

# RMT votes for strike across Network Rail and train operators

May 24, 2022



RMT has voted in favour of a strike across Network Rail and the train operating companies.

The numbers were significant: 89% of those who took part in the vote did so in favour of strike action.

Of those balloted, 71% took part in the vote.

It would be the first time since 1994 that Network Rail workers have taken part in a national strike.

The union says it will now be demanding urgent talks with Network Rail and the 15 train operating companies that were balloted to find a negotiated settlement to what it says is a dispute over pay, jobs and safety.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "Today's overwhelming endorsement by railway workers is a vindication of the union's approach and sends a clear message that members want a decent pay rise, job security and no compulsory redundancies."

“Our NEC will now meet to discuss a timetable for strike action from mid-June, but we sincerely hope ministers will encourage the employers to return to the negotiating table and hammer out a reasonable settlement with the RMT.”

Responding to the RMT’s announcement that its members have voted in favour of industrial action, Andrew Haines, Network Rail’s chief executive, said: “The RMT has jumped the gun here as everyone loses if there’s a strike. We know our people are concerned about job security and pay. As a public body we have been working on offering a pay increase that taxpayers can afford, and we continue to discuss this with our trades unions. We urge the RMT to sit down with us and continue to talk, not walk, so that we can find a compromise and avoid damaging industrial action.

“We are at a key point in the railway’s recovery from the pandemic. The taxpayer has provided the industry with £16 billion worth of additional life support over the last two years and that cannot continue. Travel habits have changed forever and the railway has to change as well to adapt to this new reality. We believe that by modernising – creating safer jobs for our people and operating the railway more efficiently – we can build a sustainable future with a railway that delivers for passengers and taxpayers.

“Any industrial action now would be disastrous for our industry’s recovery and would hugely impact vital supply and freight chains. It would also serve to undermine our collective ability to afford the pay increases we want to make.”

The following companies have voted for strike action or action short of a strike:

- Network Rail
- Chiltern Railways,
- Cross Country Trains,
- Greater Anglia,
- LNER,
- East Midlands Railway,
- c2c,
- Great Western Railway,
- Northern Trains,
- South Eastern
- South Western Railway
- Transpennine Express,
- Avanti West Coast,
- West Midlands Trains

GTR (including Gatwick Express) voted for action short of a strike.

## Rail delivery group response

Commenting on the ballot announcement, Rail Delivery Group Chair, Steve Montgomery said: “Our railways must adapt to attract more passengers back and reduce our running costs. It is not fair to ask

taxpayers to continue to shoulder the burden when there are other vital services that need public support.

“Nobody wins when industrial action threatens to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of passengers and businesses and puts the industry’s recovery at risk. We urge the RMT leadership to behave responsibly, and to talk to us to find a way to avoid damaging industrial action and secure the long-term future of the industry.”

On pay, RDG Chair Steve Montgomery said: “Every business wants to support its staff and the railway is no exception. All train operators want to offer their staff a pay rise and are working hard to make that happen. But, as an industry, we have to change our ways of working and improve productivity to help pay our own way – the alternatives of asking taxpayers to shoulder the burden after government has contributed over £16bn to the industry during covid or asking passengers to pay even higher fares when they too are feeling the pinch, simply isn’t fair.” The ending of franchising and a move to a new contracting approach by the Government gives a unique opportunity to build a simpler, better railway that supports the country’s economic recovery and drives growth and prosperity in every part of Great Britain. Prolonged industrial action would put the economic recovery at risk.