

12 Quality of service (QS)

Provincial's quality objectives

12.1. Provincial publishes standards for punctuality, cancellations, cleaning, booking office queues and telephone enquiry bureaux answering lines. These standards have been agreed with the Government and to the extent that BRB and thus Provincial is the recipient of a PSO grant, they represent an agreed level of service quality at a given level of subsidy. As shown in Appendix 4.2, Provincial has achieved significant reductions in its PSO requirement so it is important to be able to measure the level of service quality.

(a) Punctuality and cancellations

12.2. The current targets for punctuality and cancellations for Provincial Express services are listed in Table 12.1. Those for the Rural and Urban services are shown in the frequency analysis results in Table 12.2.

TABLE 12.1 Punctuality and cancellations targets for Provincial Express services

	per cent of trains	
	Within 5 mins of right time	Maximum cancellations
ScotRail Express	85	1
TransPennine Express	85	1
Midland Express (except B-L)	85	0.5
Birmingham-Lincoln	90	0.5
Western Express (except B-W)	85	0.5
Bristol-Weymouth	90	0.5

Source: BRB.

TABLE 12.2 Frequency analysis of QS targets

	Number of services in band							
	No target	80%	85%	90%	95%	97%	98%	100%
<i>Arrivals within 5 minutes of RT</i>								
Express	—	—	4	2	—	—	—	—
Rural	1	5	14	11	12	1	—	—
Urban	—	1	7	16	23	8	3	2
<i>Maximum cancellations</i>								
		No target		0.5%		1.0%		
Express		—		4		2		
Rural		13		19		11		
Urban		15		3		42		

Source: MMC analysis of BRB data.

12.3. Targets are fixed on the basis of experience of running each service and show that for Express services, the timetable for Western Express (excluding Bristol-Weymouth) is inherently less reliable than for other Express services and that the Birmingham-Lincoln service has the highest target for punctuality. Rural service targets vary from 80 to 97 per cent for arrival within five minutes of RT. Urban service punctuality targets are generally higher than Express and Rural services though the target for maximum level of cancellations is also higher.

12.4. Provincial told us it was unhappy with the variation in its published quality targets and it had therefore initiated discussions with the Department of Transport (DTp) and the Central Transport Consultative Committee (CTCC) about possible changes. In putting its proposals to the CTCC Provincial wrote that:

The proposals have been discussed informally with the Department of Transport, who have expressed support for the proposals in general terms. The targets for InterCity and NSE are easier to understand because in each case there is just one published target for the whole sector, reflecting the fact

that the customers' aspirations within each sector are broadly the same regardless of route. Nevertheless it is expected that some routes will perform better than target and some correspondingly worse, reflecting if nothing else the great variation in age of equipment and physical layout. The targets therefore are average targets for each sector.

12.5. Provincial proposed that:

- (a) Express services should adopt InterCity punctuality targets (90 per cent of trains to arrive within ten minutes of RT) reflecting the fact that Provincial's Express customers had much in common with InterCity customers;
- (b) Urban services (excluding PTE services targets for which are set by the PTEs) should adopt the NSE targets (90 per cent of trains to arrive within five minutes of RT); and
- (c) longer-distance Rural services (over one hour's duration) should adopt InterCity targets as in (a) above and shorter-distance Rural services should adopt NSE targets as in (b) above.

12.6. In its reply the CTCC agreed that the reporting of performance against existing published targets was meaningless and noted that the proposed targets represented averages. Moreover, the MMC had in their report on NSE recommended that NSE should move towards achieving the network standards on each of its individual services and the CTCC hoped that Provincial would be able to follow the same approach. The CTCC further expressed concern that the proposed target for Provincial Express services and longer-distance Rural services represented a reduction in standards, ie from 85 to 97 per cent of arrivals within five minutes of RT to 90 per cent within ten minutes of RT. In addition the CTCC said that:

the extensive use of Provincial Express services for short-distance commuting journeys, as well as their frequent stopping patterns with numerous tight connections, demand a higher standard of punctuality than the 90 per cent within ten minutes target set for InterCity, an objective which, as Provincial is aware, the Committee finds unacceptable.

The CTCC therefore argued that published punctuality targets for NSE were the most appropriate for the whole of Provincial. Provincial informed us that most of the services which would have the 90 per cent within ten minutes target currently had an 85 per cent within five minutes target.

(b) Train loading standards

12.7. Provincial told us that all services had load factor standards but these were not published. Load factor targets were used internally for non-PTE Urban services and were set at the same level as in NSE (ie no more than 135 per cent for sliding-door trains and 110 per cent for slam-door trains; and no standing over 20 minutes except by choice). Provincial told us that when first agreed internally the load factor targets were included in the first draft of BRB's Corporate Plan but were not published at the request of the DTP (which told us that final agreement remained to be reached). Therefore, Provincial had not proposed to publish load factor targets to the CTCC along with the new sector standards for punctuality and cancellations.

12.8. The CTCC, in replying to Provincial on the proposed new network standards for punctuality and cancellations, called for load factor standards to be set for all Provincial routes. It could not accept that there was a compelling logic in not setting load factor targets for Provincial services on the grounds that InterCity had not decided to do so for its services. Provincial, unlike InterCity, received considerable PSO support and this must have a bearing on Provincial's public accountability in terms of quality of service.

(c) Other QS standards

12.9. QS standards for train cleaning, customer telephone enquiry bureaux (TEB) waiting times and ticket office queueing times are the same as those for NSE and are shown in Table 12.3.

TABLE 12.3 Provincial QS standards for train cleaning and customer waiting times

	Target %
<i>Cleaning of trains</i>	
Interior/exterior—daily	100
Heavy exterior —every 28 days	100
<i>Customer waiting times</i>	
Telephone enquiry bureaux: 95 per cent of calls to be answered within 30 seconds.	
Ticket offices: maximum queuing time of three minutes off-peak, five minutes peak.	
<i>Source: BRB.</i>	

Performance against QS standards

(a) Punctuality and cancellations

12.10. We had some difficulty in measuring Provincial's punctuality and cancellations performance for three reasons:

- (a) central data collection by Provincial was patchy for a significant number of services (see paragraph 12.11);
- (b) the great diversity of standards (as shown in Table 12.2) made Provincial's overall performance indicator in BRB's annual report misleading; and
- (c) before our inquiry Provincial had no central management information system which would provide consolidated tables of performance against its QS standards.

12.11. Provincial told us that the present overall performance indicator in BRB's annual report excluded all Western sub-sector services and certain Midland and Eastern sub-sector services. Western services were excluded because in 1987-88 there was no relationship between the basis on which routes were monitored and how the targets were set. There was either a lack of data, or a lack of targets, for a number of Eastern routes, routes in the East and West Midlands and North-West England.

12.12. Provincial told us that this was being rectified as part of a general review of targets and monitoring of performance. This included the introduction of a regular four-weekly quality monitoring system similar to that used by NSE. The first of these management summaries, called the *Quality Digest*, was produced in mid-July and covered the four-week period ending 23 April 1988.

12.13. Overall punctuality indicators for the past four years are shown in Table 12.4.

TABLE 12.4 Punctuality and cancellations performance for BRB passenger trains, four years to 1987-88

	(Target in brackets)			per cent 1987-88
	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	
<i>Provincial</i>				
Within 5 minutes of RT	91	89	91	90 (85-97)
Cancellations	N/A	N/A	0.5	0.9 (1.5-0)
<i>InterCity</i>				
Within 5 minutes of RT	71	73	77 (82)	78 (90)*
Cancellations	N/A	N/A	0.8	0.5 (0.5)
<i>NSE</i>				
Within 5 minutes of RT	90	91	91	92 (90)
Cancellations	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.2 (1.0)
<i>Source: BRB.</i>				

*Target was altered to 90 per cent of trains to arrive within ten minutes of RT.

The results shown for Provincial in Table 12.4 do not take into account the individual route target levels. For 1987-88, however, Table 12.5 takes the local targets into account subject to those excluded services noted in paragraph 12.11.

TABLE 12.5 Punctuality performance on Provincial services, 1987-88

Sub-sector	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
	Number of trains run	Number of trains required to meet target	Number of trains actually meeting target	Performance ratio*
ScotRail	36,081	33,498 (92.8%)	32,820 (91.0%)	98.1
Midland	64,766	60,570 (93.5%)	60,233 (93.0%)	99.5
Eastern	28,244	26,587 (94.1%)	24,683 (87.4%)	92.9
1 x 4-week period	129,091	120,655 (93.47%)	117,736 (91.20%)	97.6
Annual total	1,678,183	1,568,515	1,530,568	
<i>Source: BRB.</i>				

$$\text{*Performance ratio} = \frac{\text{Actual achievement}}{\text{Target requirement}} \times 100$$

Thus any service/service group meeting or exceeding its target would have a performance ratio equal to or in excess of 100 per cent.

12.14. Column (b) in Table 12.5 indicates 'composite' quality of service targets and column (c) composite achievement. On the basis of these results Provincial failed to reach its composite quality of service target in all three sub-sectors for which data were available, although Midland sub-sector's results were close with a performance ratio of 99.5 per cent. However, average punctuality of 91.2 per cent in 1987-88 was little changed from the results for the previous three years.

12.15. BRB told us that the composite result for Provincial included in its annual report was ambiguous and capable of misinterpretation. To the average passenger reading this statistic and perhaps having the expectation that punctuality would be at one level throughout the sector, the reality at individual service level was rather different. BRB said that the Director, Provincial, had set internally local standards to which he expected his managers to aspire in terms of service planning and delivery. In addition, BRB would like to see the Director use results based on these targets to measure Provincial's performance and trend, to see in overall terms how the service quality was improving. The problem with this second range of targets and results was that if they were used in the public context they may actually be very misleading. Clearly, BRB argued, these targets would need to be agreed with the Government but they should not be made public.

12.16. We sought to examine Provincial's performance in a more meaningful way. We analysed the basic four-weekly period results for the 129 services for which data were available. The results are summarized in Table 12.6, which shows that in 44 per cent of the periods in 1987-88 the services (including PTE services) achieved their targets.

TABLE 12.6 Punctuality performance for 129 Provincial services (including PTE services) based on four-weekly period results, 1987-88

Number of periods analysed	1,522
Number of periods in which services met target (0.5 minutes)	674
Percentage achievement	44

Source: BRB.

Provincial told us that the (published) targets applied to the whole year and not to individual four-week periods. Clearly adherence to the same target levels applied to four-week periods would require more regulation and control.

12.17. Table 12.7 shows the ratio of performance to target for the 129 services for which data were available.

TABLE 12.7 Comparison of 129 Provincial services for 1987-88 based on the ratio of performance to target

Performance ratio range%	Number of services in each range	% of services in each range
75-79	1	1
80-84	2	1
85-89	7	5
90-94	23	18
95-99	45	35
100-104	37	29
105-109	7	5
110-114	5	4
115-119	1	1
120-124	1	1
	129	100

Source: MMC analysis of BRB data.

The table shows that average performance in 1987-88 was equal to or over the target on 51 services (40 per cent); thus 78 services (60 per cent) did not perform, on average, up to the service standard.

12.18. We also analysed the punctuality and cancellations performance for two four-weekly periods (September and October 1987) as reported by Provincial to five area TUCCs. This analysis is summarized in Table 12.8 and shows that in this two-month period 53 per cent of Provincial services met their target within five minutes of RT targets and 87 per cent their cancellations targets.

TABLE 12.8 Punctuality and cancellations performance based on four-weekly periods for September and October 1987

	September	October	Total/number of periods
<i>Eastern England</i>			
Number of services analysed	16	16	32
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	5	11	16
Cancellations	11	15	26
<i>North-Western England</i>			
Number of services analysed	61	61	122
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	34	32	66
Cancellations	54	48	102
<i>Midlands</i>			
Number of services analysed	36	36	72
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	15	24	39
Cancellations	36	33	69
<i>Wales</i>			
Number of services analysed	5	5	10
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	4	4	8
Cancellations	5	5	10
<i>Scotland</i>			
Number of services analysed	11	11	22
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	3	4	7
Cancellations	10	8	18
Total number of periods analysed	129	129	258
Number achieving target:			
Within 5 minutes of RT	61	75	136
Cancellations	116	109	225

Source: BRB.

12.19. As noted in paragraph 12.12, during the course of our inquiry Provincial introduced management summaries of performance against QS targets in the form of a four-weekly 'Quality Digest'. The results are summarized in Table 12.9. It should be noted that the figures in Table 12.9 exclude PTE-supported services (unlike Tables 12.6, 12.7 and 12.8). Table 12.9 shows that during the four-week period to 23 April 1988, 49 per cent of the 65 Provincial services for which data were available achieved their within five minutes of RT targets and 78 per cent achieved their cancellations targets. For some 33 services, or 34 per cent of all Provincial (ie non-PTE) services, there was no central collation of locally available data.

TABLE 12.9 Punctuality and cancellations performance as reported in Provincial Quality Digest, period 1, four weeks ending 23 April 1988

Service group	Punctuality	Cancellations
<i>Express</i>		
Number of services analysed	8	7
Number achieving target:		
Within 5 minutes of RT	8	—
Cancellations	—	7
<i>Urban—unsupported</i>		
Number of services analysed	23	17
Number achieving target:		
Within 5 minutes of RT	6	—
Cancellations	—	13
<i>Rural</i>		
Number of services analysed	45	48
Number meeting target:		
Within 5 minutes of RT	19	—
Cancellations	—	36
Total all services		
Number of services analysed	76	72
Number meeting target:		
Within 5 minutes of RT	33	—
Cancellations	—	56

Source: BRB.

12.20. Much of the evidence we received from third parties (see Appendix 1.1, paragraph 6), in particular the CTCC and the railway unions, complained of poor timekeeping of some Provincial services. Quantitative evidence, based on a sample check of punctuality of Provincial Yorkshire services, was provided by the Railway Development Society (Yorkshire).

(b) Train loading

12.21. As described in paragraph 12.7, Provincial has no published load factor standards but does have internal standards. We analysed the available count information for our selected case study routes (see paragraph 10.41 ff).

12.22. Much of the evidence we received from third parties, in particular the CTCC, railway unions, PTEs and the Association of County Councils, complained of overcrowding on Provincial trains. Such overcrowding was reportedly widespread. This evidence also appeared to suggest that the incidence of overcrowding on Provincial trains was growing.

(c) Other QS objectives

12.23. Monitoring of train cleaning performance is the responsibility of Area Managers. There was some variation from service to service. BRB's annual report for 1987-88 stated that 91 per cent of trains were cleaned in accordance with the interior daily wash targets. Corresponding percentages for exterior daily wash and 28-day interior clean were 93 and 80 per cent of trains respectively. We received few complaints from third parties about train cleanliness, though the railway unions commented that Provincial's failure to meet its cleaning targets could be overcome by increased investment.

12.24. Provincial's Quality Digest (see paragraph 12.12) contained performance results against target for Provincial depots for the four-week period ending 23 April 1988. The results are summarized in table 12.10.

TABLE 12.10 Provincial depot carriage cleaning performance against targets, four weeks ending 23 April 1988

	Daily Interior		Daily exterior		28-day interior	
	No of depots	% of total	No of depots	% of total	No of depots	% of total
Achieved target	17	65	10	67	5	38
Did not achieve target	9	35	5	33	8	62
Total	26	100	15	100	13	100
No information recorded	9		13		9	
Total No of depots	35		28		22	

Source: BRB.

12.25. Table 12.10 shows that for daily interior and exterior cleaning, about two-thirds of reporting depots achieved their targets. Only 38 per cent of reporting depots achieved their 28-day interior cleaning targets. In all three cases there was a considerable number of depots for which no information was given in the Quality Digest.

12.26. Provincial's telephone enquiry bureaux (TEB) performance was well below target (see Table 12.3) both in 1987-88 as a whole (77 per cent), and in the Quality Digest for the four weeks ending 23 April 1988, during which period none of the 15 TEBs achieved its target (one TEB had a total equipment failure). Against an internal target that a maximum of 10 per cent of calls should be caused to be abandoned, six of the 14 TEBs for which data were given exceeded this target; one TEB had 22 per cent of its calls abandoned.

12.27. On queueing time at ticket offices, Provincial told us that it had not centrally monitored this to date but a comprehensive system was being set up. A small proportion of the evidence we received from third parties referred to ticket queues and the need (emphasized by the CTCC) for fairness and caution on the part of BRB in imposing penalties on passengers without a valid ticket.

Passenger information

12.28. Although over the last four years Provincial has undertaken a major programme of improving passenger information services by installing:

- (a) improved public address systems;

- (b) modern flap displays of departure and arrival times operated by remote control;
- (c) flexible dot matrix displays to convey general messages to passengers;
- (d) television screens to provide passengers with information; and
- (e) on-train tannoy systems to enable guards to communicate simultaneously with all passengers regarding timetable details and delays.

there remain many Provincial stations where the provision of passenger information is still incomplete. A common complaint made to us by third parties (in particular the CTCC) was the lack of passenger information at unmanned stations and in particular the lack of any form of communication with BRB. Provincial told us it was taking further steps to improve information available to passengers.

12.29. Provincial told us that its market research in this area showed that customers spent little time on stations. Customers preferred pocket timetable information and information from the driver/guard on the train. Provincial had therefore concentrated its efforts in these areas. It admitted there was still room for improvement on unmanned stations. Its research had shown that public address systems (though fairly expensive) gave the public confidence and were also something that competitors did not have. It was currently halfway through installing long-line public address systems at unmanned stations.

Customer complaints

12.30. Customer complaints are monitored at the point of receipt, either at BRB Headquarters or within regions. The great majority of complaints affecting Provincial arise at the regional level. Regular reports are produced by each Regional Public Affairs Department.

12.31. Regional statistics on public complaints are shown in Table 12.11.

TABLE 12.11 Public complaints: Scottish, Midland, Eastern and Western Regions, 1986-87

	<i>Timekeeping</i>	<i>Train service quality</i>	<i>Passenger information</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>(a) Scottish Region</i>					
1986	2,369	1,694	1,134	5,717	10,894
1987:					
Scottish Region	2,335	1,323	1,050	5,504	10,232
Provincial	1,773	797	651	3,104	6,325
<i>(b) Midland Region</i>					
1987:					
Midland Region	5,499	2,376	3,384	16,135	27,394
Provincial	1,978	591	818	4,607	7,994
1988:					
Year to February	6,192	2,592	3,588	18,288	30,660
<i>(c) Eastern Region</i>					
1986	4,804	3,627	2,614	13,439	23,484
1987	4,744	3,184	2,489	13,406	23,853
<i>(d) Western Region</i>					
1986	2,242	1,586	1,474	6,874	12,176
1987:					
Western Region	2,144	1,567	1,395	6,630	11,736
Provincial	626	304	304	1,586	2,820

Source: BRB.

12.32. Table 12.11 shows that for each of the three regions (except Eastern Region) for which separate complaints data are kept for Provincial, the percentage of complaints about timekeeping was higher for Provincial than for the region as a whole. For example, complaints about timekeeping in ScotRail in 1987 were 28 per cent of all complaints compared with 22 per cent for the whole of Scottish Region. Comparable figures for complaints about Provincial timekeeping performance in the other regions were 25 and 20 per cent for Midland Region and 22 and 18 per cent for Western Region. Provincial's explanation was that its markets tended to be shorter-distance and contained more commuters than InterCity's. Commuters were more interested in timekeeping than InterCity passengers, hence it was not surprising that Provincial received more complaints about timekeeping than InterCity.

12.33. In addition to the information Provincial receives via customers' correspondence, regular monitoring of passenger needs and attitudes is undertaken for Provincial by an outside body. This body produces the Provincial Passenger Monitor, at four-weekly intervals, monitoring the quality of service attributes shown in Table 12.12.

TABLE 12.12. Attributes measured by the Provincial Passenger Monitor

<i>Quality of service</i>	<i>Relevant attributes</i>
(a) Punctuality & cancellations	Arrival on time
(b) Train loading	Able to get a seat
(c) Cleanliness on stations	Cleanliness of waiting rooms
	Cleanliness of toilets
Train cleanliness	Cleanliness of windows
	Cleanliness of inside trains
	Cleanliness of outside trains
	Cleanliness of toilets
(d) Information system	Availability of timetable posters
	Loudspeaker announcements
(e) On train	Whether train arriving on time or late
	Provision of loudspeaker announcements on train about the journey

Source: BRB.

12.34. We examined three four-weekly Provincial Passenger Monitors and noted the following:

- (a) 'Arrival on time' was an attribute rated of high importance by passengers. Mean performance for this attribute varied between the services but on average was about two-thirds of the level of importance: for example, for North TransPennine Sprinters this attribute had an importance level of 91 per cent and a mean performance of 64 per cent.
- (b) The attribute 'able to get a seat' was also considered important. Mean performance level was about 75 per cent of the importance level.
- (c) Of particular interest were the results recorded for the cleanliness of trains. It appeared that passengers attached much higher importance to interior rather than exterior train cleanliness.
- (d) The last four sets of results show how passengers rate the information they receive about trains while they are on the platform or on the train. 'Availability of timetable posters' and 'information about whether train arriving on time or late' were both rated 'important' although the mean performance on both attributes was about 60 per cent.

12.35. Provincial told us that the prime use of the Provincial Passenger Monitor was to detect trends in performance as seen by customers. In Table 12.12 we have listed the attributes explored in the Passenger Monitor and related them to specific aspects of quality of service, but Provincial told us that in its view the importance to the customer of those attributes and Provincial's QS performance measured different things. Other sections of the Passenger Monitor ask general questions such as: 'Do you think the service on this route is better or worse than it was a year ago?' Here the word 'service' may be interpreted to mean either *train service quality*, ie quality of rolling stock, comfort and cleanliness, general conditions of travel, or *suitability of service*, ie matters such as the convenience of the timetable and connections with other services. Provincial acknowledged this possible ambiguity and undertook to examine the matter.

Conclusions and recommendations

Quality of service standards

12.36. There is considerable variation between the punctuality standards presently set for different Provincial services. The within five minutes of RT standards vary from 75 per cent to 100 per cent, PSO services having targets varying between 85 per cent and 97 per cent. Cancellations targets vary from 0 to 1.5 per cent.

12.37. Provincial has informally agreed in general terms with the DTp to rationalize punctuality and cancellations standards and is discussing these proposed standards with the CTCC which, in particular, has expressed concern that the proposed standards represent sector averages and that rather than looking to achieve these standards on average across the sector Provincial should be required (as the Commission had recommended in their NSE report) to move towards achieving the network standards on each of its individual services. The CTCC also expressed concern that the proposed network standards for Express and longer-distance Rural services represented a reduction in standards.

12.38. Provincial has proposed to rationalize existing punctuality and cancellations standards to two network standards, one for Express and longer-distance Rural services (the present InterCity standard of 90 per cent of trains to arrive within ten minutes of RT) and a second for Urban and shorter-distance Rural services (the present NSE standard of 90 per cent of trains to arrive within five minutes of RT). We do not consider that longer-distance Rural services have much in common with InterCity or Express services. Moreover, we are not convinced that the InterCity standard is more appropriate for Express services than the existing standards of between 75 and 87 per cent of arrivals within five minutes of RT. We share the CTCC's concern that for some services the proposed network standards are lower than existing agreed standards. We note that BRB believes there is a need for the Director, Provincial, to set internal local standards to which he expects his managers to aspire in terms of service planning and delivery.

12.39. We recommend that:

- (a) Provincial should adopt one network standard for all its services of 90 per cent of trains to arrive within five minutes of RT and aim to achieve this standard on all routes.
- (b) Where existing standards are lower than the new network standard, Provincial should provide interim targets for each route which represent the best that can be achieved on particular routes with the current railway facilities. Performance should be moved progressively towards the higher achievement represented by the new network standard which for some services may require investment in rolling stock or infrastructure.
- (c) Where existing standards are higher than the new network standard, the internal target set for the local manager should be correspondingly higher.
- (d) The internal local targets in (b) and (c) above should be communicated to the area TUCCs and interested railway user groups together with an explanation of how Provincial intends to move the performance of those services below standard progressively toward the network standard.

12.40. Standards for train cleaning, customer telephone enquiry response times and ticket office queueing are consistent throughout Provincial.

**Reporting of punctuality
and cancellations
performance**

12.41. Although performance results of all train services with respect to punctuality and cancellations are maintained locally and monthly results are provided to area TUCCs, Provincial does not yet have an adequate management information system for providing consolidated data on punctuality and cancellations for all its services. During the course of our inquiry Provincial set up a centralized information system for monitoring punctuality in the form of the Quality Digest. The first Quality Digest covered the four-week period to 23 April but did not appear until mid-July. It did not cover some 34 per cent of Provincial services.

12.42. We recommend that Provincial should ensure that for future issues of the Quality Digest data collection is both comprehensive and made available within one month of the end of each four-week period.

12.43. We analyzed the punctuality and cancellations results for individual services for 1987-88 and found that performance against standards varied widely. The majority of Provincial services for which data were available did not meet the agreed punctuality standards but did meet the cancellations targets.

12.44. BRB accepted that the reporting in its annual report for 1987-88 of Provincial's overall punctuality performance against the agreed standards was capable of being misunderstood: the values are calculated on incomplete data and the ratios are produced on a different basis from that used for BRB's performance indicator.

12.45. We recommend that in reporting on Provincial's performance in its annual report BRB should indicate:

- (a) the percentage of Express, Urban (split into PTE and non-PTE Urban) and Rural services which met or exceeded the network standard; and
- (b) the percentage of Express, Urban (split into PTE and non-PTE Urban) and Rural services which met or exceeded their internal standards.

Train loading

12.46. Provincial has no published load factor standards. We have recommended in paragraph 10.88 that a systematic approach to measuring train loads should be introduced. No consolidated train loading statistics were available but third party evidence indicated that overcrowding existed on many Provincial services and that it was increasing. Our case studies of Provincial services confirmed overcrowding was a problem on some services in the Cardiff Valleys, Scotland and on the North TransPennine service.

Other quality standards

12.47. Provincial's performance against its other published quality of service standards was variable. Statistics in BRB's annual report showed that the daily cleaning of Provincial services was generally to the required standard but performance on 28-day interior cleaning was not so good, a fact confirmed by the first Quality Digest. Provincial's telephone enquiry bureaux (TEB) performance was generally below target with a high number of abandoned calls at some TEBs. Provincial told us that the necessary investment plans were in hand to rectify poor TEB performance. There was no monitoring of ticket office queueing standards though Provincial told us of plans to introduce this.

12.48. Third party evidence indicated that despite Provincial's progress in providing better information, some passengers were still unable to get the information they needed about train services. We support Provincial's plans for providing long-line public address systems at unmanned stations and recommend that its programme for passenger information improvements should be reviewed to determine how it may further be enhanced.

12.49. The percentage of customer complaints about timekeeping is higher for the Provincial sub-sectors than for their corresponding regions. We accept Provincial's explanation of this but recommend that it should monitor the ratio of its percentage of complaints about timekeeping against those of the regions and use the value of these data in conjunction with the Quality Digest as a means of identifying where improvements can be made.

12.50. The market research results provided by the Provincial Passenger Monitor are useful in determining changes in performance but Provincial makes no attempt to relate these results to its quality of service standards. We recommend that Provincial should undertake an investigation in order to measure the relationship between the Passenger Monitor results and its quality of service standards. We also recommend that each report of the Passenger Monitor should show against each route and characteristic the percentage of passengers recording either a poor or very poor rating.

12.51. We also recommend that Provincial should review the wording of particular questions used in the Passenger Monitor questionnaire, for example the meaning of the word 'service', to ensure that the final results are clear and unambiguous.

D G RICHARDS (*Chairman*)

C C BAILLIEU

S McDOWALL

B C OWENS

C A UNWIN

R YOUNG

S N BURBRIDGE (*Secretary*)

29 September 1988