

“Our action will be reinstated” promises RMT leader as negotiations fall apart

November 21, 2022



Just when you think everyone is starting to sing from the same song sheet (a little festive good will, perhaps), the apple cart is upset again. And when that apple cart has the rail network balanced on top of it, it does make an awful mess.

A statement released by the RMT today announced that despite an apparent period of calm, where both parties (union and operators/Network rail) were planning to enter into negotiations, they had just received word from middleman, the Rail Delivery Group (who represent the TOCs), that a refusal has been made by both TOC and Network Rail to make any written proposals.

The RMT statement reads:

“The Rail Delivery Group, which represents the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), has today without any credible explanation refused to make their promised written proposals in the six-month dispute over jobs, terms and conditions and pay.

“Similarly, Network Rail has also refused to make any proposals promised at the conclusion of intensive

talks last week. RMT suspended strike action on the basis that they would make new proposals by November 17 and it has failed to table anything new.

“This will mean that despite having shown good faith in attending a fortnight of discussions with both halves of the industry, the union has no new proposals to consider or put to its members.

“RMT’s National Executive Committee will meet tomorrow morning (Tuesday 22nd November 2022) to consider the matter and it is highly likely that further phases of industrial action will be set down.”

A statement from RMT general secretary Mick Lynch followed. He said:

“After a fortnight of talks, the TOCs had committed to making a firm offer in writing for the first time today. They cancelled the meeting at an hour’s notice, and we can sense the hand of the Tory government in this as we believe that they are not allowing an offer to be made.

“This is on top of Network Rail failing to make a new proposal at the end of last week.

“Our members have shown their commitment to the dispute and to winning workplace justice in the re-ballot results last week and their union is equally determined to see this dispute through until we get a deal our members can support.

“Tomorrow morning our National Executive Committee will be meeting to consider this. We have been patient and have shown good faith which has not been returned.

“Therefore, I will be recommending that we set out further phases of sustained industrial action in support of our members.

“While we will remain available for meaningful negotiations it is now obvious that the other side is unwilling or unable to progress matters appropriately, so our action will be reinstated.”

Network Rail’s chief negotiator Tim Shoveller swiftly issued a statement in reply. He said: “No-one can deny the precarious financial hole in which the railway finds itself. Striking makes that hole bigger and the task of finding a resolution ever more difficult. Only through reform, that will not result in anyone losing their job, can savings be made that can then be converted into an improved offer.

“And while progress has been made over these last two weeks, we still have yet to find that breakthrough. We will not give-up and hope that the RMT will return to the table with a more realistic appreciation of the situation.”

Lynch’s parting words that “action will be reinstated” suggests that the stalemate, designed to give each party some breathing space and thrash out a reasonable conclusion hasn’t quite gone as planned.

With Aslef due to strike on Saturday, and public sector workers due to announce a nationwide strike which threatens to grind countless industries to a halt, it looks like the country is destined for further upheaval.