

Minutes

Minutes of Passenger Focus Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 13 December 2006
Location: Whittles House, 14 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9HF
Time: 1000 – 1230
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Present

Board Members

Colin Foxall	CF	Chairman
David Burton	DB	
Brian Cooke	BC	
Kate Gordon	KG	
Christine Knights	CK	
Deryk Mead	DM	
Bill Samuel	BS	
Barbara Saunders	BSA	
Marc Seale	MS	
Nigel Walmsley	NW	

Executive

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
Kafil Badar	KB	Business Planning Manager
Jon Carter	JC	Business Manager
Mike Hewitson	MH	Policy Manager (Items 1 to 4 only)
John Mooney	JM	Passenger Link Director
Peter Thompson	PT	Passenger Research Manager (Items 1 to 4 only)
Sarah Egan	SE	Head of Communications
Kerry Williamson	KW	Passenger Link Manager (items 1 to 4 only)
Mark Woodbridge	MW	Passenger Link Director

Apologies

Jessica Barrow	JB
Phil Davis	PD
James King	JK
Dr Derek Langslow	DL
Stella Mair Thomas	ST

Guests

Dr Sharon Ellis	SE	Department for Transport
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Members of the public

None

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Welcome and Apologies

The Board noted the apologies received. CF thanked KB for his hard work and support over the course of the last year and wished him good luck in his new job. CF also welcomed Sarah Egan and Dr Sharon Ellis to their first meetings of the Board.

1. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Board approved the minutes of the meetings held on 12 July and 13 September 2006.

2. Action Matrix

Observations on action points were made as follows:

		Issue	Observations	Complete
2.1	BM009	Member Involvement	CF asked for suggestions to be put to him.	
2.2	BM012	Communications – S/H bulletin	CF reported that he had seen the first draft and the action was on track	
2.3	BM016	Board meeting in English region	Complete, albeit subject to budget.	√
2.4	BM020	TOC complaint data	Reporting now agreed	√
2.5	BM021	External support	On track for January 2007	
2.6	BM037	CrossRail / Olympic Issues	AS to be briefed this week as consultation paper has just been issued.	
2.7	BM043	Mystery shopper pilot	See agenda item 4.3	
2.8	BM045	Board Events	Stakeholder reception, Birmingham, did not go ahead for reasons previously stated	√
2.9	BM046	Personal security	Issue captured as part of 2007/08 planning	√
2.10	BM 047	Complaint Data	Now provided at agenda item 5.4	√

3. Hot Issues

- Fare rises and internet fares – the Board expressed its disappointment that some passengers were being incorrectly charged when buying tickets over the internet and noted the successful intervention by Passenger Focus. It was agreed that any media messages over 2 January would be measured, and reflect other fares related issues.
- KG expressed concern regarding services over the Christmas period – the Board accepted that rail travel on Christmas Day was not a serious issue but that very limited services on Boxing Day, with shopping, sports fixtures and people back to work, was becoming increasingly untenable to defend. CF noted that TOCs should be encouraged to respond to demand, and agreed with NW that research via an omnibus survey on travel intentions over the Christmas period would be useful, although it was clearly too late this year.

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- FGW December timetable –in particular one service from Paddington that used to go on to Swansea but is now being terminated at Cardiff - is being closely monitored by Simon Pickering.
- Rolling Stock leasing companies – CF proposed and the Board agreed that the potential referral of the ROSCO’s to the Competition Commission should be encouraged and that Passenger Focus should be seen to be supporting the referral.
- GNER – the Board noted the difficulties of GNER’s parent company Sea Containers and anticipated serious developments in the high premium franchise. The delivery of franchise agreement commitments as well as dramatic increases in car parking charges remain areas of concern to the Board. CF suggested this is likely to be a big topic for next year and may form the basis for a conference.
- MH informed the Board, in response to a query from NW, that Grand Central was still finalising arrangements for its rolling stock. ORR had recently consulted on a request from GNER for additional paths between Leeds and London, which Passenger Focus supported.
- MH also informed the Board that Passenger Focus had recently been consulted on a new Open Access application by the Wrexham and Shropshire Railway to provide services from Wrexham to London Marylebone.

Standing ACTION	Passenger Focus website ‘Hot Issues’ section to be updated reflecting Board’s discussion, as appropriate.	SE	
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4. Planning

4.1 First Capital Connect (FCC) restrictions and rolling stock issues

KW introduced her paper on future options for dealing with the FCC issues. CF observed that a good summary might be that a useful role for Passenger Focus would be to provide a ‘ladder that all parties could climb down’. AS confirmed that he had written to DfT regarding the seemingly intractable issue of cascading rolling stock, but had received no response as yet.. BC noted that if, as suspected, no additional rolling stock was to be available before December 2009, the issue must not be allowed to rest. BSA agreed; she said that it was not in any event just a rolling stock issue – the way the restrictions had been introduced left much to be desired and there was compelling evidence that the whole franchising process was flawed. Further observations included fare reductions in the shoulder peak and a need to sort out ATOC/TfL penalty fares issues which were agreed as being unacceptable.

CF said these were all issues that needed considering as part of a basket, and all directly impacted on the consumer and as such passenger Focus had an important role to play. He proposed, and the Board **agreed** that, although KW’s paper set out the issues well, they were so complex and the

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'political' issues sufficiently sensitive to demand further reflection. The paper was **endorsed** on the basis of option 2/3, but CF and AS would take the matter away and report back

New ACTION	Further consideration to be given to FCC issues and way ahead developed	CF AS	BM 048
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4.2 Cross Country Franchise

The Board considered a paper from JM proposing further research into passenger flows with a view to challenging the DfT to provide greater evidence of the impact of its proposals for this reworked franchise. Scoping the research was at an advanced stage. NW observed that we needed to be clear about the difference between 'using' and 'transiting' stations. AS confirmed that the funds were available for further research.

The Board concluded that this was a 'well-loved' franchise and the DfT proposals needed much greater transparency. The Board **agreed** to the additional research.

New ACTION	Plans for the additional research to be finalised and implemented without delay, involving nominated Board members and PT.	JM	BM 049
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4.3 Research Update

PT updated the Board on the scale of research currently being undertaken by Passenger Focus. BS was concerned about the sustainability of such an ambitious programme. PT agreed, but noted that a large portion of the programme involved managing research projects rather than actually carrying them out. Nevertheless, he would be concerned about any additional projects in the immediate future. AS reminded the Board that there were good control processes in place which ensured the Management Board linked new work to the in-year business plan before recommending it to the Board.

The Board **noted** and commended the research update.

5. Performance

5.1 Finance Update as at 31 October 2006

The Board **noted** the update.

5.2 Corporate Plan Mid Year Performance

AS introduced this review. The Board **noted** and **endorsed** Annex A (corporate plan performance measures) and agreed that the patches of red against certain indicators were somewhat overstated. Annex B (passenger engagement log) was **withdrawn** pending contextual changes. Annex C (Wins Log) appeared to the Board to be most helpful, although further thought was required on its quantitative measures before being made public, for example in the annual report. The Wins Log was **noted** and **endorsed** by the Board.

New ACTION	Passenger Engagement Log to be reviewed and resubmitted	KB	BM 050
New ACTION	Further consideration to be given to Wins Log with a view to quantifying successes in a context suitable for publication.	MW	BM 051

5.3 Business Plan measures Update

The Board **noted** and **endorsed** AS's update.

5.4 Passenger contacts, trends and issues

The Board **noted** and **endorsed** AS's update (on behalf of David Sidebottom.)

5.5 Passenger Link managers Report

MW and JM introduced their Q2 report. The Board noted a considerable improvement over the previous report in terms of identifying deliverables against objectives. The Board felt that there was still some opportunity to bring the report 'to life'. The report was **noted**.

6. Benchmarking

6.1 Stakeholder benchmarking

AS introduced the 'Lessons for Communications' report by Opinion Leader Research. He said the findings were encouraging, with good results on knowledge and awareness, relationships and effectiveness. There was, however, some way to go, and the Board needed to be bear in mind that at 28, the constituency consulted was fairly low.

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The Board **agreed** with AS that the results should be published but must be accompanied by a forward from CF pointing to what has been achieved so far (in what is in fact a fairly short space of time) and what further action is planned.

New ACTION	Stakeholder Benchmarking to be published with CF preface	AS	BM 052
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6.2 Passenger Awareness Survey

AS introduced the results of the survey, and commented that these were very much in line with expectations. Nevertheless, for baselining business plan measures and targets, they were very useful. He remained concerned about driving up the complaint caseload on the back of a higher passenger profile, although NW considered that in his experience there was little relationship between the two.

MS thought there were still many avenues for raising awareness – for example leaflets in libraries, CABx and MP's offices. SE suggested that a combined awareness campaign (stakeholders and passengers) was likely to be the most effective vehicle in developing profile, a suggestion which the Board **noted**.

7. For information

7.1 Audit Committee.

DB introduced the paper from the Audit Committee. He particularly pointed to the issue of dealing with potential overspends on projects, such as the recent office refurbishment, but also reminded the Board that Passenger Focus had been given substantial assurance on recent internal audit assignments. The Board **noted** the report.

7.2 Board forward plan

The Board **approved** the forward plan as a basis on which to manage the business coming before it over the next 12 months.

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8. Eddington

The Board considered the report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Transport by Sir Rod Eddington on the case for transport action. Themes emerged as follows:

- The report was not heavily focussed on rail, and this may feed through to the White Paper
- Road pricing and rail pricing could be regarded as being two sides of the same coin
- The concept of a rail network – rather than simple point to point routes – was in danger of being undermined

The Board **agreed** the following principles in which light Eddington could be considered:

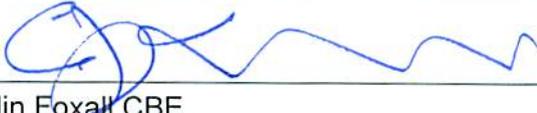
- It is a mistake to consider that all regional / local train services are 'boxes pushing air around' – they are essential both as feeder routes over a coherent network as well as having great potential for managing environmental pollution in their own right
- Future congestion of the rail network must not be underestimated and that at some point it is going to have to be enhanced rather than just maintained.
- Eddington should be regarded as a component of the planning processes which will feed into HLOS and the White Paper
- Passenger Focus is not a pro-rail lobby group. It will be dangerous to argue mode against mode unless there is clear evidence that passengers expect us to do so.



Jon Carter
Business Manager, Passenger Focus (Minute Taker)

14/02/07

Date



Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman, Passenger Focus

14/2/07

Date