

Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

**TWENTY-EIGHTH REPORT: QUARTER
FOUR 2023**

icc

HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner: Twenty-Eighth Report

Introduction

This is the Twenty-Eighth Report of the Independent Construction Commissioner HS2 (ICC) and covers the fourth quarter of 2023 (1st October – 31st December).

Overview

The number of complaints as registered by HS2 Ltd fell significantly during the quarter. The close-down of most works over the Christmas period contributed to this fall. However, the continuing impact of the pause in works announced by the Government earlier in the year has been a noticeable factor. This is particularly the case in the London area.

Once again, noise, traffic, lighting, road conditions and site management were the issues most raised by the public. As would be expected during the winter months flooding featured prominently also.

Phase 2a is now quiet from a construction perspective.

Line of route visits during the quarter included, Birmingham, West London and the Camden and Euston areas.

I continue to meet regularly with HS2 Ltd, its contractors and with the Department for Transport.

Representations

The ICC received 56 individual case approaches (see Annex) during the quarter. 34 were issues which had been raised with HS2 Ltd already but which the complainant thought the ICC should be aware of; a further 30 cases approached the ICC and these were referred on to HS2 Ltd for response. Two investigations remained open.

Small Claims Scheme (SCS)

Under the scheme, 49 new claims were registered with HS2 Ltd for the quarter. Of these 16 were rejected and 5 were approved. The remainder were still open.

Of the 555 total claims registered, 145 have been approved, 377 have been rejected and 33 remained open.

The total amount paid out stands at £64,147.

Observations

As we are now entering the spring and summer months there will be a significant increase in construction activity. Adherence to agreed working hours, particularly where these are extended, needs to be applied strictly. All aspects of late evening and night-time works require special attention to minimise the impact on local residents. I hope that site managers will pay extra attention to the impact of noise and of site lighting during these hours.

Once again, road closures and traffic make up a significant proportion of complaints being received by HS2 Ltd. Where road closures are to be put in place it is important for contractors to make residents fully aware of the details, well in advance. Alternative routes should be identified clearly. Expectations around reopening dates need to be realistic. The recent construction of the "Greatworth T" road near Banbury, Oxfordshire, demonstrated the reputational dangers of promising too much. The subsequent, repeated delays in opening left local communities both frustrated and angry.

I have raised various issues concerning the village of Water Orton previously. HS2 works in the area are extensive. Careful monitoring of noise and dust levels in the vicinity of HS2 sites will help to alleviate the difficult conditions there. I am pleased to see that HS2 Ltd and their contractors are working closely with the local authorities in the area to tackle the flooding issues which have been pressing over the past winter.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of a halt in work between Old Oak Common and Euston there have been special challenges for HS2 and for local residents. Uncertainty fuels frustration and anger. I welcome recent positive contributions by the London Borough of Camden as to future development in the Euston area although locals continue to have more questions than they have answers.

As I have said before, I hope that the Government will move at speed to tackle the vacuum in information that was created in the autumn. While designs for the new station at Euston will be some way off inevitably, I hope that we may receive early clarification on tunnel construction from Old Oak Common into central London and works on the approaches to Euston. Residents near the vent shafts for this stretch of the railway and on the Euston approaches do not know what to expect over the coming years and it would reassure them if there was a great mote clarity. I am sure that local businesses in the Euston area would also benefit enormously from more specific information.

I submit my report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Mark Worthington OBE

Independent Construction Commissioner HS2

March 2024

Annex: Quarter Four alerts, representations and complaints

	Align	BBV	BBVS	EKFB	SCS	Non Area	2A	Total
October	5	11	3	18	11	0	0	48
November	4	23	1	11	18	0	0	57
December	3	19	1	13	5	0	0	41
Total	12	53	5	42	34	0	0	146

Representations received by the ICC for the 4th Quarter 2023

	Alerts*	Referrals to HS2**	Not within remit***	In depth investigations****
4th Quarter 2023	24	22	0	0
Total To Date	533	624	104	24

*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.

****In depth investigations carried out by the ICC and concluded during the quarter.