

TSSA Industrial Action Brief



This brief gives an overview of the current dispute between TSSA union and Network Rail and train operators.

What, When and Who

- Thousands of TSSA rail members across the country are taking **strike action** and **action short of a strike** on **18 August** and **20 August** over pay, terms and conditions, and job security.
- For many TSSA members, this will be the first time they have ever been involved in an industrial dispute or taken industrial action. It's the most widespread industrial action by TSSA members in a generation.
- Action is being taken by rail workers spanning ticket office, station, controllers, operational, maintenance, support, supervisory and management staff.
- TSSA members are taking **strike action** on 18 August and 20 August at the following companies:
 - Avanti West Coast
 - c2c
 - East Midlands Railway
 - CrossCountry
 - Great Western Railway
 - LNER
 - Southeastern
 - Network Rail (members grades 5 - 8 and Controllers)
- TSSA members are taking **action short of a strike** on 18 August and 20 August (**and some other dates**) at the following companies:
 - Greater Anglia
 - Northern
 - Southeastern
 - TransPennine Express
 - West Midlands Trains
- Action short of a strike can include industrial action such as, but not limited to: a ban on unpaid or paid overtime, refusal to work rest days, no double-desking and a ban on activities associated with voluntary contingency cover.

Why

- TSSA members are going into a third or fourth year of pay freezes despite being lauded a 'national heroes' for their frontline work during the pandemic, by a government who now refuses to support them.
- Rail workers are pushing back against real terms pay cuts during a national cost-of-living crisis. TSSA wants a guarantee of **no compulsory redundancies, a pay rise which meets the cost-of-living crisis and no unagreed changes to terms and conditions.**
- Members are **not** seeking backdated pay increases.
- This strike is also about terms and conditions and job cuts. For example, Avanti only employ enough drivers for a six day a week service – even though they are subsidised by the taxpayer to provide a seven day a week service. Network Rail is seeking to cut thousands of maintenance jobs despite many of them being safety-critical – for example drainage inspections work.

There IS money for a pay rise:

- Wages are meant to be 'inbuilt' into rail fares. Rail fares are set to rise – why aren't wages?
- Before the pandemic, operators were paying out dividends of £262 million. Even in the year of the pandemic they paid £38 million. Now passenger numbers are returning to pre-pandemic levels, and private pay-outs are likely to rocket.
- Private train operators have been guaranteed profits by government through changes to franchise arrangements since the coronavirus pandemic. Train Operators received a total of £6.34bn in operational support payments from the Department for Transport in the period 1 March 2020 to the end of Period 13 in Financial Year 2020/21. Without that support, the levels of profits would not have been obtained. **It is time the Government and these railway operators put the investment back into the workers who keep our country moving.**
- Rolling stock companies (ROSCOS - who own and rent out the trains to operators) received £3 billion in 2020/21. This is a 5% increase on 2019/20. This has DOUBLED since 2015-16. ROSCOs have made huge profits, including over the course of the pandemic, when profits have been guaranteed by the taxpayer. In 2020 Eversholt, paid a £46.5 million dividend. Porterbrook paid out £80 million in dividends. ROSCOs invest very little money into the industry yet reap huge profits by leasing back rolling stock.

Notes and Dispute History

- TSSA has consistently sought out meetings and, when arranged, TSSA officials are in attendance and ready to negotiate in good faith. We have not – as stated by the government – “refused to come to the table”. Quite the opposite. It was only after TSSA moved the issue of pay into dispute status at Network Rail that meeting dates were forthcoming – almost five months after the initial request. Where talks were held with train operators, it became clear to TSSA that the operators were being prevented from tabling any sort of pay offer by the Department of Transport. More details can be found in [TSSA’s submission to the Transport Select Committee](#) regarding these disputes.
- Industrial action is a **last resort** with many TSSA members never having taken industrial action before. Huge numbers of TSSA members are concerned about pay from strike days and many members earn under the national average (for example LNER customer service assistants earn £18,800, and many station roles are in the low to mid £20k salary range). However, they understand that they are standing up for the rights of every worker in this country and that this dispute has arisen out of a lack of response from employers and their inability to negotiate.
- TSSA members support all working people who are organising to protect themselves during this cost-of-living crisis and refuse to be pitted against other workers. Nurses, cleaners and all other workers should be getting a pay rise to avoid a dramatic nationwide decrease in standard of living and tackle widespread in-work foodbank usage and fuel poverty.
- DfT, Grant Shapps and key operators have repeatedly [spread unhelpful disinformation](#) about the dispute undermining the spirit of good faith negotiating. Most recently Avanti publicly blamed industrial action for train cancellations, despite no action taking place during the period they made the allegation.

More information on the dispute is available from the [TSSA website](#).

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