

ORR Consumer Expert Panel

22nd March 2018, 13.00-17.00

One Kemble Street, London



Agenda

13.00	Arrival
13.00 -13.10	Welcome and Introductions
13.10 -13.30	Update from ORR Staff Briefing
13.30-13:45	ORR decisions document - changes to complaint handling / ombudsman
13.45-14.45	Consultation on Improving Assisted Travel
14.45-15.00	Break
15.00 – 15.45	Managing major incidents of unplanned disruption on the motorway network
15.45-16.30	Car Parks Review
16.30-16.45	AOB & Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and introductions

Stephanie Tobyn thanked those who were able to attend following date change after earlier meeting was postponed due to bad weather. Susan James, the new representative from London TravelWatch was welcomed to the panel.

2. Update from ORR staff briefing

ORR arranged for a member of the panel to present at an all staff briefing in February. The aim of the presentation was to encourage other directorates from across ORR to come to the panel and utilise the wide range of knowledge and experience on offer. It was stressed that the panel are a consumer expert panel, not an expert consumer panel. The usefulness of engagement, particularly when there is some ambiguity surrounding aspects of colleagues work was promoted. As was the panel's ability to allow staff to take a back step and look at their work from a distance and receive comments and suggestions of what happens in other industries.

Overall the session was deemed a success and it was felt that allowing staff to put a face to panel members would hopefully break down any existing barriers.

3. ORR decisions document - changes to complaint handling guidance / ombudsman

Marcus Clements provided the panel with a short update following his attendance at the previous panel meeting in December 2017.

Following a consultation on changes to complaints handling guidance, Marcus informed the panel of the conclusions set out in ORR's February 2018 decision letter. These were:

- consumers should be signposted directly to the ADR scheme;

- the time limit for signposting should be eight weeks; and
- we are minded to modify the complaints handling licence condition to require membership of an ADR scheme within six months of scheme commencement and will consult on doing so.

RDG, who are leading on the procurement of the Rail Ombudsman, are expected to make an imminent decision following their tender process.

4. Consultation on Improving Assisted Travel

The consultation, which closed on 2nd February, received over 800 responses from industry, Disability Groups, Government and members of the public. Responses brought out much of the good work being carried out across the industry; which was then picked up and discussed in more detail during ORR's engagement programme.

The four main categories of the consultation: staff training, reliability, passenger awareness and monitoring were discussed by the panel.

Staff Training: Responses were largely in favour of the industry adopting a common approach to training with a single training framework and core curriculum. The panel noted the need for the industry to identify the 'training champions' from within their organisation to ensure that training programmes remain relevant and effective. The importance of employees receiving soft skills training was also highlighted by the panel, as was the importance of ensuring staff are being developed, and not tested, as part of their training.

Reliability: Assistance failures more often occur at interchanges during a passenger's journey. The panel noted this has always been an issue for the industry and felt that ORR could challenge RDG and its members to do more to help deliver improvements for passengers. Financial fines were suggested as a powerful tool in encouraging the industry to improve. The panel also felt that DfT could assist by embedding requirements into the franchise process.

Awareness: The panel noted the lack of promotion of Assisted Travel services and felt that the industry should do more, especially when informing passengers of their rights and entitlements. This was highlighted throughout the consultation responses, with respondents largely favouring the adoption of a national campaign. The panel noted the effectiveness of ORR's mystery shopping research and suggested ORR could continue such research possibly in conjunction with RDG. Responses were also in favour of the industry promoting Assisted Travel through public services, such as GP surgeries, libraries, churches, etc. The panel agreed this would help the industry to reach a wider audience of potential users of Assisted Travel services.

Monitoring: David Kimball advised the panel that ORR would be using an ongoing passenger survey from period 1 2018/19 to assess industry's performance in delivering of Assisted Travel, including users' feedback on their experiences. The survey will provide data on a periodic basis and allow us to benchmark performance and identify issues as and when they arise. This was welcomed by the panel.

ORR acknowledged the public and political concerns in this area and will be developing a work programme throughout 2018/19. Work will be ongoing with industry and ORR will be undertaking further public consultation later this year.

5. Managing major incidents of unplanned disruption on the motorway network

Following recent incidents on the network in the last year ORR have felt that Highways England's could do more to manage disruptions.

The pane noted the uniqueness of the motorway network and agreed that Highways England could do more and suggested they should embrace technology to alert or get in touch with drivers and ensure that warning and key messages are shared as early as possible. The panel stressed the importance that all messages sent to road users must be clear and suggested Highways England could consider focusing their messages onto passengers rather than the driver to try and have a greater impact.

Obtaining feedback from affected road users was also suggested as a useful mechanism for Highways England to understand the impact of disruption and help the network to become more resilient to future occurrences.

The panel also highlighted the relationship the rail industry has with British Transport Police in managing disruption across the network, but were cognisant that a similar relationship between Highways England would be difficult to achieve.

Finally, it was suggested that Highways England could do more to empower road users, similar to how passengers are empowered in the rail industry; by taking the decision not to travel away from drivers will ensure that the motorway network is less impacted during times of disruption.

6. Car parks review

For many passengers, an important part of their passenger experience is the availability and price of station car parks. ORR carried out desk based research and data analysis into car parking (looking at over 2500 station car parks across GB), in order to investigate:

- The level of car parking charges compared to non-railway benchmarks; and
- What, if anything, tended to drive high car parking prices, in particular whether there was a tendency for station car parks to exploit monopoly positions conferred by factors including outsourcing to third party operators who also control nearby parking facilities.

ORR worked with data obtained from RDG, via a National Rail Enquiries dataset, and from other external online sources (dataset purchased from Parkopedia). ORR found the data was limited and lacked quality but ORR now see the opportunity to further enhance the data set and carry out a further review in the future.

The panel noted the robustness of ORR's research and suggested the team look at reviewing smaller samples, e.g. big city car parks, in parallel with the ongoing larger review to help increase the completeness and the overall picture.

The panel acknowledged the impact car parks complaints can have on passengers, and suggested that ORR look to identify the reasons people complain about car parks. If this was largely down to fare increases then understanding this would help strengthen ORR's argument and regulatory position.

7. AOB & Meeting Summary

The panel agreed that the format of the meeting worked well and allowed for increased discussion on the key areas brought to them by the presenters.

ORR requested more formal feedback from the panel and advised that input would also be requested from presenters to help increase the effectiveness of future meetings.

Stephanie Tobyn advised that ORR will share publication of ORR's Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) mystery shopping research following publication on 28th March.

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