

Sharing Best Practice Workshop – Wales

1 June 2012, 11am – 3pm

Radisson Park Inn, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff CF10 2JH

Notes

Key points from presentations and group discussions:

	<u>Presentations</u>
1	<p>David Sidebottom, Passenger Team Director, Passenger Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Been at Passenger Focus since 2006, used to do same job as Simon Pickering, in Northern England. 2008 took lead developing work on bus – working with Margaret Everson and Bus Users UK colleagues. • Tough couple of years following extension of our remit to cover the bus industry in England (outside of London). Everything changed after the election; Simon left, then recruitment freeze – David Beer stepped in and is still here. Public bodies review retained Passenger Focus through recognition of our work as a consumer organisation with a strong evidence base. However 50% budget cut caused us to refocus and reflect. Unclear remit for Scotland & Wales. Philip Hammond moved on and replacement more committed. • Our research, policy and influence capabilities remain intact and we will continue with clear, sound and robust research through National Passenger Survey and Bus Passenger Survey, prioritising where we can make a difference, together with service for complaints, which themselves have gone up 40% over past year. • New Passenger Issues Team will focus on ‘long term work’ of key national passenger themes, such as franchising and developing policy, whilst the Passenger Team looks after ‘here and now’ work of contact with passengers, using bedrock of research to engage with industry on poor performance and managing relationships with groups and other stakeholders. • We’ve not been quiet though and have just published research on Ticket to Ride, particularly looking at over-zealous train managers. Not a fare-dodger’s charter, uses evidence from passengers to do something about improving treatment of the issue. Also maintaining links with Wales, both from a distance and locally, with David attending meetings and providing update reports. Our Board Member Stella Mair Thomas is based in Wales and represents Passenger Focus at a senior level. We work and share with Margaret and her colleagues, to help them do their job more successfully. • We have also worked recently with Nick Smith, MP for Blaenau Gwent, putting together passengers’ views on the Ebbw Vale line, which the MP then wrapped up. The results are now available. Other work includes input to the Public Transport Users’ Committee who are involved in research into integration and also giving evidence to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee in Westminster, to their cross-border connectivity inquiry. • New Bus Passenger Survey just published, taking in 23 areas of England and results drawn from over 21,000 responses. First opportunity to benchmark and work with operators to provide evidence base as a key lever. Huge difference to how services are run, but these areas are 80% commercial, in marked contrast to Wales, where South West (Swwitch) area is 80% subsidised. Also looking at areas going down the franchising route, learning from experience in Denmark and Sweden. • We are researching the impact on communities of cuts to local bus services and how passengers find out or are consulted. Due to be published in July. Also had money to research passengers’ experience of smart card schemes to feed into decision-making

	<p>for Norman Baker. In the bus industry, there is pressure on budgets and we are disappointed at the blanket cuts, particularly to evening and weekend services. We are developing a best practice guide aimed at local authorities, for effective and better consultation with passengers and residents, with the final draft ready to put to officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the longer term we will work to secure change in bus and train punctuality with access to route information, pursuing poor performance and identifying good practice. Improving the way disruption is dealt with – particularly rail – how does the information work and using technology to put information together quickly. We have assembled a panel of volunteers that we are able to call on for feedback and we have published research following high winds in Scotland. On fares and ticketing and the Command Paper, looking at simplifying ticketing and conditions, opening hours and Schedule 17 and using major processes as levers for change, such as rail franchise replacement and long-term industry planning; ensuring groups’ voices are heard. Lot of work underway on rail franchising and more planned. How can we co-ordinate this work with local views? • Working together, we want to understand what groups need from us, what is available in return and developing how we can collaborate to better effect and maintain useful relationships and how we can help to develop a network and facilitate contact with other groups. We have spoken to 100 groups and members and we’re still here although the ‘shop window’ is a bit different. We will continue to work to our core principles, using our research and policy base to focus on and prioritise passenger priorities and to having influence at the right time in the right way, looking at how we can involve each other. • We are working in a changing world, with new players such as FixMyTransport.com opening up opportunities and availability of new channels to funnel complaints and join debate in the public domain. Groups could think about being involved, raising awareness. Could provide a useful recruitment ground.
2	<p>Margret Everson, Senior Officer for Wales, Bus Users UK Cymru</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 years’ experience in the industry. • Bus Users UK Cymru is only body representing bus users in Wales. Funded 100% by Welsh Government – assuming they pay. Staffed by Margaret, together with Barclay Davies and nine other representatives. • Work includes presentations on passenger work at various forums, advice to operators, organising Bus Surgeries around Wales, producing a Good Practice Guide – available from the website. • Facilitating information exchanges, for example from scooter users or blind people left standing at the stop. Recent event held for deaf people with two signers. • Totally reliant on funding, but what we do makes a difference. We listen and hear and become acutely aware of what makes people fed up, as well as what they like. • Groups are spread all over England and Wales and need to follow Guiding Principles for Bus User Groups, needing to work together with joint agendas, developing good relationships and encouraging consultation, which bus companies are lousy at. Members often able to go everywhere, especially when it’s free! • Working in co-operation with others, such as Passenger Focus. Making good use of wider communication through website and Facebook.
3	<p>Professor Paul Salveson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background involved setting up Community Rail Partnerships working together with businesses, rail industry and local government. Involved in rail-bus connectivity, with Passenger Focus supporting through research. Worked for Northern Rail as Government Communication Manager, now an industry consultant and just been elected to Kirklees Council. • Two campaigns in my local area; rail and bus: growth and decline. Bus is threatened with withdrawal, giving impact in Huddersfield area; whilst rail is in growth with desire of six trains per hour and threat of withdrawing stops along the service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Passenger Focus gives an extra string to the bow in dealing with issues. • Groups are a strong force in the country and sheer scale in the UK is incredible. Volunteers not dependent on funding but highly knowledgeable with experience and beacon of stability; perspective, understanding and good relationships. Historically hostile, industry now engages with a variety of organisations. • Strengths are time commitment people can give, local knowledge and intelligence, bringing assistance in kind and creating good will. More credibility when groups can see bigger picture and don't get 'zeroed-in'. Also able to feed back detail, such as when people can't get on, that the system doesn't record. Challenges are availability of volunteers, sustainability, being uncoordinated doing what volunteers or sponsors want and don't get a lot of women! – Look at how Passenger Focus can help in these situations. • Local services with local campaigns for local stations gives diversity of work. Making stations look nice encourages industry to contribute more. However people here are representative of groups, but are groups representative of passengers, eg mums with prams, disabled, young people? Need to pull more people in. Focus on projects – often long term – can take eye off the ball of short term campaigns. Need to also focus on quick wins: extra services or stops are shown to be winners; groups need short term objectives as well. There are limited links with rest of voluntary sector, when there are common issues and a lot to learn from wider sector and acting as a co-ordinated body. • We're all passionate about public transport and often cases look so obvious, but you need evidence to back up the case, not trusting to assertion. Passenger Focus have a very strong research function. • Moving on to social media and internet, we're celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Luddites this year and the tendency is not to use electronic media. If you want to influence, far easier with email that can be forwarded or copied on to others. Also scope for Facebook and Twitter and Passenger Focus have the expertise to help. • Does the outside world take you seriously – need to look at yourselves and ask are we representing interests of passengers? Need action plan towards objectives, with delicate political role. Have influence where there is money to be spent, engaging in politics to make a difference in local communities. Do need to keep party hat to one side – can weaken influence – need to have positive relationship with all politicians, who are mostly supportive of public transport. • With media, need editor's perspective of story; look at press relationships and how to put issue across. Look at Passenger Focus and other groups. Needs to be news and possibly about local community and of interest. Easiest to get negative story – might be front page, but negative impact on relationship with industry will far outweigh. • Make sure you are influencing key processes eg franchises; even-handedly with all bidders. Passenger Focus asking for franchise specification to include consultation. Great opportunities for representation and to build on solid achievements – recognise strengths and weaknesses, process of evolution and moving forward, with resources available from Passenger Focus, together with practical and creative ideas.
4	<p>David Beer, Passenger Focus, Toolkit Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas for toolkit being put together alongside new Passenger Focus website. Discussion groups have provided very valuable ideas and development of content very much shaped in line with groups' priorities. Passenger Focus also want to use this as an opportunity to put across a flavour of the resources we are planning to develop. • Groups should ensure they are able to take advantage of big opportunities to be heard, such as formal consultations; rail franchise replacement, timetable consultations and impact of service cuts. Supporting resources being developed for gathering evidence and compiling submissions alongside ensuring that key channels of communication are made available for groups' direct access, such as Welsh Government, transport consortia, local authorities, as well as operators. Research and mystery shopping are two key methods of gathering evidence; guidance will be

	<p>available for planning effective work, with sound and consistent methodology, creating briefs for all involved, recording and analysing results and writing reports for effective influence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wealth of Passenger Focus research is available from our website. This will be revisited to make it easier to find relevant reports. In addition, we are keen to provide more issue-specific extracts of research, to support groups' work, extending its reach and delivering better value for money. For our National Passenger Survey, there is also a tool called Reportal which allows individuals to extract result in a more tailored way and access to verbatim comments, although care is needed to ensure extracts are not narrowed to the point of impacting on statistical significance. • There is also a wealth of data behind the published reports on other key topics, such as the new Bus Passenger Survey, Ticket to Ride, passenger needs during disruption and the Great Western franchise; which we would like to make available to gain greater value for money from our research and to support groups in their local work. • Working with others is of key importance. Communication channels should be available for groups to have dialogue with key stakeholders such as UK and Welsh Government departments, transport consortia, local authorities, Traffic Commissioner, operators and industry organisations. However do let us know of any difficulties with channels being open to you. Equally important is sharing best practice with other groups; coming together on common issues, skills sharing and encouragement. Also where appropriate, providing local intelligence back to us, broadening our local reach and making effective use of communications, publicising and sharing wins. One key win we're celebrating is Hatti's work in the opening of Fishguard and Goodwick Station. Although it has been a long haul, the work and persistence of the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum has paid off and we would like to invite Hatti to write this up as a case study as an example for other groups of what can be achieved. • Local events are a good way of raising awareness of issues, as a group or supporting others such as surgeries. These can also be a useful way of recruiting new members, gaining feedback through questionnaires and harnessing interest. For example, working recently with Bus Users UK at a joint surgery in Kendal, the local bus user group joined us and canvassed support for their group. They signed up ten new members during the day! The appeals Passenger Focus deals with may also provide individuals wanting to be put in touch with local groups and our advice line is also available to groups as a first point of contact. • An essential part of communication is through email and internet. Not only being expected by the industry, but also giving access to the wealth of resources available online and useful links to industry organisations and published statistics through our website. New media can also be an effective tool; forums such as FixMyTransport.com for reporting local problems can also be used to give a 'local expert' response. Facebook and Twitter can extend local reach and are being used more to reach passengers individually and add to the presence of organisations – including Passenger Focus.
	<p><u>Group Discussions</u></p> <p>Groups discussed priorities for shaping proposed toolkit resources</p>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fare issues • Contact with Network Rail, particularly around infrastructure change and disruption • List of consultations and research work being carried out by Passenger Focus, with clear contacts • Annual rail group user forum • Co-ordination of responses such as timetable and franchise consultation

2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace other groups to get wider picture to passenger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliable info needed at stations, on trains – especially with regard to disruptions - Good passenger info on trains re changes - Staff training • Passenger Focus reports need to continue to be made available • TOCs should make service changes at same time – integration • Links on Passenger Focus website to relevant services, operators, government authorities etc – to access consultations, other info... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could have a ‘groups’ site page with chat room - Every group has its own strengths – help avoid duplication • Resource – be more productive. Inform people what research Passenger Focus is carrying out – can help others • Passenger Focus can salami-slice NPS to give local info to ‘Reportal’ – users can get in to ask questions • Need to know where people going to and the passenger flows – footfall hard to get by users, needs to be more open • Push transparency agenda re usage etc. Access to data and info, performance indicators – info that’s buried away. Get Passenger Focus to search • No freedom of info – passengers that are left behind are not recorded. How other groups deal with this?
	<p><u>What next?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight regional events around Britain, which will be completed in June • Priorities compiled from each event to inform toolkit development • New Passenger Focus website will include User Group resources • Website under construction from June, with on-going development and updating • Groups will be invited to view new website once this is available • Future event details will be forwarded as programme develops • Key contact point for groups is usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk
	<p><i>Thank you for your contributions</i></p>