

Helen Dennis

Call 2013



Helen Dennis has a broad commercial practice, with particular specialism in construction, technology, energy, engineering, insurance and professional negligence disputes, often with an international element. She is regularly instructed in the context of both litigation and arbitration, either as sole counsel or junior counsel.

Helen has a wide range of experience working on high value domestic and international disputes, in a range of courts within England and Wales as well as having worked on both ad hoc arbitrations and arbitrations under a variety of institutional rules, seated both in the UK and abroad. Many of her cases involve complex, large-scale projects and disputes and require examination of detailed technical and legal matters. She has experience of arbitrations governed by foreign laws including the laws of Hong Kong, Switzerland and the UAE.

Helen has been recognised in the Legal 500 directory as a Leading Junior in the field of construction, where recent feedback included: *“Helen has strong legal knowledge coupled with strong business acumen and understanding of practical implications and strategic considerations for the client”* and *“she is excellent with the details in complex construction cases”*.

As a keen linguist, Helen has been instructed in a number of international disputes involving French and German documents and welcomes future instructions requiring expertise in either language. Helen also receives instructions to obtain injunctions at short notice in both the Commercial and Technology and Construction Courts.

Helen’s practice spans the following areas:

- Construction, Technology, Energy and Engineering
- International Arbitration
- Professional Negligence
- Commercial Litigation and Insurance

Construction, Technology, Energy & Engineering

Helen has significant experience of a range of construction, technology, energy and engineering disputes, in the context of litigation, arbitration and adjudication. She acts for a variety of parties including developers, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants. Many of her cases involve a cross-border element. She is familiar with main standard form contracts used for projects in both the UK and internationally, in addition to having experience of working with bespoke agreements and on cases concerning complex PFI projects.

Her experience spans a variety of sectors. In the context of energy disputes, her experience includes nuclear, biomass power, energy from waste and CFB plants. In relation to construction and engineering disputes, she has a wide range of experience including of large residential and mixed-use developments, infrastructure and transport projects (including rail, highways and bridges), retail and commercial developments, healthcare and shipbuilding projects. Helen is used to engaging with complex legal and technical issues which arise in such cases. Her experience encompasses work as sole counsel or as part of a team, including being led in chambers by Sean Brannigan KC, Rachel Ansell KC, Duncan McCall KC, Ben Pilling KC, James Leabeater KC and Jessica Stephens KC.

Featured Construction, Technology, Energy & Engineering cases

Advising and representing a construction client in relation to a complex domestic final account dispute

Being instructed as sole counsel to advise and represent a client in a multi-party dispute concerning various allegations of technical defects including in relation to excavation, drainage, groundworks, structural elements and poured concrete components

Regularly representing clients in adjudications

Advising and/or representing clients in relation to new causes of action arising out of the Building Safety Act 2022 including in respect of Building Liability Orders and Remedial Contribution Orders

Acting as sole counsel in a case concerning the construction of a utilities infrastructure maintenance contract

Being instructed as part of a team of counsel in relation to a high-value, complex, multinational dispute, seated in the Asia-Pacific region and in the context of a dispute concerning a state of the art power station

Acting as sole counsel in a case concerning the construction of a utilities infrastructure maintenance contract

Being instructed as sole counsel in a dispute concerning an IT services contract

Acting as junior counsel in a significant and high value international arbitration seated in the Asia-Pacific region relating to alleged defects to a bridge and involving consideration of issues within the scope of structural, chemical and mechanical engineering

Being instructed as junior counsel in relation to a high value arbitral dispute arising out of a power plant construction project in Africa, involving parties from multiple jurisdictions

Advising various parties as to prospective claims available to or against them subsequent to the entering into force of the Building Safety Act 2022, including the retrospective extension of the limitation period applicable to claims under the Defective Premises Act 1972

Being instructed as sole counsel in a high value adjudication concerning a historic project. Issues related to termination

as well as the valuation of the final account

Acting as junior counsel in a substantial dispute in the TCC concerning a domestic housing development project

Regularly advising on and/or being instructed to enforce or defend enforcement of adjudication decisions

Advising a local authority regarding potential claims arising out of the discovery of drainage infrastructure in the course of construction works

Being instructed as junior counsel in a TCC dispute concerning alleged fire safety defects to a public building

Representing defendant contractors as junior counsel in relation to a final account dispute which also raised issues as to validity of termination

Acting as sole counsel in relation to a high-value domestic arbitration concerning fire safety defects

Being instructed as sole counsel representing an international retailer in relation to a claim against various construction contractors and professionals in relation to drainage and subsidence defects

Acting as junior counsel in a substantial claim between contractor and sub-contractor concerning fire safety defects

Succeeding in obtaining an interim mandatory injunction at short notice in relation to an ongoing construction project

Being instructed in a multi-party TCC dispute concerning allegations of cladding, glazing, structural and fire safety defects in a number of residential buildings in the UK.

Acting as junior counsel on a claim relating to a high profile construction project in the Middle East involving a large number of high value claims for variations and extensions of time as well as substantial counterclaims and issues of foreign law.

Being instructed as junior counsel in a high value construction adjudication concerning allegations of cladding and fire safety defects.

Acting as sole counsel in a final account adjudication relating to a significant domestic construction project.

Being instructed as sole counsel in a multi-million pound adjudication concerning applications for extensions of time in relation to a high profile energy sector project.

Assisting as junior counsel in an adjudication between international parties in a dispute concerning construction of a large skyscraper complex in the City of London.

Advising buyers of a number of vessels in relation to the operation of the matrix of agreements between the various parties involved, including in the context of termination and as to the effect of certain refund guarantees

Being instructed as sole counsel representing architects in a high value multi-party construction-based professional negligence dispute concerning the development of a large number of luxury apartments and townhouses in Central London.

Acting as junior counsel in a construction defects claim arising from a domestic infrastructure project.

Being instructed in a high value arbitration between joint venture partners in relation to a large infrastructure project.

Representing defendant engineers in a claim concerning the alleged failure of vibro-compaction ground improvement works.

Being instructed to act for engineers in a multi-party TCC dispute relating to a retail development.

Assisting as junior counsel in relation to a claim concerning the interpretation of a significant PFI contract.

Acting in an arbitration in which a technical claim was brought relating to the structural integrity of concrete elements of a design.

An arbitration between shipbrokers and shipbuilders in relation to unpaid commission fees

Being instructed on a high-value arbitration in respect of a significant construction project involving nuclear implicated design and construction.

Assisting on an international arbitration arising out of a micro-tunnelling project.

Working on a multimillion dollar international arbitration concerning disputes as to variations, extensions of time and prolongation costs.

An arbitration in relation to defects on a newly-built vessel

Assisting with the preparation and drafting statements of case for a dispute between a contractor and sub-contractor in relation to refurbishment works being carried out to a building.

Providing assistance in relation to an arbitration concerning a large international airport project.

Working on an adjudication concerning the validity and effect of various contractual payment and payless notices.

Being instructed as sole counsel for a claim for design and manufacturing defects in relation to a bespoke structural project.

International Arbitration

Many of the cases in which Helen has been and is involved are within the sphere of international arbitration. She has extensive experience of advising and representing parties in both ad hoc and institution-based arbitrations including in particular those governed by the ICC rules. Her experience involves advising as to arbitral procedure as well as advising and representing parties in disputes.

She acts for a variety of parties including developers, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants. Helen is often instructed either as junior to a silk or as part of a broader team, in which context she enjoys working together with other members of the counsel and instructing solicitor's team.

Featured International Arbitration cases

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Acting as junior counsel in a significant and high value international arbitration seated in the Asia-Pacific region relating to alleged defects to a bridge and involving consideration of issues within the scope of structural, chemical and mechanical engineering

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Professional Negligence

Helen has experience working on a variety of professional negligence claims spanning various sectors. Cases with which she has assisted include those involving accountants, solicitors, engineers, surveyors, builders, coverholders, insurer's agents and independent financial advisors. She has a particular interest in claims involving alleged technical defects and is often instructed in relation to professional negligence claims concerning construction and engineering projects.

Featured Professional Negligence cases

A case involving allegations of professional negligence against solicitors

Various cases against architects involving allegations of professional negligence in the context of alleged defective design and/or supervision of works

Being instructed as junior counsel in a substantial dispute regarding whether underwriting and claims handling by a coverholder had been conducted in breach of contract and/or common law duty

Acting as sole counsel to represent architects in a high value multi-party construction-based professional negligence dispute concerning the development of a large number of luxury apartments and townhouses in Central London.

Being instructed to represent defendant engineers in a multi-party dispute concerning the alleged failure of vibro-compaction ground improvement works.

Acting as sole counsel in a marine surveyor's negligence case.

Instructed as junior counsel in an international case relating to the deficient design and installation of a secure entry system at the claimant's retail premises in which allegations were made in relation to the door and façade construction.

Instructed as sole counsel to draft the statement of case in a dispute concerning allegations of negligence in relation to a mortgage valuation.

Commercial Litigation and Insurance

Helen has experience of a variety of general commercial disputes and insurance law matters.

Featured Commercial Litigation and Insurance cases

Regularly being instructed to advise on insurance coverage disputes

Acting as sole counsel in a dispute involving allegations of fraud against a letting and property management company

Being instructed in a dispute concerning alleged unpaid commission due to a consultancy service provider

Acting as sole counsel in a dispute concerning alleged unjust enrichment between commercial parties

Being instructed as junior counsel in a dispute between insurance underwriters and coverholders and claims handlers regarding a series of lines of business. Issues raised included questions as to coverage under relevant policies as well as detailed analysis of the binding authority contract and associated duties.

Acting as junior counsel for a high-profile international retailer in relation to obtaining an injunction to shut down an international “fake review” business

Assisting with a high-value dispute concerning a residential development.

Acting as junior counsel in relation to a claim in which urgent interim injunctions were sought.

Being instructed to draft particulars of claim for a case relating to a defective and/or delayed conveyancing transaction.

A claim in relation to the destruction of a luxury yacht.

Advising and drafting statements of case in relation to sale of goods claims.

Being instructed as junior counsel to assist on a case in which interlocutory orders were being sought in relation to fraudulently obtained funds.

Being instructed as sole counsel to draft statements of case in respect of a number of restitutionary claims.

Assisting with a case relating to defective catering equipment.

Acting as sole counsel in relation to a claim to enforce a ship mortgage.

Being instructed on a number of claims to attend hearings concerning charging orders, including those involving insolvency issues.

A claim against a broker dealer in relation to the trading of swaps

A number of disputes involving the valuation of derivatives

A claim concerning alleged misappropriation of money by a bank employee

Other Experience

Before coming to 4 Pump Court Helen spent six months working as a stagiaire at the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg as the Sir Peter Bristow Scholar. During her time there she worked with the cabinets of both Advocate General Sharpston and Judge Vajda where she gained an insight into various European legal issues.

Helen currently assists with advocacy and ethics training at Lincoln's Inn. She is a long-term member of the TECBAR committee and was also recently selected to be a member of the TCC Users Committee.

Publications

- Contributing author to Lexis Nexis' Lexis PSL KnowHow online in respect of Construction Adjudication
- Contributing author to the Practical Law Company's Adjudication service

Education

- LLB Law with European Legal Studies (University of Durham, including a year at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland), First Class
- LLM (University of Cambridge), First Class

Languages

- French (good working knowledge)
- German (good working knowledge)