

Supply chain 'will be severely disrupted' by Felixstowe port strike, union warns

A union official says "the supply chain will be severely disrupted" by an eight-day strike at the UK's biggest container port.

[Unite](#) national officer Robert Morton also warned there "will be more strikes" if his members' pay demands are not met, as some 1,900 members of Unite at [Felixstowe](#), [Suffolk](#), are expected to walk out in a dispute over pay in the first strike to hit the port since 1989.

On Monday, the second day of industrial action at the port, Mr Morton said Unite wants an improved pay offer in line with at "least the rate of inflation", suggesting a figure between "7% and 12.3%" would be acceptable.

Paul Davey, head of corporate affairs at the [Port of Felixstowe](#), stressed there is a "7% plus £500" offer on the table, and has urged Unite to let its members vote on it.

Shipping containers at the Port of Felixstowe in Suffolk (Joe Giddens/PA) / PA Wire

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Mr Morton told Sky News: "The supply chain will be severely disrupted, I accept that. That's one of the unfortunate parts of things like this.

"It could be over this afternoon if the employer agreed to meet us for real-time negotiations.

"The last message they gave to us is that 'yes, we will meet you, but no, we will not move our position one inch'.

"That's the wrong approach."

Members of the Unite union are backing industrial action by 9-1 in a dispute over pay (Joe Giddens/PA) / PA Wire

He acknowledged that the union has not put the employer's offer to its members, but added: "At the beginning of the negotiations we asked them what they wanted and they said, 'we want you to go and negotiate and come back with at least the rate of inflation. If it's anything less than that, then don't bring it back'.

"So when we get further up the negotiations, perhaps we will put an offer to them, but it certainly won't be at 7%."

Workers including crane drivers, machine operators and stevedores are taking action after voting by more than 9-1 in favour of strikes.

The union said the strike will have a significant impact on the port, which handles around four million containers a year from 2,000 ships.

But a port source previously suggested the strikes will be an "inconvenience not a catastrophe", claiming the supply chain is now used to disruption following the pandemic.

Workers including crane drivers, machine operators and stevedores are taking action after voting by more than 9-1 in favour of strikes (Joe Giddens/PA) / PA Wire

Mr Morton added: "We've been asking for a minimum of the rate of inflation. The [RPI](#) at the moment is at (12.3%).

"However, if we can sit down and thrash this out, there will be a figure between 7% and 12.3% that's acceptable to my membership."

But Mr Davey told Sky News: "These negotiations have been going on for a long time now.

"The offer that was on the table at the time they voted to strike was 5% plus £500. It's now 7% plus £500.

"We have moved considerably during the course of the negotiations.

"Unite started the negotiations asking for 10% and they ended them asking for 10%.

"There's only one party here that's tried to find a deal.

"What I suggest (Unite) should do is ask their members about this.

"The members this part of Unite represent have not had a chance to vote on the deal."