

Passenger Voice Scotland

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



Scottish passengers happier with train services

Scottish passengers' satisfaction with their journey has soared with 90% of First ScotRail passengers reporting they're happy overall with the service they receive on the train and at the station.

Passenger Focus has launched the results of its Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey (NPS) in the Winter 2009 Passenger Voice bulletin. The findings show that satisfaction with First ScotRail has increased 6 points on the Autumn 2007 results with passengers reporting improvements to the provision of information about train times/platforms, ticket buying facilities, train punctuality and reliability, and the availability of staff on the train.

Passenger Focus warned there was still room for improvement with low percentages of passengers satisfied with car-parking (46%), toilet facilities (45%) and how train companies deal with delays (42%).

Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager for Scotland, will continue to work with First ScotRail to drive further improvements for Scottish passengers. Robert will also work closely with Passenger Focus

managers Julie Warburton, Susan Tibbett and Guy Dangerfield to improve the experience passengers receive on cross-border services.

Full results can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Scotland

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
CrossCountry	84	Car-parking facilities	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand
First ScotRail	90	Punctuality/reliability	No decline in satisfaction scores
National Express East Coast	88	How well the train company dealt with delays	Connections with other forms of public transport
Virgin Trains	84	How request to station staff was handled	Punctuality/reliability

Audit Scotland Report

Transport Scotland has received broad approval from Audit Scotland for its management of the First ScotRail (FSR) franchise.

Passenger Focus will be pursuing several qualifying

recommendations with Transport Scotland, including improving consultation with stakeholders, improving the link between performance measures and the priorities of both passengers and

wider government objectives, and the need for better connectivity between transport modes.

The three-year extension of the ScotRail franchise in return for a £73.1 million package to both reduce government subsidy and improve services, was also welcomed. Audit Scotland applauded FSR's service quality,



which is meeting targets and improving in most cases.

Faster services to Aberdeen

Passenger Focus welcomes the new timetable changes which signal journey-time reductions between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Passenger Focus manager for Scotland, Robert Samson, has been working with regional politicians and First ScotRail to try to minimise any passenger concerns.

The number of trains running between Edinburgh and Inverurie, calling at Aberdeen

and Dyce, increased from six to 10. They run non-stop between Haymarket and Leuchars thanks to a new hourly Edinburgh-Dundee service catering for the intermediate stops in Fife. This does, however, mean that northbound passengers from intermediate stations such as Kirkcaldy have to change at Dundee, and a petition has been raised to object to the loss of through services.

A Passenger Focus survey in 2006 revealed that journey-time savings of at least 15 minutes would be necessary between Aberdeen and Edinburgh for passengers to consider them worthwhile. The saving from December was 10 minutes, though this will be reduced when trains stop at Laurencekirk following the opening of the new station in Spring 2009. Although passengers will benefit from these changes, some have voiced concerns over connectivity issues.

News roundup

• ScotRail forum

Rail users were invited by ScotRail to a forum in Edinburgh, which was chaired by Passenger Focus manager Robert Samson. On the panel to answer questions were acting managing director Steve Montgomery and commercial director Peter Williams. Fife services and Sunday trains were two main subjects discussed.

• Anglo-Scottish high-speed line

Written and oral evidence has been given to the Scottish Parliament by Passenger Focus manager Robert Samson and board member James King in support of a high-speed rail link between Scotland and London. This aims to improve capacity of the rail network.

• Action on APRS

Following Passenger Focus's extensive research which highlighted the shortcomings of the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS), First ScotRail is working with Passenger Focus manager Robert Samson to identify ways of improving the service. The APRS enables passengers with disabilities to book assistance to help them access rail.

• Catering changes on East Coast

5 January saw changes to catering offered on National Express East Coast services. On many trains the traditional restaurant car has been replaced with a concept of at-seat dining in first class, with food still cooked to order on board many trains. Passenger Focus will be monitoring how the new style is received by passengers.

Virgin high-frequency timetable begins

Passenger Focus has criticised new year problems on the West Coast Main Line (WCML).

Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager for Scotland, said: "The upheaval caused by a horrific air accident and overhead line failures within days of each other are a double whammy for WCML passengers. This is not the best start to the new year for passengers and we hope that a normal service will resume as soon as possible – especially since passengers are now paying more to use the train. Furthermore, with the major investment the WCML has undergone, passengers would expect to see a greater resilience and a reduction

of infrastructure problems."

Passenger Focus will continue to monitor performance on the WCML and in particular the launch of the Virgin high-frequency service.

All the work on the WCML has been geared towards the new timetable that came into operation on 14 December, which includes improved services between Glasgow and London. The six-year upgrade will result in 30 per cent more Virgin train services on the route every day.

However, there is still concern about continuing weekend engineering works to improve line speed and capacity on the northern part of the route between Oxenholme Lake



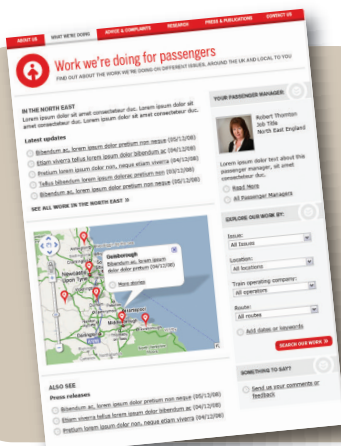
District and Lockerbie on Saturday and Sunday from 31 January to 22 March, meaning yet more disruption for passengers.

Passenger Focus will be keeping a close eye on the new timetable, together with how well Network Rail and Virgin handle alternative services during the line closures.

West Coast RUS work starts

The Stakeholder Management Group for the Network Rail (NR) West Coast Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) has met for the first time. This is the final RUS for the network and the process will last for around 20 months. It will look at a variety of issues on the West Coast Main Line, including evaluating how the December

2008 timetables are working in practice. Passenger Focus plans to undertake research in late Summer 2009 with passengers at various points along the route. In addition we plan to hold meetings between NR and Rail User Groups to find out what local groups believe the priorities for action should be.



Look at Scotland on Passenger Focus website

In February Passenger Focus will launch a new section on our website to show the work we are doing on behalf of passengers around the country. The

new area of the site will show our work by region and nation, train operating company, route and issues such as getting a seat or fares and ticketing.

It will also feature Google Maps™ technology which will allow website users to view any Passenger Focus work with a specific geographic location.