First day of national rail strike puts huge dent in UK retail footfall

By Nigel Taylor - 21 June 2022

Tuesday's opening strike action across the UK by railway workers has had a dramatic impact on retail, figures from Springboard show.
Footfall across all UK high streets is down 8.5% compared to last week with London hit particularly hard.

Over the period up to 1pm, footfall in Central London was a massive 27% lower than last Tuesday. And in city centres outside of the capital, footfall was 11.2% lower.

By contrast, Outer London and market towns were less impacted (down 6.2% and 2% respectively) “which is synonymous with home working as it is easier for people who are in their home offices to visit their local high street during working hours”, the report noted.

The drop in footfall in Central London and regional cities means the gap from the pre-pandemic 2019 footfall level has widened considerably, to -49.2% and -29.8%, “levels that are equivalent to those recorded during lockdown”, Springboard also said.

By contrast, market towns saw the gap from the 2019 footfall level narrow to just -2.5% and to -13.4% in Outer London.

Diane Wehrle, Insights Director at Springboard said: “The impact of train and tube strikes today on footfall is very clear to see, with a large proportion of people clearly working from home.”

And with a further two days of strikes ahead this week (Thursday and Saturday) and knock-on disruption to rail services expected on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, high street retailers are expected to be severely hit over the next five days too. The strike on Saturday will be particularly worrying given how important that is as a key shopping day.

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