

Passengers face more and more disruption without settlement, rail union warns

Rail passengers will face more and more disruption unless a settlement is reached in the long running dispute over jobs, pay and conditions, a union chief has warned.

More than 40,000 members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union across [Network Rail](#) and 14 train operating companies will strike on December 13, 14, 16 and 17 and on January 3, 4, 6 and 7.

There will also be an overtime ban across the railways from December 18 until January 2, meaning [RMT](#) members be taking industrial action for four weeks.

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach said members are “desperate” and have been left with no option but to take industrial action.

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He said he hopes UK Transport Secretary Mark Harper “puts his

shoulder behind the wheel and gets a deal moving” when he meets with RMT general secretary [Mick Lynch](#) on Thursday.

Mr Leach told BBC Radio Scotland’s Good Morning Scotland programme: “Let’s hope that the third secretary of state down in England in less than six months has got something better to say than [Grant Shapps](#) and [Anne-Marie Trevelyan](#) before him and actually puts his shoulder behind the wheel and gets a deal moving.

“There’s a deal that can be done here, we’re professional negotiators, our members just want a pay rise, they haven’t had one for two or three years and this will be nearly the fourth coming up.

“They’ve just got to commit themselves to fairness for our members, but if they don’t then we’re going to see more and more disruption like this and we are determined to see this through for our members.”

Asked how long strikes could go on for, he said: “We will do what we need to do and take this forward.”

ScotRail bosses have warned strikes set to start next month are likely to have a severe impact on the network.

It said that while the dispute does not involve ScotRail staff, it will have hit its ability to provide services as the RMT action will involve Network Rail staff in Scotland.

Mr Leach highlighted the union has avoided strike action over the Christmas week, and added: “We’re desperate, we’ve been waiting years for a pay rise and we’ve got thousands of redundancies coming our way.

“We have avoided the actual Christmas week deliberately because we’re citizens as well, we’ve got families, we’re going to celebrate Christmas just like everyone else.

“We get it, but we are left with nothing else left to do, we’re not going to beg for a pay rise, we’re not going to plead on our knees, we’re going to do what any union should do which is stand up and fight in a proper and civil way using industrial action as a last resort.”

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Tim Shoveller, Network Rail’s chief negotiator, said on Thursday: “No-one can deny the precarious financial hole in which the railway finds itself. Striking makes that hole bigger and the task of finding a resolution ever more difficult.

“Only through reform, that will not result in anyone losing their job, can savings be made that can then be converted into an improved offer.

“While progress has been made over these last two weeks, we still have yet to find that breakthrough.

“We will not give up and hope that the RMT will return to the table with a more realistic appreciation of the situation.”

The Rail Delivery Group urged the RMT to stay at the negotiating table and work towards a fair deal.