

RMT announce strike dates

April 28, 2023



Rail union, RMT will launch strike action across 14 train operators on May 13th after rejecting the latest offer from the Rail Delivery Group.

Following further discussions between the union and Rail Delivery Group (RDG), the employer issued a clarification on the offer RMT has been considering.

RMT says the RDG is now saying they would only implement the first-year payment of 5 per cent if the union terminated its industrial mandate meaning no further strike action could take place.

Stage 2 discussions which are part of the offer made by the employer would then have to begin without the union having any industrial leverage at the negotiating table.

In a statement RMT said: "Our NEC met earlier today to formally reject the proposal and as a result have named 24 hours strike action for Saturday 13 May.

"The union is currently re-balloting its members on the 14 train operating companies with a result expected May 4.

"If the union beats all the legal thresholds for turnout and achieves a "yes" vote, it will have a further 6-month strike mandate."

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "The RDG have reneged on their original proposals and torpedoed these negotiations.

"No doubt their decision is due to pressure exerted on them by the Tory government.

"Therefore, we have no alternative but to press ahead with more strike action and continue our campaign for a negotiated settlement on pay, conditions and job security.

"We are re-balloting our members and if we beat the draconian anti-trade union laws on turnout, we will have a renewed mandate for action.

"We will then put on a further programme of strike action to make the employers and the government who continue to hold the puppet strings, see sense in this dispute."

Steve Montgomery, Chair of the Rail Delivery Group said: "We are blindsided by the RMT executive's announcement – nothing has changed in the offer agreed two weeks ago by the RMT leadership in the negotiating room.

"The RMT are negotiating in bad faith, again denying their members a say on a fair pay deal, needlessly disrupting the lives of millions of our passengers, and undermining the viability of an industry critical to Britain's economy."

Transport Secretary Mark Harper said: "Passengers have been forced to endure the RMT's strike action for almost a year, yet the RMT executive is intent on continuing to force its members to lose even more pay. That's despite having a best and final offer, similar to the pay offer their Network Rail members recently voted to overwhelmingly accept.

"By yet again denying their members a chance to have a say, and then striking over the UK's first Eurovision event in 25 years – hosted for Ukraine – the RMT are simply further snubbing the very passengers they serve."

Also announced yesterday, ASLEF, the train drivers' union, has rejected a 'risible' pay offer from the 16 train companies with whom we are in dispute – our drivers not having had an increase in salary at these companies since 2019.

"Our executive committee met on Thursday and rejected a risible proposal we received from the RDG, a pressure group which represents some of the train companies, and lobbies on their behalf, late on Wednesday afternoon," said Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary.

"The proposal – of just 4 per cent – was clearly not designed to be accepted as inflation is still running north of 10 per cent and our members at these companies have not had an increase for four years.

'The RDG, in turn, rejected our proposals to modernise Britain's railways and help them run more efficiently, for passengers and for businesses, in the 21st century.

"Consequently, we have today announced three more days of strike action – on Friday 12 May, Wednesday 31 May, and Saturday 3 June – at the companies with which we are in dispute, and which are letting down passengers, and taxpayers, so badly.

"We are also withdrawing non-contractual overtime from Monday 15 to Saturday 20 May inclusive, as well as on Saturday 13 May and Thursday 1 June."

The 16 train operating companies include: Avanti West Coast; Chiltern Railways; CrossCountry; East Midlands Railway; Great Western Railway; Greater Anglia; GTR Great Northern Thameslink; London North Eastern Railway; Northern Trains; Southeastern; Southern/Gatwick Express; South Western Railway depot drivers; SWR Island Line; TransPennine Express; and West Midlands Trains.

A statement from ASLEF said: "Our negotiating team – general secretary Mick Whelan, assistant general secretary Simon Weller, and executive committee president Dave Calfe – has met representatives of the employers, under the framework of the Rail Industry Recovery Group, on eight occasions to try to find a resolution to this long-running dispute: Tuesday 7 February; Thursday 16 February; Tuesday 21 February; Thursday 2 March; Tuesday 21 March; Tuesday 4 April; Thursday 13 April; and Wednesday 26 April.

"The talks, at national level, were to try to resolve a dispute which began a year ago – we first balloted members for industrial action in June last year – to get a pay rise for drivers who have not had an increase since 2019. Although pay deals fall due at different times, and the pandemic, and lockdown, forced a delay in negotiations, six of those deals fell due in April 2019."

Mick explained: "We have been discussing specific issues for a national resolution and arrangements – and principles – for additional, and separate, bespoke TOC by TOC talks.

"We do not want to go on strike – we do not want to inconvenience passengers, we have families and friends who use the railway, too, and we believe in investing in rail for the future of this country – but the blame for this action lies, fairly and squarely, at the feet of the employers who have forced our hand over this by their intransigence.

"It is now up to them to come up with a more sensible, and realistic, offer and we ask the government not to hinder this process."

A Rail Delivery Group spokesperson said: "This is disappointing news for our customers and staff, more strike action is totally unnecessary and will only heap more pressure on an industry already facing an acute financial crisis. Senselessly targeting both the final of Eurovision and the FA cup final is disappointing for all those planning to attend.

"After many weeks of negotiations with the ASLEF leadership today, we made a revised and fair offer including a pay rise of 8% over two years. It would have introduced overdue, common-sense improvements already in place in parts of the network, which would will see more trains running on time

for passengers. Sadly, this has been rejected.

“We urge the ASLEF leadership to re-join us at the negotiating table and work with us to find a solution to the issues our industry faces and so we can give our people the pay rise we have always said we wanted to do.”