

Savanta:

# Transport Focus

## Reservation-only services

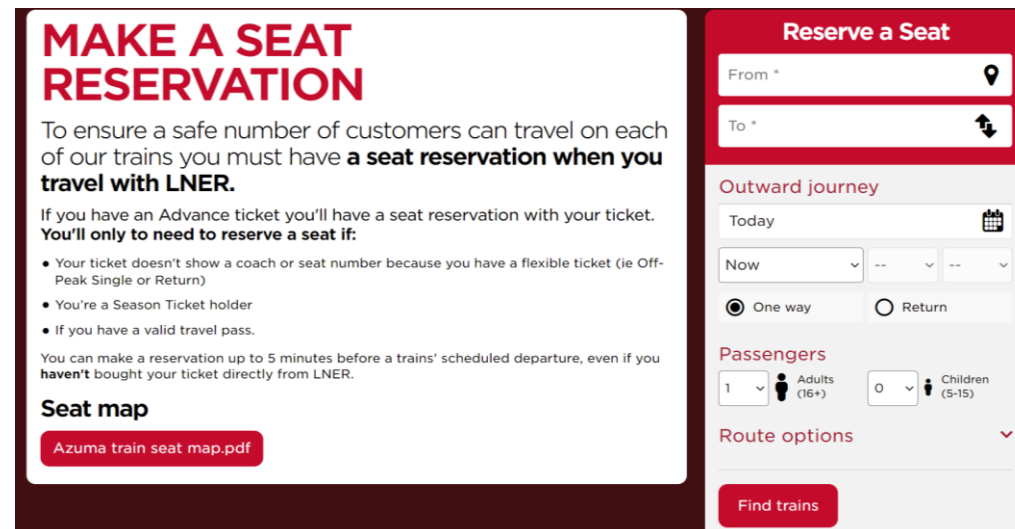
*Qualitative Report*

# Background to the research

In 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic LNER introduced a reservation-only policy on their trains, known as 'Seat Assurance'. This was intended to help LNER control passenger numbers and facilitate social distancing, by ensuring all passengers had an allocated, socially distanced seat.

Transport Focus commissioned research, in conjunction with LNER, to understand passengers' views towards a continuation of this policy after Covid-19 restrictions eased. In particular to understand attitudes and behavioural impact of the scheme among frequent and short-distance LNER passengers.

This research was conducted before the end of most Covid-19 restrictions in England in July 2021 and the introduction of LNER's 'Seat Sure' policy. Under the 'Seat Sure' policy reservations are no longer required on LNER services, but are highly recommended.



The screenshot shows the LNER 'MAKE A SEAT RESERVATION' interface. The main heading is 'MAKE A SEAT RESERVATION' in red. Below it, a text block states: 'To ensure a safe number of customers can travel on each of our trains you must have a **seat reservation when you travel with LNER.**' This is followed by a note: 'If you have an Advance ticket you'll have a seat reservation with your ticket. You'll only need to reserve a seat if:' and a bulleted list of conditions: 'Your ticket doesn't show a coach or seat number because you have a flexible ticket (ie Off-Peak Single or Return)', 'You're a Season Ticket holder', and 'If you have a valid travel pass.' A further note says: 'You can make a reservation up to 5 minutes before a trains' scheduled departure, even if you haven't bought your ticket directly from LNER.' Below this is a 'Seat map' section with a red button labeled 'Azuma train seat map.pdf'. On the right, there is a 'Reserve a Seat' sidebar with a red header. It contains a 'From' field with a location pin icon, a 'To' field with a location pin icon, an 'Outward journey' section with a 'Today' date selector and a calendar icon, a 'Now' time selector, and radio buttons for 'One way' (selected) and 'Return'. Below this is a 'Passengers' section with a dropdown for '1' and icons for 'Adults (16+)' and 'Children (5-15)'. At the bottom of the sidebar is a 'Route options' section with a dropdown arrow and a red 'Find trains' button.



# Specific research objectives

This research addressed a number of key questions about the reservation only offering, drawing out differences between passenger type and lapsed vs current passengers

## Overarching objectives

1. Explore travel behaviours pre and during COVID-19
2. Gather insight into perceived travel behaviours post COVID-19
3. What are the perceived benefits and pain points of the reservation only concept continuing from the perspective of different passenger types

## Specific questions to explore and answer

1. What will the impact be on passengers' attitudes and behaviours
2. How does the concept impact perceptions of overcrowding and the ability to get a seat
3. What are the key selling points
4. What are the key drawbacks
5. Would the concept encourage greater / lesser usage of the service

# Qualitative methodology and recruitment

## Our methodology

We conducted a two-part research methodology from the 14<sup>th</sup> June – 1<sup>st</sup> July

**Stage 1 – 7 x 1.5 hour online focus groups:** an exploration and deep dive into the key themes, travel habits and perceptions of the reservation only concept with a focus on short-distance travellers (journeys of 60 minutes or less)

**Stage 2 - 4 x online depths with disabled passengers**

**NB:** all research took place whilst COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, however the main focus of the research focused on the time period after restrictions have been lifted

**NB:** focus was on short-distance travellers, however each group included at least two long-distance travellers to validate previous research

## Who we spoke to

**The groups were split by traveller type and occasion (refer to appendix for definitions);**

- 1 x Current walk up fares
- 1 x Current indirect bookers
- 1 x Current direct bookers
- 1 x Lapsed walk up fares
- 1 x Lapsed indirect and direct bookers
- 1 x Lapsed and current season ticket holders
- 1 x Mix of lapsed and current season ticket and frequent leisure

**We also ensured a spread across groups of:**

- Mix of week and weekend users
- Travel purpose (business, leisure, commuting)
- Travel frequency
- Travel times
- At least two per group to also be taking journeys of two hours or more
- Different routes along the LNER route

17 August, 2021

# Travelling by train

# Train travel: purchase and travel behaviours summary



## **Why trains**

Trains are a great mode of transport to choose for many reasons; it's quick, convenient and can be relaxing. However the price of tickets, cancellations and delays, and overcrowding are the biggest drawbacks



## **Comfort and convenience**

Are key when it comes to travelling by train and length of journey usually dictates which one feels more important. Those travelling under 30 minutes rely on flexibility whereas longer distance journeys require comfort



## **Ticket types**

Open return tickets are a regular choice of ticket type giving passengers flexibility on their return journey - deemed important for both business and leisure (and more common amongst short-distance passengers). Season ticket holders tend to have a more rigid routine with some even bulk reserving up to a month in advance.



## **Why reservations**

Most appealing for longer distance journeys, or disabled passengers, those travelling in groups and those with young children. Reserving seats for shorter journeys is not as common (particularly as these journeys are typically planned less far in advance). The need or desire to reserve comes down to comfort (e.g., being able to find a seat, but also choose the best place on the train)

# There are positives and negatives to choosing the train

## Trains are chosen for many reasons...



- Gives passengers time (to relax, have a drink or work productively )
- Great option when travelling with others as can book a table
- Convenience of journey length and station location
- Can be picturesque and pleasant

## But there are also drawbacks..



- Can be expensive
- Cancellations / delays
- Finding your train, platform and seat can be stressful
- Can be very crowded at peak times
- Lack of space and privacy (particularly an issue for those working)
- Seat fear (of not finding a seat, or finding someone in yours)

Train travel can be a great option particularly for the relaxation of long-distance journeys and the convenience of short ones. Current 'stresses' such as disruption, overcrowding and being able to find your seat can be frustrating

# The benefits of taking the train differ slightly depending on why you are travelling



## Leisure

- Group travel
- Still time to sit back, relax and enjoy the views
- Have a drink and a meal on board
- Dropped off directly in city centers
- No need to worry about parking



## Business

- Often the quickest and most convenient way to travel (speed of actual journey as well as at either end)
- Less price orientated as companies pay for their travel
- Still time to do work or relax after a busy day



## Commuting

- Quick and convenient way to get to and from work
- Don't have to worry about morning or evening traffic
- Still time to sleep or read a book before / after work

# Travel during COVID-19 was reduced

As was expected people travelled less during COVID for both business and leisure. Whilst some refrained from travelling at all in the period between March 2020 and June 2021 (particularly in the case of those who were shielding) others continued to travel at a reduced frequency

“

I was shielding with my children during the pandemic so did not travel at all. I have been on the train a couple of times in the last month, it's a lot quieter and you always get space

**York to Newcastle**

“

I have started travelling again, I have had both of my jabs so I am as protected as I am ever going to be. I imagine people will continue to be wary for a while but it will eventually just go back to normal

**Peterborough to London**

“

I wasn't going into work at all for most of the pandemic, but I work in the prison sector and it's important that we do face to face meetings so I have started going back in a bit already

**Newcastle to Darlington**

Passengers who travelled were able to experience train journeys with fewer passengers on board, less disruption and plenty of space which was seen as a welcome relief to frequent and infrequent passengers alike

# Although less regular passengers may be wary in the short term, commuters and regular passengers imagine a return to normality as restrictions ease

Passengers ultimately see a return to pre-pandemic train environments with trains packed with commuters and no social distancing restrictions in place



**Leisure trips** are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels, with travel in the next 12 months expected to increase as passengers turn to UK based holidays while international travel still seems risky



**Business trips** are the most likely to be affected in the long term as companies and passengers move to a work environment that will favour online meetings (for example a long-distance journey for a meeting of only one hour in length). There will of course always be the 'unavoidable' trips where face-to-face presence is needed



**Commuting** is expected to return to a 'hybrid' model for some (e.g. travelling into work a few days a week) and 'back to normal' for others (travelling in five days a week)

NB: participants were asked to think into summer 2022, when social distancing and the requirement of masks on board trains was 'a thing of the past'. For a minority thinking into the future and a world 'free of COVID-19' feels challenging and hypothetical

# Choosing whether to reserve a seat usually comes down to price, journey length and whether passengers require comfort or flexibility



## Leisure

- **Long-distance** passengers are more aware of price and comfort and less likely to need a flexible return ticket so almost always have a seat booked
- **Frequent or short-distance** leisure passengers may rely more on flexible returns so will only reserve one way
- Particularly important to reserve when travelling in groups or with children



## Business

- **Long-distance:** Less likely to worry about price and more likely to place importance on flexible return journey so will reserve seats one way
- **Short-distance:** unlikely to book either way
- More important to reserve a seat when travelling in groups



## Commuting

- Are most likely to need the convenience and flexibility of train services so are the least likely to reserve their seats
- Mostly travelling in peak hours they are the most likely to assume that reserving seats would be pointless in times of overcrowding
- Some season ticket holders bulk reserve in advance to secure their seats

# There is a widespread perception that even if you do reserve, your seat isn't 'guaranteed'

Whether travelling off-peak or during peak times (although most frequently when the service is busy) many say that even when reserving, their **seats could be taken by other passengers** and wanting to avoid confrontation they will simply go and sit somewhere else. In peak times specifically reserving a seat is often felt to be 'pointless' unless you are travelling for over 30 minutes or from a station that is relatively quiet due to **overcrowding**

“

“I don't book a seat because even if I do and there is someone sat in my seat I don't want to confront them it's stressful. I would rather just rock up than be promised a seat and then not be able to use it!”

**Walk Up**

“

“I don't see the point in booking to be honest, the trains are always packed anyway there wouldn't be much point”

**Walk Up**

“

“When it is not that busy people just kind of sit anywhere because it doesn't really matter ”

**Disabled passenger**

# Introducing the concept of reservation-only services

# Initial reactions to the concept depended on two main factors

**1**

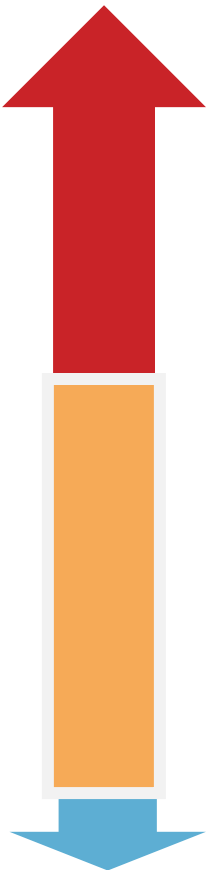
**The type and severity of impact passengers expect to experience**

**2**

**Whether they favour comfort or flexibility, which is defined by passenger type and length of journey**

# Ticket type and how far a passenger is travelling can dictate impact

## High Impact



**Short-distance peak:** will have to start reserving seats and having to consider the possibility of trains being filled and capacity demands not being met

**Short-distance off-peak:** adds an additional layer to a currently seamless ‘turn up and go’ approach to travel

**Open return leisure / business:** those used to flexible train travel who are more likely to be buying open returns (particularly those departing from busy hub stations)

Negative Behavioral Impact

**Long-distance peak:** although they already reserve a seat they will benefit from trains being less busy and overcrowded in peak times

**Disabled passengers:** already reserving a seat wherever they can, this would ensure they would always get a seat and that in peak hours there would be a reduction in pushing and shoving

Positive Experiential Impact






**Advance tickets leisure / business:** already booking Advance tickets (i.e. no flexibility) with reservations both ways so little impact unless travelling in busy times with less overcrowding

**Long distance off-peak:** already booking Advance tickets (i.e. no flexibility) with a reservation, and not travelling during periods that experience overcrowding so there is limited impact

Limited Impact

## Low Impact

# Flexibility vs comfort: differences by customer type

<b>Flexibility is key</b>		Flexible leisure	Many are buying open returns not knowing when they will want to leave so flexibility is hugely important
<b>Flexibility is key</b>		Business	Many are buying open returns not knowing when meetings will end so flexibility is key
<b>Neither comfort nor flex reign</b>		Commuters / season ticket holders	Balance between needing a seat (for those travelling over 30 minutes) and those who favour flexibility and feel unlikely to get a seat anyway (over 30 mins)
<b>Comfort is key</b>		Disabled passengers	Prefer to be comfortable over anything else - when trains are packed and they have to board they are left feeling incredibly dissatisfied
<b>Comfort is key</b>		Inflexible leisure	Book in advance in off-peak times

Ultimately, if a passenger needs to get somewhere they will typically 'grin and bear' being uncomfortable over not travelling if there is somewhere they need to be

# Flexibility vs comfort: differences by journey length

**Flexibility is  
key**



Journeys under 30  
minutes

Although a seat would be preferred the journey is often not deemed long enough to reserve a seat. Even those with reservations who travel in peak times would generally rather jump on a packed train than wait for a seat

**Comfort is  
preferred**



Journeys between 30  
and 60 minutes

Long enough (even for regular commuters) to want to find a seat and relax or work

**Comfort is  
key**



Journeys over 60  
minutes

Comfort is key, not only a seat is required but passengers want to find the perfect spot, near to required amenities and preferred seats

Ultimately, if a passenger needs to get somewhere they will typically 'grin and bear' being uncomfortable over not travelling if there is somewhere they need to be

# Reservation-only services do have clear benefits for all passengers

**No one wants to stand on a train, it's a key issue raised time and again when discussing the pitfalls of train travel. Reservation-only services potentially negate this issue and lead to several clear benefits:**

- **Giving the passenger added confidence and power in always getting a seat;** you can currently reserve a seat if you wish but that does not necessarily mean you will be able to sit in it. There is a perception that making reservations mandatory would stop this from happening giving passengers more confidence in getting a seat in actuality and stopping the current issue of passengers not following reservation rules
- **Reducing overcrowding;** with no one standing in the aisles and every passenger boarding with a reservation there will be space and no one pushing and shoving to get on board. This is particularly appealing for disabled passengers who still have to travel in peak times but really struggle, as well as those booking for their children or elderly relatives and knowing they won't be on crowded trains
- **Safety on board;** a minority like the idea of details being collected and LNER knowing who is boarding for security and safety
- **Making train travel more comfortable and spacious as a result;** enabling passengers to get the most out of their journeys, do work, read a book and feel calmer (even now getting a seat you can be surrounded by others)

# There are however some perceived drawbacks, a certain amount of behaviour change required and lots of questions raised around the concept

## Unavoidable Drawbacks

There are some drawbacks that seem unavoidable such as ensuring there is enough capacity to meet demand, enforcing the concept and reacting to times of personal emergency, cancellation and delay

“

“I get on trains most evenings that are absolutely packed, I just don't see how this is going to work. It's a free for all, people will just get on when they can.”

**Indirect Booker – Peterborough to London Kings Cross**

## Behaviour Change

Behaviour change may be necessary for certain passengers who rely on flexibility - they would need to see the benefits to encourage them to change the way they book and travel

“

“I always buy an open return because I don't know when I am going to want to board the train, if I am going to want to stay longer with friends or come home immediately

**Direct / Indirect Booker – Durham - Newcastle**

## Raising Questions

Questions around the logistics, practicality and potential price hikes of the concept would need to be managed and communicated well

“

“I can see the benefits but how would it work if you were travelling in a group or you were running late for your train

**Direct Booker – Newcastle to Darlington**

# Unavoidable drawbacks

**Passengers can foresee three unavoidable drawbacks that makes them question the concept:**

## **Capacity demands:**

Passengers need help understanding how the concept would work in peak times (or in the case of matchdays). This is particularly the case for commuters, season ticket holders and regular travellers using return tickets. The unreserved carriage does help to alleviate the fear of not being able to board slightly, but there is still trepidation. The fear of not being able to board a train is a huge concern.

## **Delays and cancellations**

Are an immediate concern across the board (even for those who don't see an issue elsewhere) passengers respond well to the idea of rules being relaxed in these times to ensure that they can get to where they are going.

## **Enforcement**

Particularly for those travelling during peak times there is a feeling that passengers will simply not listen to the rules. There is a polarisation amongst passengers around how strictly they feel this should be enforced (with those booking travel in advance in off-peak times most likely to want strong enforcement). Some feel that in the new age of reservation-only services turning up and finding that someone is still sat in their seat would be highly frustrating.



“

There is no way they are going to be able to enforce this on match days

**Disabled passenger– Leeds to Harrogate**

# Behaviour Change

**How flexibly passengers are currently travelling dictates the level of behaviour change potentially required**

## No behaviour change required

Some passengers will barely notice the shift to reservation-only services, it's the way they book and travel currently anyway. Their mindset is usually that it should have always been a necessity anyway to reduce overcrowding (important to bear in mind that these passengers rarely travel in peak times).

## Behaviour change required

Being able to make a reservation up to 5 minutes before the departure of the train is received very well by passengers but still doesn't alleviate the issue that for those with season tickets or flexible tickets an extra step is being added to the process. For long-distance passengers this behaviour change would feel 'worth it' but short-distance passengers, who have less need for comfort, are less keen.

For those who can see the benefits clearly, who perhaps travel less flexibly or book online, this behaviour change does not feel substantial enough to kick up a fuss. For those who do travel more regularly however or are used to the 'turn up and go' nature of travel the change does 'feel like a hassle'.

“

It doesn't really bother me,  
I would always reserve in  
advance anyway  
**Current indirect Booker**

“

When I am out with friends in  
London I am not going to want to  
have to keep thinking about re-  
reserving my seat .  
**Season Ticket – York to Durham**

# Raising questions

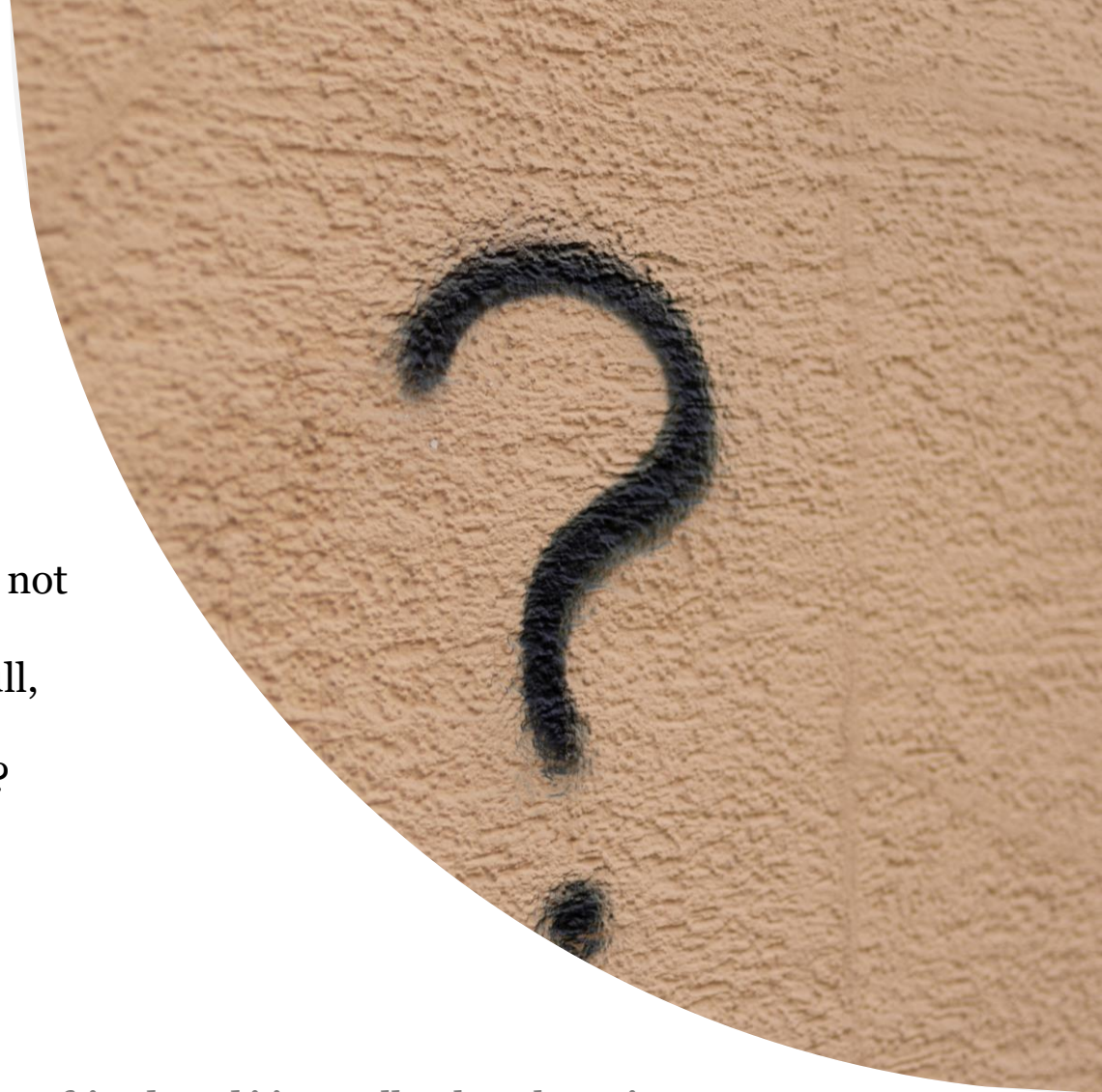
**A variety of questions and concerns were spontaneously raised that would need to be answered**

1. What would happen if I was travelling in a group?
2. What would happen if I was sat next to someone who was drunk, rowdy or anti-social?
3. What happens if I get on the train, but I don't like my seat - can I not move?
4. What would happen if all the trains for the rest of the day were full, or I can't get on the last train of the day?
5. What happens if there is an emergency, and I must board a train? (particularly an issue for disabled passengers)
6. Will there be a price implication due to reduced capacity?
7. Will those booking in advance have priority over season ticket holders by booking up availability?

“

I travel out of London for business or when I have gone to see friends and it's usually when the trains are quite busy. I sometimes have to stand to Stevenage but then after that it's fine all the way to Newcastle. Does this potentially mean that I am going to have to wait for all the commuters to get home before I can even get on a train?!

**Disabled passenger – London Kings Cross to Newcastle**



17 August, 2021

# Concept deep dive

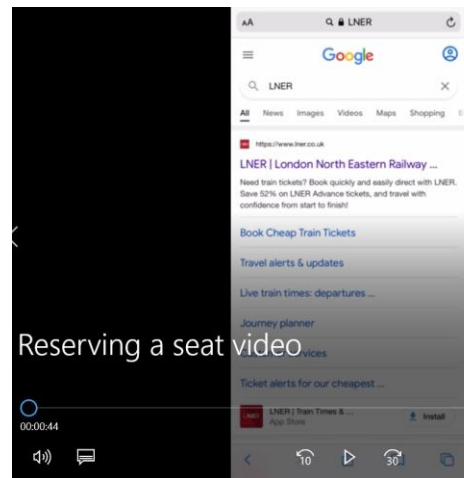
Classification: Private

# Participants were shown text, images and videos to explore and gain insight at greater depth



1. Concept sheet, detailing reasons for reservation-only services and 'what it means for passengers'
2. Video showing passengers how to reserve a seat through the LNER website
3. Video showing passengers how to cancel a reservation through the LNER website

## Reservation-Only with LNER

- 1 Everyone has a reserved seat, helping to mitigate the risk of overcrowding
- 2 Ticket availability is linked to seat availability which means trains will be quieter, cleaner and more restful for those seeking to relax or more productive for those who need to focus on work
- 3 We will be able to provide a more personalised service – such as delivering food and drink or other services direct to your seat
- 4 Reservations can be made, or changed, up to 5 minutes before departure via our desktop site, mobile app or via our Travel Centres or station staff
- 5 Knowing exactly how many customers are reserved on our services helps us better manage disruption



## Why Reservation-Only?

<b>'Ensuring everyone can get a seat when choosing to travel with LNER'</b>	
<b>Background:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LNER introduced <b>reservation-only services</b> in May 2020 in response to the need to manage customer demand and social distancing onboard services</li><li>• The need to manage customer demand and take measures to <b>avoid overcrowded</b> services is one that predated the pandemic</li><li>• Covid accelerated LNER plans to prevent over-crowded services – which have the <b>greatest adverse impact on customers' travel experience</b></li><li>• Reservation-only enables LNER to <b>manage and spread demand</b> at the point of sale and reduce the number of instances where customers <b>unknowingly purchase a ticket that does not guarantee them a seat for their journey</b></li></ul>	
<b>What does reservation only mean for customers?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tickets are <b>only available for sale if there are available seats</b></li><li>• All tickets are <b>automatically issued with a seat reservation across most sales channels</b>, requiring no additional customer effort (with the exception of season tickets, Travel Passes or the return leg of an Anytime return)</li><li>• Season ticket, Travel Pass and Anytime ticket customers are able to <b>self serve</b> and book their own reservations separately (<i>automatic reservation limits are applied to ensure seats for everyone</i>) <b>You can book at the station or on the phone if you don't have access to a smartphone/internet</b></li><li>• Season ticket holders can reserve one return journey per day if they want to reserve for numerous days this can be done over the phone.</li><li>• Customers can <b>book and amend/cancel reservations</b> plus <b>select which seat</b> they would personally like to travel in. All up to 5 minutes before departure. This applies to travel from departure and intermediate stations along the journey.</li><li>• Reservations can be made and amended/cancelled via the LNER desktop, mobile app or Travel Centre and Station staff</li><li>• On the day <b>advance fares</b> can still be purchased up to <b>5 minutes before departure</b> from departure and intermediate stations</li><li>• The <b>majority of seats on each train will be dedicated to customers who hold reservations</b>, booked at point of sale or just before departure</li><li>• A unreserved coach will be retained on each train, to accommodate customers <b>who have not been able to secure a seat reservation</b></li></ul>	
	

# Explaining the ‘reasoning’ behind reservation only services overtly communicates potential benefits

## Why Reservation-Only?

*‘Ensuring everyone can get a seat when choosing to travel with LNER’*

**Background:**

- LNER introduced **reservation-only services** in May 2020 in response to the need to manage customer demand and social distancing onboard services
- The need to manage customer demand and take measures to **avoid overcrowded** services is one that predated the pandemic
- Covid accelerated LNER plans to prevent over-crowded services – which have the **greatest adverse impact on customers’ travel experience**
- Reservation-only enables LNER to **manage and spread demand at the point** of sale and reduce the number of instances where customers **unknowingly purchase a ticket that does not** guarantee them a seat for their journey

- For those who may have to change current behaviours, overtly stating the positive impact it will have upon them makes them less averse to potential behaviour changes or ‘extra steps’ in their current booking / purchase habits
- This is especially the case for the more cynical passenger who may have previously assumed that reservation-only services were simply a way to make more money at the expense of the passenger

# Added detail allays certain concerns

## What does reservation only mean for customers?

- **Tickets are only available for sale if there are available seats**
  - All tickets are **automatically issued with a seat reservation across most sales channels**, requiring no additional customer effort (with the exception of season tickets, Travel Passes or the return leg of an Anytime return)
  - Season ticket, Travel Pass and Anytime ticket customers are able to **self serve** and book their own reservations separately (*automatic reservation limits are applied to ensure seats for everyone*) **You can book at the station or on the phone if you don't have access to a smartphone/internet**
  - Season ticket holders can reserve one return journey per day if they want to reserve for numerous days this can be done over the phone.
  - Customers can **book** and **amend/cancel reservations** plus **select which seat** they would personally like to travel in. All up to 5 minutes before departure. This applies to travel from departure and intermediate stations along the journey.
  - Reservations can be made and amended/cancelled via the LNER desktop, mobile app or Travel Centre and Station staff
  - On the day **advance fares can** still be purchased up to **5 minutes before departure** from departure and intermediate stations
  - The **majority of seats on each train will be dedicated to customers who hold reservations**, booked at point of sale or just before departure
  - A unreserved coach will be retained on each train, to accommodate customers **who have not been able to secure a seat reservation**
- 
- **The unreserved coach**; there is always a coach there for people who need to board without a reservation (continued questions about enforcement and people simply moving down the carriage once the train departs or more passengers trying to board at other stations do arise)
  - **Reserving 5 minutes before departure**, is unexpected for most, and although there is still fear of trains being too full it does show an increased amount of flexibility from what would have been expected
  - **Wide choice of where to book and amend up to 5 minutes before departure is appealing**, especially knowing that station staff can be on hand to solve any issues.

# Reserving and cancelling reservations looks easy, but some drawbacks to the process do arise



Not considered a step for those who are directly / indirectly booking Advance tickets



Cancelling before re-reserving was seen as being a positive ensuring that seats are not left empty. The ability to 'swap out' seats to avoid fear of not getting a new one was appealing



Cancelling or reserving at the station is a great option to have but does raise concerns around added queues or delays



Was not clear through the videos how disabled passengers would book their seats



Added step of having to book seats for those not currently reserving would be a hassle for some (indirect bookers) and a real chore for others (season ticket holders)



For those who are less tech savvy (or even those who don't have battery or sufficient connection) updating 'on-the-go' comes with concerns of having to rely on apps and websites 'to get home'

“

I would have to download another app, which isn't the end of the world but is a bit annoying  
**Indirect Booker**

“

It is not as easy as it looks, I have been booking my places through several different emails because they only let you book a few in advance and the phone service just never seems to work. It has been a nightmare  
**Season Ticket Holder**

“

I am sure it is on there somewhere but it's not immediately obvious how you would go about booking a disabled seat  
**Disabled passenger**

“

We have all been there when your phone runs out of battery or you can't get signal. It sounds like a nightmare.  
**Disabled passenger**

# Scenarios: considering travel companions

Scenario	Type of perceived impact	Perceived impact	How to manage it
When travelling in groups	Raises questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue as before</li> <li>Concern about now having to book seats together whereas before they would simply find a spot together after boarding</li> <li>How would this work if members of the group were joining from different stations</li> </ul>	Ensure that there is a clear and seamless process for passengers to book, cancel and re-reserve in a group, including those who are joining at different stations
When travelling with children under five	Raises questions	If anything, this might encourage passengers to reserve seats and be sure they would get one, whereas previously they would have been more likely to 'hope for the best'. For a minority there is a worry that people would use this as a way of booking extra seats without cost	Ensure that booking for children is monitored so that people can't save themselves extra seats at no cost and reduce the ability for others to board
When travelling with elderly relatives	Positive impact	Passengers would feel more confident about boarding elderly relatives, particularly if they were not travelling with them	

# Scenarios: having to ‘re-reserve’

Scenario	Type of perceived impact	Perceived impact	How to manage it
You want to travel tomorrow but the trains are fully booked	Unavoidable drawback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would have to consider other modes of transport or other TOCs</li> <li>• This raises a serious concern for those without this option (e.g. disabled passengers that can't drive)</li> </ul>	Make it clear whether there is the option to choose a wheelchair space in the unreserved carriages
There were disruptions, cancellations or delays	Raises questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passengers are already used to cancellations and delays, but this does raise an issue for passengers of all types</li> <li>• It could mean you are waiting around for a very long time to board a train if all the others are fully booked already</li> </ul>	Ensure that it is clear how LNER expect to manage delays, cancellations and disruptions. Passengers like the idea of flexing the rules slightly in these times to allow people to stand in aisles and get to their destination
You are running late, or plans have changed and the following train is fully booked	Behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This causes concern for those that end up getting ‘stuck for hours’ in peak times</li> <li>• Detracts from the current ease and convenience of train travel</li> <li>• Passengers would have to start booking in advance and being more organised or relying on the unreserved coach</li> </ul>	Unreserved carriages and flexibility in times of disruption to allow for people to board without a reservation

# Scenarios: rethinking the way you travel

Scenario	Type of perceived impact	Perceived impact	How to manage it
Having to start considering how far in advance you book	Behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seems like a slight hassle</li> <li>• Would be manageable for the most part but there are some situations in which you just don't know when you are going to return or when you are going to suddenly need to take a train journey</li> </ul>	Direct some passengers towards behaviour change, and others towards viable solutions (e.g. booking a return seat and pointing out ease of changing once decided on return route)
Commuting and having to reserve seats	Unavoidable drawback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seems like a hassle and is an added step</li> <li>• Great concern about trains being full considering the capacity and people being late to work consistently</li> <li>• May have to consider other modes of transport or other TOC's</li> </ul>	Whilst some feel that LNER should enforce the reservation-only policy in its entirety others feel that rules need to be relaxed in these times to ensure everyone can board
Having a season ticket and having to book	Behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally feel hard done by considering the amount they pay and feel entitled to seats</li> <li>• Seems like a hassle and an extra step</li> <li>• Some already bulk reserving in advance - the process looks like it could be harder than the old one</li> </ul>	Amend process to enable more block booking options for the regular journeys of season ticket holders

# Scenarios: logistics of reservation

Scenario	Type of perceived impact	Perceived Impact	How to manage it
Having to book on LNER but not with other TOCs	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally not seen to have an impact on passengers at all</li> <li>Gives them the opportunity to travel with another TOC if running late / travelling late notice</li> </ul>	
What if LNER is the only option	Raises questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Becomes more of an issue when trains are full and you can't board, particularly for commuters and flexible travellers</li> </ul>	Unreserved carriages and flex in times of emergency
Football matches and Edinburgh Festival	Unavoidable drawback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passengers that are used to / have travelled in these times before do not see how LNER would be able to enforce reservation only in these times</li> <li>Passengers used to travelling in off-peak times feel that LNER would need to enforce this rule at all times to make it feel worth it</li> </ul>	Whilst some feel that LNER should enforce the reservation-only policy in its entirety others feel that rules need to be relaxed in these times to ensure that everyone can board

2 August, 2021

# What does this mean for the future

Classification: Private

# The Future; a summary



Reservation-only services could put an end to overcrowding, ensuring passengers get the seat they reserved



The key concerns are how LNER ensure capacity demands are met, how they enforce and / or relax rules as well as how they react to disruption and delay



The principle of compulsory reservation adds an extra step on for some that could see this as being a real hassle, but something that they could ultimately move on from. The real threat to demand would come from capacity concerns



Some passengers will be impacted more than others (whether positively or negatively) and this will have in turn impact on their perceptions of LNER



Passengers will need to be convinced that flexibility in train travel is still an option both when booking tickets and when physically on the trains (e.g., being able to move seat if sat next to, or in a carriage with undesirable passengers)

# Passenger type and length of journey dictates how passengers feel about the concept

Ultimately the concept feels very hypothetical without seeing it in practice after restrictions have eased (particularly for commuters or passengers travelling in peak hours whose main concern is meeting capacity demands). There is however a scale of the types of passenger this appeals to the most

## See only benefits

- Disabled passengers
- Long-distance off-peak
- Long-distance peak from less busy stations travelling currently on busy trains but with seat reservations and Advance tickets (i.e. no flex)
- Departing from less busy stations

## Mix of benefits and concerns

- Short-distance off-peak passengers
- Long-distance leisure passengers
- Business and leisure travellers with open returns departing from busy hub stations

## Concerned

- Commuters
- Season ticket holders
- Short-distance peak time passengers
- Departing from busy stations (e.g. London Kings Cross)

# How LNER manage disruption, capacity and enforcement is key

Ultimately passengers use the train because it is the most convenient option and can be more relaxing and comfortable than other modes. Although behaviour change is a frustration (particularly for regular travellers) the biggest issues still gravitate around enforcement, capacity and disruption. How LNER deal with these factors feel the most important to passengers.

“

This could either be a really great thing for LNER and make them the go to for trains, or it could be a real error

**Disabled passenger**

“

I don't see how they are going to manage this when trains are cancelled or delayed, and you just want to get on a train. People want to get home, but you have those that are waiting and will now be standing and those who reserved who are now surrounded by people

**Current walk up**

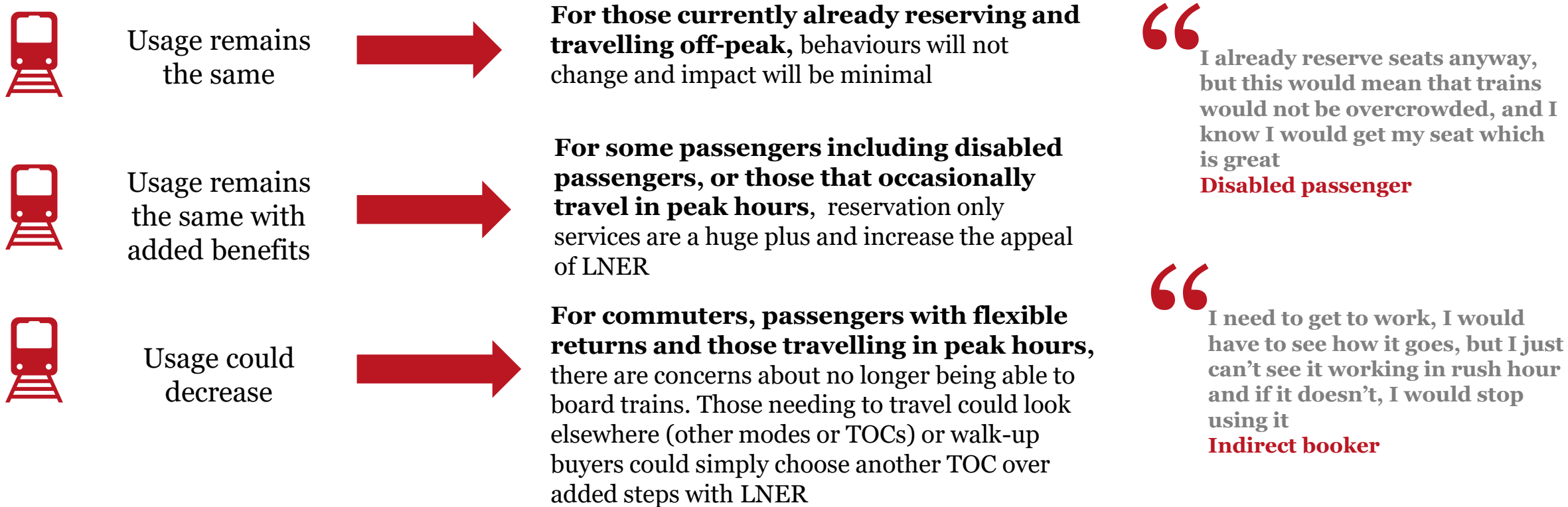
“

There are so many people who want to get on the trains, short of adding more trains, which I know is not possible they are just going to be leaving people on the platforms who need to get somewhere. I don't think it will work

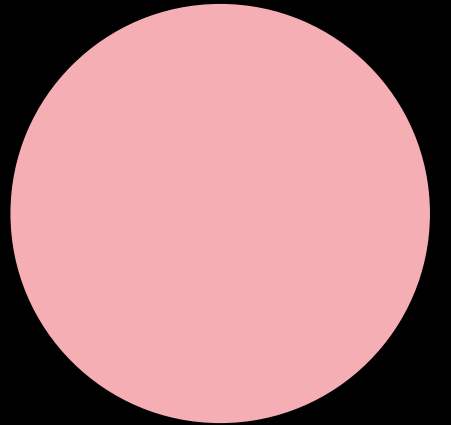
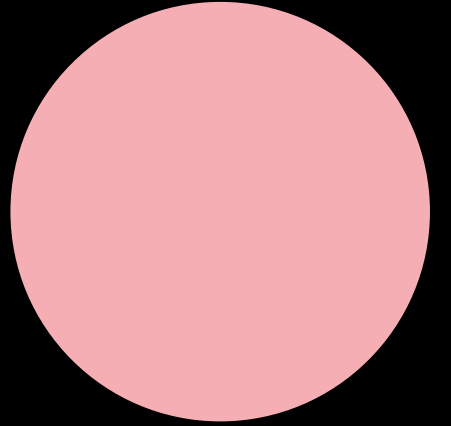
**Lapsed and current season ticket holders**

# There is polarisation between how much this would impact passengers and their likelihood to continue using LNER services

Some concerns feel ultimately hypothetical until things return to normal and passengers would be able to see how LNER would manage capacity demand and enforcement. Passengers are currently used to having lots of extra steps to boarding trains, or entering pubs and restaurants but as restrictions begin to ease this could change



# Appendix



# Group definitions

**Group 1: Current walk-up fares** (all to currently purchase tickets at the station)

**Group 2: Current indirect bookers** (all to currently purchase at least occasionally from a third party site such as Trainline)

**Group 3: Current direct bookers** (all to currently purchase at least occasionally from LNER website / app)

**Group 4: Lapsed walk-up fares** (all to have in the past purchased tickets from the station)

**Group 5: Lapsed indirect and direct bookers** (all to have in the past purchased from either a third party website / app such as Trainline or directly with LNER app / website )

**Group 6: Lapsed and current season ticket holders** (all to either currently or in the past have held an LNER season ticket)

**Group 7: Mix of lapsed and current season ticket holders and frequent leisure** (either currently or in the past have held an LNER season ticket, or travelling frequently for leisure purposes)

