

The Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

ELEVENTH REPORT: Quarter Three
2019

icc

Introduction

This is the 11th Report of the Independent Construction Commissioner HS2 (ICC) and covers the third quarter of 2019 (1st July – 30th September).

Overview

The steady rise in the number of alerts over the past three quarters fell back somewhat over the summer months. Though in line with previous annual patterns, nevertheless it was quieter than expected.

The major demolition work at Old Oak Common in West London which was generating a steady number of noise, dust and vibration complaints was completed in the early summer and therefore there was a fall in alerts from that area.

In Hillingdon, West London, the scheduled closure of Breakspear Road South during August had been expected to generate a considerable community reaction. Previous closures had produced a noticeable rise in alerts from the area. However, good advanced warning and active preparation by the local engagement team resulted in a relatively smooth implementation. It was a much improved model and a good template for future operations.

Area South continues to generate the largest level of alerts as would be expected. However, local anxieties are increasing in both Areas North and Central as construction draws nearer.

During this period, I have continued to visit and meet with communities along the line as well as to meet with MPs and with senior management and stakeholder bodies within HS2.

Representations

The ICC's office received 24 alerts/representations during the third quarter (see annex), a noticeable fall on the previous two quarters. Of these 3 were of a general nature concerning HS2 policy or fell outside the remit of the ICC. In 13 cases, HS2's own complaints process was engaged already. The ICC referred a further 8 cases to HS2.

In one of these cases after HS2 had completed a full complaints review the individual complainant appealed to the ICC. After careful consideration of the information relating to the nature of the case the ICC felt that the complaint was primarily a matter which fell outside the jurisdiction of HS2 and consequently outside the remit of the ICC. The ICC declined the case advising the complainant to approach the outside body responsible.

Small Claims Scheme (SCS)

During the quarter, three new claims were received under this scheme. Of those one was paid, one was rejected and one remains under consideration. A total of £1,650.00 was paid out. No claim required action by the ICC.

Since the beginning of the scheme 22 claims have been received: ten have been rejected, ten awards have been made, one is awaiting acceptance by the claimant and one is still under consideration. The total payment so far is £5,629.73.

Observations

Noise Insulation

I continue to work with HS2 and their contractors to make improvements to the rollout of noise insulation. HS2 is conducting a "lessons learned" exercise currently following issues I raised with them previously in the context of the Euston/Camden and Old Oak Common areas. I look forward to seeing the conclusions of this review.

Hillingdon, West London

The closure of Breakspear Road South was well managed by the local engagement team. As I noted in my previous report by involving the local community more closely in the planning of the closure there were noticeably fewer complaints when works began. A strong presence on the ground at the commencement of these works also ensured a smoother implementation than on previous occasions.

There remains an issue with the continued activity of protestors near the Harvil Road construction sites. As more land is brought into usage by HS2 I would expect this issue to become more active.

Chilterns, Buckinghamshire

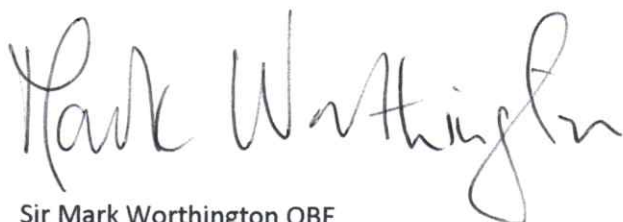
There remain construction and road issues particularly in the Great Missenden area. Contractor response to agreed actions has sometimes been slow and I urge HS2 to ensure that where solutions have been agreed with local communities, they are implemented as quickly as possible.

Ancient Woodland and Footpath Closures

There is an increased agitation in communities along the line at the level of vegetation clearance and most particularly the encroachment into ancient woodland. I would encourage HS2 to redouble its efforts to explain the requirements behind these clearances and the measures it is taking to protect wildlife. The announcement by the Secretary of State for Transport that there will be an effective moratorium on clearances of ancient woodland until the Oakervee Review into HS2 has reported was welcomed in many communities but there remains deep concern at the potential loss of habitat in the future.

Concern has also been expressed about the closure of footpaths and rights of way in parts of the Chilterns and in Warwickshire. Again, where these are necessary it is important that HS2 explain the reasons fully to the local communities most affected.

I conclude my report.



Sir Mark Worthington OBE

Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

November 2019

Annex: Quarter 3 alerts, representations and complaints

Total construction enquiries/complaints received by HS2 Ltd for Phase One 3rd Quarter 2019

	South	Central	North	Total
July	40	0	7	47
August	29	5	4	38
September	34	3	13	50
Total	103	8	24	135

Representations received by the ICC for the 3rd Quarter 2019

	Alerts*	Referrals to HS2**	Not within remit	Valid complaints***
3 rd Quarter 2019	13	8	3	0
Total to date	104	25	28	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