



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

Transport for the North (TfN)

## 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?

### 5. How regularly do you travel by Cross Country?

- Every day
- 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"/>	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"/>	At station
<input type="checkbox"/>	On train
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

# Awareness

## 8. How did you hear about this consultation?

	Poster
	Internet
	Station e-board
	On train consultation
	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?

The significant growth experienced across the North's rail network in the previous 20 years has resulted in many services being subject to overcrowding. Addressing the increasing levels of overcrowding on the core part of the franchise between the Midlands and the North and into the North's economic centres, through the provision of extra capacity is the most urgent issue that needs to be addressed. Overcrowding is no longer just an issue during peak periods driven by commuting, with growth in regional and long distance travel for leisure and business, services are increasingly busy inter-peak, at weekends and on public holidays.

The increasing overcrowding is likely to be suppressing demand, limiting passenger growth and hurting the economy, acting as a brake on important commuting, business, and leisure flows.

The Long Term Rail Strategy for the North of England identifies a Strategic Gap: On-train capacity has not kept pace with growing demand, leading to overcrowding which reduces the attractiveness of rail. Passengers place a high level of importance on getting a seat on the train, this is often reflected in passenger satisfaction surveys, particularly in the North of England.

This overcrowding is a symptom of train capacity provision not keeping pace with demand growth.

The rail industry's long-term planning process (LTPP) provides further evidence on increasing Cross Country crowding within the published West Midlands and Chiltern and East Midlands Route Studies, and further evidence is being produced through Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (North of England Route Study) strategic questions for Manchester Corridors, Sheffield, and Leeds.

## 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

later times of last trains

more frequent weekend services  
earlier Sunday morning services  
earlier times of first trains  
more frequent weekday services


Which routes and stations and why?

Our vision is to achieve: 'A thriving North of England, where modern transport connections drive economic growth and support an excellent quality of life.'

Aligning with our pan-northern transport objectives, set out in the Strategic Transport Plan, the Long Term Rail Strategy identifies the need for a step-change in connectivity. Improvements to connectivity will support a sustainable transformation of the North's economic performance and quality of life. For the rail network, this will require an improvement in train services to ensure a minimum of two passenger trains per hour on each route to, from and within the North.

The order of priority for improvement of Cross Country services will vary across the North of England given the existing variability in frequency and hours of operation, and geographic coverage. We expect each local transport authority will give more detailed local priorities in their individual responses. In our answer to Q36 below we have provided evidence for the case for serving stations in the North beyond the geography of the current Cross Country network.

The leisure economy is an increasingly important contributor to employment, culture and quality of life in the North of England. The daytime leisure economy in towns and cities operates on a seven-day basis and as well as offering opportunities to visitors, it is an important source of employment. Evenings are particularly vibrant in the North's major economic centres – its towns and cities. It is important that the economic and cultural benefits of evening leisure can be realised across the North, and not restricted to those residing in large population centres. People must be able to access leisure opportunities, and the employment options they generate, and travel home afterwards.

Timetables of current Cross Country services currently fall short of our Long Term Rail Strategy Conditional Outputs to:

- Increase the number of services operating on Sundays and public holidays to achieve parity with the weekday inter-peak
- First services to arrive in economic centres prior to 07.00 (09.00 on Sundays), with last services departing no earlier than 23.00

Public holiday timetables should, as a minimum, match those delivered on Sundays. This should include Boxing Day and New Year's Day, which have both become important retail dates as well as hosting sporting events and other leisure attractions. Service provision should be well-promoted to ensure that infrequent travellers are aware of the opportunities available.

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

Close collaboration with TfN's Integrated and Smart Travel (IST) programme will be required, in particular Phase 1: Smartcard on Rail and Phase 3: Account-based travel. Please see our answer to Q37 for more information on fares and ticketing.

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

APOD can be a useful product to increase attractiveness and affordability of rail travel, and a useful tool to provide an incentive for travellers with flexibility to choose less busy trains. However, problems on Cross Country services with seats becoming reserved during the journey are well documented. These are compounded by crowding and a limited number of seats that are 'unreservable'. Increased capacity would help to reduce this problem and provide space to enable innovative solutions including flexibility to tailor the onboard experience to different markets. Innovations regarding electronic and intelligent seat reservations should also be considered.

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

The franchise will need to work in close collaboration with Phase 2 of TfN's IST programme so that passengers across the North will be able to plan journeys, obtain fares information, travel and avoid disruption much more conveniently, quickly and simply.

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

The franchise will need to work in close collaboration with Phase 2 of TfN's IST programme so that passengers across the North will be able to plan journeys, obtain fares information, travel and avoid disruption much more conveniently, quickly and simply.

**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?**

Paramount to the continued successful growth of the rail market, customers will expect a certain level of service to be provided by staff:

- Ensuring safety and security
- Customer service and information provision including:

- seating and reservation management;
- service declassification needs;
- onward connection information;
- regular service updates and management of customer journey disruption including co-ordinating any required alternative arrangement;
- management of customer comfort factors including toilets and other on-board facilities; and
- being the customer's first point of contact.
- Disability and accessibility assistance.
- Management of the on-board experience.
- Ticket sales and revenue protection.
- Management of other on-board staff including catering and cleaning teams.

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

We fully support the need to improve the door-to-door journey experience in order to improve the attractiveness of rail for making journeys. In practice, there are very few journeys which are genuinely station to station.

We recognise there are a number of barriers that discourage passengers from making complex journeys which require changing trains or using different modes. The operator should seek to co-ordinate timetables to reduce waiting times and provide on-board information about onward connections across different modes.

Many passengers from the north who wish to travel to destinations served by the Cross Country franchise will need to use local services to connect. The operator will need to work with the station operators and the other Train Operating Companies to ensure through journeys with connections are as attractive as possible.

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

Bidders should refer to useful research by Transport Focus on passengers' experience and expectations of complaints and compensation.

**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"/> |
| More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats    | <input type="text"/> |
| More comfortable room for short distance standing | <input type="text"/> |

- Cycle storage
- Seats that align with windows
- Greater leg-room
- Extra room for luggage


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

Cross Country operate long distance services in the North, that also provide important regional connectivity, and provide capacity for commuting into multiple economic centres. As we represent the broad spectrum of passengers, it is not appropriate to rank the items described above. Bidders should refer to useful research by Transport Focus on passengers' experiences and aspirations. Increased capacity would help to provide space for different markets, passenger aspirations and luggage.

**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
- More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats
- More comfortable room for short distance standing
- Cycle storage
- Seats that align with windows
- Greater leg-room
- Extra room for luggage


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

N/A - only long distance Cross Country services operate in the North.

**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?**

The Long Term Rail Strategy for the North of England also identifies a Strategic Gap: The reliability and punctuality of services causes a perception that rail services cannot be relied on for commuting, business and other journeys.

The performance of the North of England's self-contained franchises is unacceptable. On heavily-utilised routes and at busy junctions, both of which are common across the North of England, this can include knock-on delays to and from other train operating companies and freight services, as well as eroding passenger confidence in the ability to make connections to other services.

The consultation document identifies that Cross Country Right Time performance is lowest of all franchised operators and needs to be addressed in the next franchise.

Specification of the next Cross Country franchise needs to include resources to collaborate with initiatives to increase the punctuality of passenger and freight services in the North and decrease cancellations. This needs to include helping to identify and develop further opportunities to increase resilience.

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## 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. Within the North these calls are often serving important economic centres themselves, and not just picking up/setting down commuters to conurbation centres. For example, Stockport and Macclesfield are defined economic centres in TfN's Long Term Rail Strategy. The crowding on Cross Country trains in the North is a mix of demand of business, leisure and commuting to multiple economic centres.

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

Yes or No?

No. As above within the North these calls are often serving important economic centres themselves, and not just picking up/setting down commuters to conurbation centres.

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

Yes or No?

No. This could be in conflict with the aim to simplify fares and ticketing. Within the North the long distance trains serve multiple markets. Close collaboration with TfN's Integrated and Smart Travel (IST) programme will be required.

Other:

More appropriate measures would be provision of extra capacity to accommodate growing demand alongside increasing the attractiveness of alternative local services.

Provide specific instances where these may be applicable.

Continued transformation of Northern and TPE franchise services operating

alongside the long distance Cross Country trains in the North of England is required to increase the attractiveness of alternative local services.

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

	Yes	No
Birmingham to Nottingham		
Birmingham to Leicester		

Why?

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# 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	

## Routes to transfer

**26. Which routes and stations and why?**

As a statutory partner TfN will expect to work closely with the DfT in decisions of train service requirements in the North of England, making best use of evidence in order to help deliver the Long Term Rail Strategy.

## 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

Why / why not?

If the network was unable to accommodate all service enhancements north of Northallerton on the East Coast mainline, a solution to address the capacity problems needs to be developed.

In addition to achieving pan-northern connectivity, services on the East Coast mainline need to provide connectivity between the North and its neighbouring regions, Scotland and the Midlands, as well as long-distance links to key markets across the rest of England.

Particularly due to the interaction with services in franchises jointly managed through the Rail North Partnership, as a statutory partner TfN will expect to work closely with the DfT in decisions of train service requirements in the North of England.

Please see our answer to Q36 for evidence of the case for Cross Country serving economic centres beyond the geography of the existing network.

**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?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Comments:

As a statutory partner TfN will expect to work closely with the DfT in decisions of train service requirements in the North of England, making best use of evidence in order to help deliver the Long Term Rail Strategy.

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## 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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

33. On what routes could this be introduced?

Within the North, these calls often serve important economic centres, providing valuable connectivity. Investment in infrastructure can improve journey time, without having to make fewer calls at stations, for example the investment in grade separation at Norton Bridge has enabled improved journey times on Cross Country services to and from Manchester even with additional calls at Macclesfield. Investment in better performing rolling stock can also accelerate services. TfN are leading work on the Journey Time Improvement strategic question in the North of England to identify the most economic investments.

## 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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	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)?

Consideration should be given to additional calls at intermediate stations with growing patronage such as Northallerton and Congleton.

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)?

The Long Term Rail Strategy identifies a Strategic Gap: The rail 'offer' between

the North and centres elsewhere in the country can be often unattractive, presenting a barrier to both business and leisure travel by rail. The strategy identifies that some major Northern cities such as Bradford and Hull lack direct connectivity to other major cities, such as Birmingham. It is worth noting the Long Term Planning Process, Long Distance Market Study in Table 7.5 'Long term service level conditional outputs for the Yorkshire and the Humber – aspirations for 2043' for Hull and Bradford identifies a Birmingham interurban service aspiration with an End to end journey speed of 80 mph and 1 or 2 opportunities to travel per hour. This study also identifies an improved service aspiration for Liverpool-Birmingham connectivity. We note the consultation document recognises aspirations for extensions of the franchise to serve Liverpool. Liverpool did have a Cross Country service in the past, and is a major Northern city without direct connectivity beyond Birmingham to the South West and South Coast.

Our Long Term Rail Strategy also explains that in the North low average speeds serve to increase generalised journey times, limiting rail's attractiveness relative to other modes of transport, particularly where a low journey speed is combined with a low service frequency. It gives the example of the Durham Coast route between Middlesbrough and Newcastle which serves a number of our economic centres which are also major population centres (Sunderland (>270,000), Stockton-on-Tees (>195,000) and Hartlepool (>90,000).

We expect to work closely with the DfT with analysis of service development options in collaboration with our member authorities and partners, especially where there is an interaction with the franchises jointly managed through the Rail North Partnership.

## 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?

Rail fares are a critical aspect of the overall passenger 'offer' and are a key driver of how passengers perceive value for money. The structure of the fares system, the products offered, and the methods of retail should be closely aligned to passenger needs and expectations. It is important that passengers can access a full range of ticket options and that they are given guidance to ensure they purchase the best value ticket for their particular journey requirements. If this can be achieved, greater passenger satisfaction could be expected and the attractiveness of travel by rail relative to private car would improve. If delivered alongside wider improvements to the network, this would help to support sustainable economic growth, social participation and improved quality of life.

The Long Term Rail Strategy calls for a long-term fares strategy to be put in place for the North of England, setting out the short, medium and long-term initiatives needed to deliver an intuitive, accessible fares structure which is fit for purpose for the needs of both the current economy, and that of a transformed 'Northern Powerhouse' economy where TfN's Vision has been realised.

TfN is working on a Long Term Fares Strategy and responding to the Rail Delivery Group consultation on fares. We welcome the RDG's recognition of the challenges presented by the current rail fares structure and the barriers it presents to passengers when attempting to secure value for money. We believe that there is clear alignment between a number of the options set out in their consultation document and those being considered by TfN.

Procurement of the Cross Country franchise will need to take account of the emerging principles in this strategy and the TOC will need to work with TfN and the Rail North Partnership to implement any changes to fare structures and product types.

In the shorter term there is a need to provide better value fares and a simplified fare structure. There is a need to remove the anomalies that can result in cheaper journeys being made with split ticketing or where artificial boundaries encourage passengers to use a car to reach stations where a cheaper fare is available. The range of products available can also be confusing with a variety of different restrictions and these are often not explained fully, leading to passengers being penalised for innocent mistakes.

## 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?



Increased capacity would help to enable innovative solutions including flexibility to tailor the onboard experience to improve access and provide facilities for those with disabilities or additional needs.

## 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?**

Our LTRS identifies a Strategic Gap: Rolling stock has not kept pace with passengers' expectations of quality and contributes to poor air quality in many centres, and global climate change.

Our LTRS identifies that ageing vehicles remain a feature of rail in the North of England, and that it should be recognised that a diesel powered fleet will look increasingly polluting relative to other modes, especially given ongoing changes in the automotive industry.

Disturbance caused by the 'churn' of passengers alighting and boarding is concentrated by overcrowding and the lack of capacity on board to accommodate the many different passenger journeys and their luggage. Increased capacity would help to reduce the problem and provide space to enable innovative solutions including flexibility to tailor the onboard experience to different markets.

## 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?**

Transport for the North (TfN) is the Sub-national Transport Body for the North of England. Our vision is of a thriving North of England, where modern transport connections drive economic growth and support an excellent quality of life.

We are a unique partnership, with elected and business leaders from all areas of Northern England uniting to work with central government and national transport bodies. Following approval from Parliament, we became England's first Sub-national Transport Body (STB) in April 2018. The establishment of TfN as a STB has provided a unique opportunity to join up 'track and train', allowing train service solutions to be developed and implemented alongside infrastructure

schemes and enabling us to make well-informed decisions for the whole of the North.

Stakeholder engagement by Cross Country needs to recognise the importance of TfN and our partners working together in collaboration.

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

## Community Rail partnerships engagement

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

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

We support community engagement in rail. Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) add significant value to the rail industry, they promote and market the rail offer, particularly around promotion for tourism and leisure use. DfT's National Community Rail Steering Group research suggests that CRPs can increase annual rail patronage by 2.8% (above the equivalent annual background rail growth). Station supporter/friend groups and CRPs can also help make the railways safer and more welcoming.

Whilst the role of CRPs is recognised, this is not the only approach for community involvement and station adoption or friends groups have been able to thrive outside of the designated CRP routes, also helping to support the local economy and stimulate demand for rail services.

We believe that encouraging community involvement will help to improve the overall ambience of stations, making them more attractive to passengers, as well as providing human presence that can improve safety and security. Community support may also help bring disused station buildings back into use, helping to bring the station into the heart of the community.

The new Cross Country operator should support all of the CRPs within its operating area by providing financial support and pro-active engagement. To ensure this is effective, we suggest that the franchise includes a contractual obligation for the operator to provide funding support for these while

maintaining local governance, in a similar manner to the latest Northern franchise.

## Final comments

### 44. Any other comments?

Strategic Planning, HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail - we expect the next Cross Country operator to take a pro-active approach to working with TfN collaboration with our members, partners and stakeholders to ensure that the franchise can manage any construction disruption and consider the needs for future network connectivity. This should include planning beyond the end of the franchise period, if necessary, to provide long term certainty.

## Return your completed questionnaire

Save this file and email it to [crosscountry@dft.gov.uk](mailto:crosscountry@dft.gov.uk)

Or post it to:

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