

# Passenger Voice North West

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



## Northern timetable changes in December

Passengers can expect significant changes to services when the new timetable is introduced this December

As always with such changes, 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 would 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 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 journey.

## New managers for northern operators



- **Kerry Williamson** (pictured left) 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. She has started to meet groups and individuals in Northern Rail's large area and is looking forward to establishing constructive relationships with them.

- **Julie Warburton** has taken over as passenger manager for Merseyrail. Julie has presented the National Passenger Survey Spring 2008 results to around 40 senior managers and facilitated workshops to explore ways in which Merseyrail can improve customer satisfaction, especially through the availability of staff both at stations and on trains. Merseyrail is also keen to improve the way passengers are kept informed at times of disruption. Julie is discussing the establishment of a passenger panel and will be working closely with Merseyrail on incorporating passengers' views into the design of new rolling stock.



## Passenger Focus takes bus to party conference



Passenger Focus arrived at the Labour Party conference in Manchester on a double-decker bus to highlight its up and coming role as bus and coach passenger watchdog for England in 2009.

The move was to encourage passengers, politicians and stakeholders to visit Passenger Focus at the conference and put across their views on the state of public transport. Passenger Focus also took its bus to the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Party conferences. Pictured above is Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith.

# Travel plans for tourism

Passenger Focus is keen to establish links with development agencies and tourism organisations to address the needs of both holiday and day visitors in reaching tourist attractions

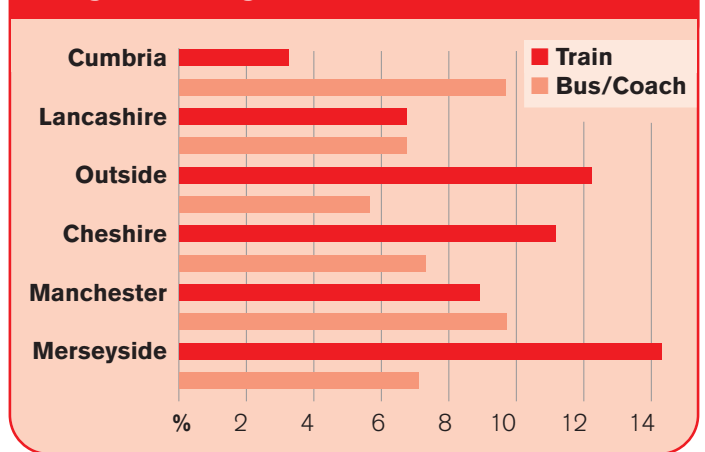
An insight into the importance of this sector of the transport market was given in a presentation to the Regional Transport Advisory group by Phil Reddy, the Head of Tourism Strategy for the North West Development Agency. It was based on the findings of a year-long survey of same-day tourism activity and expenditure which took into account the favoured travel mode of tourists. About 52% of annual tourism spending in the North West was by day

trips, which generated a staggering £85.6 billion representing 195.7 million trips to and within the region.

Cumbria County Council has appointed a new community rail officer, in a joint initiative with Northern Rail, and has also helped to pay for extra carriages to accommodate visitors.

The first meeting has been held between Passenger Focus manager Julie Warburton, the North West Development Agency and tourism organisations.

## Regional Origins



# West Coast Main Line upgrade



Engineers work to upgrade the line

The West Coast Main Line (WCML) upgrade will deliver passengers extra services to Manchester, Liverpool and other places, will mean more trains at the weekend and a substantial cut to journey times

The additional trains and shorter journey times should go some way to addressing passenger priorities for extra services and more trains running on time.

The industry acknowledges the engineering work needed to bring these massive improvements has caused years

of weekend pain and disruption on an ongoing and frequent basis. Therefore, it is now essential that engineering works do not overrun into 2009 and cause further delay and disruptions to passengers.

Passenger Focus has raised its concerns to the industry that many passengers have had to pay full-price fares for disrupted and longer journeys, often on bus replacement services. This has sometimes been because of train timetables being loaded onto the website too late to offer lower advance purchase fares.

There is now also concern about how the upgraded line will cope with the increase in services from December 2008. However, Passenger Focus will be monitoring this situation very closely. And, Network Rail assures us that its plans are running to time and from January 2009 the inconvenience and distress caused to passengers will fade into a distant memory.

## Facelift for Liverpool Lime Street station

It's exciting times at Liverpool Lime Street station as a £3.4 million refurbishment gets underway at the station. Passengers will benefit from two new lounges, an information point and more shops, all designed to complement the historic

station. The toilets have already been totally redesigned and upgraded. The taxi rank has had a facelift and plans are well developed to transform the area at the front of the station through the Lime Street Gateway project. This will improve pedestrian

access, create a piazza-style open space with plants and seating, and unmask the Victorian frontage by demolishing a later row of shops and Concourse House. Overall completion is scheduled for early 2010. On completion of works we will look at National Passenger Survey scores to judge how changes have improved satisfaction with station facilities.