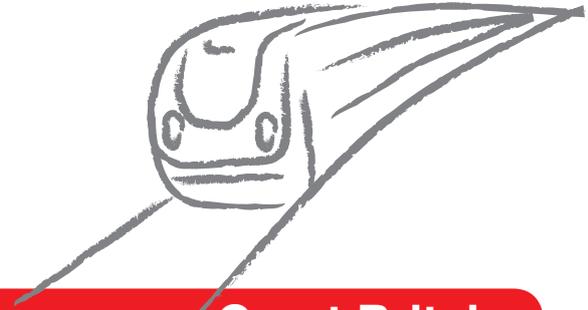


Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Autumn/Winter 2010

Great Britain

In this issue: • A look at first class • Stations under review

Improvements for disabled passengers?

Passenger Focus is currently mystery shopping Great Britain's railway to check if improvements have been made to services offered to disabled passengers. A Passenger Focus study previously found staff at stations expected passengers (mystery shoppers) on only two out of three occasions, despite assistance having been booked through the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS). Also, in 15% of all cases no assistance was provided to help passengers get off the

train. The 2010 research will reveal whether any improvements have been made and where further work needs to happen.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "Our research shows that generally, passengers' experience of their railway journey is improving. The Government continues to invest in infrastructure and programmes aimed at making the railway more accessible to all – including for older people, passengers with

disabilities, parents with buggies and passengers with luggage. But it is evident that for disabled passengers, there are still serious failings that must be addressed by the industry and Passenger Focus will continue its work to make sure passenger views and opinions are heard and acted upon."

Results from the latest research will be published later this year and analysed in the next edition of Passenger Voice.



Fares up in 2011

While the Government has announced that in 2012 fares will increase by RPI+3%, passengers can expect significant rises in January 2011 too.

The price for season tickets and other regulated fares will increase by RPI+1% in the New Year, taking the average price rise to 5.8%. Train companies can also put up unregulated fares – including Anytime and first-class fares, by any amount.

The July Retail Price Index (RPI) figure is part of the formula which allows train companies to increase regulated fares, including season tickets, off-peak return journeys and commuter fares, by up to RPI +1% (RPI +3% on some routes).

Additionally, some passengers could find they will be asked to pay a further 5% as the Government has decided not to restrict the flexibility train companies have to put up prices on individual routes.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "With the whole country feeling nervous about our economic prospects, now is not the time for train companies to sweat passengers off the train."

Passengers to pay more for transport



Passenger Focus welcomed the commitment to transport projects including Crossrail, electrification and a pledge on new trains.

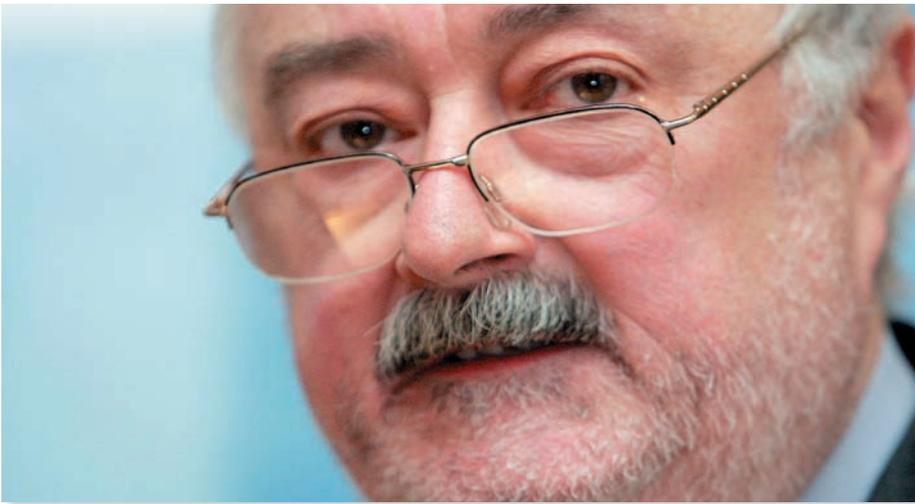
Mr Smith said: "Good news is the Government's acknowledgement that transport spending is good for Britain's economy and will improve rail services. But rail passenger numbers are on the way up so we need these new trains and projects to arrive as soon as possible. For those plans postponed, we hope these projects will be picked up during better economic times."

The independent passenger watchdog has warned rail passengers to be prepared for big fare rises come January 2012.

Commenting on the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review last month which included a decision that average regulated fares will go up to RPI+3%, Passenger Focus said many passengers will find these rises difficult to stomach.

Passenger Focus research has found that Britain already has some of the highest fares in Europe and commuters in particular think that fares represent poor value for money.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "This level of price rises puts the spotlight on industry performance. For such prices passengers will rightfully expect punctual, clean trains with a reasonable chance of getting a seat. Passenger Focus will be pressing to ensure that the rail industry is as efficient as possible. Savings identified by the Government's value for money review should be passed on to passengers."



Paying more for less?

Rail passengers fared relatively well in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Long term sustained investment in many railway projects will continue. While we still await announcements about new train orders and electrification the industry's spending plans up to 2014 are largely intact. The sting in the tail is that the shift in funding from the taxpayer to the passenger has been given fresh momentum with stiff price rises in the pipeline. This really puts a spotlight on industry performance – passengers will expect, in return for these rises, improvements in the core elements of the service. Trains on time, disruption handled well and a more reasonable chance of a seat as more new trains come into service will all be under our spotlight in the coming years. Increasingly debates about the future of the railways are now focusing on value for money for the taxpayer. However, we will continue to support measures to ensure passengers get value for money.

Colin Foxall, Passenger Focus chairman

Looking at first class

Passenger Focus has broken down its National Passenger Survey results by first class and standard class and found that 84% of first class passengers are happy overall with the service they receive. First-class passengers seem to be happier across the board - or at least as happy - when looking at station and on-train aspects of services when compared with passengers in standard class.

Passenger Focus has reviewed recent surveys and analysed responses from over 2000 first-class passengers.

Looking at the long-distance operators, passengers are even happier with first class services – especially those provided by open access operators Wrexham and Shropshire (97% satisfied) and Grand Central (96% satisfied.)

Interestingly, passengers in first class score particular aspects of the service higher than those passengers in standard class. This includes value for money (56% satisfied in first, 48% satisfied in standard), train toilet facilities (50% in first, 38% in standard) and how well the train company manages delays (41% satisfied in first class compared with 35% in standard class).

	First class	Standard class
Overall Satisfaction	84	83
STATION FACILITIES		
Ticket buying facilities	72	72
Provision of information about train times/platforms	81	79
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	66	64
Cleanliness	71	69
The facilities and services	56	51
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	72	70
Connections with other forms of public transport	77	74
Facilities for car parking	51	48
The overall environment	65	64
Your personal security whilst using	68	65
The availability of staff at the station	60	58
How request to station staff was handled	85	84
TRAIN FACILITIES		
The frequency of the trains on that route	83	77
Punctuality/reliability	87	82
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	84	85
Connections with other train services	75	75
The value for money for the price of your ticket	56	48
Upkeep and repair of the train	75	72
The provision of information during the journey	71	68
The helpfulness and attitude of staff	77	64
The space for luggage	57	53
The toilet facilities	50	38
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	76	68
The comfort of the seating area	76	70
The ease of being able to get on and off	82	80
Your personal security whilst on board	81	75
The cleanliness of the inside	78	71
The cleanliness of the outside	74	66
The availability of staff	64	46
How well train company dealt with delays	41	35



Working for the Railway Children

Passenger Focus staff have been doing their bit to raise much needed donations for the organisation's chosen charity the Railway Children.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus's chief executive, has participated in a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro with several other rail industry figures during October.

Also in the name of charity, Passenger Focus's bus director David Sidebottom and change manager, Benn

Jones, challenged each other to a competition to see who would reach Manchester from London first - Sidebottom using the English bus network, or Jones on his bike. They each set off from the London Pimlico offices and the finish line was the Manchester office.... The athletic pedalling efforts of Jones saw him reach the north west destination first.

Donations for the Railway Children's work can be made through their website at <http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/>



Stations under review

Passenger Focus, with London TravelWatch, has been exploring how passengers feel about Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations with a view to discovering how the three stations might better serve the needs of passengers. The research looked specifically at station access, information, station amenities, safety and security as well as retail outlets.

Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch are now working with the industry to see how the passenger research can feed into plans for station improvements. What is good news is that South West Trains and Network Rail plan to fund £6m of improvements to Clapham Junction Station which will commence during 2011/12. These works will address passengers' key priorities for improvement at the station.

Similarly, it is encouraging that First Capital Connect and Network Rail are working to identify future improvements to Luton Station and Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch will continue to ensure that passenger priorities are considered within the development of these schemes.

News roundup

Ticket-office opening hour cuts

Passenger Focus has declared the Government's decision to keep South West Train's (SWT) ticket offices open a win for many passengers. However, it acknowledged cuts were going to happen across SWT's network ticket offices which many passengers would find inconvenient and worrying.

The independent passenger watchdog objected to changes to SWT ticket-office opening hours where more than 12 tickets are sold an hour. The Secretary of State for Transport has now rejected many of SWT proposals, forcing the company to open offices longer and maintain some Sunday trading.

Views on Chiltern's loos

Passenger Focus has been working with Chiltern Railways to explore where the company could improve passenger satisfaction with its train toilets.

Passenger Focus has now made recommendations to Chiltern, including introducing a more visible cleaning regime, making small design changes such as adding shelves, improving ventilation, better signs onboard and, longer term, more toilets being provided on trains.

East Midlands acts on complaints

East Midlands Trains has developed an action plan to address Passengers Focus's recommendations on improving how the train company responds to passengers' complaints.

Passengers should start noticing changes over the next six months. Passengers Focus will undertake a further review later this year to assess East Midlands Trains' development.

Passenger Focus blog

Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith regularly updates the Passenger Focus blog at <http://passengerfocus.blogspot.com/>

Winter weather

Passenger Focus has been critical of the way the industry has handled disruption of services during poor weather over recent years – especially the massive disruption to passengers using Eurostar services over Christmas in 2009. Passenger Focus has subsequently been feeding into industry planning as it works to address winter weather disruption.

Innovative approach benefits passengers

Passenger Focus has congratulated Southern Railway for its pioneering efforts in helping passengers in need of a seat on busy trains.

Southern Railway won the Putting Passengers First accolade at the National Rail Awards 2010 for its Priority Seat Card initiative. Passenger Focus said the award recognised Southern's efforts to help passengers with a hidden disability, those over 65 and pregnant women to identify their need for a seat to other passengers in a respectful and dignified way.



Picture courtesy of Southern Railway



Passenger Focus campaigns to reduce disruption

Passenger Focus is exploring how the rail industry can reduce disruption to passengers when engineering work is happening.

This is especially important, as the industry steps up work ready for the 2012 Olympic Games and while planning progresses for a new high speed line.

Passenger Focus was asked by the previous Transport Secretary to examine how passengers can receive a better deal during infrastructure work on the rail network and feed back to industry.

Headed by Passenger Focus's Mark Leving, the watchdog is working with train operating companies, Network Rail, Passenger Transport Executives and other stakeholders to ensure passengers' interests are represented. This includes making sure that the industry applies the principles of the seven-day railway-keeping the railway open for passengers as much as possible and realises the maximum possible benefit for passengers when work does

take place.

Mr Leving said: "Following pressure from Passenger Focus, the industry has made progress to reduce the number of rail-replacement buses. Nevertheless, there are still too many buses instead of trains on weekends and bank holidays. There are also still too many instances of parallel/ alternative routes being closed simultaneously."

However, Passenger Focus notes that the rail industry's commitment to a seven-day railway is beginning to deliver some benefits and there is more emphasis during planning on how disruption may affect passengers and might be avoided.

Passenger Focus also wants to ensure the industry delivers the maximum possible future benefits to passengers from infrastructure expenditure. This includes looking at how works may improve passenger services, rather than just maintain current standards.

Sleeper survey results

Passenger Focus reports that passengers using sleeper train services were generally very happy with the service they received with an overall satisfaction score of 94% for First Great Western (FGW) and 89% for ScotRail.

The independent passenger watchdog has reviewed recent National Passenger Survey results, specifically to gauge passenger satisfaction with sleeper services.

Key results included:

- Satisfaction with train staff, including their helpfulness and attitude (96% for FGW; 90% for ScotRail), was generally on a par or better than the long distance sector
- Satisfaction with train cleanliness (96%; 85%), value for money, (80%; 69%), comfort of seating (86% each) and on-train security (92%; 90%) were all rated higher than for the long distance sector
- Satisfaction with train toilet facilities was very high (96%; 90%).



Watchdog makes a difference for unhappy passengers

Passenger Focus's advice team (PAT) has already secured almost £29,000 in additional compensation for passengers this financial year.

Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will mediate, where appropriate, in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual. While passengers were offered just £6250 originally, after Passenger Focus stepped in and negotiated with the train company, it was able to get an extra £28,800 for passengers between April and August.

The passenger advice team meets with each train company on a regular basis in an effort to resolve passengers' issues, secure 'goodwill gestures' and feedback to customer service teams on how they can better respond to passenger complaints.

Passenger Focus then asks passengers how satisfied they were with the service they received from the watchdog itself. During the first quarter of 2010-2011, 84% said they were happy with Passenger Focus's handling of their appeal.