

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

South West

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South West rail services review

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| Train company | Overall satisfaction | Most significant improvement in satisfaction since Autumn 2009 | Decline in % satisfied since Autumn 2009 |
|----------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Great Britain result | 84% | Value for money (4%) | No significant decline |
| Arriva Trains Wales | 87% | Space for luggage (8%) | No significant decline |
| CrossCountry | 84% | No significant improvement | The upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms (5%) |
| First Great Western | 82% | Value for money; facilities for car parking (5%) | Station facilities and services; connections with other forms of public transport; overall environment (4%) |
| South West Trains | 87% | Personal security while using the station; personal security on the train (6%) | No significant decline |

Passenger Focus has published research which reveals how satisfied passengers travelling in the South West are with the rail network.

Almost 31,000 passengers have responded to the independent passenger watchdog's Autumn 2010 NPS, which rates Great Britain's rail companies, train and station facilities.

For the first time, Passenger Focus has also published a breakdown of passenger satisfaction scores for different routes within each train company. This shows, for example, that while 85% of passengers using First Great Western's (FGW) long-distance routes are satisfied overall, only 79% of passengers on London Thames Valley routes are happy.

Michael Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Breaking the National Passenger Survey results down by routes marks a huge step forward in accountability and transparency. Passengers can now get a much better idea of how their train services compare with others run by their company, as well as those across Great Britain."

Passenger Focus will work with FGW, South West Trains, CrossCountry and Arriva Trains Wales to address those areas where passenger satisfaction is lower.



Passengers report on Reading disruption

Passengers have given favourable reports of disruption handling during major engineering works undertaken recently at Reading station.

Work on a new bridge, the station, signalling and line infrastructure resulted in major disruption to the timetable over the 2010 Christmas/New Year period, prompting Passenger Focus to survey those passengers whose journeys were affected by the Reading project. Passengers were asked how and when they learnt about disruption, their journey experience, what improvements they expect to see as a result of the engineering works and how the disruption could have been better managed.

Michael Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said: "On this occasion the industry worked hard to ensure that passengers knew from early days that disruption was planned and what impact this would have on their journeys. The feedback from passengers is that

information leading up to and during disruption was accurate, timely and useful. Some excellent 'best practice' has been identified to take forward for planning of the next phases of the scheme."

Passenger Focus acknowledged that key to the project's success was the industry's coordination in delivering passenger information, work and services in the months leading up to the closure and during the affected period. The research also found that passengers have a preference for using alternative, but longer rail routes, rather than changing to a replacement bus service.



Passengers count delay

Long-distance train company CrossCountry has worked with Passenger Focus to better understand how delays affect passenger satisfaction.

Passenger Focus's research has found that commuter satisfaction with punctuality starts to drop as soon as a train is one minute late. Business and leisure passengers are a little more tolerant, being prepared to wait between four and six minutes before their satisfaction is affected. However, the industry records trains being on time when they arrive at the final destination within five minutes on short journeys and up to 10 minutes on longer-distance services.

The study also found that passengers' experience of delays tends to be more than that recorded by the industry as trains may be late at stations along the route, but make up time towards the end of the journey and arrive at the

final station according to the timetable.

The findings have prompted Passenger Focus to call on the rail industry to review how it records 'on-time' trains and to measure punctuality along the route, not just at the final station.

Passenger Focus wants the industry to consider:

- Should a measure of 'right - time' train arrivals be part of the operator's contract?
- Should punctuality be measured at stations along the route, as well as at the destination?
- Do the recent improvements in punctuality mean that the current measure (Public Performance Measure) should be tightened?
- What information can rail companies provide to passengers to give them a better understanding of punctuality for their specific routes?

News roundup

Complaints help

Passenger Focus's advice team has now secured more than £59,800 in compensation for passengers this financial year.

Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will take on the case, where appropriate, in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual. If you have a complaint or need advice email info@passengerfocus.org.uk or call 0300 123 2350.

Green light for new trains and rail electrification

Passenger Focus has welcomed the announcement of investment in new trains, electrification of the line between London and Cardiff and plans to study electrification of the railway in the Valleys.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "Many of the inter-city trains running on the East Coast and Great Western main lines are over 30-years-old and more modern trains will be desperately needed in the near future as passenger numbers continue to rise.

"Passenger Focus has been working with the Department for Transport (DfT) and the bidders to ensure the internal layout brings extra benefit and facilities for passengers. We would encourage the DfT and the Agility Consortium to build mock-ups of these trains as soon as possible so we can further test the layouts and help deliver a train which sets new high standards for passengers."

Rugby match disruption averted

Passenger Focus welcomed the additional train services and extra capacity provided by train operators after the Six Nations Wales v England rugby match at Cardiff Millennium Stadium recently. Temporary canopies had also been put up to shelter passengers queuing for trains after the game. The independent watchdog had raised concerns last year that the late finish of the match would leave regular evening services unable to cope.



Passengers' pleas for extra services pays off

Rail passengers are set to benefit from additional trains with CrossCountry agreeing to increase the number of trains stopping at Chepstow and Lydney.

Better Trains for Chepstow have been campaigning for additional services for some

time and Passenger Focus has consistently supported this aspiration in its discussions with CrossCountry. Passenger Focus was therefore pleased to note the recent CrossCountry announcement that Chepstow will receive 10 services and Lydney six services a day in each direction, Monday to Saturday,

from the beginning of May on a 12-month trial basis.

Michael Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said: "We welcome this CrossCountry initiative to stop more services at Chepstow and Lydney. Passengers have been asking for more trains for

a considerable period of time and it will now be up to them to prove that they will use the additional services on a regular basis. This is a trial period and it will very much be a case of 'use it or lose it'. The future of a better rail service at these stations is firmly in passengers' hands."