

Penalty Fares and South West Trains

Passenger Focus has long been concerned that much-needed revenue is lost to the industry through ticketless travel, resulting in fare paying passengers having to subsidise those who do not. For this reason we have supported, in principle, efforts to restrict fare evasion, including Penalty Fare schemes.

However, our support for such a policy is dependent on the Train Operating Company in question providing adequate retail facilities. Train operators are obliged to make 'reasonable endeavours' to ensure that passengers queue no longer than five minutes for a ticket at peak times and three minutes at off peak times. The [South West Trains Passenger's Charter](#) also states "we will try to ensure that you do not need to queue for more than five minutes at busy times and no more than three minutes during less busy times".

Passenger Focus believes that passengers should not be penalised because the train operator fails to provide adequate retail facilities for passengers to buy tickets. Providing that the passenger has queued for the minimum period we believe that they should not be expected to miss their train because of the length of the ticket queue. At such times we believe that station staff should switch on automatic permit to travel machines or give verbal approval for people to buy on board the train without being penalised.

We also do not feel that passengers should be issued with penalty fares if they were unable to purchase the exact ticket they wanted from a ticket machine. Whenever the cheapest fare is not available from the ticket machine and there is no ticket office open then we believe the passenger should be able to get on the train and buy the ticket on board.

We are currently discussing the operation of the penalty fares scheme with South West Trains.