

News story: CMA considers proposals to protect London to Exeter rail passengers

Last week the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the award of the franchise to FirstGroup and MTR [raised concerns because FirstGroup already operates the Great Western Railway \(GWR\) franchise](#), which runs the only other train service between London and Exeter.

As the only operator running rail services between the 2 cities, the CMA found that FirstGroup could potentially take advantage of the reduction in competition to increase fares for the half a million passengers a year who use the route.

FirstGroup and its joint venture partner MTR were given the opportunity to avoid an in-depth ('phase 2') investigation by offering proposals (known as 'undertakings in lieu of reference') to the CMA to address the concerns identified.

The companies have now offered to cap unregulated fares between London and Exeter on both South Western and GWR services by linking these to prices on a number of other comparable routes. They have also proposed to maintain the availability of cheaper advance fares on both services – again by comparing with similar routes.

The CMA has decided that there are reasonable grounds for believing that these proposals, or a modified version of them, might be acceptable to remedy the competition concerns it has identified by protecting passengers using both London-Exeter rail services.

The CMA has until 20 September 2017 to consider whether to accept the undertakings, although it may decide to extend this deadline to 15 November 2017 if it decides that there are special reasons for doing so.

As part of its process, the CMA will now undertake a public consultation, which will commence shortly. Details on this consultation will be found on the [case page](#) along with full text of the decisions and all other information about the investigation.

The CMA's decision to consider the proposals comes in advance of the start of the franchise, due on 20 August 2017.

News story: Rip off card-charges to be outlawed

The government is unveiling new rules that will mean card-charging in Britain – where people can be charged 20% extra for purchases like a flight just for paying with a credit card – will come to an end in January.

‘Surcharging’ is common practice across the country – with businesses ranging from takeaway apps to global airlines charging people to make card payments or for other services such as Paypal. While many industries have acted to absorb the cost and not pass these on to consumers, these rules will bring an end to the practice entirely.

The rules will also tackle surcharging by local councils and government agencies.

In 2010, the total value of surcharges for debit and credit cards was an estimated £473 million.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay, said:

Rip-off charges have no place in a modern Britain and that’s why card charging in Britain is about to come to an end.

This is about fairness and transparency, and so from next year there will be no more nasty surprises for people at the check-out just for using a card.

These small charges can really add up and this change will mean shoppers across the country have that bit of extra cash to spend on the things that matter to them.

The government has previously capped the costs that businesses face for processing card payments, and will engage with retailers to assess if there is any more that can be done to help.

This action forms part of our wider help for families with the cost of living by helping to raise their incomes and keep more of what they earn.

News story: CMA CGM Simba and Domingue

report published

MAIB's report on the investigation of the girting and capsizing of tug Domingue while assisting the UK-registered container vessel CMA CGM Simba resulting in 2 fatalities on 20 September 2016, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened and the subsequent actions taken.

Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

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News story: Home Secretary announces £1 million to help communities support refugees

The funding was announced by the Home Secretary to mark the one year anniversary of the [community sponsorship scheme](#) (Wednesday 19 July).

The community sponsorship scheme, which was launched by the Home Secretary at Lambeth Palace last year, enables community groups to take on the role of supporting refugees who have been resettled from the camps in the countries surrounding Syria in the UK.

Since the scheme launched last year, 53 refugees have been welcomed by 10 community groups across the UK. Community sponsors, including charities, faith groups and churches, provide housing for the refugee families, as well as helping them to integrate into life in the UK, access medical and social services, arranging English language tuition and supporting them towards employment and self-sufficiency.

The new 2 year £1 million fund will provide training and support for groups signing up to the scheme.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

"I am delighted that the community sponsorship scheme has got off to such an excellent start.

"The work of the volunteers who have welcomed refugees into their communities over the last year is inspiring, as is the compassion of the many local authorities who have provided their support.

"But this is just the beginning. I hope many more groups, from across England and Wales, will be inspired to get involved. That is why I have announced this funding, to help more communities welcome vulnerable families looking to create a new life and bring real benefits to the places in which they will live and work."

One year ago Lambeth Palace became the first community group to welcome a refugee family. Since then community groups from Manchester to Cornwall and Wales have also welcomed these vulnerable families into their communities.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

"Last year we welcomed a family of Syrian refugees to live with us here at Lambeth Palace through the community sponsorship scheme. It has been an absolute privilege and joy to get to know this special family over the last year as we've supported them to start a new life in the UK. They have been a blessing to us in so many ways.

"It's amazing to think that we are celebrating the one year anniversary of the scheme. In whatever way you can, I would encourage everyone to get involved with community sponsorship and support refugees. It is truly a life-changing experience."

The UK scheme has been set up by the government working closely with civil society groups and international partners including the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which is jointly led by the Government of Canada, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Open Society Foundations, the Radcliffe Foundation, and the University of Ottawa.

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, said:

"The success of Canada's refugee resettlement program would not be possible without our private sponsorship program. I'm very pleased to see that the UK has already experienced similar success with its own sponsorship model within its first year.

"Through the community sponsorship scheme for refugees, the UK will be able to help bring more vulnerable people around the world to safety. I have no doubt that private sponsorship, which has been so positive in Canada, will also bring long-term advantages for individual communities in the UK and the entire country."

Community sponsorship is just one way that the UK government is helping to support refugees. The government remains on track to meet its commitment of resettling 23,000 of the most vulnerable refugees through the vulnerable person and children's resettlement schemes by 2020, with over 7000 refugees resettled as of March this year.

Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq: 18 July 2017

The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq this afternoon.

She congratulated him on the recent liberation of Mosul, and commended the bravery and sacrifice of Iraqi forces.

Prime Minister Abadi thanked her and said victory would not have been achieved without the support of the UK and other members of the international coalition against Daesh.

Prime Minister May reiterated the UK's long-term commitment to a secure and unified Iraq, through our ongoing military, humanitarian and stabilisation support.

They agreed on the importance of continuing to work together to defeat terrorism, to ensure Iraq's stability and prosperity. This includes our continued efforts to bring Daesh to justice.

They also discussed the importance of political reform and reconciliation to unite Iraqis and prevent the reemergence of Daesh. Prime Minister May stressed the need to heal divisions, help citizens rebuild their lives and give all Iraqis a stake in a better future.