

14 December 2023

Translink Strike: Northern Ireland public sector workers continue strike action

Workers at Translink, Northern Ireland's public transport provider, will take part in three days of industrial action in the run-up to Christmas.

Members of Unite, GMB and SIPTU will strike on 15, 16 and 22 December in an ongoing dispute over pay.

The strike action will mean there will effectively be no public transport in Northern Ireland on strike days, with both bus and rail services affected. Staff have not been offered a pay rise this year and, when RPI is factored in, this amounts to an 11.4% pay cut according to Unite.

Unions have placed the blame of the action squarely at the door of Northern Ireland secretary of state Chris Heaton-Harris, who has imposed what many see as a punishment budget due to the ongoing absence of a functioning assembly.

Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham said: "The failure of the secretary of state Chris Heaton-Harris to intervene and provide any pay increase has left Translink workers no alternative but to escalate industrial action."

GMB regional organiser for Translink Peter Macklin said: "The reality is that Mr Heaton-Harris is now openly seeking to weaponise the suffering of public sector workers and the general public to blackmail the parties to do a deal. That is completely disgraceful behaviour. Our members are not pawns in a game of chess. They cannot be denied a cost of living increase because of a political stalemate. They deserve and need a pay increase. Responsibility for this strike lies wholly with the secretary of state."

PCS stands in solidarity with other public sector workers taking industrial action to fight insulting and derisory pay awards. In the case of Translink, those workers haven't even been offered a pay award. Members are encouraged to support the three unions' picket lines where possible.

SIPTU regional organiser Niall McNally said: “We are calling on civil society to get behind the public transport workers. This strike is the cutting edge of the fight for proper funding for all public services in Northern Ireland; funding that will provide decent pay for all public sector workers and end the staffing crisis. The clock is ticking for Mr Heaton-Harris – he needs to move and address our members’ pay concerns before we further escalate strike action in the new year.”

Public sector workers, including those in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, health and education sectors are planning co-ordinated industrial action in January. This comes on the back of pay offers which are all below the rate of inflation. Civil servants, for example, were given a flat £558 pay rise (regardless of grade) which amounted to less than 1% for many workers.