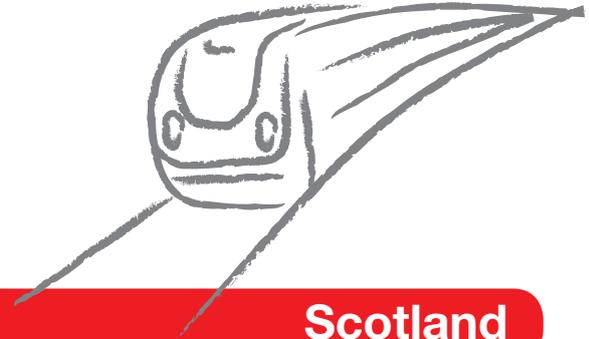


Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Autumn/Winter 2010

Scotland

In this issue: • Planning for the future • Charge for East Coast's internet • CrossCountry passengers not yet online

Put passengers first when deciding on rail

Passenger Focus has responded to Transport Scotland's draft document looking at the country's policy on rail franchises. The watchdog has stressed that passenger needs from the railway need to be central to any decisions made.

In his response, Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager in Scotland, says: "We believe that there is a need to focus on a bidder's past record in delivering services for passengers and, in particular, on delivering passenger satisfaction. Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey (NPS) provides a robust set of data which could be used to achieve this." Representing the independent passenger watchdog in Scotland,

Mr Samson also stressed the importance of choosing an

"We believe that there is a need to focus on a bidder's past record in delivering services for passengers and, in particular, on delivering passenger satisfaction.

operator which can deliver value for money to passengers as well as taxpayers. He referred to the watchdog's recent research which found value for money was passengers' number one priority for improvement. Also important was passenger consultation on decisions made about future services running in Scotland. Mr Samson concluded: "We believe it is crucially important that franchising involves passengers. It is passengers who will be travelling on services and who will pay the

fares - so it is right and proper that their views are taken into

account. We firmly believe that such engagement produces better results for both taxpayers and passengers.

"Finally, when deciding on the process, it is important that the franchising is accountable and transparent. It is only right that the reasoning and the decisions made about train services are explained, justified and debated. It is important that passengers have access to, and awareness of, what is being negotiated on their behalf."

Cross Country passengers not yet online

Passenger Focus is disappointed that CrossCountry has not met its deadline to provide passengers with Wi-Fi on its trains.

Passenger Focus's research shows that over a third (37%) of business passengers identified one of the benefits of using the train is having the ability to continue their work while travelling. They also said it is a less stressful form of transport (33%), 28% said speed of journey is a benefit and 21% appreciated the fact it eliminated parking problems.

Mike Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Having Wi-Fi onboard is important to passengers, particularly to those on long-distance journeys who wish to use it to work. Delivering Wi-Fi was a specific commitment in their franchise, so we urge CrossCountry to deliver this service as soon as possible."





Charge for East Coast internet

Commenting on the introduction of charges for Wi-Fi on East Coast trains Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It's disappointing that East Coast is abandoning National Express's commitment to make Wi-Fi on the east coast route free throughout the journey and for all passengers. If passengers are going to be paying in future, East Coast will have to work hard to ensure the

Wi-Fi system is more reliable than it's historically been."

All standard-class passengers will be entitled to 15 minutes' free access to the Wi-Fi system per journey. Thereafter, access will be charged at £4.95 for 60 minutes or £9.95 for 24 hours. First-class passengers can access the service free of charge.

Views on franchises

Passenger Focus co-chairs Virgin Trains' quarterly Passenger Panel meetings, which are a chance for rail users to tell the train operator what they think about its services, stations and trains. At the most recent session

passengers discussed what they wanted from future franchises. The feedback will be included in Passenger Focus's response to the Department for Transport's consultation on reforming rail franchising.

Planning for the future

Consultation has begun on the draft Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), and Passenger Focus will be working closely with Network Rail to ensure passenger needs and aspirations are considered.

RUSs consider the future needs of the rail network and identify gaps which need to be addressed by Network Rail in its future planning. As

part of the formal consultation period, Passenger Focus and Network Rail plan to hold a stakeholder meeting in Perth to allow rail user groups and passenger representatives to comment on the document. The feedback will be used to inform Passenger Focus's formal response to the RUS consultation. The first Scotland RUS was published in 2007.



Sleeper survey results

Passenger Focus reports that passengers using sleeper trains to and from Scotland were generally very happy with the service they received with an overall satisfaction score of 89% for ScotRail's offering.

The independent passenger watchdog has reviewed recent National Passenger Survey results, specifically to gauge passenger satisfaction with sleeper services.

Key results included:

- Satisfaction with train staff, including their helpfulness and attitude (90% for ScotRail sleepers), was generally on a par or better than the long-distance sector
- Satisfaction with train cleanliness (85%), value for money, (69%), comfort of seating (86%) and on-train security (90%) were all rated higher than for the long-distance sector
- Satisfaction with train toilet facilities was very high (90%).

News roundup

ScotRail disruption handling

Passenger Focus has relayed feedback from its disruption panel to staff at ScotRail's communications centres in Paisley and Dunfermline to help improve the flow of information to passengers when things go wrong on the network.

Passenger Focus invites passengers on its disruption panel, which comprises of about 1000 rail users nationwide, to report back on their experiences of disrupted journeys. The comments are used to campaign at national and local level for improvements in the way train operating companies handle disruption.

Customer service impresses

Glasgow Central has been highly commended at this year's National Rail Awards in the Large Station of the Year category.

Passenger Focus is involved in the nominating and judging of the stations. Judges consider a whole range of categories when making their assessment, including ticket buying facilities, facilities and services, information and staff.