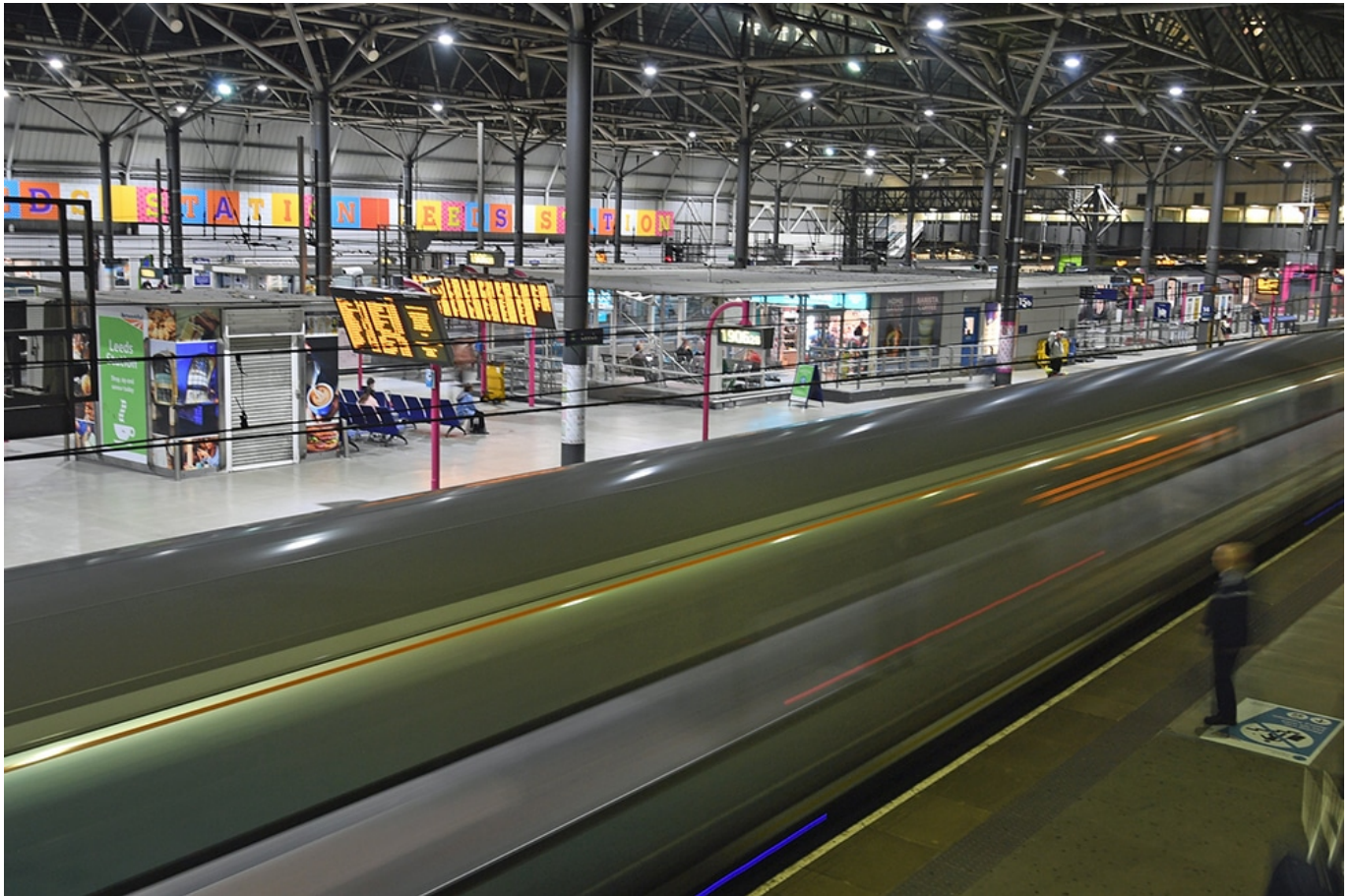


ASLEF announces strike action

November 16, 2023



Union ASLEF has announced a rolling programme of one-day strikes and a nine-day overtime ban over pay increases.

A statement from the union hopes that it will “ratchet up the pressure on the 16 train companies to give train drivers who have not had an increase in salary for four-and-a-half years the pay rise they deserve”

It comes after Transport Secretary Mark Harper told the Transport Select Committee on Wednesday that ASLEF should put the Rail Delivery Group’s (RDG) April offer to members. ASLEF says this has already been rejected so “is not on the table”.

Members will walk out at EMR and LNER on Saturday 2 December; at Avanti West Coast, Chiltern, Great Northern Thameslink, and WMT on Sunday 3 December; at C2C and Greater Anglia on Tuesday 5 December; at Southeastern, Southern/Gatwick Express, SWR main line, SWR depot drivers, and Island Line on Wednesday 6 December; at CrossCountry and GWR on Thursday 7 December; and at Northern and TPT on Friday 8 December.

All members will also refuse to work any overtime from Friday 1 to Saturday 9 December.

"We are determined to win this dispute," said Mick Whelan, ASLEF's General Secretary. "And get a significant pay rise for train drivers who have not had an increase since 2019 while the cost of living, in that time, has soared.

"Mr Harper, who has gone missing in action during this dispute, says we should put the offer to our members. What the minister apparently fails to understand is that, since the RDG's risible offer in April, we have received overwhelming mandates, on enormous turnouts, for more industrial action.

"Our members have spoken and we know what they think. Every time they vote – and they have voted overwhelmingly – for strike action in pursuit of a proper pay rise it is a clear rejection of the offer that was made in April.'

Mick added: "The RDG's offer – a land grab for all our terms and conditions – was made in the full knowledge that it couldn't – and wouldn't – be accepted.

"Our strikes have forced TOCs to cancel services and the ban on rest day working has seriously disrupted the network as none of the train companies employs enough drivers to provide a proper service – the service they have promised passengers and businesses they will deliver – without asking drivers to work their days off.

"We have successfully struck pay deals with 14 companies in the last 12 months. They include freight companies, open access operators, Eurostar, and passenger companies in Scotland and Wales where transport is devolved. But we have been unable to do a deal with the 16 TOCs in England controlled by the government."

Mick has described it "as a dispute in England made at Westminster by the Tory government".

The union adds: "We gave the TOCs a way out of this dispute which they chose not to accept. Because the government interfered. We suggested a significant across the board increase for all drivers, at all the companies involved, to deal with the cost-of-living crisis. Other matters, we said, could then be dealt with company by company. Because T&Cs are different at each company.

"Uncoupling the carriages, as it were, would have given the TOCs, and the government, a way out. And given us an opportunity to deal, at company council level, with any changes and productivity they want. Some TOCs have Sundays in the working week, some don't. One size does not – cannot and will not – fit all.

"We will continue to take industrial action until the train companies – and/or the government – sits down and negotiates with us in good faith," said Mick.

Responding to the news, a spokesperson for the Rail Delivery Group said: "This wholly unnecessary strike action called by the ASLEF leadership will sadly disrupt customers and businesses ahead of the vital festive period, while further damaging the railway at a time when it is losing £3,000 a day post COVID.

"The fair and affordable offer made by industry, which would take average driver base salaries for a 4-day

week from £60,000 to nearly £65,000, remains on the table. We urge the Aslef leadership to put it to its members, give Christmas back to our passengers, and end this damaging industrial dispute.”

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: “It is disappointing that ASLEF are targeting the public and hospitality businesses at the beginning of the festive period, when there is a fair and reasonable pay offer for train drivers on the table that would take their salary up to an average of £65,000 for a 35-hour, four-day week.

“Taxpayers contributed £1,000 per household to protect train drivers’ jobs during the pandemic. Instead of going on strike, ASLEF should be following in the footsteps of the other rail unions and giving their members a vote on this fair pay deal.”

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group