

# In The News | 29th August 2023 | Latest Rail News

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Network Rail has refused to pay bonuses to RMT members who participated in strikes earlier this year, according to a report from The Telegraph.

The Telegraph reported that up to 20,000 union members staged walkouts over a period of eight months. The dispute ended in March after they voted to accept a 9pc pay rise that would benefit lower-paid staff, in particular.

Now, Network Rail has confirmed that any employees who participated in the strikes will not receive bonuses.

Mick Lynch called the decision to exclude union members from the performance related pay (PRP) scheme “disgraceful”. Network Rail responded by stating that it had warned employees they would not receive bonuses if they took part in the strikes.

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Rail union TSSA has announced that it will protest ticket office closures at the Department for Transport (DfT) this week, alongside We Own It, Bring Back British Rail, and ASLEF.

The four organisations will hand over an open letter urging government to scrap its “disastrous” plans, which would see almost all ticket offices closed in English railway stations.

They claim that these closures will make thousands redundant and adversely affect older and disabled customers – adding that a public consultation has already received 460,000 responses.

Cat Hobbs, director of We Own It, stated that the plans “put the profits of private railway companies first”, while Peter Pendle, TSSA Interim (Joint) General Secretary, said that closures would affect everyone, “especially vulnerable passengers and those with disabilities and additional needs.”

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Network Rail has ordered a trial batch of EAF-steel rails as part of R&D work to assess the viability of ‘green’ track renewals.

According to Railway Gazette, the single trainload of R260 (60E2 profile) rails was manufactured by Saerstahl using an electric arc furnace, and will help the infrastructure manager to explore the technical differences between EAF and non-EAF steel.

Network Rail stated that it needs to establish a viable logistics chain for its long-welded rail depot in Eastleigh – adding that Saerstahl is currently the only supplier of European-made EAF steel.

The company remelts scrap metal using an electric arc furnace in France, before rolling the resultant high-quality steel bar into rail. It says that this process produces between 60 per cent and 90 per cent less CO2 than conventional manufacturing methods.

It has been awarded a one-off contract worth £826,098 by Network Rail, which will seek to place any future orders for EAF and non-EAF steel via competitive tenders.

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And finally, Great Western Railway has installed a ‘Wellbeing Piano’ at Worcester Parkway station.

Rail Advent reported that ‘Winnie Woo the Wellbeing Piano’ was unveiled during a recent community wellbeing day. It will become a permanent fixture at the station, with passengers invited to play it while they wait.

Winnie Woo is the second instrument of its kind to be installed by Great Western’s wellbeing team, who unveiled a piano at Reading station last year. The operator’s Community Fund has also awarded a grant of £3,800 to a ‘People’s Piano’ project at Plymouth station. John Roe, Railway Mission chaplain for the South West, became the first person to play Worcester Parkway’s new piano during the community event, which was held with Norton Juxta Primary School