

Tyne and Wear braced for Metro disruption as Stadler Rail engineers vote to strike

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More than 50 Tyne and Wear Metro engineers are set to strike after their employer Stadler Rail Service Ltd offered 4% pay rise.

A one-off payment of £1,000 is also being offered to workers, but the unions say that basic pay has to rise beyond the 4% that is on the table. With the real rate of inflation, RPI, at 12.3 per cent and expected to rise, their union Unite says that this is a real terms pay cut.

The company reported profits of £119 million in 2021 as well as record figures for order in-take, order backlog and earnings before interest and tax (EBIT).

Strike dates are yet to be announced but an overtime ban will commence from Friday 14 October. As maintenance schedules are reliant on staff working overtime, the ban is expected to impact services on the Metro, which is the UK's busiest light rail system outside of London.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Stadler wants its Tyne and Wear engineers to take a pay cut as prices rocket, while it continues to rake in huge profits. This is not acceptable to Unite.

“Stadler brings in enormous profits every year, so there is no reason why it should not give its Metro workers a fair piece of the pie. Our members have Unite’s full backing in their fight for a fair pay rise.”

In October 2020, Stadler won the £300 million contract to build 42 new Metro trains, rebuild the Gosforth depot and maintain the Nexus Tyne and Wear train stock for 35 years.

Unite regional coordinating officer Suzanne Reid said: “Our members are working harder and harder but their wages are worth less and less. The sheer number of extra hours worked to keep on top of the Metro maintenance means the overtime ban will cause disruption.

“But this is entirely the fault of Stadler, which can well afford to put forward a reasonable pay rise but is refusing to do so. The company must table an offer our members can accept.”