

Rail strikes set to return after drivers at eight companies back walkouts

Train drivers have voted overwhelmingly to strike over pay, increasing the threat of more disruption to rail services this summer.

Members of the drivers union Aslef at eight train companies have backed industrial action.

Aslef members at Chiltern, LNER, Northern, TransPennine Express, Arriva Rail London, Great Western, Southeastern and West Midlands Trains voted by around 9-1 in favour of strikes on turnouts of more than 80%.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of Aslef, said: "Strikes are always the last resort.

"We don't want to inconvenience passengers – our friends and families use public transport, too – and we don't want to lose money by going on strike but we've been forced into this position by the companies driven by the Government.

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"Many of our members – who were the men and women who moved key workers and goods around the country during the pandemic – have not had a pay rise since 2019.

"With inflation running at north of 10% that means those drivers have had a real terms pay cut over the last three years.

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"It's not unreasonable to ask your employer to make sure you're not worse off for three years in a row.

"Especially as the train companies are doing very nicely,

thank you, out of Britain's railways, with handsome profits, dividends for shareholders, and big salaries for managers."

The Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) also said that hundreds of its members at Southeastern have also voted to strike.

The union is not naming dates for any industrial action yet, but will now consider the next steps with workplace reps.

General secretary Manuel Cortes said: "The results demonstrate that our members are utterly determined to fight for their pay, jobs and conditions.

"They are right to do so amid the escalating Tory cost-of-living crisis and with a chaotic government hell bent on making swingeing cuts to our rail network while inflation rages."

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A Department for Transport spokesperson said: "It is very disappointing that, rather than commit to serious dialogue with the industry, Aslef are first seeking to cause further misery to passengers by joining others in disrupting the rail network.

"The train drivers they represent earn, on average, just under £60,000 per year – more than twice the UK median salary and significantly more than the very workers who will be most impacted by these strikes.

"Our railway is in desperate need of modernisation to make it work better for passengers and be financially sustainable for the long term. We urge the union bosses to reconsider and work with its employers, not against them, to agree a new way forward."

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The votes follow highly disruptive strikes by [40,000 RMT union workers across 13 operators and at Network Rail](#) last month.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch has backed Aslef members for voting to walkout, and said of the transport secretary: "Grant Shapps needs to stop messing around with his doomed [Tory leadership bid](#) and get back to focusing on resolving this dispute.

Meanwhile, Aslef members voted to accept an improved pay offer from ScotRail.

The union announced on Monday that its members had accepted

proposals on pay and conditions from the newly nationalised rail operator.