

TransPennine Express given 'public target' for performance recovery

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Rail operator TransPennine Express (TPE) has been set a 'public target' for its performance recovery.

The move, agreed by leaders across the North in January, follows a period late last year when the operator returned the worst performance figures in the country, sometimes with less than half their services meeting basic performance targets. TPE services suffered badly as the operator struggled to introduce new trains which arrived late into service and which experienced teething problems.

Now, Transport for the North says it expects TPE to deliver a service that restores passenger trust and rebuilds confidence in the railway as it sets benchmark performance targets for the operator to:

- return performance to early 2019 levels by March 2020
- improve further on this target by summer 2020
- show clear progress in restoring its full timetable
- show clear progress in timely local communication to passengers

Strategic Rail Director for Transport for the North, David Hoggarth, said: "Passengers in the North of

England must have a rail service they can rely on. In the run-up to Christmas last year TPE simply failed to provide what was needed. The operator must now build back trust and deliver what is needed. The new trains are welcome, and the extra capacity they bring is much needed, but service levels must be maintained as they come on stream.”

Transport for the North has determined that the first milestone should be for TPE’s performance in March 2020 to reach the level achieved in the first half of 2019, assessed against what is known as the Public Performance Measure (PPM) – a measure of punctuality and reliability.

In the first half of 2019 (covering 6 January to 22 June), the median daily PPM stood at 86%. Transport for the North will make an initial assessment against progress at the end of March 2020 and consider further milestones at that point. In November 2019, at some points, TPE’s performance stood as low as 45% PPM.

After TPE removed a number of services because of the late introduction of new rolling stock, Transport for the North now expects the operator to demonstrate clear progress in restoring a full timetable as the trains come into service, while protecting the reliability, capacity and resilience of existing services. In addition, as part of the recovery plan, Transport for the North expects TPE to demonstrate clear evidence of better communications to passengers, in real time, at an appropriate local level.

This month TPE announced that customer who are delayed by 15 minutes or more will be entitled to compensation.

Delay Repay 15 (DR15) is a further extension of the current Delay Repay compensation that customers receive, when their train is delayed by 30 minutes or more.

Customers who are delayed by 15 minutes or more will be able to claim back 25% of their ticket price for a single ticket, 12.5% of their ticket price for a return ticket and season ticket holders will also be able to claim compensation should their train be delayed.

Leo Goodwin, Managing Director for TransPennine Express said: “We absolutely agree that our customers should benefit from improved performance. We have been very open about the fact that this was nowhere near good enough before Christmas and we have apologised to our customers for this.

“Since the start of the year we have made a number of changes which has seen our performance improve, but we know that there is more to be done. At the start of February, we reintroduced the majority of services that we had temporarily removed, with the remainder of these services to be introduced next week.

“Performance this past week has been severely affected by the extreme weather that impacted the whole of the transport industry and we are working hard to recover from this.

“We continue with our plans, which sees even more new trains on our network, an increase in capacity and improving our customers journeys with us. We also continue to work closely with Network Rail, Northern and other rail operators, whose performance also underpins our ability to deliver improved train service performance.”

Photo credit: Transport for the North