

# Travellers still face rail disruption despite strikes being called off

Rail services will be crippled on Saturday despite a series of planned strikes being called off.

Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) and [Transport Salaried Staffs Association](#) (TSSA) were due to stage walkouts in the coming few days in a long running dispute over jobs, pay and conditions.

The RMT said it had secured “unconditional” talks with [Network Rail](#) and the promise of a pay offer from the train operating companies.

The union said the dispute remains “very much live” and it is continuing its re-ballot of members to secure a fresh mandate for action with the result due on 15 November.

Our priority is our members, and we are working towards securing a deal on job security, a decent pay rise and good working conditions

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RMT general secretary [Mick Lynch](#) said: “The threat of strike action and our strongly supported industrial campaign has made the rail employers see sense.

“We have always wanted to secure a negotiated settlement and that is what we will continue to push for in this next phase of intensive talks.

“Our priority is our members, and we are working towards securing a deal on job security, a decent pay rise and good working conditions.

“Our re-ballot remains live and if we have to take strike action during the next six months to secure a deal, we will.”

Tim Shoveller, Network Rail’s chief negotiator, welcomed the announcement but said it had come too late to reinstate services on Saturday, warning they will remain “extremely limited”.

Special strike timetables will remain largely in place for Monday but operators hope that services will be back to normal after that.

A spokesman for the [Rail Delivery Group](#) said: “It is positive that the RMT leadership have stepped back from the brink and called off their strike action.

“Our advice remains to please check before you travel and on Saturday and Monday only travel by rail if necessary.

“We remain committed to intensive negotiations to agree the reforms needed to improve reliability, deliver a pay rise for our people and get the industry back on a sustainable financial footing.”

Merseyrail said its services will be partially reinstated on Saturday as a result of the strike being called off.

Rugby fans travelling to Cardiff for the Wales v New Zealand game will be among those hit by Saturday's disruption.

The RMT said Network Rail had originally declared discussions and consultations closed and was intent on imposing changes to maintenance without agreement with the union.

It is vital, for passengers and workers alike, that all parties continue to work together and deliver a modern railway we can all be proud of

"They have now rowed back and will continue discussions on the basis that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed".

"This takes away the reason for the current phase of action and means talks can continue without pre-conditions unilaterally set down by the company," said the RMT.

Transport Secretary [Mark Harper](#) said: "This is a positive development for passengers up and down the country but the very late notice means, unfortunately, there will still be significant disruption across the network tomorrow and into Monday.

"We encourage unions and employers to continue their negotiations and calling off these strikes has given those talks a better chance of success.

"It is vital, for passengers and workers alike, that all parties continue to work together and deliver a modern railway we can all be proud of."

The TSSA announced it was calling off its planned rail strikes on November 5, 7, 8 and 9 after receiving an invitation to "intensive talks" from the Rail Delivery Group.

TSSA members were due to take strike action in five different rail companies on different days over the period.

Interim general secretary Frank Ward said: "We have always

said that strikes are a last resort, and we are glad to finally be invited to the first set of formal talks with train operators in months.

“However, it is ridiculous that the invitation was only issued less than six hours before our strikes were due to begin.

“This will cause rail travel disruption across the weekend, as train companies won’t have time to reinstate cancelled services.

“This would have been completely avoidable if the Rail Delivery Group and their paymasters at the Department for Transport and Transport Secretary Mark Harper had invited us to talks sooner.”