

The Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

EIGHTH REPORT: Quarter Four 2018

icc

HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner: Eighth Report

Introduction

This is my first report as the now permanently appointed HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner (ICC), having taken office on 1 October 2018. It is published alongside the final report of my predecessor, Gareth Epps and it follows sequentially from the seven reports of the interim HS2 Construction Commissioner.

This report covers the final quarter of 2018 (1st September – 31st December).

I would like publicly to thank Gareth for generously sharing his knowledge and experience with me during our handover. I would also like to thank all those with whom I have met since I took up my post. Understanding their various perspectives on HS2 has been an invaluable part of my introduction to the Construction Commissioner role.

Overview

The level of construction complaints continues to reflect the low level of construction activity. The work is centred on Euston/Camden, Old Oak Common and Hillingdon.

During the period covered by this report, I made two introductory visits to the Euston/Camden area, one to Old Oak Common, one to Hillingdon and one to the Curzon Street site in Birmingham. I also visited Warwickshire. I intentionally give priority to areas such as these, where construction complaints are most frequent.

I met the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, on 5 November and set out how I intended to approach my role and my short and medium-term priorities. I met the HS2 Residents' Commissioner, Deborah Fazan, who holds HS2 Ltd accountable for the way in which it communicates with residents affected by its proposals, particularly in regard to property measures. We discussed how we might each complement the work of the other to the benefit of those along the Phase One route. I have also received representations from a number of MPs whose constituencies are along the route.

In this quarter I have attended two meetings of the independent Construction Commissioner Steering Group (CCSG), which has oversight of my role. I have found the CCSG membership to be constructive and insightful.

Also, I have attended various stakeholder forums directly linked to my work as Construction Commissioner and have maintained engagement with senior management of the company.

Representations

During the quarter, the ICC's office received 22 individual approaches (see Annex). This represented a notable increase on the third quarter of 2018. Of these, the largest number (10) copied the ICC into issues raised through HS2 Ltd's own process; five approached the ICC not having previously raised matters with HS2 Ltd and thus had to be redirected; four were matters requesting general information; and three fell outside the jurisdiction of the ICC. Thus far, none of these has resulted in further action by the ICC.

No claims required action by the ICC under the Small Claims Scheme during the quarter.

My predecessor closed two outstanding cases at the beginning of the period but as they were included in the previous quarter's statistics I have not added them to the annex below.

Observations

Installation of noise insulation

HS2 Ltd offers a noise insulation package to those residential properties that are predicted to be affected by construction noise. Notwithstanding that main construction work has not yet begun, I have concerns that installation of noise insulation is not proceeding as quickly as was hoped. My predecessor highlighted this issue previously and it has been raised with me on numerous occasions over the past quarter. I accept that there are particular problems with properties which are listed or which are situated within conservation areas. However, HS2 Ltd need to take steps to advance the overall initiative in line with the wider construction timetable and ensure all affected properties for which the insulation package is appropriate are treated before main construction work begins.

Relations between HS2 Ltd and residents in Hillingdon

I consider that the relationship between HS2 Ltd and local residents' groups in Hillingdon remains challenging. Given the upcoming major works in Hillingdon, it is important that communications with residents should continue to be clear, timely and wherever possible, two-way.

HS2 Help Desk relocation

I welcome HS2 Ltd's decision to relocate the Help Desk to the same office as the HS2 Public Response Team. Physical proximity of the two teams should mean that enquiries and complaints can be resolved more quickly, which in turn should deliver an improved service to the public. I would expect over time that this would feed positively into my caseload.

Sir Mark Worthington OBE

Annex: Quarter 4 enquiries/complaints and representations

Total construction enquiries/complaints received by HS2 for Phase One 4th Quarter

	South	Central	North	Total
October	45	5	0	50
November	57	3	0	60
December	12	2	0	14
Total	114	10	0	124

Representations received by the ICC for the 4th Quarter 2018

	Representations	Valid	Outside Scope
4 th Quarter 2018	22	0	3
Total To Date	60	3	12