

Passenger Voice Scotland

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



First ScotRail franchise extended

Continued investment is key to franchise extension and incentivising the operator... but will it deliver?

Passenger Focus believes Transport Scotland's surprise announcement to extend First ScotRail's (FSR) franchise for three years to 2014 will mean some improvements to services for passengers.

The Scottish Government explained the decision as being necessary to change funding arrangements which are intended to help FSR grow its business and make improvements for passengers' benefit.

Passenger manager for Scotland, Robert Samson said: "Scottish passengers tell us

they want improved value for money and more train services that arrive on time, as well as better personal security. This decision will go some way to address these concerns with new services, improved connections and by improving stations."

James King, Passenger Focus board member for Scotland, also commented: "Passenger Focus has consistently fed back to Network Rail and Transport for Scotland key passenger priorities for improving the Scottish rail network. We are delighted that



First ScotRail franchise extension

this investment demonstrates a clear commitment to improving the frequency of services and the passenger experience. It is also provides certainty during major engineering works and in the run up to the Commonwealth Games."

NPS scores moving in the right direction

The rail watchdog's Spring National Passenger Survey results positive for First ScotRail

Passengers' overall satisfaction with First ScotRail improved significantly compared with Spring 2007 (and Autumn 2007), rising by five points to 88%. To put this in context, this is approximately four points higher than the regional sector average. The proportion of passengers satisfied with punctuality/reliability was four points higher than Spring 2007 at 87% (although this was not significantly different compared to Autumn 2007). Again, this is higher than the regional sector overall.

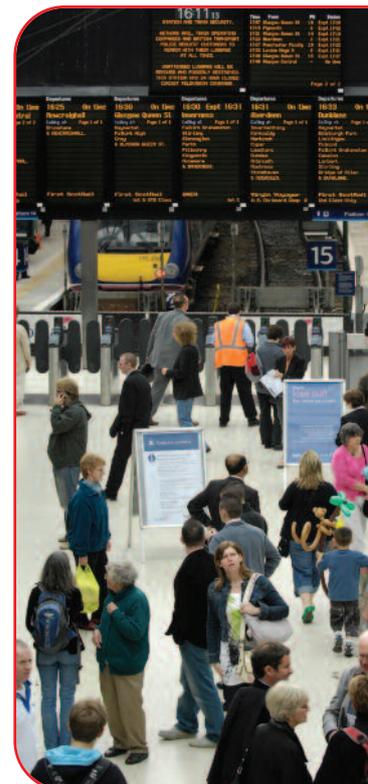
Satisfaction with value for money (55%) was not significantly different from Spring 2007 and was slightly below the regional sector overall (though significantly higher than nationally). The score of 72% for sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand was not significantly different compared to Spring 2007 and was slightly higher than the regional sector and significantly higher than the national results.

Passenger satisfaction with most station attributes was unchanged compared to Spring

2007, but for three factors it improved. Just one registered a decline. Satisfaction with upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms improved by nine points, satisfaction with ticket-buying facilities by seven points and the availability of staff by six points. In contrast satisfaction with facilities for car-parking declined by 11 points to 44%, but this is a predictable consequence of growth, even if it is one that needs attention.

The highest rated areas of satisfaction were train speed (91% satisfied), how requests to station staff were handled (89%) and punctuality/reliability (87%). Satisfaction with all the other 17 train attributes was not significantly different compared to Spring 2007.

The lowest rated area was how well the train company dealt with delays (37% satisfied), followed by train toilet facilities (40%).



News roundup

- **Rolling stock procurement**

Passenger Focus manager Robert Samson is presenting to Transport Scotland passengers' views on what they want from rolling stock. The presentation will consider passenger views on internal design and passenger facilities, including: seating, on-train information systems, storage space, toilets, air conditioning, personal security and accessibility.



- **National Passenger Survey 2008**

You can now see this year's NPS results on our website at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps

- **Give us your feedback**

Want to have your say about something you've read in *Passenger Voice*? Got a burning issue you want to see highlighted in the next edition? It's your Voice, so contact: krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk

Survey shows cross border services on the right track

Passenger Focus's Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey has found that across Scotland, overall satisfaction with rail services was generally higher than the GB average of 80%. National Express East Coast received a score of 86%, Virgin Trains an 85% approval rate and overall satisfaction with CrossCountry and First TransPennine Express was at 84%.

Scotland passenger manager Robert Samson commented: "Once again passengers have told us train operators in Scotland are doing a good job, but there is still work to do across the board. This feedback demonstrates train companies shouldn't rest on their laurels but listen to customer criticism."

James King, Passenger Focus Scottish

board member agreed: "While the scores in Scotland are better than the national average, they do show scope for improvement across quite a number of areas including value for money, facilities for car parking and how well companies respond to delays."

Passenger Focus's findings provide a network-wide picture of customers' satisfaction with rail travel and it is the largest survey of its kind, with it receiving input from more than 25,000 rail users in Spring 2008. Passengers rate each of the train operating companies on both station and train facilities provided.

The NPS was conducted at around 650 stations between January and March 2008.

Commitment to Stranraer

A study, part-funded by Passenger Focus, is being carried out into the potential for regenerating the Stranraer line, partly in response to the possible switch of Stena ferry services from Stranraer to Cairnryan. There is also a perception that train services have been geared to their role as a through route to Ireland, rather than meeting the needs of local users, leisure visitors and tourists.

Last year a support group, the Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association, was set up in a bid to promote the future well-being of the Ayr to Stranraer rail line. The group has concerns about the provision of a bus service between Cairnryan and Girvan station being seen as the best option for ferry passengers should Stena relocate.

First results for new CrossCountry franchise

CrossCountry has maintained satisfaction scores since taking over the franchise from Virgin, according to the Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey.

Comparisons and trends across time are difficult to establish because CrossCountry has taken on some routes from Central Trains and lost routes between the North West and Scotland, but overall there do not appear to be any significant changes in passenger satisfaction. Comparisons can be made with other long-distance operators, and room to sit and stand remains a key issue for passengers travelling on CrossCountry trains; the operator ranked 17th out of 21

operators on this measure. However, there are plans to improve capacity as part of the new franchise which should help to address this concern, and CrossCountry is exceeding the 30% increase in capacity recommended by Passenger Focus to create 35% more seats.

CrossCountry remains below other long-distance operators in many areas. Passenger perception of helpfulness, attitude and availability of staff on trains is of particular concern, especially as many CrossCountry passengers change trains during their journey and may need help and information from train staff. Staff issues clearly need to be carefully considered by



CrossCountry, and we will continue to encourage Cross Country to work with us to develop clear action plans which will address passengers' concerns.