

Train drivers to continue strike action after overwhelming ASLEF union vote

Members of ASLEF have voted overwhelmingly to continue strike action for the next six months in their ongoing dispute over pay, the train drivers' union has announced.

Union members at 12 train operators in England were re-balloted, each returning huge votes in favour of industrial action.

General secretary Mick Whelan said: "We are in this for the long haul. Our members who have not had a pay rise for nearly five years now are determined that the train companies and the Tory government that stands behind them do the right thing.

"The cost of living has soared since the spring and summer of 2019, when these pay deals ran out.

"The bosses at the train companies – as well as Tory MPs and government ministers – have had increases in pay. It's unrealistic and unfair to expect our members to work just as hard for what, in real terms, is considerably less."

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The announcement comes as train drivers start a week-long overtime ban which is expected to cause disruption to services across England.

A series of strikes that start from Saturday may cripple some services.

Yesterday, members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union [agreed to an offer](#) from train companies for a backdated

pay rise of 5% for 2022-2023 and job security guarantees.

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The deal means RMT's mandate to strike has been withdrawn, so there will be no more walkouts until at least spring next year for members of the union.

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ASLEF: 'We have no choice'

But Mr Whelan said the ASLEF union has not had a meeting with Transport Secretary Mark Harper since December 2022, or with Huw Merriman, the rail minister, since January – or with the private sector train operators, who its members work for, since April.

“We are prepared to come to the table but the government and train companies need to understand that this dispute won't be

resolved by trying to bully our members into accepting worse terms and conditions of employment,” he said.

‘More misery for passengers’

Reacting to the announcement, Mr Merriman said ASLEF are the only rail union still striking and the only union not to have put an offer to its members.

“They are instead choosing to cause more misery for passengers and the hospitality sector this festive period,” he said.

“The fair and reasonable offer that’s long been on the table would bring the average train driver’s salary up to £65,000 for a 35-hour, four-day week.

“ASLEF’s leadership should follow in the footsteps of all the other rail unions by doing the right thing and giving their members a say on that offer.”

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Mr Harper has also called for ASLEF to follow the example of other unions.

“It remains the case that the train drivers’ union ASLEF continue to block their members from having a say on the offer – ASLEF should follow the RMT’s lead and give their members a say,” he said on Thursday.