

Performance update – Continuing improvements

Our endeavours to improve performance and provide a better customer experience are continuing to deliver much improved planning appeal handling times. A total of 67 inspectors have been recruited this year and are dealing with appeals. This has allowed our more experienced inspectors to concentrate on the older, more complex appeals that were waiting to be decided. Since the beginning of the year this has reduced the number of older cases in the system by 50%.

Over the past 3 months we have delivered a record of around 3,700 appeal decisions, this is the highest number for the second quarter running this year. Our customers are also seeing their planning appeals, handled through the Written Representation process, being decided on average within 20 – 25 weeks and 42% in 18 weeks.

Rosewell Review

The recommendations of the Rosewell Review are proving to be effective resulting in the first 22 cases being decided within 26 weeks; 21 of these cases were decided in 24 weeks. Since March, the Inquiry event for more than 80 planning appeal inquiries has been scheduled within 13 to 16 weeks from the start of the appeal.

We know the time taken to deal with Enforcement appeals is not meeting expectations. To improve this, we are working on improving our processes and making better use of digital technology. We have appointed more than 20 additional Enforcement inspectors and case officers to deal with these. We expect that new appeals, from January 2020 that follow the written representations procedure, will meet our current target of 36 weeks. With the intention of improving the time taken to deal with Enforcement Inquiry cases, we are also going to trial the principles of the Rosewell Review.

Putting customers at the heart of everything we do

Our determination to improve the service we offer to customers doesn't end with deciding appeals quickly. We also want to make it easier for customers to do business with us.

We have an ongoing project to transform our end-to-end delivery process by:

- Making it easier for our customers to do business with us
- Supporting our staff to work as efficiently and effectively as possible
- Maximising the use of digital opportunities
- Providing excellent value for money for taxpayers

A new planning appeals portal is currently being developed to make it easier for customers to submit and participate in the appeal process. This new portal helps guide the customer through making submissions to ensure they submit the correct documents and automatically validated appeals. Once appeals are received, customers will be able to track progress via the portal's clear timeline.

This new service went live in August with 27 local authorities in East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent. These authorities are testing the service on s.78 planning appeals suitable to be decided by written representation procedure. As the service is tested and improved, we will be expanding the number of appeals processed via the service.

Implementing a more effective and efficient structure

To achieve our goal of putting customers at the heart of everything we do, we are also changing the way we are structured. We have created a slimmed down, more effective management team to focus on delivering an outstanding service to our customers, to look to the future, making the right strategic decisions.

The new structure will also make the processing of appeals more efficient by inspector and case work teams working together at the very the start of an appeal.

Our work to improve performance and our customer's experience is continuing. We will keep you updated here.

[A British-led fleet rotation 'Tractable' reached Lithuania](#)

Earlier this week the British Ambassador to Lithuania, Brian Olley, journeyed to Šeštokai to see the rail exchange point, where standard and broad gauge railways meet.

British Ambassador Brian Olley in Sestokai

'Tractable' is the British Army's name for the complex, large-scale movement by sea, rail, air and road move of a wide variety of armoured, combat-ready vehicles from the UK and Germany to the UK enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup based in Tapa, Estonia. These will replace one-for-one the vehicles currently based there.

TRACTABLE in Sestokai

The Ambassador met at Šeštokai with Brigadier Jo Chestnutt, the Commander of 104 Logistic Support Brigade (UK). This brigade, in partnership with Lithuanian Railways, has been trans-loading a fleet of heavy armoured vehicles, which includes Challenger 2 main battle tanks, AS90 artillery weapons and Warrior infantry fighting vehicles and today were working hard alongside their Lithuanian military and civilian colleagues to get the vehicles on their way.

British Ambassador Brian Olley meets Brigadier Jo Chestnutt

The UK Defence Attache to Lithuania, Major Thomas O'Boy said:

This rotation of our vehicle fleet presented a unique opportunity to test military mobility across Europe, and in doing so, demonstrate the UK's commitment to the collective defence of Lithuania and our other NATO allies. I've been hugely impressed by the diligence and professionalism of both the Lithuanian and UK logistics planners.

Liaison officers were established in all of the countries: including in Vilnius, where Lieutenant Ross Turner has been embedded with the Lithuanian Defence Staff and NATO Force Integration Unit.

TRACTABLE crew in Sestokai

[ESFA Update: 30 October 2019](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Latest information and actions from the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academies, schools, colleges, local authorities and further education providers.

[Decarbonising the UK's industry: apply](#)

for phase 1 funding

Some of the UK's most economically active and industrially intensive areas are also some of the largest producers of carbon emissions, with around a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions being produced by industry.

Two competitions aim to help the UK achieve net zero emissions by 2050 as part of the Industrial Decarbonisation challenge, part of the government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

The Industrial Decarbonisation challenge will commit £170 million towards deploying technologies like carbon capture and hydrogen networks in industrial clusters, supporting the Industrial Clusters Mission to establish the world's first net zero industrial cluster by 2040.

Competition 1 – deployment

UK businesses will have the opportunity to apply for a share of up to £1 million to develop plans for decarbonising an industrial cluster.

Successful applicants from phase 1 will then compete for phase 2, where up to £131 million will be awarded for projects that will deliver, or support delivery of, significant emissions reductions in a UK industrial cluster by 2030.

Deployment phase 1 information

Your project must:

- have total eligible costs between £60,000 and £200,000
- be led by a UK business
- be collaborative
- last between 3 and 4 months
- aim to carry out the project work in the UK and exploit the results across other UK industrial clusters

Timeline

Competition 2 – roadmaps

UK organisations can apply for a share of up to £1 million to prepare plans for their journey to achieving low carbon and net zero industrial clusters.

In phase 2 up to £8 million will be awarded for the development of industrial cluster decarbonisation roadmaps for major UK industrial clusters. These must set out how a cluster could be decarbonised to net-zero levels.

Roadmaps phase 1 information

Your project:

- must have total eligible costs between £40,000 and £120,000
- can be carried out by a single organisation or in collaboration – which we encourage
- must demonstrate how it will collaborate within a cluster
- can last between 3 and 4 months
- can be led by a UK registered business of any size, a research organisation, public sector organisation, charity or academic institution
- must carry out its project work in the UK
- must intend to exploit the results in at least one UK industrial cluster

Timeline

[HMS Pembroke back in action after Fife refit](#)

The work was carried out on the Sandown-class mine countermeasures vessel (MCMV) by about 50 Babcock International employees plus specialist sub-contractors.

The Rosyth team upgraded the ship's sonar and communications systems, overhauled her propulsion systems and generators, and improved her fresh water tanks.

Defence Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

The HMS Pembroke refit is another example of the impressive engineering skills of our Scottish dockyards.

The upgraded vessel will return to carrying out the vital work of finding and destroying underwater threats and keeping shipping lanes safe. I wish HMS Pembroke and her crew well on their next tasking.

She can operate in deep and exposed waters, using clearance divers or a SeaFox remote-controlled underwater vehicle to deal with hazards at depths of up to 200 metres.

After a refit that was on time and within budget, HMS Pembroke completed sea

acceptance trials off the Scottish and Norwegian coasts a day ahead of schedule.

She will now re-join her six sister ships as part of the Faslane Flotilla at Scotland's largest military establishment, HM Naval Base Clyde.

Two of the Faslane ships are permanently based in the Gulf and Indian Ocean, where they work with local militaries to promote peace and stability in the region and support the international effort to ensure the safe transit of oil and other goods.

HMS Pembroke destroying a mine. Crown Copyright

Nick Fernandes, team leader, Defence Equipment & Support, said:

This is a great achievement for Defence Equipment & Support, Babcock and HMS Pembroke's own crew, whose project management skills and collaborative working demonstrates once again our commitment to continuous improvement.

Lieutenant Commander Richard Kemp, commanding officer of HMS Pembroke, said:

It's been a real team effort from Babcock, the sub-contractors, DE&S and my own ship's company to get Pembroke out in such great shape.

That we have managed to sail through all of our trials in such a short time and pass them all with flying colours really goes to show what great work has gone on over the past nine months. We're now ready to start delivering on operations wherever we are needed.

Rosyth dockyard has developed a specialism in refitting Royal Navy MCMVs and patrol vessels. Prior to the work on HMS Pembroke, HMS Penzance underwent a successful 10-month refit.

Of all the £1.69 billion that Defence procurement spends with Scottish businesses each year, approximately one billion is invested in ship building and maintenance, including submarines, supporting 5,500 jobs in the Scottish private sector.

In September 2019, the Ministry of Defence announced that Babcock is its preferred bidder to build five T31 frigates at an average production cost of £250 million per ship.

Babcock expects the Type 31 programme to sustain about 1,250 highly-skilled roles in multiple locations across the UK including Rosyth, the central build

and integration site. All five vessels will be delivered by the end of 2028.

Sean Donaldson, managing director of Babcock's Rosyth site, said:

We were delighted to complete the refit of HMS Pembroke on time and look forward to carrying out similar packages of work on the other minehunter vessels.