



Virgin Media O2 response to Department for Business & Trade and Department for Culture, Media & Sport on Putting Fans First: the resale of live event tickets

Non-confidential

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Virgin Media O2 welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Business and Trade & the Department for Culture, Media & Sport on the topic of Putting Fans First: consultation on the resale of live events tickets.

As a major UK telecommunications provider with our Priority Tickets platform, selling over a million tickets annually, Virgin Media O2 enables customers to buy presale tickets at face value. As the sponsor of 21 O2 live event venues across the UK, we want changes to the current secondary ticketing legislation to protect customers from unfair ticket touting practices.

We're in the ticketing and live events business to reward our customers and provide unforgettable experiences, which is why we're so passionate about the fight for a fairer ticketing industry. Since 2007, we've seen consumers coming to The O2 or one of our 20 x O2 Academy venues (since 2009) to attend a live show, only to be refused entry because they've bought a ticket on a secondary website and the ticket does not exist. Or they've had no option but to massively over-pay for a ticket at several times the original face-value price. UK consumers are getting ripped off on an industrial scale and it must stop.

After years of campaigning on this issue, it's positive to see the Department for Business and Trade & the Department for Culture, Media & Sport seeking views of potential proposals to improve fairness for fans.

Virgin Media O2 strongly believes that the resale of tickets should be **capped at 10%** above the amount originally paid, to discourage touts and protect consumers from unsafe ticketing platforms that do not have ethical resale protocols in place. In addition, Virgin Media O2 believes there are three elements required to combat confusion in the market and is calling for:

- **Clearer information** during the sale process on ticket resale platforms, such as a pop-up notification which fully explains who the ticket is being bought from and the potential risks involved.¹
- **Clearer identification** of ticket resale platforms on search engines. Resale websites can currently buy their way to the top of search results, without having to mention their tickets are second-hand, leading to confusion for fans in understanding that their ticket is being sold at a price decided by a stranger on the internet.¹
- **Clearer transparency** of the face value of the ticket price set by the artist before it can be resold to a consumer. If the seller does not have a ticket, they should not be able to list it for resale.

These three measures are based on our experience within the ticketing industry since 2005, and on consumer research conducted between 11-16 July 2024 which found that nearly half of music fans (48%) stated they are 'not confident' in identifying a resale platform, causing confusion due to a lack of transparency for consumers. During the consultation period, from 1-3 April 2025, O2 has directly polled consumers at our O2 Store at The O2 to understand their views of the secondary ticketing market and found that:

- **91%** of consumers believe there should be a cap applied on resale tickets of 10% or less.
- **84%** of respondents were in favour of a resale cap applying to all live events.
- **77%** of consumers want resale platforms to be prohibited from allowing sellers to list more tickets for an event than any one individual is permitted to buy on the primary market.



Questions

Part 2: understanding the ticket market

- 1. We invite you to share any additional information or evidence you have concerning the live events sector, the pricing of tickets in the primary market, and/or the impacts of secondary ticketing markets on consumers and the live events sector.**

O2 as the owner of its Priority Tickets platform, which sells over a million tickets per year, and as the leading sponsor of 21 x O2 venues across the UK, has carried out extensive research on the impact of secondary ticketing and the confusion that exists amongst fans in identifying resale platforms. Our research, conducted by YouGov, found that the secondary ticketing market is costing music fans an extra £145m per year.¹ This is money not only being taken away from fans but also artists and the UK live music industry, adding to other economic pressures, such as the rising costs of touring, while lining the pockets of career touts who have made it their full-time job. Professional ticket touts abuse the market and steal tickets out of fans' hands. Music fans deserve the chance to buy tickets at a price set by their favourite artist, but all too often they are forced to pay an inflated price decided by a stranger on the internet.

Our research, in partnership with YouGov analysis institute, also indicated that:

- 62% of music fans who purchased tickets through resale platforms were unaware that they were buying from an individual seller. Furthermore, 64% of fans who bought from a resale website did not realise the ticket price they paid was set by the individual reselling the ticket. This clearly highlights the need for clearer information, clearer transparency and clearer identification in the existing ticket resale market²
- Only 5% of music fans would buy a second-hand ticket from outside of a venue, yet millions are doing so via online resale platforms – highlighting a major consumer awareness problem in the secondary ticketing industry.²
- Consumer support for the regulation of ticket resales in the UK increased to 72% by the end of 2024 (up from 63% at the time of our initial research in July 2024)³. The increase of 9% – apparent over a period of just five months, between July to December 2024 – means that almost three quarters of music fans who attended live music events now believe there should be rules in place against the resale of tickets for significant profits.

To help ensure tickets remain with music fans as much as possible, O2 blocked over 50,000 suspected bots from accessing its Priority Tickets platform in just a six-week period in 2024.¹ However, this effort will not stop professional touts continuing to find ways to break the system, buying tickets in bulk, taking them away from genuine fans and reselling them at inflated prices. This exploitative practice cannot continue. It's damaging to the music industry and unfair on fans who are being financially exploited as a result.

¹ <https://news.virginmediao2.co.uk/tickets-touts-costing-music-fans-an-extra-145m-per-year-o2-issues-warning-to-concertgoers-not-all-resale-platforms-are-made-equal/>

² <https://news.virginmediao2.co.uk/almost-two-in-three-music-fans-buying-second-hand-concert-tickets-dont-realise-theyre-buying-from-another-person/>

³ <https://news.virginmediao2.co.uk/latest-o2-and-yougov-data-nearly-three-quarters-of-concertgoers-want-to-see-rules-against-the-resale-of-tickets-for-profit/>



Part 3: tackling the incentives behind touting

2. What is the maximum uplift that you think should be applied if ticket resales were to be subject to a price cap? Please state the reason for your selection.

- no uplift at all
- **10% or less**
- between 10 and 20%
- between 20 and 30%
- other – please state

Virgin Media O2 strongly believes a 10% price cap should be the maximum amount any live event ticket can be resold for, as any allowable percentage higher than 10% would enable touts to continue their profitable venture, specifically in the context of bulk buying tickets and creating bots to buy out tickets from platforms as they are released from the primary seller. A 10% cap above what was originally paid, inclusive of primary fees, will demonstrate that the UK takes a clear stand on putting consumers first and ensures touting is no longer a viable, lucrative profession.⁴

For too long touts have flourished online, forcing fans to choose between missing out on their favourite artists or paying ludicrous resale prices. While consumers should retain the option to buy tickets from others who can no longer attend, a 10% price cap would protect consumers from being financially exploited while ensuring those who can no longer attend an event have a legitimate way to resell their ticket and avoid losing out on what they paid.

A 10% resale cap is a vital step to effectively discourage ticket touting and is a strategy that has already been adopted by some platforms therefore Virgin Media O2 strongly believes implementing this strategy would not impose any significant challenges for other platforms to introduce. In addition, a 10% cap would enhance consumer protection and provide a transparent and consistent approach to the ticket resale market, minimising confusion and frustration among fans looking to purchase tickets via secondary sites. After directly polling consumers in the O2 store at The O2, we found 91% of consumers believe there should be a cap of 10% or less applied on resale tickets.

An example of a 10% cap, inclusive of primary fees, like the existing legislation in France and Ireland⁵, would look like:

Primary ticket price	Primary platform fees	Total “face value” of the ticket (primary price+ fees)	Amount the original buyer can sell for / final amount paid by the secondary buyer (10%)	Amount the seller (original buyer) gets back	Fees made by the reselling platform
£45	£5	£50	£55	£50	£5

⁴ <https://www.musicweek.com/live/read/o2-s-qareth-griffiths-on-the-fight-for-fairer-ticketing-and-why-10-is-the-right-resale-price-cap/091369>

⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/71f1a-new-law-banning-ticket-touting-comes-into-force/>




3. Would the introduction of a price cap be likely to impact the service fees charged by resale platforms to both the buyer and the seller? If so, how?

- yes
- no
- other – please state

As referenced in the pricing table in response to question 2, Virgin Media O2 believes a 10% price cap on the amount that was originally paid for the ticket should be inclusive of primary fees, with the 10% cap payable to the resale platform. This approach ensures that the original buyer can recoup their money for an event they are no longer able to attend, while supporting the continued operation of ethical secondary ticketing platforms and removing financial incentives for ticket touts. Furthermore, a 10% cap on all live ticket resales will provide a fair and consistent approach for consumers, enabling clearer information of the original ticket value and clearer identification if the ticket is being sold by the primary or secondary seller at the point of sale.

4. What would be the main operational requirements that need to be in place for primary sellers and resale platforms, to ensure original ticket prices can be easily identified for the purposes of a resale price cap?

The primary operational requirement for resale platforms would be that the face value of a ticket purchased from a primary seller is verified before it can be listed for resale. If the platform is unable to verify the face value of the ticket, then it should not be allowed for resale. For example, Ticketmaster clearly displays a unique identifier symbol  when purchasing a ticket sold by another fan and has similar processes already in place to verify the ticket before it can be resold.⁶ Similarly, the primary seller must ensure that the face value is clearly displayed on the physical or e-ticket and online throughout the purchasing process. Practices like these are already in place for major primary ticketing platforms and ensures clearer transparency for consumers.

5. What challenges might exist for primary sellers and resale platforms with a resale price cap?

Several primary and resale platforms already have well-established reselling systems which allow consumers to resell tickets for events they can no longer attend, with caps already in place. For example, 'Twickets' and 'Ticketmaster' enable customers to resell their tickets inclusive of the primary booking fee up to the original face value and verify the ticket before it is listed for resale.^{7 8} Therefore, we do not believe there will be insurmountable challenges for other platforms to establish a similar approach.

6. If ticket resales were subject to a price cap, should the cap apply to all live events taking place in the UK? Please state the reason for your selection.

- yes
- no

Yes, a 10% ticket resale cap should be applied to all live events in the UK to maintain clearer information and a consistent approach that protects consumers and prevents touts from profiteering at the expense of fans. A consistent approach will help with consumer clarity around ticket resales and

⁶ <https://help.ticketmaster.de/hc/en-us/articles/26766093171473-How-do-I-know-if-an-offered-ticket-is-a-Resale-ticket>

⁷ <https://www.twickets.live/en/how-it-works>

⁸ <https://help.ticketmaster.co.uk/hc/en-us/articles/4402103802769-Why-are-some-resale-tickets-listed-at-a-higher-price>



ensure consumers know where their money is going. At our consultation station where we directly polled consumers from 1 - 3 April 2025, 84% confirmed they want to see the government apply price cap to all live events in the UK.

7. If a resale price cap did not apply to all live events, what criteria should be used to determine which events are in scope? You may select more than one option. Please state the reason for your selection.

- venues and events above a certain capacity threshold
- venue and event organisers 'opting-in' to being subject to a price cap
- other – please state
- not applicable

Not applicable, a 10% price cap should be implemented for all live events in the UK to guarantee fairness and consistency for consumers. Different approaches for different events will cause confusion, complexity and potential loopholes that could be exploited by touts.

8. If ticket resales were subject to a price cap, should resale above the price cap be permitted where tickets are resold for charitable purposes?

- yes
- no

Resale above the price cap should be permitted for charitable fundraising purposes, however, this exemption must be carefully monitored to prevent ticket touts from exploiting charitable sales to unfairly maintain their dominance in the ticket resale market. Furthermore, monitoring of this exemption is essential to avoid touts manipulating the system through making a de minimis charitable donation with each ticket sale and claiming all sales were for fundraising purposes. Tickets donated to charity organisations should not be resold, except when the resale is for the purpose of fundraising, and where 100% of proceeds are donated to legitimate charitable causes.

9. Aside from charitable purposes, are there any other circumstances where resale above the price cap should be permitted?

- yes – please state
- No

Beyond charitable purposes, Virgin Media O2 strongly disagrees that there should be any other circumstances in which resale above the cap should be permitted. A clear and consistent approach is essential to reduce the risk of touts exploiting loopholes and to improve consumer clarity.

10. What are the risks, unintended effects or practical problems associated with a price cap on ticket resales? How could these be addressed?

A potential unintended risk associated with a price cap could be the development of illegal resale channels. Touts will inevitably seek loopholes to shift their transactions to black markets, where tickets could be sold at even higher prices outside official platforms which could make it more difficult for consumers to find legitimate and ethical resale options. Virgin Media O2 believes this risk can be minimised with appropriate guardrails and penalties in place.



To combat the risk of illegal resale channels emerging, Virgin Media O2 recommends the government implements strict legislation that penalises unauthorised resellers, including substantial fines for those who are deemed to be professional ticket touts reselling tickets at scale above a 10% cap. Additionally, a corresponding public awareness campaign should be launched to help educate consumers on the new rules. The campaign should also include the risks of purchasing secondary tickets from black markets, such as counterfeit tickets and inflated prices, and should provide clear guidance on how to buy tickets safely and legally. This approach will help deter consumers from turning to unauthorised resale channels, incentivising a fair and secure resale experience while disincentivising industrial scale touting. To help drive further awareness amongst consumers, O2 has recently launched an online educational hub, “Stamp It Tout”, to provide consumers with facts and guidance on how to protect themselves from being ripped off and the risks associated with the current secondary ticketing market.⁹

Part 4: making resale platforms more accountable

11. Should resale platforms be prohibited from allowing sellers to list more tickets for an event than one individual is permitted to buy on the primary market? Please state the reason for your selection.

- yes
- no
- other

Yes, resale platforms should be prohibited from allowing sellers to list more tickets for an event than an individual is permitted to purchase on the primary market as it will help to prevent bulk buying by touts and bots. Over a six-week period in 2024, O2's Priority Tickets platform blocked over 50,000 suspected bots from accessing its platform.¹ This demonstrates how imperative it is for resale platforms to limit individuals so they can only sell tickets in line with the volumes permitted at primary purchase. Without this restriction in place, touts and bots can continue to exploit the system, taking tickets out of genuine fans' hands.

Limiting the number of tickets an individual can resell is an equally important measure alongside a price cap. A volume limit will ensure as many people as possible can access tickets directly from the primary market, rather than relying solely on secondary markets. It's essential that both a price cap and volume limit are implemented collectively. After directly polling consumers at the O2 store in The O2, we found that 77% are favourable of the number of tickets purchased by one individual being restricted.

12. What are the risks of introducing new limits on resale volumes? How could these risks be countered?

Limiting resale volumes at a platform level could reduce the overall number of tickets available for fans who can no longer attend or who missed out on the initial sale, but limiting the number of tickets an individual can resell, which is what Virgin Media O2 recommends, is important to combat touting. If ethical resellers are not allowed to sell their tickets, they would struggle to recoup their money, leading to frustration among consumers. To counter this, event organisers or resale platforms should implement a controlled, official resale platform where only genuine, unused tickets can be resold within the price cap. This ensures that fans who need to resell tickets still have a legitimate way to do

⁹ <https://news.virginmediao2.co.uk/lets-stamp-it-tout/>



so, without significantly reducing availability. Additionally, implementing a robust ID verification system for anyone reselling tickets is crucial to prevent touts from offloading multiple tickets. Major primary ticketing companies already have similar systems in place to combat these risks.

13. Should resale platforms be required by law to verify that the seller owns a ticket before it can be listed for resale on their website?

- **yes**
- no
- other – please state

Yes, resale platforms should be legally required to verify that a seller owns the ticket before it can be listed to prevent speculative trading and the sale of fraudulent tickets. While O2 Academy venues have a dedicated system in place to support fans who have unknowingly purchased fraudulent tickets, this does not prevent the upset, embarrassment and frustration experienced by fans who have been victims of ticket fraud. If a resale platform is not obligated to verify ticket ownership, it undermines transparency and fairness for consumers.

14. Should resale platforms be required by law to verify certain key information provided by a reseller about a ticket (for example, original price and location within the venue) before it can be listed for resale on their website?

- **yes**
- no
- other – please state

Yes, resale platforms should be legally required to verify certain key information, especially the face value of the ticket, to ensure that when the resale ticket is listed on the platform it complies with any price cap set in place, providing clarity and fairness for consumers. The verification process should include all relevant details associated with the ticket, such as the seat number and location, so consumers are informed about what they are buying, including any restrictions such as obstructed views. Verifying the face value and other essential details will help protect fans from fraud and speculative ticket trading. For instance, platforms such as Viagogo enable sellers to list tickets for resale on their platform before having the tickets¹⁰. Virgin Media O2 strongly believes that legislation should be implemented to stop this practice, protect ticket resale buyers, and to ensure transparency in the resale market.

15. What steps should ticket resale platforms take to ensure that tickets listed on their websites do not breach requirements under consumer law?

To comply with UK consumer law and ensure a fair marketplace, resale platforms should focus on transparency, fairness and consumer protection. They need to monitor pricing, verify ticket authenticity, provide clear and accessible terms, carry out an ID verification of the seller and ensure that consumers are fully informed about their rights. By taking these steps, resale platforms can minimise legal risks, build trust with consumers and provide a secure and fair environment for buying and reselling live event tickets.

¹⁰ <https://support.viagogo.com/articles/61000276294-resell-your-viagogo-tickets>



16. Should resale platforms be responsible for preventing resale of tickets when the primary seller has prohibited resale under their terms and conditions?

- yes
- no
- other – please state

Yes, resale platforms should be responsible for preventing the resale of tickets when the primary seller has prohibited resale, provided the T&Cs are clearly stated before the purchase of the ticket. If an appropriate cap of 10% is implemented, this matter is less likely to be a major area of concern as a price cap will counter financial incentives from the distributive and unfair practice of ticket touting.

17. Should consumers be able to obtain refunds for resold tickets purchased from professional traders through secondary ticket platforms? Please state the reason for your selection.

- yes
- no
- other – please state

Consumers should have the right to obtain refunds for tickets purchased from professional traders on secondary ticketing platforms *if* there is an issue with the ticket, such as it being invalid or fraudulent, or the event being cancelled. This would ensure consumers are protected in line with the Consumer Rights Act 2015¹¹ and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008¹², which allows buyers to seek refunds and be protected from unfair practices.

Part 5: enhancing enforcement

18. Should the government review the levels of penalties available for breaches of the Consumer Rights Act and if so, what factors should we consider in respect of these?

- yes – please state
- no

Yes, the government should review the penalties for breaches of the Consumer Rights Act in relation to ticket touting, as the current legislation is not strong enough to stop the touting industry from profiting at the expense of consumers. Specific rules should be introduced for ticket sellers who resell tickets in bulk, including fines for bulk purchasing with the intention of reselling for profit and a ban on speculative trading in the ticket market. Resellers should not be allowed to list tickets for sale unless the ticket and the seller have been verified. Our research with YouGov revealed that ticket touts are costing fans an additional £145m per year¹, highlighting the significant profit being made by touts at the expense of consumers.

Recently, The Standard reported that hundreds of fans were left stranded at a live event in Amsterdam after purchasing fake tickets from a dominant and disruptive secondary ticketing platform¹³. We regularly see consumers coming to The O2 or our O2 Academy venues for a show, only to find the tickets they have bought on a secondary ticketing website do not exist. It is often hard-working

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-rights-act-2015/consumer-rights-act-2015>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-protection-from-unfair-trading-regulations-traders>

¹³ <https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/teddy-swims-amsterdam-viaqogo-tickets-scam-b1213178.html>



families who have bought tickets for their children to shows who are left devastated because they are unable to get into a venue. O2 is calling for clear legislative changes to prevent such issues from arising in the UK. While the platform linked to The Standard's recent report has stated that "a full refund will take place"¹³, those who fell victim to this scam will have incurred additional costs, such as travel and accommodation expenses that they will be unable to recover.

19. Would a licensing system for resale platforms help to address issues on the secondary ticketing market? Please state the reason for your selection.

- yes
- no
- do not know

Virgin Media O2 does not have a definitive view on a licensing system as we believe a clearer, more ethical and consumer first marketplace can exist with or without one, however we do feel strongly that whatever system is put in place should ensure transparency, consumer protection, resale price cap control and accountability. It is imperative that the government regularly monitors ticket resellers for non-compliance with any new legislation.

20. Beyond demonstrating compliance with UK consumer law, should licensed platforms be subject to any further requirements? If so, what should these requirements be?

- yes – please state
- no

¹Both primary and secondary ticketing platforms should be subject to ensuring they provide:

- **Clearer information** during the sale process on ticket resale platforms, such as a pop-up notification which fully explains who the ticket is being bought from and the potential risks involved.¹
- **Clearer identification** of ticket resale platforms on search engines. Resale websites can currently buy their way to the top of search results, without having to mention their tickets are second-hand, leading to confusion for fans in understanding that their ticket is being sold at a price decided by a stranger on the internet.¹
- **Clearer transparency** of the face value of the ticket price set by the artist before it can be resold to a consumer. If the seller does not have a ticket, they should not be able to list it for resale.

21. What could be the potential unintended consequences of a licensing system?

Should the government decide implementing a licensing system is the most effective way forward, they should ensure that any system implemented is user-friendly, robust and cost-effective for operators. If the licensing system is overly complex or costly, it could jeopardise the existence of legitimate reselling platforms, undermining its purpose.



22. How might a licensing system interact with other proposals set out in this consultation, such as a resale price cap?

A licensing framework could monitor ticket values, implement robust ID verification processes and impose limits on the number of tickets an individual can resell for a single event. These measures would align with the terms and conditions set by the primary seller, helping to prevent fraudulent and unethical behaviours in the ticket resale market.

Part 6: promoting industry-led action to improve access for fans

23. How could participants in the primary market adapt their ticketing distribution approach to reduce the likelihood of tickets appearing on the secondary market at inflated prices?

To mitigate the risk of tickets being resold at inflated prices on secondary platforms, primary ticket platforms could impose limits on the number of tickets an individual is permitted to purchase for a single event. This approach would help deter touts and automated bots from buying tickets in bulk as soon as they go on sale, ensuring fairer access for genuine buyers. This is an approach already widely adopted by major primary ticketing platforms. For example, Ticketmaster implements ticket limits determined by the event organiser to prevent unfair purchasing practices. These limits are clearly displayed during the purchasing process and are enforced by ensuring tickets cannot be bought using duplicate details such as the same name, email address, billing address or credit card information.¹⁴

24. How could the live events sector better enforce ticket resale restrictions and harness technology to combat touts and enable more transparent, efficient and safer authorised resale for fans? What are the barriers and is there a role for government to facilitate this?

Major ticketing platforms already have advanced technology in place to facilitate transparent and ethical ticket resales, allowing fans who can no longer attend an event to recoup their money. To combat touts, secondary ticketing platforms should continue investing in technology that blocks bots, verifies ticket validity and ensures that the face value of a ticket is clearly displayed.

The government's role in understanding the importance of a 10% price cap, placing limits on individual ticket purchase volumes and ensuring better information for consumers when buying a resale ticket is crucial to reducing the financial incentives for touts. Without this cap and other measures, the secondary ticketing market will remain unfair and opaque for consumers, allowing touts to continue making millions of pounds at fans' expense. Furthermore, the government should seek to raise awareness among consumers about the risks of purchasing tickets from secondary markets dominated by touts and encourage the purchase of tickets from legitimate platforms that uphold ethical practices for both buyers and sellers.

25. How would measures set out in this consultation (notably a price cap) interact with incentives for primary sellers to enable more permissive resale and transferability of tickets for fans?

Virgin Media O2 does not have any reflections to share in response to this question.

26. What other factors should the primary market and the government consider to address issues identified with ticket resale?

Virgin Media O2 does not have any reflections to share in response to this question.

¹⁴ <https://help.ticketmaster.co.uk/hc/en-us/articles/360006439554-Why-is-there-a-ticket-limit>