

New 16 – 17 Saver discounted rail tickets & Independent rail fares review

I have received this letter from the Government detailing the launch of the brand new 16 – 17 Saver, which offers discounted rail tickets to young people. They are also launching an independent review of rail fares to ensure the railways offer value for money to passengers:

Dear John

I am pleased to inform you that today the Department for Transport, together with the rail industry, has unveiled the brand new 16 – 17 Saver, which guarantees half-price travel for young people in England and Wales.

Whether starting or returning to sixth-form or college, beginning an apprenticeship or entering the world of work, teenagers can start using their discounted tickets on Monday 2 September.

It is forecast to save young people and their families an average of £186 every year and set to boost education opportunities, communities and businesses with young people able to travel more affordably.

The launch comes as the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) confirmed that over 327,000 people are now saving a third off their journeys after purchasing the 26-30 Railcard, saving an average of £19 per month since it launched in January.

Today's announcement means that passengers aged between 16 and 30 will now benefit from significant savings on their travel. Available for purchase for £30 online at www.16-17saver.co.uk or by calling 0345 301 1656, the Saver will be on sale at 9am on Tuesday 20 August

From this date, up to 1.2 million young people are eligible for the 50% discount it offers on most rail travel, including peak and season tickets. The 16-17 Saver will be valid across England, Wales and services into Scotland, but not on ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper services.

This is a positive step, but we need a rail system where passengers of all ages get a fair deal. While the government has frozen regulated fares in line with inflation for the seventh year in a row, there is a need to do more. Which is why the government has launched an independently-led Government review of the railway, including looking at fares reforms and value for money for passengers.

This review will report in the Autumn with reforms expected to begin in 2020.

I look forward to updating on progress in this area.

Yours sincerely
Chris Heaton-Harris MP
Minister of State for Transport

Paying for care homes

Mrs May rushed out social care proposals in her 2017 General Election Manifesto, only to have to drop them during the course of the Election campaign as they were unpopular. The new government has also promised to produce proposals which will benefit from study of what went wrong with the May ideas.

It is first important to understand the tri partisan settlement we have lived under for many years over social care. The political parties have all agreed that healthcare must be free at the point of need for all, including elderly people requiring a lot of expensive care towards the end of their lives. They have also agreed that living costs are to be paid where possible by the people concerned. In particular, if an elderly person needs to be looked after in a care home then the hotel costs of providing a room with meals and service falls to them if they have an income to cover it or if they have capital they can draw on.

The most contentious part of the current settlement for some is the fact that an elderly person needs to sell their home when they move into the care home and spend the capital from their home sale on the hotel costs of the care home. If someone does not have any capital then the state provides the care home place as well as the healthcare at taxpayer expense. Some say this is a tax on the thrifty and prudent. Others say the elderly person no longer needs their former home, so why shouldn't its value be treated like all their other capital? Should taxpayers pay the care home costs of millionaires, for example? If not, at what level of capital should the state take over and pay for the provision? If only one person from an elderly couple needs to move into a care home then of course the couple's home remains untaxed and available for the other person living there.

My elderly parents reached the point where they needed to move into a care home to be looked after, and wanted to do so. I helped them sell their two bedroom flat so they could afford a good quality care home. I did not think I had any right to inherit their flat and did not disagree with the policy that said that money from the sale of their home had to be used for their living costs in the care home.

Do you think there should be a new deal on this matter? What is a fair solution over the costs of living for elderly people, when some elderly people have saved and have capital and others did not?

A new approach to crime

This week the government made more announcements about dealing with crime. They tell us that the Prime Minister has ordered an urgent review into the prison sentences of violent and sexual offenders to ensure the public are properly protected from the most dangerous criminals. The review, beginning immediately, will focus on violent and sexual offenders, assessing if their sentences truly reflect the severity of their crimes. It will look at whether we need to change the law so they cannot be let out if they have not served their full time. Finally, it will examine how we can break the vicious cycle of prolific, repeat offenders.

This review is part of wider attack on crime, recruiting 20,000 new police officers, creating 10,000 new prison places and increasing stop and search powers. The aim is to keep dangerous criminals off the streets.

The new prison places will come from building new modern, efficient prisons which will provide better opportunities to reform criminals, meaning less re-offending and a lower burden on the taxpayer. Offering strengthened stop and search powers will give the police full support in combatting serious violence and keeping people safe.

The government will also publish draft guidance on measures in the Offensive Weapons Act, paving the way for new criminal offences that will help to stop knives and dangerous acids making their way into criminal use.

Are there other features you would like to see in an effective counter crime strategy? Clearly strong policing of our borders to keep out international criminals would be welcome. I also favour more work on rehabilitation and non custodial sentences for lesser crimes where there is no violence involved and where there is good chance of avoiding re offending.

Trade wars



John Redwood won a free place at Kent College, Canterbury, He graduated from Magdalen College Oxford, has a DPhil and is a fellow of All Souls College. A businessman by background, he has been a director of NM Rothschild merchant

bank and chairman of a quoted industrial PLC.

- [Read more about John Redwood](#)
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[Your favourite spending cuts](#)

In response to my ideas on spending there were various other suggestions from readers. The most popular with readers were :

1. Costs of government. There was strong support for fewer peers and fewer expenses and allowances for peers. Some wanted fewer MPs and less generous expenses for MPs. There was widespread enthusiasm for a cull of quangos, especially those supporting politically correct causes.
2. Cut public money to charities and arts where this can be raised by voluntary donation and from admission charges
3. Remove subsidies for alternative energy
4. Charge all overseas visitors who use the NHS
5. Reduce numbers of migrants needing financial support
6. Make the BBC a subscription service