

Passenger Focus response to ATOC rail fares policy March 2010 (email)

Dear David (Mapp),

Thank you for inviting our comments on ATOC's review of rail fares policy. As you will be aware this is an area of particular interest to passengers and one in which Passenger Focus has been very active. In 2009 we produced our own review of fares and ticketing (Fares and Ticketing Study) which covered, amongst other things, the following points:

- Levels of satisfaction and factors influencing value for money;
- Comparisons with fares with other European countries;
- Regional fluctuations of fares within Great Britain;
- Fairness, understanding and credibility of the fares system; and
- Ticket buying facilities.

I believe that these address most of the specific questions you raise in your own letter and so rather than simply re-iterate the findings I have attached a copy of the report as our substantive input to your review. It is also available on our website:

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2526>

The report highlighted in particular the need to address the long-distance fare structure both in terms of transparency and the 'cost' of flexibility. The demise of the previous East Coast franchise has provided an opportunity to discuss this further with DfT. It may be that moving to a single-leg structure will address some of these concerns but there is still a need to ensure that the price passengers pay is protected to a sufficient degree. Clearly there would be a need to also discuss any potential implications this could have on fares regulation.

You will also be aware from previous discussions that Passenger Focus is conducting further research on passenger priorities. We hope to publish the report shortly and it is noticeable that improving value for money remains the number one priority for improvement throughout the country.

We have discussed our report (and associated work) with ATOC on several occasions but obviously we'd be happy to go over any particular items should you wish.

Regards

Mike Hewitson
Head of Policy
Passenger Focus