

Sharing Best Practice Workshop – South West England

20 March 2012, 11am – 3pm

Thistle Grand Hotel, Bristol

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"> • 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 50% budget cut caused us to refocus and reflect. We will work to change the way we influence; concentrate on a smaller number of passenger priorities and develop relationships and contact methods. • 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. Given a good send-off by Norman Baker. Results drawn from over 21,000 responses and is being used by transport authorities to provide evidence base to support bids. Strategy is for this to become a self-sustaining national survey; plan for three-year programme is with DfT. New commission from Go-Ahead just started, giving research a stamp of independence and authority. National Passenger Survey also published, with tweaks to some questions as this continues to develop. In the pipeline is research into impact on communities of cuts to local bus services and how passengers find out or are consulted, with fieldwork being carried out at the end of March. Also had money to research passengers’ experience of smart card schemes to influence future decisions and we are developing a best practice guide to consulting passengers aimed at local authorities, following a Transport Select Committee recommendation. • 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. 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. • Working together, we want to understand what groups need from us, what is available that we need in return and developing how we can maintain useful relationships and involve each other at the right time. We will continue to work to our core principles, using our research and policy base to focus on passenger priorities and to having influence at the right time in the right way. We are working in a changing world, with new players such as FixMyTransport.com opening up opportunities and availability of new channels to joining the debate and using to raise awareness of groups and even for recruitment.

<p>2</p>	<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. • Rail groups movement is strong and unique in Britain; not the same breadth elsewhere in the world. Big Society is alive and well with voluntary effort, not dependent on funding. It’s a two-way street – groups feeding ideas and help, 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 and such positive relationships within the industry, which is remarkable. • Groups do have that freedom, with not being reliant on funding. Managers are more likely to look into issues if supportive and positive. For example, Hope Valley wanted extra train, but main obstacle was freight path to cement works. User group knew people at the works, approached and asked to be flexible. Worked because of the way it was done – train started on 12th December. • There are challenges; getting people involved and being representative, but do represent and take on issues across the board. 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. There are good skills, but need evidence to back up passion with well-researched evidence – work together with Passenger Focus to benefit from research budget. • We’re celebrating 200th anniversary of Luddites’ uprising and sometimes groups can have those tendencies, with patchy use of technology. 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. With politics: need to engage with who’s there – with evidence. With media: important to be responsible. • On refranchising, work with Passenger Focus, make the most of the relationship and present strong arguments to bidders and introduce positive working and be even-handed. 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. This helps FixMyTransport.com and ATOC come together and is a possible ground for finding new members. It’s democratic and promotes change through small steps.
<p>3</p>	<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. • 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

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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"> • Value research in NPS and BPS: make it easier to drill down and get information to be useful to them (eg Exmouth line) – can a simple piece of software be developed to get to the data? • Contact database of who does what at Passenger Focus, as title don't mean much. Widening this out to local authorities and operators • Frequently do footfall counts or mystery shopping and feed back to operators. However they don't accept because it's 'the work of amateurs'. Could there be something to say it's done 'in accordance with Passenger Focus methodology', so it is taken seriously? • With the loss of field managers, involve local groups on giving feedback: members on trains are a great source of intelligence (eg a group in York helped to identify a person causing trouble) also can help with planning of research such as BPS • How can groups be more effective and what can they learn from best practice of others? Challenges are that showcasing is more labour-intensive, but there's no harm in sharing. Reportal needs to be more user-friendly.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource facilities and how to find easily with a keyword search • Nice useful links to other key research eg bus accidents or rail partnership • Two-way process drawing from each other, contributing and telling for the benefit of others, but with some form of testing before putting up on website • Sensitivity to open availability of database feeds • Information display at bus stops: people can be stranded with no idea of who to ask – may have Traveline – but who operates what and where? How to use tracker apps eg Trent Barton, or encouraging operators and authorities to provide guidance

	<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>