

Operators tackle “ticketless travel”

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Rail operators and police are working together to educate travellers... and deter fare dodgers.

A recent operation at Preston station, spearheaded by Avanti West Coast, Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE), together with British Transport Police (BTP), highlighted the ongoing issue of “ticketless travel” which costs the industry millions every year.

During the three-day initiative, 155 people were reported without a ticket or having the wrong ticket.

Jason Wade, Head of Retail Operations at Northern, said: “We know many people have been away from the railway for a long time and may have got out of the habit of buying tickets for their journeys. We’ve worked hard during this time to give customers better ways to buy tickets, making it quicker and easier to do.

“We’re reminding everyone that they should always buy their ticket before they board any rail service, but we’re also showing that we won’t hesitate to take appropriate action if people keep traveling without a paying.”

Ian Humphreys, Head of Retail Strategy at TransPennine Express said: “We’re committed to tackling fare

evasion and ticketless travel, ensuring consistency and fairness for all. Ticketless travel costs the rail industry a lot of money every year.

“The three-day event provided a great opportunity to come together with colleagues across the rail industry to remind customers about the importance of buying a ticket before travelling and how a Penalty Fare will be issued to those who ignore the rules. Anyone travelling by train must buy a ticket before they board ideally using our website or mobile app. Tickets can also be purchased from our stations.”

Andi Smith, Revenue Protection Strategy Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: “We want to ensure everyone pays the correct fare for their journey. Our role as a revenue protection team is to educate rail users, identify fare evaders and provide value for money for our customers.

“Teaming up with train operators in the region and BTP at Preston is part of our latest approach to tackling ticketless travel, highlighting the rail industry’s commitment to making it fair for everyone.”

Inspector James Mitchell, of British Transport Police, said: “Fare evasion is a crime and we continue to work closely with our partners in the rail industry to prevent this serious crime and support revenue protection officers who work on frontline.

“It’s not right that the actions of a few who believe they can use the railway for free means that other honest, fare paying customers are effectively paying for their journeys.

“We will do everything possible to ensure that those intent on defrauding the railway are brought to justice.”

A visit to court is usually a last resort – penalty fares are usually just the ticket for people who persistently try not to pay.

The on-the-spot penalties, which are either £20 or double the cost of a single fare for the journey taken (whichever is the greater), are being enforced on-board trains and at destination stations by the industry’s authorised collectors.

Northern said where customers believe a penalty fare has been applied wrongly there is a tried and tested, independent appeals process which is used across the country.