

Passenger Voice South West

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



Future needs of the region under review

The shape of the rail network needed to meet decades of growth is currently being assessed

In February 2008 Network Rail started the Greater Western Route Utilisation Study (RUS) process and outlined the programme to investigate the current and future needs of passengers. The process will compare the current level and delivery of services with projected growth to assess what plans and funding are needed to meet future demand. This examination will take place on a route-by-route basis.

The initial period under review will be between 2009–19 with a further assessment of needs up to 2039. A formal document will be released in April 2009 for three months of public consultation before publishing the final report in September 2009.

Passenger Focus is representing the needs of passengers at every stage of this process as we attend all meetings of the Strategic Management



First Great Western

Group and also sit on the Passenger Demand sub-group. Passenger Focus manager Mike Greedy said: "We welcome the opportunity to make sure that the needs of all passengers are considered in these very important initial stages."

The next stage will involve consultation with wider stakeholder groups in June 2009 for their input. Any group wishing to know more about the RUS process can contact Mike Greedy via the web address: www.passengerfocus.org.uk

NPS results show First Great Western stabilising

The Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey suggests First Great Western has halted the decline

The Passenger Focus survey results show that First Great Western (FGW) has at least moved off the bottom of the league table. Although overall satisfaction has gone down by 1%, a breakdown of the figures into the three areas of the business – London Thames Valley, Western Region and High Speed – reveals that satisfaction in the Thames Valley area has increased by six points to 59% since Spring 2007. While the improvements are positive, there is still a long way to go to achieve an acceptable figure.

There are encouraging and significant gains where investment has been targeted during the first two years of the franchise. Following completion of the High Speed Train refurbishment, customer satisfaction with upkeep and repair of the train has risen, while satisfaction with train cleanliness has also grown. Passenger Focus manager for FGW Mike Greedy "is looking to the company to continue this trend over the coming months".

Passengers are still dissatisfied with punctuality and reliability, provision of information at times of delay, visibility and accessibility of on-train staff, and general customer information systems. Passenger Focus will be directing its attention to these areas during the next twelve months.

More carriages, more seats

With 44% of passengers telling the national rail watchdog they are concerned about space to sit or stand, it is good news to see some additional carriages making life a bit easier at some pinch points on South West Trains (SWT). The extra vehicles are coming from the completion of refurbishment schemes. Towns that will benefit include Portsmouth, Salisbury and Haslemere. SWT is undertaking further work on capacity issues to present to the Department for Transport shortly.

Passenger Focus will continue to raise the issue of capacity on SWT and looks forward to hearing the outcome of new rolling stock allocations.

News roundup

- **Gates at Waterloo**

Some passengers will have noticed things are changing at Waterloo, which will be the last major London station to have ticket gates installed. Network Rail has removed some retail units and is preparing to install gates by the end of the year. Network Rail has approached Passenger Focus to ensure they understand the passenger perspective.

- **Helping SWT target police resources**



SWT policing

South West Trains (SWT) would like to hear from passengers who witness behaviour which, while not criminal, causes discomfort or anxiety. Passengers should contact the train operator about rowdy behaviour on a specific train on a regular basis, or large groups loitering on station platforms. Passenger Focus manager Jocelyn Pearson has been working alongside Stuart Giddings, SWT security manager, and is supporting the train operator in collecting passenger views on security issues. SWT wants to use this information to help it and the British Transport Police target and deploy resources more effectively.

Passengers who wish to provide feedback should email:

securityadmin@swtrains.co.uk

Replies will not be sent but SWT has assured Passenger Focus the information will be used to address concerns. Crimes should not be reported using this email address; all crimes should be reported directly to the British Transport Police.

- **National Passenger Survey 2008**

You can now see the latest 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? It's your Voice, so contact: krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk

FGW final warning

Passengers to benefit from government sanction

At the end of February, Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly issued a Remedial Plan Notice to First Great Western (FGW) following unacceptably high levels of cancellations during the latter half of 2007, which had a severe impact on passengers. Unless the company retrieves the position within 18 months, the franchise could be in jeopardy.

Passenger Focus regarded the January 2008 fare increases as unjustified when performance had been so dreadful, and following strong representations from the watchdog, a package of customer benefits was announced. These included double Passenger Charter Compensation for 2008 and 50% during 2009, and a freeze on fares during 2008. The Government also required FGW to invest an additional £29 million in customer-facing initiatives.

The new management team at FGW is improving punctuality month on month:



Thames Valley rose from an unacceptable low of 64% in December 2007 to 89% punctuality at the end of April 2008 against a target figure of 92%. The weekly Public Performance Measure over the four-week period in May recorded an average of over 91% with some days exceeding 94%. Passenger manager Mike Greedy said: "Monthly improvements in performance are now delivering the standard of service which passengers expect and deserve. There is still a long way to go but these results are encouraging."

There have been similar improvements in performance across the other parts of the FGW network, and Passenger Focus will continue to monitor this closely to ensure that the momentum continues.

Encouraging SWT figures

South West Trains (SWT) has achieved a creditable performance in the National Passenger Survey (NPS).

NPS results show that 83% of passengers are satisfied with the reliability and punctuality of services provided by SWT. As passenger manager Jocelyn Pearson says; "this score isn't a fluke; it's the result of a lot of hard work. SWT led the Right Time Railway Group, working with Network Rail and others to ensure every train runs as

punctually as possible." While trains get the thumbs up, other aspects of delivery are not getting the same approval rating by passengers. Only 41% of passengers were satisfied with the way SWT dealt with delays. SWT has responded to this low score and is in the process of completely overhauling its service. Passenger Focus is being kept fully informed and we are eagerly waiting for the outcome of the project and the next round of NPS scores.

Call for passenger opinion

Passenger Focus is calling for passenger opinion on South West Train's plans to change ticket office opening hours. South West Trains has announced it is reviewing the opening hours of ticket offices at over 100 locations and has advertised plans at the affected stations. Passengers will have up until 5 August to comment on the proposal. Jocelyn Pearson, passenger

manager, is leading Passenger Focus's consultation on the SWT changes. Passengers who wish to comment on the South West Trains proposal should get in contact with Passenger Focus at www.passengerfocus.org.uk, call our passenger advice team on 08453 022 022 or write to Freepost RRRE-ETTC-LEET, PO Box 4257, Manchester, M60 3AR.