

Minister publishes review of the UK search and rescue helicopter service

I am delighted to publish this independently produced [post-implementation review of the UK search and rescue helicopter service](#). The service has been in place since 2015 and in that time, has been responsible for the rescue of thousands of lives. As Minister responsible for the service, I am proud of the work of our helicopter crews who routinely put their own lives at risk to rescue others.

I recognise the high expectations the public has for this service, particularly given the fact that it replaced the much respected military sea king service. I equally recognise the degree to which our stakeholders in the emergency services and the volunteer rescue organisations value our search and rescue helicopters and how critical it is to enable those services to undertake their lifesaving work.

To assure itself that the UK search and rescue helicopter service is meeting our stakeholders' needs and to evaluate the impact the service has had on the ability to respond to people in distress, the MCA commissioned this review to evaluate the work of the UK search and rescue helicopter service since it has been in operation.

The review draws upon statistical data and insight from partner rescue organisations to reach its conclusions. The general opinion of the review is that the transition to the UK search and rescue helicopter service was successful. It concludes that the anticipated benefits are either met or on track to be met. It further identifies a number of unanticipated benefits that present opportunities for the future to grow the service to be offer even greater value for money to the public.

This review will be used to inform the government's plans for the next generation search and rescue aviation capability, work on which has now started.

Nusrat Ghani MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport

Letter from Jeremy Wright to Sharon White

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Jeremy Wright, the Secretary of State

for DCMS has written to Sharon White, the Chief Executive of Ofcom.

Major demolition milestone at HS2's Old Oak Common site as Great Western sheds cleared

Watch a 30 second construction update video from site: [HS2 progress: clearing the site to build the station at Old Oak Common](#)

HS2 has completed the clearance of the former Great Western Railway sheds at Old Oak Common as work continues to prepare the way for the high speed rail project's transformative West London super-hub.

The demolition of the enormous sheds – which were big enough to park more than 600 double decker buses in – is a key milestone in the preparation of the 1km long station site.

The new station, designed to link HS2 with Elizabeth line (Crossrail) services to Heathrow and central London, and trains to Wales and the West of England, will be one of the busiest interchanges in the UK, with around 250,000 people passing through every day.

Alongside freeing up space on existing lines and improving journeys, the arrival of HS2 will unlock the wider regeneration of the area, with 65,000 jobs and 25,500 new homes set to be created as part of the wider Old Oak and Park Royal development.

Across the capital, more than two thirds of demolitions have now been completed, with more than 1,500 people at work on the project. Nationwide, more than 9,000 jobs are supported by HS2, both directly and across the UK-wide supply chain.

Welcoming the milestone, HS2 Ltd Programme Director, Matthew Botelle, said:

HS2 will transform Old Oak Common, unlocking thousands of new jobs and homes around the station and improving journeys for millions of people travelling to Heathrow Airport, London, the Midlands and the North.

The demolition of the sheds is a major milestone for the project, and it's great to see how much progress the team has already made as we work to deliver West London's new super-hub.

The demolition of the sheds was completed in four months by HS2 Ltd's London early works contractor, a Costain Skanska joint venture (CSjv) and subcontractors Erith, as part of ongoing work to clear the site ahead of the start of construction.

Next steps include working through 110,000 cubic meters of earth to clear the site of obstructions and remove any hotspots of contamination built up over a century of continuous railway use.

Originally built by the Great Western Railway in 1906, the 280 meter long sheds were part of a vast depot, housing and maintaining steam and later diesel locomotives running in and out of London Paddington, much of which was cleared in 2011 to make way for the neighbouring Crossrail depot.

CSjv Programme Director, Peter Jones, said:

The successful delivery of this challenging project shows just what can be done when you get the right team together. Alongside HS2 Ltd and Erith, I'm proud to say we've built a diverse team at Old Oak Common, including local people, female engineers, apprentices and people with previous careers in the armed forces. Our colleagues are working hard to encourage more people from under-represented groups to consider careers in our industry.

Stuart Accleton, Erith Contractors Ltd Operations Director, said:

We are proud to have been awarded the Old Oak Common enabling works package for HS2. The works package has seen Erith utilise all its enabling skills in demolition, asbestos removal, temporary works, earthworks and remediation to ensure it provided the support structure required from CSJV and HS2.

It's been great to see the amount of collaboration between the CSJV and Erith teams to ensure the successful delivery of this vital piece of the project.

Alongside the sheds, the team has also cleared the old Heavy Maintenance and Wheel Lathe Sheds as well as removing 40,000 tonnes of concrete slab which covered a quarter of the site. The former train wash was carefully deconstructed and moved to Penzance to be installed in the new depot.

Overall, 98% of material from the demolition of the sheds and associated buildings has been recycled or reused, with the surplus track donated to heritage railways around the UK. The concrete slab was crushed on site with the material set to be reused during construction.

The adjacent 1970's diesel shed is due to be demolished in the autumn, with

the Heathrow Express buildings expected to remain for at least a year, before they are also removed to make way for construction of the new station.

On Phase One, work has been delivered at around 250 sites, with more than 9,000 jobs supported both directly and across the UK-wide supply chain.

Background

Recent Phase One construction milestones include:

- Completion of the clearance of the former Ibis hotel site in Euston above where the new platforms will be built.
 - Completion of HS2's largest demolition to date, at the site of the new Victoria Road Crossover Box, near old Oak Common in west London
 - The completion of site clearance, including the painstaking removal of three disused 220 tonne container cranes, at Willesden, west London, the site of the project's Rail Logistics Hub.
 - The latest design images of the new Old Oak Common station have been revealed.
 - Work has begun to demolish the two 1970s office towers at the front of Euston station
 - Work is well underway clearing the site of the new Washwood Heath rolling stock depot in Birmingham
 - At Curzon Street, clearance of the station site is well underway with 20,000 tonnes of concrete cleared and demolitions in progress.

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Background

Threat level system updated to include all forms of terrorism

Changes to the terrorism threat level system come into effect today (Tuesday 23 July).

The changes, which follow an extensive review into the country's approach to counter-terrorism following the attacks in 2017, mean that the system will now reflect the threat posed by all forms of terrorism, irrespective of ideology.

There will now be a single national threat level describing the threat to the UK. The threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism in Northern Ireland will remain separate.

This means, for the first time, the threat from extreme right and left-wing

terrorism will be reflected in the published threat level.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Our approach to stopping terrorists is the same, regardless of the twisted ideology that motivates them.

While the Islamist threat remains, we have recently seen an increase in terrorist activity motivated by the extreme right wing.

It is therefore important the public is properly informed about the threats we face, which is why we are making these changes.

Until today, the threat level system described the threat from 'international terrorism', which has become largely synonymous with Islamist terrorism.

However, this is now outdated as Islamist terrorism can be home grown, just as extreme right-wing terrorism can have an international dimension.

The changes follow the joint police and MI5 Operational Improvement Review which followed the 2017 attacks.

Based on recommendations made in that review, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) began assessing the threat from all forms of terrorism in November 2018. From today, the published threat level will reflect JTAC's assessment.

The level of threat has not changed from SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely. JTAC sets the threat level independently of the government.

Terrorism threat levels give a broad indication of the likelihood of an attack. They are an important tool for security practitioners and the police to determine what protective security is necessary.

They also keep the public informed of the threat the country faces.

Additionally, from today, the definitions of some of the threat levels will be updated to ensure they are clear and consistent.

The definitions of the LOW, SUBSTANTIAL and CRITICAL threat levels will change meaning the new definitions are as follows:

- CRITICAL – an attack is highly likely in the near future
- SEVERE – an attack is highly likely
- SUBSTANTIAL – an attack is likely
- MODERATE – an attack is possible but not likely
- LOW – an attack is highly unlikely

[More information on how to report suspicious activity or what to do in the event of an attack](#) is published on GOV.UK.

[e-learning tools](#) are available for organisations to offer training to their

staff.

The threat levels are [published on GOV.UK](#) and on [MI5's website](#).

Annual update on Crossrail 2019

It has been a challenging year for the Crossrail project. Since August 2018 when Crossrail Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Transport for London (TfL), announced that the opening of the Elizabeth Line through central London would be delayed, the project has been fully reviewed and reset.

Crossrail Ltd, TfL and the Department for Transport (DfT) have taken significant action in response to issues raised in the independent reviews by KPMG, as well as the reports from the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee and the London Assembly's Transport Committee. Lessons have been learned and Crossrail Ltd and both project sponsors, DfT and TfL, remain fully committed to the completion of the project which will transform London rail transport, and carry around 200 million passengers per year.

Actions taken this year have included:

The commissioning and completion of 2 wide ranging and detailed independent reviews into the project's governance, commercial and financial agreements with all recommendations acted upon by June 2019.

The agreement in December 2018 to an additional £2.15 billion financing package to deliver the final stages of the project in a way that is fair to the UK taxpayer.

The appointment of a new executive leadership team within Crossrail Ltd, a review of the organisational structure to ensure maximum efficiency, and the strengthening of the Crossrail Board to ensure the right skills are in place right across the organisation and its Board. The announcement in April 2019 of a revised schedule which confirmed a 6 month window for delivery of the central tunnel section between Abbey Wood and Paddington (not including Bond Street), with a mid-point in December 2020, with more certainty to follow as testing progresses.

The publication in April 2019 of a joint report by the Department for Transport and the Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) on lessons learned from the sponsorship of major projects including Crossrail.

Despite the challenges, the project has seen some key achievements during this year. Main dynamic testing of the trains commenced in January, and Crossrail Ltd recently achieved a further milestone with the commencement of close-headway testing of multiple trains in June.

Fifteen new class 345 trains are in operation on the eastern and western parts of the route, building reliability and achieving a high standard of performance. Testing of the trains in the Heathrow tunnels is continuing and a TfL Rail service between Paddington and Reading is planned to commence in December of this year. This will be another important stepping stone to the opening of the full railway as soon as possible after the central section is completed.

The Network Rail (NR) on network works on the eastern and western sections of the Crossrail route are well advanced. Over the past year, work completed has included the installation of the steelwork for new accessible footbridges, stairs and lift shafts at Ealing Broadway, West Ealing and Acton Main Line. The contracts to build and upgrade 6 ticket halls between Acton Main Line and West Drayton have been awarded, and the new ticket halls at Forest Gate and Gidea Park have now opened to the public.

Updated costings for Network Rail's programme show that the costs are now forecast at around £2.8 billion. The additional costs are the result of some work taking longer than planned and have been managed by Network Rail from within its own internal budgets. No further funding has been provided from Government, and this has not had an impact on any other programmes.

Further details on Crossrail Limited's funding and finances in the period to 29 May 2019 are set out in the table below.

The coming months will be critical for the project as Crossrail Ltd work to complete the installation and integration of the tunnel, stations and signalling systems, and Network Rail continue their works on surface sections of the route. It remains a hugely complex project and uncertainty and risk remains across the programme, with significant testing and integration work remaining. The new leadership team has committed to being fully open and transparent as it works through the final stages of the project, which is supported by the Department and TfL. However, it is positive that Crossrail Ltd now has a new plan in place to complete the outstanding works and bring the Elizabeth Line into passenger service at the earliest possible date. When complete, the Elizabeth Line will transform the rail network in London, reducing overcrowding and increasing central London rail capacity by 10%.

During the passage of the Crossrail Bill through Parliament, a commitment was given that an annual statement would be published until the completion of the construction of Crossrail, setting out information about the project's funding and finances. The relevant information is as follows:

Total funding amounts provided to Crossrail Limited by the Department for Transport and TfL in relation to the construction of Crossrail to the end of the period (22 July 2008 to 29 May 2019)	£13,165,913,790
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Expenditure incurred (including committed land and property spend not yet paid out) by Crossrail Limited in relation to the construction of Crossrail in the period (30 May 2018 to 29 May 2019) (excluding recoverable VAT on Land and Property purchases)	£1,481,243,170
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Total expenditure incurred (including committed land and property spend not yet paid out) by Crossrail Limited in relation to the construction of Crossrail to the end of the period (22 July 2008 to 29 May 2019) (excluding recoverable VAT on Land and Property purchases) £13,958,459,007

The amounts realised by the disposal of any land or property for the purposes of the construction of Crossrail by the Secretary of State, TfL or Crossrail Limited in the period covered by the statement. £143,778,674

The numbers above are drawn from Crossrail Limited's books of account and have been prepared on a consistent basis with the update provided last year. The figure for expenditure incurred includes monies already paid out in relevant period, including committed land and property expenditure where this has not yet been paid. It does not include future expenditure on contracts that have been awarded.