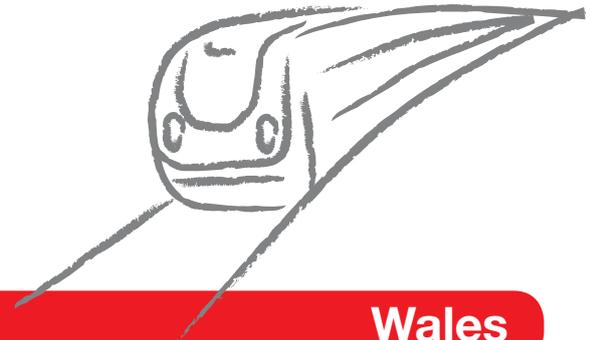


Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

Wales

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Passengers talk disruption

The way train operating companies (TOCs) handle disruption consistently falls short of passengers' expectations.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey only 35% of passengers in Great Britain said they were happy with this aspect of train services. To provide constructive feedback from passengers to TOCs, Passenger Focus has set up a nationwide disruption panel to collate responses with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

The specific nature of reports has helped provide focused comments on good and poor

practice at stations on First Great Western (FGW), where performance generally has improved to the point where there have been fewer disruption reports. Arriva Trains Wales is improving its current train-running information on its website and will be issuing on-train staff with better phones to improve their knowledge of delays and response to them.

Passenger manager Robert Samson has spoken to Virgin Trains' communications director to discuss the good and the bad in the reports, which will be used in training sessions for staff.



Value for money increases in Wales

Arriva Trains Wales has scored its highest value-for-money passenger satisfaction score in nearly seven years – up six points to 66%. The result follows many fares being frozen last January as a result of following on from the low-inflation rate in mid-2009.

Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey (NPS) found 88% of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) passengers were satisfied overall with their last train journey train companies running cross-border services also received good overall passenger satisfaction scores – Wrexham and Shropshire 99%, Virgin Trains 90%, CrossCountry 85% and First Great Western 83%.

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus Wales manager, said: "Rail services in Wales continue to score well against the Great Britain average of 83% overall satisfaction. However,

focus must continue on passengers' bugbear – how the industry handles disruption, a priority for passengers but with only 40% satisfied."

Passenger Focus will be using the NPS results, in which over 56,000 passengers take part each year, to work with industry in the review and planning of improvements to their services. This research builds into a powerful picture of how services vary around Britain. Armed with this research Passenger Focus, working with the train companies and Network Rail, plan how to boost satisfaction.

Mr Pickering concluded: "Improved scores for Virgin Trains demonstrate the power of investment. We hope further promised investment in trains for passengers travelling in Wales is forthcoming sooner rather than later."

Spring 2010

Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain result	83% (up 2%)	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (2%)
Arriva Trains Wales	88%	Facilities for car parking (8%) Value for money (6%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (9%)
Cross Country	85%	Value for money (6%)	Train toilet facilities (7%)
First Great Western	83%	How well the train company deals with delays (9%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (5%)
Virgin Trains	90%	Punctuality/reliability (10%)	-
Wrexham and Shropshire	99%	First time included in the Spring survey	-

News roundup

Disability Wales

Passenger Focus has recently shared its research and experiences with Disability Wales to identify potential areas for future cooperation. Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus Wales manager, will speak at a Disability Wales conference in North Wales in October.

Why don't people use rail more?

Passenger Focus has looked into why people who make limited use of rail services do not use the train more. The survey was run in partnership with the Association of Train Operating Companies and undertaken at nine stations across Britain, including Shotton in North Wales. The main reasons given were inconvenience (34%), cost (31%) and door-to-door journey time (18%). The results have been shared with staff working on the Shotton Station Travel Plan initiative.

Welsh Language Scheme

Passenger Focus has launched its Welsh Language Scheme following approval from the Welsh Language Board. It outlines how it meets the needs of people who wish to communicate with the independent rail consumer watchdog in Welsh.

Passenger Focus has also responded to a consultation from the National Assembly for Wales about proposals for new Welsh language legislation.

Unstaffed stations

A Passenger Focus project aimed at improving the experience of rail travellers using unstaffed stations in Wales is nearing completion.

The results of surveys on the Cambrian Coast Line and the Rhymney Line in the Cardiff Valleys, carried out as part of the Autumn 2009 wave of the National Passenger Survey, identified a number of areas of concern for passengers using unstaffed stations, including ticket buying, facilities and personal security.

These findings are being followed up in a series of focus groups.

Improving station accessibility

Passenger Focus has proposed a number of improvements to railway stations in Wales.

The watchdog made the suggestions in its evidence to the National Assembly for Wales' Equality of Opportunity Committee's inquiry into making stations more accessible.

The main recommendations are:

- To establish minimum standards for the provision of facilities at different types of railway stations, including information, security, waiting rooms and shelters, disabled access and toilets
- To provide real-time computerised information displays at every station
- To establish a robust management process to ensure stations are maintained to a high standard
- To ensure there are ramps for stations with low platform heights to assist wheelchair users, passengers with reduced mobility, and people travelling with children and/or luggage
- To maintain and/or increase staffing levels at stations.

In its response, Passenger Focus has also drawn attention to the results of the National Passenger Survey (Autumn 2009) results, which showed passenger satisfaction with stations in Wales is generally lower than the average for Britain, and that rail travellers with disabilities are even more likely to be frustrated with their experiences.



Stella Mair Thomas, Passenger Focus Wales board member in Wales, welcomed the National Assembly for Wales' review, adding: "Stations are the gateway to the rail network and it is very important that they provide a welcoming and accessible start and end to a journey."

Passengers share safety concerns

Passenger Focus research shows that passengers in Wales are generally satisfied with their personal security on trains. However, of those passengers who are not satisfied, the anti-social behaviour of others was their primary concern.

Respondents on Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) said the most irritating passengers were those who played music or DVDs loudly (58%), fare evaders (53%) and vandals (53%).



In answer to what types of anti-social behaviour they felt threatened their personal safety, passengers said they were most worried by passengers who were abusive or used

threatening behaviour (59%), theft of belongings (35%) and those under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (33%).

Simon Pickering, Passenger Focus Wales manager, said: "Passengers generally feel safe on the railway in Wales but having staff available definitely makes a difference - 37% of passengers called for more staff on the train and 38% said they wanted more visible police on board. More than half (58%) said they would feel safer if rowdy or drunk people were prevented from boarding the train."

Passenger Focus has discussed the results of the research with stakeholders in Wales, including ATW and British Transport Police (BTP) to help them plan their security activities. It is pleasing to note that crime on the rail network in Wales has fallen over the past year with BTP reporting that robberies were down 40%, fraud offence 70% lower, and sex offences falling 39%.

Wales v England match prompts rail concerns

There could be serious travel difficulties for passengers after the Six Nations game between Wales and England at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium on 4 February 2011, warns Passenger Focus.

The scheduling of the Friday night match, which kicks off at 7.45pm, has been criticised by both the independent passenger watchdog and train operators due to concern that regular rail services will not be able to cope with the extra demand.

Passenger Focus is talking to the train companies about providing additional resources, but even if sufficient extra capacity can be found, there may still be disruption to services the next day as trains finish the night in the 'wrong' place.

Passenger Focus is calling on all parties, not just the train companies but also the Welsh Assembly, Stadium and rugby officials, to work together to find effective solutions.