

# Case Study #7

HS2 INDEPENDENT  
DESIGN PANEL

In July 2017 the Main Works Civils Contracts (MWCC) for HS2 Phase One were awarded to four joint venture teams. An initial mobilisation programme known as 'Hot Starts' was designed for these teams, to ensure that all four were fully briefed and able to apply a consistent approach to the project from the very start. A series of topic specific briefings covered technical issues such as IT systems; programme controls, and ground investigation. A series of resources are being developed by consultants David Kester & Associates to support the the 'Hot Start' programme, and introduce MWCC contractors to HS2 Ltd's approach to design.

The HS2 Independent Design Panel held two review meetings in July 2017 to advise on the 'Hot Start' design programme.

**Process:** the panel provides support in a number of ways, from a full review to individual mentoring. In this case, two workshop review meetings were held with three panel members. The panel members attending these meetings included experts in: railway engineering; civil and structural engineering; and consultation and engagement. HS2 Ltd representatives attended the meetings, along with David Kester & Associates, giving a presentation on the 'Hot Start' programme, as a basis for discussion with the panel.



## Project headlines

- Main Works Civils Contractors for HS2 Phase One began work in September 2017
- To ensure that the teams are fully informed on essential topics 'Hot Start' briefings are being delivered
- The 'Hot Starts' will set expectations and requirements for delivering HS2 Ltd's design quality ambitions
- Panel comments informed the final design 'Hot Start' contractor mobilisation programme

# Panel comments

The HS2 Independent Design Panel welcomed the development by HS2 Ltd of a programme for initial engagement with Main Works Civils Contractors (MWCC), stressing that this is a critical moment in the evolution of HS2. The panel encouraged HS2 Ltd to strongly articulate its expectations for innovation and collaboration, and provide instructions rather than guidance where necessary.

Some of the comments made by the panel, are outlined below.

## 1. Promoting innovation and collaboration

The panel supported the schedule and content of the 'Hot Start' programme, and the attention paid by HS2 Ltd to effective contractor engagement. It recommended that HS2 Ltd remain open to adding subjects to the 'Hot Start' programme as they emerge, for example place making and community engagement.

HS2 Ltd has identified 400 potential opportunities for innovation, and an approach will be needed to prioritise these. HS2 Ltd also needs to consider how it can ensure sufficient time for contractors to develop innovative designs, which could deliver significant longer term gains – including reduced costs.

The panel recommended that HS2 Ltd continue to strongly articulate its expectation of innovative approaches to fulfilling contracts. It suggested that early successes should be shared to incentivise further innovation, and that opportunities be explored to actively involve subcontractors and the supply chain in identifying innovative approaches.

## 2. Communicating design ambitions

The panel endorsed the need for an effective design briefing to communicate HS2's design ambitions to contractors, and to set expectations and requirements. It asked HS2 Ltd to consider backing up the 'Hot Start' design briefing with the appointment of a high level design advocate - an influential figure with the remit to drive expectations and scrutinise progress. Design directors at MWCC joint ventures will also be important figures in driving design quality, so early contact with them will be needed.

The panel identified collaboration between contractors as a key factor in achieving design quality across the project. Because joint ventures often do not operate as a single supplier, it asked HS2 Ltd to look for ways of strengthening collaboration, including opportunities to bring all design teams together in one location.

## 3. Focus on design outcomes

While broadly supporting the material to be presented at 'Hot Start' design briefings, the panel suggested some refinements. It asked for a clearer focus on achieving the desired design outcomes rather than on process. It also suggested that issuing instructions rather than guidance would provide better assurance of the end result. It asked that the proposed HS2 Design Handbook be communicated to the supply chain in as inspirational a manner as possible. HS2 Ltd facilitators should also be on hand to encourage collaboration and innovation during the crucial first six months of the contracts.

