

James Hatt

Call 2003



James is a highly sought-after commercial senior junior and is noted by the legal directories who say, *“his advocacy is smooth, efficient and incisive, which reflects his powers of analysis and thorough preparation”* (Legal 500 2025 – Professional Negligence)

He regularly acts in high value and complex Commercial Court disputes and is currently acting for Insurers in the Russian aircraft claims matters.

Shipping is a core part of James’ practice, for which he is ranked by Legal 500 and he has wide ranging experience of shipping, shipbuilding and offshore construction disputes for example.

He has gained substantial experience as an advocate in both trials and interim applications: he has appeared as sole advocate before many Courts and Tribunals including the Court of Appeal, the Commercial Court, the Technology and Construction Court and numerous arbitral tribunals, and he is experienced in cross-examining both lay and expert witnesses. A substantial proportion of James’ work is international in nature, involving arbitrations seated in a number of jurisdictions.

James’ practice also focussed on construction, engineering and energy and financial services disputes.

He is available to carry out work on a direct access basis.

Shipping, Shipbuilding and Offshore Construction

James is consistently recommended by Legal 500 for shipping matters. He has substantial experience of shipping, shipbuilding and offshore construction disputes. He is familiar with standard form charterparties (NYPE, Shelltime, BPVOY, Asbatankvoy, etc) and regularly acts in a variety of LMAA charterparty disputes involving, for example, cargo claims, demurrage disputes and bunker claims. He has experience of the standard shipbuilding and ship sale forms (SAJ, Norwegian Saleform).

Featured Shipping, Shipbuilding and Offshore Construction cases

Acting for Chinese shipyard in dispute concerning delivery of US\$53m crude oil tanker.

Acting for charterers in a long-running series of disputes arising under a charterparty on the Shelltime 4 form by reason of state detention of the vessel. The disputes have included issues of frustration and the scope of contractual indemnities in the charterparty.

Acting for Owners in dispute concerning reliquefaction unit on LNG vessel.

Acting in “bad bunker” claims including ARA (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp) region contaminated bunkers.

Acting for a Chinese shipyard in a dispute with a Canadian government entity relating to the delivery of barges.

Advising the drilling equipment sub-contractor in relation to US\$180m SIAC arbitration claim against Singaporean shipyard arising out of contracts for drillships to be delivered in Brazil affected by the “*lava jato*” scandal.

Acting for the limitation defendants in limitation claim brought by owners and insurers of a superyacht which was destroyed by fire.

Appeal to the Commercial Court from an arbitration award concerning the correct approach to speed and performance claims.

Acting for charterers in arbitrations under a COA concerning crude oil shipments to south-east Asia.

Acting for a Korean shipyard in a number of disputes concerning the completion of a substantial decommissioning vessel (under the Netherlands Arbitration Institute Rules).

Acting for purchasers in arbitration concerning cancellation of purchase of bulk carrier on an amended Norwegian Saleform.

Acting for German owners/purchasers in a series of connected arbitrations arising out of delayed construction of a series of vessels by Chinese shipyard.

Acting for Dutch claimant purchasers in Commercial Court proceedings under refund guarantees in connection with construction of bitumen tankers by a Korean shipyard.

Advising owners and P&I Club in general average claims and seaworthiness dispute concerning a cement carrier.

Acting for Indian shipyard in €60m LMAA arbitration concerning claims for extension of time arising out of the delayed construction of Platform Supply Vessels/Offshore Support Vessels (PSV/OSVs).

Acting for contractors in US\$100m LCIA arbitration concerning hook-up work on a major offshore hydrocarbon extraction project.

Acting for Brazilian shipyard in US\$83m ad hoc arbitration concerning upgrade works to semi-submersible drilling unit, including claims for extension of time, prolongation and disruption costs.

Acting for purchasers in US\$20m ad hoc arbitration concerning sale of three tender rigs and associated maintenance contracts.

Construction, Engineering & Energy

James has extensive experience of construction and energy cases, particularly ones with an engineering focus.

Featured Construction, Engineering & Energy cases

Acting for the contractor in an LCIA arbitration arising out of the supply of coal reclaimers and stackers to a mine in Mozambique.

Acting for the main contractor in a US\$150m ICC arbitration against a subcontractor concerning welding and other defects in Heat Recovery Steam Generators in a Middle Eastern Combined Cycle Thermal Plant.

Disputes relating to both commercial and residential waste treatment facilities including acting for the design and build contractor in a dispute with an engineer concerning a Moving Bed Bioreactor (MBBR) sewage treatment plant (STP).

Advising maintenance contractor under PFI contract in relation to alleged defects in London borough housing estate.

Acting for a south-east Asian refinery against Hong Kong claimants in a US\$500m ad hoc arbitration concerning bitumen exports.

Advising the contractor in relation to a dispute concerning a UK cryogenic storage plant.

Advising Chinese metals buyers in relation to a LME arbitration.

Acting for a contractor (and P&I club) in a dispute arising out of well-swap/pipelay work offshore Nigeria.

Acting for providers of offshore seismic surveying services in an ICC arbitration.

Acting for turnkey drilling operator in Commercial Court proceedings concerning provision of semi-submersible drilling rig and associated guarantee claim.

Advising Turkish vendors of chrome ore concentrates in arbitration proceedings against purchasers.

Advising drilling contractor regarding a US\$13m claim from an operator under drilling services agreement.

Acting for main contractor in dispute with piling sub-contractor concerning works at Heathrow Terminal 4 Link Bridge.

Acting for a property developer in a TCC dispute concerning redevelopment of a substantial inner London site.

Acting for the contractor under a major PFI contract in disputes with a local authority.

Acting for a property management company in dispute with offshore trustee owners of UK residential property portfolio.

James has also acted and advised in many cases involving allegations of subsidence caused by tree roots and is familiar with the technical aspects of subsidence claims.

Financial Services

James' experience includes not only cases involving financial instruments ancillary to offshore or other construction contracts (such as performance bonds/guarantees) but also pure financial services matters.

Featured Financial Services cases

Acting for the major claimant groups in the major group litigation in the Chancery Division arising out of the collapse of the £4bn Woodford Equity Income Fund (formerly managed by Neil Woodford).

Acting in TCC injunction proceedings for the façade sub-contractor against main contractor and bank restraining calls on a performance guarantee.

Acting for the defendant Chinese bank in anti-suit injunction proceedings arising out of a refund guarantee in relation to a shipbuilding contract

Acting for the lending bank in a series of successful US\$10-US\$20m summary judgment applications against Brazilian borrowers under facility agreements.

Acting for a Greek bank defending Commercial Court proceedings concerning claim on a payment guarantee in connection with a contract for the construction of a bulk carrier by a Chinese shipyard.

Interest rate swap (IRHP) mis-selling disputes, including FSA/FCA Review scheme and Court proceedings.

Acting for a fund manager and distributor in a dispute with over mistaken investment of pension funds.

Insurance & Reinsurance

James has many years of experience of insurance and reinsurance matters including professional indemnity (PI) cover, marine insurance, aviation insurance, construction all risks (CAR) insurance, jewellers' block policies and high-value domestic home insurance.

Featured Insurance & Reinsurance cases

- Acting for a substantial proportion of the hull all risks (HAR) aviation reinsurance market in ongoing Commercial Court proceedings arising out of the alleged loss of leased aircraft and engines in Russia following the Russia-Ukraine conflict (i.e., the "Operator or OP Claims" being case-managed by Henshaw J and Picken J).

Acting for an HAR reinsurer in recent Commercial Court proceedings concerning the alleged loss of aircraft in Ukraine.

Acting for professional indemnity insurers in a dispute raising aggregation and attachment issues.

Advising insurers in connection with loss of grain from a warehouse in Liberia.

Advising Dutch underwriters in connection with claims arising out of warehouse receipts issued in respect of metals stored in Chinese bonded warehouses.

Advising underwriters in connection with Channel Islands flood risk cover.

Advising underwriters in connection with claims arising out of a transatlantic yacht casualty

Acting for shipowners in a dispute with insurers arising out of hi-jacking of a vessel by Somali pirates.

Acting for insurers in relation to a financial risks reinsurance programme relating to a fleet of civil aircraft.

Professional Negligence & Professional Discipline

James has extensive experience of professional negligence cases with a construction/engineering focus but and also often acts in cases of solicitors' negligence.

Featured Professional Negligence & Professional Discipline cases

Acting for the design and build contractor in TCC claims against the architect relating to fire safety and other defects in the construction of apartment blocks and retail space.

Acting for the architect in TCC proceedings brought by the main contractor alleging fire safety defects in the design of a hospital.

Acting for defendant solicitors in negligence claim concerning drafting of option agreement in property transaction.

Acting in a claim for professional negligence against consulting engineers concerning foundation design.

Acting for insurers in negligence claims against loss adjusters.

Acting and advising in respect of various claims against solicitors and valuers relating to commercial and residential property.

Acting for defendant solicitors in multi-party proceedings concerning allegations of breach of warranty of authority.

Acting for solicitors in a series of cases arising out of alleged mortgage frauds.

Advising and acting in a mediation on behalf of a quantity surveyor alleged to have acted negligently in the preparation of a bill of quantities.

Advising and acting for the defendant architect in a claim brought for allegedly negligent design and supervision of a restaurant conversion.

James also has significant recent experience of professional disciplinary proceedings, having successfully acted for the architects in proceedings before the RIBA Hearings Panel and the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and RIBA Hearings Panel, including both at the investigations stage and at contested final hearings. James can act on direct instructions from architects in disciplinary proceedings (e.g. if professional indemnity insurers do not provide cover). James is also the author of the chapter of the 110th edition of the Architect's Legal Handbook dealing with professional disciplinary proceedings.

General commercial litigation

James' practice includes a wide range of miscellaneous commercial disputes, often with an international element.

Featured General commercial litigation cases

Acting for a US train operator and ex-Virgin licensee in a US\$250m Commercial Court claim brought by the Virgin Group under a Trade Mark Licensing Agreement.

Acting for biotech company in dispute with employment agent, including representation at a mediation.

Advising international businessman on alleged malicious civil prosecution in foreign jurisdiction.

Acting in a jurisdictional dispute concerning international gambling contracts and alleged conspiracy to defraud.

Acting in Chancery Division proceedings concerning beneficial ownership of an international property portfolio.

Acting for the provider of security services in a High Court claim from warehouse client.

Acting for Turkish licensees of a major international TV station in Chancery Division proceedings.

Acting for funders in claims against directors arising out of abortive AIM listing.

Involvement in a number of aviation-related disputes, including acting for the claimant in a small arbitration claim under an aviation chartering agreement, acting for the defendant repairers in a dispute arising out of a contested aircraft lien and acting in High Court proceedings concerning the misappropriation of the deposit for the purchase of a helicopter.

Education

- BA (Oxon) PPE 1st Class
- Dip Law (City)

Languages

- French (working knowledge)

Recommendations

James is listed as a leading junior in the "Shipping" section of The Legal 500 UK. The 2023 edition comments that he is "very calm, thorough and user friendly."