

Note of ORR's code of practice on retail information workshop -

20 Oct 2014

ORR's stakeholder workshop for the development of a code of practice on retail information took place on 20 October, 14:00-16:00, at ORR offices in London. This note summarises the main points of discussion. This note should be read alongside the slides for the workshop, available [here](#).

The session was introduced by John Larkinson, Director of Economic Regulation, who spoke about the need for the industry to work together on delivering the Code.

Kraig McCarthy, rail fares and ticketing policy manager from the Department for Transport (DfT) then spoke about the wider context for the Code. He explained the issues the DfT felt needed to be addressed, and the various options that were considered to address these. Finally he outlined the benefits the introduction of a Code could bring to the rail industry.

Beth Corbould, senior policy executive from ORR, then spoke about the work ORR has undertaken to assist the development of the Code. She outlined the obligations the Code is intended to reflect, and the research ORR had commissioned to identify the information that might be relevant to passengers when choosing, buying and using rail tickets. Next, Nick Wortley, policy manager from ORR, spoke about the vision ORR has for the Code, which is for a principles-based Code that presents best practice examples of compliance, of which the [OFT's Principles for online and app-based games is a good example](#).

Next, David Mapp, Commercial Director of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) spoke about the Code from an industry perspective and the process for agreeing and publishing the Code. He outlined that ATOC thought the Code was an appropriate measure for the industry to take to improve retail information, and that the Code could likely have benefits for train operating companies (TOCs). Finally David outlined that ORR had agreed to produce a first draft of the Code, and to organise a working group consisting of ATOC/RDG, ORR, DfT and Passenger Focus to continue the Code's development, with input from other stakeholders. David also pointed out that significant work is required to achieve the desired March publication.

Following these presentations, John Larkinson then asked participants to turn their attention to the questions that were circulated in advance.

Question-and-answer session

Participants had previously been asked to consider four questions covering key issues to be agreed during the developing of the Code. These questions can be found in the slides at the above link.

The key points discussed over the session are listed below:

- Some parties highlighted the importance of knowing what different passengers expect and need in their transactions. For example, passengers making straight forward and/or regular journeys don't need or expect as much information for their purchase as someone who is making a complex or irregular journey. Stakeholders said the Code should reflect that retailers may choose to identify passengers and provide different information to reflect their needs.
- Some parties identified that it was important the Code not be prescriptive in the information mandated, and that the Code should be more focused on the outcomes achieved by passengers. This would better align the Code with modern consumer law, as well as improving how "future proof" the Code is.
- On the different sales channels the Code will cover, some parties pointed out their limitations to currently available technology, particularly around ticket vending machines. Some stakeholders talked about ways to inform passengers of the differences in the channels.
- There was discussion of methods to inform people of the restrictions of their tickets, for example providing colour coded timetables and maps to passengers that clearly show on what trains and routes their ticket is valid.
- Parties discussed what the industry was doing to improve the systems and data involved in retailing. ATOC acknowledged there was a great deal of work on-going in this area.
- Some stakeholders outlined the reasons a passenger-facing version of the Code may be a useful addition to the current project, for example 'Key Facts' about different ticket types empowers consumers to educate themselves and hence seek out information when they purchase tickets.
- In discussing how the Code may be monitored, there was general discussion of how ATOC's 'mystery shopping' report, which is soon to be published, could also consider the impact of the Code. There was also general discussion of the extent to which surveys of actual passengers may be more credible than mystery shopping exercises, so it may be sensible to do a combination of both.
- A stakeholder also pointed out that some TOCs are required to report on their ticketing and retailing activities under their franchise or passenger charter, so some evidence may already be available.

Next steps

John Larkinson highlighted the next steps for the development of the Code, being:

- ORR will produce an initial draft – and will circulate to TOCs and third party retailers to provide an indication of the format and structure of the Code in the week beginning 27 October
- A small steering group (ORR, DfT, Passenger Focus, RDG/ATOC) will be set up to oversee the development of the draft based on comments received, including responses to ORR's consultation
- Further draft circulated in December/January
- Finalised draft to ORR and ATOC/RDG governance bodies in February
- Code finalised and published in March 2015

John also encouraged all stakeholders to seek a bilateral meeting with ORR if that would be helpful.

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