**Protocol for:**

**Site visits by or on behalf of CoST to ongoing public infrastructure works**

# Distinction between official and unofficial monitoring visits

This protocol relates to any visit by a CoST Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG) member or representative (including a designated Independent Review team member) to a public infrastructure project or other area (such as a works yard, borrow-pit or quarry) where construction-related activities are taking place. A distinction is drawn between:

* **Official** (generally pre-planned) visits where a designated MSG representative visits a site in the course of a formally mandated review of the scope, quality and observed physical context of data disclosure. In this case, the MSG representative may, with the authority of the Procuring Entity and the permission of the contractor, enter the contractor’s working area, and participate in relevant discussions; and
* **Unofficial** (generally ad-hoc) visits, where any MSG member or citizen simply makes observations as a member of the public. He or she may not enter the contractor’s working area without express permission, should not enter into any discussion with the contractor or sub-contractor, and should not claim any MSG mandate.

# Health & Safety

Construction sites are potentially dangerous places to visit and work. The minimum requirement for any MSG-mandated site visit, whether official or unofficial, is to wear a high visibility reflective vest, and (if visiting at night) to carry a bright torch. Where relevant risks are evident, or where required by the contractor, it may be necessary for visitors to wear hard hats and/or steel-toed safety boots. In some cases, contractors are required under their contracts to issue suitable safety equipment to official visitors.

The contractor is responsible for all aspects of health and safety within his working area. This includes responsibility for the safety of his own operatives, of visitors, of nearby citizens, and even of trespassers. Sub-contracting all or part of the works has the effect of increasing, rather than decreasing, the responsibilities of the main contractor in this regard, as it is necessary for a main contractor to ensure that all sub-contractors’ staff receive appropriate guidance and training in both safety and quality management.

# Contractual relationships and lines of accountability

It is important for MSG visitors to understand and respect contractual relationships and lines of accountability on site. Under the main agreement, the Contractor has a contractual relationship with the Government procuring entity, which then delegates supervisory powers to a supervising Engineer. This Engineer, with or without a supporting team, may work for a government entity, or be a hired Consultant, and is responsible for administering the contract and supervising the works. Only the designated Supervising Engineer can issue instructions to the Contractor. An exception to this rule arises in the case of an observed imminent risk of injury, where anyone may, and professionally qualified people must, alert the contractor to a significant observed risk. The Contractor is contractually free to choose whether and how to respond to any non-contractual intervention, such as by a visiting politician or government official.

Official lines of accountability need to be respected by those responsible for both Government audits and non-government monitoring, including when undertaken in the name of the CoST MSG. It is important in this regard to understand that MSG/Independent Review Team monitoring of construction sites is limited to making observations, asking questions and where appropriate raising concerns about what is observed. It does not, and must not, extend to making technical judgements, for which others are responsible.

# Preparing for a site visit

**Any visit**

* **Be clear** about its purpose. What are the key objectives you hope to achieve?
* **Be prepared**. In addition to being familiar with the basic features of the contract, you should:
  + Familiarise yourself with any available information about what should be happening, in terms of location, construction standards, scope, drawings, works programme, reported progress and known commitments entered into by the named contractor;
  + Obtain copies of any necessary tools, including relevant checklists and forms and other stationery;
  + Try, if possible, to use a camera. Check that the date and time are set correctly, that they will appear as imprints on the images, and that you have spare batteries and adequate storage space. Many smartphone cameras now embed approximate GPS location data in the jpg file;
  + Pack any necessary Health and Safety equipment, including a high visibility vest, and adequate drinking water for the duration of the visit. On official visits, the high visibility vest may display a reference to the CoST MSG.

**Official visits**

* **Cooperate** closely with the procuring entity in order to respect and maintain the sense of common purpose, which is to improve performance.
* **Be prepared** if necessary to take basic measurements. Though it may be appropriate in some circumstances to bring a tape measure (such as to check whether a basic dimension such as road width matches what is specified) and/or thermometer (such as to check whether the ambient temperature is within specified limits for certain operations to take place), this is not generally necessary.

**Other (ad hoc) visits**

* **Coordinate** with the MSG, ideally in advance, or (in the case of a chance observation) by telephone with the CoST Manager.

# Conducting an official site visit

Focus on asking simple questions and avoid making technical judgements. In the process always be:

* **Polite;**
* **Professional;** but nevertheless
* **Persistent and focused.**

Always clarify **who is responsible** for the management of any site or operation you are observing. If it is a subcontractor, ask for details of the company. If such information is withheld, simply record that fact. It is better to focus on a small number of important and definite observations than to try to complete all aspects of every possible checklist.

The primary focus should normally by on monitoring **Physical progress** (ideally by using a linear progress monitoring tool) and comparing the results with what has been reported. In addition, without making technical judgements, it is important to look out for issues **indirectly relating to Quality.** These typically include evidence of systems, procedures and practices related to:

* **Materials**. On many sites, it is possible to observe factors related to the storage, protection, and quality of materials, such as cement. Particularly on road sites, it may also be possible to observe and make a note of the nature and source of base & sub-base material and to compare this information with what is reported;
* **Methods**. Evidence of effective performance and quality management by the contractor. The use of pegs, lines and levels, and evidence of on-site direction and guidance and direction are positive indications. Idle equipment or operatives, and disjointed or unsafe working practices are negative indications. The presence and activity on site of the supervising Engineer and support staff should be noted.
* **Results.** Evidence of construction defects being identified and corrected as areas of particular interest, as this indicates that systems are working. It is important to clearly understand in this regard that the contractor is responsible for quality management of the works and should not ask the supervising engineer to inspect some aspect of the works until the contractor’s own records indicate likely compliance with the specifications.

When reporting on quality-related issues, stick to verifiable facts, and where possible focus on underlying systems and procedures rather than on specific defects observed. Legitimate questions include such basic items as:

* The name of the individual responsible for quality management (both for the construction functions (the contractor) and the supervision functions (the consultant, or the government engineer);
* The date of the latest quality plan (in each case);
* The location of various records including those related to the delivery of materials, testing regimes etc.; and
* Typical reported pass rates for Requests for Inspections (RFIs – the means by which the contractor asks the supervising Engineer to check on specific works that, in accordance with the contractor’s own quality management system, should meet the requirements specified in the contract.)

# Reporting on a site visit

Site visit reports should wherever possible follow a standard pre-determined template, and primarily consist of a record of simple repeatable observations that are:

* **Factual**, stating what was observed, and **not straying into assumptions and/or judgements**;
* **Precise**, including relevant details such as the time, the weather (including temperature if potentially extreme), and exact location, as well as any other relevant, or potentially relevant measurements or observations made. Most such measurements will not warrant reference in Assurance Report, but could prove relevant at a later time;
* **Concise**, avoiding text that dilutes the core message. Include photographs if possible; and
* **Verifiable**. Would your report help someone else to make the same or similar observations?

In the case of visits undertaken as part of an Assurance process, concise summaries of site visit reports would typically be included as Annexes to the main report.