

Sharing Best Practice Workshop – Yorkshire and North East England

13 April 2012, 11am – 3pm

Park Inn, York

Notes

Key points from presentations and group discussions:

	<u>Presentations</u>
1	<p>Robert Samson, Passenger Manager, Passenger Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following extension of our remit to cover the bus industry in England (outside of London), public bodies review retained Passenger Focus through recognition of our work as a consumer organisation with a strong evidence base. However squeeze on spending with 50% budget cut. We will concentrate on fundamentals with sound evidence of what passengers want, to influence Government and industry and develop new ways of maintaining relationships. • Our research, policy and influence capabilities remain intact. New Passenger Issues Team will focus on ‘long term work’ of key national passenger themes and developing policy, whilst the Passenger Team looks after ‘here and now’ work of contact with passengers, using survey results to engage with industry on poor performance and managing relationships with groups and other stakeholders. • New Bus Passenger Survey just published, taking in 23 areas of England and delivered with considerable joint funding and is being used by transport authorities to provide evidence base to make a difference. Strategy is for this to become a rolling national survey, similar to the National Passenger Survey. National Passenger Survey also published, meetings are taking place with train operators to influence improvements. In the pipeline is research into impact of cuts to local bus services and how passengers find out or are consulted, coming out over the summer. Also had money to research passengers’ experience of smart card schemes to influence future decisions. • In the longer term we are looking at what causes poor bus and train punctuality, pursuing poor performance and identifying good practice. Improving the way disruption is dealt with – particularly on rail, value for money, simplifying ticketing under the Command Paper and fares policy to make it easier to negotiate for passengers. Also looking at rail franchising and development and working with ORR and Network Rail to influence decisions for spending period 2014-19; ensuring groups’ voices are heard. • We have published research on disruption due to snow and more recently the high winds in Scotland, retailing through websites and ticket vending machines. We have responded to opening hours consultations and currently working through passenger priorities for a number of rail franchise replacements. Local groups are well placed to add influence on new services, but need to make sure right message comes across. Example of uproar in Scotland when suggestions to move some little-used stations to where population was bigger or to give better access; reported as stations closing and campaigns were launched to ‘save our stations’. We are also developing a best practice consultation guide for local authorities, following a Transport Select Committee recommendation, to ensure there is a full consultation process. • We want to understand how we can maintain useful relationships with groups so we all benefit. We are still here, although with a constrained agenda. We will continue to work to our core principles, using our research and policy base to focus on passenger priorities and to having influence in the right way and looking at how to involve each other at the right time and make the best of limited resources. We are working in a changing world, with new players such as FixMyTransport.com opening up

	<p>opportunities and providing a new resource that can be used for passengers to raise issues, for groups to join the debate and even for recruitment.</p>
2	<p>Professor Paul Salvesson, ‘The Railway Doctor’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive background in rail campaigning – assisting Passenger Focus. Founded the community rail partnership work, from which emerged ACoRP. Worked for Northern Rail as Head of Government Strategies and now is Professor at University of Huddersfield. • These sessions are looking at positives and challenges for groups. The movement is very strong and breadth of groups particularly in rail is unique in Britain. Big Society is alive and well with voluntary effort, not dependent on funding and without staffing and premises constraints. There is also a significant degree of informed comment and expertise, with positive relations with local authorities, Government and train companies and having deep roots; with Passenger Focus supporting with informed and expert lobbying which is important, as there are not many who understand the breadth of technicalities with skills and ability to put well-argued cases. • Groups do bring local knowledge and it is important for Passenger Focus to know what is happening at local level and understand how communities work. There are challenges; getting people involved and being representative, coming to a decision quickly and establishing into the local area. Sometimes a danger of pet projects, so need to look at what people think is important. Real benefits to linking with local voluntary sector; good allies and potential members. It is good to have long-term ambitions, but also important for quick hits. There are good skills, but need evidence to back up passion with well-researched evidence – work together with Passenger Focus to benefit from strong research capabilities and to help with encouragement and guidance on how to build skills, use of media and publicising successes. • We’re celebrating 200th anniversary of Luddites’ uprising and sometimes groups can be dismissive of new technology, which can be quite damaging. Got to have standard form of communication; there’s no way to avoid it. It’s essential to be wired up and the whole system is geared for email. Also taken seriously if evidence rather than assertion based. Sometimes advantage in persistence but can crowd out other issues. Can get quick wins but need to be taken seriously to get big issues on agenda. Need to understand language of new landscape to put new arguments and take advantage of funding through LEPs and PTEs. Important to be responsible with politics and media, putting personal politics aside and influence effectively. With media, impact of bad news can dissuade others from using services so need to balance with good news and cultivate local relationships with editors, collaborating with Passenger Focus to develop media skill. • On refranchising, work with Passenger Focus, make the most of the relationship and present strong arguments to all bidders and build up a case of what you want to set your stall out. Railfuture and others are putting in pre-emptive submissions to take initiative and have some early influence. Recognise group strengths and weaknesses and see what resources are needed, also look outwards and help each other and make the most of new opportunities, such as FixMyTransport.com who will push issues under the noses of local authorities, transport authorities and operators for a response and is a possible ground for finding new members. Also using services of umbrella organisations such as Railfuture, who put together a digest of newsletters. Groups can submit theirs for inclusion and increase circulation and awareness of what’s going on.
3	<p>David Beer & Matthew Andrews, 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. We also want to make it easier for groups to get in contact so we have created a new

	<p>email address: usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk which will be monitored by key people and any emails directed to right person within the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. Research and mystery shopping are two key methods of gathering evidence; guidance will be 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. • 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. • Working with others is of key importance. Communication channels should be available for groups to have dialogue with key stakeholders such as Government departments, transport authorities, 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. • 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. 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"> • Better communications between Passenger Focus and user groups etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User group database to share with groups - Ask user groups for help with evidence gathering - User groups to be an extension of Passenger Focus's limited resources - User groups can more easily consult with non/potential users • Complex journeys including multi-modal with on-line form to report experience and on-line form to show journeys not made by public transport because too difficult/impossible • Facilitating inter-modal connectivity • Facilitating easier user group communications with Network Rail • Ticket machine issues including risk of no discount on train fares if machine not used

	<p>because of complexity, queues etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very different quality of rail replacement services and lack of information at intermediate stations
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement: better access to local authorities, MPs etc • Influence: DfT on rail franchises, simplify fares & tickets, earlier and later trains in the North East, feedback on quality issues to Passenger Focus, influence and relationships with train companies • Training group members to improve skills and advertising existence and issues to attract and engage with others • Integration and communication: what are our objectives, open doors to third sector and other groups to improve communication. Research & consultation – are we listened to? • When, where and how to be effective and who with: help to get Government pressure on improving sustainable transport, fares & pricing
	<p><u>What next?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight regional events around Britain, which will be completed in May • Priorities compiled from each event to inform toolkit development • New Passenger Focus website will include User Group resources • Website under construction from May, 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>