

Passenger Voice Rail

EAST MIDLANDS

Independent national passenger watchdog



Passenger satisfaction high on East Coast route

East Coast under the publicly-owned Directly Operated Railways took over the National Express East Coast (NEXC) services from 14 November 2009, at the

end of the research period for Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey. The survey therefore covers the final half year of National Express's operation.

NEXC continued to be one of the best-performing train operating companies with overall satisfaction at 89%. Notably, the joint improvement programme with Network Rail

intended to overcome the punctuality problems has continued to produce results: satisfaction with punctuality/reliability rose three points to 90%.



Passengers give their view

East Midlands

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	Facilities for car parking
East Midlands Trains	84	Punctuality/reliability	-
London Midland	87	Train toilet facilities	-
National Express East Coast	89	Upkeep and repair of the train	-
Northern Rail	82	Provision of information about train times/platforms	-
Virgin Trains	89	Facilities for car parking	-

Red dot special

Passengers have welcomed a 'taste' of East Midlands Trains' services through the successful Red Dot Days deals.

East Midlands Trains has held seven Red Dot Days since last summer with a total of 10,463 Red Dot tickets sold. The initiative offers adults £10 journeys, children £5, from certain stations to travel anywhere on that same day. The latest Red Dot Day at East Midlands Parkway in January attracted the largest number of passengers so far, with 2308 adults and 479 children travelling on a bargain ticket.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "This is a good initiative which will help the industry tackle passengers' view that rail doesn't offer good value for money".

Progress at East Midlands Trains

Most passenger satisfaction scores are moving in the right direction at East Midlands Trains, according to Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey. Overall passenger satisfaction is 84% but the most significant improvement has been in passengers' satisfaction with punctuality/reliability which has risen six points to 85%. The journey time figure was also up by four points to 83%.



News roundup

• East Coast shake-up

Big changes to the timetable on the East Coast Main Line which runs trains from London to Peterborough, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh, are planned for May 2011. Passenger Focus encourages passengers to feed in their views about the new timetables by visiting www.eastcoast.co.uk/Eureka

Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "This will be the biggest change to the East Coast timetable for many years and, as with most timetable changes, there are winners and losers. As well as East Coast's trains to and from London, train times for some CrossCountry, East Midlands Trains, First Capital Connect, First TransPennine Express, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Northern and ScotRail services may also change."

• Bus arrangement

A passenger suggested that if trains between Spalding and Peterborough are cancelled, rail passengers should be able to use the local bus route between the two – rather than wait for the next train or for alternative transport.

Passenger Focus contacted the bus company involved and East Midland Trains, both part of the Stagecoach group, and arrangements have been put in place.

More room on trains

The additional capacity provided by more seats and use of high speed trains on CrossCountry routes have raised passenger satisfaction, according to Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey (NPS). The figure for sufficient room to sit/stand rose by 11 points and reflects the provision of 35% more seats on the train, though the measure has still not eliminated overcrowding on some weekend trains. Overall satisfaction stands at 85%, but punctuality improved significantly, by five points to 85%.

Expectations for East Coast franchise

On 21 January Transport Secretary Andrew Adonis launched the consultation phase of the InterCity East Coast franchise. A new franchise is expected to begin in Autumn 2011. After speaking to more than 6000 passengers the watchdog has made recommendations to government based on its feedback. The research will also be shared with potential bidders to highlight passenger requirements from the new operator.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers tell us that their top priority for improvement on this franchise is punctual and reliable trains. Let's see more challenging targets set in the new deal, including on-time measurements meaning

just that – not the 10-minute leeway which is currently in place. This is also a prime opportunity for government to solve passengers' top issue with the railway – concerns about fares and getting a good deal for their money."

Passenger Focus is calling for an easily understood fares structure that will be regarded by passengers as logical and transparent and offers a fair price for their journey.

Passenger Focus also stressed the importance of a deal being struck which avoids passengers being forced to pay more to use the railway and service quality slipping as the train operator struggles to meet its premium payments to government.



Board in Focus Barbara Saunders

Members of the Passenger Focus Board have been chosen for their specialised knowledge and skills, and Welsh-born Barbara Saunders, OBE has an exceptional background in consumer representation. After university she worked for 10 years with the National Federation for Women's Institutes at a time when there were 10,000 branches across the UK. Lobbying for women and their families at the newly-created European Community was excellent preparation for becoming an independent consumer consultant.

Her non-executive positions have included Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel, fighting for the rights of bank customers, and the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau. Nearly all her work has entailed bringing the concerns and rights of customers to the fore in policy decisions, based on her belief in the importance of speaking up for those who don't have a voice. Vital to success with this is sound research, so that you have absolute confidence in what is being said, and Barbara pays tribute to the quality of Passenger Focus's research and evidence base.

She is particularly involved with Passenger Focus's frontline advice services in Manchester, working with staff on audits of the train companies' complaints handling procedures as well as improving the processes of its own

"Barbara is looking forward to Passenger Focus's new bus role and has enjoyed developing her knowledge of the regional bus operators and the challenges facing customers."

Passenger Advice Team. Her use of First Capital Connect, London Midland, Virgin Trains and First Great Western services equips her for a role in contributing to the

relevant route utilisation strategies and the specification for the forthcoming franchise renewal on the West Coast.

Barbara is looking forward to Passenger Focus's new bus role and has enjoyed developing her knowledge of the regional bus operators and the challenges facing customers. Although Passenger Focus will not be responsible for complaint appeals, Barbara hopes that the organisation will be able to share its experience of good practice from the rail industry with bus operators so passengers with a problem get a timely and helpful response and services can be improved.