

Passenger Voice

Independent national passenger watchdog

East Midlands

Passengerfocus
putting passengers first

Passenger Focus puts car parking under spotlight

Passengers are being given the chance to help shape the future of rail services in the East Midlands as the independent watchdog seeks views specifically on car parking at the station.

Passenger Focus will be surveying passengers at 15 stations in the region to give them an opportunity to comment on parking capacity and satisfaction with facilities. Results, expected in December, will form part of Passenger Focus's submission to Network Rail's East Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy

(RUS). RUSs are Network Rail's planning studies which look at future requirements of the rail network.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "This is the perfect opportunity for passengers to have a say on what their priorities are for their local rail network.

"Restrictions in car-parking spaces limit the potential for rail. Not being able to park at the station is a real deterrent for potential passengers and a head ache for existing users."



Speak up on parking

Passenger Focus's latest National Passenger Survey shows that across Great Britain, only 44% of passengers who answered the question are satisfied with car-parking facilities. Passengers using East Midlands Trains rate car-park facilities better, with 54% of passengers satisfied.

Catering restored on Norwich–Liverpool trains

Passenger Focus has welcomed the announcement that East Midlands Trains has reintroduced an at-seat weekday trolley

service between Nottingham and Stockport on its busy Liverpool to Norwich route. Passenger Focus manager, Guy Dangerfield,

said: "This is good news. It is unreasonable to operate a train route taking five and a half hours without providing

some form of catering for at least part of the journey." The refreshments available on the Rail Gourmet trolley will include snacks, sandwiches, hot and cold drinks.

Shaping a new franchise

Passengers want punctual and reliable trains, value for money and to be able to get a seat on services run under the new East Coast franchise.

As National Express handed back the franchise to the Government, Passenger Focus completed research asking what passengers want delivered by the future operator.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said the return of the franchise to the Government brought an end to the period of uncertainty. He commented: "Passengers were relieved that the transfer was smooth and will welcome assurances that the level and quality of service will not suffer.

"Looking forward, it is most important that passenger needs and priorities are at the heart of any future franchise. In the last two months we have surveyed over 6000 passengers on this route and have fed their views to the



Passengers surveyed

Government – we hope passengers' concerns and aspirations are central to the next franchise."

Passenger Focus is also working with the Department for Transport to understand passengers' views about various service quality issues to be addressed during the period when the Government has direct responsibility for the East Coast franchise.

Focussing on station standards

Passenger Focus is championing an uplift in station standards on East Midlands Trains and National Express East Coast routes, working with key staff to help them understand what passengers need. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "We will highlight where station standards are not good enough and seek actions to turn things round. This is particularly important at a time of belt-tightening when, for example, cleaning budgets may be under pressure."

News roundup

- **How complaints are handled during the Summer**

National Express East Coast presented its action plan to improve the quality of customer complaints-handling, following an assessment by Passenger Focus earlier in 2009. Passenger Focus manager, Guy Dangerfield, said: "We will now work with the new East Coast operator to ensure these improvements are driven through".

- **New timetable on East Coast**

When National Express won the East Coast franchise in 2007 it proposed an enhanced timetable (in terms of service frequency and new destinations) to start in December 2010.

Guy Dangerfield said:

"Passenger Focus will work with the Government to ensure passengers have the chance to comment on what is proposed in the future".

- **Board meeting**

The national passenger watchdog is taking its Board to Liverpool for a meeting in public and a stakeholder event on 15 and 16 December.

The stakeholder event will take place at the ACC Liverpool Balcony and the board meeting is being held on the 16th at the ACC Liverpool Hall 3A. For information about either function or to see the meeting agenda, go to www.passengerfocus.org.uk

- **Network Rail Study**

To help prepare its response to Network Rail's East Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), Passenger Focus met rail user groups in Leicester to understand their views and aspirations. Network Rail presented key elements of the proposals.

- **Give us your feedback**

Want to have your say about something you've read in Passenger Voice? Contact: krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk

Work starts on new rail study

The steering group working on the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy met for the first time in October. The Route Utilisation Strategy looks at the future needs of the rail network and identifies gaps which need to be addressed by Network Rail in its future planning. Passenger Focus has agreed to contribute to work on London issues and

on a specific update looking at services for passengers in the South Hampshire area. It will also follow overall progress and the freight workstream through the steering group. A consultation draft document is expected in spring/summer 2010. Updates on progress will be published on the Passenger Focus website.



Board in Focus David Burton

David Burton brings over 30 years' experience as a railwayman to his work as a board member at Passenger Focus. Apart from the rather poisoned chalice of being given the task of selling Red Star parcels, most of his time was spent on the passenger side.

He was deputy general manager of the Southern Region under British Rail, helped prepare many of the train operating companies around London and the south east for privatisation, and was managing director of West Anglia Great Northern in shadow and privatised forms.

Asked whether he feels there is an element of gamekeeper turned poacher in his work for Passenger Focus, he rejects the idea; the same business principles apply whatever the form of ownership or management, the most important being the necessity of looking after customers. His understanding of railways from a passenger perspective is perhaps his greatest contribution to the board, and his main areas of involvement with the team are timetables, franchise renewal and Route Utilisation Strategies.

David Burton sees ticketing and fares as a major unresolved challenge. Despite the Association of Train Operating Companies' (ATOC) recent simplification of fare names, he feels there is still far too much complexity and a

lack of clarity for passengers. There remain too many subdivisions within each ticket type, and the times at which they can be used vary from one TOC to another. Nor is there consistency over the times that Advance tickets become available to book. Equally he thinks a major marketing exercise is needed to let those

who seldom use trains realise what good value fares can be obtained through advance booking.

He is looking forward to the challenge of championing bus, coach and tram passengers. Although research to find out what passengers want is at an early stage, he believes it may offer the opportunity of improving integration between modes. While there are good examples of bus/rail integration, they are the exception rather than the rule. David Burton sees the new role as a natural extension of Passenger Focus's current remit. He has been impressed by the dedication of the team, and he stresses how much he enjoys working for what he sees as a successful and well-run organisation.

"There is still far too much complexity and a lack of clarity for passengers."