

Passenger Voice Scotland

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



Fares rise above inflation

Train passengers in Scotland have seen the price of their journeys rise above inflation in the latest round of fare increases.

Prices on First ScotRail increased by 1% above the Retail Prices Index (RPI) on 2 January, going up by 4.8% outside Strathclyde.

The unregulated fares increase was also 4.8%, but there was no increase on Standard Open Returns on Edinburgh and Glasgow to Inverness Services. Value Advance2Fares were frozen at current levels on more than 80 journeys.

"Passengers who are in a position to book in advance

should do so to try and take advantage of the cheaper book ahead fares where they are available," says Passenger Focus Manager, Robert Samson.

He adds: "The concern of the ordinary passenger will be that yet again fares are going up above RPI and that they will have to dig deeper."

Peter Williams, First ScotRail's commercial director, commented: "We have seen growth of 17% in three years. I am confident that demand for rail travel will continue through

our value for money strategy, improved performance and reliability and continued investment."

Research carried out by Passenger Focus in 2006 shows that a significant number of train commuters aren't aware of the benefits of annual season tickets.

These give travel for 52 weeks of the year at the cost of only 40 weeks.

As fares continue to rise year-on-year above inflation, Passenger Focus is encouraging First ScotRail to consider introducing the valuable benefit of paying for an annual season ticket with interest-free instalments. This would help mitigate above-inflation



Passengers should book in advance

increases and make commuting by train more affordable for passengers.

First ScotRail Passenger satisfaction falls

Our Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey reveals lower levels of satisfaction with issues such as how train companies deal with delays.



Delays hit satisfaction levels

Overall passenger satisfaction with First ScotRail (FSR), which accounts for 95% of Scottish rail journeys, fell by 4% to 84% compared with the ratings given in our National Passenger Survey (NPS) last Autumn.

This is due to a fall in satisfaction with punctuality and reliability of five points and a fall of as much as 20 points with how well the train company deals with delays.

On the plus side, passengers have welcomed the investment in ticket-buying facilities, the upkeep of station buildings, personal security and the overall station environment, rating all of them more highly.

Robert Samson of Passenger Focus

says: "Autumn 2006 was First ScotRail's best score. We hope it can once again reach those heights and, in fact, overtake them.

"It is disappointing to note the drop in satisfaction as regards punctuality and reliability and the large drop in satisfaction as to how well FSR deals with passenger delays."

However, he adds: "When compared to similar train operating companies, FSR results are at the top end, but we hope that further improvements can be made.

"As passenger numbers continue to increase on Scotland's railway it is important that passenger satisfaction with all aspects of train services increases to give passengers the service they deserve and to help attract new passengers to rail."

News roundup

• Extra Edinburgh train

Passengers benefited from an extra train to Edinburgh during the holiday period, thanks to Passenger Focus. After we alerted National Express East Coast, the company laid on an earlier train for passengers from Berwick and Dunbar to Edinburgh, on 24, 27 and 28 December 2007.

• Challenges for National Express

Passenger Focus has three top challenges for National Express East Coast. The company took over from GNER as intercity operator on the East Coast Main Line from London to Peterborough, East Midlands, Yorkshire, North East England and Scotland, in December.

We want to see it:

- tackle the poor punctuality record
- deliver consistent high-quality service on-board
- be more empathetic with passengers, particularly when things have gone wrong.

• Leaflet to clear up confusion

The latest fare rises will have an effect on a range of tickets, including regulated, non-regulated, advance fares and flexipasses. To clear up any confusion for passengers, Passenger Focus is working with FirstScot Rail on a leaflet explaining the fares.

• National Passenger Survey 2008

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

• Work causes Glasgow disruption

Services at Glasgow Central station were severely disrupted at the beginning of January when engineering works over-ran. Because of the works at Shields Junction, passengers travelling from Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Paisley had to suffer a reduction in services, as well as services being replaced with buses. Robert Samson of Passenger Focus says: "We are currently taking it up with Network Rail and the Office of Rail Regulation."

• 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

TransPennine takes on Manchester Airport run

New Class 185 trains replace Voyagers after changes to the Cross Country franchise – but will they prove comfortable enough for passengers travelling long distance?

Passengers will be experiencing travel on the new Class 185 trains with the introduction of the TransPennine Express service between Manchester Airport and Scotland.

The service started on 9 December 2007 and runs seven trains a day, with four return services between Manchester Airport and Edinburgh, and three between Glasgow and Manchester. Advance fares start from £10.

Passengers on TransPennine Express routes praised the trains in a survey carried out by Passenger Focus last year.

However, the research also showed that passengers' satisfaction with comfort decreased as the journey time increased.

The trains, which were first rolled out in 2006, replace the Voyagers used on the Cross Country service on the West Coast



Main Line operated by Virgin Cross Country. Their facilities include air conditioning, easier access for disabled passengers and a GPS-based information system.

More than 90% of passengers who took part in the Passenger Focus survey said they were satisfied with key aspects of the trains – getting a seat, cleanliness and the ease of getting on and off.

Passenger Focus is keen to see any difficulties ironed out as the service takes over the Manchester to Scotland service.

Helping shape the future of Scotland's rail franchise

Passenger Focus is helping Audit Scotland to develop a performance study of the rail franchise in Scotland.

Audit Scotland wants to measure how First ScotRail (FSR) is performing against the terms of its franchise, as well as how Transport Scotland monitors and manages the franchise.

The study will also look at what passengers and rail users think of train travel in Scotland.

We will be helping to advise on the key areas that the study should examine, as well on how the study should identify the needs of current and potential passengers.

Work goes on after upgrade

Now that work on Edinburgh Waverley station has been completed, Passenger Focus is working on a review of signage with Network Rail.

We have been heavily involved in the revamp, helping to produce a connections guide for passengers during the upgrade.

We're now looking at the signs at the station, which weren't part of the infrastructure works.