

# Now overtime ban adds to Highlands and Islands Airports wage row

By **Simon Warburton** ⌚ February 16, 2023, 4:21 pm 0



Overtime ban adds to HIAL woes. Image: Sandy McCook.

Trade union Unite has announced its members at all 11 Highlands and Islands Airports (HIAL) are to implement an overtime ban as the dispute embroiling the group steadily worsens.

Unite says its members will take part in what it terms a “discontinuous overtime ban” across the 11 bases starting on February 24 and continuing each day up to and inclusive of March 2.

This means any hours outside contractual ones will not be worked, although if there is an emergency that will be dealt with.

**Unite’s** move comes in addition to an already-announced series of 24h strikes at the 11 airports on February 21, 22 and 23, which could see a raft of knock-on effects

from postal deliveries, to offshore workers not being able to reach rigs or return home.



Airports cannot operate without adequate fire crews. Image: HIAL.

To add to the growing catalogue of unrest which might see passengers' ability to travel in the run up to Easter severely curtailed, the [Prospect union representing fire and security workers at HIAL](#), is also threatening a “spring of continual disruption” as it too mulls strike action.

Both unions are furious at what they perceive is a paltry wage increase offer from [HIAL](#) management of 5% as rampant inflation hovering near double that figure continues to eat away at pay packets.

Meanwhile, the dispute's tentacles are spreading south with HIAL airport Dundee closing on February 17 due to strike action as part of the pay row which involves more than 120 Unite members across the HIAL group.

## **Dundee demo planned**

Strike action will start Friday at Dundee Airport and then resume on February 20. There will be a strike demonstration starting from 11:00 on both days of action near to the airport entrance.

Unite is due to strike affecting operations at Barra, Benbecula, Stornoway, Sumburgh and Tiree airports from February 21 to 23.

Airports at Campbeltown, Dundee, Inverness, Islay and Wick John O’Groats are due to operate normally however.

Kirkwall Airport will operate on a limited basis, opening between 07.15 and 13.00 on February 21, 22 and 23 for inter-island flights only.



Strike could affect operations at Barra’s famous beach airport. Image: HIAL.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “Unite’s industrial action is set to fully close a number of airports starting with Dundee. Other airports will either operate on a limited basis or be significantly disrupted.

“Let’s be clear that the source of this dispute is due to the inflexibility shown by airport management and the Scottish Government to pay these workers what they deserve.

“Unite will fully support our members in the fight for better jobs, pay and conditions across the Highlands and Islands.”

The Unite workforce encompasses security staff, baggage handlers, ground crew along with those working in fire and rescue, security and administration.



Unite general secretary Sharon Graham. Image: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Press Wire/Shutterstock.

Unite says the Scottish Government to date has not directly met the union to discuss pay, recruitment and retention of workers across the HIAL group.

Unite industrial officer Shauna Wright added: “Unite has no choice but to escalate our industrial action across the HIAL Group. Our members keep the airports operating in isolated and rural communities.

“They help to ensure businesses can trade, workers can travel and visitors can come to the islands.

### **‘Deeply disappointing’**

“The way they have been treated by the Scottish Government and HIAL management is deeply disappointing.

“Unite’s industrial action will now cause widespread disruption. Local communities, workers and businesses should turn their fire on the Scottish government for ignoring these vital workers and allowing this dispute to escalate to a point where airports will now be fully closed.”



Air traffic to islands such as Lewis could be disrupted. Image: Sandy McCook.

A HIAL spokesman noted its local teams are “working closely with emergency partners and our airlines” in a bid to minimise disruption.

He added: “Contingency arrangements are in place for emergency situations during this period of industrial action. HIAL operates well-established local on-call medical emergency processes and this will continue.

“Unite has confirmed where medical or other emergencies arise, cover will be provided.

“We continue to work closely with our airlines to minimise any disruption to passengers immediately preceding and following the strike days and during the overtime ban.”

## **HIAL meeting unions this week**

The Scottish government was not immediately available for comment but yesterday (15 February) noted it “absolutely respects the democratic right of union members to take industrial action,” adding it was “disappointing” passengers face the prospect of further disruption.

It noted it is encouraging HIAL and Unite to continue to “engage in positive dialogue” to resolve the dispute.

HIAL is meeting its trade unions this week.

# Conversation

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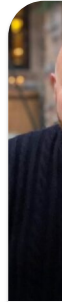
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