

Passenger Voice Wales

Independent national rail passenger watchdog

Passengerfocus
putting rail passengers first

What do the DfT proposals mean for Wales?

This is our first Passenger Voice Wales and it coincides with the Government's announcement of its plans for the future of the railway. We asked passengers in Wales what improvements they wanted to see and they told us their priorities are value-for-money fares, punctuality and greater frequency of services.

As part of our research, we spoke to over 670 Welsh rail passengers who also highlighted the importance of improving capacity to ensure they are always able to get a seat and ensuring that trains are consistently well maintained.

The findings highlight areas that are falling short of passengers' reasonable expectations and provide ranked priorities for improvement to

ensure resources are properly focused.

Our research in Wales, part of a wider survey across all of Great Britain, was commissioned to feed into the Department of Transport's High Level Output Statement (HLOS) that has set out the Government's proposed spending plans for rail in England and Wales from 2009-2014. The question

is, has the Government listened to what passengers are saying and what improvements will Welsh passengers experience as a result of HLOS and the White Paper? The promise of extra trains to Cardiff is good news and should help reduce overcrowding particularly in the Valley network. Many passengers travelling out of Wales will also benefit from the investment at Birmingham New Street and Reading stations which will reduce the bottlenecks in these areas. However the major worry for passengers is what will happen to unregulated fares?

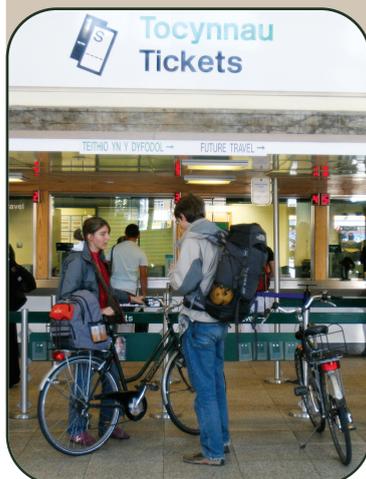
I hope you enjoy the first Passenger Voice Wales. Please tell me what you think: simon.pickering@passengerfocus.org.uk



Simon Pickering

Simon Pickering
Passenger Focus for Wales

'Saver' fares slashed



Arriva Trains Wales has cut the price of many of its longer distance 'turn up and go' Saver fares by up to 38% following concerns raised by Passenger Focus.

The move follows Arriva Trains Wales's earlier decision to remove its 'SuperSaver' ticket in favour of greater use of discounted advance-purchase tickets. While the expansion of advance purchase tickets was welcomed, Passenger Focus was concerned that the SuperSaver's removal had resulted in ticket price increases of up to 34% for passengers without the flexibility to book prior to their day of travel and/or fix their exact time of travel.

Arriva Trains Wales has used the Saver review to correct price anomalies across different routes in Wales that have largely arisen from the number of different franchises that have operated rail franchises since privatisation. The company has now placed a cap of £65 return on Saver fares between Welsh stations. Examples of the reductions include the Saver return from Bangor to Swansea now costing £65 compared to the old price of £82.70, and the Newtown to Carmarthen fare dropping from £61.10 to £42.

Due to the complexities of the fares system, the new prices have initially been introduced as promotional fares, but Arriva Trains Wales has confirmed that the adjustments will be made permanent at the next industry-wide fares round in September.

Event management at Cardiff Central

Arriva Trains Wales is currently trialling a number of Passenger Focus suggestions to improve event management at Cardiff Central station. Large numbers of passengers pass through the station on their way to concerts and events at the adjacent Millennium Stadium.

Among the recommendations that will be examined during the trial include the colour coding of the dedicated queuing lanes used during special events and greater use of 'voice vest' staff. The first initiative is aimed at helping passengers access the station quickly and easily, while the latter effort is designed to provide more information to people about train departures.

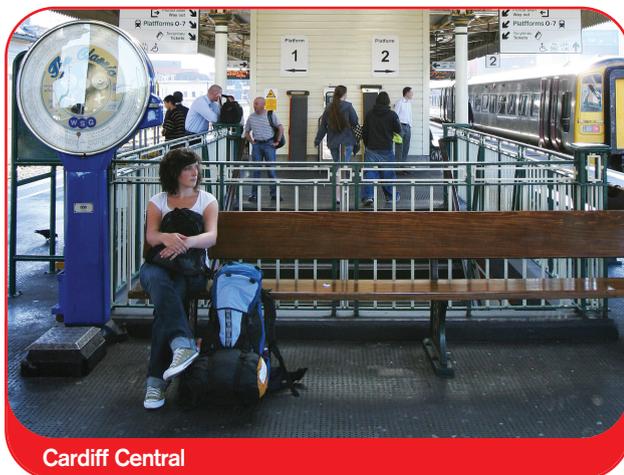
Other suggestions for improvement include the provision of more pre-travel information about the special arrangements in place at Cardiff Central during Millennium Stadium events, making use of both websites and press releases.

Passenger Focus' report on event management follows on from its earlier initiative,

led by its board member for Wales Stella Mair Thomas, to take a strategic view of the provision of rail services to the Millennium Stadium. This brought together representatives from Arriva Trains Wales, First Great Western, British Transport Police, Network Rail, the Millennium Stadium

and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Among the successful outcomes of that work has been improvements in the sharing of information between industry partners that has led to better coordination of engineering works around major Stadium events.



Cardiff Central

News roundup

- Regional transport plans
Passenger Focus is continuing to work with all four of Wales' regional transport consortia to help them develop their regional transport plans.

- Wales RUS

We are also involved in the development of the Wales Route Utilisation Strategy, a document that will form the basis of Network Rail's work for the next 10 years.

- Passenger priorities

Simon Pickering will be presenting a paper on the satisfaction and expectations of Welsh rail passengers at the 3rd Transport Applications Cymru conference to be held in Llandudno on 30 November 2007

- Bus integration

Passenger Focus has been invited to join the management board of TrawsCambria, the long distance bus network in Wales. Our role will be to bring an understanding of rail passenger issues to help improve integration between the two transport modes.

- NPS

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



- Annual Report

Passenger Focus' 2006-2007 annual report is available in English and in Welsh. Both versions can be downloaded from www.passengerfocus.org.uk

- 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: **Simon Pickering at Passenger Focus, PO Box 114, Chepstow NP16 6DW; simon.pickering@passengerfocus.org.uk**

Arriva Trains Wales passenger panel off to a good start

Train users now have a greater say in the operations of Arriva Trains Wales following the company's development of a Passenger Panel.

Members of the panel, recruited from across ATW's network, provide direct feedback to the company on its performance, as well as reviewing specific areas such as station facilities and information provision.

Passenger Focus assisted in the development of the Panel and continues to support its operation by attending meetings and providing information and advice to its members.

