

Minutes



Minutes of Passenger Focus Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 14 February 2007
Location: Whittles House, 14 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9HF
Time: 1030 – 1315
Library ref:

Present

Board Members

Colin Foxall	CF	Chairman
David Burton	DB	
Brian Cooke	BC	
Kate Gordon	KG	
Christine Knights	CK	
James King	JK	
Bill Samuel	BS	
Barbara Saunders	BSA	
Dr Derek Langslow	DL	
Phil Davis	PD	

Executive

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
Sarah Hampshire	KB	Business Planning & Board Support Manager
Jon Carter	JC	Business Manager
John Mooney	JM	Passenger Link Director
Nigel Holden	NH	Finance Director
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Passenger Link Manager (Item 4)

Apologies

Jessica Barrow	JB
Nigel Walmsley	NW
Stella Mair Thomas	ST
Marc Seale	MS
Deryk Mead	DM

Guests

Stuart Dalglish	Internal Auditor (observer)
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Welcome and Apologies

The Board noted the apologies received. The Chairman welcomed Sarah Hampshire to her first meeting of the Board.

1. Minutes of Previous Meetings

Subject to the amendment of one typographical error, the Board approved the minutes of the meetings held on 13 December 2006 and authorised the Chairman to sign them.

2. Action Matrix

Observations on action points were made as follows:

		Issue	Observations	Complete
2.2	BM012	Communications Strategy	It was agreed that the Board as a whole were keen to understand how much progress had been made on this and when it would be made available for them to review.	
2.3	BM017	Board meeting in English region	It was agreed that the Board would meet in either Bristol or Leeds in May 07	
2.4	BM037	Update on Crossrail and Olympics	Representatives from the ODA will attend the June Board.	
2.5	BM054	Consultancy Agreement – Chris Irwin	It was emphasised that that this contract should be circulated to the board before being finalised.	
2.6	BM055	Consultancy Agreement – John Cartledge	It was emphasised that that this contract should be circulated to the board after to being finalised.	
2.7	BM057	Budget and Business Plan 2007/08	See agenda item 6	√
2.8	BM058	Budget and Business Plan 2007/08	See agenda item 6	

3. Hot Issues

- AS reported that there had been some improvement at First Great Western (FGW), although the situation would continue to require close monitoring; BC expressed concern that he had heard that improvement been minimal and emphasised the need for monitoring.
- The Chairman informed the Board that the DfT had expressed interest in Passenger Focus doing some research on the route between Bristol and Paddington and that there could be

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funding available for the management of the work, but that it could present an opportunity to incorporate monitoring FGW as part of the project.

- AS reported that Passenger Focus was still waiting for a government decision regarding the issues of capacity on Brighton Mainline.
- C2C had reinstated their old timetable, and AS remarked that he felt that they had been honest and forthright in admitting that a mistake and taking swift action to rectify it. The Board agreed, but CK and BC observed that it was important that C2C do deliver the benefits they had promised to passengers, given that in reality they were back where they started and had made no progress in this area.
- The New Year rail fare increases had created significant feedback, and led to comments in the Press regarding some TOCs' plans to change the dates of fare increases from New Year's Day to points in the year where there was generally more news. BC emphasised that London TravelWatch would strongly oppose such a change, primarily because so many passengers plan to renew their tickets specifically to avoid the increase in prices. The Board agreed that any proposed change would have to be completely transparent.
- JM reported that the DfT were committed to Passenger Focus being involved with the review of franchises in relation to the Cross Country franchise service cuts, and had requested Passenger Focus data to assist them. He added that 50% of passengers currently passing through Birmingham New Street would be likely to have to have to change at another station, potentially Cheltenham Spa, Banbury or Derby. JK was concerned that that the response was not passenger focussed enough and that it should be clear how many people would be affected, he suggested that Virgin would have useful information that would help if they were willing to share it. It was agreed that Board Members would feed specific comments on the response back to John Mooney, and there was consensus that capacity should be increased.
- The Board noted the update on the ROSCOs, and the Chairman added that he would like to explore the issue raised by Mark Lambirth on splitting leasing and maintenance, as it could encourage transparency.
- The Board noted the update on FCC's evening peak restrictions, and whilst KG remarked that FCC were still not prioritising this issue, BC observed that no other TOCs had proposed similar fare restrictions which was positive.

Standing ACTION	Passenger Focus website 'Hot Issues' section to be updated reflecting Board's discussion, as appropriate.	SE	
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4. Passenger Focus Response to InterCity East Coast Franchise Specification Consultation

The Board thanked Guy Dangerfield for his work on the Passenger Focus response to the DfT consultation, but asked for it to be recast to ensure that passenger priorities were firmly in view, particularly as DB remarked, highlighting issues such as GNER's commitment not to raise car parking prices. The Board asked that Guy make the requested changes and submit the paper to the DfT.

New ACTION	Passenger Focus response to be recast to incorporate Board remarks as far as practicable and submitted to the DfT in advance of the consultation deadline.	GD	BM059
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5. National Passenger Survey

- The Board noted the report on the NPS, AS commented that it was becoming a recognised standard that was beginning to create a lot of interest, in turn this was resulting in a significant number of queries and subsequently an increasing workload, which he felt it important to monitor. He reported that some high performing TOCs had begun to use their results in their advertising which reflected very well on the survey had been received.
- KG asked how Passenger Focus intended to follow up with those TOCs who had not performed well. It was agreed that follow up would be required and that it was anticipated that individual projects could be implemented to expose issues and encourage change. The Chairman remarked that he was keen to encourage project based working on these issues to ensure more focus on ongoing performance issues with individual TOCs.

6.0 Business Plan

- AS spoke to the report on the Business Plan, commenting that the plan was broadly speaking what was intended, but that it was intended that a year long plan be produced to indicate peaks and troughs of work and that items would be prioritised, to provide Passenger Focus with the flexibility to react to issues that arise during the year.
- BC felt it was better to assign responsibilities to teams and not individuals. BSA expressed concerns at the lack of measures contained within the plan and observed that they really needed to be clear, particularly in areas such as complaints. BS remarked that he was happy with the document at this stage but wished to see the final version. AS confirmed that the Business Plan would be resubmitted at the next meeting.
- DB said that he was very concerned about the resources attached to item 6 relating to staff and organisational management and it was agreed that the figures in this area did need some attention, and that the Board would like to see a report on staffing and the related budgets.
- The Board approved the Business Plan, subject to the agreed changes and the plan being resubmitted at the next meeting.

New ACTION	Business Plan to be updated to incorporate Board's comments, updated plan with further detail to be submitted to Board at next meeting.	SH	BM060
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7.0 Performance

7.1 Passenger Link Update

- JM spoke to the report, advising that it was anticipated that in the region of 30,000 passenger contacts would be made by the end of the year and that it was expected that in excess of 100 passenger wins would be achieved. Work on the e-bulletin was continuing and feedback on Passenger Voice suggested that it had been very well received, but that there was real demand for regional versions, delivery of regional versions would present a significant resource issue.
- The Chairman continued to say that he was particularly pleased with performance against targets in this area, and felt that all those involved should be proud of their achievements.
- There followed some discussion regarding the South East Railways- schedule 17 ticket office opening hours review; BC reported that he was not convinced that this was a major issue as the proposed closures were to be during quiet periods in the afternoons. Consultation would end on the 20th February and thereafter there was a very short turnaround period in order to get a response back to the DfT. At this time BC believed the main opponents to the proposal to be trade unions rather than passengers.
- JM added that work was now starting on how PLMs should work; the Chairman remarked that he was particularly keen on project working and developing project methodologies to effectively support this, and capture learning, JM responded that this was coming on well and that it was planned that all projects would have their own business plans. CK remarked that she would like to see the methodology and it was agreed that it would be useful for the Board to receive a presentation on this topic.

7.2 Research Update

The Board noted the Research Update. JM reported that Neil Scales the head of MerseyTravel had been very complimentary about the breadth of research being carried out by Passenger Focus.

7.3 Passenger Contacts Trends and Issues

The Board noted the report on Passenger Contacts Trends and Issues, AS reported that complaints had actually increased, primarily as a result of the First Great Western problems, but that it was a difficult area to manage as it could be impacted by any number of issues.

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BSA expressed concern over the level of performance in December when the level of appeals acknowledged within 5 days dipped to 25%, although this had reached 70% in January, she felt that this was a severe and unacceptable dip in performance. It was agreed that this was an area which still needed attention and that it would be addressed as part of the work that Kerry Williamson was undertaking. BSA added that it was notable that in general Passenger Focus was upholding the majority of complaints against TOCs, and that it would be important to explore this further.

BC added that it was important to note that the complaints data in the report did not include those complaints being dealt with by London TravelWatch and he was very disappointed that this was not made clear.

JK felt that diversity issues were not being addressed enough and asked that the demography of complainants be looked into to ensure that there was no under-representation. The Chairman confirmed this was part of the work Kerry was undertaking. CK remarked that it would be useful to see the equivalent representative information from the TOCs.

7.4 Quarter 3 Financial Update

The Board noted the Quarter 3 Financial Update, NH remarked that there were some favourable variances as a result of carrying some vacancies, and a service charge credit of £39,000. In response to a query from KG, NH confirmed that he was seeking some year end flexibility from the DfT.

New ACTION	Future Finance Updates to show variances by department.	NH	BM060
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7.5 Wins Log

The Board noted the Wins Log, and endorsed 23 of the 25 wins recorded; items 24 and 25 were not endorsed as the changes had not yet occurred. It was agreed that they would be followed up and resubmitted when complete; additionally wins would not be submitted until benefits and improvements could be evidenced.

CK remarked that she thought the log was a valuable tool, and that the process surrounding it was very effective; the Chairman agreed and added he would like to see wins weighted both in terms of passengers affected and significance of change effected. It was noted that this was something already being worked upon.

8.0 Organisational Policy to be approved

8.1 Health and Safety Policy

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The Board approved the Health and Safety Policy.

8.2 IT Strategy

- The Board noted the IT Strategy and the cover paper tabled; NH highlighted that the organisation’s IT equipment is increasingly obsolete and laptops are no longer supported by Hewlett Packard; other issues being addressed by the plan included ensuring consistent and effective system access, effective version control, and an improved and up to date intranet.
- AS remarked that there was little in the report that was new, and that Servo provided a high quality service. The Chairman remarked that it would be useful to have the contract reviewed during the year.
- In response to a query from DB, NH confirmed the three and five year replacement timescales for laptops and PCs was industry standard, the Chair added that it was prudent to plan on this basis although equipment may or may not be replaced at that point.
- The Board approved the IT Strategy

New ACTION	Review performance of the IT Support Contractor Servo and report back to the Board.	NH	BM061
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8.3 NPS Retender – Contract Approval

The Chairman reported that the NPS Governance Group had a little more work to do, but expected to be able to bring something to the board shortly, he added that it was likely to be circulated in written form, as decisions would have to be made prior to the next meeting.

9.0 For Information/Noting

9.1 Update from the Audit Committee 17.01.07

DL advised that there were no significant issues to bring to the Board’s attention, but that the meeting in January had been useful.

9.2 Update on Remuneration Committee 13.02.07

The Remuneration Committee had been unable to meet and would have to be reconvened in due course.

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9.3 Resubmission of Engagement Log

The Board noted the Engagement Log. The Chairman remarked that it would be important to bear in mind Equality issues and considering in more detail those with whom Passenger Focus engage.

10.0 Recommendations and Action Points

The Board noted and endorsed the recommendations and action points from the informal members meeting of the 10 January 2007.

11.0 Any Other Business

It was agreed that given the public nature of Members meetings, it would be useful to ensure that members always had name plates.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13.15

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting



Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman, Passenger Focus

15 May 2007
Date