

# CMA Warms Up For The New Era of UK Consumer Law Enforcement By Taking Action To Address Ticketmaster's Sales Tactics

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Just a few days before obtaining its new consumer law powers on 6 April 2025, the UK Competition and Markets Authority (**CMA**) has underlined its focus on this area by taking action in respect of its investigation into certain potentially misleading sales practices in the event ticketing sector.

On 25 March 2025, the CMA sent a consultation letter to Ticketmaster UK Ltd (Ticketmaster), a leading online ticketing platform in the UK, setting out its concerns over Ticketmaster's tactics during its sale of tickets for the Oasis Live '25 tour, an enormously popular event (the **Consultation Letter**).<sup>1</sup> The Consultation Letter seeks representations from Ticketmaster on some proposed changes to its sales practices to address the CMA's concerns.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-seeks-changes-to-the-way-ticketmaster-labels-tickets-and-provides-pricing-information-to-fans>

This is the latest (and possibly the last) significant consumer action by the CMA under its existing consumer protection powers. At present, the CMA can only bring enforcement action for breach of consumer laws through court proceedings, and cannot levy administrative fines on infringing businesses.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, from 6 April 2025, there will be a step change in the UK consumer protection regime as the CMA gain new powers under Part 3 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (the **DMCCA**). The CMA will not only be able to bring direct enforcement action, but in doing so may impose fines of up to 10% turnover on companies that infringe consumer laws.<sup>3</sup>

### **Background**

On 5 September 2024, the CMA opened an investigation into Ticketmaster's conduct and practices during the sale of Oasis' concert tickets.<sup>4</sup> This followed significant public disappointment over the unavailability and price of tickets for the hugely anticipated tour. The CMA stated at the time that it was investigating "*a variety of things*", including whether Ticketmaster had engaged in unfair commercial practices which were prohibited under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, namely whether: (i) concert-goers were notified of and provided with "*clear and timely information*" about the potential application of "*dynamic pricing*" (through which ticket prices could fluctuate based on demand); and (ii) consumers were put under pressure to buy tickets quickly and at a higher price than they had expected.

At the same time, the CMA launched a call for evidence from consumers who had tried to buy or had in fact bought tickets through Ticketmaster. The call for evidence was closed on 19 September 2024.

### **Consultation Letter**

The Consultation Letter is the latest step in the CMA's investigation. In its press release, the CMA describes its concerns regarding the following sales practices:

- **Misleading labels on seated tickets:** Ticketmaster may have labelled certain seated tickets as 'platinum' and sold them for nearly 2.5 times the price of equivalent standard tickets, whereas those 'platinum' tickets did not offer any additional benefits, and the seats were often located in the same area of the stadium as the equivalent standard tickets.
- **Omitting information on standing tickets:** Ticketmaster may not have informed consumers about the existence of two categories of standing tickets, which were sold at different prices. All of the cheaper

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<sup>2</sup> The CMA has the power to enforce consumer protection laws under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002. The main consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's concerns about misleading claims and other harmful online selling practices is the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

<sup>3</sup> For further information about the DMCCA and the provisions that have been enacted so far, see our client briefing "[Changes to the UK competition regime brought by the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 are now in force](#)".

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-launches-investigation-into-ticketmaster-over-oasis-concert-sales>

standing tickets were sold first before the more expensive ones were released. As a result, many fans may have waited in a lengthy queue without understanding how much they might have to pay and then having to decide on the spot whether to pay a higher price than they had expected. Although the CMA confirmed that it had not found evidence that Ticketmaster used an algorithmic pricing model during the Oasis tickets sale, it is concerned that consumers may not have been given clear and timely information about how the pricing of standing tickets would work, which may have impacted their decision-making.

The CMA's press release states that, although Ticketmaster has made changes to some aspects of its ticket sales process since the opening of the investigation, the CMA does not currently consider these changes sufficient to address its concerns.

The Consultation Letter (not itself published) sets out the details of the further steps that Ticketmaster is required to undertake to address the CMA's concerns, including changes it needs to make to its sales process. These requirements relate to the information to be provided to customers, when to provide that information, and how Ticketmaster should label some of its tickets.

## Comments

This is not the only CMA activity in the event ticketing space at the moment. On 24 March 2025 (just a day before the Ticketmaster announcement), the CMA published its response to the UK Government's consultation on the resale of live events tickets.<sup>5</sup> In the response, the CMA voiced its support for the Government's proposed resale price cap for secondary ticketing,<sup>6</sup> and set out a list of recommendations to the Government to ensure successful implementation of such a price cap. The recommendations include, amongst other things, a resale price cap to be applied to both resellers and secondary ticketing platforms, and a licensing regime for resale platforms that could ensure enforcement against non-compliance.

On the same day as the *Ticketmaster* announcement, Sarah Cardell (Chief Executive of the CMA) published a blog post detailing the CMA's current consumer protection projects that are aimed at ensuring consumers have access to clear and accurate pricing information.<sup>7</sup> The blog post mentions the CMA's investigation into Ticketmaster's sales practices and response to the Government's consultation on resale of live events tickets. It also mentions wider research by the CMA into the use of dynamic pricing across different sectors of the economy, and that the CMA is currently engaging with a number of businesses and consumer groups to understand the benefits and potential risks of such practices for consumers and competition. The findings of this research project are set to be published by the end of April 2025.

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<sup>5</sup> The response can be found [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> 'Secondary tickets' are tickets that are resold after the original sales, often (but not always) at prices that are different from the original prices.

<sup>7</sup> <https://competitionandmarkets.blog.gov.uk/2025/03/25/why-clear-and-accurate-pricing-matters-and-how-businesses-can-get-it-right/>

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