

Northern sees 10 per cent reduction in penalty fares issued since fine increase

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Northern has issued 10 per cent less penalty fares in the first month since the government increased the 'fine' to £100 compared to the same period last year.

3,831 people caught travelling without a valid ticket or 'promise to pay' notice were issued with a penalty fare, compared to 4,261 in the same period last year.

The train operator, which offers 2,500 services a day to more than 500 stations across the North of England, revealed adult passengers accounted for 81 per cent of the penalty fares issued, with under 18s making up the remaining 19 per cent.

Mark Powles, commercial and customer director at Northern, said: "A sudden 10 per cent reduction in the number of penalty fares being issued would suggest the increase to £100 has been effective in terms of a deterrent. Of course, this is only the first month - but it is definitely a step in the right direction.

"Upwards of 95 per cent of our customers do the right thing and buy a ticket before they travel - and having invested in the largest network of digital ticket infrastructure of any train operator in the country,

Northern has made it easier than ever to buy a ticket via our app, website or one of more than 600 ticket machines across the network. There really is no excuse.”

The government’s new £100 penalty fare came into effect on 23 January. Since 2005, the penalty fare had been just £20 – but it was felt by the industry that that figure was too low and was no longer an effective deterrent to would-be fare evaders. As part of the government’s public consultation, 69% of respondents agreed that the £20 penalty fare was too low.

Money raised through penalty fares issued by Northern will, in-line with other revenue income streams, be re-invested in the rail industry to improve the service offered to all customers.

Industry body, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) estimates that every year around £240 million is lost through fare evasion on Great Britain’s railways.

The £100 penalty fare forms part of The Railways (Penalty Fares) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. Penalty fares are reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days.

The increase in the penalty fare for train operators in England brought it in-line with penalty fares charged across much of Western Europe and by Transport for London (TfL) and Manchester’s Metrolink tram network.

Photo credit: Northern