

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

West Midlands

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West Midlands passengers talk disruption

The way train operating companies (TOCs) handle disruption consistently falls short for passengers.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey only 35% of Great Britain's passengers 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 with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

Jocelyn Pearson has recently taken over responsibility for leading Passenger Focus's work with London Midland and has found the reports invaluable in helping her identify shortcomings with the operator's performance.

On CrossCountry, issues have been identified at Birmingham New Street, particularly late platform changes – a problem that must be addressed with the station's rebuilding work likely to cause frequent platform alterations.

High standards of punctuality at Chiltern Railways make information less of an issue, but a lack of adequate onward journey information at stations has been highlighted.



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

New passenger manager for London Midland

As part of a reorganisation within Passenger Focus as it assumes its new bus, coach and tram role, Jocelyn Pearson has taken on the role of passenger manager responsible for monitoring London Midland, with help from executive Mike Clark. Jocelyn has been making journeys across the London Midland network and meeting directors and rail user groups to get a feel for the company's services.

West Midlands report card

Passengers travelling on trains in the West Midlands have rated the region's railways as part of the independent watchdog's National Passenger Survey (NPS).

Passenger Focus's NPS, in which over 56,000 passengers participate each year gives a clear picture on how satisfied passengers are with London Midland (86%), Virgin Trains' (90%), Chiltern Railways (91%), CrossCountry (85%), Wrex-

ham and Shropshire (99%) and Arriva Trains' (88%) services.

Chiltern and the smaller operator Wrexham and Shropshire, continue to be strong performers in the survey and passenger satisfaction with value for money increased for most of the region's operators thanks to many fares either dropping or being fixed last New Year.

These results show a pretty good picture of the region's railway. They also demonstrate the power of investment with Virgin Trains' and London Midland's passengers noting improvements through their satisfaction scores in several areas of the survey. As more trains arrive on time, Britain's rail passengers are becoming more satisfied.

The NPS is one of the most cost effective ways of driving improvements for passengers. The results allow valuable comparisons between routes and train companies.



Spring 2010

Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain	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%)
Chiltern	91%	Value for money (8%)	Station facilities and services (8%)
CrossCountry	85%	Value for money (6%)	Train toilet facilities (7%)
London Midland	86% (up 8%)	Train frequency (11%) Punctuality/reliability (11%) Value for money (11%)	No significant decline
Virgin Trains	90% (up 4%)	Punctuality/reliability (10%)	No significant decline
Wrexham and Shropshire	99%	First time included in the Spring survey	-

News roundup

Passenger Focus move

Passenger Focus's London base has moved from Islington to Pimlico.

The new address is 2nd Floor, One Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2QY.

Rail services

If you have a complaint about the railway or the service you have received from a train company then you should complain to the service provider involved. Most complaints can be resolved by dealing directly with the company responsible in the first instance.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint or you do not feel the train company handled it appropriately Passenger Focus can help by calling 0300 123 2350 or emailing info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger Focus 2009-10

Passenger Focus's annual report and accounts has been laid before the Westminster and Scottish Parliaments. To view the documents see www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Bad weather

With summer already upon us, the winter's cold snap may seem a long time ago, but the disruption caused by snow is still fresh in Passenger Focus's minds.

Passenger Focus's rail director Ashwin Kumar has given evidence to the Department of Transport as part of its Winter Resilience Review. Ashwin spoke on passengers' experiences during the disruption and what the industry should do to help passengers during these unplanned for events.

Initial findings from ticket machine research

Passenger Focus's research on the benefits and shortcomings of ticket vending machines (TVMs) and queuing times at stations will be published soon.

The research asks why passengers queue to speak to a member of staff when there is no queue for a TVM. What is it about some TVM programs that passengers find off-putting and drives them to wait longer to buy their ticket from the booking office? The need for reassurance is compounded by the complexity of tickets and fares. If you would like to see the research email info@passengerfocus.org.uk or go to www.passengerfocus.org.uk

High-speed rail future?

The new Government has made a commitment to developing a Great Britain high-speed rail network. Passenger Focus has welcomed plans to develop the network and address issues associated with increasing popularity of the railway.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "In the long term more and more people are going to want to use the railway. So, a step change in the ability of the network to handle more trains, longer trains and more reliable trains, all key passenger priorities for improvement, is needed now. This plan represents an important first step in unlocking this potential, that should also free up more space on the rest of network to handle more regional and local trains. More trains arriving on time are now helping to attract more passengers. Add higher

speeds to that and a whole new group of passengers could be tempted to use rail.

"Passenger Focus welcomes the commitment that the new line will be an addition to the current network – not a bolt on, rich man's railway. The ability to turn up and travel remains a key attraction of Britain's railway – this new line, with fast frequent services could, with attractive fares, start to revolutionise intercity rail travel. The other commitment, that funding will not be diverted from the existing network, is also welcome."



West Midlands in focus

Passenger Focus's Board returned to the West Midlands recently to hold its meeting in public.

As well as hearing about Passenger Focus's bus work to date, the board was updated on the watchdog's work on rail infrastructure operations and reducing disruption to passengers.

Following concern from the previous government about the scale and lack of coordination of disruptive engineering work, Passenger Focus has been asked to undertake a review of the industry structures and processes to identify how passengers can receive a better deal. Consultation across train operating companies, Network Rail, Passenger Transport Executives and other key

stakeholders is now underway, headed up by Passenger Focus manager Mark Leving.

Mark Leving, said: "Long term, passengers will welcome the ongoing maintenance and investment in the rail network as this will bring a better, safer and more reliable railway.

"We welcome the effort the industry has made, following pressure by Passenger Focus, to reduce the number of buses running instead of trains during engineering works. But too often, on weekends and holidays, too many passengers find themselves turned off trains and put on buses. Passengers would rather travel up to an hour longer on an alternative rail journey than be shuttled on a bus. Addition-



Passenger Focus chairman Colin Foxall

ally, too many passengers are paying the same money for less – a bus replacement service is not the same as a train journey."

Meanwhile, to learn more about Passenger Focus's bus work, see the latest edition of Passenger Voice Bus, Coach and Tram. The next board meeting will be held in public at Passenger Focus's London office on 15 September.

Transport funding commitment

Passenger Focus was pleased to see a commitment to developing regional public transport with spending confirmed in the new budget to extend the Manchester Metrolink; the Tyne and Wear Metro; Birmingham New Street station redevelopment; and improvements to rail lines to Sheffield and between Liverpool and Leeds. Passengers will welcome the Government's

commitment to these four transport projects which will bring real benefits to people. This Government investment is helping people have real transport choices and helping to underpin economic growth in these four areas. Passenger Focus will continue to work with industry to ensure passenger views are incorporated into plans as projects progress.