

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Coffey DBE  
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25 June 2025

Dear Baroness Coffey,

### **Employment Rights Bill – Repeal of Strikes Act 2023 and Nationalised Rail Services**

Thank you for your contributions to the Committee Stage debate on the Employment Rights Bill on 16 June, on the important topic of the repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels Act) 2023 – “the Strikes Act” - and the question regarding whether nationalised rail companies will be allowed to keep services running during strike action.

This Government believes that the Strikes Act unduly restricts the right to strike and undermines good industrial relations. The Act has proven to be ineffective and has contributed to industrial unrest. We believe that willful negotiation and cooperation are better ways to ensure essential services continue during strikes while respecting workers' rights. This is a point you recognised in your contribution to the debate using the examples of Greater Anglia and South Western Railway.

Once the Strikes Act is repealed by Parliament, employers will no longer be able to issue a work notice, to require people to work on a day of strike action to secure a minimum service level in certain essential services. In practice no employer has given a work notice since the 2023 Act came into force and the Act has not prevented a single day of industrial action. Instead, we encourage employers to seek alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution and maintaining essential levels of service, including voluntary agreements.

Evidence given at the time the Strikes Act was being debated - including by employers - was that existing voluntary arrangements worked and ensured that vital services were able to continue during periods of industrial action. We are simply returning to this situation.

I can confirm that publicly owned Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are subject to the same trade union legislation as other TOCs, including that relating to industrial action. The general position of the Government is not to make carve-outs based on ownership or organisational status in the Employments Rights Bill from the limitations and conditions which apply to industrial action. This includes carve-outs for publicly owned TOCs.

The repeal of the Strikes Act will remove barriers to effective collective action and strengthen the rights of working people. We want to work, and reset the relationship, with both employers and unions to resolve disputes through meaningful negotiations. By supporting workplace rights fit for a modern economy, our plans will support growth and allow us to move on from strikes to deliver the change this country needs.

I would be very glad to meet if you would like to discuss this topic further.

I am copying this letter to all Noble Lords who spoke in the debate. I am also depositing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Leong', with a large loop at the start and a long, sweeping stroke at the end.

**Lord Leong CBE**  
**Lord in Waiting (Government Whip)**