

RMT ballot for potentially “biggest” strike in UK rail history has begun

April 26, 2022



Over 40,000 rail workers are today being asked to vote on what the rail union RMT describes as being “potentially the biggest rail strike in modern history.”

On launching the ballot, the RMT drew attention to two issues: it said it believes Network Rail intends to cut at least 2,500 safety critical maintenance jobs as part of a £2bn reduction in spending on the network. Moreover, it says train operating company staff have faced pay freezes as well as changes to their contract terms and conditions.

The ballot starts today and then closes on May 24. Were enough members to vote for the motion, then RMT says that a major national strike could happen as soon as June.

Network Rail says it had not tabled any proposals or published formal consultation papers yet. A spokesperson said the infrastructure owner was discussing ideas and looking to work with the unions, not against them.

It added it would never consider any changes that would make the railway less safe

Tim Shoveller, Network Rail’s regional director, said: “Our railway has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, and even as passenger numbers start to recover, we know travel habits and passenger demand have changed and the industry has to change too. We cannot keep relying on Government handouts, and so we must work together with train operators and our trades unions to save millions of pounds and deliver a more efficient railway.

“Our modernisation programme aims to build a sustainable future that delivers for passengers and creates better and safer jobs for our people. We would not consider any changes that would make the railway less safe. We are disappointed that the RMT has taken this decision and urge them again to work with us, not against us, as we build an affordable railway fit for the future.”