

Passenger Voice Wales

Independent national passenger watchdog



Good news story for passengers in Wales

Passengers in Wales believe they are getting a better deal on the railway with 87% of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) passengers saying they are satisfied with their journey

The Spring 2009 National Passenger Survey (NPS) revealed passenger satisfaction with ATW rail services is six points higher than the Great Britain score of 81%.

Commenting on the National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus welcomed results which found that passengers travelling on Arriva Trains Wales (ATW)

are increasingly happy with value for money, with the scores up from 53% to 60%.

Passengers have also noticed improvements with stations but results still lag behind Great Britain results. Passengers reported improvements to information they receive on train times and platforms (80%), upkeep/repair of buildings

and platforms (58%), cleanliness (62%), overall station and environment (58%) and availability of staff (54%). Satisfaction with facilities and services at the station increased from 31% to 39%.

Passengers have also acknowledged First Great Western's efforts to improve punctuality and services generally in Wales.

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Punctual trains are passengers' top priority and FGW has done well to turn around its performance".

Passenger Focus is now a producer of Official Statistics and is named in the Official Statistics Order 2009. As part of the changes, the watchdog will need to comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Full National Passenger Survey results can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Wales

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
Arriva Trains Wales	87	Cleanliness of the outside of the train	-
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	-
First Great Western	81	Punctuality/reliability	-
Virgin Trains	86	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	Punctuality/reliability

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager for Wales, commented: "The Spring 2009 NPS results show the rail experience for passengers in Wales is getting better, with improved scores on both ATW and First Great Western. However, passenger satisfaction scores with stations show there is still work to be done. We hope that these train companies don't drop the ball and continue to put passengers' needs first."



Watchdog opposes new charging structure

Back-door price rises on FGW

Passenger Focus has opposed First Great Western's (FGW) move to charge passengers more to upgrade to first-class, with concerns it will make standard carriages more crowded.

FGW passengers were previously able to pay a supplement to upgrade to first class for between £5 and £10 on weekends and bank holidays. However, FGW has changed the

restrictions with the cost of the upgrade now depending on how far the passenger is travelling, ranging from £5 to up to £25.

Under the new scheme, passengers can no longer purchase a through first-class upgrade incorporating travel on connecting trains run by other rail companies. This will increase the fare further.

Passenger opinion of Welsh railway

Welsh senior citizens and women generally are more satisfied with the country's railway than men and passengers aged 16 to 34, an analysis of rail users shows. Leisure travellers are also more likely to say they are satisfied with their journey compared with those who use the train to commute.

Passenger Focus has produced a report that looks in detail at the

levels of satisfaction and passengers' priorities for improvement on the Welsh railway. It will use this information to help train companies plan and improve services delivered to passengers. The report uses the results of the (NPS) and other research to compare various demographic groups' opinions of services provided on the railway.



A report on Welsh passenger opinions of the railway is available at www.passengerfocus.org.uk



News roundup

- **Comment on Welsh Language Scheme**

Passenger Focus has published a draft Welsh language scheme setting out how it will provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. That scheme is now out for public consultation and may be viewed at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

- **Busy route receives extra trains**

Passenger Focus has supported the introduction of a half-hourly service between Cardiff and Merthyr. Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus manager for Wales, said: "Passengers travelling on this increasingly popular route will be pleased that promises for extra services are now being delivered on."

- **Towards sustainable transport in tourism**

Passenger Focus is part of a Welsh Assembly project aiming to tackle the barriers that tourists face when using public transport in Wales.

The Sustainable Transport & Tourism Task and Finish Group will make recommendations on how the tourism sector can work more effectively with the transport industry and ways that existing transport provision can be improved for visitors.

Board in Focus

Welsh rail under review

Passenger Focus has a close look at passenger views in Wales

The Passenger Focus Board received a valuable insight into the efforts being made to improve the passenger experience of rail services in Wales at our recent meeting held in Cardiff.

We heard from four guest speakers at the meeting, including managing directors of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), Tim Bell, and First Great Western (FGW), Mark Hopwood. Chris Rayner, route director (Western) at Network Rail and Tim James, director of Integrated Passenger Transport at the Welsh Assembly Government, also spoke.

The Board learned more about the various initiatives to improve FGW services since the franchise's difficult beginnings back in 2006. It is pleasing to see that punctuality has now been lifted to above 90% and that the train and station refurbishment programmes are progressing well. We noted that capacity on the Cardiff-Portsmouth route remains one of FGW's key challenges and we will continue to monitor that closely.

"ATW is committed to investing in ticket vending machines and more conductors"
Stella Mair Thomas

Low National Passenger Survey satisfaction scores with ATW stations and ticket buying facilities have been identified by Passenger Focus as priorities for improvement, so the Board welcomed the update on progress in these areas.

ATW reported that it is committed to investing in further ticket vending machines (TVMs), especially on the Valley lines where the need is most acute, and it plans to employ more conductors on Cardiff Valleys trains.

Passenger Focus also welcomes the investment planned for stations that will include more customer information systems at another 56 stations under the National Station Improvement Programme, as well as new shelters at locations of greatest passenger need.

The Welsh Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to meeting the significant increase in demand for rail services in Wales. It also outlined its vision for high-speed rail services for Wales.

Stella Mair Thomas