

Scottish Government Submission of 19 April 2022

PE1930/A: Ensure customers are always given information on cheapest possible fare in new Scotrail contract.

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that a requirement of future rail contracts is for customers to be given information on the cheapest possible fare as a matter of course and recognize the vital role of the existing ticket office estate in delivering on this aim.

We want more people to choose to travel by train on our publicly controlled and operated railway, so people need to feel confident that they can book a ticket easily and that they have got the best fare.

ScotRail Trains Limited will be expected to explore what more can be done to achieve this. One aspect might involve strengthening current commitments such as the price promise guarantee, which will refund the difference if passengers find the same Season, Anytime or Off-Peak ticket (or combination of tickets) cheaper elsewhere with the same terms and conditions, and Transport Scotland will work with Scottish Rail Holdings and ScotRail Trains to progress this work.

Currently the onus is on the purchaser however ScotRail's Price Promise [Our Price Promise on Rail Tickets | ScotRail](#) is in place and within the Policy Compendium as part of the move to ScotRail Trains Ltd there is a requirement to "*Review, remove and prevent future fares anomalies, where possible so as to ensure passengers can clearly understand pricing and choose the lowest fare available for their journey*".

We know how challenging the cost of living crisis is for people who need to use public transport right now and are looking carefully at what more can be done to ensure that passengers can get the **best** value fare for their journey at all times.

Transport Scotland is taking forward a Fair Fares Review to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares. The review will look at the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes.

We support calls for simplification of the current system and will be exploring how we can make the case for this and also what we might be able to do with the powers the Scottish Government has to make fares easier for all, including through the Fair Fares Review.

We also note that the Williams –Shapps Review identified a need for simplification and that Great British Railways (GBR), once established, is to address this issue. Transport Scotland officials will be making clear in their discussions with GBR of Scotland's priorities and needs in respect of a future, simplified fares system.

In 2011, ticket office sales accounted for 40 per cent of all transactions but by 2019 it dropped to 28 per cent and is now currently at 19 per cent. ScotRail has installed 355 ticket vending machines which, based on current data, accounts for 32 per cent of all ticket sales. Increased usage and familiarity of the internet has opened up an entirely

new retail channel, which currently accounts for 25 per cent of all ticket sales.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – the independent economic and safety regulator for Britain's railways – advises that ticket sellers are required to provide their customers with information, but it is up to customers to choose the most suitable ticket for their journey.

The information that might be important to customers, and how this should be provided, is set out in the industry's code of practice on retail information.

National Rail Conditions of Travel stipulates that Train Companies will make available:

...clear information about the range of Tickets to help customers make a well-informed choice about the most appropriate and best value Ticket.

Additionally, the ORR's Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services states the following:

The rail industry offers passengers a range of products and services, and ways of choosing and buying them. In order for passengers to capitalise on the choices available to them, plan their journeys with confidence, and achieve value for money they need good information in order to make informed decisions. This will enable them to select the most appropriate ticket for their journey (and choose from the other services that might be available to them), to understand how they can use their ticket, and to exercise their rights.

The legislation that governs these arrangements, including the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement which includes the National Rail Conditions of Travel, is reserved to the UK Parliament.

On 22 March 2022, Transport Focus – the independent watchdog for transport users – published its advice on 'Tips on finding cheaper train tickets' which included:

'Buy directly from the operator's website'

- Sign up for email alerts – from time to time, they might send customer offers

'Book in advance'

- Booking an Advance ticket will usually save customers money. Companies start selling tickets up to 12 weeks before the journey

'Split your journey'

- If customers are travelling long distance, it might be cheaper to buy two separate tickets to the destination

On the option of splitting journeys they note:

If you want to do this, you'll need to do this yourself as staff at ticket offices are not required to search for the cheapest ticket.

End