

# New dates announced for latest rail strikes

Train drivers at 12 operators are to stage fresh strikes over pay that will coincide with the opening and conclusion of the Conservative Party conference.

The Aslef union said its members would walk out on Saturday 1 October and again on Wednesday 5 October.

The new dates were unveiled after a strike planned for last week was called off as a mark of respect to the Queen.

The services to be affected were listed as:

- Avanti West Coast
- Chiltern Railways
- CrossCountry
- Greater Anglia
- Great Western Railway
- Hull Trains
- LNER
- London Overground
- Northern Trains
- Southeastern
- TransPennine Express
- West Midlands Trains

The union warned it was in for the “long haul”, in line with other unions in dispute with employers on the rail network.

Members of the RMT and TSSA unions are yet to reach a resolution to their own grievances, which also include job security and working conditions.

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The rate of inflation stands at 9.9% but is expected to return to double figures over the next few months as winter sets in despite government aid for [household](#) and [business](#) energy bills.

Mick Whelan, the Aslef general secretary, said: “We would much rather not be in this position. We don’t want to go on strike – withdrawing your labour, although a fundamental human right, is always a last resort for this trade union – but the train companies have been determined to force our hand.

“They are telling train drivers to take a real-terms pay cut. With inflation now running at 12.3% – and set, it is said, to go higher – these companies are saying that drivers should be prepared to work just as hard, for just as long, but for considerably less.

“The companies with whom we are in dispute have not offered us a penny. It is outrageous that they expect us to put up with a real-terms pay cut for a third year in a row.”

In addition to the travel disruption facing the Tory conference, the prospect of taking a train to Labour’s annual get together – in Liverpool this year – is also filled with uncertainty.

Continuing staff shortages at Avanti West Coast has forced the under-fire operator to slash schedules and timetables will not be published until a few days before the start of the event.