

Fares and Ticketing Review – Two years on

Scorecard and analysis

Two years on from the publication of ['Rail Fares and Ticketing: Next Steps'](#) (referred to as the Fares and Ticketing Review) by the Coalition Government we have looked back to see what promises were made, which ones have been kept and which ones have not.

According to the Transport Secretary, Patrick McLoughlin, the aim of the Fares and Ticketing Review was to:

- Give passengers a better, more modern and more flexible deal on fares;
- Improve the current ticketing system while in parallel building the smart ticketing system of the future;
- Encourage innovation and efficiency from train companies for the benefit of the passengers and taxpayers alike.

Our findings show that progress with implementation of the Review has been highly uneven. There has been very limited progress with many of the key promises, some of which have been ignored and seemingly forgotten since October 2013. The Government should be praised, however, for the decision to hold the rise in regulated rail fares at RPI inflation for the duration of this Parliament. This move away from annual above inflation price rises for the most popular tickets was notably absent from the Fares and Ticketing Review.

We have scored the key commitments set out in the Fares and Ticketing Review with a PASS or FAIL and with a score of between 0 to 3. These have been assigned as follows:

- 0 = No visible signs of progress
- 1 = A commitment partially met
- 2 = A commitment fully met
- 3 = A commitment exceeded

Commitment 1. Single Leg Ticketing

Government Promise: We will trial a scheme to regulate longer distance off peak tickets on a single leg basis to remove the confusing scenario where some single off-peak tickets cost nearly as much as return tickets, and to also to offer passengers increased choice and flexibility.

PASS/FAIL: In the two years since the review, the Government has failed to hold a trial of these tickets on any routes. There is no timetable or indication of when a trial of these tickets would take place. This is despite ample opportunity to do so including the letting of the East Coast Franchise in the subsequent period. **FAIL**

SCORE: 0

Commitment 2: Part Time Tickets

Government Promise: Trialling more flexible tickets that can provide a more attractive offer for commuters travelling fewer than five days a week, or outside peak hours, that can better match more modern working patterns and potentially help to better manage capacity on the railways.

PASS/FAIL: In the two years since the review, the Government has failed to hold any trial of flexible tickets for part time workers, despite promising to do so before the end of 2014. There was a commercial trial on the Southern franchise as part of franchise requirements in 2014 but this trial had a sample of just 65 people and no real conclusions were made.

The Government has committed to introduce flexible tickets for part-time workers in its 2015 General Election Manifesto but with no timetable or details of when this will happen. **FAIL**

SCORE: 0

Commitment 3: South East Flexible Ticketing Programme (smart ticketing)

Government Promise: We will deliver our South East Flexible Ticketing (SEFT) Programme, outputs from which will help inform our future smart ticketing strategy.

PASS/FAIL: The SEFT programme has been shrouded in mystery from the outset with no clear timetable of completion. Rumour has it that Transport for London offered to run this scheme using skills and experience from its successful Oyster programme but this offer was turned down by the Department for Transport. Since then this programme has been beset with problems and delays. **FAIL**

SCORE: 0

Commitment 4: Code of Practice on ticketing information

Government Promise: We will deliver a Code of practice on ticketing information that will ensure passengers can access the information they need to confidently select the most appropriate ticket for their journey.

PASS/FAIL: The Office for Rail and Road and Association of Train Operating Companies have jointly produced a '*Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services*'. This document is however written by the rail industry for the rail industry and does not nearly go far enough to address the problems of fares and ticketing complexity. The main outcome of this code of practice seems to be stickers on Ticket Vending Machines instructing passengers of what tickets are and are not available. **PASS**

SCORE: 1

Commitment 5: Flex

Government Promise: We will reduce the current fares flex from 5 per cent to 2 per cent, thereby limiting the extent of the annual fares increases and putting money back into the hands of passengers

PASS/FAIL: Flex is where Train Operating Companies had the option to increase fares on some routes by up to an extra 5 per cent on top of the annual increase set by government, This meant fares on some routes could rise by more than 10 per cent in a single year.

The Government have also pledged to hold their regulated fare formula at the rate of RPI inflation for 5 years. Although this was not in the Fares and Ticketing Review, the Government should be praised for this much needed move to limit annual fare increases.

The Government has passed with flying colours. They exceeded the commitment in the Fares and Ticketing Review and have got rid of the flex rule entirely. **PASS**

SCORE: 3

Overall score and comments

Many of the key promises made in the Fares and Ticketing Review have been misses but it is a mixed picture with some promises also being kept. It is also notable that the Government has frozen peak time fares for the lifetime of this Parliament – something not included in the Fares and Ticketing Review.

Two years on there is still a huge amount of work to do to meet these promises and give passengers what they want; cheaper, fairer and simpler rail fares for everyone.

The overall score for the Government two years on from the Fares and Ticketing Review is:

Commitment 1: Single Leg Ticketing: 0 points

Commitment 2: Part Time Tickets: 0 points

Commitment 3: South East Flexible Ticketing Programme: 0 points

Commitment 4: Code of Practice on ticketing information: 1 point

Commitment 5: Flex: 3 points

TOTAL SCORE: 4 out of 15