

RMT rejects latest pay offer from Network Rail and TOCs

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Rail union RMT has rejected the latest offers from both Network Rail and the train operating companies, saying they don't meet members expectations on pay, job security or working conditions.

Transport secretary Mark Harper has reacted by saying the rejection of "these best and final offers is a kick in the teeth for passengers across the country and the RMT's own members, who having been ordered to take strike action are now being blocked from having a say on their own future."

The RMT says the rejection follows "a wide ranging and in-depth consultation with every level of the union involved in the national rail dispute".

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "We have carried out an in-depth consultation of our 40,000 members and the message we have received loud and clear is to reject these dreadful offers.

"Our members cannot accept the ripping up of their terms and conditions or to have safety standards on the railway put into jeopardy under the guise of so-called modernisation.

“If our union did accept these offers, we would see a severe reduction in scheduled maintenance tasks, making the railways less safe, the closure of all ticket offices and thousands of jobs stripped out of the industry when the railways need more investment not less.

“We have carried out an extensive listening exercise and our members have spoken.

“It is now time for the employers and the government to listen to railway workers in their tens of thousands.

“Our industrial campaign will continue for as long as it takes to get a negotiated settlement that meets our members reasonable expectations on jobs, pay and working conditions.”

The transport secretary said: “The RMT’s rejection of these best and final offers is a kick in the teeth for passengers across the country and the RMT’s own members, who having been ordered to take strike action are now being blocked from having a say on their own future. The RMT’s leaders should have had the courage to allow their own members to have the chance to vote on their own pay and conditions, rather than making that decision for them behind closed doors.

“It is time for those union leaders to face the reality – our railways are currently not financially sustainable, reform is essential. I have played my part. I met union leaders. The Rail Minister and I facilitated regular meetings between all parties. We guaranteed fair and reasonable offers on pay and reform. It is now clear that no realistic offer is ever going to be good enough for the RMT leadership.”

A Rail Delivery Group spokesperson said: “Our passengers and many hard-working RMT members will be deeply dismayed that the union leadership has opted to reject our fair proposals without putting out a vote to their full membership in a democratic referendum.

“Having listened to the union’s concerns during recent negotiations, we went back to the table with substantial changes to give colleagues a minimum pay increase of at least 9% over two years – rising to over 13% for the lowest paid – which they will now miss out on without even having had an opportunity to have their say. We removed driver only operation and gave an improved job security offer.

“This decision will hit colleagues in their pockets and does not negate the need to make the vital changes needed to secure the railway’s sustainable future, at a time when taxpayers are still paying up to £175m a month to make up the shortfall in revenue post covid.

“The railway’s financial crisis is not going away. We remain willing to engage, but the RMT leadership must now accept the urgent need to make the railway fit for the future for both our people, and the communities the railway serves.”

TSSA members to vote on revised offers

Meanwhile on Friday the TSSA union announced that members are to be given a vote on offers from the train companies in the long-running national dispute over pay, job security and conditions.

The union, which has been at the heart of industrial action on the railways since last summer, has received two formal offers in relation to all members employed by the train companies in the dispute.

For the first time these offers cover management and control staff, as well as stations and other grades within the rail industry. TSSA Reps across the country were consulted in an online ballot and voted overwhelmingly in favour of putting the offers out to members.

Of those who voted there was also agreement that there should be no formal recommendation from the union on whether to accept or reject the offers.

The timetable for the ballot will be decided in due course.

The offers come after several rounds of talks with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) on behalf of the train operating companies and include –

An improved pay deal over two years, commitments for no compulsory redundancies until the end of 2024, improved opportunities for redeployment, as well as full consultation over proposed reforms to ticket offices and any changes to terms and conditions.

In December last year the RDG made an offer which failed to include Managers or Controllers at train companies. The new offers include all members in the scope of the dispute and affords redundancy protection for Control and Revenue staff.

The train companies involved in the scope of the new offer are – Avanti West Coast, C2C, Chiltern Railways, Cross Country, East Midlands Railway, Govia Thameslink Railway, Greater Anglia, Great Western Railway, London North Eastern Railway, Northern Trains Limited, South Eastern Railway, South Western Railway, Trans Pennine Express, West Midlands Trains.

A TSSA spokesperson said: “Members involved in this long-running dispute will now have the chance to vote on whether what the train companies have come up with is enough to address their demands.

“We have fought for months on pay, job security and conditions in the face of a cost of living crisis and intransigence from government ministers.

“What is on the table now is a result of careful negotiations and the commitment of our members in their determination to demonstrate our collective industrial strength.

“Though the offers represent progress on a number of fronts we will continue to ballot for further industrial action as the dispute remains live.”

The offer on pay to TSSA from the train companies is a two year pay deal covering 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 which provides for a 5 per cent increase or a minimum increase of £1,750 whichever is the greater in year 1 and a further 4 per cent increase in year 2.

*No compulsory redundancies of employees within the grades directly affected by the Workforce Changes

(see below) from the date of the agreement until 31st December 2024.

The grades directly affected by the workforce changes are: – All station-based grades, all on board grades including catering and train-crew, all administration grades, all Fleet & Engineering grades. All Revenue Protection and Train Service Controller grades will be regarded as in scope for the purposes of the no compulsory redundancies commitment.

*Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (VRS) – offering the terms set out under the RIRG Enabling Framework Agreement in 2021, to allow affected employees the opportunity to leave the industry should they wish to apply to do so.

A Rail Delivery Group spokesperson said: “It is encouraging that TSSA members will now have their say on our proposals. We hope that our TSSA colleagues will deliberate carefully, vote for the deal and end this dispute.

“We listened to the union’s concerns in response to our initial offer and we have addressed them – including increasing our offer on pay. If they vote yes, TSSA members’ pay will increase by at least 9% over two years – rising to 13% for the lowest paid.

“Having negotiated at length with the TSSA to agree this best and final offer, we hope that our colleagues look carefully at what is on the table and work with us to bring an end to this dispute. We can then work together to secure a thriving long-term future for a railway we can all be proud of.”

Photo credit: Network Rail