

Report by OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: UK response, October 2022

Mr Chair, I wish to thank the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr Mecacci, for his presentation. Matteo – your comprehensive comments remind us of the importance of ODIHR's work across all OSCE participating States in implementing our human dimension commitments. Thank you to you and your team for all you work on this, especially during this particularly challenging time, and for continuing to deliver on your mandate effectively and impartially.

As we are all aware, the OSCE has faced new challenges since Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and I commend ODIHR's work in addressing these. Firstly, Director Mecacci, I welcomed your steadfast joint-statements responding to [the sham "referenda" in temporarily controlled territories of Ukraine](#) and [the attempted illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory](#) that followed.

Secondly, as you mentioned, ODIHR's Monitoring Initiative has provided important [interim reporting](#) into violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights in the course of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We await the publication of the second report. Such monitoring and reporting are key to understanding the full scale of violations and abuses of international law.

Thirdly, the UK welcomes ODIHR's support to national and international human rights accountability processes and mechanisms – such as the provision of expert monitoring and reporting, and the facilitation of prosecution and investigation platforms.

Additionally, ODIHR has continued its critical work on the integration of migrants, anti-discrimination and hate crimes and human trafficking across the OSCE region – including the facilitation of practical training to those working on the ground in Ukraine – such as the recent course for civil society and frontline responders on addressing human trafficking.

This year, much of our time in this forum has rightly been used to discuss Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, but I wanted to take a moment to also highlight the important work of ODIHR in other parts of the OSCE region.

I'd like to thank the Polish Chair, Director Mecacci and all those who contributed to the success of this year's [Human Dimension Conference in Warsaw](#) which brought together over one thousand participants from international organisations, government and civil society from across the OSCE to assess our Human Dimension commitments. The plenary sessions, round tables and side events brought with them thought-provoking discussion and concrete recommendations – demonstrating the huge value of such a platform. I'd like to echo the Director's regret that consensus could not be reached on

the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and share in his hope that this achievable next year.

Throughout 2022, ODIHR has continued assisting participating States through the provision of needs assessments and election observation missions, with 14 missions across the OSCE region.

We continue to support ODIHR's election observation methodology, which recognises an election is a process and considers the key elements of participating States' electoral systems, including the effectiveness and impartiality of the election administration, the legislative framework, the nature of campaigns (including the media environment), and the protection of fundamental civil and political rights. We continue to believe that strengthening our democratic institutions and practices is a continuous process, and ODIHR's clear recommendations to each country help all of us improve our electoral processes. They also provide a useful starting point to inform ODIHR's needs assessments for future election observation missions, helping ensure each of our individual democracies can be supported appropriately, and in a way that builds on past successes and addresses previous failings.

Director Mecacci, this year has demonstrated more than ever the huge importance of approaching security comprehensively – incorporating the politico-military dimension, the economic and environmental dimension and the human dimension. This year the actions of the Russian Federation and Belarusian regime have demonstrated the link between internal oppression and external aggression. This was clearly outlined in the most recent [Moscow Mechanism report in the case of Russia](#). We must learn from this and fund the crucial work of ODIHR accordingly. Any effort to restore peace in the OSCE region must be comprehensive and must include work in the human dimension.

Let us recognise now what we recognised half a century ago, security across the OSCE region can only be sustained when human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy are guaranteed for all within it.

Thank you.

[Minister Keegan reaffirms important UK-Egypt ties on first visit to Cairo](#)

Press release

Ahead of COP27 and on her first official visit to Egypt, UK Minister for Africa, Gillian Keegan, reaffirmed UK-Egypt partnership and thanked Egypt for its leadership on the climate change agenda.



Minister Keegan met with Foreign Minister and COP President Sameh Shoukry to discuss how the UK and Egypt can work together to secure the best outcome in the upcoming climate negotiations. The Minister also discussed a number of regional files with the Foreign Minister, thanking Egypt for its role in seeking stability across the Middle East & North Africa.

As part of Cairo Water Week, the Minister delivered opening remarks at an event hosted by the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), and met British business people in Egypt to discuss the significant opportunities that exist for UK investment and expansion in Egypt, particularly in the renewables and green sectors. She also met with Egyptian Energy Minister Dr Mohamed Shaker, discussing how UK firms can best invest in Egypt's booming renewables and green technology market, including solar, wind, and green hydrogen.

Speaking after the visit, Gillian Keegan said:

In less than a month, Egypt will host the world's leaders for the United Nations climate conference, COP27, and it is essential that the negotiations are a success. After meeting with my Egyptian counterparts, I am heartened by the effort, the energy, and the enthusiasm shown by the Egyptian government in its preparations.

I was grateful for the opportunity to meet with young Egyptian leaders, both those working on climate, and young entrepreneurs. I was struck by the dynamism and the passion on display. We owe it to these young people, and to future generations, to make real progress in a month's time.

Whilst in Cairo, I also met the family of Alaa Abd El-Fattah to express the UK's sympathy and our commitment to his case. Mr El-Fattah is a dual Egyptian-British national: gaining consular access and ultimately securing his release is a priority for the UK. I raised our strong concerns about his ongoing detention with Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.

Performance update – October 2022

News story

On a monthly basis, we publish the latest official statistics on appeals performance, which represent the highest volume (in terms of number of cases) of the work of the Planning Inspectorate.



[Planning Inspectorate statistical release 20 October 2022](#)

In summary:

Appeals

- Our appeal cases are dealt with in one of three ways; written representations, hearings, or inquiries. [New Ministerial performance measures](#) were announced earlier this year including an expectation to reduce average decision times over time. Since April we have been holding hearings for planning appeals much sooner and those appeals are now being decided between 24 and 26 weeks. This is about half the time they were taking previously.
- While we are still working through previously submitted hearings cases the average across all hearings cases will remain higher for a period of time.
- Decisions on appeals dealt with by hearing saw the fastest monthly median of the past 12 months in September (44 weeks) and inquiries the second fastest in the 12 months (36 weeks). Across all our appeal cases, the median time to decide a case in September 2022 was 29 weeks. This is the longest in the last 12 months and is driven by longer decision times for the appeals decided by written representation. Our next area of focus will be to start improving times for these cases.

- The overall number of open cases at the end of September was 14,260. We received 1,636 new cases in September and closed 1,358 (including withdrawn cases)
- In more than 30 Local Planning Authorities (LPA) across the country appeals are now being submitted using our new digital service using a [new process aimed at making the service easier, faster and more cost-effective](#). Building on a smaller pilot earlier this year, the 'beta' process has introduced a more intuitive appeal submission process and new LPAs will be added to the service in the coming months

Local Plans

- There are currently 60 live Local Plan examinations in progress. Local Plans help to protect communities from speculative or unwanted proposals. We encourage Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to use our advisory visits to help them get their plans in good shape and deal with challenges well before submission.
- We completed the examinations of two Local Plans in September and have completed three so far in October. Our final report on each has been issued to the relevant LPA so they can decide how to finalise and adopt their plan.

National Infrastructure

- We have a high number of [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects \(NSIPs\)](#) at various stages. They include 68 national infrastructure schemes where we are providing advice before submission, 14 applications being considered by us and 11 applications where we have completed our recommendations and the Secretary of State's decision is awaited. Those 11 include:
 1. Boston Alternative Energy Facility, which involves constructing of a 102MWe energy from waste facility
 2. A1 in Northumberland, which will provide thirteen miles of upgrades to dual the carriageway linking Morpeth and Alnwick bypasses with the dual carriageway near Ellingham, to create a continuous dual carriageway from Newcastle to Ellingham.
 3. Keadby 3 Carbon Capture Power Station, combined cycle gas turbine (CCGT) power station with a capacity of up to 910 megawatts electrical output (gross), carbon capture and compression plant, electrical, gas, and cooling water connections.
- We continue to meet the statutory deadlines for infrastructure applications as part of continuing to focus on casework with the most community interest and those key to supporting the nation's economic

growth.

- Earlier this month the application to improve the interchange between the [A47 and A11 Thickthorn Junction](#) was given development consent by the Secretary of State for Transport. It followed an examination during which the public, statutory consultees and other interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Planning Inspectorate.

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[Collaborating with U.S. on Cyber](#)

News story

Strategic Command is working with the U.S. Cyber Command and other partners on a joint operation to improve interoperability and strengthen cyber resilience.



Personnel from Defence Digital will be joining the collaborative exercise which will identify threats that could impact the internal systems of participants.

Insights from the operation will be shared with all partners in the interest of bolstering security and unifying our response to malicious cyber activity.

Rear Admiral Nick Washer, Director Operations at Defence Digital said:

Cyber does not recognise geographic borders. Our relationships with partners offer huge shared benefits; operations like this with U.S. Cyber Command put our expertise into practice and enhance our collective defence.

This sentiment was echoed by U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Matthew C. Paradise, deputy director, Operations J-3, U.S. Cyber Command, who added

Defensive Cyberspace Operations helps CYBERCOM meet its mission responsibilities by enabling and improving mission assurance of the joint force, as well as our allies and partners, by maintaining reliable and defensible networks

The information age is making the world more interconnected than ever before, driving opportunity, innovation, and progress. However, this increased digitisation also brings unprecedented complexity, instability and risk, making global partnerships key to our security and economic prosperity.

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[Runaway engineering train at London Liverpool Street station](#)

News story

Runaway engineering train at London Liverpool Street station, 2 October 2022.



The stopping point of the train (courtesy of Network Rail)

At about 11:52 hrs on 2 October 2022, an unattended freight train ran away from platform 3 at London Liverpool Street station. The signaller was alerted to the train's movement by track sections in the throat of the station showing occupied unexpectedly. The incident happened within a part of the station that was, at the time, under possession for engineering work. The unattended train travelled about 150 metres, before coming to a stop within the possession limits. No one was injured as a result of the incident,

although a set of points which the train ran through were damaged.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

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