

The Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

**NINETEENTH REPORT: QUARTER THREE
2021**

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HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner: Nineteenth Report

Introduction

This is the Nineteenth Report of the Independent Construction Commissioner HS2 (ICC) and covers the third quarter of 2021 (1st July – 30th September).

Overview

The number of complaints registered by HS2 Ltd fell over the quarter.

August and September proved to be quieter months. Areas South and Central saw marked decreases, however, Area North saw a rise in complaints. Noise, traffic and site management issues continue to feature strongly in the figures.

While any reduction in complaints is welcome, I would continue to urge caution on drawing too many conclusions from the falling figures as they can vary considerably depending on works being undertaken at the time.

Phase 2a remains relatively quiet.

Since my last report I have renewed visits along the line. I visited South Staffordshire to meet with the NFU and local farmers and made a tour of the whole of the Phase 2a route. I was in central Warwickshire where I visited two sites which were the subjects of complaints. I also attended one of HS2's roadshow events in Leamington Spa. I spent a day at the Curzon Street station site in Birmingham touring the works and meeting contractors. I also met with members of the local communities and with neighbouring stakeholders. I visited Buckinghamshire to meet with local representatives from the communities in the Misbourne Valley and to visit various HS2 worksites. In addition, I paid several visits to the Euston and Primrose Hill areas of London and out to Old Oak Common to look at traffic impacts in that area. Recently, I have been working with HS2 Ltd on their community engagement refresh strategy which was launched in Birmingham a few weeks ago.

As usual, I have been in regular contact, at all levels, with HS2 Ltd and its contractors and with the Department for Transport.

Representations

The ICC received 85 individual approaches (see Annex) during the 3rd Quarter. 31 of these were issues raised with HS2 Ltd already but which the complainant thought the ICC should be aware of; 50 approached the ICC not having

previously raised matters with HS2 Ltd and thus had their cases referred; and 4 concerned matters outside the Commissioner's remit.

Small Claims Scheme (SCS)

22 new claims were registered with HS2 Ltd for the third quarter of 2021. Of these, 9 remain open, 11 cases are awaiting further evidence from the claimants, 1 was rejected and 1 was settled

6 damage payments were made during the period along with 4 goodwill payments.

In total there have now been 135 applications, with 37 approved with some form of payment made, 24 remain open and 74 have been rejected. The total amount paid out has been £11074.16.

One appeal was settled by the ICC under the Small Claims Scheme during the quarter.

Observations

Public Roads and Traffic

Again the largest number of issues raised with both the ICC and with HS2 Ltd were related to road and traffic issues.

Contractors need to be ever aware of the effects of road closures whether in an urban or a country environment. Inevitably, they are disruptive to peoples' lives and great attention must be taken in consulting and informing local communities. This is especially the case when looking at a multiple pattern of closures in a specific area. Besides being alert to individual closures, contractors and HS2 need to ensure that the wider pattern of road closure in an area is fully available to the public. This is particularly important in more rural settings.

Being sensitive to local views and listening to those with local knowledge and ideas is a vital factor in achieving good relationships. However, I would also point out that local communities need to keep their own engagement constructive and to look at practical ways in which they can help HS2 Ltd and the contractors to improve matters for local residents.

I continue to monitor concerns from Hillingdon and from the Old Oak Common area about road closures and would ask that HS2 Ltd looks carefully at these sections of the route.

Again, there have been some reports of large vehicles not following the approved routes. I acknowledge that these reports remain low in number but they can be especially aggravating for local communities. Therefore, it remains

important that there is no slackening on the contractor's part in repeatedly reminding drivers of approved routes rather than them relying on any form of satellite navigation systems.

Further, I should like to remind all contractors of the importance of regular cleaning of vehicle wheels and of roads in proximity to works. In the winter season this is particularly important.

Street Level Impact

I have discussed above the importance of working with local communities where road closures are concerned. An aspect of that is with street signage. It is important that these are clear and are placed strategically. It is also important that they are removed as soon as works are complete. I have received a number of reports where road works had been completed but signage remained in place resulting in residents taking unnecessary detours. That is something I would like to see eliminated.

On a related point, several communities have complained that signage can have a cluttering effect, particularly in an urban environment. Signs and barriers are sometimes moved or knocked over. If combined with signage from other non-HS2 related works they can make roads and footpaths intimidating. I would urge HS2 Ltd and their contractors to work with local authorities to look at ways in which these problems can be managed.

Noise Disturbance and the Insulation

In most of my reports I have registered the frustrations of many local people at the impact of noise. With main construction in full operation this will continue to be a strong feature. It is important that where particularly noise-impactful works are planned they are done so sensitively and with the widest information given to nearby residents.

I shall continue to monitor the roll-out of noise insulation and ventilation measures in the Euston area which I have discussed on a number of occasions.

Site Management

I have mentioned the importance of ensuring that the entrances to all sites are kept as mud-free as possible and that contractors are regularly looking at the condition of roads immediately away from the site.

In addition, I would like to flag the matter of site lighting. Again, in winter months, this is a very significant issue for a number of residents in close

proximity to sites. It can be especially impactful in rural areas where overall ambient lighting tends to be low.

Lighting, particularly that for security, is important and necessary. However, the height and position of lighting can often be open for discussion and I would like to see contractors working much more speedily with residents where problems arise.

I submit my report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'n'.

Sir Mark Worthington OBE

Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

November 2021

Annex: Quarter 3 alerts, representations and complaints

Total construction complaints received by HS2 Ltd for Phase One and for Phase Two A for the 3rd Quarter 2021

	South	Central	North	Two A	Non-Geographic	Total
July	62	46	34	1	2	145
August	27	32	40	1	0	100
September	53	34	26	0	0	113
Total	142	112	100	2	2	358

Representations received by the ICC for the 3rd Quarter 2021

	Alerts*	Referrals to HS2**	Not within remit***	Valid complaints****
3rd Quarter 2021	31	50	4	3
Total To Date	289	284	64	10

*Alerts identified to the ICC already either under examination by HS2 Ltd or previously alerted to them.

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

***Alerts outside ICC remit but may have been referred to HS2 Ltd.

****Valid complaints which fall under the ICC's remit to adjudicate.