

Avanti West Coast handed millions of pounds of taxpayer-funded bonuses – Labour

Avanti West Coast was handed millions of pounds of taxpayer-funded bonuses for a period in which it was Britain's worst train operator for delays, [Labour Party](#) analysis shows.

Shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh called the payments a “scandalous waste of taxpayers’ money” and a “symptom of a broken rail system”.


Labour analysis of [Department for Transport](#) (DfT) figures published on Thursday found Avanti West Coast was awarded the highest possible rating for “operational performance” and “customer satisfaction” between April 1 and September 18 last year.

That contributed to a bonus payout of £4.1 million.

This is despite [Office of Rail and Road](#) (ORR) figures showing just 60.1% of stops at stations by Avanti West Coast trains were within a minute of the schedule between April and June 2021 – the worst figure for all operators.

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Separate [ORR](#) data also revealed that the company had a higher rate of complaints per passenger than every operator except Caledonian Sleeper during that period.

Ms Haigh said: “Ministers have rewarded abject failure, handing over millions of pounds in performance bonuses and fees to this failing operator.

“Rather than hold operators to account for shambolic performance, ministers are doling out taxpayer-funded bonuses.

“This is a symptom of a broken rail system where passengers come last.

“The next Labour Government will bring our railways back into public ownership as contracts expire, ending the Tories’ failing system, and putting passengers back at the heart of our rail network.”

Ministers came under fire last month for renewing Avanti West Coast’s contract despite it slashing services in August to reduce short-notice cancellations.

A new timetable introduced earlier this month featured a 40% uplift in services, according to the company, which is a joint venture between FirstGroup (70%) and Italian state operator Trenitalia (30%).

A [DfT](#) spokesperson said: “This performance fee is based on data from before the current period of disruption. Avanti need to improve services on their network to ensure passengers can get the reliable, timely service that they deserve.

“We have put Avanti on a short term, six-month contract, as they roll out vital improvements and service upgrades and

continue to monitor the situation closely.”