

RMT strike affects services across the UK as ASLEF adds another date to action

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RMT strikes got underway on Wednesday morning with about 40,000 people involved in industrial action at sites across the UK.

And by the end of the day, ASLEF, the drivers' union, had added two more strike dates to its own action in August.

A day of industrial action

Prominent figures joining staff on RMT picket lines included political figures Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.

Newsstands included an interview between RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch and the Daily Mirror, in which the union leader took aim at PM hopefuls Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, under the headline "It's a Tory war on workers.. we must fight".

He said both were pledging to discourage industrial action through legislature: "We are at a real

crossroads, with these anti-union proposals coming on the back of the misery caused by the cost of living crisis.

“It’s time for workers across the economy, whether you’re a member of a union or not, to take a stand, take action, before it’s too late.”

Meanwhile, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Today, union bosses are once again trying to cause as much disruption as possible to the day-to-day lives of millions of hardworking people around the country. What’s more, it has been cynically timed to disrupt the start of the Commonwealth Games and crucial Euro 2022 semi-finals, in a deliberate bid to impact the travel of thousands trying to attend events the whole country is looking forward to.

“Sadly, this is nothing new. In fact, in my three years as Transport Secretary, there has not been a single day when unions have not been in dispute with the rail industry by either threatening or taking industrial action with around 60 separate disputes lodged in 2022 alone.

“This country’s taxpayers stumped up £600 per household to ensure not a single rail worker lost their job during the pandemic, but many of those very same people will be forced into losing a day’s wages through no fault of their own but because of stubborn union leaders’ refusals to modernise.

“Union bosses will claim they’re willing to do a deal but how can anyone take them seriously when, earlier this month, the RMT dismissed a Network Rail offer worth 8% over the next 2 years without even consulting their members.

“Unfortunately, it’s too late to call off today’s damaging strikes but I urge the RMT and indeed all unions to stop holding the country to ransom with the threat of further industrial action and get off picket lines and back around the negotiating table. If not, we risk passengers turning their backs on the railway for good.”

ASLEF adds another strike date

ASLEF has announced a one-day strike at nine train companies on Saturday 13 August, after it claims operators failed to make a pay offer to help members keep pace with the increasing cost of living.

Drivers are already set to strike this Saturday at seven companies and today ASLEF members at two more train companies voted overwhelmingly for industrial action in a dispute over pay.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of ASLEF, said: “With inflation running at north of 10% that means those drivers have had a real terms pay cut over the last three years. We want an increase in line with the cost of living – we want to be able to buy, in 2022, what we could buy in 2021.

“It’s not unreasonable to ask your employer to make sure you’re not worse off for three years in a row.”

A Rail Delivery Group spokesperson, said: “The action announced by the ASLEF leadership shows a cynical approach to talks, a total disregard for passengers and is putting everyone’s summer plans at risk. This action will bring the total number of strike days on the railway to ten, disrupting plans in June, July and

August.

“Like any public service we have to change with the times, and it’s only by making necessary reforms that we can give our people a pay rise.

“Now is not the time for further strikes, so we urge the ASLEF leadership to resume talks to reach a deal that is fair to staff and taxpayers, and which secures a better, safer, and more affordable railway.”