

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Autumn/Winter 2010

Yorkshire and The Humber

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Work to improve disruption handling

Passenger Focus continues its work to improve the way the industry communicates with passengers during times of disruption.

Northern Rail, East Coast and First TransPennine Express have all welcomed the feedback from Passenger Focus's disruption panel. Passenger Focus set up the panel, comprising of about 1000 rail users nationwide, to report back on their experiences of

disrupted journeys. The feedback is used to campaign at national and local level for improvements in the way train operating companies handle disruption.

While Passenger Focus notes improvements in the way the train companies communicates to passengers during disruptions, the watchdog continues to emphasise the vital role played by rail staff in making consistent and timely

information available to passengers. The Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey found that only 35% of Great Britain's passengers are satisfied with the way train companies deal with delays.

On CrossCountry recent comments from Passenger Focus's disruption panel suggest passengers are generally satisfied with the way CrossCountry is handling delays and cancellations.

Stations recognised

Railway stations in Yorkshire and the Humber have fared well at the recent National Rail Awards.

Doncaster station was highly commended at this year's awards in the Large Station of the Year category and Hull was highly commended in the Medium Stations class.

Passenger Focus is involved in nominating and judging stations. Judges consider a whole range of categories when making their assessment, including ticket-buying facilities, facilities and services, information and staff.

CrossCountry passengers not online

Passenger Focus is disappointed that CrossCountry has not met its deadline to provide passengers with Wi-Fi on its trains.

Passenger Focus's research shows that over a third (37%) of business passengers identified one of the benefits of using the train is having the ability to continue their work while travelling. They also said it is a less stressful form of transport (33%), 28% said

speed of journey is a benefit and 21% appreciated the fact it eliminated parking problems.

Mike Greedy, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Having Wi-Fi onboard is important to passengers, particularly to those on long-distance journeys who wish to use it to work. Delivering Wi-Fi was a specific commitment in their franchise, so we urge CrossCountry to deliver this service as soon as possible."

High-speed a step closer

The Government has announced that it will consult early next year on building a 'Y'-shaped high-speed rail network with separate legs from London to the West Midlands then to Manchester and Leeds. A 'Y'-shaped route would allow the East Midlands and South Yorkshire to be served by the high-speed rail network, as well as Leeds, Manchester and the North West.

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "Passengers who have campaigned for a high-speed connection to east-coast destinations will welcome this latest development.

"All forecasts show that Britain's railways are only going to get busier. Government and industry must continue progress on this important project as new high-speed lines are critical to relieving overcrowding in the future. Putting longer-distance journeys onto these new lines will allow more trains to serve commuters and middle-distance passengers on the current network.

"Wherever this new line is built, there will be winners and losers. It is important that the Government and industry discuss the implications of this decision with affected communities and addresses concerns."



Operator of the year

Passenger Focus has congratulated First TransPennine Express (FTPE) on taking the Passenger Operator of the Year title in the 2010 National Rail Awards. The accolade was given in recognition of the improvements made in every aspect of its business, including improving standards and security at stations.

In the most recent (Spring 2010) Passengers Focus's National Passenger Survey (NPS), overall passenger satisfaction with FTPE was 87%. Although this score remained unchanged compared to the previous year, the score was a 10 point improvement on the 77% achieved in the franchise's first year of operation in 2004. Good news is the recent improvement to the operator's value for money score, up nine points on Spring 2009 to 60%.



Charge for internet

Commenting on the introduction of charges for Wi-Fi on East Coast trains Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It's disappointing that East Coast is abandoning National Express's commitment to make Wi-Fi

on the east coast route free throughout the journey and for all passengers. If passengers are going to be paying in future, East Coast will have to work hard to ensure the Wi-Fi system is more reliable than it's historically been."

Cycling to the station

Passenger Focus is pleased to see continued progress by the industry on improving cycle facilities at Britain's stations.

Passenger Focus is part of the Cycle and Rail Task Force, which was set up to improve bike and rail integration. It includes representatives from the Association of Train Operating Companies, Cycling England, government and Network Rail and the group is responsible for helping the delivery of a £14 million improvement package of cycle facilities at stations.

Currently, Merseyrail, Northern, South West Trains and Virgin are working on improving their cycle facilities as part of a flagship 'Bike 'n' Ride' scheme. Southern has also outlined its plans to upgrade cycling facilities as part of its station travel plans.

Passenger Focus feels that cycling to the station helps reduce road congestion, improves health and is a totally self-reliant form of transport. However, to convince people to cycle, sufficient and

secure storage facilities must be provided at the station. This is especially important while trains are overcrowded and passengers cannot take their bike on the train.



Rail future under review

Network Rail has published the Draft Northern Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). Passenger Focus will be working closely with the industry to ensure passenger needs and aspirations are considered. RUSs consider

the future needs of the rail network and identify gaps which need to be addressed by Network Rail in its future planning.

Consultation on the RUS will run until mid-January.

A look at first class

Passenger Focus has broken down its National Passenger Survey results by first class and standard class and found that 84% of first class passengers are happy overall with the service they receive. First-class ticket holders seem to be happier across the board - or at least as happy - when looking at station and on-train aspects of services when compared with passengers in standard class.

Passenger Focus has reviewed recent surveys and analysed responses from over 2000 first-class passengers.

Looking at the long-distance operators, passengers are even happier with first-class services - especially those provided by open-access operators such as Grand Central (96% satisfied).

Interestingly, passengers in first class score particular aspects of the service higher than those passengers in standard class. This includes value for money (56% satisfied in first, 48% satisfied in standard) and train-toilet facilities (50% in first, 38 % in standard).

News roundup

Timetable criticism

Passenger Focus remains highly critical that the rail industry has not yet put latest drafts of the East Coast Main Line May 2011 timetable in the public domain. Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It is unacceptable that there has been no feedback since the consultation ended in the Spring and that the Saturday and Sunday drafts are still not in the public domain".

Passenger advice

Passenger Focus's advice team (PAT) has already secured almost £29,000 in additional compensation for passengers this financial year. Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will, where appropriate, mediate in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual. If you need help with your appeal contact Passenger Focus's helpline on 0300 123 2350 or email info@passengerfocus.org.uk.

Northern Stars recognised

Passenger Focus has congratulated both Northern Rail and the staff successful in the train company's Northern Stars customer service awards. Passenger Focus joined the judging panel in an effort to recognise those staff delivering excellent service to passengers. Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus rail director, said: "Stations and station staff are a crucial part of the passengers' rail journey. Passengers tell us that staff are needed for journey advice, ticket sales and for personal security. We are pleased to be part of the process which recognises excellent service."