

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

North East

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Passengers score North East region's rail services

Autumn 2010

Train company	Overall satisfaction	Most significant improvement in satisfaction since Autumn 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Autumn 2009
Great Britain result	84%	Value for money (4%)	No significant decline
CrossCountry	84%	No significant improvement	The upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms (5%)
East Coast	89%	Connections with other forms of public transport (7%)	Punctuality/reliability (7%)
First TransPennine Express	87%	Facilities for car parking (15%)	No significant decline
Grand Central	95%	The upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms (20%)	Frequency of the trains on that route (7%)
Northern Rail	82%	No significant improvement	Station facilities and services (6%)

Passenger Focus has published research which reveals how satisfied passengers travelling in the North East are with the rail network.

Open-access operator Grand Central was among the top scorers in the survey with 95% of its passengers reporting they were satisfied overall.

Almost 31,000 passengers have responded to the independent passenger watchdog's Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey (NPS), which rates Great Britain's rail companies, train and station facilities.

For the first time, Passenger Focus has also published a breakdown of passenger satisfaction scores for different routes within each train company. This shows, for example, that 85% of Northern Rail passengers are satisfied on Tyne Tees and Wear routes compared with only 78% in the South and East Yorkshire.

Capacity major issue for passengers

Passenger Focus has responded to Network Rail's draft Northern Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), which sets out the priorities for rail investment in the north of England for the next 30 years.

In its submission, the independent passenger watchdog said the biggest challenge was developing enough capacity to meet the expected growth in rail passenger demand, which is forecast to increase across northern cities by five per cent each year.

Also important is continuing to improve passenger satisfaction with punctuality and journey time while enhancing those services and facilities that passengers rate less well, including station access, capacity and car parking.

Sue Tibbett, Passenger Focus

manager, said: "We support the broad thrust of what has been proposed in the Northern RUS. However, the railway network in the north will need significant investment to meet demand."

She continued: "We hope that the final plan will address these issues and provide clear strategic direction to how the Northern railway will be developed to meet passenger priorities for improvement going forward."

Passenger Focus's submission was based on the findings of research with nearly 3200 passengers on Northern Rail and TransPennine Express as well as 8598 other passengers surveyed for other RUSs that have covered part of the north. Additionally, the most recent National Passenger Survey results were considered.

Breaking the NPS results down by routes marks a huge step forward in accountability and transparency. Passengers can now get a much better idea of how their train services compare with others run by their company, as well as those across Great Britain.

Passenger Focus will work with Northern Rail, First TransPennine Express, Cross Country, East Coast and Grand Central to address those areas of the rail network where passenger satisfaction scores are lower.





Passengers count delays

Train companies CrossCountry and Northern Rail have worked with Passenger Focus to better-understand how delays affect passenger satisfaction.

Passenger Focus's research has found that commuter satisfaction with punctuality starts to drop as soon as a train is one minute late. Long-distance, business and leisure passengers are a little more tolerant, being prepared to wait between four and six minutes before their satisfaction is affected.

The study also found that passengers' experience of delays tends to be more than that recorded by the industry as trains may be late at stations along the route, but make up time towards the end of the journey and arrive at the final station according to the timetable.

The findings have prompted Passenger Focus to call on the rail industry to review how it records 'on time' trains and to measure punctuality along the route, not just at the final station.

Passenger Focus wants the industry to consider:

- Should a measure of 'right-time' train arrivals be part of the operator's contract?
- Should punctuality be measured at stations along the route, as well as at the end destination?
- Do the recent improvements in punctuality mean that the current measure (Public Performance Measure) should be tightened?
- What information can rail companies provide to passengers to give them a better understanding of punctuality for their specific routes?

News roundup

Complaints help

Passenger Focus's advice team has now secured more than £59,800 in compensation for passengers this financial year.

Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will take up the case, where appropriate, in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual.

National Passenger Survey

If you want to know more about the results in the latest National Passenger Survey, go online at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps

Passenger Focus blog

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

It includes his views on Great Britain's rail services and England's buses.

Our work online

For the latest updates on Passenger Focus's work happening across Great Britain and details of the events Passenger Focus staff will be speaking at, go to <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/what-we-are-doing>

Passenger Focus's Manchester office

We can now be found at Passenger Focus, 7th Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

May 2011 East Coast timetable proposals

Big changes to the East Coast timetable, which covers London to Peterborough, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh are planned from 22 May 2011. Passenger Focus encourages passengers to check what it means for them – the new timetables can be viewed at www.eastcoast.co.uk/22May.

Passenger Focus manager, Guy Dangerfield said: "This will be the biggest change to the East Coast timetable for many years and there are winners and losers. If you use East Coast, I recommend that you see what the new timetable means for you. Please let Passenger Focus know what you think

at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/contact-us.

"Many passengers will welcome these improvements, but there are downsides and the original proposals promised more.

"It is also very frustrating that the rail industry has failed to consult passengers effectively over these changes. For instance, the Saturday and Sunday timetables have been subject to no consultation at all."

Passenger Focus has summarised the principal positives and negatives in the proposed 22 May 2011 timetable, by station. See www.passengerfocus.org.uk



A whopping bus fare – now sorted

Passenger Focus has successfully sorted out a rail fare anomaly where passengers were paying £100 more to travel from Galashiels to London King's Cross than from Berwick Upon Tweed.

A journalist contacted Passenger Focus referring to the high fares between Galashiels and London via the East Coast main line compared with those using the West Coast. Galashiels does not have a railway so connects with trains at either Berwick upon Tweed or Carlisle stations via scheduled bus services.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager explains: "Media comment about how the East Coast main line is more expensive than the West Coast is not uncommon. But the difference in price on this occasion was very significant - it turned out to be a whopping £100 more or £50 each way to get to from Galashiels to Berwick. That's a pricey bus!"

Passenger Focus contacted East Coast who discovered that the Super Off-Peak fare wasn't in the system from Galashiels and a number of other towns served by the same bus route. They took immediate action to correct the anomaly.