

# Passenger Voice Rail

## WALES

Independent national passenger watchdog



Passenger numbers surge on game days

## Rail vs Sport

When planning major sporting events, special consideration should be given to rail transport issues, says Passenger Focus in response to a consultation currently underway by the National Assembly for Wales.

Issues highlighted include the capacity challenges at stations and on trains presented by the surge in

demand for rail travel on event days at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium, and the need to ensure train services are running punctually and reliably. Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager in Wales, said: "While there has been progress, such as better scheduling of engineering works, difficulties still exist, most notably in terms of capacity. Arriva Trains Wales and First Great Western frequently tell us that they do not have enough carriages to run longer or additional trains to address all overcrowding issues."

## Passengers in Wales rate rail services

Passengers in Wales continue to rate the country's railways as being in generally good shape with 86% of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) passengers saying they are satisfied with their overall journey

However, commenting on the results, Passenger Focus did express concern with ATW's managing disruption results, with which only 32% of passengers said they were satisfied.

The Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey (NPS) has revealed passenger satisfaction with ATW rail services is three points higher than the Great Britain score of 83%. Punctuality scores on all train operators

running services in Wales also improved across the board, which is good news for passengers who rate punctuality as a top priority.

Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 results is the second NPS in a row to show significant improvements to passenger satisfaction with station facilities in Wales.

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager in Wales, said: "The gap between Wales and



the rest of Great Britain is finally starting to close when it comes to passenger satisfaction with stations. ATW, the Welsh Assembly and Network Rail have listened to passengers, taken their advice and invested in areas that count for passengers. However, there is still room for improvement and investment should continue. Specifically, we would like to see real-time information at every station in Wales, which should help train companies improve passenger satisfaction with how well they handle disruption."

Also scoring highly was open-access operator Wrexham & Shropshire with 98% of passengers satisfied with services run by the company. Passengers using Virgin Trains'

services reported better satisfaction scores (up five points to 89%), CrossCountry received a 85% satisfaction rating and First Great Western 82%.

Stella Mair Thomas, Passenger Focus board member in Wales, commented: "Let's see ongoing investment in station facilities and make sure that passengers across Great Britain – including Wales – receive a good level of service, regardless of their location."

"The Welsh Assembly Government has highlighted plans for investment in new trains and refurbishment of some of the country's older stock. We urge the Government to act now on these plans in order to improve passenger satisfaction with trains running in Wales."

### Wales

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
Arriva Trains Wales	86	Ticket buying facilities	-
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	Facilities for car parking
First Great Western	82	Availability of staff on the train	-
Virgin Trains	89	Facilities for car parking	-
Wrexham & Shropshire	98	-	-

# Concessionary travel review

Passenger Focus has responded to a consultation which considers giving the National Assembly for Wales further law-making powers in relation to concessionary fares and learner travel (school transport).

The response has highlighted Passenger Focus's findings that rail concessionary pilot schemes trialled on some rural lines in Wales were extremely popular with passengers. However, the watchdog raised its concerns

about the initiative being implemented for different periods on different railway lines with some individual services excluded due to train capacity being insufficient to meet demand during the busiest times.

Stella Mair Thomas, Passenger Focus board member in Wales, said: "If concessionary rail schemes are introduced in the future they should provide the same level of entitlement to all beneficiaries. We



also recommend widening the scope of the legislation to services from all train operators, not just the ones operated under the franchise agreement managed by the Wales Assembly."

In its response, the independent watchdog also took the opportunity to outline its desire to see concessionary travel extended to students in the 16 to 19 years age band.

## Engineering work completed



Simon Pickering

The rail upgrade work carried out in the Severn Tunnel area over the Christmas and New Year period has been completed.

Passenger Focus representatives, who visited stations during the line closure to see how well bus-replacement services were running,

found passengers' experience to be generally positive. Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager in Wales, said: "It reflected the discussions that we had with Arriva Train Wales and First Great Western in the lead up to the works about keeping disruption to a minimum."

## Cardiff to become beacon of sustainable travel

Passenger Focus has been invited to join an advisory group connected to a Cardiff transport initiative aiming to ease the city's busy roads and reduce its carbon footprint. Selected as Wales's first "sustainable travel city" by the Welsh Assembly, Cardiff will receive £28.5 million to invest in transport schemes, including free cycle hire, bus travel and improved bike and walking routes. If successful the concept could be rolled out across the country.



## Improve rail-coach integration

Improving rail-coach integration in Wales is one of the key issues for Passenger Focus as part of its new role on the advisory board for TrawsCambria, the long distance bus and coach network in Wales.

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager in Wales, is part of the group that is advising the Welsh Assembly on how the coach services can be developed to meet the changing needs of

communities across Wales. Mr Pickering said: "Our interest is to ensure that the system is joined-up so passengers are given the maximum opportunity to use public transport in Wales."

## News roundup

### • Virgin Trains concerns

Passenger Focus is meeting with Virgin Trains to discuss various issues affecting rail passengers in Wales. Fares and ticketing, including travel time restrictions, timetabling of services, the website and future plans will be covered.

### • Research used worldwide

Rail passengers in Britain may be the target of Passenger Focus research but the findings influence transport policy much further afield.

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) recently asked Passenger Focus for more information on its research into the concessionary rail fare pilot scheme in Wales. Findings showed strong passenger support for the initiative as it helped to increase participation in activities and reduced feelings of isolation among those who took advantage of the scheme.

### • FGW still on the way up

82% of First Great Western's (FGW) passengers have reported that they are happy with the company's performance. The National Passenger Survey (NPS) shows a two-point rise in overall satisfaction, a dramatic improvement on the position in 2007 when almost every score was falling. The NPS also shows a steady improvement in the punctuality/reliability of FGW services, with a four-point rise to 80%. Mike Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said train staff deserve commendation with the NPS results showing a six-point rise in staff availability (47%)