

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Autumn/Winter 2010

South East

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East Sussex disruption leaves passengers without rail

Passenger Focus is critical of industry planning which recently left passengers needing to travel in the East Sussex region without rail services.

On Sunday 3 October, all routes - Brighton to Lewes & Three Bridges; Hastings to Ashford; Uckfield & East Grinstead to Croydon and Hastings to Tonbridge - into and out of East Sussex were closed

simultaneously. The result was that London-bound passengers either had to use buses or divert to Brighton, from where they could take another diverted train to London (a two-hour service, which normally takes about an hour).

Mark Leving, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Part of the problem is that the county is served by two different train operators. It appears that

although planning guidelines do exist to try and avoid such situations arising, Network Rail does not appear to have recognised the regional difficulties these simultaneous route closures would cause to passengers who just need to get from A to B - irrespective of which company operates the trains."

Mr Leving has been heading up Passenger Focus's work on

rail infrastructure and reducing disruption to passengers caused by engineering work.

Consultation is now underway across train operating companies, Network Rail, Passenger Transport Executives and other key stakeholders to identify how passengers can receive a better deal from engineering work.



Clapham Junction review

Passenger Focus, with London TravelWatch, has been exploring how passengers feel about Clapham Junction with a view to assess how the station might better serve the needs of its passengers. The research looked specifically at station access, information, station amenities, safety and security as well as retail outlets.

Passengers using South West Trains, Southern or London Overground services to/from the station told the watchdogs their priorities for improvement were reducing congestion in the subway, real-time information, toilet facilities, having canopies over the platforms and better information on platforms.

Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch are now working with the industry to see how the passenger research can feed into plans for station improvements. What is good news is that South West Trains and Network Rail plan to fund £6m of improvements to Clapham Junction Station which will commence during 2011/12. These works will address passengers' key priorities for improvement at the station.

Southern's innovative approach benefits passengers

Passenger Focus has congratulated Southern Railway for its pioneering efforts in helping passengers in need of a seat on busy trains.

Southern Railway took the Putting Passengers First accolade at the National Rail Awards 2010 for its Priority Seat Card initiative. Passenger Focus said the award recognised Southern's efforts to help passengers with a hidden disability, those over 65 and pregnant women to identify their need for a seat to other passengers in a respectful and dignified way. Passenger Focus supports the Putting Passenger

First award and recognised the initiative as a perfect example of a train company talking with its passengers, listening to their suggestions and responding to passengers' needs.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive and chair of the judging panel for this award, said: "Southern Railway's scheme takes away what can be an awkward situation for both the passenger who needs the seat and the passenger confronted. We encourage other train companies to learn from Southern's innovative approach to helping its passengers."





Southern stations take industry awards

Southern stations Eastbourne and Bexhill have received industry recognition for their top-quality passenger services.

Eastbourne Station has taken the National Rail Awards Medium Station of the Year title and Bexhill Small Station of the Year at the 2010 National Rail Awards.

Passenger Focus is involved in nominating and judging for these awards. Judges consider a whole range of categories when making their assessment, including ticket buying facilities, facilities and services, information and staff. Liverpool Lime Street won the Large Station of the Year award.

Cycling to the station

Passenger Focus is pleased to see continued progress by the industry on improving cycling facilities at Britain's stations.

Passenger Focus is part of the Cycle and Rail Task Force, which was set up to improve bike and rail integration. It includes representatives from the Association of Train Operating Companies, Cycling England, government and Network Rail and the group is responsible for helping the delivery of a £14 million improvement package of cycle facilities at stations.

Southern recently outlined its plans to upgrade cycling facilities as part of its station travel plans.

Passenger Focus feels that cycling to the station helps reduce road congestion, improves health and is a totally self-reliant form of transport. However, to convince people to cycle, sufficient and secure storage facilities must be provided at the station. This is especially important while trains are overcrowded and passengers cannot take their bike on the train.

News roundup

National Passenger Survey

How satisfied are passengers in the South East? Passenger Focus will be releasing the results of its Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey early in 2011.

Passenger advice

Passenger Focus's advice team (PAT) has already secured almost £29,000 in additional compensation for passengers this financial year. Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team, where appropriate, will mediate in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual. If you need help with your appeal contact

Passenger Focus's helpline on 0300 123 2350 or email info@passengerfocus.org.uk.

Do you need more information?

For more information about Passenger Focus's work around the South East or Passenger Focus's research, see www.passengerfocus.org.uk.

Passenger Focus blog

Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith regularly updates the Passenger Focus blog at <http://passengerfocus.blogspot.com/>

Improving disruption handling

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 feedback is used to campaign at national and local level for improvements in the way train operating companies handle disruption.

Passenger Focus has relayed concerns from passengers about the way passenger information is handled during disruption to Southern services.

Issues raised by Southern passengers include the lack

of information on trains and at stations, the quality of the announcements and specific issues on Gatwick Express services.

Passenger Focus has asked members on its disruption panel to continue to monitor progress on First Capital Connect's improvements to real-time information provision on stations and to report back on the quality of information given on trains. While on Southeastern, Passenger Focus has welcomed two new initiatives to improve the provision of information to passengers.

First, it is setting up a resources centre at Orpington to coordinate the delivery of appropriate resources during incidents of service disruption. Second, it

is establishing hub stations to be responsible for passing on information to local stations affected when there are delays and cancellations.

