelihood of delays or disruption but the potential for increased crowding

- Reduced feels like you will be 'worse off'
- Strong dislike of over-crowding
- Feels less predictable and more uncomfortable
- Often this is what is delivered by TOCs during extreme weather

WITHOUT EXPLANATION THIS CAN SUGGEST THAT TOC IS TRYING TO PUT PEOPLE OFF TRAVELLING

Expectations strongly linked to relationship with TOC

- Initial reactions to timetable options focus on consistency (knowing when I can travel, and that I can travel within a reasonable timeframe) and comfort
- But relationship with TOC can generate cynicism about why changes to timetable are put in place

Timetable measures (2)

Spontaneous suggestions for timetable changes focus on creating an enhanced response to extreme weather with the aim of maintaining normal service

Maintain normal service

Bus replacement services

Allow tickets to be used on any service

Hub stations leaving smaller stations unserved (London commuters)

Enhanced service

Run services earlier

Run services later

Longer trains/ more carriages

Run trains 24 hours

Extended peak hour services

Standing only carriages (London commuters)

Reduce over-crowding

These are suggestions for extreme weather, but also applicable to other situations where there may be disruption/ delay to service

Declassify first class carriages

Standing only carriages (London commuters)

Change refreshments carriage for additional seating

Low knowledge and awareness of overhead vs. third rail and diesel vs. electric engines means that these do not spontaneously drive timetable expectations

Suggestions highlight the high expectations that passengers have for how TOCs plan for extreme weather – the focus is on maintaining a normal service or better

Timetable measures (3)

As we have seen, spontaneous views and expectations for how TOCs plan for extreme weather focus on putting in place enhanced measures to ensure normal service is maintained. Participants were shown some suggestions for how in reality, TOCs could plan for extreme weather

Leave some smaller/ intermediate stations entirely unserved

Run last trains earlier than usual

Start trains later than usual

Provide a similar timetable to normal but with reduced train lengths

Stop trains short of their destination and expect passengers to continue on a connecting service

“[They should] add more carriages to the ones that can run to make it worth their while”
London, Business and Leisure

These suggestions were met with some negativity as they contradicted the measures that passengers spontaneously expected would be put in place

Timetable measures (4)

Reaction to timetable options

Provide a similar timetable to normal but with reduced train lengths

- Fear of over-crowding; “station rage”
- Worried that passengers may become angry and this will impact on other passengers and staff
- Feel that reduced timetables will cause delays and do not understand why this would be beneficial

- Concerns voiced by:
 - Branch line users
 - Those with limited confidence in navigating unknown/ new journeys
 - Those with a mobility impairment who specifically avoid journeys where an interchange is needed
- Mixed views on whether expect a connecting service to:
 - Be arranged (e.g. bus replacement)
 - Be sign-posted/ advised
 - Be the responsibility of each individual passenger

Stop trains short of their destination and expect passengers to continue on a connecting service

Leave some smaller/ intermediate stations entirely unserved

Timetable measures (5)

Reaction to timetable options

Run last trains
earlier than
usual

- Unclear why this would be required during extreme weather but some acceptance among those who have previously experienced it/ recognise it as a measure taken
- But strong concerns if this were to be put in place alongside starting trains later than usual

- Most unclear why this would required during extreme weather
- Some cynicism that do not truly need extra time in the morning/ late start may be due to prioritisation of main lines/ London routes
- Increased tolerance when:
 - Safety mentioned
 - A later time means greater certainty that trains are running
- Greatest push-back among commuters – later is ‘7am’ not ‘11am’

Start trains
later than
usual

“I think 11 o'clock is too late, cos...you're really not going to get in before lunch time...if it gets to after lunch time I'm thinking I'm not going to bother going in”

London, Commuter

Timetable measures (5)

When rationale for these measures was provided, tolerance for them did increase (although start times for commuters continued to attract negative comments)

Passengers never think about operational factors

- Interested to hear about them
- Does provide rationale for decisions
- Helps understand the decisions that TOCs are making



Community spirited

- Most understanding of challenges faced
- Need to pull together to make service disruptions a positive experience

Frustrated

- Experience service delays for range of reasons on regular basis
- Focus on individual needs/pressures so limited tolerance for disruption to service

Cynical

- The most politicised participants
- Keen to scrutinise decisions
- Most likely to be expressed by commuters

Cynicism driven by:

- Media coverage
- Perceived lack of focus on the passenger (e.g. decisions are driven by what is easiest for TOC/ requires least short term and long term investment for TOC)

More information will help passengers understand why normal service is not possible. Communications that provide believable rationale are key to building greater tolerance of decisions made regarding extreme weather

SAFETY



Safety (1)



Views regarding safety fall into two key areas:



Safety (2)

Awareness of safety issues

Overall low awareness of the range of safety issues related to extreme weather

FOCUS ON PERSONAL SAFETY

- Slipping/ falling at station
- Over-crowding/ cramped conditions
- Too hot/ too cold on train
- Angry passengers
- Very few spontaneous mentions of wider safety issues (e.g. derailment, trees on the line, landslips)



NOT TOP OF MIND

- Recall of rail issues during extreme weather very limited
- Safety concerns considered rare/ rarely reported in the media
- Safety for cars much easier to recall/ considered more likely

SAFE COMPARED TO OTHER MODES

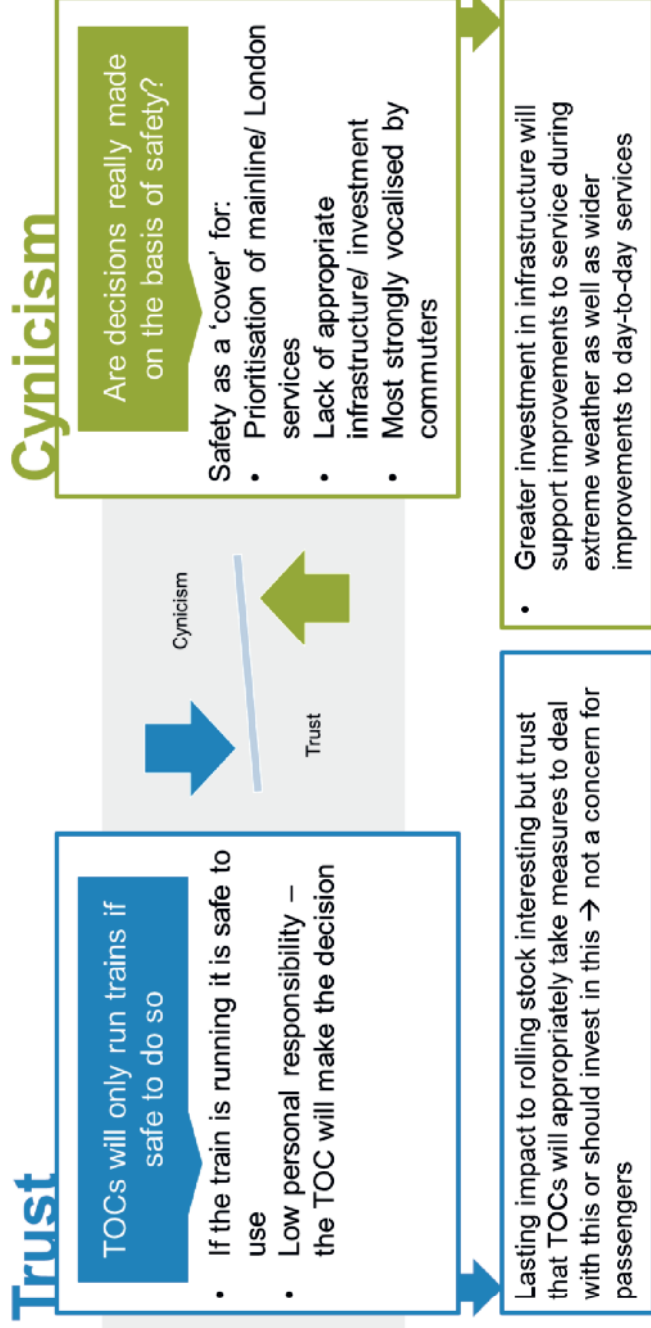
- Rail considered safe during extreme weather
- Large, heavy vehicles make them secure
Although this may be:
 - Weather dependent (in Glasgow high winds seen as risk to train derailment/ landslips)
 - Dependent on where weather is e.g. buses may be able to avoid flooded areas

Low awareness of safety factors mean that these are not currently factored into passenger expectations

Safety (3)

When made aware of the types and range of safety issues participants expressed mixed reactions

Engagement in safety issues



Whilst participants do trust TOCs to decide when it is safe for trains to run, there is some cynicism. This means that any measures planned for extreme weather need to be clearly justified to passengers

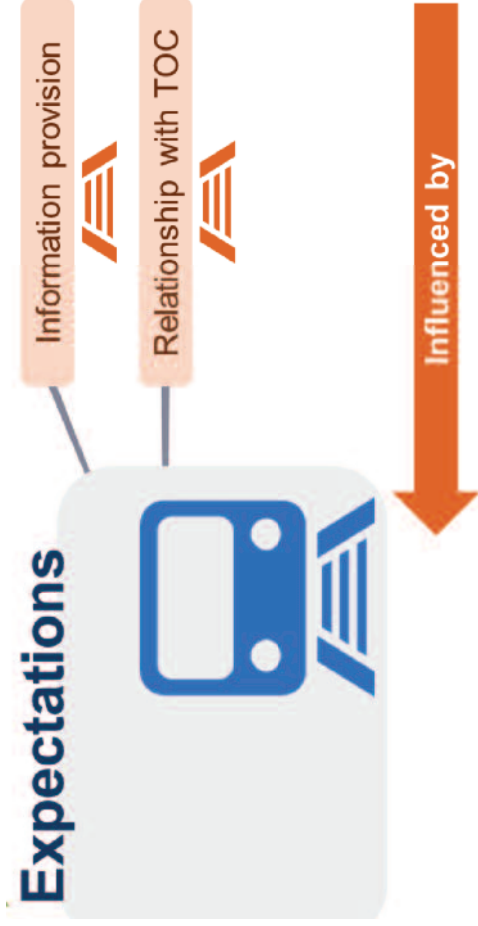
Safety (4)

‘You never hear an announcement that a delay is because of a safety issue, its always just something stupid like leaves on the line...its frustrating because you can’t believe a 20 tonne steel train can be affected by leaves, it sounds stupid to joe public...if they came out and said oh its not running because the line is really icy...it’s not that stupid’
Cardiff, commuters

“A couple of years ago there was a storm forecast for the afternoon and they told us that trains would be stopped from 3pm, that’s fine because we got advance notice and it was going to be dangerous, it was an inconvenience but it was about safety”
Glasgow, business and leisure

“In the morning ScotRail had cancelled all services until they had checked all the lines for fallen trees...If there’s any risk and you’re on the train and there is something on the line that should come first”
Glasgow, business and leisure

INFLUENCING EXPECTATIONS

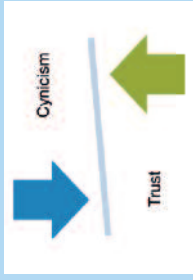


RELATIONSHIP WITH TOC

Across the research it was clear that most participants were thinking about their TOC when discussing measures taken for extreme weather:

- Participants knew who their TOC was (this information was required at the point of participant recruitment to ensure a spread of TOC was included across the research). However, this was not always explicitly referred to during the research sessions – some referenced their TOC whilst others did not
- Whilst aware of their TOC, some participants expressed a lack of clarity regarding the role of bodies such as Network Rail

Relationship with TOC



There is a mix of trust and cynicism regarding TOC decisions during extreme weather often driving low tolerance of measures taken



Improved communications with clear rationale that is believable will increase tolerance for steps taken/ disruption to services due to extreme weather

INFORMATION



Channels of information



Participants cited various channels that they currently use to get up to date rail information

Twitter
BBC Radio thetrainline.com
Local TV weather forecast
National Rail Enquiries
Facebook Transport for London
Scotrail Local radio

- Participants expressed a preference for channels that provided up to date and accurate information
- On this basis many preferred using websites and apps

Information experiences

“The ScotRail app tells you if trains are delayed or cancelled and warnings about disruption, it’s so good, it’s a live update, so when they know you know”
Glasgow, Commuters

‘You understand they can’t control the weather, but they can control how quickly they tell us that the service is disrupted’
Exeter, business and leisure

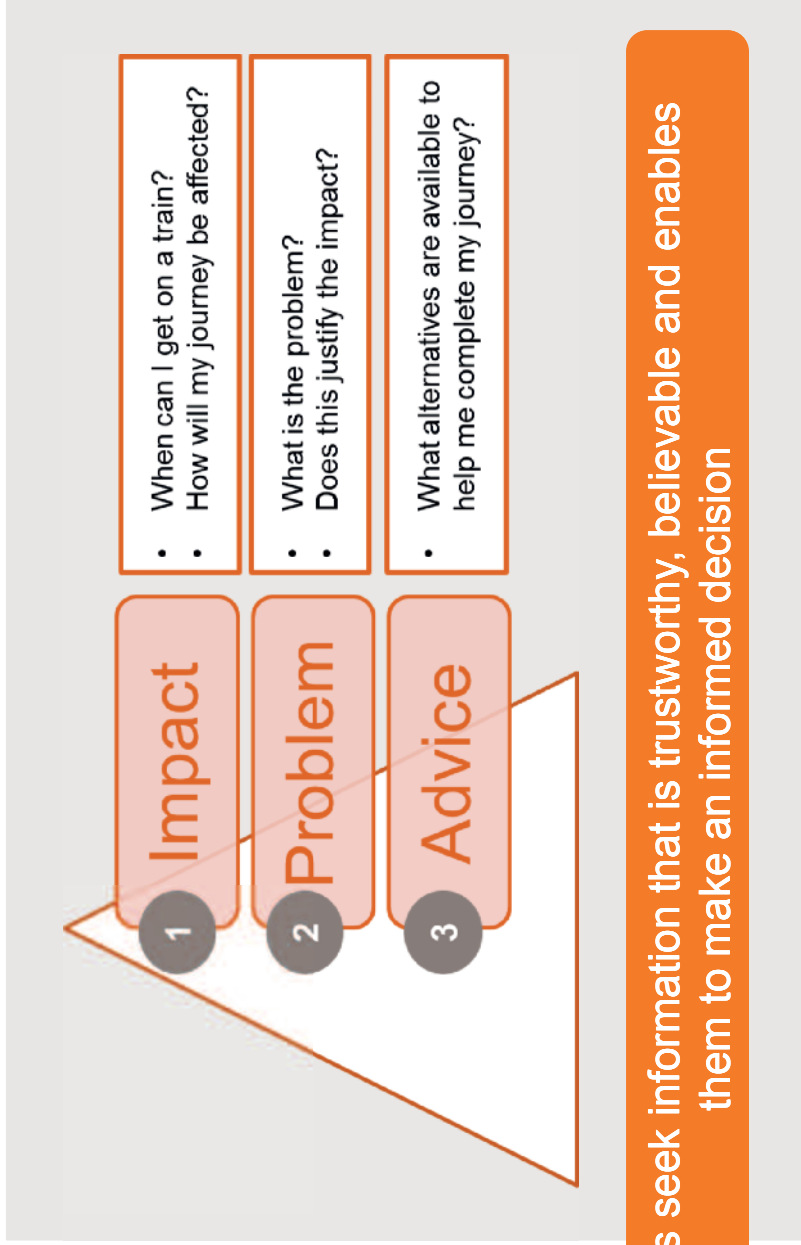
“Just really communicating information that is important to the travelling public in the sense that if they invoke an emergency timetable...then the public can take confidence in the fact that those services are actually going to be running and at what times, so that they can plan a day around that...it’s often you don’t know what’s happening. It’s complete failure of communication”
London, business and leisure

Information needs and preferences

Information needs reflects previous Transport Focus research findings and ATOC PIDD ACOP guidance



Order of needs is mirrored



Passengers seek information that is trustworthy, believable and enables them to make an informed decision

Information needs

The following information needs were identified

Accurate &
Consistent

Informative
& Clear

Up-to-date
& Timely

Believable

Accessible

Tailored

Information needs

Lack of a considered communications approach drives frustration

Believable

- Rationale for decisions to drive greater tolerance/ understanding and demonstrate that TOC is making genuine efforts
- Images to demonstrate steps taken (avoiding generating fear/ concern)
- Webcam to see progress?
- Honest and realistic
 - Avoid promising/ suggesting a perfect service when it is not possible
 - Avoid worse case scenarios which can drive cynicism when not realised



Accurate & Consistent

- Core need is knowing when can get on train/ how journey is affected
- Lack of consistency drives frustration/ lack of confidence in TOC
- Need consistency across channels – some currently rely on app/ website over station information as find it more up to date
- Role of staff particularly important as f2f is key source of accurate details
- Expect smart technology should make accurate and consistent information achievable

Informative & Clear

- Clear content/ information about impact on services/ journey and what steps are being taken (mixed views on how detailed this should be)
- Avoid information overload but option to access more information via hyperlinks
- Clear information that can be provided to work/ employers

Information needs

Good communication helps participants feel confident in making informed choices

Up-to-date & Timely

- Current information that is regularly updated
- Specific times e.g. avoid generic time frames such as 'this afternoon'
- Avoid creeping delay information e.g. adding on 20 mins, then another 20 mins
- As much advance warning as possible
 - 24-48 hours for planned measures
- Idea for when disruption might end – not focusing only on what is happening now

Tailored

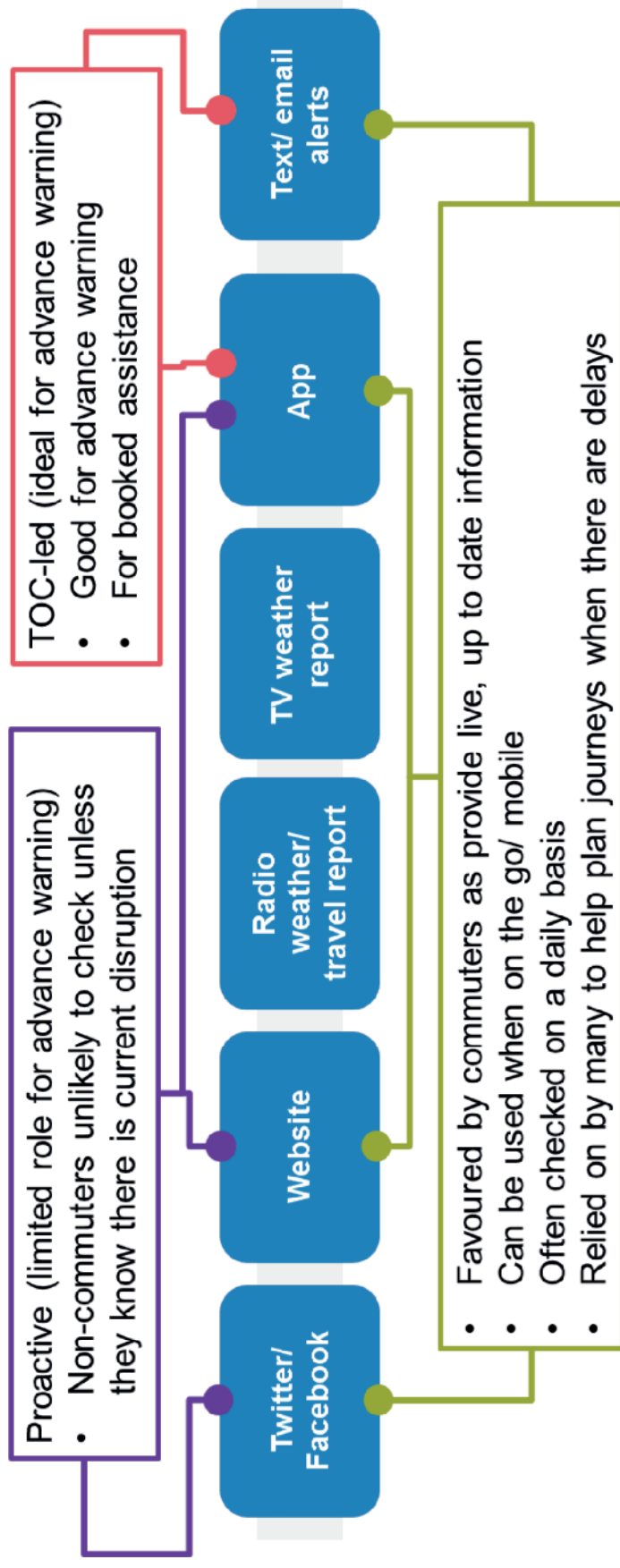
- Avoid automated announcements
- Hyperlinks to more information allowing passengers to access the information they want
- Text alerts/ email alerts based on details provided when purchasing ticket
 - Provide clarification for what will happen to journeys where passenger has booked assistance
 - Provide clarification for what will happen if unable to use booked ticket

Accessible

- Reflect current channels used
- Follow good examples from:
 - Transport for London
 - Road network information in Glasgow
 - Employers who use technology to update staff on travel issues

Channel preferences

A range of channels are used and are considered to be sources of information for when TOCs want to communicate pre-emptive measures for extreme weather



Communications need to mirror these existing uses

PRE-EMPTIVE MEASURES FOR EXTREME WEATHER → REACTIONS TO SCENARIOS

Scenario reactions



Participants were asked to provide their preferences for a range of scenarios

Heavy snow is forecast for next week and the rail company has put a revised timetable in place for the days that will be affected. However, the heavy snow arrives the day before it was forecast and the revised timetable needs to be put in place immediately.

Extreme weather means that it is not possible to run trains. However, most roads are open and safe to use.

A rail company has planned to reduce its timetable the next day as heavy rain and high winds are forecast. The weather turns out not to be as bad as expected but for a variety of practical reasons it is too late to revert to the normal timetable.

There are no weather issues in the morning but extreme weather is forecast for the afternoon. This could mean that trains are disrupted or unable to run in the evening peak.

However, whilst putting measures in place to provide as close to a normal service as possible was the preference, clear communications and rationale are equally important

Scenario reactions

Scenarios regarding changes to the forecast (extreme weather arrives early or not at all)

A rail company has planned to reduce its timetable the next day as heavy rain and high winds are forecast. The weather turns out not to be as bad as expected but for a variety of practical reasons it is too late to revert to the normal timetable.

Heavy snow is forecast for next week and the rail company has put a revised timetable in place for the days that will be affected. However, the heavy snow arrives the day before it was forecast and the revised timetable needs to be put in place immediately.

Communications - all aspects important but a focus on:

Up-to-date
& Timely

- Ensure that any extreme weather timetables have been communicated well in advance
- Give as much warning about subsequent changes as possible

Believable

- Provide rationale not just 'practical reasons'

Relationship with TOC:

TOC has passenger interests at heart

- Attempt to revert to normal timetable as soon as possible (e.g. half way through the day), provide additional services or provide bus replacements suggests TOC doing their best for passengers
- *Though many prefer to avoid bus replacement if a train will be possible*

Scenario reactions

Forecast extreme weather for later the same day...

There are no weather issues in the morning but extreme weather is forecast for the afternoon. This could mean that trains are disrupted or unable to run in the evening peak.

Communications - all aspects important but a focus on:

Up-to-date
& Timely

- Advance warning before you decide to travel in the morning

Informative
& Clear

- Clear and detailed information about which services will be affected, length of disruption, where any rail replacement services might be used

Relationship with TOC:

TOC has passenger interests at heart

- Run services in the morning to:
 - Demonstrate that making an effort for passengers
 - Enable those making single journeys to complete them
 - Passengers to make a decision about whether they want to travel
 - *But this choice MUST be informed*

Scenario reactions

No trains but roads safe to use...

Extreme weather means that it is not possible to run trains. However, most roads are open and safe to use.

Communications - all aspects important but a focus on:

Up-to-date
& Timely

- Advance warning before you decide to travel in the morning

Believable

- Provide rationale as trains often considered safer than road

Relationship with TOC:

TOC has passenger
interests at heart

- Demonstrate that making an effort for passengers by providing some bus replacement services

COMMUNICATING AN EMERGENCY TIMETABLE

- The research sought to understand from a passenger perspective whether train companies should implement a formal temporary timetable, for example, containing fewer trains which take longer to reach their destination than usual, or whether train companies should leave the normal timetable in place and warn passengers that there will/may be cancellations and delays
- This was explored in two ways:
 - Passengers' preferences for how the service would appear in a timetable, for example a PDF on a website
 - Passengers' preferences for how a train would be shown on station customer information systems (CIS)



TIMETABLE PREFERENCES

Timetable preferences

Participants were presented with timetable display options for their consideration

Option A: show the normal timetable and:

- Show which trains are cancelled.
- Show how late trains that are running will be in reaching their destination.

Station A (departure)	06:00	07:00	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00	23:00
Station B (departure)	06:05	07:05	08:05	09:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	13:05	14:05	15:05	16:05	17:05	18:05	19:05	20:05	21:05	22:05	23:05
Station C (departure)	06:10	07:10	08:10	09:10	10:10	11:10	12:10	13:10	14:10	15:10	16:10	17:10	18:10	19:10	20:10	21:10	22:10	23:10
Station D (departure)	06:20	07:20	08:20	09:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	13:20	14:20	15:20	16:20	17:20	18:20	19:20	20:20	21:20	22:20	23:20
Station E (departure)	06:25	07:25	08:25	09:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	13:25	14:25	15:25	16:25	17:25	18:25	19:25	20:25	21:25	22:25	23:25
Station F (arrival)	06:30	07:30	08:30	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	19:30	20:30	21:30	22:30	23:30
= service cancelled																		
- Journey time will be extended by 10 minutes because of speed restrictions due to high winds																		

Option B: show the emergency timetable and:

- Do not show the cancelled trains.
- Show the actual arrival and departure times for trains that are running.

Station A (departure)	06:00	08:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00	22:00
Station B (departure)	06:07	08:07	10:07	12:07	14:07	16:07	18:07	20:07	22:07
Station C (departure)	06:14	08:14	10:14	12:14	14:14	16:14	18:14	20:14	22:14
Station D (departure)	06:26	08:26	10:26	12:26	14:26	16:26	18:26	20:26	22:26
Station E (departure)	06:33	08:33	10:33	12:33	14:33	16:33	18:33	20:33	22:33
Station F (arrival)	06:40	08:40	10:40	12:40	14:40	16:40	18:40	20:40	22:40

Preferences demonstrate the desire for clarity in advance of travel

Timetable display scenario:



Option A: normal timetable with warning of cancellations and delays
 Option B: formal emergency timetable with fewer trains taking longer

Overall preference for option B: want to see which services are running in a simple format in advance of travel

Option A

- ✓ Colour coding is eye-catching
- ✓ Easier to see whether the train you are booked on is running
- ✗ Potential to confuse which service are running and which are not
- ✗ Unclear whether 10 minute journey addition has already been added

Option A: show the normal timetable and:

- Show which trains are cancelled.
- Show how late trains that are running will be in reaching their destination.

Station A (Departure)	06:30	07:00	07:30	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00	23:00
Station B (Departure)	06:25	07:05	06:55	08:05	09:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	13:05	14:05	15:05	16:05	17:05	18:05	19:05	20:05	21:05	22:05	23:05
Station C (Departure)	06:20	07:20	08:20	09:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	13:20	14:20	15:20	16:20	17:20	18:20	19:20	20:20	21:20	22:20	23:20	
Station D (Departure)	06:25	07:25	08:25	09:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	13:25	14:25	15:25	16:25	17:25	18:25	19:25	20:25	21:25	22:25	23:25	
Station E (Arrival)	06:30	07:30	08:30	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	19:30	20:30	21:30	22:30	23:30	

Cancelled services are extended by 10 minutes because of space restrictions due to high winds.

Option B: show the emergency timetable and:

- Do not show the cancelled trains.
- Show the actual arrival and departure times for trains that are running.

Station A (Departure)	06:30	08:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00	22:00
Station B (Departure)	06:20	08:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00	22:00
Station C (Departure)	06:15	08:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00	22:00
Station D (Departure)	06:20	08:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00	22:00
Station E (Arrival)	06:30	08:30	10:30	12:30	14:30	16:30	18:30	20:30	22:30
Station F (Arrival)	06:40	08:40	10:40	12:40	14:40	16:40	18:40	20:40	22:40

Option B

- ✓ Simple and straightforward
- ✓ Easy to see exactly what is running
- ✓ Easy to see additional 10 minute journey time
- ✗ Confusing if looking for the train you are booked on

Assume this timetable would be provided online in advance of timetable changes.
 Link to online version could be provided in text/ email/ app alert

STATION DISPLAY PREFERENCES

Station display preferences

Participants were presented with some station display options to identify how best to provide these

Option A: show the normal time of 12:00 but show 'expected at' 12:20 because speed restrictions will make it late.

12:00 (expt 12:20)
London Kings Cross
 calling at:
 Durham
 Darlington
 York
 Newark North Gate
 Peterborough
 London Kings Cross
 East Coast

Option B: Not mention the normal 12:00 time at all, and show only the new time of 12:20.

12:20
London Kings Cross
 calling at:
 Durham
 Darlington
 York
 Newark North Gate
 Peterborough
 London Kings Cross
 East Coast

Preferences demonstrate the desire for transparency of impact on journey at the station

Station display scenario:

Option A: normal timetable showing delay

Option B: formal emergency timetable with extra running time built in

Overall preference for option A: cannot guarantee that all will be familiar with extreme weather timetable

Option A

- ✓ If expecting to travel on a specific train
- ✓ Greater transparency that there are delays
- ✓ Less confusing if not seen extreme weather timetable
- ✓ Familiar format currently used at rail stations/ airports

Option A: show the normal time of 12:00 but show 'expected at' 12:20 because speed restrictions will make it late.

12:00 (expt 12:20)
London Kings Cross
calling at:
Durham
Darlington
York
Newark North Gate
Peterborough
London Kings Cross
East Coast

Option B: Not mention the normal 12:00 time at all, and show only the new time of 12:20.

12:20
London Kings Cross
calling at:
Durham
Darlington
York
Newark North Gate
Peterborough
London Kings Cross
East Coast

Option B

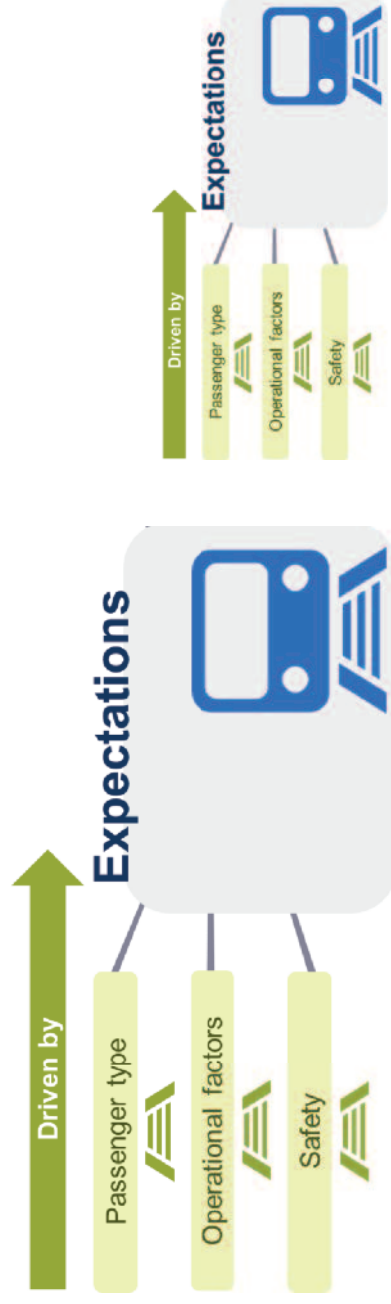
- ✓ Only suitable if everyone will be aware of extreme weather timetable
- × Potential for confusion if looking for the 12.00 and it does not exist
- × Want to see the delay so can make an informed choice on whether to travel
- × Envisage confusion at the station/ negative impact on staff

Passengers want to know the impact on their journey - understanding the time lapse until the next available service helps passengers decide whether to travel



CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions (1)



- At a spontaneous level participants have high and probably unrealistic expectations
- There is an expectation that knowing about weather in advance means that TOCs should be able to implement enhanced measures to avoid any change or disruption to service
- However, previous experience of disruption during extreme weather can impact on tolerance towards measures whilst some express understanding of the challenges facing TOCs whilst others becoming cynical that TOCs do not put the passengers' interests at heart
- High and possibly unrealistic expectations can be heightened by passengers who feel their journey is essential and therefore are keen for maintained normal services enabling them to complete their journey
- Expectations are also fuelled by lack of awareness and understanding of operational and safety factors

Conclusions (2)

Expectations



Expectations



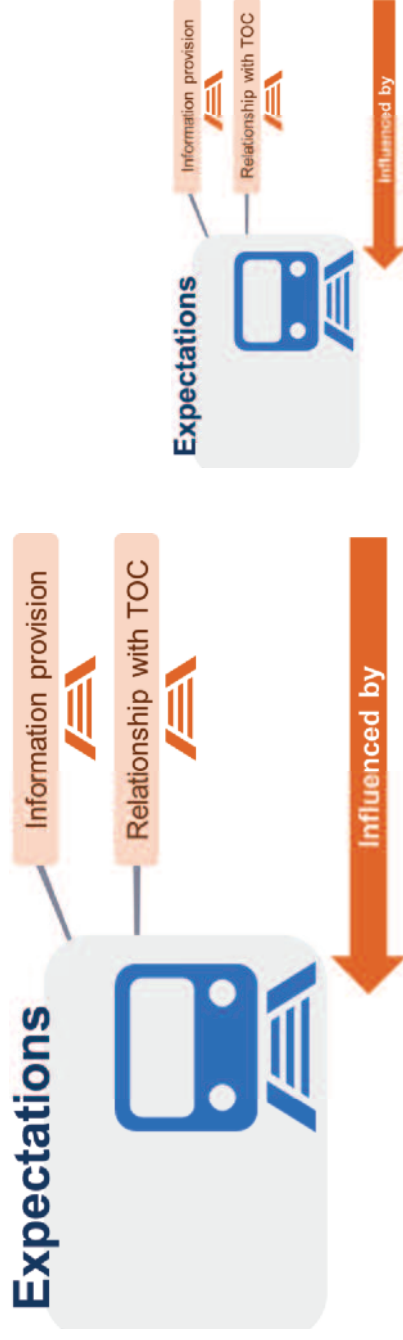
Expectations



Expectations are for:

- TOCs to put measures in place to run a normal service wherever possible
- TOCs to put the passenger safety and interests at heart
- TOCs to make sensible decisions on when it is safe to run trains
- TOCs to provide clear information that enable passengers to make informed decisions about whether to travel/ be aware of the impact that extreme weather will have on their journey
- TOCs to provide clear rationale for decisions helping passengers feel more confident in the decisions made

Conclusions (3)



- **Expectations can be influenced through improved information and communications with passengers.** This in turn will help build a more positive relationship with TOCs
- **This will help passengers to:**
 - **Put trust in the decisions made when planning for extreme weather**
 - **Make informed decisions about whether to attempt to travel**

Conclusions (4)

Need to focus on information provision and relationship with TOC to address the drivers of high and possibly unrealistic expectations

Regardless of measures taken, tolerance and understanding of these can be improved by following three core principles

- Enable passengers to make informed decisions
- Be transparent
- Demonstrate that TOC is doing its best (don't assume that this is a default passenger assumption)

- Improve information provision and relationship with TOC by reflecting the following needs and preferences:



- Reflecting these communication preferences in all passenger communications (not just those regarding extreme weather) will help build more positive relationships with TOCs



THANK YOU

APPENDIX



Detailed Sample (1)

All mini-groups contained an even gender split, mix of technology use, and mix of train frequency

Location	Group composition	
	Commuters	Leisure/ Personal/ Business
England South East London <i>Travelling in to Waterloo with South West Trains and Victoria/Blackfriars/Charing Cross/Canon Street/London Bridge with Southeastern (Third rail)</i>	Mini-group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of long and short journeys Younger C1C2D 	Mini-group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of long and short journeys Older BC1C2
England South East London <i>Travelling in to Liverpool Street/ Abellio Greater Anglia or Stansted Express and Kings Cross with East Coast or Great Northern and Fenchurch Street with c2c (OLE)</i>	Paired depth 1 and teledepth 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of long and short journeys Older BC1C2 	Mini-group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of long and short journeys Younger C1C2D
England South East London <i>Travelling in to Paddington with First Great Western Thames Valley (Non-electrified)</i>	Mini-group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branch line users making an interchange: Thames Valley (Basingstoke/Twyford/ Marlow/ Windsor not Greenford) Older BC1C2 	-
England South West Exeter <i>First Great Western, Cross Country or South West Trains</i>	Mini-group 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of mainline and branch line (Barnstaple, Exmouth, Honiton) users Mix of First Great Western and South West Trains users Mix of long (30+ minute) and short (sub 30 minute) journeys Older BC1C2 	Mini-group 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure/Personal users only Mix of mainline and branch line (Barnstaple, Exmouth, Honiton) users Mix of First Great Western, Cross Country and South West Trains users Mix of long (30+ minute) and short (sub 30 minute) journeys Younger C2DE

Detailed Sample (2)

<p>England Yorkshire Leeds East Coast, <i>First Transpennine Express</i>, or Cross Country</p>	-	<p>Mini-group 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business users only • Mainline users only • Long journeys of 60+ minutes only • 50% travelling to/from London • Mix of ages • C1C2D
<p>England North West Manchester <i>Northern Rail, First Transpennine Express</i>,</p>	<p>Mini-group 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of long and short journeys • Younger • BC1C2 	-
<p>Scotland Glasgow Scot Rail</p>	<p>Mini-group 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of long and short journeys • Younger • C1C2D 	<p>Mini-group 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys of 60+ minutes • Older • BC1C2
<p>Wales Cardiff <i>Arriva Trains Wales, First Great Western</i> or Cross Country</p>	<p>Mini-group 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users of Arriva Trains Wales • Valley Lines services only • Older • BC1C2 	<p>Mini-group 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of users of <i>Arriva Trains Wales, First Great Western</i> or <i>Cross Country</i> • Long journeys • Younger • C2DE

Detailed Sample (3)



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Location	Depth composition	
	Commuters	Leisure/ Personal/ Business
London	Depth 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Branch and mainline user • Mobility impaired • Younger • BC1 	Depth 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Mainline user • Mobility impaired • Younger • C2DE
Manchester		Depths 3 and 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Mainline users • 1 x mobility impaired • 1 x elderly and travels with luggage • 1 x booked assistance • Older • C2DE
Leeds		Depths 5 and 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Mainline users • 1 x mobility impaired • 1 x elderly and travels with luggage • 1 x booked assistance • 1 x Older, 1 x Younger • C1C2
Cardiff		Depth 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Mainline user • Travels with pushchair • Younger • BC1
Glasgow		Depth 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long journeys • Mainline user • Mobility impaired • Older • C2DE



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