



### Rail Disputes - Key Facts

As you will be aware strike action is taking place on 21, 23 and 25 June. Far from rushing into strike action, we have been seeking to work with government and employers for almost two years to address the challenges facing our industry, including the jobs, pay and conditions of our rail workers. Moreover, our overwhelming ballot for strike action was almost four weeks ago and we have again been using that time to try and seek a resolution.

However, the rail companies have made it clear to the union and also in private briefings to the media that the government is directly controlling the negotiations and hindering a settlement.

The union sought urgent talks with the government and also called for the government to unshackle the companies to allow settlement. Over the weekend, Jake Berry who is Chair of the Northern Research Group of Tory MPs, broke ranks from the government line and called for Grant Shapps to intervene. It is a matter of extreme concern that government ministers are continuing to refuse to meet to try and resolve the dispute or allow the companies the freedom to negotiate more freely. Indeed, in response they have directly threatened rail workers with even more job losses.

Astonishingly the government have said they will use taxpayers' money to bail out private train companies during the strikes and will legislate to ban the right to strike. They are even prepared to risk passenger safety by using untrained staff to run the railway during the action.

Rather than negotiation they seem to want confrontation.

We remain available for meaningful negotiations to resolve this dispute and we urge the government to unshackle the employers to make realistic proposals as soon as possible. In the meantime, below are some key facts in relation to the dispute.

- Rail workers voted by almost 9-1 in favour of strike action on a 71% turnout. **Far from 'jumping the gun' the action is a last resort after two years of discussions where the industry and UK Ministers failed to address concerns on jobs, pay and conditions.**
- A key aspect of the dispute is the threat of thousands of compulsory redundancies. This will mean increased risks on safety critical infrastructure, less staff on stations and trains, including the removal of guards and catering staff, cuts to cleaning and the closure of nearly all ticket offices. This is not modernisation; it is the managed decline of our railways where cuts will worsen services for passengers and make the railway less safe and accessible. If we are to have a full rail recovery from Covid with expanding services to meet our climate commitments, we need to retain staff and their skills. The passenger watchdog Transport Focus has said **'there is a strong sense that the ideal response to the pandemic would be to see more staff...rather than less.'**

- All rail staff are identified as key workers. They work in a safety critical industry seven-day weeks with very unsocial hours in all types of adverse weather and conditions. Many regularly deal with being assaulted and anti-social behaviour. Those workers balloted include cleaners, catering staff, controller, guards, drivers, engineering, revenue protection, signal workers, station staff, track workers and train maintenance staff. **Most rail workers have basic salary rates of between £25 -31,000, around the national median annual salary of £31,285.**
- Rail workers were praised as 'heroes' by the UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, for keeping the country moving during the pandemic. Now despite the cost-of-living crisis **most rail workers are enduring two to three year pay freezes whilst MPs have received a rise worth almost worth 6% during this period.**
- The government claim they 'bailed out' the rail industry during the pandemic, when in fact the railways always needed to be supported to keep people and good moving. Rail workers are angry their livelihoods are under threat when **during the pandemic rail bosses have taken home £1m pay packets and rail companies have made in excess of £500 million a year in private profits since the start of the health emergency.** The reason cuts are now being proposed is so companies can continue to rake in profits, regardless of the consequences for passengers.
- There is a better way to manage change. For example the Welsh Government have guaranteed no compulsory redundancies and have protected staffing levels and support the role of ticket offices. **In contrast we are concerned the UK government and companies are preparing for confrontation. Ministers have even said they will use taxpayers' money to fund any losses incurred by the private train operators.**
- RMT's recent ballot exceeded stringent anti-trade union thresholds, beat the percentage turnout at the general election and exceeded the majorities achieved by most politicians. Yet in response the government is threatening to change the law to remove workers' democratic right to take strike action. **The P&O scandal has recently shown exactly how ruthless companies can be and how the law is stacked in their favour against working people. Now the government is threatening to make it worse.**
- After all they have been through as key workers during Covid, putting their health and lives on the line, rail workers don't want to take strike action. This dispute could still be resolved quickly and RMT is calling for talks with the government and the industry at a national level to reach a fair settlement. **Please lobby the government to demand that the rail companies must agree that there must be no compulsory redundancies of rail workers, that working conditions and jobs are subject to negotiation and agreement with the rail workers union the RMT and that rail workers receive a fair pay rise that takes into account the rising cost of living.**