

**The Independent Construction Commissioner HS2**

**TENTH REPORT: Quarter Two 2019**

**icc**

## **HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner: Tenth Report**

### **Introduction**

This is the Tenth Report of the Independent Construction Commissioner HS2 (ICC) and covers the second quarter of 2019 (1st April - 30th June).

### **Overview**

The overall level of alerts to the ICC's office rose markedly for this quarter. In some part this was due to increased HS2 activity and publicity for Phase Two of the project and consequently outside the remit of the ICC. However, there was a large increase in alerts from the Old Oak Common area of west London. This increase reflects the extent of major clearance work in preparation for construction of the new interchange station at Old Oak Common.

The anticipated rise in complaints for the Hillingdon area of west London as a result of the planned closure of Breakspear Road South and its knock-on effects did not occur during this quarter as HS2 listened to the representations made by local residents and rescheduled the work for its original date during the school summer holidays.

Area South continues to produce by far the largest level of complaints as would be expected with the degree of significant construction preparation. Area Central and Area North remained relatively quiet for the period.

I have continued to make regular visits to Hillingdon and Old Oak Common in west London as well as to Buckinghamshire, meeting with local authority officials and local councillors. Some of these visits are made in conjunction with the Residents' Commissioner.

Meetings with MPs, with senior management and stakeholder bodies within HS2 and with DfT officials have followed the established pattern. I am also grateful for the support of the Construction Commissioner Steering Group (CCSG).

### **Representations**

The ICC's office received 38 alerts/approaches during the second quarter (see annex), a substantial increase on the previous one. Of these, 11 were either of a general nature concerning HS2 policy or fell outside the remit of the ICC. In 20 cases HS2's own complaints process was engaged already, one of these has subsequently been registered with the ICC as a formal complaint. The ICC referred a further seven cases to HS2.

### **Small Claims Scheme (SCS)**

In total 19 claims have been received under the SCS since it was introduced. Of these, eight were rejected, nine were awarded payments, one currently under consideration and an offer has been made on the outstanding case for the quarter. No claims required action by the ICC.

A sum of £3979.73 has been paid out so far.

## **Observations**

### Installation of noise insulation

In my last report I welcomed the responses given to me by Jim Crawford, HS2's Managing Director Phase One, and the work being done by the company and its subcontractors. There is still much to be done in implementing installation but it is clear that the overall figures are distorted somewhat by a high rate of non-response from qualifying properties. The CCSG has instigated a "lessons learned" process which will look at the Euston/Camden area in particular to see if improvements of practice are required.

A similar issue has arisen in the Old Oak Common area in west London and I have asked the Head of Community Engagement Area South to look at additional ways to try to expand the take-up of the insulation scheme.

### Closure of Breakspear Road South, Hillingdon

Road disruption in the Hillingdon area has been a particular concern for local residents and I have made several visits there over the past ten months. The configuration of the road network with the route of the HS2 line between the tunnel portal at West Ruislip and the Colne Valley Regional Park poses major problems. The closure of Breakspear Road South on previous occasions has created difficulties for local road users. In discussion with HS2's community engagement teams, residents requested that the next major closure be scheduled to coincide with this summer's school holidays. Though the company were sympathetic to this suggestion originally, the works programme was brought forward. After further representations by the local community with the support of the community engagement team the road closure was moved back to its original dates.

I welcome that HS2 listened to local residents to find the best solution to alleviate inevitable problems. I welcome also the efforts made by senior managers responsible for community engagement issues within HS2 in highlighting residents' concerns to those at the uppermost levels of the company.

### Community action plans and contractor response

Following my various visits to west London and to Buckinghamshire I have drawn HS2's attention to the importance of being as open as possible with local communities. HS2 is often accused of being too defensive which creates unhelpful tension with residents and furthers unnecessary suspicion of HS2's motives and actions. HS2's default position should be to answer local questions and concerns as quickly and fully as possible.

When community engagement meetings take place it is crucial that an action plan is circulated shortly afterwards which is clear and identifies who is responsible for delivering answers.

Often responsibility for answering community concerns and taking the necessary actions will fall to the contractors rather than HS2 itself. Locals are sometimes given assurances only to find that delivery of the solution does not follow. HS2 should have a more rigorous system of monitoring undertakings and actions which fall to the contractors to ensure that where commitments are given they are fulfilled as speedily as possible.

## Conclusion

All of the above observations highlight the crucial role of engaging communities fully and openly. Of course, HS2's prime purpose is to construct a railway line but community issues need to be centrally important in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes of the company.

There has been considerable progress over recent years in improving community engagement mechanisms and in addressing community concerns but more can be achieved.

I conclude my report.

Sir Mark Worthington OBE

Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

August 2019

## Annex: Quarter 2 alerts, representations and complaints

Total construction enquiries/complaints received by HS2 Ltd for Phase One 2nd Quarter 2019

	South	Central	North	Total
April	25	0	4	29
May	38	7	4	49
June	39	0	3	42
Total	102	7	11	120

Representations received by the ICC for the 2nd Quarter 2019

	Alerts*	Referrals to HS2**	Not within remit	Valid Complaints***
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2019	19	7	11	1
Total to date	91	17	25	5

\*Alerts identified to the ICC already under examination by HS2 Ltd

\*\*Alerts not made to HS2 Ltd directly but referred to them by ICC

\*\*\* Valid complaints which fall under the ICC's remit