

# Passenger Voice Scotland

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



## Priorities for passengers in Scotland

The announcement that £3.6billion is to be spent on improvements to the railway in Scotland should make a big difference to passengers. The High Level Output Specification (HLOS) addresses some of the most important issues for passengers in its plans for improving the rail network between 2009 and 2014.

The resources available to the Scottish Executive need to be clearly aligned to what passengers want to be improved. Passenger Focus, with valuable help from Transport Scotland, commissioned in-depth research involving group discussions to gain a better understanding of passengers' priorities for improvements to train services. In addition we commissioned a survey into passengers' prioritisation for improvements to help identify

which service attributes are most in need of improvement.

Passengers were asked to rate their satisfaction with 30 aspects of the service they experience either on the train or at train stations. They were also asked to rate how well their reasonable expectations are being met and their priorities for improvements to each service area.

It is useful to establish areas that are falling short of passengers reasonable expectations, however there

are a number of such areas, therefore we also ranked priorities for improvement in order to understand where finite resources should be focused.

The top five passenger priorities for improvement in Scotland are:

1. Price of train tickets offers excellent value for money
2. Sufficient train services at times I use the train
3. At least 19 out of 20 trains arrive on time
4. Passengers are always able to get a seat on the train
5. Maximum queue time no more than 2 minutes to purchase tickets

We will concentrate on these issues to ensure that we get the best deal for rail passengers. Enclosed with this newsletter is our full report "Passengers' priorities for improvements. Rail services in Scotland" and our full GB-wide version is available on our website [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)



Robert Samson

I hope you enjoy our first edition of Passenger Voice Scotland. Please tell me what you think: [robert.samson@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:robert.samson@passengerfocus.org.uk)

Robert Samson  
Passenger Link Manager Scotland



Passengers at Glasgow Central

## Annual season tickets for all

Research undertaken by Passenger Focus identified that a significant proportion of commuters remain unaware of the benefits of annual season tickets.

For example, two in five commuters don't know how many weeks of "free" travel are offered (52 weeks travel for the price of 40 weeks). Our research shows 14% of commuters who do not have an annual season ticket cite that they "haven't got the money to pay in advance" for one, whilst 11% cite they "cannot afford one" as their reasons for not purchasing one.

We believe that all passengers should have access to the advantages that an annual season ticket can bring. For those passengers who are currently denied this opportunity due to the large advance payment required, we encourage train operators that don't already do so to introduce a direct debit facility. We have asked First ScotRail to introduce such a facility to make rail travel more affordable to passengers and in this way contribute to the National Transport Strategy aim of improving the affordability of public transport.

## News roundup

- **Bus Passengers' Platform**

On 31 August Passenger Link Manager, Robert Samson explained Passenger Focus' role in dealing with passengers' appeal complaints

- **Scottish Consumer Council**

Consumer group meeting taking place on 10 September

- **Passenger satisfaction survey**

The next National Passenger Survey (NPS) which assesses service aspects important to rail users, begins fieldwork later this month

- **Let us know what you think**

If you have any comments about anything you have read in this issue of Passenger Voice or anything you would like to see in the next issue, contact: Robert Samson at Passenger Focus, [robert.samson@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:robert.samson@passengerfocus.org.uk)

## Improvements on the East Coast Main Line?

Passenger Focus is currently preparing its response to Network Rail's 'East Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation.' Options for consideration include journey times between London and Edinburgh, additional stops at Dunbar, Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh local service and an improved frequency of service between North Berwick and Edinburgh. Our response will ensure that the passenger voice is heard as part of the consultation.



Waiting to board the train

# Crossing the border with Cross Country

Arriva plc has been awarded the contract to run the New Cross Country rail franchise from 11 November 2007. Each year 2.9 million passengers cross the border using Cross Country trains.

Our spring 2007 National Passenger Survey shows that nearly one third (29%) of passengers currently using this service don't feel they get value for money. While we are pleased that Arriva have published a ballpark figure for possible unregulated fare rises, this means that some ticket prices may rise by up to 50% over the length of the franchise based on the current rate of inflation. This makes it all the more important that affordable, off-peak turn up and go fares are protected on all Cross Country routes in Scotland.

From December 2007 the Cross Country Voyager services that operate between Manchester and Scotland will be replaced by TransPennine Express Class 185 trains. Recent research by Passenger Focus with 1,765 passengers who travel on the Class 185 trains showed that passengers with journey times longer than an hour expressed greater dissatisfaction with nearly all aspects of comfort but more significantly with lighting and temperature



Long distance passengers

(air conditioning/heating) and draughts from the doorways. We are urging TransPennine Express to monitor the situation once the new service begins and to work with other operators to protect the current range of affordable tickets between Glasgow and Manchester and through tickets to destinations south of Manchester.

There are no changes proposed to the services from Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh to Birmingham via the East Coast Main Line. However, journeys from Edinburgh on Cross Country trains to destinations south of Birmingham via the East Coast Main Line will be slower than the journey currently available on the West Coast Main Line.

## National Express Group to run the InterCity East Coast franchise

From 9 December 2007 National Express Group is to take over running rail services on the East Coast Main Line which is currently run by GNER. Our spring 2007 National Passenger Survey shows that 87% of GNER passengers are satisfied with the service they receive and we hope to see National Express improve this rating. Passengers will be pleased with the proposals to provide extra capacity from December 2010 with around 14,000 extra seats.

We welcome the commitment to get nine out of ten trains to run on time.

However, this will be a significant challenge for both National Express and Network Rail because last year, over 17% of GNER's trains were more than 10 minutes late.

Recent Passenger Focus research shows that value for money is at the top of the passengers' priorities for improvements. We are pleased to see that a figure for unregulated fare rises has been stated so that passengers at least know what to expect. However at 2.1% above the rate of inflation each year, we are concerned that at current inflation rates this could amount to a 45% price increase over the length of the franchise.