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Our Ref: Lett8028/Perry/AS/ad

*Dear Minister*

### **Improving self-service ticket machines at railway stations**

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Michael Roberts and David Brown about ticket vending machines (TVMs) following the recent Telegraph article.

Passenger Focus recognises the frustration and anger generated by inadequate TVMs and we have been demanding action for some time. Our research "Ticket Vending Machine usability" uncovered numerous issues, and we continue to press train companies, the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and the TVM manufacturers to act on our recommendations. We were pleased to see some of our concerns referred to in the Department's fares and ticketing review in 2012, since which we have been working with the Office of Rail Regulation to ensure that the "retail market review for selling tickets" results in tangible improvements. Appendix A gives more detail about what we wish to see changed, and touches on problems with the underlying ticket structure where relevant, but I will cover three of the key issues below.

1. At the heart of the TVM problem is the need to move away from displaying all the options and requiring passengers to work out, often with some guesswork, what is best for them. Instead, for those who are unsure what ticket they need, TVMs need to guide passengers to what is best for the journey they want to make – much as a ticket clerk would do. We also think passengers need to be involved far more in the development of TVM screen navigation and layout than has been the case so far. We continually make these points to the industry, including to bidders for new franchises. Many train company senior managers agree with us, but there has been frustratingly little progress at any existing franchise – the cost of change generally being cited.
2. Some tickets are not available from a TVM, with the likelihood that those not 'in the know' are overcharged. In this category are things like GroupSave offering a discount when three or four passengers travel together and Day Rangers giving unlimited travel within a particular area. There are also instances where ordinary tickets are not available from TVMs, even though they are the most appropriate option for the passenger. Passenger Focus challenges train companies to correct the programming whenever we discover problems, but we do not see concerted effort by the industry to resolve these sorts of issues.



3. Passenger Focus has long argued that through fares being more expensive than the sum of individual journey legs is unacceptable. It is simply unfair to those who assume that if you ask for a ticket from A to B you will be offered the best price. Transport Scotland and ScotRail worked together to solve this problem. It is high time that the industry in England and Wales followed their lead.

In summary, while some TOCs have made improvements in response to some of our recommendations, substantive progress in addressing deficiencies with TVMs has been glacial at best. I therefore welcome the proposed summit and look forward to contributing the passenger perspective.

Yours sincerely

**Anthony Smith**  
**Chief Executive**

Enc

cc: Michael Roberts, Director-General, Rail Delivery Group  
David Brown, Chair, Rail Delivery Group Information & ticketing workstream  
Martin Griffiths, Chair Rail Delivery Group  
Richard Price, Chief Executive, Office of Rail Regulation



## Appendix A – Passenger Focus recommendations regarding ticket vending machines

### Presenting all the options

- TVMs should display only the tickets that it is appropriate to sell at the time, in order that passengers do not buy a more expensive ticket than they need (at present, many TVMs display tickets that are more expensive than needed at the time, leading to confusion and potential for the unwary to overpay). An example is Super Off-Peak prices, available only at the weekend, which do not always appear on TVM front pages – when this happens the more expensive weekday Off-Peak price generally shows instead.
- TVMs and websites must offer the GroupSave price when a passenger seeks to buy three or four tickets for a journey where that product is offered. It is unacceptable that the unwary are charged full price for all passengers in their party when a discount is available to anyone 'in the know'. The now defunct First Capital Connect achieved this on its Scheidt & Bachmann TVMs – why have others not followed suit?
- Sufficient information (e.g. restriction times, geographic boundaries etc.) should be contained in the fares system about all Day Ranger tickets to enable TVMs and websites to sell them where relevant. At present, many TVMs and websites are 'blind' to Day Rangers, even when they are the most appropriate ticket for the journey in question, and passengers are instead offered a higher-priced ticket.
- TVMs should be programmed to allow off-peak fares to be sold early enough for passengers to buy one and board the first off-peak train. As soon as the last more expensive train has departed, the cheaper ticket should be available (passengers have problems with TVMs displaying off-peak tickets only from the moment they are valid, in some instances allowing no time to buy one and board the first train on which that ticket can be used).
- TVMs should be able to sell Boundary Zone 'add on' tickets to passengers already holding a Travelcard or equivalent. First Capital Connect achieved this on its Shere/ATOS TVMs, but other TOCs do not appear to have followed.
- All TVMs should be able to sell tickets to all National Rail stations. Currently, there is no mechanism for a new station to be automatically added to the list of destinations offered by TVMs. Stratford Parkway is an example we have found missing from TVMs, including at Marylebone from where trains to Stratford Parkway depart!

### Pricing structure

- In order for passengers to effectively mix and match between Advance and 'walk up' ticket types, Off-Peak Single tickets for long-distance journeys should be half the price of the current Off-Peak Return (this would deal with the illogical situation in which a single ticket can be just £1 less than a return and provide a mid-priced ticket that fills the gap between the complete inflexibility of Advance and the fully-flexible Anytime).



- A comprehensive exercise should be carried out to identify where fares do not exist between pairs of stations; where they exist but are not valid for a perfectly reasonable routing; and where for no apparent reason Advance tickets do not exist for a journey between pairs of stations.
- On any 'walk up' interavailable flow the through fare should not exceed the cost of buying 'walk up' interavailable fares for individual legs of the journey. An example of where the unwary pay more than necessary is Leicester to Aberystwyth: the Anytime Single through fare is £61.00, yet an Anytime Single Leicester to Birmingham (£17.00) plus an Anytime Single Birmingham to Aberystwyth (28.80) comes to £45.80.

### **Helping passengers buy with confidence**

- Validity restrictions (in terms of times you may not travel and routes/train companies you cannot use), for both outward and return legs, should be clear to passengers before they commit to purchase the ticket. As well as the principle of having what you need to make an informed purchase, this will reduce the number of passengers caught out later by surcharges and Penalty Fare Notices.
- Towards the end of peak periods, booking offices, TVMs and websites should warn passengers making long-distance journeys that it may be cheaper to buy an Anytime ticket for part of the journey and an Off-Peak ticket for the remainder (for example, an Anytime Single from Kettering to Exeter for the 08:56 departure costs £185; however, by the time the passenger departs from Paddington at 11:06, Super Off-Peak tickets are valid – a Kettering to London Anytime Single at £64.50 including Underground from St. Pancras to Paddington, and a London to Exeter Super Off-Peak Single at £46 would save £74.50).
- TVMs and websites should, for avoidance of doubt, display "(5-15 years)" wherever child fares are referred to.
- TVMs and websites should help passengers work out, with minimum effort, which TfL zone(s) they need their ticket to cover.

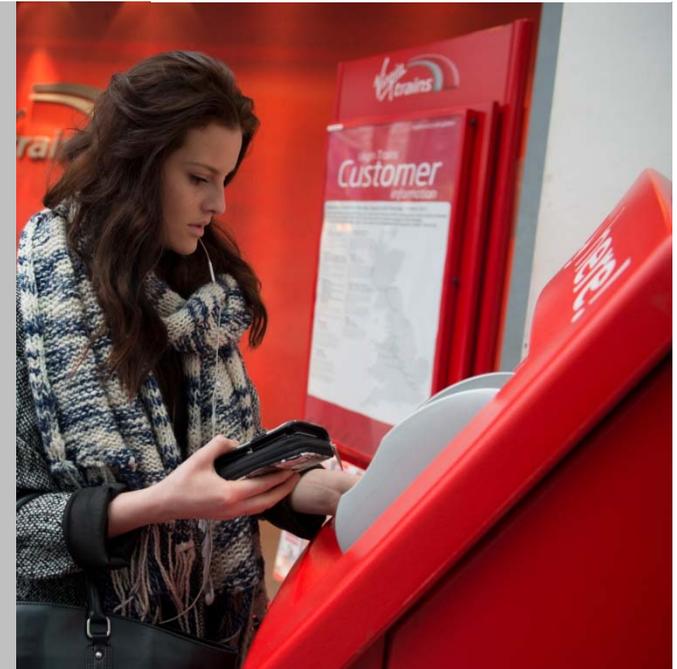
### **Miscellaneous**

- Validity restrictions should be physically printed on 'walk up' tickets, whichever purchasing-channel is used. Having it set out on the ticket when you can and can't use it will remove ambiguity to the benefit of passengers and staff.
- TVMs and ticket retailing websites should be subject to formal 'impartial retailing' rules, as are ticket offices at stations. It is not always easy to find the right ticket to travel with a TOC other than the one operating the TVM: indeed some train companies complain that they do not get fair billing from other TOCs.
- All TVMs should offer translation into different languages. The majority offer German and French, but no TOC has matched East Coast's French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish



## Ticket machines at stations: what needs to change?

Mike Hewitson and  
Guy Dangerfield  
Passenger Focus  
11 December 2014



## What needs to change?

- Guide passengers to their ticket – don't make them guess what they need
- Make sure TVMs can sell the full range of tickets – the industry cites TVMs as an alternative to a booking office, but there are significant gaps
- Fix the underlying issues with the fares structure

## Bewildering array of options ....

- Which one?
- There are people behind me ...
- Am I paying too much?
- Which platform – I've got three minutes
- Will I get a penalty fare for buying the wrong thing?

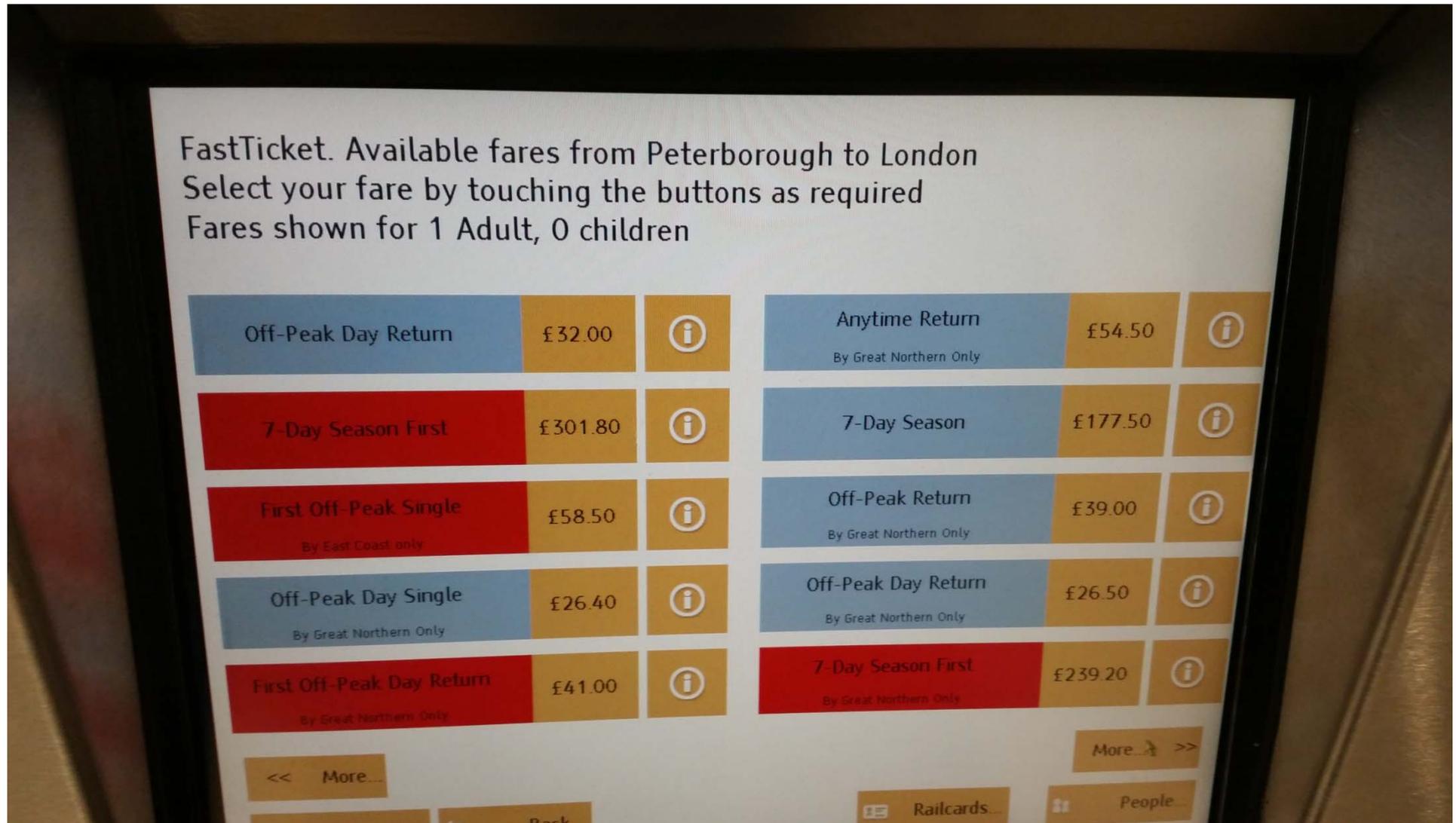
*"I find the options on there a bit off putting. Do you want standard, return, railcard, anytime, off-peak, peak time. There's an anytime, an off peak and a super off peak and sometimes I have to look really closely at the screen to think of which one I want"*

# East Coast TVM Peterborough to London – Page 1

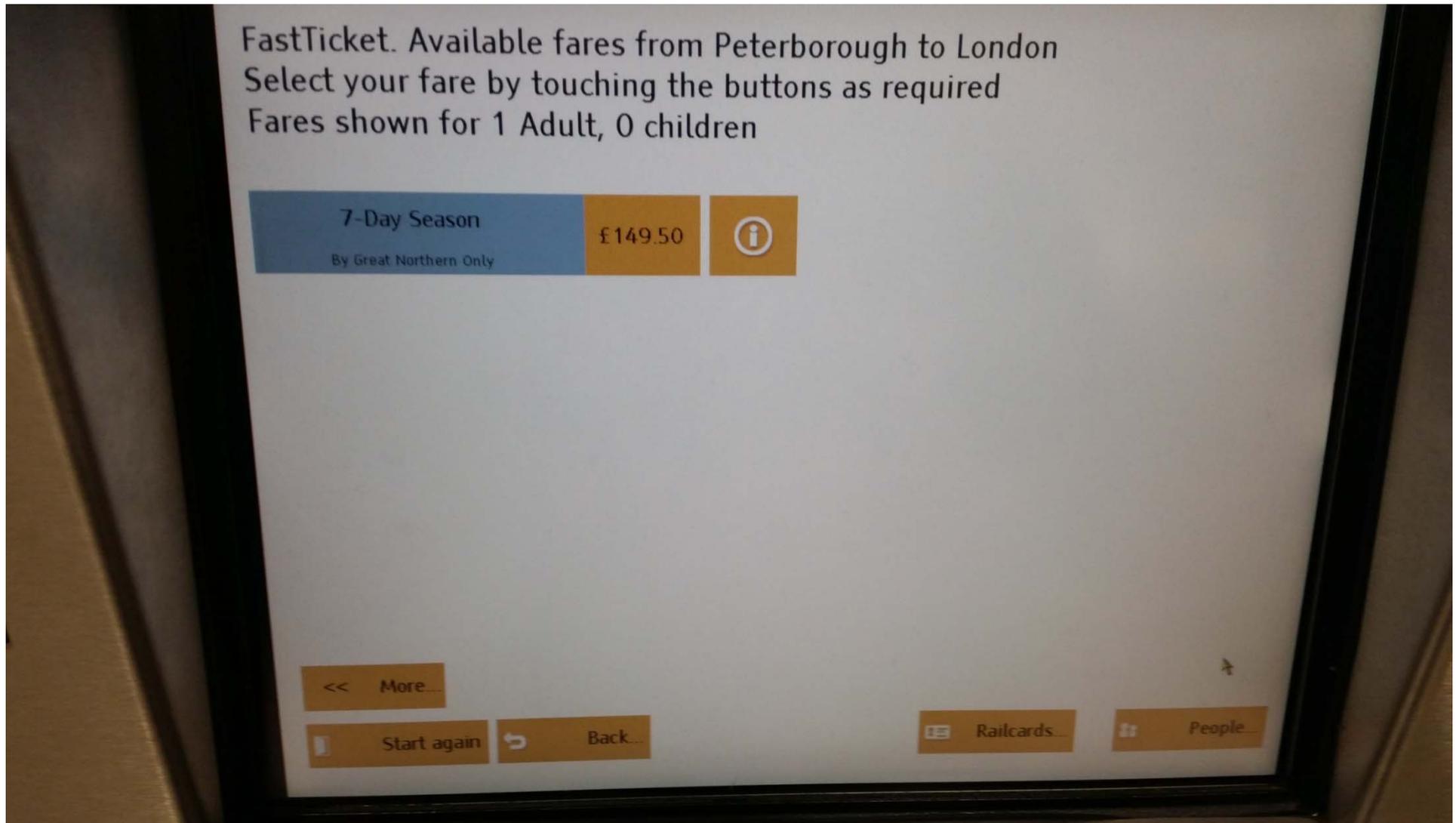
FastTicket. Available fares from Peterborough to London  
Select your fare by touching the buttons as required  
Fares shown for 1 Adult, 0 children

First Class Anytime Single	£67.00		First Class Anytime Return	£134.00	
Anytime Return	£99.00		First Class Anytime Single <small>By Great Northern Only</small>	£46.00	
First Class Anytime Return <small>By Great Northern Only</small>	£92.00		Off-Peak Return	£67.50	
Super Off-Peak Single	£42.20		Super Off-Peak Return	£44.00	
Off-Peak Day Single	£31.90		Anytime Day Single <small>By Great Northern Only</small>	£31.00	
			More... >>		

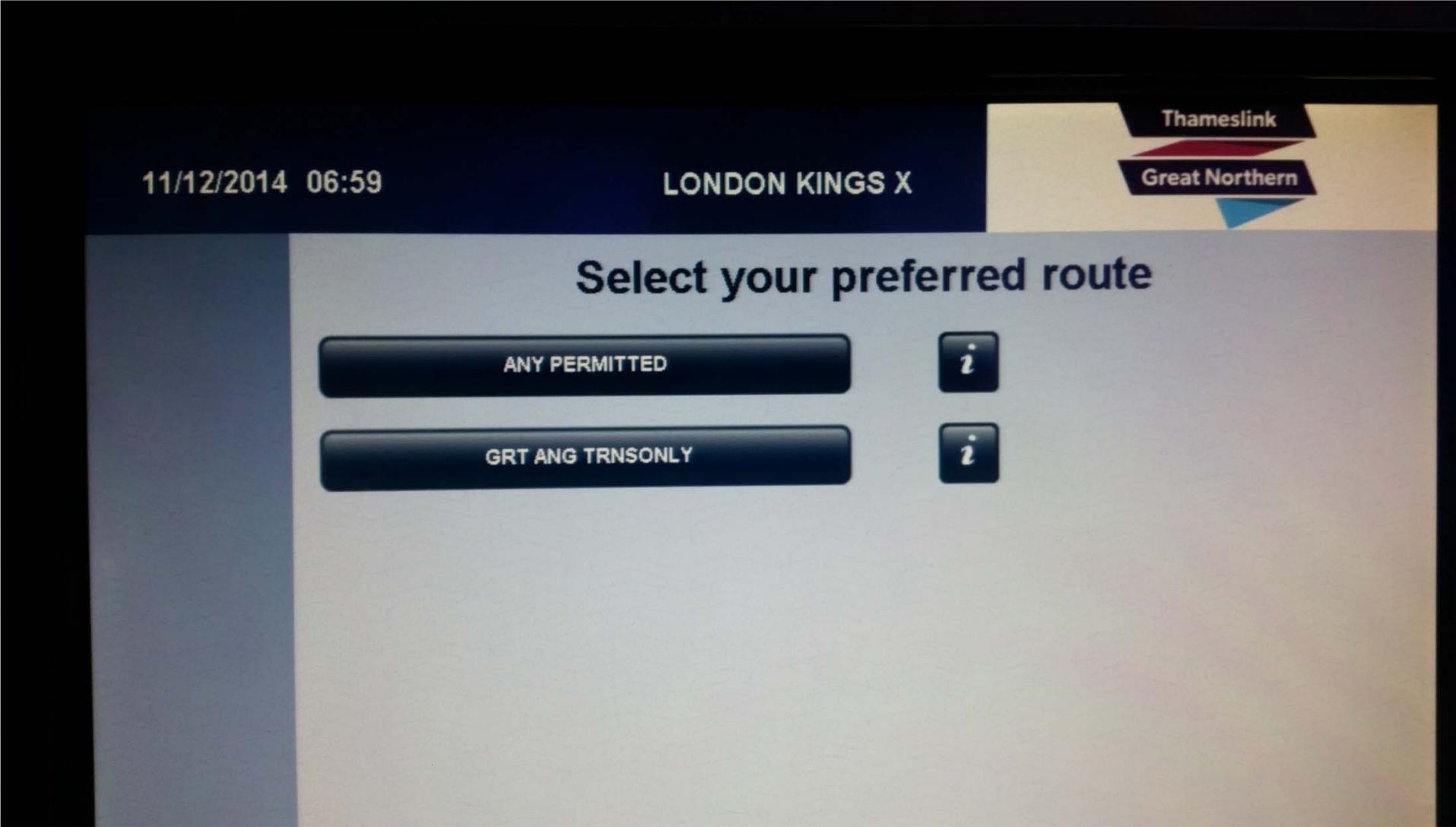
# East Coast TVM Peterborough to London – Page 2



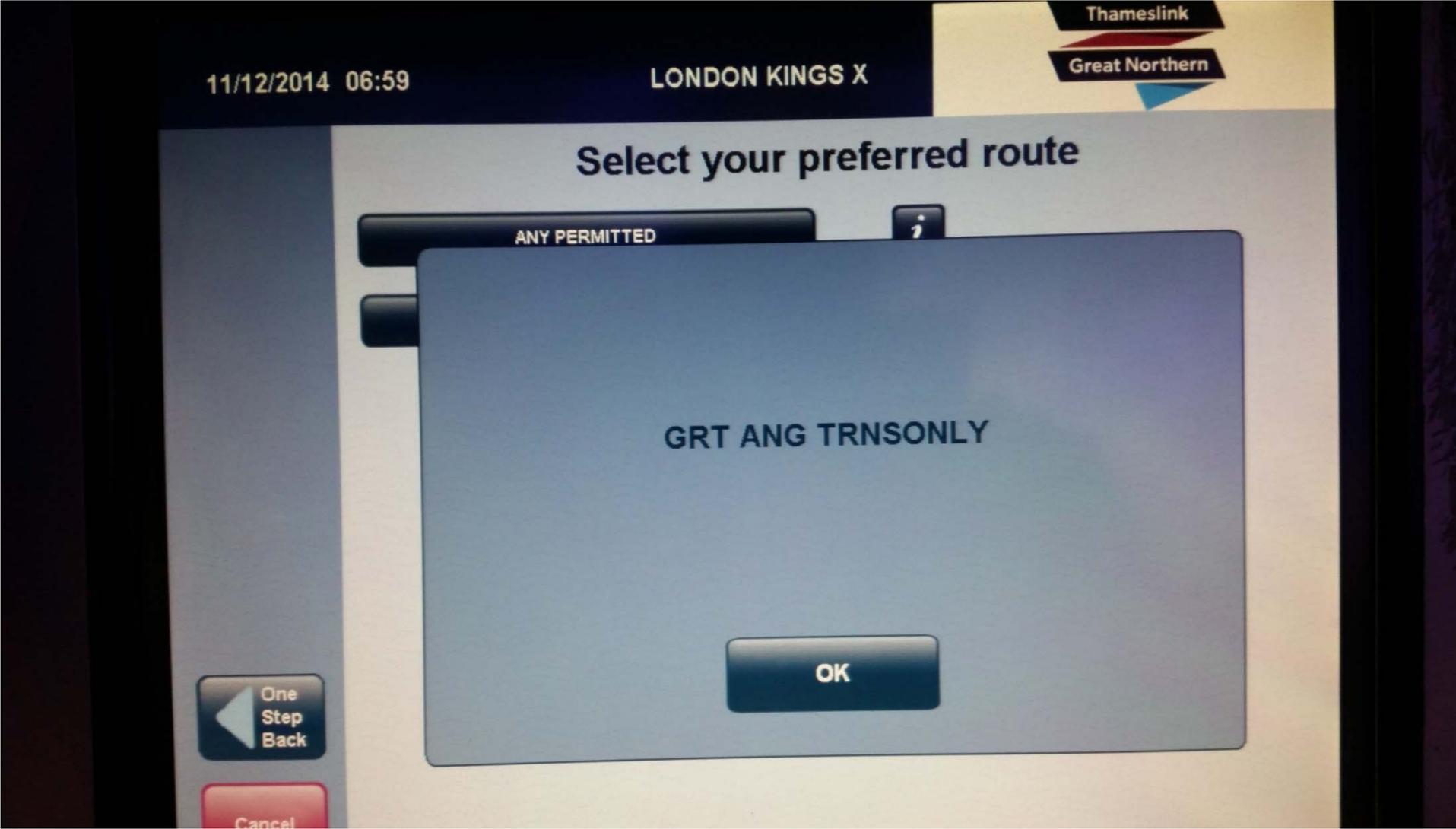
# East Coast TVM Peterborough to London – Page 3



# Govia Thameslink TVM London to Cambridge



# Govia Thameslink TVM London to Cambridge



## My ticket isn't there ...

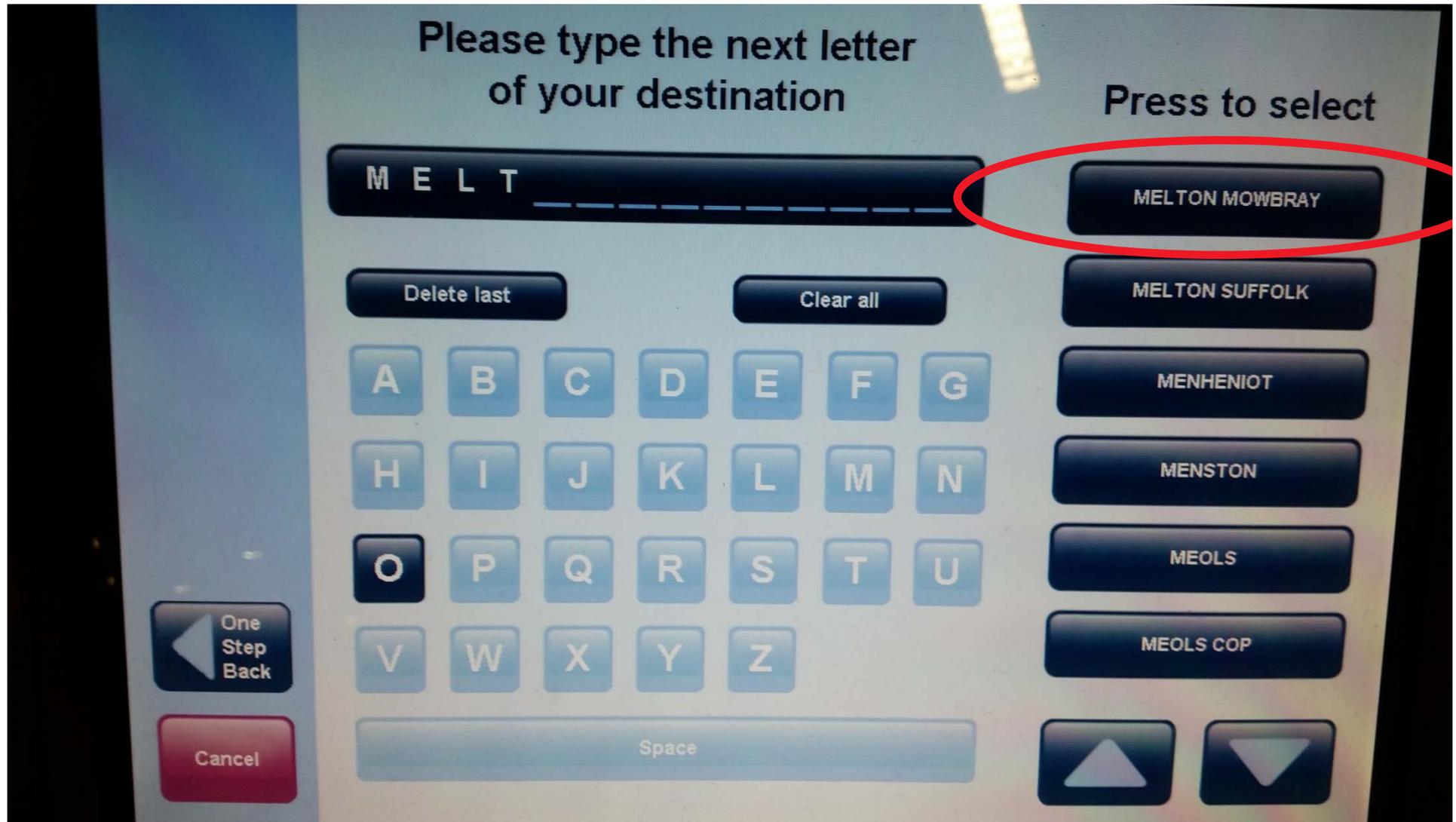
- Weekend prices don't always show on 'hot lists' – even at the weekend!
- Some stations are missing entirely (e.g. Melton Mowbray not on some machines at St Pancras, Stratford Parkway not on some machines at Marylebone)
- Off-peak tickets not 'showing' in time to buy one and catch the first train on which that ticket is valid
- Boundary zone add-ons not generally available
- GroupSave tickets are not generally available
- PlusBus offered only by some machines

**All lead to hassle for passengers**

**Some lead passengers to overpay**

**Most undermine trust**

# East Midlands Trains TVM at St Pancras – shows Melton Mowbray



Southeastern TVM right next to it doesn't – nothing to warn passengers



## What I need isn't there ...

Boundary zone add-ons not generally available

GroupSave tickets are not generally available

PlusBus offered only by some machines

A cause of particular frustration ....

- Many TVMs cannot sell any of these
- Some TVMs can sell one of the three
- Solutions have been developed, but ....

# Underlying fares anomalies

Until the industry tackles the split ticketing issue, passengers using TVMs will continue to pay more than they need

- You lose out unless ‘in the know’ – and even then ....
- Feels underhand, undermines trust

An example of where the unwary pay more than necessary is Leicester to Aberystwyth:

- the Anytime Single through fare is £61.00
- an Anytime Single Leicester to Birmingham (£17.00) plus an Anytime Single Birmingham to Aberystwyth (28.80) comes to £45.80.

**This example, like many, has nothing to do with “combination of tickets” allowed by the Conditions of Carriage**



**Are there some quick wins?**

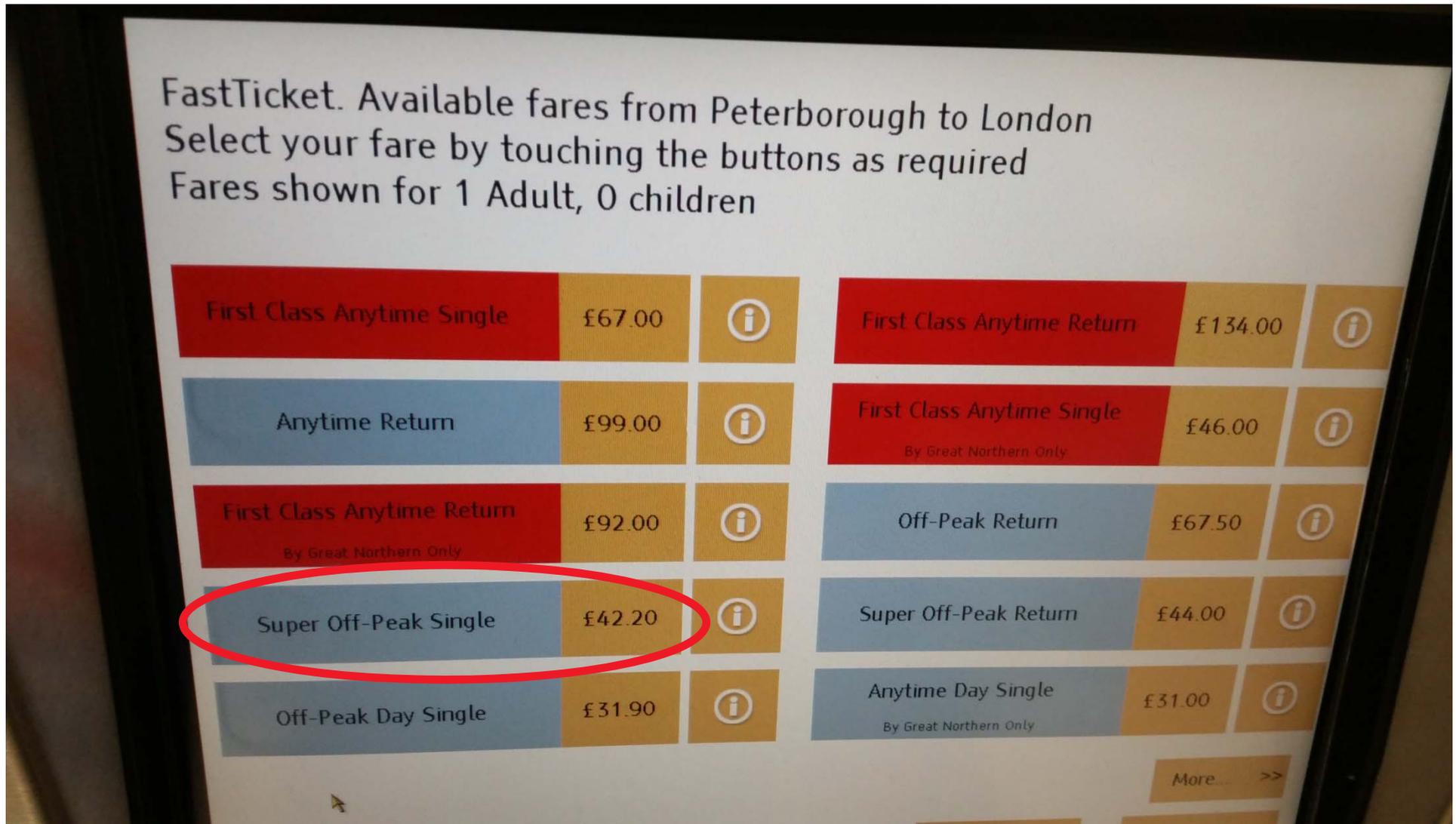
## Quick wins?

- Make sure TVMs display only the tickets that it is appropriate to sell at the time – reducing the risk that passengers buy a more expensive ticket than they need.

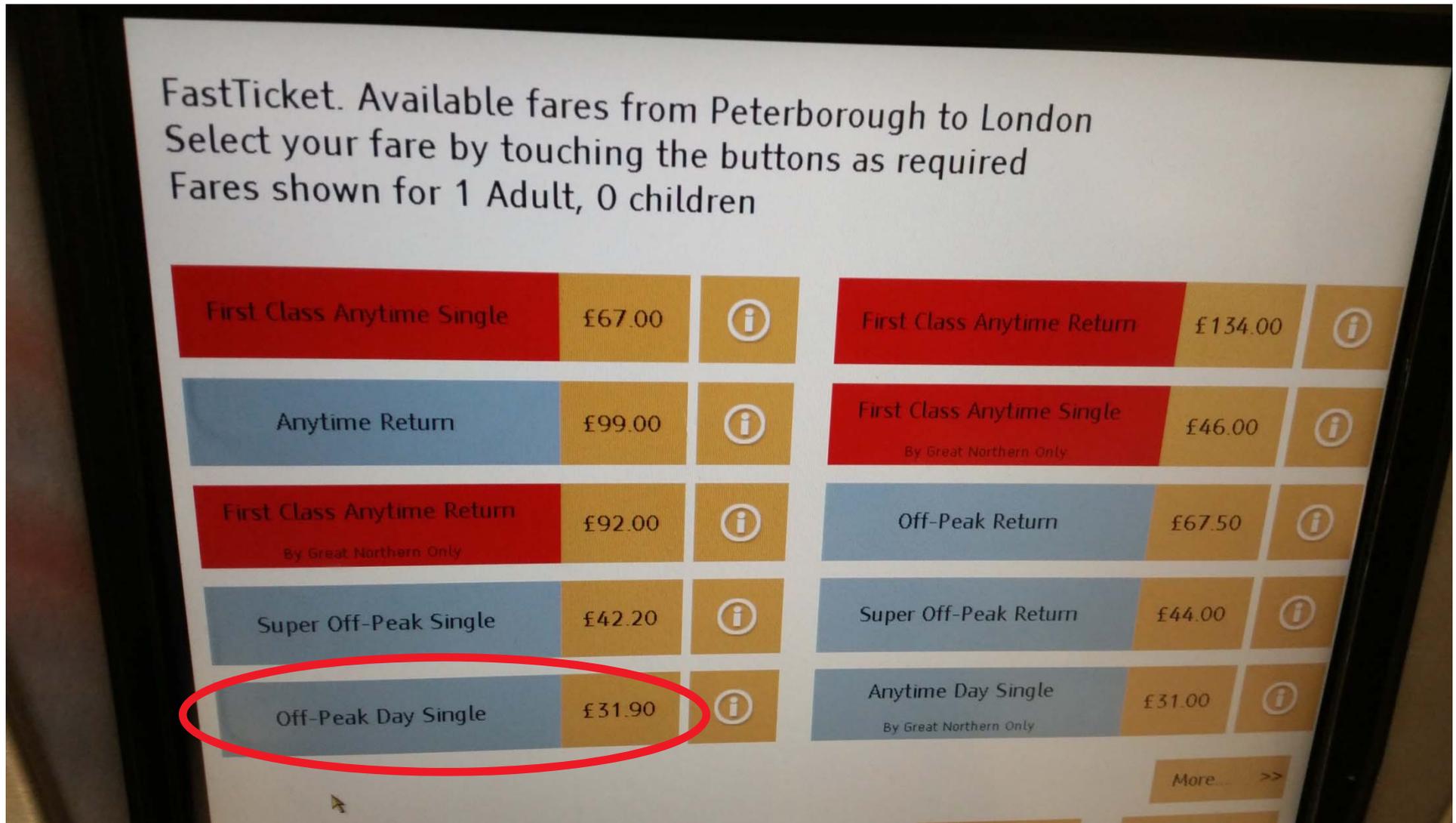
Issues to resolve include:

- Tickets showing when cheaper tickets are valid that do exactly the same thing
  - Weekend prices not showing on 'hot lists'
- All TOCs to adopt existing functionality that would allow
    - Boundary zone add ons
    - Groupsave
    - PlusBus

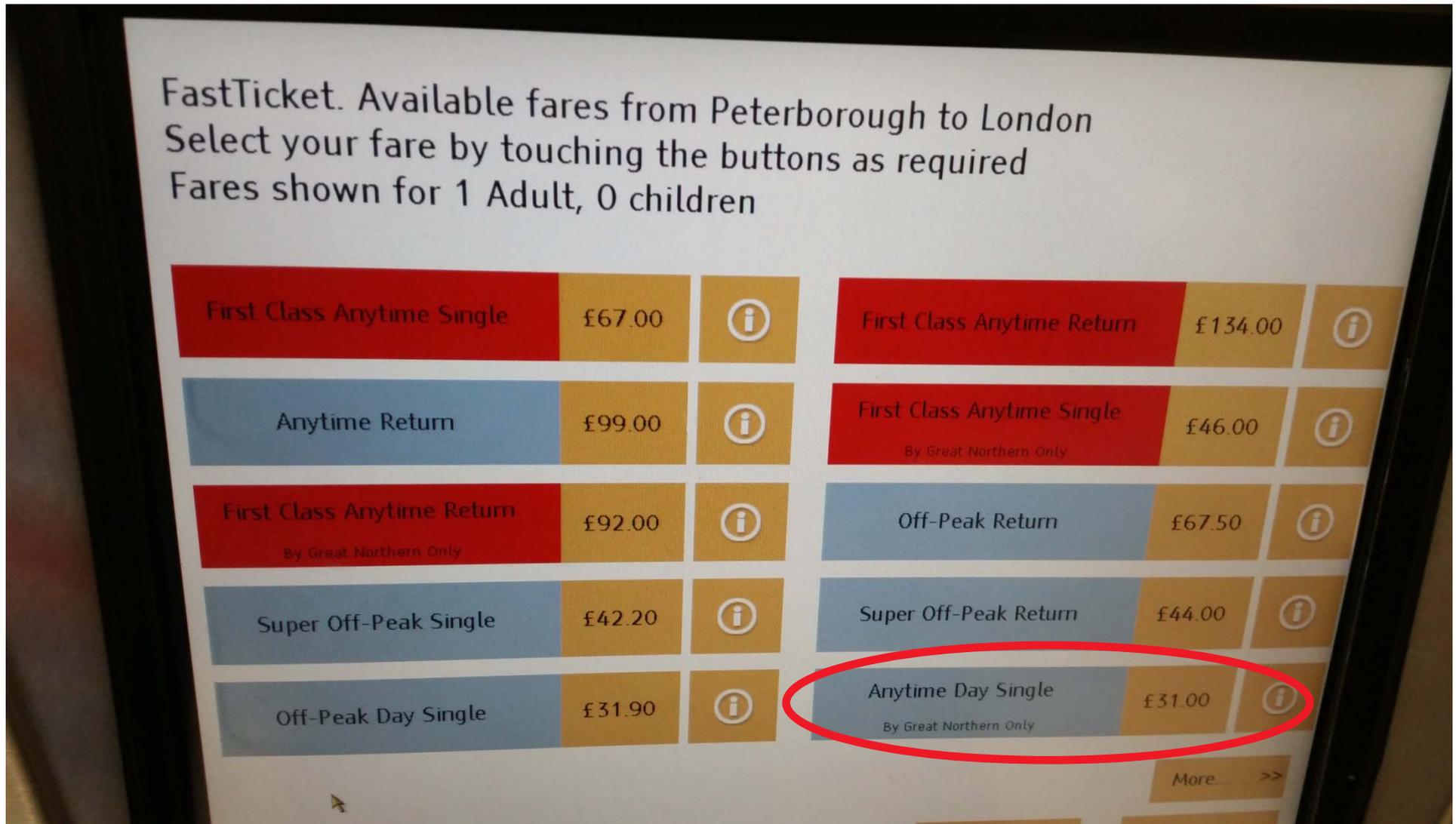
£42.20 ticket gives exactly the same as the £31.90 below it



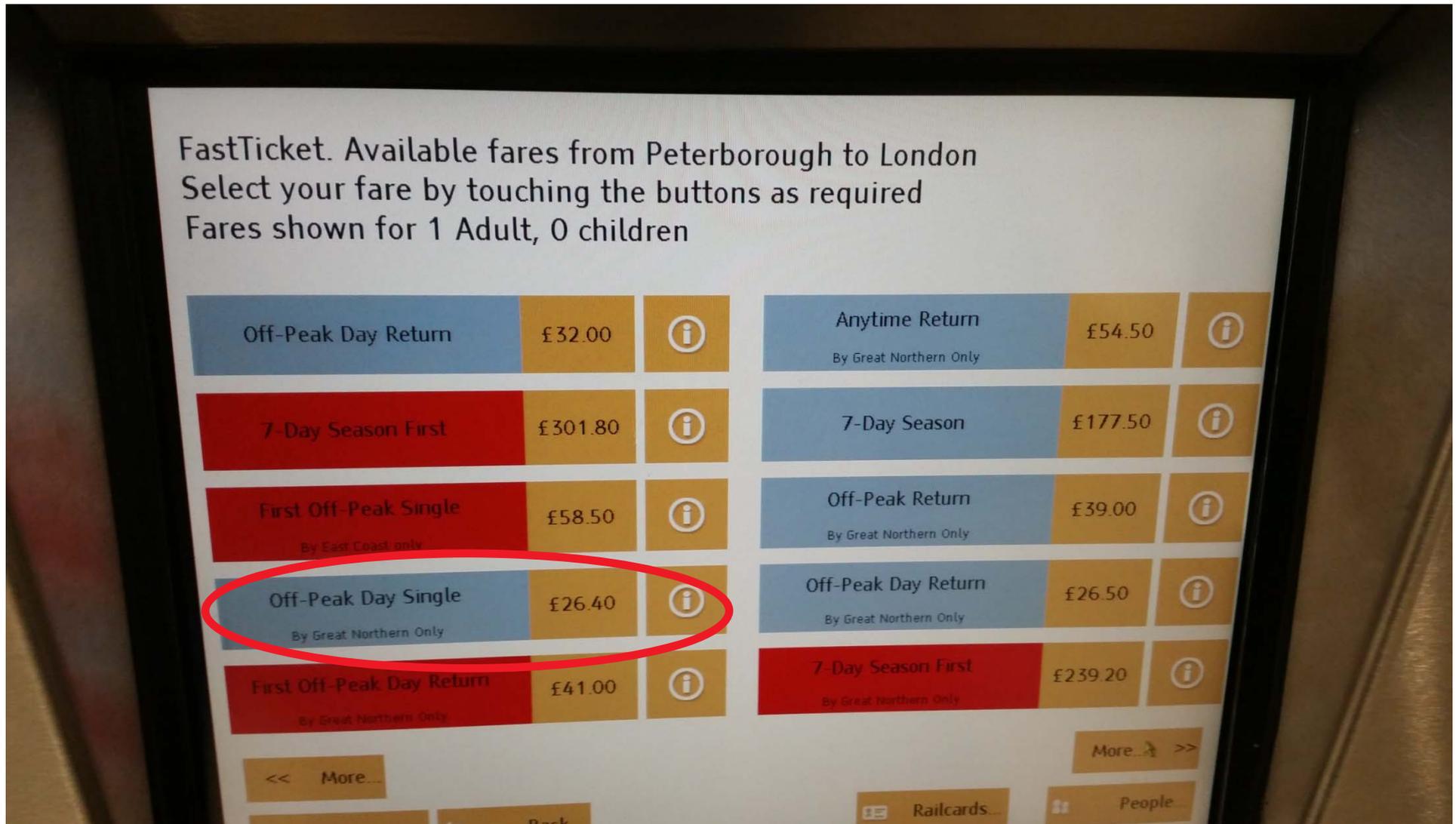
£42.20 ticket gives exactly the same as the £31.90 below it



£31.00 ticket gives exactly the same as the £26.40 on the next page



# East Coast TVM Peterborough to London – Page 2



## Quick wins?

- Make sure TVMs display only the tickets that it is appropriate to sell at the time – reducing the risk that passengers buy a more expensive ticket than they need.

Issues to resolve include:

- Anytimes showing when cheaper tickets are valid
  - Weekend prices not showing on 'hot lists'
- 
- All TOCs to adopt existing functionality that would allow
    - Boundary zone add ons
    - Groupsave
    - PlusBus

ular starting stations  
ect your station from the list  
touch 'Station Finder A-Z' for more...

We accept:



Boundary Zone 6

Boundary Zone 4

Boundary Zone 2

Station Finder A-Z

LONDON  
KINGS X

Zone 1

Please select your ticket type

First Capital Connect

3 adults

4 adults

3 adults + 1 child

4 adults + 1 child

3 adults + 2 children

4 adults + 2 children

3 adults + 3 children

4 adults + 3 children

4 adults + 4 children

Previous  
Screen

Start  
Again

16.04.14  
12:08

16/04/2014 16:06

LONDON PERLOO

SOUTH WEST TRAINS

Details

Show Basket

Change

Change

Change

Change

Coins



Notes



Credit/Debit cards



Add to Basket AND select another Ticket

Destination: SOUTHAMPTON CTL.

Date of travel: Travelling Today

Route: ANY PERMIT

Ticket type: Standard Off-Peak Day Return

valid for 1 outward and 1 return journey on 16/4/2014

Passengers:	Adult(s)	1
	Child(ren) (5 - 15 years)	0

Railcard: No Railcard selected

Restrictions: RESTRICTIONS APPLY - PLEASE ENQUIRE

- +

- +

Add railcard

Discount for small groups:

Group Save

Add to Basket & select +BUS or Admission

Cancel

Total:

Please press to confirm purchase

Press here to pay now

## Quick wins?

- Programme TVMs to sell off-peak fares early enough for passengers to buy one and board the first off-peak train  
(passengers have problems with TVMs displaying off-peak tickets only from the moment they are valid, in some instances allowing no time to buy one and board the first train on which that ticket can be used)
- TVMs and websites should help passengers work out, with minimum effort, which TfL zone(s) they need their ticket to cover
- TVMs and websites should, for avoidance of doubt, display “(5-15 years)” wherever child fares are referred to

16/04/2014 14:29

Liverpool Street

Great Anglia

# Your journey details

- Coins
- Notes
- Credit/Debit cards
- Add to Basket select other Ticket

Destination: CHELMSFORD (ESSEX)  
Date of travel: Travelling Today  
Route: ANY PERMITTED  
Ticket type: Standard Super Off-Peak Day Return

*Valid for 1 outward and 1 return journey on the day of purchase*

Passengers: Adult(s) 1  
Child(ren) (5 - 15 years) 0

Railcard: No Railcard selected

Restrictions: VALID AS ADVERTISED

- Show Basket
- Change
- Change
- Change

Add to Basket & select +BUS or Admission

- +
- +
- Add railcard

Cancel

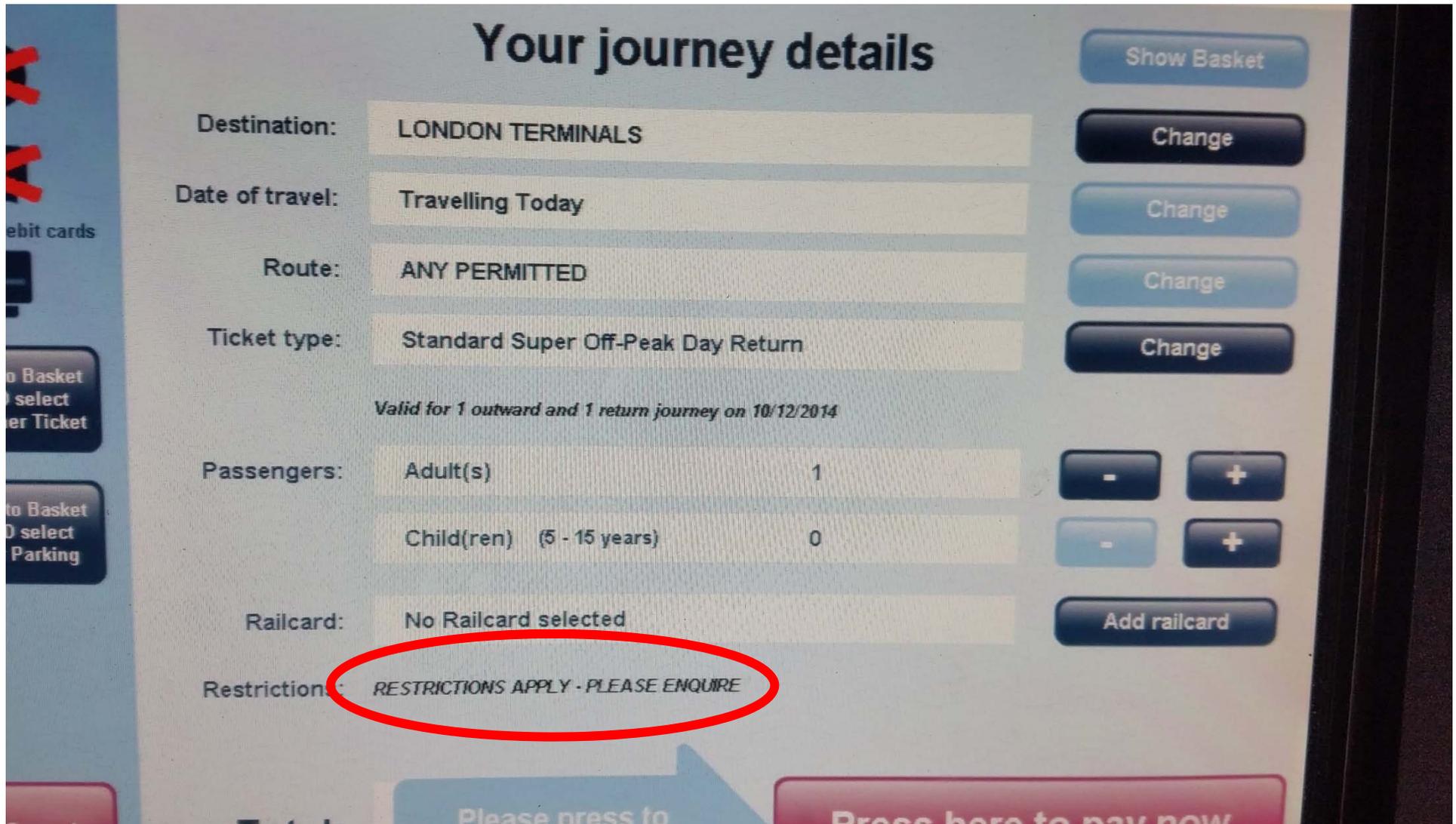
Total: Please press to confirm purchase

Press here to pay now

## Quick wins?

- Implement an automatic process to add new stations to the list of destinations offered by TVMs
- ATOC's new Product Management System is coming – TVMs need to be ready to capitalise and:
  - display outwards **and return** time restrictions information on the screen before purchase
  - print that information on the ticket itself

Errr – of whom? And why should it be necessary?





## **Ticket machines at stations: what needs to change?**

**Mike Hewitson and  
Guy Dangerfield  
Passenger Focus  
11 November 2014**

