

British Rail Unions Call Off Industrial Action after Improved Pay Offer



London, May 22 (RHC)-- Britain's major rail unions have suspended their industrial action after receiving a new offer in their pay dispute with Network Rail. The 24-hour strike by members of the RMT and TSSA unions was set to bring British railways to a standstill next week.

Following four days of negotiations between the unions and Network Rail, the RMT decided to suspend the strike. The TSSA called off its action earlier in the day. The third union in talks, Unite, which has a few hundred rail members, said it would be consulting on the improved pay offer next week.

The walkout, that had been due to start on bank holiday Monday, would have seen more than 90% of passenger trains cancelled, including the biggest commuter and intercity services, as well as all freight trains. Now, many train services will now run as planned on Monday and Tuesday.

No details have yet emerged of Network Rail's revised offer. The RMT's general secretary, Mick Cash, said however that the union has received a new offer that enables it to suspend the planned industrial action.

Contingency plans were being drawn up and passengers had been advised to expect travel chaos if maintenance staff and station workers went ahead with the planned action. The news that the strike is off will ease concerns about intensified road congestion after potential passengers were set to switch to their cars to join the traditional bank holiday traffic jams.

Meanwhile, the threat of a tube strike in London has emerged as both the RMT and the train drivers' union Aslef announced they would ballot members over pay and rostering on the London Underground. The traditionally moderate Aslef has not called a tube strike in 13 years.

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