



Responses to ORR's 30 September 2025 Consultation: review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services

Link to consultation webpage: [Consultation: review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services | Office of Rail and Road](#)

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MS Form: South Western Railway

Timetable information/Providing information about facilities: Certain retail systems (such as ticket vending machines) do not currently have live fares feeds or journey planning capabilities. This prevents operators from complying with this requirement.

Validities and restrictions: The fundamental challenge is that the pertinent information pertaining to a particular ticket does not reside in one place. For Advance, it is the terms and conditions of a product type, for others it may be the route (e.g. Via Three Bridges) which may be meaningless to a customer (nevertheless important) or it might be the restrictions e.g. not valid before X. This information is not contained within one place which is why TOCs have to manually create the text to be displayed. The get to a position of greater consistency, it is necessary for an industry level change to be made and restriction information to be managed at RDG level. The alternative is for agreement to fund additional dedicated resource within Fares/Retail teams in every train operator.

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Yes

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.

The principles do but I don't think you have considered the feasibility of achieving these outcomes. i.e. if there is a gap now, why is that the case?

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Yes and no, further work needed to understand what is required technically to achieve the outcome you are looking for

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be

Yes

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

These are all good customer outcomes. Unfortunately they are not easy to achieve and will require for example, running a tender to change system suppliers, charging RDG with managing a comprehensive set of restriction information that can be consumed by Retail Systems to achieve consistency or increasing headcount within TOCs which will require DfT backing/approval.

LONDON TRAVELWATCH

Please find below the London TravelWatch response to the consultation of the review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services.

Most of our comments are general observations but we have indicated those that are specific to the questions within.

London TravelWatch is concerned by the ORR's statement that Transport Focus were informally consulted. With 70% of all train journeys starting, ending or travelling through London, it would be helpful to understand why London TravelWatch was not fully consulted.

General questions

On TVMs it can sometimes say 'restrictions apply' but when you press the information button (or similar) it doesn't give further information.

What has been done to ensure the guidance is applied consistently across all retailers?

Ticket retail sites open other websites in the background. These websites can drain the battery life of a handheld device which puts the passenger at risk of not being able to show a ticket.

Lack of supporting guidance – no prompt to check whether passenger has a railcard or that their railcard is in date.

No information provided relating to the security different tickets can offer. For example, through tickets might be more expensive but the passengers will receive refunds for the entire journey if any part of it fails.

Specific questions relating to the code/guidance

P6 - Do/have ORR acted against retailers to ensure compliance? If there have been breaches, have all TOCs been alerted to them to ensure that they aren't occurring across the industry?

P9 - Class of travel – this should also say if 1st class is not available at all.

P9/10 - In terms of the limitations of the medium or channel used to communicate information, what mediums or channels wouldn't be able to provide all the required information?

P18/19 - Selling tickets on an impartial or limited basis – why is it allowed to only have the latter on some channels, especially TVMs? Do TVMs say at the start that not all tickets may be available on them? (on page 20 it says make clear at ‘point of sale’ – does this just mean the end of the process on the ‘buy ticket’ page?) If a ticket office has the bigger range but is closed at the time that a passenger wants to buy a ticket, why should they be at a disadvantage compared to online purchasers?

P20 - Why is it acceptable to only ‘generally offer the most appropriate thorough tickets’ rather than always offer them? The onus appears to be on the passenger knowing which ticket will be best. Presumably at ticket offices the staff will ask the purchaser questions to help identify the most appropriate ticket, so those buying at a TVM or online may be at a disadvantage.

Question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

We have no comments for this question.

Question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.

The fares shown are not always the cheapest and this should be indicated (example – SAC to KX one way, retail price £15.90 but contactless is £10). There is no indication that there is a cheaper fare. Promotional tickets only appear to be on TOC’s own websites. How is the passenger informed that better price tickets could be available?

Question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Raileasy show if there is an accessible toilet on board but others don’t have any accessibility information of the trains or stations.

There is a need for additional clarity that booking fees will not be refunded.

It is not clear that multi leg journey tickets can include different types including advance tickets. Passengers are caught out expecting all tickets to have the same validity as the first of the journey.

Email: Response 3a

Good afternoon

I welcome ORR's review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services and the opportunity to respond. The current fares and retailing system remains too complex for many passengers and creates real consumer-protection harms: passengers are unable to reliably identify the cheapest valid fare at point of sale, face inconsistent information across different retail channels, and (for many) lack the means to compare options easily. I therefore support ORR taking a stronger, more prescriptive approach to retail information to deliver clear, auditable and enforceable consumer protections.

Key asks (summary)

1. **Require display of the cheapest available valid fare at point of sale.** All retailing channels (operator websites, third-party sellers, ticket machines, and ticket offices) should display, clearly and prominently, the cheapest valid fare available for the exact journey/search parameters selected by the customer, plus an explanation of any restrictions. This must be mandatory, not merely advisory.
2. **Publish a machine-readable national fares register and open API.** ORR should require GBR as operators/retailers to publish a single, complete fares register (fares, restriction rules, validity and acceptance) in a standard, machine-readable format to enable independent comparison tools, enforcement and audits.
3. **Standardise prominence and comparators.** Introduce a mandatory "compare" widget/format so passengers see price, restrictions and whether alternative flexible/advance/railcard fares exist presented in an understandable order by total cost, including any booking fees.
4. **Protect non-digital and face-to-face channels.** Retail rules must preserve the role of ticket offices and phone/book-in-person channels — including a requirement that ticket-office staff have access to the same fares register and a duty to advise on the cheapest valid fare, especially for complex journeys or multi-ticket options.
5. **Enforcement and reporting.** Create clear KPIs for retailing transparency, require quarterly reporting, and give ORR explicit powers to require remedy and publish findings where operators/retailers repeatedly fail to display correct, complete information, this could be enforceable via a stronger version of the Consumer Duty placed on Scottish Rail Holdings. <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/10839763/huge-scotrail-shakeup-announced-ticket-prices/>

Why this is necessary — PE1930 and parliamentary context

My Petition PE1930 called for customers to be “always given information on the cheapest possible fare” in future ScotRail contracts and emphasised the ongoing role of ticket offices in delivering best value advice. The petition was considered by the Scottish Parliament and has now been closed; committee papers and SPICe briefings record that the issue remains unresolved in practice and that earlier commitments have not yet been fully delivered. This demonstrates clear public and parliamentary concern about the inability of passengers to identify cheapest fares and the consequential importance of requiring retailers/operators to show cheapest fares proactively. ORR’s Guidance should take these concerns into account and align with the principle that consumers must be able to make informed choices. <https://www.parliament.scot/get-involved/petitions/view-petitions/pe1930-ensure-customers-are-always-given-information-on-cheapest-possible-fare-in-new-scotrail?qry=PE1930>

Suggested regulatory wording (for ORR Guidance / Code)

- “Retailers and operators must display the cheapest valid fare for the passenger’s specified journey and travel date/time at the top of search results and point of purchase, including a brief note of any restrictions and an explicit statement of refund/change rules.”
- “Operators must publish a complete fares register in a machine-readable, standard format and maintain an open API so that independent price comparisons and audits are possible.”
- “Ticket offices and staff must be able to access the full fares register and be mandated to advise customers of the cheapest valid option for their journey where requested.”

Evidence and enforcement

I can provide anonymised case examples (misleading adverts, ticket-machine errors, ticket-office advice failures) for ORR to use as evidence of the harms described. Any new Guidance must be backed by audit powers, transparent reporting and, where necessary, binding enforcement action to be effective. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/transport/article/campaigners-claim-online-only-rail-deal-is-discriminatory-gm370n6mb>

Finally, I urge ORR to coordinate with the Advertising Standards

Authority <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/trainline-ads-banned-misleading-claims-train-ticket-prices-b2815132.html&ved=2ahUKewiKu8rWj9uQAxUvWEEAHYdqHEAQFnoECBoQAAQ&usg=AOvVaw1BTIleYFCjOztqh36RZUjE>, Consumer Scotland and also devolved administrations (given the specific parliamentary consideration of PE1930) so that

Guidance is implementable across the UK and consistent with contract terms used in devolved franchises or publicly-owned operators. Thank you for the opportunity to respond, I am happy to expand on any point or supply concrete case studies to assist your review.

Thanks

Email: 3b Member of the public

Thanks for the acknowledgment, this is a snapshot of current fare advertising language, dramatically improved from when I started observing it a decade ago, however I fear that with GBR being government owned and Scottish and Welsh railways, there will need to be clear guidance on press releases and advertising as otherwise the primary stakeholder can use public policy channels as advertising to the detriment of a thriving third-party retailer ecosystem? <https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/remit-press-releases-and-pr.html>

A Quick review regarding the language used at the main points of sale by UK Train Operating Companies (TOCs), in relation to ticket pricing claims.

In reviewing sector-wide practice, it is striking how there remains a few outliers. While most TOCs use moderated terms such as “value” or “ways to save,” some continue to assert its fares as both “*cheapest*” and “*unbeatable*” a confident positioning unmatched elsewhere in the network.

This is notable given the **Advertising Standards Authority’s (ASA) formal rail sector guidance issued in 2021**, which set clear expectations for substantiation and transparency in fare-related claims across the industry. It is further underscored by the **2022 ASA ruling** that upheld complaints against misleading “lowest price” style claims in the rail sector, and by the **ASA’s decision yesterday (27 August 2025)** against Trainline for similar “you won’t find cheaper” assertions, which were found to mislead consumers about price parity and availability.

Against this backdrop, it remains surprising that such absolute language persists. The continued use of these terms raises questions about alignment with both the spirit and the letter of ASA guidance, as well as the expectations of transparency and trust that public ownership entails.

It may be timely to consider whether this approach to fare messaging is consistent with wider sector standards, regulatory expectations, and the soon to be Great British Railways values?

Point of Sale Language across UK Train Operating Companies



TOC	Type of Language at point of sale
Avanti West Coast	Cheap https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/tickets-and-savings/ways-to-save
c2c	Best ways to save https://www.c2c-online.co.uk/tickets-and-fares/ways-to-save/best-ways-to-get-cheap-tickets/
Caledonian Sleeper	Unique https://www.sleeper.scot
Chiltern Railways	Tips for savings https://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/before-you-travel/buy-tickets-online
CrossCountry	Ideal https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/tickets-savings/ticket-types
East Midlands Railway	Cheap https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk
Govia Thameslink Railway (Gatwick Express, Great Northern, Southern, Thameslink)	Thameslink – better https://www.thameslinkrailway.com Exclusive https://www.gatwickexpress.com/ Better https://www.greatnorthernrail.com Better https://www.southernrailway.com
Grand Central	Get away for less https://www.grandcentralrail.com
Greater Anglia (including Stansted Express)	Book direct for lowest prices https://www.greateranglia.co.uk
Great Western Railway	Great range https://www.gwr.com/your-tickets/choosing-your-ticket
Heathrow Express	Save https://www.heathrowexpress.com/ticket-fares
Hull Trains	Great value https://www.hulltrains.co.uk
London North Eastern Railway	Cheap/Save https://www.lner.co.uk
Lumo	Value/Affordable https://www.lumo.co.uk/
Merseyrail	Affordable https://www.merseyrail.org/tickets-passes/
Northern Trains	Cheapest https://www.northernrailway.co.uk
ScotRail	Unbeatable/cheapest https://www.scotrail.co.uk/tickets/peak-fares-gone-for-good
Southeastern	Buy tickets no fees https://ticket.southeasternrailway.co.uk/search
South Western Railway (including Island Line)	We will always have the lowest priced tickets for journeys on our trains across and you'll never find a cheaper South Western Railway ticket anywhere else https://www.southwesternrailway.com/train-tickets/price-promise
TransPennine Express	Cheap/No booking fee https://www.tpexpress.co.uk
Transport for Wales Rail	Cheap/Smooth/No fees https://tfw.wales/ways-to-travel/
West Midlands Trains (West Midlands Railway, London Northwestern Railway)	Best https://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/tickets-discounts/ticket-types Best https://www.londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

MS Form: Transport for All

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Transport for All recognises that the Guidance is designed primarily to assist retailers in understanding their consumer-law obligations, while also helping passengers to understand the information they should expect when buying tickets. In that respect, the document largely achieves its purpose for retailers: its structure, layout, and examples are clearer and more navigable than the previous Code of Practice, and the link between consumer law and day-to-day retailing responsibilities is presented in a practical and logical way.

However, the Guidance only partly achieves its purpose for consumers, particularly disabled passengers. Although the layout and examples make it easier to follow than the old Code, it remains written mainly from a retailer's perspective. The tone and content are still oriented towards compliance rather than passenger understanding, and many disabled people would find it difficult to identify what the Guidance means for them in practice.

To make the document genuinely effective for both audiences, ORR could:

- Produce a plain-English and Easy Read summary setting out what passengers can expect from retailers and what to do if information is missing or misleading.
- Ensure the Guidance itself is available in accessible formats, including screen-reader-compatible, large-print, and audio versions.
- Provide clearer signposting on how consumer-law obligations relate specifically to accessibility information and the rights of disabled passengers.

At present, the Guidance assumes a relatively high level of legal and technical knowledge, which risks limiting its usefulness to passengers. Making it more accessible and explicitly connecting consumer-law duties to accessibility requirements would ensure it better meets its stated purpose for both its intended audiences.

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Transport for All welcomes the new set of principles and recognises that they are clearer, easier to apply than the 2015 Code, and more in line with the current consumer protection legislative landscape. However, while the principles broadly achieve their intended purpose, they could be strengthened by embedding an accessibility lens across each of them. At present, accessibility appears as a single item within the key-information table rather than as a cross-cutting requirement. For disabled passengers, the ability to plan, book, and complete a journey depends fundamentally on the clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of the information provided at every stage. The principles should therefore make clear that accessibility underpins how information is defined, communicated, and used.

Principle B:

Current wording:

“The information retailers provide should be accurate, truthful and should not be provided in such a way as it might deceive, even if factually correct”

This principle could be strengthened by explicitly recognising the importance of accessibility in accuracy and clarity. Our research found that 22% of disabled people experience barriers when booking train tickets, often because information is confusing, inconsistent, or presented in a way that is difficult to navigate. Information that is technically accurate but inaccessible in format can still mislead passengers or prevent them from making an informed choice. Accuracy must therefore include accessibility of presentation – ensuring passengers can perceive, understand, and act on the information through inclusive design, such as screen-reader compatibility, audio options, large print, and Easy Read formats.

Suggested edit:

“The information retailers provide should be accurate, truthful, accessible, and should not be presented in such a way as it might deceive or disadvantage passengers, even if factually correct.”

Principle C:

Current wording:

“Retailers should provide information in a timely manner, including at all relevant stages of the purchasing process.”

The emphasis on timeliness is welcome, particularly as live and journey-specific information is critical for disabled passengers. Passengers must know before purchase if key accessibility features on their intended journey, such as lifts or assistance services, are unavailable, as this may make the journey impossible. “Timely” should therefore encompass proactive communication of material information that affects journey feasibility, rather than relying on passengers to seek out updates.

Suggested edit:

“Retailers should provide information in a timely manner, including at all relevant stages of the purchasing process, and ensure that any material changes, particularly those affecting accessibility or service availability, are communicated to passengers as soon as they become known.”

Principle D:

Current wording:

“Retailers should make it clear where relevant information is omitted or restricted which may be material to the passenger’s purchasing decision”

This principle is helpful but needs to go further to reflect the digital exclusion many disabled passengers experience. Ticket vending machines (TVMs) and some apps are frequently inaccessible, either because they cannot sell certain ticket types, such as concessionary fares, or because their design presents physical or digital barriers. Retailers should not only highlight where information or functionality is limited, but also provide clear, accessible signposting to alternative ways of obtaining it or completing the purchase.

Suggested edit:

“Retailers should make it clear where relevant information is omitted or restricted in ways that may be material to the passenger’s purchasing decision, and provide clear, accessible signposting to where or how the missing information, or an alternative method of purchase, can be accessed.”

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

Transport for All welcomes the expanded list of key information types used in the new Guidance. It is positive to see explicit recognition of accessibility of trains and stations within this list, which marks a clear improvement on the previous Code of Practice.

While the list is broadly comprehensive at this high level, we suggest a few amendments to ensure it reflects inclusive language and practical accessibility considerations:

- **Terminology:** The heading “Assistance available to passengers with disabilities” should be amended to “Assistance available to disabled people,” aligning with the social model of disability and best practice across the transport sector. This change would ensure consistency with the Equality Act and with the terminology used by many operators and disabled people’s organisations.
- **Accessibility-related information:** The reference to “Accessibility of trains and stations” is welcome, but ORR could clarify in the corresponding detail that this should include key features such as level boarding and accessible toilets on trains and at stations – elements that are often decisive for disabled passengers when planning journeys.
- **Concessionary travel:** The list could more clearly encompass information on the availability of concessionary fares. Many disabled passengers rely on these schemes, yet they can be difficult to locate or purchase through some sales channels. Including this under fares and ticket types would ensure retailers present it transparently.
- **Accessible contact and complaint channels:** It would be beneficial for the Guidance to make clear that information on how to contact a retailer, seek assistance, or make a complaint, should itself be accessible. Retailers should offer multiple contact options and publish expected response times for assistance requests or refund claims in accessible formats.

Overall, the list is appropriate and proportionate, but small adjustments to language and clearer expectations around accessibility and contact information would ensure that the Guidance fully supports disabled passengers while remaining practical for retailers.

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be

Transport for All agrees that the case studies in the draft Guidance are a valuable addition. They translate legal and policy concepts into practical examples that make the Guidance more usable for retailers and clearer for consumers.

We particularly welcome Case Study 6, which focuses on journey-planning information and includes an example of a passenger with a mobility impairment travelling to a station without step-free access. This is a realistic and helpful illustration of how accessibility information can materially affect a purchasing decision. However, the case studies could go further in reflecting the diversity and complexity of accessibility barriers that disabled passengers’ experience.

We recommend that ORR expand the set of case studies, or include sub-examples within each

principle, to highlight accessibility and inclusion more consistently. For example:

- **Inaccessible digital sales channels:** A scenario showing a retailer’s website or app failing to meet recognised accessibility standards (e.g. WCAG 2.2), preventing a disabled passenger from viewing accessibility details or completing a Passenger Assist booking. This would demonstrate how inaccessible platforms can amount to a material omission under consumer law.
- **Live accessibility information:** Building on Case Study 6, a companion example could show a passenger booking travel to a station that is normally step-free but where the lift is temporarily out of service. Forty-four per cent of disabled people we surveyed reported lift failures as a barrier to travel. This would underline the importance of real-time accessibility updates at the point of sale and of offering appropriate remedies, such as re-routing or refunds, when accessibility changes after booking.
- **Accessible customer-contact routes:** A short example could illustrate how failing to provide accessible contact or complaint options (for instance text, phone, or in-person alternatives) can breach Principles A and B.
- **Refunds, redress, and liability:** A case study could outline how retailers should signpost liability and remedies when a passenger experiences an accessibility failure. It could highlight best practice where admin or refund fees are waived for disabled passengers unable to complete a journey due to inaccurate or missing accessibility information, showing how rigidly applying such fees may breach consumer-law principles of fairness.
- **On-train accessibility mismatch:** A scenario could show a ticketing or marketing page advertising accessible toilets on board when, in reality, the toilets are locked or out of order. This would demonstrate how misrepresentation of accessibility features can still mislead consumers, even when timetable or fare details are accurate.

Including examples such as these would make the Guidance more inclusive and better representative of the everyday experiences of disabled passengers. It would also help retailers understand how accessibility considerations intersect with their consumer-law obligations across all principles – not as an isolated issue, but as a core aspect of providing accurate, accessible, fair, and complete information.

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

Transport for All supports the overall direction of the Guidance and welcomes the ORR’s efforts to make it clearer, more user-friendly, and better aligned with consumer-law principles. However, as noted throughout our response, accessibility must be treated as a consistent and integral part of the consumer-information framework, rather than a single entry in the key-information list. Disabled passengers’ ability to make informed purchasing decisions depends on the accessibility, clarity and reliability of the information provided, and this should be reflected throughout the document.

While we appreciate that the Guidance itself is non-statutory, enforcement and accountability remain essential. Rail retailers’ obligations under consumer law are legally binding, and the ORR should take a stronger approach in monitoring and enforcing compliance where accessibility information is lacking or misleading. Our research and feedback from members show that many booking websites and apps remain incompatible with screen-reader technology or fail to meet basic accessibility standards such as colour contrast requirements. These are not just technical issues – they are barriers that prevent disabled people from exercising our consumer rights on an equal basis.

We would therefore urge ORR to set out how it will monitor and evaluate adherence to this Guidance, including:

- Regular spot-checks and audits of online and in-person sales channels
- Disabled-user mystery-shopping exercises to test accessibility in practice
- Transparent publication of findings and enforcement outcomes where systemic failings are identified

Taking these steps would demonstrate that the Guidance is not only a statement of good practice but also a foundation for accountability and continuous improvement.

ORR Consultation: review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and service

A consultation response from Independent Rail Retailers (IRR)

Introduction

Independent Rail Retailers (IRR) is a membership and advocacy organisation representing nearly all the major retailers who sell train tickets for Britain's railways.

Our members are passenger champions and play a key role in driving revenue for the rail industry by investing in technology, offering affordable ticket options, and implementing impactful marketing strategies.

IRR members are committed to providing excellent levels of customer service. They rely on attracting new customers and retaining existing users and the best way of doing this is to make the ticket buying experience as simple and easy to use as possible, and to give passengers confidence that they have bought the best ticket for their journey.

We confirm that this response does not contain any confidential information.

Consultation Questions

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

IRR welcomes the review of the 2015 Code of Practice and the current consultation. We support the Guidance's primary aim of assisting rail retailers in meeting consumer law obligations and in promoting best practice.

IRR has no concerns that the document is now being renamed as guidance rather than as a code of practice. The 2015 Code was always clear in that its primary purpose was to provide guidance for retailers and not to act as a regulatory document in its own right. Naming it as 'Guidance on Rail Retailing' is still consistent with this.

We agree that it makes sense to update the guidance to reflect significant changes in consumer protection regulations.

IRR also supports the aim of this document informing interested consumers as well as retailers. This educational aspect for consumers is important – the more that passengers understand what to expect when buying a ticket, the more confidence they will have in the process and in having been sold the best ticket for their journey. This could help to improve public perceptions of rail retailing.

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.

IRR is comfortable with the move towards an overarching Core Principle (retailers must provide passengers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions), which is underpinned by four additional principles:

- Principle A – retailers should provide the information that passengers need clearly, and where they are likely to see it.
- Principle B – the information retailers provide should be accurate, truthful and should not be provided in such a way as it might deceive, even if factually correct.
- Principle C – retailers should provide information in a timely manner, including at the relevant stages of the purchasing process.
- Principle D – retailers should make it clear where relevant information is omitted or restricted which may be material to the passenger’s purchasing decision.

We feel these still reflect the key consumer issues and are consistent with the principles set out in the 2015 Code.

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

IRR broadly agrees with the list of ‘key Information’ provided on pages 4-6. These are, again, consistent with the 2015 Code.

The provision of accurate timetable information is clearly of the utmost importance to passengers, and this includes providing information on any planned engineering work. Third party members are committed to providing passengers with accurate and timely information. However, we would like to emphasise that in doing so they are heavily dependent on data provided by the industry, which they neither generate nor control.

We welcome the inclusion of a new term covering the accessibility of trains and stations and the ability for passengers to be able to determine if trains and stations are accessible to them. IRR has previously argued that the current process for booking passenger assistance is too fragmented and that third party retailers should be allowed to book passenger assistance when selling tickets. This would help create a much more seamless service for passengers requiring assistance.

IRR also notes the increased focus on transparency in displaying the ‘total price’ of a ticket (i.e. including any admin/booking fees or other charges). IRR members already comply with this and are committed to giving passengers accurate and clear information on the total cost of travel.

The new Guidance retains an emphasis on making consumers aware of the key terms and conditions attached to their ticket. However, this now just includes a reference to conditions “set out the National Rail Conditions of Travel, and ticket and/or railcard specific terms and conditions, such as flexibility, routeing, discounts, fulfilment, etc.”

While factual this is not as informative as the 2015 COP which included additional information and examples in this section. Under ‘key terms and conditions’ it said:

Including those set out in the National Rail Conditions of Carriage, and ticket specific terms and conditions, in particular key terms and conditions such as:

- Advance tickets: a passenger can only get on/off a train at the origin and destination for which the ticket is valid, ticket is only valid with accompanying proof of reservation (where required), and any restrictions on refunds;
- Off-Peak: times during which the ticket is valid;
- Season tickets: arrangements for duplicates if lost/stolen and refund arrangements;
- Railcards: if ticket(s) purchases using a Railcard then passenger must have the Railcard with them on their journey for their ticket(s) to be valid;
- Group tickets: where the group must always travel together; and any other terms and conditions, such as terms of sale, e.g. ticket collection arrangements – where the credit/debit card must be one that was used to make booking.

If one of the purposes of the Guidance is to inform individual consumers as well as retailers, then retaining some of the 2015 Code detail would be beneficial. It would give consumers some specific things to be aware of rather than just being redirected to other complicated regulatory documents and left to find this out by themselves. To re-iterate a point we made earlier, the more that passengers understand what to expect when buying a ticket, the more confidence they will have in the process and in having been sold the best ticket for their journey

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?

The case studies are helpful in adding context, but the IRR would like to make the following points.

We note that Case Study 3 refers to statements such as ‘book early to get the cheapest tickets’ potentially being misleading if cheaper tickets might become available later. IRR members are clearly dependent on train companies for access to tickets and the prices they set – they have no control over prices or quotas themselves. Therefore, it will be important that the train companies inform third party retailers if they have any intentions of issuing cheaper tickets later so that this information can be passed onto customers.

Case study 4 states: “Some pay-as-you-go (PAYG) options are only available via one ticket form e.g. contactless. In instances where PAYG is cheaper than paper tickets this should be made clear to the passenger.”

IRR would like to reiterate its concerns about the lack of access to certain products – including PAYG. While PAYG is welcome, independent retailers are currently barred from retailing these

products. This reduces informed choice and puts third party retailers at a competitive disadvantage. IRR would welcome the ability to automatically offer digital customers the same PAYG experience and fares as contactless customers.

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

The Core Principle in the Guidance is to provide passengers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions. One such piece of information covers compensation and refund rights and arrangements. IRR would like to reiterate previous calls for its members to be able to process Delay repay Compensation for passengers.

Allowing independent retailers to process Delay Repay would offer cost effective solutions that provide genuine passenger benefits. It would:

- simplify processes and stop passengers being passed between retailers and operators.
- make claiming quicker and easier.
- facilitate greater innovation and use of automated payment methods.
- drive up claim rates.
- help drive up levels of satisfaction and trust.
- reduce fraud.

Allowing third party retailers to process Delay Repay claims would also be a step towards creating a level playing field between independent retailers and industry retailers. At present third party retailers do not have full access to products and services – some tickets can only be bought from train companies and some services (including Delay Repay and Passenger Assist) cannot be offered. This puts independent retailers at a competitive disadvantage as the railway retailer can provide products and services which third party sellers cannot match. The creation of Great British Railway makes this risk of self-preferencing even more acute. Giving third party retailers access to all products and allowing them to process Delay Repay would better allow all parties to compete fairly and make it easier for passengers to make an informed choice of retailer.

Independent Rail Retailers (IRR) is the membership body for Britain's third-party ticket retailers, consisting of Assertis, Atomised, Evolvi, Fast Rail Ticketing, My Train Ticket, Omio, OnTrack, Raileasy, Trainline and Trip.com.

Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
25 Cabot Square
London E14 4QZ
ENGLAND

10 November 2025

By email to: [REDACTED]

CCed: [REDACTED]

Consultation: Draft guidance on rail retailing and consumer law

We welcome the ORR's initiative to clarify how consumer protection law applies in the context of rail ticket retailing. As an independent ticket retailer, we share the objective of ensuring that passengers are well-informed and able to make effective and confident purchasing decisions.

The proposed guidance reflects an important and positive step towards greater transparency and consistency in the rail retail market. In our view, replacing the current Code of Practice with guiding principles is a useful step in order to allow the rail retail industry – be it railway-owned or independent market actors – to evolve with and support a customer-oriented and dynamic Great British Railways.

We have carefully read your proposed guidance on rail retailing and would like to list our responses in the appendix below.

We fully support the ORR's overall aim of improving consumer protection and transparency in rail retailing. We believe these objectives will be best achieved by:

- Ensuring **consistency of information sources** across TOCS and retailers;
- Avoiding **duplicative or unenforceable obligations** for intermediaries; and
- Promoting **collaboration within the industry** to improve the quality and accessibility of fares data.

We would be pleased to engage further with the ORR to explore practical solutions to these issues.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Appendix

Rail Europe's responses to the ORR consultation "Guidance on Rail Retailing and Consumer Law" 2025

General remarks

a) Dependence of independent retailers on TOCs for information

Retailers are entirely dependent on the data (including but not limited to timetable, fare, reservation and real-time data) provided by train operating companies (TOCs) and associated industry stakeholders such as infrastructure and network managers.

Where the guidance suggests additional or completeness of information that must be disclosed to consumers (like accessibility of stations) and accuracy of information provided, retailers may only be able to comply with this guidance to the extent that TOCs and associated industry actors make such data available to retailers through a centralized systems environment.

We therefore suggest that:

- Any new information obligations should be aligned with the data actually available to accredited retailers both technically and commercially; and
- The ORR should consider requiring TOCs and associated industry actors to make such information accessible to all accredited retailers on a fair, consistent and timely basis so as to enable independent retailers to comply with guidance to the greatest extent possible.

b) Application of the guidance beyond the traditional retail industry: the case of artificial intelligence (AI)

Increasingly we are observing the rapid emergence of AI-generated responses to consumer enquiries on rail services. The responses delivered by AI on traditional web browsers and applications (Google, Microsoft) and social media currently focus on timetable information and lead-in fares. However, it is reasonable to expect that AI-generated journey planning and information services will expand towards a full travel companion before long, covering pre-, in- and after-journey details.

As AI applications are trained and enhanced on the basis of large web-based information sets, the quality, comprehensiveness and accuracy of AI-generated information depends on the quality of the underlying vast information sets. However, we would argue that AI providers – be they commercial or not-for-profit – should now equally be subject to and included in the proposed guidance in order to ensure a quality user experience when booking rail.

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

In Rail Europe's view, the transition from a Code of Practice to Guidance is the right step:

- As the experience, e.g., in the airline industry has shown (GDS Code of Conduct by the European Commission), such codes are retrospective and therefore insufficient to deal with emerging new industry structures and practices;
- In terms of the UK's new setup for the rail industry in the shape of GBR, it is sensible to provide a framework, in the form of Guidance, to allow a degree of flexibility for the industry to respond to and evolve with new customer behaviours.

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.

In general, the principles proposed in the new Guidance are goal-oriented inasmuch as they should be able to ensure well-informed customer decisions when booking a train journey in the UK. This however comes with a clear caveat from the perspective of an independent retailer that providing full and accurate information is often **technically complex and commercially sensitive, and dependent on TOC's cooperation and their inter-availability rules**. One such example is split-ticketing where algorithms may not be integrated with the official fares database.

We would therefore encourage the ORR to:

- Recognise that retailers may not have full visibility of all possible fare combinations or "through" options; and
- Avoid creating obligations that could lead to misleading or inconsistent information, or that would place retailers at a competitive disadvantage compared with the primary carriers.

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

From Rail Europe's retail experience, the updated list for the new Guidance is adequate to meet with current customer expectations and behaviour. However, we would also like to point out 2 dependencies which affect not just the provision of sufficient information but also the way this is comprehended and interpreted by the end consumer:

- Industry complexity: it is a well-understood fact that the railways' fare structure and associated rules and conditions are linked with a high degree of complexity which is often difficult to a lay person. In this context we strongly recommend a reform of the fares system in the UK with the aim of making this simpler and more transparent;

- The need for retailers to translate complexity into simplicity: Rail Europe and other independent retailers strive to provide end consumers with access to as much information as possible about rail journeys, in clear and understandable language. However, we strongly recommend to leave it to best practice how and where such information, especially granular detail, is provided to avoid information overload for consumers and risk potentially decisions against this mode of transport.

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?

In general, the inclusion of relevant case studies is useful and helps illustrate examples of where and how the new Guidance can be applied. In terms of other current topics, please see our comments in section “General remarks” above on AI.

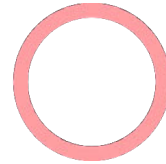
Principle D – Indicate when information is omitted or restricted

We note with concern the proposed Principle D, which suggests that retailers should inform customers where e.g. products or fares are missing from a consumer request and booking of a rail journey.

While we understand and support the intention of ensuring transparency, this requirement raises practical and commercial difficulties:

- It is extremely difficult to identify and display all fares not offered, particularly where the absence of a fare may result from commercial, technical or data access limitations.
- Explicitly listing “what is not sold” could confuse customers and undermine trust in legitimate retail offers.

We therefore propose that Principle D be reframed to require reasonable disclosure only where the retailer knows, with certainty, that a fare or ticket type is available elsewhere but not offered through their platform — rather than a blanket duty to list all “missing” products.



Consultation: Rail Retailing Guidance

Rail Retailing Guidance Consultation
Office of Rail and Road
The Cabot
25 Cabot Square
London E14 4QZ



11 November 2025

Trainline's response to the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) consultation on the review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services (Draft Guidance)

Overview

Trainline welcomes the opportunity to respond to the ORR's consultation on the Draft Guidance. We strongly support the objective of ensuring customers have access to comprehensive, accurate, and timely information to enable them make informed purchasing decisions. To deliver this objective in practice, it is essential that all licensed retailers, including third-party retailers (TPR), are granted fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory access to fares, features, products, services, and data. Without such equitable access, retailers are unable to meet the Core Principle (defined below) of the Draft Guidance in full, and customers are consequently denied the transparency, choice, and convenience that the Guidance seeks to achieve.

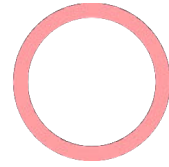
The Government's *A Railway Fit for Britain's Future – Government Response*, published on 11 November 2025, confirms that the ORR will take on an enhanced role, co-developing and enforcing a new statutory Code of Practice on Retail Information (**Code**). The Code will set clear requirements for how GBR should interact with all market participants and will give retailers a route to raise issues with ORR where non-compliance occurs. It is vital that GBR's retail arm is subject to the same Code, on the same terms as independent retailers, to ensure fair competition and prevent self-preferencing. In this context, and consistent with the Draft Guidance, it is essential to begin closing the access gap now, ensuring all retailers have equal access to fares, features, products, services and data.

In more detail

Trainline is supportive of the updated Draft Guidance and believes the Core Principle of the Draft Guidance (*"retailers must provide passengers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions"*¹ (the **Core Principle**)) captures the right objective. The supporting Principles A–D translate that Core Principle into clear expectations.

To meet these principles in practice, all retailers must be able to present the same range of choices and services to customers. When TPRs are prevented from showing certain ticket types, assisting with

¹ See page 3 of the Draft Guidance.



compensation, or using available digital fulfilment options, they cannot meet the Draft Guidance's principles in full. This is an issue of parity of access.

Therefore the single biggest step-change for customers will not come from drafting improvements to the Draft Guidance but instead from ensuring a genuine, fair retail environment across all channels meaning that customers have all information available when purchasing rail tickets and services. When train operating companies (**TOCs**) restrict TPRs from accessing key products, features, and processes, customers are denied information and options that are material to their purchase decisions; the very issues the Draft Guidance seeks to address.

We therefore urge ORR to update the Draft Guidance to:

- (i) acknowledge the link between market access and the ability to meet the Core Principle; and
- (ii) advocate for fair and consistent access to fares, features, products, services and data for all retailers.

To demonstrate how the proposed updates could enhance the customer experience in practice, we outline below examples showing how self-preferencing and restricted access currently undermine the aims and principles of the Draft Guidance, ultimately to the detriment of customers.

Trainline hopes this submission will assist the ORR to finalise the Draft Guidance and is very happy to discuss any aspect of this submission if that would be of assistance.

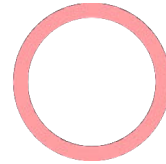
1. Delay Repay

Delay Repay is a core passenger right. Consistent with wider consumer law, customers should be free to authorise TPRs to handle claims for delay repay compensation on their behalf, ensuring that access to redress is simple, fair and channel-neutral.

Despite this, customers of TPRs are restricted in claiming the delay repay compensation they are entitled to because TOCs have consistently limited TPRs' abilities to assist customers in submitting such claims. TPRs are forced to redirect customers to TOC channels to make their delay repay claims resulting in customer confusion and eroding customer trust. This is directly at odds with the objectives of the Draft Guidance.

There is no technological or legal barrier to TPRs submitting delay repay claims on behalf of their customers. As an example, Trainline already has a right to process delay repay claims on behalf of its customers in Spain.

TPRs should be enabled to submit delay repay claims on behalf of customers on equal terms to TOC channels, so that information about delay repay entitlement and corresponding actions can be surfaced prominently and at the right moments of the booking flow and customer's journey. This would ensure consistent, timely communication of compensation rights to customers which ultimately makes it easier for customers to claim the delay repay compensation they are entitled to, and improves customer trust and confidence in the rail retail sector more broadly.



2. Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG)

Current PAYG schemes do not allow TPRs to offer their customers PAYG fares; instead, the TOCs retain exclusive control. PAYG fares can be up to 50% cheaper than equivalent pre-paid options. Preventing TPRs from retailing these fares means that the cheapest fares are invisible to all TPR customers. Customers cannot make fully informed choices if TPRs are prevented from displaying and selling certain ticket types that may better meet their travel needs.

Again there is no technological or legal barrier to TPRs participating in PAYG schemes. For example, Trainline has already developed the technical capability to offer PAYG but access is still being withheld by the TOCs.

Where PAYG schemes exist (EMV or app-based), all retailers should be able to participate in the schemes and have the ability to retail PAYG fares. This would enable all customers to make fully informed decisions about the tickets and services the purchase; as is the intention of the Draft Guidance.

3. Digital season tickets

Several TOCs (Great Western Railway, SWR, Greater Anglia and c2c) still prevent TPRs from retailing digital season tickets even where the necessary technology exists. Customers using TPRs are therefore presented with a reduced set of fulfilment options with no option to purchase a digital season ticket. As with PAYG, these restrictions prevent customers from making fully informed decisions; digital season tickets could offer better value or convenience to the customer. Particularly for regular commuters, this is a tangible barrier to consumer choice.

TPRs should be enabled to retail and fulfil digital season tickets wherever they are technically supported. This would remove unnecessary friction for the customer and ensure a consistent experience for all customers regardless of where the customer chooses to buy their ticket.

4. Promotional and special fares

TOCs have persistently offered promotional and special fares available only on their own retailing channels. For example, between 2020 and Autumn 2025 Greater Anglia has repeatedly launched its 'Hare Fares' and 'Rail Sale' promotions offering heavily discounted advance tickets on selected routes with this promotional fares only available for purchase on Greater Anglia retail channels.

When fares are only visible on one retailer's channel(s), customers cannot see a complete picture of the fares available for their journey and are therefore unable to make an informed decision. This is in direct conflict with the Draft Guidance's aims.

Promotional and special fares should be available to all licensed retailers on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms, so that all customers can see the promotional and special fares and purchase them in their preferred retail channel, in line with the Draft Guidance.

11th November 2025

Rail Retailing Guidance Consultation
Office of Rail and Road
25 Cabot Square
London
E14 4QZ

Dear Sir / Madam

Assertis is pleased to submit its response to the ORR's consultation on rail retailing guidance.

Whilst we recognise that this is guidance, rather than being binding, we welcome the timely decision by ORR to update it. As a responsible retailer seeking to constantly improve the customer experience, increase customer satisfaction and drive upwards rail industry revenues, we are always supportive of guidance on best practice.

To the specific questions asked by ORR, we respond as follows:

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)?

Whilst the guidance is useful, and we do not materially disagree with any part of it, it is very general. It does not sufficiently consider that there are many different types of purchaser, with differing degrees of confidence and knowledge, and that their requirements may be significantly different.

For example, a person who has never travelled by train before may need, depending on the complexity of the journey, in-depth information about the stations which they are travelling to and from (and changing at), with respect to accessibility, facilities and assistance; the trains (or other modes) they are travelling on, with respect to comfort, seating, accessibility, catering and reservations, for example; the ticket options including flexibility both temporally and geographically, as well as to make subsequent changes; and the fare and how this might change or compare to the costs of alternatives.

On the other hand a person who is a regular traveller already knows the answer to all of these questions (or at least the ones that matter to them), and wants to purchase their ticket as quickly as possible.

Retailers need to balance these competing requirements carefully, so as to satisfy both groups (and all those who fall in between). The key to this is progressive disclosure, where customers can (easily) find the information they require, but are not forced to see any more than they need to make an effective decision. Given both the large volume of potential information, and the complexity of much of it (especially around fares), this is a very difficult task to achieve. It has become even more so with the increasing popularity of small-format devices (i.e. apps on phones, rather than websites on PCs).

The challenge here is made further more difficult because of the poor quality of rail data. Most data sources have not changed in structure for 30 or more years. Consequently they do not cater well for newer things like wi-fi, or for anything more descriptive than “hot food” for on-board catering. Consequently it is not possible for us to provide really useful information to customers to inform their decision-making, without creating, curating and maintaining bespoke data; this is something we already do.

Responsible retailers strive to provide customers with sufficient information, in an appropriate way, despite the difficulty of doing so. However, the ORR’s guidance states:

Retailers must ensure that passengers are provided with **all** the information they may need to enable them to choose and buy the most appropriate ticket for their journey.
[my emphasis]

“All” should be tempered in some way, as it is simply unachievable (and probably undefinable - where does it end?). This could be achieved through being more clear about what are the absolute minimum requirements, and what might be more aspirational. Responsible retailers such as ourselves are likely to be willing to sign up to such a requirement - and to aspire to exceed it too.

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose?

Broadly speaking the principles do help to ensure that the twin purposes of meeting consumer law obligations and delivering best practice are met.

However, as noted previously, both of these are, in practice, very difficult to achieve consistently and at scale. There should be some recognition of the difficulties faced by retailers in trying to achieve these objectives, when the desired data (e.g. on station accessibility) does not exist in a consumable form.

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive?

As it stands it is sufficient. It could be developed further to define minimum and best practice requirements. If that is done then it should be done in collaboration with retailers and other interested parties.

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?

We think that the case studies provide good examples, of a range of matters (modes, tickets, accessibility, and fees for instance), without being overly prescriptive.

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

The principles consider only the moment of purchase. Often, however, purchase is some time before travel, and the possible journey itself (and elements of it, such as accessibility, rail replacement buses or diversions) can change between purchase and travel.

Whilst communication about this is covered by some Rail Delivery Group requirements, it would be sensible to acknowledge in the ORR's guidance the possibility of change and the need to communicate with customers, applying the same principles, should this happen.

Should you wish to discuss any of the points raised in our response, please do get in touch. We are always happy to contribute.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Assertis

Office of Rail and Road consultation: review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services

Response from the Rail Ombudsman

The Rail Ombudsman welcomes the adoption of the ORR's Guidance on Rail Retailing. The rationale for the shift from the Code of Practice to Guidance is clear, and our experience of engaging with interested consumers very much supports this approach.

ORR will be aware of the Rail Ombudsman's remit, which includes relevant retailing matters, and the provision of information to passengers is a recurring theme of Rail Ombudsman casework. We note that the Guidance clearly addresses matters noted by the Rail Ombudsman through our casework recommendations, published data and insight reports.

Consultation question 1: Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.

The Guidance appears to be clear, comprehensive, and suitably presented to meet the needs of a varied audience including interested consumers. The potential value of this Guidance to interested consumers is considerable; our casework demonstrates considerable variation in consumer expectations and understanding across a broad range of issues. This Guidance, applied in a consumer-facing context, creates a clear reference point which can improve consistency in consumer expectations.

We believe that the best outcome relies on consistent industry approach to how the Guidance is implemented. If consumers can find the information required by the Guidance with the same ease across the varied retailing landscape, this will almost certainly benefit consumer understandings by reducing complexity. This might be expected to reduce complaints as a result.

We feel the Guidance does set out a clear framework for consistent provision of information to consumers; whether it ultimately achieves its intended purpose can in part be assessed through escalated complaint data from the Rail Ombudsman. We are keen to continue to support ORR with access to data and insight; given the relative prominence of retailing matters within our

casework, we expect to be able to contribute meaningful data insight on an ongoing basis.

Consultation question 2: Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback

We support the proposed Core Principle — “retailers must provide passengers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions”. The supporting principles are also appropriate. We suggest emphasising:

- Post-purchase/user-journey information. Not only at point of purchase, but also while the passenger uses the ticket.
- Complaint procedure sign-posting. Retailers should consistently indicate how customers may access complaints handling (including, where appropriate, alternative dispute resolution).

The principles themselves are broadly reflective of the issues we encounter through casework – in particular the availability of information at the right time and that it is readily understood. We feel that customer complaints mechanisms could be helpfully captured, as although not related to which ticket, product or service to purchase, it is beneficial to consumer confidence in the retailer. Clear and consistent reference to such mechanisms can assist consumers in making informed decisions.

The insight arising from complaints will be a useful tool in assessing whether the intended purpose has been achieved over the medium to long term. Both tier one complaints and the Rail Ombudsman's casework data can help to quantify impact. Dispute outcome data relating to relevant operators/retailers will be especially insightful as this will allow ORR to determine not only volume but the extent to which consumer disputes are being upheld – this will be a clear gauge of consistency in application across the sector and effectiveness.

Consultation question 3: Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.

In the context of issues raised through casework with the Rail Ombudsman, the themes addressed appear comprehensive. The key to success however will be the effectiveness and consistency with which this information is displayed in practice. Cross-sector engagement will be important and the Rail Ombudsman is available to support this as required.

Ensuring the information covered in the Guidance remains reflective of issues arising in complaints on an ongoing basis is important, for instance those issues identified by the Rail Ombudsman (e.g. through the [Casework Deep Dive Report](#)) and the Statutory Appeals Bodies Transport Focus and London TravelWatch.

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?

We welcome the inclusion of case studies in the Guidance, which we note cover a breadth of issues including those evident through our dispute resolution work. A case study approach that evolves in response to insight from complaints and disputes would ensure that the Guidance remains up to date as a driver of best practice in the long term.

Case studies focussing on pre-purchase information availability could be especially helpful. As an example, a case handled by the Rail Ombudsman involved an allegation of mis-selling, because a ticket was sold for a journey that, due to planned engineering works, could not be undertaken entirely by rail. In this instance, the claim was not upheld, but the role of information available at the time of retailing the tickets was critical to the matter in dispute and the parties' position on what could and should be stated at the time of selling the ticket differed.

In addition to case studies, standardised/templated wording for key information could be useful in achieving a consistent level of application within the sector, and understanding by consumers.

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

Summary

The Rail Ombudsman supports the proposed structure and intent of the revised Guidance. We look forward to continuing to support the Office of Rail and Road in its next steps to promote quality and consistency in the sector.

Response to the Office of Rail and Road Consultation: review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services

Rail Delivery Group

11 November 2025

Consultation response: ORR review of the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services

The 2015 'Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services' was developed by a cross-industry group comprising of train operators, Third Party Retailers (TPRs), Office of Rail and Road (ORR), and Transport Focus following the Department for Transport's 2013 report 'Rail Fares and Ticketing: Next Steps'. It was agreed and published by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) in March 2015.

Its main purpose was to provide guidance and to promote best practice in meeting consumer law and industry standards associated with the provision of information to passengers in connection with the sale and use of rail products and services, targeted at both train operators and TPRs.

Since then, ATOC has become the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). This is currently structured as a membership organisation consisting of Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Owing Groups and Network Rail with a strong customer focus.

Rail Delivery Group (RDG) partners with Britain's train operators to put customers at the heart of everything we do, delivering essential services and dedicated experts who keep the nation's railway running efficiently.

Our railway connects people and places, creates jobs, boosts the economy, and provides a greener way to travel. Anyone who has travelled by train or booked a journey for friends or family, will have used our services. We are integral to the running of the railway and play a crucial part at every stage of the customer journey.

From journey information, reservations and Railcards to improving performance, safety and accessibility, we drive the services and people that keep the railway moving – making sure we are delivering a better railway for all our customers, now and in the future.

As we embark on a new era for rail, we are enabling important changes to the structure of the industry and how we run the railway to meet customers' needs. It is now more important than ever that we make sure our services can be relied upon by our customers to get them where they want to be, when they want, and to drive the economic growth the country needs.

Consultation question 1: *Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

The guidance provides a clear set of signposts as to what is expected of rail retailers when selling tickets. The original Code of Practice was issued in 2015 following a 2013 DfT report

that was itself a product of the McNulty report into the rail industry. The world has moved on significantly since then and the rail industry is in the process of being nationalised.

This is creating the opportunity to baseline the structures, accountability and ownership of activities in a way that was not possible in 2015, The Government has just (5 November 2025) set out its intentions for the upcoming legislation to underpin this process and in that context an updated Guidance provides a useful benchmark to retailers and intended consumers, not only for current arrangements but also for their future evolution.

Consultation question 2: *Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

The new principles expand on the requirements of the 2015 Code of Practice and provide a greater context in the way they collectively achieve the desired outcomes. They are therefore a useful build on previous guidance, and we consider this will help inform guiding principles both for existing retailers and the evolution of the retail landscape under GBR. The new principles should reflect the comprehensive set of existing and new data sources that are made available to the retailers.

Consultation question 3: *Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

In considering our response we recognise the emergence of a single, accountable organisation at the heart of the industry in the creation of GBR. Under the published Government policy, GBR will both retail in its own right (including statutory and agreed requirements for access to tickets on and off station) and will license TPRs. This provides for the ability to capture processes and requirements in appropriate detail through the various levels of activity without the guidance needing to be so comprehensive that the principles are obscured.

Therefore, we envision that alongside the guidance, the ORR will be a key stakeholder in developing the various processes and standards that GBR creates and/or evolves from the existing retail landscape. Reflecting on the core principle that *“Retailers must provide passengers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions”*, we believe this principle should also apply to ticket combinations to ensure clarity for customers, whilst also recognising that by choosing to combine tickets customers may be limiting their flexibility or other features of their ticket choice. We would welcome detailed discussion with ORR colleagues on this topic to ensure this is considered as it is complex, and extends beyond informing the purchase decision to ensuring that at the point of travel passengers understand how to use their tickets and where they are valid.

The list of information includes the information type ‘Total price’, against which the examples given in the detail column refer to *“other unavoidable charges”* – we are keen to understand how the ORR determined which charges are *“unavoidable”* and would welcome discussion on this.

Noting our comments above, broadly we consider that the principles laid out are clear and comprehensive enough to meet the needs of retailers and consumers.

Consultation question 4: Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?

We consider that the case studies add useful context to the principles and welcome their inclusion. They collectively provide a broad overview of the different aspects that need to be addressed to avoid directly or indirectly leaving consumers with incomplete information.

One area that might benefit from scoping through a case study is how 'Split Ticketing' options are presented. As the ORR is aware, ticket combination is permitted under the National Rail Conditions of Travel. These rules reflect the fact that there is no prohibition on a consumer using individual products with their own Ts and Cs in combination provided that they comply with those terms and with the rules of combination. This was designed to protect consumers from being unreasonably prevented from using such combinations when they had followed the correct rules. However, many retailers now routinely offer such combinations as an alternative to the through fare and it might be useful through a case study to make clear that the rules governing such combinations need to be adhered to for the ticket to be valid, and that appropriately clear and detailed information should be provided to customers.

Consultation question 5: Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?

RDG is working closely with TOCs and industry partners to realise the vision and ambition of Government through the creation of GBR. We continue to welcome and work with the ORR in ensuring that this translates into clear principles and practices that benefit consumers. The rail reform work in fares and ticketing is working to re-engineer processes so that there is clear accountability, standard-setting and oversight of the mechanisms by which consumers can access rail products, and it is therefore timely at this stage for the retail information principles to be revisited and augmented as per the ORRs proposals.

We will continue to work with the ORR to reflect this guidance in industry standards and to build it into new processes during the establishment of GBR.

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www.transportfocus.org.uk

**Rail Retailing Guidance Consultation
Office of Rail and Road**

[REDACTED]

November 2025

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on this important document.

About Transport Focus

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog representing the interests of rail users throughout Great Britain; bus, coach and tram users across England, outside London; and users of the motorways and major A-roads in England. Working with transport providers and Governments across England, Scotland and Wales – and in partnership with our colleagues at London TravelWatch – we ensure that the users voice is heard.

For ease of reference, we are using page numbers based on the downloadable version of the document available here:

https://www.orr.gov.uk/node/4419/book_pdf_print

Consultation question 1: *Do you think that the Guidance achieves its purpose for its intended audience (i.e. retailers, as well as interested consumers)? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

While we think the Guidance will make a difference for passengers, there are important ways in which it can be strengthened.

It should include the following wording to the relevant section of Principle A.
(Retailers should provide the information that passengers need clearly, and where they are likely to see it)

“Retailers should ensure that the journey planning algorithm they use ‘surfaces’ not less than:

1. The fastest options between the origin and destination pair
2. Any option between the origin and destination pair where there is a fare available that is lower than the fastest option
3. Any option between the origin and destination pair that involves fewer changes of train
4. Any option between the origin and destination pair that involves a through train – even if it is slower and more expensive than other options
5. Any option between the origin and destination pair that involves travel by train rather than bus (replacement or scheduled) – even if slower and more expensive than other options”

Consultation question 2: *Do these new principles achieve their intended purpose? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

See above. We also have suggestions in response to consultation question 3 about possible next steps for using the guidance to drive improvement for passengers.

Consultation question 3: *Is this list of information sufficiently comprehensive? Please provide any comments or feedback.*

We support what is in the list of information, however we have some suggested additions:

Third party retailers

In the introduction on page one: Be explicit that third party retailers include travel management companies.

Enforcement

On page 2 (on relevant consumer law and enforcement):

- While it is useful to have the information on enforcement powers, more detail on how this happens in practice would be helpful as fines and court orders are not commonly being used to enforce these principles.
- It would be helpful to list the aspects of consumer law not enforced by ORR so it reflects the broader consumer experience.

Principle A

Being clear about what service a ticket has bought

Through its input to the Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys programme, Transport Focus has been advocating that the railway needs to do more to help passengers know what they can do with a ticket, this includes being explicit if a ticket is for a single train and only that train, but equally that where they have bought flexibility and not just on the train that it says so (this includes both on the ticket itself and in the retail space prior to purchase).

Special events

Train journeys can be affected by anticipated events such as sporting fixtures, festivals such as Glastonbury. With some exceptions, dates are known well in advance and it should be possible for retailers to warn passengers who are booking tickets that their journey may be especially busy.

Booking mistakes

Booking trains can be complicated – it is easy to get dates and times muddled up. LNER have a two-hour grace period for the passenger to correct errors before a change fee is charged and we feel there is a case for this to be a requirement. More generally, fee free refunds need to be as seamless as possible, including when seeking a refund where no administration fee applies (that is, in accordance with National Rail Conditions of Travel Part F).

Principle C

Timely information for those with additional accessibility needs

While static information about the accessibility features at stations is generally good, problems can arise with communicating temporary changes. The railway should look to provide retailers with the information they need to present cautionary information about facilities expected to be out of action or degraded on the date the passenger is intending to travel. That way, they can make an informed choice.

Principle D

Range of fares

In relation to the range of fares that must be offered, there is an issue in rail retail that there is no obligation to sell the full range. For example, one retailer we approached did not sell the £2 child fare offered by some train companies and we were told it was not worth the development cost.

It is also important that if a retailer is not selling the whole range of fares that this should not be dealt with through blanket get out clauses - analogous to 'may contain nuts'. An example is retailers selling tickets with a railcard discount applied presenting blanket advice about time restrictions, including on a Sunday when there are no restrictions.

Consultation question 4: *Are the case studies helpful in adding context from a rail retailing perspective to the legislative requirements? Are there any other current topics which you think should be included in the case studies?*

Yes.

The case studies are valuable and pick up many common issues for passengers in a straightforward way. Our work suggests ticket vending machines have a number of

areas for improvement and it is important that the clear case study provided is used to drive change across the industry.

The price guarantee that operators have signed up to in relation to TVMs is valuable. However, we would make two observations. It could be better explained and more prominent on train company websites, making it clear that a passenger buying a more expensive ticket than required in error is included. Second, prevention is much better than cure and train operators should strive to ensure TVMs are as intuitive as possible, so passengers buy the right ticket in the first place.

However, while this document is clearly helpful, it is likely that there will need to be continued work by ORR to make progress on this issue. This may include doing similar research to that which it has done in the past on this issue and developing guidance and good practice case studies to show how TVMs can be brought into full compliance with the guidance. This reflects our recommendation in consultation question 3 on being clearer about the practicalities of enforcement.

Consultation question 5: *Do you have any additional comments or feedback you would like to provide which are relevant to our proposals?*

Yes.

On figure 1, page 3, which summarises the principles:

Principle A: could be clearer - we think it means the information needs to be clear - and it needs to be clear where a passenger would find it.

Under the text outlining the core principle, it says "Consumers must be supplied with the information that the average consumer needs...".

We understand what this phrase is driving at, but it needs to be amended. What retailers need to provide is the information needed by people with diverse needs, common issues to take into account are a consumer's familiarity with the railway and their reading age.