



BRITISH AIRWAYS CABIN CREW BEGIN SIX DAYS OF STRIKES

News / Airlines



Staff set to walk out for most of week over pay but airline believes most will turn up to work amid tougher sanctions on strikers

Low-paid cabin crew at British Airways have begun six days of industrial action, as the airline takes an increasingly hard line on strikes by employees.

Members of the mixed fleet at Heathrow were set to walk out for most of this week from Sunday in a dispute over what the union, Unite, describes as poverty pay.

But BA anticipates that many of the 2,900 crew involved will report for work, and has increased sanctions on strikers by threatening to dock two years of bonuses and removing all staff travel discounts for the next year from anyone joining industrial action.

Crew in the mixed fleet earn a basic salary of £12,000, but most earn a minimum of £21,000, according to BA, after bonuses and flying time. Unite estimates the sanctions will cost strikers an average of £850.

The airline said all passengers would reach their destinations, with cancellations limited to routes with multiple services, and crew and planes from other airlines such as Titan and Thomson Airways hired to operate some services on BA's behalf.

Two previous walkouts over five days led to 68 cancellations, according to BA.

The Unite national officer, Oliver Richardson, said crew were showing courage in taking a stand against BA. "Rather than issuing threats and wasting huge amounts of cash on chartering aircraft to cover striking cabin crew, British Airways should start valuing staff who contribute massively to the billions of pounds in profits the airline generates."

A BA spokeswoman said: "Our pay offer for mixed fleet cabin crew is consistent with deals agreed with more than 90% of British Airways colleagues, including many Unite members. More than 9,000 cabin crew, represented by a different Unite branch, today voted overwhelmingly to accept the deal.

"The offer also reflects pay awards given by other companies in the UK and will ensure that rewards for mixed fleet remain in line with those for cabin crew at our airline competitors."

The mixed fleet, which all recruits now join, operates both long- and short-haul flights and was set up in 2010 during the cabin crew strikes on inferior terms and conditions to those of existing crew.

The first phase of the latest strike will run until Tuesday 7 February, followed by a further three days from Thursday to Saturday 11 February.

05 FEBRUARY 2017

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

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