

Hospitality firms 'hugely concerned' for New Year's trade after disruption

Hospitality leaders say venues could see weaker trade over the key New Year period after sales were knocked by strike action.

But there are signs for optimism amid more bookings and strong demand over the festive period for other areas of the sector.

The Night Time Industries Association, which has more than 1,400 members including night clubs, bars and casinos, said although industrial action is not taking place across the transport network on New Year's [Eve](#), there are fears strikes on other days will have a knock-on effect.

Michael Kill, chief executive officer of the trade organisation, told the PA news agency: "Industrial action and cost inflation pressures have decimated trade across the night time economy, with many hugely concerned that New Year's Eve and New Year's Day will be further impacted by strikes."

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Members of the RMT union took part in strike action on December 26 and will launch further action from January 3.

Meanwhile, members of the [TSSA](#) at [Great Western Railway](#) and West Midlands Trains took part in strikes on Wednesday and Thursday.

Mr Kill added: “The industry has lost an estimated £2 billion in trade, many losing up to 50% of trade during the critical festive operating period which they were relying heavily on to see them through the early 2023.

“The Government’s postponed announcement on the energy relief extension has left many facing further uncertainty and once again the inability to plan.

“We will without doubt now see a huge swathe of businesses and jobs lost in January due to the Government’s inaction.”

Fellow trade body [UKHospitality](#) warned earlier this week bookings for New Year’s Eve appeared “soft” but said the sector remains positive.

The hospitality sector remains positive and we encourage people to go out and celebrate at their local hospitality business

Chief executive Kate Nicholls said: “[Pubs](#), restaurants and nightclubs are always perfect places to ring in the new year and bring friends and loved ones together and this year is no different.

“Despite recent trading disruptions and challenges like the rail strikes and rising cost of living, many venues across the country have put in a large amount of time, effort and resource into planning new year festivities to accommodate

guest bookings during one of the busiest times of the year.

“The hospitality sector remains positive and we encourage people to go out and celebrate at their local hospitality business.”

Latest data from OpenTable points to a positive Christmas period so far – despite strike action by rail workers and pressure on consumer budgets.

It said bookings for the fortnight to December 27 were up by 35% from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

This was particularly strong over the latest week, with bookings up 57% on average compared with three years ago.