

Rail passengers hit by disruption on last weekend before Christmas

Train passengers are facing major disruption on the last weekend before Christmas as rail workers continue their 48 hour walkout.

[ScotRail](#) is running only 12 services in the central belt, Fife, and the Borders after Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members at [Network Rail](#) walked out on Friday, following two days of strike action earlier in the week.

Talks between the leader of the [RMT](#), train company employers and Rail Minister [Huw Merriman](#) on Thursday failed to make a breakthrough leaving a bitter dispute over pay, jobs and conditions deadlocked.

ScotRail is running services on 12 routes between 7.30am and 6.30pm on Saturday.

The dispute does not involve ScotRail staff, but is having a major impact on the train operator's ability to provide services as the RMT industrial action involves Network Rail staff in Scotland.

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David Simpson, ScotRail service delivery director, said: "We're advising customers to seek alternative means of transport and to only travel if they really need to on the days of strike action.

"Customers should check their journey in advance to make sure your train is running."

RMT general secretary [Mick Lynch](#) says the union continues to receive strong support from the public.

He said: "It's better we are talking than not, so the rail minister convened a meeting on Thursday with the RMT representatives along Network Rail and the train operators.

"We exchanged some ideas and some possibilities, there was no negotiations at that, nothing arising tangible out of that.

"But what he did, having heard that as the facilitator, as they describe themselves, and the people that ultimately own the purse strings, is he invited us and requested that we get together and hold further talks going forward and we'll do that in the next period if the companies want to get engaged in it."

Andrew Haines, Network Rail chief executive, said the RMT has "deliberately chosen to try and ruin Christmas for millions of passengers and businesses".

He said: "In talks over the months we have sought to address all the RMT's concerns by putting a decent pay rise on the table, guaranteeing a job for anyone that wants one, significantly raising base salaries for the lowest paid and offering a new, huge rail travel discount scheme for members

and their families. By any reasonable measure, we have put a fair deal on the table.”

Mr Haines said that the industry will do all it can to keep services running and projects on track but warned that serious disruption is inevitable given the RMT’s action.