



Hedley Ayres
Audit Manager
Crossrail Investigation
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road,
London, SW1W 9SP

3 December 2018

Dear Mr Ayres

NAO Crossrail Investigation

I write on behalf [Save Ealing's Centre](#) (SEC)ⁱ regarding NAO's upcoming audit of the Crossrail project. SEC requests that you include the delivery of the western section of Crossrail as part of your investigation into the management of the project overall. Station works on this section ought to be complete by now. After years of delay they have barely begun. Even their designs remain unknown

SEC wants to highlight how the governance and project management failures on the Crossrail project the NAO is now investigating, extend along the whole Crossrail route and are not confined to the central section. Particular attention must be given to Network Rail's involvement in the project, especially the issues of governance and accountability between Network Rail, TfL and DfT.

My comments centre on Ealing Broadway station as it is what I am most familiar with but except for Hanwell where Crossrail involves a minimal upgrade, Ealing Broadway's problems have been similar to the other stations on the Western section. We have watched with some envy the progress being reported on the Central section of the route while schedules in the west have been pushed back without explanation and the specification of improvements to the stations on this section have been reduced through value reengineering exercises.

Ealing Broadway Station has long been regarded as seriously overcrowded with steep flights of stairs presenting access difficulties for passengers with luggage, never mind those who are disabled. 2011 promises work that would start early to resolve some these problems soon proved illusory but by 2016 Crossrail was assuring us improvements to the station would be delivered by Summer 2018.

By Summer 2018, no work had started on site. Instead we were told Network rail was refining the redesign of the station for reasons never explained. How can such redesigns have been necessary so late in the day? Since the Summer, further rumours have arisen that for various reason Crossrail cannot now deliver the station upgrade whose design has been emblazoned on its hoardings since it was approved in 2014.

Even if these problems are overcome, the upgrade cannot possibly be completed now before the commencement of the full Elizabeth Line Service. This means major construction work still taking place even as the additional passengers expected to use the station start to do so. It will cause serious inconvenience, congestions and risks to public safety that should not have been necessary.

SEC and other local groups repeatedly flagged our concerns to Andrew Wolstenholme (then Crossrail CEO), Val Shawcross (Deputy Mayor for Transport), Caroline Pidgeon, (Chair of the GLA Transport Committee), Dr Rupa Huq (our MP), the BBC and to Ealing Council but our concerns remained unheeded. A major problem is that it has never been clear where responsibility for the delays rest. Crossrail's joint sponsors, TfL and the DfT, just [point their finger at Network Rail](#) who they say have sole responsibility for its delivery. Something is very seriously wrong.

Questions for the NAO's inquiry

It now appears the problems we tried to raise underlie the project as a whole. Had they been addressed earlier, they would have been dealt with at less cost to the public. Save Ealing's Centre, thinks these experiences raise important questions that relate to the goals stated for your inquiry:

1. Governance and oversight: Ealing Broadway highlights a key weakness of the delivery strategy for Crossrail. While DfT and TfL are ultimately accountable for the project, Network Rail is responsible for delivering the vast majority of track and station works along the western sections. What systems monitor progress and escalate issues when required? Who is ultimately accountable when delivery goes awry? When the public see things are not right how can they alert those responsible? These are key questions your inquiry should investigate.
2. Cost overruns: Delays, redesigns and several retendering exercises have added costs to the overall project. Why were successive redesigns of Ealing's stations required? How much was actually saved since the project inception by the value engineering and what has the cost been to the functionality of the station, and to its future capacity?
3. Delivery: What work will now be done actually to deliver the long-promised capacity upgrade? How will it be financed and what oversight will there be? How will this outcome compare with the specification of the project in the Crossrail Act?

Lessons need to be learned to ensure that complex projects of this nature do not repeat them in future. We hope that the NAO will be able to investigate and provide an explanation for the concerns we have consistently raised. The project's longstanding mismanagement of Ealing Broadway's upgrade will provide your investigation with a case study of the problems that have lain unrecognised with the project as a whole.

I hope you will take SEC's request on board. If you require any further information, including copies of correspondence with key authorities, please let me know. In any event, I look forward to hearing from you.

I am copying this letter to my MP, Dr Rupa Huq who has raised her concerns about Crossrail's delays.

Yours sincerely

Will French
Chair Save Ealing's Centre

ⁱ [SEC](#) is one of a number of numerous Ealing based groups who have sought since the enactment of the Crossrail Bill to engage with Crossrail with regard to its 5 stations in the Borough of Ealing. Both current and previous local MPs helped set up numerous meetings in Westminster and locally with the Crossrail team to learn how the project would be implemented in the Borough.