

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

Yorkshire and The Humber

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Passengers report on 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 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 to collate passenger feedback with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

Reporters on Northern indicated a problem with faulty announcements and customer information screens. Following complaints from passengers, TransPennine Express (TPE) has implemented staff training at Huddersfield and Selby stations. An information point is being set up at Huddersfield, and the use of Selby as a 'turn-round point' in cases of major disruption throws up particular challenges and two other options are being examined.

Detailed comments on East Coast's delays

have been fed into the Guards' Standards training, delivery of new software for the screens at Durham should improve their poor performance, and East Coast and Network Rail have created a joint disruption booklet to clarify responsibilities.

East Midlands Trains has used the feedback to overhaul its disruption and communications plans, which include improvements to public announcement equipment, help points and customer information screens.

Passengers score the region's railway

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%)
CrossCountry	85%	Value for money (6%)	Train toilet facilities (7%)
East Coast	88%	Connections with other forms of public transport (5%) The availability of staff on the train (5%)	No significant decline
East Midlands Trains	86% (up 5%)	How well the train company handles delays (14%)	No significant decline
First TransPennine Express	87%	Value for money (9%)	No significant decline
Grand Central	94%	First time included in the Spring survey	-
Northern Rail	82%	Value for money (6%)	Connections with other forms of public transport (6%)

Passengers travelling on Yorkshire and the Humber's trains 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 indication of passenger satisfaction with CrossCountry (85%), East Coast (88%), East Midlands Trains (86%), Northern (82%), First TransPennine Express (87%) and Grand Central (94%) services.

These results show a pretty good picture of the region's railway. As more trains arrive on time, Britain's rail passengers are becoming more satisfied. Particularly good news is passengers say many train companies have improved value for money following many fares staying the same or even falling in January 2010 as a consequence of the lower inflation rate in mid-2009. East Midlands Trains' overall satisfaction increased five points, the highest result achieved since the start of the franchise in November 2007. Several aspects of its services were also rated higher by its passengers.

The publication of this independent comparative data is one of the most cost effective ways of driving improvements on the railway. As operators vie with each other for pole position it also allows valuable comparisons between routes and the widely different scores operators achieve for various aspects of their services. For example, Northern Rail's 82% overall score spans 87% scores on West and North Yorkshire services and 74% on the crowded routes in and around Manchester and Liverpool.

Passenger Focus is now working with train companies to improve those areas passengers have identified as being problematic.

News roundup

First Hull Trains launches green information

First Hull Trains has installed a new wind and solar-powered information display at Howden station, the first renewable-energy customer information system of its kind on the Great Britain rail network.

Attending its launch, Sue Tibbett, Passenger Focus manager, welcomed the initiative: "Passengers will be pleased by this investment in customer information systems. Providing quality, timely information in a way that is environmentally friendly has to be a win-win situation. We will be watching this development closely and if it is a success, then rolling it out to other stations should be explored."

New London-Bradford service

Passengers travelling between Bradford and London now benefit from three additional return train services a day.

Grand Central launched the new direct services between Bradford Interchange and London King's Cross in May as part of its new West Riding route. The trains call at Halifax, Brighouse, Wakefield, Pontefract and Doncaster.

Sue Tibbett, Passenger Focus manager, said: "This is good news for passengers as Halifax, Brighouse and Pontefract currently have no direct services to London while Bradford has only one East Coast service. They will also offer improved connections for passengers travelling from the north of England or Scotland, via Doncaster."

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

Northern Rail wins longer franchise

Northern Rail has secured a two-year extension to its franchise after beating performance targets for its 2500 daily train services across the north of England.

The Department for Transport has confirmed that Northern, which is owned by a joint venture of Serco and Abellio, will now run the franchise until 15 September 2013.

Sue Tibbett, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It's good news that Northern Rail has met

its targets on punctuality and capacity which has led to this franchise extension. Passengers tell us that trains running on time is a top priority. Our National Passenger Survey shows that 82% of passengers are satisfied with the train company's overall performance and 82% with Northern Rail's punctuality and reliability. However, overcrowding on these train services are a problem with the National Passenger Survey showing that only 68% of passengers are satisfied

with room to sit or stand. Effort needs to be made into improving this aspect of service for passengers."



Initial findings on ticket machines

Passenger Focus research on the benefits and shortcomings of ticket vending machines (TVMs) and queuing times at stations will be published in July. The research looks at 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.



Passenger research

To learn more about Passenger Focus or to see any of its latest research, why don't you visit the Passenger Focus website at www.passengerfocus.org.uk or email info@passengerfocus.org.uk

East Coast rail deal

Passenger Focus is calling for the new East Coast rail franchise to tackle passengers' top priorities – punctuality and value for money – when the government looks for a new operator.

The independent passenger watchdog has responded to government consultation on what should be included in the franchise. Passengers also highlighted the importance of getting a seat, with it being their third priority for improvement.

Following research with over 6000 passengers, the independent passenger watchdog has also called for measures to improve passenger satisfaction with value for money, including introducing a logical, transparent and fair ticketing system which allows passengers more flexibility at an affordable price.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers using East Coast trains have told us that they're generally happy with rail services. The next franchise must build on the relatively high levels of passenger satisfaction achieved so far and achieve even better results. Passengers certainly won't want quality and standards to slip."

Passenger Focus is also calling for timetable changes which include more evening and weekend trains; capped car-parking charges; and a commitment that replacement buses during engineering works are used only as a last resort.

