

Written evidence submitted by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) (RRB0017)

CTSI is submitting this response in support of the Rail Ombudsman who provide a free Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) service to help sort out unresolved customer complaints about service providers within the rail industry. CTSI operates as the competent authority auditing and approving ADR bodies, in all non-regulated sectors against the requirements of the legislation.

The purpose of this response is not to comment on all elements of the draft Rail Reform Bill as much of this is outside the scope of CTSI, but we would like to raise some points around Section 6 - Rail Dispute Resolution Scheme of the draft Bill.

This Bill presents a timely opportunity to bridge some gaps in terms of the protections available to consumer when purchasing tickets from third-party ticket sellers. Currently the Rail Ombudsman provides a free ADR service to consumers when a dispute arises following the purchase of train tickets. Currently the Rail Ombudsman cannot deal with consumer complaints that relate to tickets sold by third-party sellers, which leaves those consumers disadvantaged when there is a service that can provide assistance, but is outside of their current remit.

CTSI has recently published its Manifesto – [‘Helping Local Communities and Businesses to Prosper’](#). Section 2 of the Manifesto is calling on the next Government to ‘Create more confident consumers by putting in place greater levels of protection’. The Manifesto is calling on the next Government to: Review the redress landscape to make it simpler for both businesses and consumers to navigate.

In a fast-moving technological trading environment, legislation can lag behind and even impede business innovation, so there is an opportunity to use a smarter regulatory approach.

CTSI’s Consumer Codes and ADR schemes can offer robust non-legislative tools for consumers to seek redress when things go wrong with a purchase, taking pressure off the overstretched court system.

It has been well reported that consumers are confused about how to seek redress when they have a problem (due to a combination of multiple ADR

providers and gaps in redress) and do not understand the role of Ombudsmen, Redress and ADR schemes.

Citizens Advice also found consumer awareness of ADR schemes was only 28% in regulated sectors and 16% in non-regulated sectors, and YouGov found that only 2% of the public have used an ADR scheme - [Gaps overlaps consumer confusion 201704.pdf \(citizensadvice.org.uk\)](#). More needs to be done to protect consumers and to help them seek redress by improving accreditation and accountability, and simplifying the redress routes - including third-party train ticket sellers to the remit of the Rail Ombudsman would mean consumers have access to a service that can help them to achieve consumer redress and increase consumer protection in this key area.

About CTSI

The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) is a national not for profit established in 1881 which supports the UK's Trading Standards profession and works to protect consumers and safeguard honest businesses. CTSI's members are engaged in delivering frontline Trading Standards services at local authorities and in businesses. www.tradingstandards.uk

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