Minutes

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Transport Focus Board meeting	
Date:	**16 March 2017**
Location	**Bridewell Hall, St Bride's Foundation, London, EC4Y 8EQ**

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Marian Lauder MBE	ML	Board member
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Isabel Liu	IL	Board member
Dr Stuart Burgess CBE	SB	Board member
Stephen Locke	DM	Board member for London
Philip Mendelsohn	PM	Board member for Scotland
Bob Linnard	RL	Board member

Executives in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Transport User Director
Ian Wright	IW	Head of Insight
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of Policy and Issues
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Transport Strategy
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Business Services
Linda McCord	LM	Passenger Manager
Hazel Phillips	HP	Head of Public Affairs
Michelle Calvert	MCa	Business Services Executive

Guest Speakers:

Mark Hopwood	MHd	Managing Director, Great Western Railway
Dan Moore	DMe	Deputy Director, Rail Markets Strategy at Department for Transport
Dick Fearn	DF	Chair, Western Route Supervisory Board

Apologies:

Diane McCrea MBE	DM	Board member for Wales

Members of the public:

Approximately six members of the public attended the meeting

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Part B: Standing Items

1.0 Chair's opening remarks; apologies

JH welcomed everyone to the public Board meeting, especially those members of the public in attendance; he explained an opportunity to ask questions would be provided.

Apologies had been received from Diane McCrea.

JH thanked Board Member Dr Stuart Burgess, whose term of office would come to an end at the end of April, for his outstanding work and contribution to Transport Focus. He also publically thanked former Board Member Paul Rowen, whose term of office came to an end at the end of March; and also Board Member for Wales Diane McCrea, whose term of office would come to an end at the end of April. He advised that Councillor William Powell would be joining the Board in April to replace Diane McCrea as our Welsh Board representative and that he would be in attendance from the next meeting in July.

JH advised that Mark Hopwood of Great Western Railway, Dick Fearn of the Western Supervisory Board and Dan Moore from the Department for Transport would be the guest speakers for today.

Part A: Public Affairs

1.0 Great Western Railway

Mark Hopwood thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to present to them. He started by presenting a brief background to Great Western Railway (GWR) with the appropriate slides as a handout.

MHd then turned to the issues caused by the switch to the new call centre. He stated that there was a need to upgrade the IT systems to meet the conditions of the Data Protection Act and to cover passenger confidentiality. The work had originally been done in Mumbai; bringing it back to the UK was a key part of the contract.

The contract went out to tender and was won by Capita. One of the reasons for this was that they had already managed contacts for John Lewis and Marks & Spencer. The contract was to be carried out at their premises at Preston Brook.

Unfortunately, Capita started the contract the same week as a derailment outside Paddington station. The situation was exacerbated by storm Angus, which brought about disruption through unmanageable weather conditions. Capita started to fall behind immediately and the backlog had doubled by autumn 2016.

GWR alerted the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and agreed a recovery plan which was now being delivered. MHd hoped to have normal standards of service in place by April 2017. At the moment there are still 20,000 open cases.

One of the key requirements of the recovery plan was that Capita have more resources. They now have 269 staff as opposed to 171 in November 2016 – this includes 177 new staff; the discrepancy in numbers is due to staff turnover.

MHd advised that his own experience at GWR started by answering telephone enquiries so he does have some experience of the work Capita is doing. He had arranged for his own team to visit Preston Brook regularly to walk the floors and assist staff. A new contract manager based on site has also been appointed; the manager works jointly for GWR and TransPennine Express.

Capita have a new quality system in place including strengthened guides and training. They updated the telephone system to enable customers to be directed to the correct department. A lot of queries could be dealt with by web form so this was also upgraded. GWR have moved from vouchers to cash refunds. They are currently managing this themselves but are planning to conclude a delivery contract with a third party.

MHd acknowledged the severity of the delays and advised that GWR is open to goodwill gestures on a case by case basis. A key concern going forward is referrals; there are currently 18 appeals being investigated with 30 awaiting review. Sixty cases are in the queue for a response. There are 317 cases currently with Transport Focus (TF).

There have been regular visits by GWR to TF offices in Manchester. MHd believes the new processes should ensure prompt responses and believes the two teams are working together well. He remains disappointed with the position. His aim is to get the backlog cleared with an improvement in quality as soon as reasonably practicable.

Regarding other matters, over Christmas 2016/2017 the engineering work at Paddington station was managed well. GWR involved Nina Howe and others in the planning and good feedback was received through social media. A key objective is to keep customers on trains and not replacement buses. This is a big task as electrification, Crossrail and HS2 approach.

Lastly, a new depot at Penzance will be opening soon; greater parking capacity at stations is an upcoming project; and there will also be 45 new trains in the Thames Valley with refreshed units going to Bristol and the West.

JH thanked MHd and invited questions from the board.

TdP queried the numbers regarding the peak in complaints being 50,000, and then decreasing to 35,000. The figure is now 20,000 - is that the new 'normal'? (6,000 of these cases are outside of the service-level agreement (SLA)).

IL questioned the total current appeals this year being 760 compared to 229 the previous year. Although numbers are coming down there is a case from November 2016 still open, where the complaint was made in July 2016.

MHd was clear that GWR is aware of the challenges. One of these is the high rate of staff turnover at Capita. GWR had Capita had responded to this challenge by cataloguing cases to generate themes of complaints. Yes, the complaints numbers included some long term cases; most have been dealt with but one or two remain outstanding.

The 6,000 cases which are outside the SLA are expected to be dealt with within four weeks. He added that the annual expectation for complaints at GWR is around 14,000 and therefore they are returning to 'business as usual'.

SL observed that complaint handling regulation in rail is fairly light-touch; GWR may be regarded as having been lucky. Both Scottish Power and Vodafone have recently been heavily fined for mishandling customer complaints. ML added that the reputation of GWR must have been negatively impacted due to the mishandling of their complaints. One way of limiting the damage was to use the opportunity for goodwill gestures – why were these not in place sooner?

MHd explained that goodwill gestures have indeed been in place going back a number of years. He accepted the negative impact on his business and assured the Board that there is huge pressure on him to contain it and bring it to an end. Regarding regulatory fines, they have never been in this situation before, and no doubt ORR would take a longer term view on the matter. In a nutshell, the transition to a new contract was due to the need to bring the work back to the UK and to upgrade the IT service to provide better information. However it was clear that they had expected too much from the new contract; the transition was very quick with a new site and a new selection of staff. An example of a successful transition was a new train cleaning contract, which was handled well in that although a different company took over the work, the same staff were employed.

JH thanked MHd for his contribution to the meeting and assured him Transport Focus would remain keenly interested in complaint handling performance over the next few months.

Part A continued: Public affairs

3.0 Boosting passenger input to rail industry planning: Transport Focus and the new Western Route Supervisory Board (WRSB)

DF introduced himself and gave a background of his experience in the industry from joining BR at Crewe station in 1973 straight from school, through his days at Network Southeast, Railtrack and latterly as Chief Executive for Iarnrod Eireann where he worked for 10 years. Having moved back to the UK and retired from full time executive work, he was approached to be chair of WRSB. It came in the wake of the Shaw report on Network Rail governance. Train operating companies (TOCs) needed to co-operate, co-ordinate and be more in-step with Network Rail.

Western was chosen as a pilot with an independent chair rather than somebody from Network Rail or one of the TOCs. The aim is a renaissance of the railway in terms of both operations and infrastructure. There will be increased focus for both passenger and freight operators.

DF said that we all want investment but it's not always easy to turn this immediately into better performance - in Ireland, they had a huge government commitment but the process of change still took a long time. It's easy to go off in different directions, e.g. engineers will have one way of thinking and operators will have another. DF stressed that the Board won't be focusing on money, or how much is being spent; it isn't about reorganisation or reconstructing the industry but it *will* be about focusing on finding a shared goal between Network Rail and train operating companies on the Western Route.

In advance of the first board meeting, he had established three key objectives:

1. Bring people together; co-ordinate the effort for passengers and freight customers alike. Benchmark where we are - look at the numbers. WRSB need to know how to understand these numbers to then agree the next steps.

2. Understand what customers are saying; the priorities of the Board need to be in tune with those of its stakeholders.

3. Plan ahead. Have a vision and determination. Mentor as required. Provide direction and guidance as necessary.

DF concluded by saying he is determined that the Board will succeed, and very much looks forward to working with Transport Focus to that end.

JH thanked DF for his interesting remarks and positive stance. He noted however that this is a new scheme, and must be regarded as something of an experiment. Although ORR

guidance to Network Rail's CP6 business plan had made specific reference to the WRSB, the Terms of Reference for the Board were yet to be completed and it remained unclear whether its focus would be on detailed operational scrutiny, or on longer-term strategy and customer engagement. DF explained that they are still working out what they will do - a plan has yet to emerge – but the point was well made; they must not get it wrong.

The powers of the new supervisory board were discussed and the influence it may have within the industry. Other collaborative initiatives - such as the South West Trains Alliance and the ScotRail Alliance - have been created in the past, and not all had been a success. What would be different with this Board? DF clarified that the WRSB will not have any executive powers; it is a "fresh approach" with an independent chair; a meeting of minds around a table.

JH thanked DF for attending and extended his support on behalf of Transport Focus to the WRSB.

2.0 Department for Transport

Dan Moore, Deputy Director, Rail Markets Strategy at the Department for Transport began by thanking Transport Focus for the invitation to present.

He discussed the role of Department for Transport (DfT), the Secretary of State's priorities and how Transport Focus can help. He emphasised that the Secretary of State really appreciates the work of Transport Focus. Transport Focus will play an important role shaping agendas over the next two years.

The Secretary of State's earlier speech at the Transport Focus Stakeholder Reception emphasised putting passengers at the heart of railway issues. There has been good progress with the recent HS2 bill and there are further opportunities to make sure passenger voices are heard. The Bus Services Bill is currently before parliament and there will be further debate on how the bill will impact on the industry and passengers.

The DfT had a basic request of Transport Focus; to keep on doing what it is doing and to look for ways to further maximise its impact. There are huge opportunities on the horizon and the active, continued involvement of Transport Focus in shaping the transport agenda is important and appreciated. Transport Focus needs to continue to think how we can maximise our impact using communications, research and engaging with passengers to make a difference, helping passengers, rail companies and the DfT itself.

Another important role of Transport Focus is the Rail Passenger Redress Scheme (RPRS). This is a very important scheme as it will enhance passenger rights and will have a visible impact on the reputation of the industry.

Transport Focus has unique knowledge in this area. In short, the DfT believes Transport Focus must continue to be public, visible and brave in terms of engaging with Government.

The current lack of transport provision in rural areas was noted and the willingness of the DfT to listen to passengers regarding the cutting of local bus services was questioned. The financial situation means local authorities have some further decisions to take. DM believed Transport Focus need to take advantage of the Bus Services Bill and ensure they have the best possible relationships with bus providers to make a difference for bus users. The value Transport Focus can add is its relationship with both based on its extensive bus passenger research and, of course, its recently updated toolkit.

SL noted that London, including the underground, DLR etc. accounts for 50% of passenger journeys. Is the Secretary of State achieving enough impact in London and is it being given enough priority? DM agreed that there is a huge amount of work to be done including south east England franchises and exploring how passenger interests are best served. Work has been done with passengers and passenger groups but the DfT needs to continue to hear the passenger voice.

DM suggested that Transport Focus could build on their excellent evidence base, credibility, and public profile by further increasing its impact becoming more challenging on behalf of passengers.

JH thanked DM for attending and hoped he would return for further discussions with the board in the not too distant future.

Part B continued: Standing Items

2.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

There were no comments on the previous minutes. There were no matters arising.

3.0 Board action matrix

The updated action matrix was **noted**.

4.0 Chief Executive's report

AS reported that the content of the 17-18 workplan is agreed in principle, but it needs to be placed in the context of a broader 3-year strategic plan. This is work in progress and will be brought to the next meeting.

4.0 Bus Cuts Tool Kit

DS commented that the Secretary of State's speech at the recent reception hadn't mentioned buses. Five years ago, Transport Focus was asked for a report by the Commons Transport Select Committee, given that evidence was showing local authorities were cutting bus services based on reduced funds. A toolkit was produced based on best practice ideas. This work was undertaken by Mike Bartram with support from Mike Hewitson.

This work has been recently refreshed; examples of good practice by local authorities, such as Wiltshire and East Riding, have been included. The toolkit, published in February 2017, is being shared with local authorities wherever possible and with other agencies such as the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers. There are still too many examples of poor performance in what are admittedly challenging times for local authorities; indeed some have cut funding for some services altogether with no consultation

The board was concerned at the extent of follow-through; what next? DS explained that letters were going to all chief executives of transport authorities, trade bodies and NGO's. Further good practice examples, such as from Lincolnshire and Cumbria, would help to put pressure on those local authorities where we struggled, for example Surrey.

The board asked that the excellent work the toolkit demonstrated was rolled into a coherent campaign plan, with clear deliverables and performance metrics.

1617-267	**Mar 17**	Bus Cuts Tool Kit	Create campaign plan for Bus Cuts Tool Kit	DS	July 2017

5.0 Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS 2)

GD introduced the draft of Transport Focus's road users' priorities for the second road investment strategy (2020-2025), which the board warmly welcomed; it put the user at the forefront of planning for perhaps the first time.

In particular, the board endorsed four key issues set out in the paper:

- Consideration should be given to transferring responsibility for litter picking of SRN 'A' roads from district and unitary authorities to Highways England (they have this responsibility already with Motorways)

- Consideration should be given to giving Highways England sole responsibility for the management of junctions with the SRN, removing risks (in particular safety risks) arising from split responsibilities at an inherent point of weakness
- The question as to whether the M6 Toll should be made temporarily free at the point of use when Highways England's M6 is closed, either for scheduled roadworks or because of an incident
- The idea that cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians might be better served if RIS2 had a clear objective to separate motorised and non-motorised traffic, rather than spend money on piecemeal improvements for a small number of individuals.

The Board asked GD to consider if the following were sufficiently reflected in the draft:

- Road users' desire for an end to very long stretches of roadworks, even if doing the work in shorter stretches takes longer and costs more
- In Section 4, the need for Highways England to have full control over the information it shows on Variable Message Signs (VMS), rather than needing to seek DfT authorisation
- In Section 5, the need for the RIS to commit to addressing deficiencies in lorry parking and A-road 'services' provision on the SRN

JH thanked GD and Phil Carey for an excellent piece of work, strongly evidence based, and looked forward to publication with updated emphasis as discussed.

1617-268	16/03/17	Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS 2)	Make agreed changes to document before publication	GD	April / May 2017

Part C: Workplan report

1.0 Workplan Report 2016-17

AS introduced the near-final Workplan report for 2016-17. Managers will be asked to take one last look to make sure it is completely up to date before it is published in final form.

The board agreed with the suggestion that in the workplan report for the coming year, better RAG descriptions – in particular those with an amber RAG – would lead to a more complete picture. The document remained useful as it is sometimes difficult to reflect on successes and achievements.

2.0 Finance report

The finance report was reserved (inaccurate dates, rather than financial data) and will be reissued.

3.0 Records of Projects

It was suggested, regarding next year's programme, that there is some scope for Transport Focus to be a bit more ruthless about prioritising new projects, i.e. making use of new opportunities to gather data rather than doing what we find interesting. There were no other comments.

1617-269	16/03/17	Finance Report	Re-issue	NH	April 2017
1617-270	16/03/17	Workplan report	RAG descriptors	MCa	May 2017

Part D: Corporate affairs

1.0 To receive and endorse draft Version 3 minutes of meetings (where available)

1.1 Passenger Contact Group: verbal update

ML reported that there hadn't been a recent meeting due to the Contact team handling a hugely increased workload. It was also agreed that it was too early in the development of the RPRS to discuss any further direct actions. The situation regarding the Contact Team had however been much improved; they now have 3 permanent passenger team advisors, 2 temporary passenger team advisors and 1 permanent coordinator. The co-ordinator role is proving very valuable indeed; they now have extensive contact with GWR over all non-response cases which leaves the SPTAs free to concentrate on their own cases.

The caseload is currently 130 per person which is still very high for one person to deal with. There are 1,086 cases open with there being 4,707 to date; this means the 2016-17 estimate of 5,000 appeals will be broadly correct.

The target average handling time is 35 days or less and the actual result has been 33 days. The satisfaction target of 70% has suffered and is now around 67% which, under the current climate, is not surprising and is still a respectable result.

1.2 Statistics Governance Group: 15 December 2016 (V2)

SL discussed the most recent meetings (the Group last met on 15 March). The key issues have been changes to the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and the retender of the contract, and the new Strategic Road User Survey. The Group was satisfied that good progress was being made, although it remained concerned about resourcing in respect of communications activity. There were no further questions or comments.

1.3 Audit, Risk Assurance and Remuneration Committee: 12 January 2017

ML highlighted key areas of these minutes. Firstly, regarding internal audit, four out of five internal audits have been completed this year. The first, on Information Risk, had a substantial grading as did the second, Roads Remit and Change Programme. It was suggested that there is some potential best practice learning to be shared with other organisations. The third, Data Transfer, has a moderate grading, with the final report currently being written. The fourth, on Project Governance, also had a moderate grading and the report for this is also due. The final internal audit, on Core Controls, is currently underway.

Secondly, on a cyclical basis, each team's risk reports were brought to the Committee and the head of the each team comes in to present and answers the Committee's questions. There has been major restructuring of risk registers as there has been major restructuring of the teams. There are now risk registers for the Transport Teams, CEO Team, the Insight Team, the Communications Team and the Corporate Services Team.

Lastly, the Committee has now added remuneration issues to its responsibilities. They struggled to get through everything in the recent meeting so more time will need to be allocated in future. The Committee had endorsed management proposals for a pay uplift of 1%, an increase in allowances of 1% and an increase in pay bands of 1%.

AS commented, and the Board agreed, that the amount of work the staff produce for the committee to get through in these meetings is astonishing. Congratulations to both staff and board members concerned.

2.0 <u>For approval by the Board</u>

2.1 Workplan 2017-18

AS advised this was discussed on 15 March and was 'work in progress'. Based on advice from DfT we will also be developing three year "look ahead" to be clear about what Transport Focus is trying to achieve in the longer term. Comments received have been useful. There needs to be a balance of how much the workplan demonstrates past impact and previous successes and what we plan for the future.

AS confirmed a final draft would be available for the next meeting in July.

2.2 Rail Passenger Redress Scheme proposal

JC introduced the paper and reported that this update was being brought to the Board for public record and endorsement.

JH noted the Board had already given their support to Transport Focus participating in the scheme and are being asked to formally note the progress made and note the fact that the Board will be consulted as necessary. This was agreed.

3.0 For noting by the Board

Items previously approved out of meeting

3.1 BRD1617-11 – BPS autumn 2016
Noted

3.2 BRD1617-12 – Northern Rail passenger research
Noted

3.3 BRD1617-13 – not approved – R97 – Surface access to airports
Noted

1617-271	Mar 17	Workplan 2017-2018	Bring version 12 of workplan to Members' event along with Stakeholder and Staff Survey Results	AS	May 17

1617-272	Mar 17	3 year Business Plan	Bring draft of 3 year plan to Board meeting	AS	Jul 17

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4.0 Any other business

Private session resolution

The board **RESOLVED** that, pursuant to the statutory provisions governing procedure, members of the public should be excluded from the meeting for the items set out below having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted:

Rail industry performance

The matter is commercially confidential: the affairs of an individual or organisations will be disclosed, and such disclosure may 'seriously and prejudicially' affect their interests

The resolution was proposed by Philip Mendelsohn and seconded by Stephen Locke. The Chair countersigned the resolution.

Members of the public were asked to leave the meeting. This part of the meeting ended at 12.45 hrs.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

J Halliwell

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

21/7/17

Date

DRAFTS