



Department
for Transport

Cross Country rail franchise

There is an online version of this questionnaire that allows you save or print a copy of your response:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/government/consultations/cross-country-rail-franchise>

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read the consultation document and to respond to the questions. Your views will contribute to the formulation of specification for the next Cross Country rail franchise.

Confidentiality and data protection

We are not asking for any personal data as part of this consultation. If we receive any it will be securely deleted.

Our [privacy policy](#) is on GOV.UK.

Responding

1. Are you responding:

on behalf of an organisation? (Go to question 2)

as an individual? (Go to question 3)

Organisation details

2. Name of organisation

Birmingham Friends of the Earth

Your journey

3. Do you mostly travel on the Cross Country network as:

a leisure passenger?

commuting to and from work?

a business passenger?

4. What is your most frequent journey (station to station) on the Cross Country network?

Centred in Birmingham, members use routes to Bristol, to Reading, to Nottingham, to Newport/Cardiff, to Manchester, to Leicester, and to Leeds and York

5. How regularly do you travel by Cross Country?

Every day y

4 to 6 times a week

2 to 3 times a week

Once a week

Once a fortnight

Once a month

Less than once a month

Once or twice a year

Never

6. What type of ticket do you usually buy?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Season ticket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full fare
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced ticket
<input type="checkbox"/>	First class ticket
<input type="checkbox"/> y	Standard ticket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

7. How do you buy your ticket?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Online (Cross Country website)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Online (alternative operator)
<input type="checkbox"/> y	At station

	On train
	Other:

Awareness

8. How did you hear about this consultation?

	Poster
	Internet
	Station e-board
	On train consultation
y	Other:

Passenger survey

Information on these questions is included in the 'Cross Country passenger rail franchise' consultation document.

9. What are the particular services, routes and times of day where you think crowding on Cross Country services needs to be addressed most urgently?

Saturday morning Birmingham to Bristol. Friday evening Birmingham to Oxford

10. Rank the following in order of priority for improvement for your future Cross Country services. Rank 1 for most important to 6 for least important.

more additional summer only services	6
later times of last trains	2
more frequent weekend services	4
earlier Sunday morning services	3
earlier times of first trains	1
more frequent weekday services	5

Which routes and stations and why?

Birmingham to Cardiff weekday first direct train arrives after the start of the working day.

11. What changes would you like to see to the way Cross Country currently sells and provides tickets?

No view

12. What changes would you like to see to the Advanced Purchase on the day (APOD) system?

13. What additional information would be useful to you when planning your journeys or making connections onto other services?

No view

14. How would you like the information (in question above) communicated to you?

No view

15. How do you believe Cross Country staff could be more effective in providing service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?

No view

16. What comment do you have on improving the overall passenger experience before, during and after the journey?

Isolated unmanned stations after dark, intimidating to lone travellers

17. How could the way in which Cross Country deals with your complaints and provides compensation to you be improved?

No view

18. Rank your priorities for improvement to the carriage layout for long distance inter-city Cross Country trains? Rank 1 for most important to 7 for least important.

More seats	<input type="text" value="2"/>
More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats	<input type="text" value="6"/>
More comfortable room for short distance standing	<input type="text" value="7"/>
Cycle storage	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Seats that align with windows	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Greater leg-room	<input type="text" value="3"/>
Extra room for luggage	<input type="text" value="4"/>

Where and when do you think these facilities are most required?

Lack of cycle facilities is a deterrent to travel. Growth in travel by rail could be even greater if the 'last mile' disincentive to disconnected rail were to be addressed. Providing for cycles is also in line with the industry's sustainable development principles.

19. Rank your priorities for improvement to the carriage layout for local trains on Cross Country? Rank 1 for most important to 7 for least important.

More seats	<input type="text" value="2"/>
More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats	<input type="text" value="6"/>
More comfortable room for short distance standing	<input type="text" value="7"/>
Cycle storage	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Seats that align with windows	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Greater leg-room	<input type="text" value="3"/>
Extra room for luggage	<input type="text" value="4"/>

20. What other comments or suggestions do you have about the on-board experience?

None

21. Do you have any other views on how the future Cross Country franchise could be improved that have not been captured in the questions above?

Yes. There need to be towns added to to the franchise to which access is by bus (eg towns such as Padstow that lost their rail connection). The franchisee would be responsible for through tickets and integration of times / locations.

Qualifying question

22. The rest of this survey is mainly designed to be completed by rail industry stakeholder representatives, however you can complete this if you wish.

Crowding issues and ideas to respond to

Use the consultation annex to help inform your response.

23. Which of the following potential measures do you think could overcome crowding caused by short distance commuters using long distance Cross Country trains, assuming that suitable alternative services are available?

Removing calls from towns closest the conurbation centre either completely or just at peak times.

Yes or No? No

Retaining calls at such stations but restricting them to pickup/set down only?

Yes or No? No

Removing the validity of multi-modal tickets on long distance trains?

Yes or No? No

Other:

Adding destinations and expanding the Network.

Provide specific instances where these may be applicable.

Birmingham to Guildford needs to be more frequent (Guildford is the interchange for Portsmouth trains).

Bath Spa provision is almost unnoticeable. Major tourist destination and a better interchange for onward journeys to other destinations. Bath Spa could be a part of a network expansion to include Swindon.

The existing offering to the North West is poor (currently extending only to Crewe whereas stations between Crewe and Preston are currently served by trains that may make one call then non stop to London). Cross Country network should be extended to Preston.

In support of rail's part in regeneration, the franchise agreement must be written so as to facilitate new destinations (Skelmersdale for instance).

Worcester Shrub Hill – this is the interchange station for Cheltenham to Hereford and to Kidderminster

Ipswich – difficult to access (changes of trains in London)

Brighton and some other major south coast destinations could be reinstated to the Cross Country network to avoid changing in London.

Hull could also be added

By increasing the range of destinations served and the range of journey possibilities, the

inconvenience of changing trains is avoided. The need to change trains may deter many passengers from travelling by train particularly disabled and elderly passengers who may drive instead. With an ageing population, changing trains is likely to become a deterrent to rail travel to an increasing proportion of passengers.

24. If it were possible would you agree with transferring these local routes to the West Midlands franchise:

	Yes	No
Birmingham to Nottingham		No
Birmingham to Leicester		No

Why?

There is no point in making the changes.

To improve the service pattern and network to offer journeys that better meet your needs

Use the consultation annex to help inform your response.

25. Would you like to see any other routes or stations transferred to or from the Cross Country franchise?

Yes	
No	No

Routes to transfer

26. Which routes and stations and why?

None

Changes

The East Coast service north of York aspirations are listed in the consultation document.

27. If the network was unable to cope with all the service enhancement aspirations north of Northallerton on the East Coast mainline, would a:

curtailment of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?

diversion of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?

Yes	No
	No
	No

Why / why not?

The necessary enhancements need to be undertaken

28. Do you think the department's minimum specification should preserve exactly the existing pattern of services and station calls rather than offer an opportunity to change?

Y	Yes
	No

Comments:

Yes, the existing pattern of services and station calls should be a minimum, with capacity increased to reflect growth and future growth.

If the franchise holder can see a business case for additional services, there is the facility to purchase train paths and to operate additional service. The passenger wants certainty and consistency

Bidder station stop flexibility

32. Should bidders have some flexibility to make fewer calls at some stations, for example if that enabled them to accelerate services?

	Yes
No	No

33. On what routes could this be introduced?

None

Minimum specification

34. Should the minimum specification have the number of trains from each station to Birmingham but give bidders the flexibility to decide where the trains go after Birmingham?

	Yes
No	No

35. Are there stations within the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive (include examples and supporting evidence)?

Worcester Shrub Hill (interchange for other routes)

36. Are there stations beyond the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive (include examples and supporting evidence)?

Stations between Crewe and Preston

To improve and simplify fares and ticketing

The current Cross Country fare structure is mentioned on page 26 and 27 of the consultation document.

37. What changes would you like to see to the current Cross Country current fares structure?

No view

To improve access, information and making connections

38. What more could be done to improve access and provide facilities for those with disabilities or additional needs?

No view

To improve the on-board experience

39. Which initiatives would you suggest to try to reduce the disturbance caused by the 'churn' of passengers alighting and boarding at frequent station calls?

No view

Engagement improvement

Stakeholders are explained on page 30 of the consultation document.

40. Are there any improvements to the level stakeholder engagement by Cross Country that you would like to see and how could stakeholder engagement be improved?

No view

41. Does Cross Country provide a sufficient level of support to relevant Community Rail partnerships in your experience?

	Yes
	No

Community Rail partnerships engagement

42. Has their support improved in the last year to 18 months?

	Yes
	No

43. Provide ideas on what more you feel the franchise could do to help the relevant Community Rail partnerships?

No view

Final comments

44. Any other comments?

The franchise should take into account other government policies on sustainable transport and the environment

DfT Policy paper **Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail** (29.10.2017) in the Executive Summary, states under 'Expanded network' that "The surge in demand over the past 20 years means we need to invest in capacity. To rebalance the economy and create more homes we also need to forge new links between places, spurring development and economic growth.

Under 'A productive and innovative sector', it says "We will embed the industry's sustainable development principles in future franchise specifications and expect ambitious proposals from bidders in response."

The relevant Sustainable Development Principles, which need to be applied to this franchise are those in the RSSB document signed by Claire Perry, MP, as follows:

- Customer-driven: Embed a culture where dialogue with customers puts them at the very heart of the railway, and where they are able to make optimal travel and logistics choices.
- Putting rail in reach of people: Position rail as an inclusive, affordable and accessible transport system through the provision of information and accessible facilities.
- Providing an end to end journey: Work together with all transport modes to provide an integ-

rated, accessible transport system.

- Being an employer of choice: Respect, encourage and develop a diverse workforce, support its wellbeing and actively consider and address the challenges of the future labour market.
- Reducing our environmental impact: Operate and improve the business in a way that minimises the negative impacts and maximises the benefits of the railway to the environment.
- Carbon smart: Achieve long-term reductions in carbon emissions through improved energy efficiency, new power sources and modal shift.
- Having a positive social impact: Focus on local impacts and communities through better understanding and engagement.
- Supporting the economy: Boost the productivity and competitiveness of the UK, at a national and regional level, through efficient services and by facilitating agglomeration and catalysing economic regeneration.
- Optimising the railway: Maximise rail's capability, build on its strengths and improve efficiency to deliver a transport system that is resilient and offers good value for money.
- Being transparent: Promote a culture of open and accountable decision making and measure, monitor and report publicly on our progress toward sustainability.

The Cross Country franchise should be embraced as the opportunity to turn these principles into reality.

We propose measures that can be addressed by this franchise applying the Sustainable Development principles and these now follow.

1. Accommodating growth and modal shift

In the consultation background document there is reference to the growth in recorded passenger use of the rail network. There is also a mention of current overcrowding. The proposals are not ambitious in accommodating further growth and even indulge the concept of reducing the number of destinations. With current levels of growth, one past DfT rail document anticipated Birmingham New Street station in its current format reaching capacity in 2025, whilst the Business Plan for the redevelopment that justified the current improved station anticipated capacity being reached in 2035. There is a need to achieve modal shift, and in view of the Climate Change Act 2008 that should be a DfT ambition. The measures to accommodate growing demand may be met in part by employing longer trains, but this will require alterations to stations, acknowledging that this is limited by the nature of some stations.

It is also relevant that the number of freight trains is currently low and is set to grow. Accommodating more trains (and there is a variety of train characteristics and stopping patterns), also requires planning ahead. For trains from the South West to the North, avoiding the congested two track railway through Bromsgrove, DfT has the (currently out of use) route through Dudley. Utilising the route is proposed in Network Rail's Freight Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). The second West Midlands route will be a key resource for freight trains and for some Cross Country trains (potential new services). The second route also will be of use for trains diverted when the route through Birmingham is unavailable. The alterations to the Birmingham area in terms of grade separated junctions (at Barnt Green and at Kings Norton) are ambitions of Network Rail in the West Midlands and Chilterns RUS. The need to address capacity, identified by the two Network Rail RUS, is pertinent to a franchise centred on Birmingham.

2. Through ticketing.

This would address the 'final mile' and add other towns to the network.

3. Resilience - flooding

There is also a need to address resilience: the document mentions the effect of adverse weather on one length of sea wall. That problem can be solved by replacing the trains. There are other areas that are vulnerable to weather events: Birmingham to Nuneaton is regularly closed by and needs either a major reconstruction of the vulnerable length of railway, or an alternative route.

4. Diesel train emissions at Birmingham New Street Station

Emissions from diesel trains pose a particular problem in Birmingham New Street Station which is classed by Network Rail as an underground station and therefore diesel engine emissions can become trapped at platform level. A large proportion of the diesel trains using Birmingham New Street (accounting for at least 23% of all services) are operated by Cross Country and account for 23% of the total number of all trains using the station. Research undertaken by the University of Birmingham in shows that levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter (PM 2.5 and PM10) recorded at platform level exceed various EU air quality standards. This produces a very unpleasant environment for station staff and passengers alike and is potentially harmful to their health. The research concludes that mitigation measures are required. Ref. 2016 Hickman AL, Baker CJ, Cai X, Delgado-Saborit JM and Thornes JE, *Evaluation of air quality at Birmingham New street Railway Station, Proceedings of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers Part F; Rail and Rapid Transit 2018*, Vol. 232 (6)1864-1878.

Although the station has a system of fans installed, which are able to draw some of the pollution away from the platforms and disperse it into the open air, this just shifts the problem to other areas surrounding the station. In a number of locations in Birmingham city centre, annual average levels of nitrogen dioxide resulting mostly from road vehicle emissions, exceed the EU legal limit. The diesel emissions from trains using New Street Station are just adding to this problem.

Given the air quality exceedances, Birmingham City Council has been required by central government to introduce a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) by 2020 which is proposed to cover an area of the city centre bounded by the Middleway (A4540). Petrol-engined vehicles worse than the Euro 4 emissions standard and diesel-engined vehicles worse than the Euro 6 or VI standard will be charged to enter the zone. The intention is to reduce the number of non-compliant vehicles entering the city centre with people either switching to other modes or replacing their vehicles with low or zero emission vehicles.

The diesel trains used by Cross Country are of a poorer emissions standard than the Euro 6 or VI road vehicle emissions standard and of course Birmingham New Street station is located in the proposed CAZ. Passengers who want to make the greener travel choice by using the train would be disappointed to know this and even more disappointed by the unpleasant diesel emissions and resulting harmful levels of pollutants they are exposed to at platform and even concourse level.

We believe the source of this problem should be tackled by the new Cross Country trains franchisee and should be a franchise commitment. We would like to see the following commitments included:

- Initially, with the existing rolling stock, ensure that idling of diesel engines at platforms is minimised. It should be possible to shut down all engines on a unit standing in the station for longer than 3 minutes. A no-idling policy should be enforced by Network Rail at Birmingham New Street and the Cross Country franchise holder should comply. If there are any technical obstacles preventing engines being switched off while the train is stationary in the station, then the franchise holder should work towards a solution to enable engines to be shut down for even very short stops of less than five minutes. We would suggest a system of financial penalties is introduced by Network Rail to reflect the CAZ road vehicle charging scheme proposed by Birmingham City Council. Unnecessary idling at the station should attract a financial penalty payable by the train operator.
- At present all cross-country trains are diesel, yet some run for many miles under 25kV electric supply. As soon as feasible, the current fleet should be replaced by hybrid units such as those already used by some other operators. These could switch to electric traction in the station area where all tracks are electrified and on the station approaches. Furthermore, unnecessary diesel running on electrified sections of route could be eliminated i.e. Birmingham to Coventry, Birmingham to Manchester, Doncaster to Edinburgh and even Birmingham to Bromsgrove if the fast lines between Kings Norton and Longbridge were electrified.
- Another possibility would be to convert the diesel Voyager trains to bi-mode capability (diesel

and electric) by inserting an extra coach with a pantograph (current collecting device) and the necessary electric traction equipment. This possibility was investigated by DfT in 2011.

5. Fares

Many Cross Country tickets, when not booked far in advance are much too expensive and will price some people off the rails. Many of these potential passengers will end up driving. Cross Country fares are more expensive per mile than many other train operators' fares.

In many cases it is often substantially cheaper to buy a different ticket to cover each section of a given journey. For instance a day trip from Birmingham to Cambridge can be undertaken much more cheaply by buying four separate day returns to cover different sections of the journey rather than buying a single ticket to cover the whole journey.

'Splitting tickets' in this way can give substantial savings. However this is not a satisfactory state of affairs. When 'splitting tickets' is cheaper than buying a through ticket for the same journey, then the price of that through ticket should default to the cheaper 'split ticket' alternative. Passengers should be automatically sold the cheapest fare rather than having to research whether splitting their ticket would be cheaper.

Return your completed questionnaire

Save this file and email it to crosscountry@dft.gov.uk

Or post it to:

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