

My intervention to the Transport Secretary about taxpayer subsidies to the Railways and how Managers could try to keep services running on a strike day

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): What has been the monthly rate of taxpayer subsidy to the railways so far this year? What additional flexibilities could managers use to try to get a bigger proportion of services running even on a strike day?

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport: My right hon. Friend is right to discuss the subsidy, which has been £16 billion as a whole through covid—or £16 billion committed, which means that we do not have the exact number yet for the amount of that which is still going towards the operations this year. One thing I can say to him is that without that support the railways simply would not have been able to operate. It is the equivalent of £160,000 per individual rail worker. To turn around and call these strikes is a heck of a way to thank taxpayers. We have lost around a fifth of the income from rail. I hear Mick Lynch, the leader of the RMT, claim that the Government are cutting the money that is going to the railways, but that is a fundamental misunderstanding on his part. The money that is missing is the £2 billion of passenger fares that are not being paid because people are not travelling.