

# ASLEF announces new strike action

September 20, 2022



Train drivers who are members of ASLEF – the train drivers’ trade union which represents 96 per cent of the train drivers in England, Scotland, and Wales – will walk out at 12 train operating companies for two days of strike action on Saturday 1 and Wednesday 5 October in a dispute over pay.

ASLEF said it initially called a strike for 15 September but postponed that action as a mark of respect following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September.

The union said it also made no public announcement as a mark of respect for the monarch, until after the funeral on 19 September. However, it said that the government’s anti-union laws meant that it must give companies 14 days’ notice, so operators were informed on 16 September.

The operators affected are Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Railways, CrossCountry, Greater Anglia, Great Western Railway, Hull Trains, LNER, London Overground, Northern, Southeastern, TransPennine Express and West Midlands Trains.

It also claimed to have successfully negotiated pay deals with nine train operators this year, and said it was only in dispute with companies that have failed to offer their drivers anything. ASLEF said these drivers have not had an increase since 2019.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF general secretary, said: "We would much rather not be in this position. We don't want to go on strike – withdrawing your labour, although a fundamental human right, is always a last resort for this trade union – but the train companies have been determined to force our hand.

"They are telling train drivers to take a real term pay cut. With inflation now running at 12.3 per cent – and set, it is said, to go higher – these companies are saying that drivers should be prepared to work just as hard, for just as long, but for considerably less.

"The companies with whom we are in dispute have not offered us a penny. It is outrageous that they expect us to put up with a real term pay cut for a third year in a row. And that's why we are going on strike. To persuade the companies to be sensible, to do the right thing, and come and negotiate properly with us. Not to run up and say, "Our hands are tied and the government will not allow us to offer you an increase".

"Train drivers kept Britain moving – key workers and goods around the country – throughout the pandemic and we deserve to be treated better than this. That's why we are calling on the companies – which are making big profits and paying their chief executives' enormous salaries and bonuses – to make a pay offer to our members to keep up with the rise in the cost of living."

ASLEF said the companies where pay deals have been agreed are DB Cargo, Eurostar, Freightliner Heavy Haul, Freightliner Intermodal, GB Railfreight, Merseyrail, MTR Elizabeth Line, PRE Metro Operations and ScotRail. Multi-year deals are in place with other companies said ASLEF. The union has also received improved offers from Colas IM, Direct Rail Services and Transport for Wales which it is putting to its members.

A Rail Delivery Group spokesperson said: "These strikes will once again hugely inconvenience the very passengers the industry needs to support its recovery from the ongoing impact of the pandemic. They range from those left out of pocket because they can't get to work, to people missing vital appointments and to thousands of London marathon participants, who, after months of training, will have their journeys to London disrupted at the weekend.

"The strikes are not in the long-term interests of rail workers or building a sustainable rail industry. We want to give our people a pay rise, but without the reforms we are proposing, we simply cannot deliver pay increases. Revenue is still around 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, no business can survive that scale of upheaval without implementing change.

"The actions of union leaders have very real consequences: every strike day takes more money out of their members' pockets. We want to see the industry and its people thrive – we are asking the unions' leadership to do the right thing, call off these damaging strikes and work with us to make that happen."