Annual rail consumer report 2024 to 2025

Ticket retailing and passenger rights

We want operators and retailers to be fair and transparent in all their interactions with passengers, providing information that is accurate and timely which enables passengers to make well-informed decisions and access their statutory rights as customers.

Independent review of train operators' revenue protection practices

There are a range of circumstances in which a passenger may innocently attempt to travel without a valid ticket for their journey. For example, they may make a mistake during purchase, they may accidentally board the wrong train, they may misplace their ticket or leave their railcard at home.

However, many of these reasons can also be used as excuses by passengers who deliberately choose to underpay or avoid their fare. This creates a number of 'grey areas' where it can be difficult for rail staff to determine the passenger's intent and decide how to address the situation.

In November 2024 the then Secretary of State for Transport commissioned the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to conduct an independent review of train operators' revenue protection practices. Her overriding priority in doing so was to ensure that fare evasion was being addressed, but in a way that was fair to passengers and in line with the correct procedures.

Our review considered whether ticket terms and conditions are clear and effectively communicated, and operators' revenue protection and enforcement practices. Our report set out recommendations to address five key issues:

- Make buying the right ticket simpler and easier
- Strengthen consistency in how passengers are treated when ticket issues arise
- Introduce greater consistency and fairness in the use of prosecutions
- Make information on revenue protection easy to access and understand
- Greater coordination, oversight and transparency of revenue protection activity

The next step is for the Secretary of State and DfT to consider the recommendations and how (and the extent to which) these should be implemented. While our role is now complete, we stand ready to support this in any way we can.

Transparency of fees for online rail ticket purchases

We asked eight third-party retailers to make changes to their websites and apps to increase the transparency of the fees they charge during the booking process.

Throughout 2024, we had constructive and positive engagement with these retailers and all made changes that addressed our concerns. The changes made include incorporating fees into the total price at the earliest opportunity, making information about fees more transparent throughout the booking process, and providing improved FAQs on fees.

Fees for ticket refunds

Last year, in response to recommendations that we made to industry and DfT, the maximum administration fee for processing rail ticket refunds was reduced from £10 to £5. This year, we carried out an assurance review to ensure that retailers were accurately informing their customers of a maximum £5 fee. We identified several cases where the information was wrong and secured changes.

Regulatory framework for ticket retailing and passenger rights

Our work is underpinned by:

- our consumer law investigation and enforcement powers, which we hold concurrently with

the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA);
- obligations set out in train and station operating licences; and
- commitments set out in industry-owned documents such as the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

In April 2025, the enforcement and unfair commercial practices provisions of the Digital Markets, Competition & Consumer Act 2024 came into effect. The Act consolidates and enhances enforcement powers and consumer rights, including strengthening of the provisions relating to the drip-pricing of mandatory fees. We have powers under the Act concurrently with CMA.

Our priorities for April 2025 to March 2026

We will:

- review the existing Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services, including its status and scope; and
- continue to monitor risks to passengers across the ticket retailing landscape and identify where we need to intervene.

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