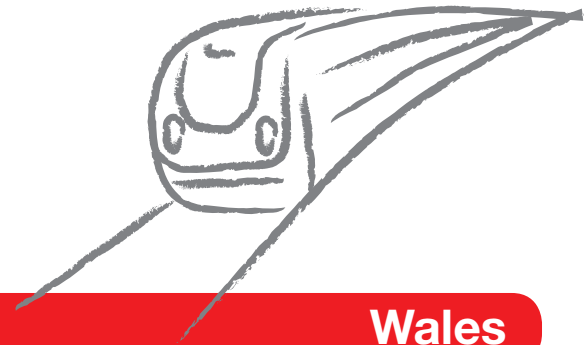


Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

Wales

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Passengers rate rail services running in Wales

Autumn 2010

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%)
Virgin Trains	90%	The frequency of trains (4%)	No significant decline
Wrexham & Shropshire	96%	Toilet facilities (19%)	Punctuality/Reliability (5%)

Passengers continue to score Arriva Trains Wales' rail services highly with 87% satisfied with their overall journey.

Almost 31,000 passengers have responded to the independent passenger watchdog's National Passenger Survey (NPS), which rates Great Britain's (GB) rail companies, train and station facilities.

Open-access operator Wrexham & Shropshire, which has now ceased operations, was a top scorer with 96% of passengers satisfied overall.

Passenger Focus's survey found Arriva Trains Wales' (ATW) overall satisfaction score beat the GB rating of 84%. ATW received better marks for passengers' top priorities, including value for money (64% compared with the GB score of 49%), punctuality (85% compared with 82%) and sufficient room to sit/stand (74% versus 68%). However, in the latest survey passengers continue to express concern about the country's stations. For the first time, Passenger Focus has asked passengers how they rated overall satisfaction with their station and ATW received a 73% rating compared with the GB score of 76%. The gap between facilities and services was also higher, ATW scoring 42% compared with the GB rating of 51%.

Also, for the first time, Passenger Focus has published route-based results in the NPS. When looking at the passenger experience by route, passengers travelling in North Wales are much more satisfied (90%) than those travelling in South Wales (83%) or on Valley routes (86%).

Breaking the NPS results down by routes marks a huge step forward in accountability and transparency. Taking a closer look at the results in this way means that government and industry can respond strategically to passenger issues. For example, passengers on Valley routes have a bigger issue with value for money (60% satisfied) compared with those in the north and south of the country (both 67% satisfied).

News roundup

Electric railway

Passenger Focus has welcomed railway-electrification plans between London and Wales.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "After much speculation and uncertainty, passengers using services between London and Cardiff are set to benefit from an electrified network which will improve reliability, cut passengers' journey times and reduce costs. If the plans come to fruition, passengers travelling in Wales could also benefit from the electrification of the Valley lines.

"However, this announcement will be disappointing for those passengers campaigning for electrification of the line to Swansea and we hope that as the economy recovers, further electrification of the network will be put back onto the table."

Equality and Human Rights

Passenger Focus has presented evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Commission as part of its formal inquiry into disability-related harassment. Among the issues being investigated are the steps taken by public transport operators to prevent and eliminate disability-related harassment.

Review of rail programme

Passenger Focus has made a submission to the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Learning Committee to help inform its latest review of rail investment and performance in Wales. The submission outlined latest research, including customer satisfaction with the railways as measured by the National Passenger Survey and an examination of passenger priorities for investment.

Tourism working group in Wales

Passenger Focus has joined a working group set up by the Welsh Assembly Government to look at how more sustainable forms of transport, such as rail, can play a greater role in tourism.



Increased services

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 more services and Lydney six extra services a day in each direction, Monday to Saturday, from the beginning of May on a 12-month trial basis.

Welcoming the announcement Passenger Focus manager, Mike Greedy (pictured, above right) said the development will offer new opportunities for business, leisure and commuting passengers travelling northbound to Gloucester, Cheltenham and Birmingham and southbound to Newport and Cardiff.

In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government has announced that it plans to provide £3.5million funding so that Arriva Trains Wales can lease additional rolling stock to operate an extra daily express service from Holyhead to Cardiff.

Stella Mair Thomas, Passenger Focus board member for Wales (pictured, above left), said: "We're pleased to see the continued investment in Welsh railways. However, many passengers would like these express services to include more North Wales centres, such as Wrexham. If this is not possible in the first instance, we trust it will be achieved as soon as it becomes feasible."

Call for improvements

The rail industry needs to improve the consistency of help given to disabled passengers who use the Assisted Passenger Reservation System (APRS).

Passenger Focus's network-wide mystery-shop found that while improvements have been made to the central booking service and delivery of assistance since the last review carried out by Passenger Focus in 2008, disabled rail users continue to face problems getting the right information and help.

The research found that seven out of 10 passengers were satisfied with the service they received, but in too many cases the provision of information and assistance failed to materialise.

While welcoming the industry's promise to develop a new

booking and communication system to deliver much-enhanced assistance, the research concluded that rail operators need to make certain that staff are adequately trained, passengers receive accurate information and that there is good communication within the industry as well as with passengers.

Stella Mair-Thomas, Passenger Focus board member in Wales, said: "The Welsh Assembly Government has given a commitment to tackling the issues faced by disabled passengers as outlined in the National Transport Plan, including improving station access. It's also important to continue to improve the APRS to enhance the journey experience for passengers with reduced mobility in Wales."

Future rail must meet passenger needs

Passenger Focus has responded to Network Rail's draft West Coast Main Line (WCML) Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), which sets out the priorities for rail investment until 2024.

As part of the consultation process, Passenger Focus

and Network Rail have held meetings among rail user groups to establish what issues the RUS should be addressing. The group discussions highlighted some key priorities, including capacity, connectivity and station improvements.

Watchdog finds too many passengers being 'kept in the dark'

Passenger Focus is calling for real-time information at every unstaffed station as a minimum standard, waiting area improvements and ongoing encouragement of community-station partnerships following passenger research in Wales.

The independent passenger watchdog with the Wales

Transport Research Centre has investigated why passenger satisfaction with stations in Wales is consistently lower than the Great Britain average. Passenger Focus has discussed its findings with the Welsh Assembly Government during the course of the research, and has welcomed its recent promises to address information and accessibility

issues, particularly as part of future franchise considerations.

The new research revealed passenger issues with ticket buying, shelters and waiting facilities, security concerns and accessibility problems.

More information is available at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

