

Grand Central works to improve information on train



Although performance of Grand Central's London King's Cross–Sunderland services has been edging up from a low level, problems remain due to poor rolling stock reliability

Although Grand Central (GC) does not have to publish its Passenger Performance Measure (PPM), the operator continues to have problems running a full

service. Passenger Focus manager Kerry Williamson has been working with Grand Central to improve the much-criticised quality of information given to passengers when the service is disrupted. Although a cancellation plan was in place, there was no procedure to cope with disruption, and Passenger Focus has been setting out what passengers expect.

Poor performance has put GC's expansion plans on hold, its request for more paths being deferred by the Office of the Rail Regulator until GC has demonstrated that it can run its current services effectively.

Northern timetable changes in December

Passengers can expect significant changes to Northern Rail services when the new timetable is introduced this December. As always with such amendments, there are winners and losers in the draft timetables put out for consultation. For example, the revised timetable for Calder Valley services between Manchester Victoria and Leeds sees a new semi-fast service at the expense of intermediate stops such as Mytholmroyd and Sowerby Bridge, which will lose half their trains to Bradford. Mills Hill and Littleborough between Manchester and Todmorden will also lose some services. There are also concerns over services in mid-Cheshire. Longer trains on some peak services, 28 extra trains between Hebden Bridge and Manchester and more robust turn-round times are some of the gains.

A major concern of Passenger Focus manager Kerry Williamson is the lack of notice in the timetable changes, leaving Passenger Focus and rail user groups little opportunity to make constructive comments that could be incorporated into



There will be winners and losers from timetable changes

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revisions. Northern Rail's complex network and many connections with other train operating companies mean that some factors are outside Northern's control. Passenger Focus argues as much advance notice as possible should be given so that passengers have the opportunity

to give their feedback on the proposals. Delayed advice of service changes is also unsatisfactory as it makes it difficult for passengers to plan their journeys.

For further information on any of the stories in Passenger Voice email info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Future of rail under review

Network Rail has launched its consultation on a strategy to boost services running in the Yorkshire and Humberside region

Covering routes running between Leeds to Bradford; York and Hull to Leeds and Manchester; and Sheffield to Manchester, the Yorkshire and Humber route utilisation strategy outlines how Network Rail proposes to cope with growth in rail use over the next 10 years.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus director, said: "We welcome this plan to

meet the future needs of Yorkshire and Humberside. Demand for the railway is increasing and it is critical that Network Rail responds to this by ensuring the infrastructure is in place to meet passenger needs. As the railway consumer watchdog we will be looking at this plan very carefully to make sure it truly meets the demands of the area."

Station standards

Focus on East Coast

'At station' factors in the National Passenger Survey lagged behind those for 'on train' – and all too often it is clear why

Passenger Focus is working closely with National Express East Coast to help them understand what needs to change for their stations to excel in presentation and most particularly cleanliness. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "Whether the station loos are spotless or not will never rival train punctuality in terms of importance to passengers. But being able to rely on finding clean facilities, where the locks and hand-driers work and the soap dispensers have been filled



Clean facilities are important

is important – whether you have paid £200 or £10 for your ticket."

National Passenger Survey online

An online database version of Passenger Focus's twice-yearly National Passenger Survey (NPS) is now available after being launched in London and Leeds

Besides providing all the information in the report, the Reportal database allows registered users to review previous years' surveys and devise their own comparisons

based on specific interests.

The NPS is the largest study of rail users in Great Britain with over 53,000 passengers completing questionnaires about their rail journeys each year.

The results are used industry-wide, helping train operating companies, Network Rail and others determine how they can improve services based on passenger priorities.

In addition to Reportal, Passenger Focus has created an on-line facility which will allow the user to access comments

made about services provided on the train and at the station, giving a clear idea of passenger feedback.

For further information, go to www.npsreportal.org.uk

For further information or to contact us go to www.passengerfocus.org.uk

News roundup

- **Grand Central referral to ORR** Passenger Focus made a representation to the Department for Transport over the decision by Grand Central (GC) to impose a peak fare supplement from 10 March.

However, because GC is an open-access operator, the DfT is limited in its jurisdiction and therefore passed the matter on to the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR). The ORR was advised by GC that they had stopped levying the supplement and would not be reintroducing it, so no further action was taken.

- **New passenger manager** Kerry Williamson is taking over from David Sidebottom as passenger manager for Northern Rail and Grand Central.

Kerry was previously a passenger manager in the South East and has also worked with the Passenger Focus advice team in Manchester.

- **NPS in the field** Work is currently underway on the Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey.

The Spring results can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps

- **Passenger Focus on video** The Passenger Focus corporate video explaining the watchdog's role is now available to view at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

- **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