

Special Board meeting - timetable crisis in the north

Passengers in the north of England have endured severe disruption, especially since a new timetable was introduced on 20 May. Unprecedented delays, confusion and cancellations made life miserable for many passengers.

The Transport Focus Board will hold the industry to account at a meeting held in public in central Manchester at **1.30pm on 19 June**. We will hear from the managing directors of Northern, David Brown, and TransPennine Express, Leo Goodwin, and Patrick Cawley, Director of Route Sponsorship, Network Rail, to question them on recent poor performance, plans for compensation and how services and passenger confidence will be recovered.

What has been happening?

Passengers in the north of England have been having a torrid time, especially on lines in Lancashire and Cumbria. Since the timetable change on 20 May train performance deteriorated further, with numerous delays and cancellations¹. Among the worst affected passengers are those who had already been putting up with delayed Network Rail electrification works and rail replacement bus services.

On 4 June Northern implemented an emergency timetable. This has brought some stability but at the cost of removing 165 services and using rail replacement bus services on some routes. This includes replacing all trains with buses on the Lakes Line for four weeks. Industrial action continues to disrupt Northern passengers with RMT strikes planned on 19, 21 and 23 June.

TransPennine Express passengers have also endured disruption with poor train performance and an increase in cancellations since the timetable change².

What questions will Transport Focus be asking?

- Why has this happened?
- What is being done to stabilise performance?
- What compensation will passengers receive?
- How will passenger trust, for example on the Lakes Line, be recovered?
- How will communication with passengers be improved?
- How will a repeat be avoided at the next timetable change?
- What lessons have been learned?

¹ Northern performance statistics <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/corporate/333-performance>

² TransPennine Express performance statistics <https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/about-us/passengers-charter/performance-transparency>

Transport Focus's work on behalf of passengers

Warning about problems with timetables

Transport Focus first warned about fresh timetabling problems last autumn and recently found more problems. Transport Focus's investigation can be found [here](#).

Monitoring passengers' experience

We have used our Transport User Panel to get daily feedback from affected passengers. Transport Focus staff have been out on the network, including seeking feedback from passengers using the rail replacement bus service on the Lakes Line. We have [reported daily on our website](#).

Calling for action from Northern and Government

We have written to Secretary of State Chris Grayling, and Northern managing director David Brown – and published the correspondence [here](#).

Raising passengers concerns with the rail minister and Northern

We have met separately with rail minister Jo Johnson and Northern managing director David Brown. We discussed what's needed to restore a reliable service and confidence in rail travel in the north:

- reliable train performance and clear communication about the timetable that will be provided in the coming weeks
- compensation that recognises the full extent of the disruption to people's lives and Delay Repay measured against the original timetable promised, not just the slimmed-down one now on offer
- a robust plan to reinstate the 165 Northern train services that have been removed from the timetable as soon as possible.

Calling for compensation for passengers

Both Northern's and TransPennine Express's Passenger Charters include a commitment to compensate passengers when there is a period of 'sustained poor performance'. Northern has consulted with us and we are calling for:

- a cash payment for season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- recognition of the impact on regular travellers who do not buy season tickets – for instance part-time workers or regular leisure/business passengers
- special offers/marketing deals designed to rebuild trust and confidence once services have returned to normal
- the adoption of a 15-minute Delay Repay 'trigger' rather than 30-minute.

Providing advice to passengers

We've been giving advice to passengers about [what to do to claim compensation](#).

Helping passengers with complaints about their service

We mediate on behalf of passengers who have not had a satisfactory outcome to their complaint. We have seen a recent increase in contact from Northern and TransPennine Express passengers. The number of ongoing Northern complaint cases is currently more than twice that for any other train company.