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Go North East bosses dismayed as Unite 'talks walkout' creates misery for passengers

Talks held today, brokered by the reconciliation service ACAS, aimed at resolving the Go North East driver pay dispute that has been ongoing for weeks ended in huge disappointment as Unite staged a walkout after four hours.

Unite demanded pay rises every six months in return for calling off their strike before refusing to continue talks. The stunt dashes hopes that unions were willing to reach a deal to end the strike and restore bus services.

Go North East sought a dialogue on proposals, but negotiations ended after four hours when Unite representatives walked out.

Go North East business director, Ben Maxfield said, “Today, Unite demanded six monthly pay increases: as well as rises backdated to July 2023, and another in July 2024, Unite are now insisting on an additional pay increase on 1 January 2024. All increases they say, must be higher than anything already on the table.

“Passengers are facing unacceptable levels of hardship. But instead of a constructive dialogue all we get from the local Unite representatives is a set of moving goal posts, escalating demands, and a succession of U-turns.”

Ben Maxfield added, “We persuaded ACAS to become involved in talks weeks ago and even they have struggled to keep Unite at the negotiating table. I think that says it all.

“This dispute, this strike, is entirely of Unite’s making. All we want is for the local union representatives to work constructively and collaboratively with us to secure a resolution.

“New demands for six-monthly pay rises will only add to mounting anger within the workforce, and from the public, over Unite’s handling of negotiations. It is impossible to negotiate with a union hell bent on disruption rather than dialogue.”

The company’s offer of a 10.3% pay increase would make the drivers the best-paid in the region. For drivers working a standard week annual pay would rise by almost £2,700 yearly, with an hourly rate of £14.15. Drivers who chose to work overtime stand to gain over £3,000 per year. Drivers who choose to work a 41-hour week will earn £30,000 per year.

Ben Maxfield said, “Coming on the back of the 10% increase our drivers received in July last year, our offer means they will have had a 20% pay rise in just over a year.

“Unite had been hanging their hat on references to North East drivers ‘earning less’ than their counterparts in Manchester. However, Manchester drivers work to far more flexible scheduling rules. Unite confirmed to us today that they would not want to swap their package of wages and

conditions for that of Manchester or anywhere else. They want to keep their conditions as they are now.”

[Go North East website](#)