



Dear Member

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APTU / FCC annual meeting

Our annual meeting this year with FCC and Network Rail will be at 7:30pm on Thursday 12th June in St Albans.

It will be attended by David Statham (Managing Director) and Larry Heyman from FCC and, we hope, Justin Page or other senior Network Rail representative.

It will be in the main hall/nave at Trinity Church, Beaconsfield Road, St Albans – which is less than 100 metres from the Station. It can be found on Google Maps at <http://goo.gl/qZvcF>. The main hall is accessible by the disabled and has an accessible toilet.

More details nearer the time. In the mean time, links to both [ICS \(most Internet email services\)](#) and [VCS \(Outlook\)](#) format electronic invites are available on the website – use these to “save the date”.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2014/15 will be due for payment from 1 April. Please send a cheque for £3.00 (single membership) or £5.00 (joint membership) as soon as possible. I will of course accept payment at the meeting on 12 June.

Thank you

Malcolm Howe

Treasurer

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Class 700s: Official launch

The new Siemens Class 700 / City Desiro units were officially launched in late January at the Excel centre. There were two launch “parties”, the second for Rail User Groups, on the evening of 28 January. On the morning of the 29th there was a session for the rail industry, followed by an “open to all” session.

The official press release is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-state-of-the-art-passenger-train-unveiled>.

With the formal launch, a non-disclosure agreement that APTU and other Rail User Groups signed with FCC at the behest of the Department for Transport expired and we can now report in some detail on our views and recent interactions.

A description of the Class 700



The Class 700 comes as 8 and 12 coach trains, each with the same basic design; the full layout has been uploaded to our website and can be accessed at: http://aptu.org.uk/pdfs/class700_layout.pdf. Key characteristics include:

1. Two + two seating.
2. Wide doorways and stand back areas recessed from the doors (to prevent the ‘honour guard’ which means only one person can leave / board at the same time).
3. Open plan: wide inter-connections between coaches and no doors (like on London Overground and the new Metropolitan line trains).
4. Very much biased towards metro operation – ie St Pancras to London Bridge / Elephant & Castle and vica-versa.
5. Lightweight design.
6. Top speed 100 miles per hour.
7. Much improved Passenger Information systems including video and colour displays.

Because of 1 to 4 above, there are less seats per train than on the current trains on the line.

	Class 319 (See note 1)	Class 377	Class 700
8 car train			
1st class seats	24	20 (see note 3)	44 (see note 4)
Standard class seats	526	456	375
Standing	274	322	730
TOTAL	824	798	1,149

12-car train	(see note 2)		
1st class seats	36	30 (see note 3)	44 (see note 4)
Standard class seats	789	684	614
Standing	411	485	1,100
TOTAL	1,236	1,199	1,758

Notes

1. Class 319 configurations vary, this is typical for a unit with First class seats.
2. Theoretical, Class 319s cannot run in public service as 12 coach services – this is only allowable for empty coaching stock movements.
3. As delivered, double this number; campaigns by APTU and others resulted in 1 of 2 areas on each FCC 377 being converted to Standard class.
4. We understand that most or all bidders for the TS&GN franchise are planning to only run with one First class section (22 seats). We are not aware of plans for the introduction of First Class on current Standard Class only services (Wimbledon loop and most Sevenoaks services) and will lobby against its introduction should it be suggested (I think this is unlikely, particularly given announcements such as the reductions in First Class seating on First Great Western's High Speed Trains).

There are a lot of images on the web of the new Class 700s, including:

- DfT: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/transportgovuk/sets/72157640249845645/>
- Private individuals:
 - <http://www.ianvisits.co.uk/blog/2014/01/29/22-photos-of-the-new-thameslink-train/>
 - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mackenzieblu/sets/72157640284156676/with/12209932294/>
- The real thing (in German, showing actual units at a wind tunnel in Austria): <http://www.bahnnews-austria.at/forum/viewtopic.php?t=12090>

Note: Other than the last one, all are pictures of the full size model that has been prepared. The most important point about this is that as the model needs to show every different design element (First Class, Standard Class, 2 types of toilet, mobility impaired area, cycle area, luggage area etc); there will no coaches in the delivered trains laid out like the model.

Effect on capacity

Along with the new trains (once fully delivered), there will be an increase in services and average service length. FCC have provided us with this:

Furthermore, the train service requirement from the invitation to tender shows that the new service will, as a minimum, provide the following:

Midland Mainline (Fast)

- In the busiest hour of the morning peak **all Thameslink north services that run fast between St Albans and London** will be formed of 12 carriages, delivering approximately **30% more seats**.
- Over the **full 3 hour AM peak there will be over 50% more carriages providing approximately 30% more seats**.
- Over the full 3 hour AM peak the number of services increases from 18 to 24 (a third more).

Midland Mainline (Slow)

- There will be more services, some longer 12 carriage trains and new rolling stock with more standing room, providing **over 10% more seats** over the **full 3 hour peak**.
- Over the full 3 hour peak the number of services increases from **17 to 24**.

The APTU view

The APTU was invited to visit Kassel in Germany back in April last year, along with other Rail User Groups (“RUGs”) including the BCA, Rail Future and RUGs from the Brighton Main line and Great Northern. Passenger Focus and London Travel Watch also sent representatives and there was a disability representative there as well.

We inspected the full scale mock up that was shown at Excel in January and discussed various aspects of the design with FCC, Siemens and the Department for Transport.

Following the visit, we wrote a combined response to FCC setting out our views on the Class 700. There was a considerable degree of agreement between the RUG representatives who went to Germany to view the mock-up. Many aspects of the layout were widely praised, including the provision of accessible toilets, grab rails and poles and wide circulation areas at doorways. The two main concerns were:

- Narrow Standard Class seats. The BCA and APTU had previously inspected the seat design at Siemens in Northampton and fed back that they were narrow and uncomfortable and that a large duct at ankle level was a real issue. Since then the duct had been reduced in size and the seat improved. However the final design is still quite lightly padded and still very close together – the main issue is not the seat design, but their closeness – just moving the seats apart by 25/50mm (1 to 2 inches) would have made an enormous difference.
- Lack of tables in Standard Class. Standard Class has no tables and we saw this as an issue particularly for leisure and off peak travellers. There were two reasons given: Tables would add £9m to the total cost of the project; the bigger concern to the designers is apparently how tables would impair quick access and egress in the Central Core. The view of RUGs was that the cost could easily be recouped, because by making the trains more appealing to leisure travellers and off-peak business travellers (over the life time of the train, the per annum cost is small) and that some tables would not slow down exit notably (eg we accepted that there might be no tables at the seats nearest the doors; bay tables might only be half width).

Slightly lesser concerns include:

- Low numbers of seats in bays in Standard Class – ie facing each other, again with particular benefit for families. There was some re-design following our visit, but the portion is still too low in our view.
- Lack of power sockets in Standard Class.

We also had two notable concerns, but these are well within the remit of the new TS&GN operator to address:

- Lack of Wifi in Standard Class – I believe many of the bidders have included this in their submission.
- Too many First Class seats – see comments above.

It is important to acknowledge that many smaller suggestions made by the RUGs were acted upon:

- Wheelchair emergency alarm;
- Hand dryer label location;
- More bay seating;
- Clearer identification of first class;
- Move of four seats from near toilet;
- Handholds in 2+1 area;
- First class door partition handle design;
- Door rotation near toilet;
- Folding bike storage;
- Rack next to disabled toilet;

- Coat hooks in toilet;
- Extra rubbish bins;
- Edges of overhead displays;
- Rain-strip location.

Following the initial reply from FCC we then wrote to both the relevant Minister and the Head of the Major Projects and Growth Rail Group at the DfT regarding the lack of tables. We received a somewhat unsatisfactory reply from the DfT. I have subsequently spoken to the DfT and two key points emerged:

1. There are now no real opportunities to further influence the design of the trains pre-delivery. A combination of possible delays in delivery and cost is going to effectively prevent change. It is clear that the first of these reasons is the bigger driver.
2. The DfT is very keen that RUGs remain engaged with the Rail Industry, in particular the successful bidder for the TS&GN in order to influence how the train is used etc.

What will happen to our Rolling Stock between now and arrival of all the class 700s?

There is a fairly extensive cascade of rolling stock during the move from a mainly class 319 fleet to a wholly class 700 fleet. FCC have recently confirmed that some class 319s will be released this summer (to be used in North West, I believe) and will be replaced with the same number of class 377s from Southern.

FCC also confirmed that new Class 387s will be temporarily allocated to Thameslink services. These new trains are due for delivery from 2015 and be with us for around 2 years before they are switched to Corby services once the Midland Main Line is electrified. Class 387s are basically updated and improved Class 377s with 2 + 2 seating throughout. They are 110mph capable, but I suspect that the TS&GN franchisee will elect to limit them to 100mph as they will only be using them temporarily.

Beyond this, the arrangements are somewhat unclear, but at present there are no indications that stock allocated to Thameslink routes will be reduced. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true – I do not think there will be a significant increase until enough Class 700s have been received.

Request to participate in an Academic study

APTU has received this:

Dear Association of Public Transport users (Bedford - London line)

My name is Martyn Tobin and I am currently conducting research at Loughborough University about passenger needs during unplanned disruption. Information about my project can be found here: www.mjtobin.co.uk.

Part of my project is to collect data from FCC users using a questionnaire I've developed. I was wondering if you could share this research questionnaire to help my research.

The questionnaire can be found: <http://disruption.mjtobin.co.uk>

Any questions or concerns, please let me know!

Kindest Regards,

Martyn Tobin

Martyn comments on his website "This research project has the permission of First Capital Connect and has passed all ethical requirements set by Loughborough University. The data provided will at no point be sold or given to any third party." – he contacted us from a Loughborough University student email address.

Friday 17th January: Hendon dewirement

At the recent St Albans Council update, FCC commented:

- It was an FCC fault: A pantograph failure.
- More could have been done: both prevention and in response.
- The unexpected delay in reinstating the service from early Saturday to Saturday afternoon was because they were optimistic and failed to deliver.
- As a result of the incident a new tactical command facility will be set up at Bedford – it has been concluded that the existing arrangement – located at Derby – is too far away.

Cancellations on Monday 17th February: Patcham Tunnel flooded

Anyone who travelled (or attempted to travel) on Monday 17th February will have been faced with a much reduced service. The immediate cause of this was flooding in Patcham Tunnel just north of Brighton. The main source of the flooding was very high ground water levels following the recent rain.

The service levels provided by FCC were similar to those provided during very bad weather; a key APTU concern is why the tunnel closure had such a big impact.

The main reason for the impact is the way FCC allocate their drivers. FCC have two big depots – at Bedford and Brighton, and a smaller depot at London Blackfriars. However drivers can work throughout the network - for instance a Brighton driver might start by driving to St Albans, take a break (“PNB” or Personal Needs Break in the industry jargon), then drive a train from St Albans round the Wimbledon loop, handing over at Blackfriars. Their final drive would be to return to Brighton from Blackfriars. When the Brighton driver is unavailable, this results in cancellations in all areas of the network. This diagramming allows for efficient use of driver hours.

Whilst APTU understands that some disruption is inevitable after problems such as the Patcham Tunnel closure, we do think that the amount of service cut back is excessive. We will be pressuring FCC to prepare a set of simple driver diagrams that allow more services to be operated.

FCC spoke at the St Albans District Council recently and outlined the sequence of events:

- Thursday: Warned water levels would increase and a blockage was likely.
- Friday: Created timetable. The planning assumption was that they would effectively lose Brighton. They assumed no railway and no road; thus Brighton drivers could not be used in the plan. They wanted to make it robust: therefore less efficient. The plan was 2 trains per hour Bedford <> Hassocks, 2 round the Wimbledon loop and the standard Southeastern services.
- Sunday: Block was confirmed and also told Southeastern services could not run (they were diverted to Victoria).
- Monday: Buses were located at South Mimms services (junction A1(M) and M25), but were not called off to go to St Albans when they were needed (they did not arrive until 9:15am); in addition the Arriva voucher system was not activated (Uno ticket acceptance was in place).
 - APTU Note: Because UNO Buses have in-cab radios, when FCC want their tickets to be valid they speak to UNO Control, who then radio this instruction to their drivers. Arriva buses do not have radios, and instead an FCC staff member needs to speak to the driver and give them a voucher.

Lack of buses at St Albans

We also followed up the lack of buses at St Albans separately and received this reply:

It was only late on Sunday that it was established that only four trains per hour would run in each direction between St Albans and London. It was previously anticipated that the normal shared FCC / South Eastern trains services would run, which would have resulted in eight, rather than 4 trains an hour running from St Albans towards London during the morning peak. While still a reduction in the normal services, it would have enabled the majority of passengers to travel. It was not until late on Sunday night that it was established that the necessary resources would not be available for those trains to operate. Ten rail replacement buses were ordered and were based at South Mimms Services for call off to Luton or St Albans as required.

Unfortunately these buses were not directed to St Albans station as early as they should have been. As your member acknowledged, our response to service disruption has improved and we regret that the level of the train service and alternative travel arrangements that were in place on 17 February were below the level that we would have wished to provide. The reasons for this have been identified and action is being taken to ensure that we provide a better response if a similar situation arises.

Performance

FCC have updated us as follows:

During Period 12 (4 weeks to 1 March) we experienced consistently challenging circumstances that impacted on the performances of our services. Against a Public Performance Measure of 90.79% of on time trains we achieved 82.10%.

From the 14th February to the 18th February we experienced severe disruption on the Thameslink route. This resulted from flooding near Patcham Tunnel that impacted on track safety and damaged signalling equipment. While the cause of this disruption was located on the southern section of the Thameslink route, the disruption it caused was widespread and impacted services as far north as Bedford and around the Wimbledon Loop.

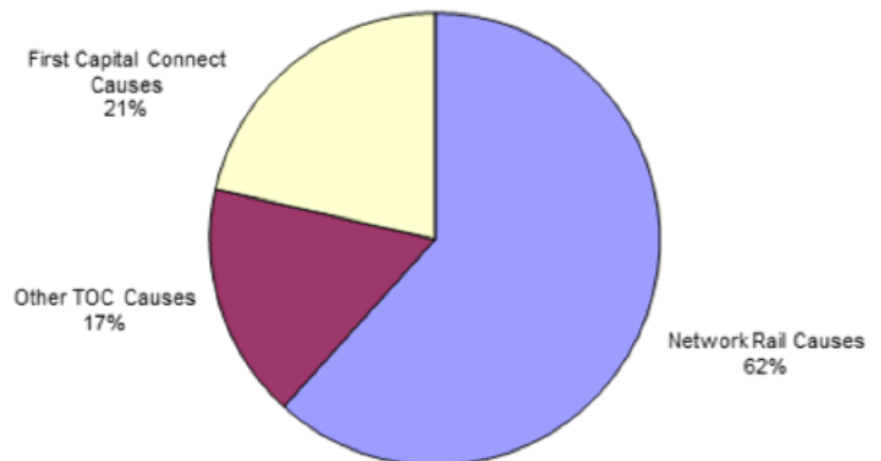
While further strikes were called off, industrial action by some Transport for London staff had an impact on FCC's services that serve stations in central London. This is because some stations that are served by our trains are manned by TfL staff and not all of those stations could open while industrial action took place.



Where our services are disrupted we seek to provide up-to-date information to passengers as quickly as possible and, as appropriate, arrange for replacement bus services.


Major causes of disruption

<i>Date</i>	<i>Incident detail</i>	<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Delay Minutes</i>	<i>Trains cancelled</i>	<i>Trains Affected</i>
14-17/02/14	Flooding between Hassocks and Preston Park	NR	3,477	94	304
07/02/14	OLE damaged by water ingress in Potters Bar Tunnel	NR	1,924	41	370
07/02/14	Object damaged OLE near Huntingdon	NR	1,330	67	140
25/02/14	Traction power cable fire at Sutton	NR	778	68	113

First Capital Connect - Thameslink Route Delay Responsibility (13 Periods) Year ending 01/03/2014



05/02/14	Station closures due to LUL industrial dispute	FCC	185	121 	153
06/02/14	Station closures due to LUL industrial dispute	FCC	41	110 	118

 I believe the majority of these were on the Moorgate branch of the Great Northern.

National Passenger Survey

The latest National Passenger Survey has been published: <http://bit.ly/1plZITg>. FCC had this to say:

First Capital Connect (FCC) has showed strong signs of improvement according to the latest National Passenger Survey (NPS) results, despite its network experiencing major service disruption due to severe infrastructure failures. The company's future plans, aim to boost these results even further going forward providing passengers with better value for money.

FCC achieved an 'overall satisfaction' score of 79% which is 2% lower than our autumn 2012 results. The biggest improvement overall for FCC was in 'how the train company deals with delays' where satisfaction has risen by 10% from this time last year to 43%. This is 5% higher than the current London & South East average. This is as a result of improved information systems and customer service training for front line staff.

The satisfaction in the 'upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms' has risen by 8% to 75%, which reflects FCC's continued commitment to investing in stations including refurbishing areas such as ticket offices and booking halls, enhancing accessibility and installing car parks and better cycle parking facilities. The satisfaction of the 'cleanliness of the train' has also increased – up 2% to 67% for inside and up 7% to 63% for outside. This reflects the £350,000 investment and great efforts made by FCC's train presentation staff who have almost completed deep-cleaning the entire fleet of trains.

However, results for the 'punctuality and reliability' of the service have dropped from 81% to 74% over the past year due to passengers experiencing mainly severe and regular delays because of infrastructure failures. These failures included overrunning engineering works on 27 August and a section tripping fault on 13 September – both at Alexandra Palace. FCC is working in partnership with Network Rail to improve infrastructure reliability and with other train operating companies to improve response time when these failures occur and ultimately improve service performance.

Of the 36 categories that are monitored as part of the survey, FCC was higher than the London & South East average in 15 of them – 12 of which were in regards to station aspects such as cleanliness of the station and the facilities available. This is a reflection of all the work that is being carried out as part of the 'Better Stations' scheme. In 18 of the 36 categories FCC scored higher than it did this time last year, and in 35 our 36 categories FCC scored better than in spring 2013.

Passengers have said that there is insufficient 'room to sit and stand', which will be addressed through the Thameslink Programme and the new Class 700 trains.

First Capital Connect is also running several initiatives to provide its passengers better value for money. This includes a 'January sale' of 10% for off peak day return tickets bought online, a 22.5% discount on super off peak (weekend and bank holiday) tickets and a promotions to get 2 for 1 offers at over 150 attractions, restaurants, and theatres. This has already led to a 5% increase in 'value for money' satisfaction since spring 2013.

We understand that recent infrastructure failures have made it difficult for our passengers to travel and have put their patience to the test.

We will continue to work with Network Rail to allow more access to improve maintenance activities and to identify ways so we can improve the service that we offer to our passengers, as we recognise the need to urgently improve performance.

Network Rail has already announced a £15m investment package into the Great Northern route to improve reliability.

We are constantly working to create a better railway. When things go wrong because of infrastructure failures, we will do our best to put things right quickly. Another key aim is supporting Network Rail to minimise problems caused by their infrastructure on our route.

2014 fares

We have received a full set of fares from FCC for 2014, and these are available from our website at http://aptu.org.uk/excel/tlnorth_fares2014.xls (Microsoft Excel file).

FCC Franchise extension

FCC have finalised their agreement with the Department for Transport for an extension to their current franchise from 1 April 2014 until 14 September 2014. I have heard that it also caters for the possibility of a further extension should the DfT not be able to award the new TS&GN franchise for a start date of 15 September 2014.

FCC provided us with this update:

I am pleased to inform you that FirstGroup has signed an agreement with the Department for Transport to operate the First Capital Connect franchise for a further six months. This means that FCC will operate from 1 April 2014 until 14 September 2014 when the new Thameslink Southern and Great Northern franchise is anticipated to start. This is a testament to the hard work my team have put in over the last year to improve the railway. The new franchise period gives us the opportunity to continue delivering our programme of improvements, in order to change our customers' experience of FCC services for the better.

Last year brought challenges including two large storms and several significant infrastructure failures, which tested our resilience plans. I am pleased that we were strong in providing continuous and consistent information to customers during what were difficult times. In the face of these challenges, we also successfully delivered an investment of £350,000 to improve the internal cleanliness of our trains, which showed an increase in passenger satisfaction.

The work we have done to improve specific business areas has been successful as we have seen marked improvements since last year's National Passenger Survey (NPS) including with the cleanliness of trains (67% inside up by 2% and 63% outside up by 7%), the upkeep and repair of stations (75% up by 8%), the attitude and helpfulness of staff (75% up by 5%), and value for money (37% - up by 5% since spring 2013). We also introduced a number of improvements to customer information and the way we handle disruptions, which led to the latest NPS results going up by 10 points in the way we deal with delays (now at 43%).

With this in mind, we are prioritising the following key objectives for 2014:

- Improving operational performance, by working closely with NR to reduce infrastructure failures
- Providing passengers better value for money, by improving services and information and delivering major programmes to improve stations and trains
- Continuing to enhance employee and customer safety, through our Injury Prevention and etiquette campaigns

We have already launched the new Class 700 train, and are now pressing ahead with the roadshow to ensure a maximum number of employees and passengers get the chance to see the model of the train and find out more about the project. Whilst we have made strong progress in 2013, performance and the reliability of our infrastructure remains a key issue to tackle. Network Rail has publicly apologised for the continued disruption and I am leading discussions with them to drive more improvements in the short term so we can offer our passengers the service that they deserve.

We have a number of exciting projects coming up, including:

- The launch event for the second Class 365 train due to come in service in March. With each refreshed train, passengers' experience of FCC will improve as they enjoy a more comfortable journey.
- FCC will deliver a £2.5 million improvement plan providing passengers better value for money. This will see the following improvements being delivered: WiFi at key stations, extra cleaners on trains, enhanced customer service training, a new website rainbow board providing an at a glance view of our services, better customer information at stations through new and enhanced customer information systems, improved graffiti removal measure and additional staff to provide customer information and assistance.
- We will continue our role as the Thameslink Programme delivery partner on behalf of the DfT. Having concluded the design and initiated manufacture of the trains, we will be commencing dynamic testing of the trains at the dedicated test centre in Wildenrath, Germany, in March. Work is also progressing well with the construction of the two depots and the changes to stabling locations to support the new fleet of trains. Preparations are also underway with the development of training packages and the safety assessments associated with the introduction of a new fleet of trains.
- FCC will deliver a programme of heavy maintenance without having to reduce the number of trains in service. We will receive six class 377 Electrostar trains to cover the heavy maintenance of 83 class 319 units and will also receive two class 317 trains to cover the class 365s that are being overhauled. We will give back three class 319s to Porterbrook trains as part of the industry cascade.
- A series of station improvement plans are underway, and others are planned for completion by the end of the franchise period. These include: refurbishing subways at Elephant and Castle and Hertford north, replacing canopies at Gordon Hill, introducing lifts at Hitchin, Hatfield, Letchworth, Elstree & Borehamwood and Stevenage, resurfacing the car park at Bedford and refurbishing King's Lynn.

We believe that the next six months and beyond will be an exciting time for First Capital Connect passengers and hope that you will agree. Please do get in touch with me or my team if you need any more information on any aspect of today's announcement.

Best wishes,

David Statham

Managing Director - First Capital Connect

London Bridge: No FCC services in late August

A quick reminder:

Saturday 23 August to Sunday 31 August 2014

Again, as a result of the building work, our Thameslink route services will not be able to stop at London Bridge on these dates and will instead be diverted along our alternative route between Blackfriars and East Croydon. Some services via Blackfriars will operate with 12 carriages which will run fast from East Croydon to Blackfriars. Other services will call at Elephant & Castle. Some weekday services are expected to be much busier than usual, especially between East Croydon and central London.

FCC's etiquette campaign

FCC have launched the second round of their etiquette campaign ("Ed Tickett"), providing this update:

First Capital Connect launched its 'Modern Day Guide to Train Etiquette' last October. The guide proved extremely successful and 77% of surveyed passengers indicated it would change their behaviour in relation to safety and etiquette on the railway. Having listened to this feedback, we have now launched the next phase of this campaign. The next phase of the campaign was presented to the travelling public at an event at King's Cross station today (10/3/14) alongside an animation video of the previous ten messages which can also be found on the company's [website](http://www.fcc.co.uk). You can find a link to the video at [youtube.com/watch?v=j6HPn0U0tEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6HPn0U0tEw).

The latest etiquette issues addressed by the campaign are:

- Putting feet on seats
- Bringing bicycles on trains
- Being more considerate to FCC employees
- Giving up your seat for those who need it most

The popularity of ‘The Modern Day Guide to Train Etiquette’ was unprecedented when compared to any awareness campaign we have done before. The challenge then was to build upon this using our passengers’ feedback and that is what we have done with the introduction of four new images as well as unveiling an animation video that is entertaining yet relays important messages.

Office of Rail Regulation view on recent Network Rail performance – “Coped well”

In their most recent regular assessment the Office of Rail Regulation (“ORR”) had this to say:

ORR’s analysis found that Network Rail, working with the rest of the industry, coped well with the wettest winter in almost 250 years. Train punctuality was severely impacted by the weather, and the report highlights that rather than focussing on performance targets during this exceptional period, Network Rail rightly concentrated on working with train operators to keep passengers informed and get them to their destinations safely. ORR has asked Passenger Focus to research individual passengers’ views on how well information was provided during the storms of January and February 2014.

.... The rail industry is focussed on responding to the challenge of severe weather conditions and climate change. Network Rail has committed to provide plans for all routes by September 2014 which list specific and critical works required to improve network resilience, and to identify any improvements urgently needed before then.

To read the Network Rail Monitor in full, visit: <http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/regulation-of-network-rail/monitoring-performance/network-rail-monitor>.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

23 March 2014