

National strike by Hitachi Rail workers over pay

January 22, 2024



Railway journeys on Great North Eastern and Great Western railways could be disrupted from this week due to strike action by workers at Hitachi Rail, Unite the union has announced.

Over 300 Unite members and further members of the RMT who work as technicians, maintenance crews and engineers at Hitachi Rail Ltd were offered just a 5.5 or 6 per cent pay increase – a real-terms pay cut when inflation is taken into account.

Unite say workers are unhappy at such a low pay offer in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis when they perform highly skilled roles that are safety critical for the railway industry. Unite and RMT members ensure that the trains are fit for service and without their work, trains cannot run safely.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “Hitachi is making enormous profits in the UK and yet it is trying to short change our members with this real-terms pay cut.

“These workers are highly skilled and perform a safety critical role and yet are being chronically undervalued by their employer. Hitachi need to know our members won’t stand for such penny pinching as they head to the picket line.”

Hitachi Rail Limited made £104 million in profits according to its latest filings with Companies House and its highest-paid director earned nearly £1.4million [1]. The pay anniversary for the Hitachi workers was in April 2023 when RPI was 11.4 per cent.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: “Workers at Hitachi Rail do a range of highly skilled work ensuring that trains and infrastructure are all working properly. However, bosses at the multi-million pound company are undervaluing their own staff by being greedy and not offering a decent pay rise.

“This sustained action by Hitachi Rail workers will send a clear message to the company that we will not rest until we get a negotiated settlement on pay, that rewards our members sufficiently.”

Unite and RMT Hitachi Rail workers are at depots in Bristol, Plymouth, Penzance, Wiltshire, Swansea, London and Edinburgh. They will take part in strike action from 27 January 2024 until 1 February 2024.

Hitachi Rail spokesperson said: “We are disappointed at the trade unions’ decision to carry out industrial action.

“We believe the combination of last year’s pay increase, and this year’s pay proposal, is fair and highly competitive in the current economic environment.

“We will continue to work with the trade unions to find a solution.

“In the meantime, we are working with relevant operators to put in place contingency plans to mitigate the impact of industrial action.”

Photo credit: Unite