

INFRASTRUCTURE Intelligence

Hannah's an inspiration

Award-winning apprentice Hannah Mehr uses success to inspire others

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Message from the editor



Welcome to the latest edition of our digital magazine, with award-winning apprentice Hannah Mehr deservedly taking centre stage on our front cover.

Hannah is the ACE apprentice of the year, and is using her success to inspire others to think of joining our industry when deciding their own career paths. Read all about it in our exclusive interview on pages 16-17.

It's been another busy period for our industry, and one where government ambition on infrastructure delivery is being questioned across the board.

The NIC, the National Audit Office and the Climate Change Committee have all published recent critical reports, and you can read all about it in the pages of this magazine.

The spring budget on 15 March also drew a fairly mixed industry response, and the HS2 delay has been described as a complete false economy that threatens the UK's global reputation on future infrastructure delivery.

In other news, this is my final edition as editor of *Infrastructure Intelligence*. I've worked with *II* for almost four years and it's been a joy and a pleasure to be involved in this fantastic industry.

However, a spot of Long-Covid has left me needing a bit of time out and, once my batteries are fully recharged, I'll be working with some previous PR clients and enjoying some of that much-loved work-life balance.

In the meantime; thanks for reading, we hope you enjoy the magazine, and please feel free to visit us online at www.infrastructure-intelligence.com - where you can sign up for our free twice-weekly e-newsletter, packed with a mix of news, features and industry opinion.

Rob O'Connor
Editor, Infrastructure Intelligence

UK's infrastructure reputation on the line, as HS2 is delayed



"The more HS2 and other significant infrastructure projects get delayed, the more we are hampering the recovery of Britain's economy and the levelling up agenda." Stephen Marcos Jones, chief executive of ACE and EIC.

ACE and EIC chief executive Stephen Marcos Jones calls on government to protect global standing of the industry in the UK.

At the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, we champion infrastructure and the built environment in the UK. Therefore, the image of this

vital industry in a global context is of great importance to us - and our member firms, who employ more than 60,000 people in the UK and 250,000 worldwide.

It is of great concern to ACE that progress towards major infrastructure objectives has "stuttered further, just as the need for acceleration has heightened" to borrow a phrase used by our friends at the National Infrastructure Commission. (see pages 22 & 23).

Long term social, economic and environmental goals

We fully agree with the commission's call for the UK government to develop stronger staying power and focus on fewer, bigger, better targeted initiatives, to deliver the infrastructure needed to meet long-term goals for economic growth and a lower carbon economy.

The commission's annual Infrastructure Progress Review highlights positive

progress towards nationwide coverage of gigabit broadband by 2030 and continued growth in renewable electricity, both of which, it notes, have enjoyed a relatively stable policy environment.

However, there have been "negligible advances in improving the energy efficiency of UK homes, the installation of low carbon heating solutions or securing a sustainable balance of water supply and demand," which have been subject to a more short-term and changeable approach in recent years.

Confident and robust approach to infrastructure policy

The UK needs a confident, robust and non-partisan approach to infrastructure policy, because infrastructure is central to a green and prosperous UK recovery.

Further delays and a lack of long-term strategy and commitment to major infrastructure projects result in uncertainty throughout the industry.

This damages confidence in the UK's economic and social recovery.

At ACE, we support the NIC's call for greater clarity for industry from government as well as the devolution of funding and decision-making to local areas.

Additionally, some of the recommendations in the NIC's report mirror the asks of our 2023 Policy Manifesto, specifically in relation to post-project appraisal and reviewing lessons learnt as well as the importance of proposals to speed up Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

HS2 delay is a false economy

The recent disappointing announcement from secretary of state for transport Mark Harper that parts of the HS2 line between

Birmingham, Crewe and Manchester will be "rephased" by two years, taken as a result of inflationary pressures, represents an absolute false economy.

It is a prime example of the issues the NIC and ACE are trying to address, as we call for the government and policymakers in the infrastructure sector to have a major rethink about how these projects are formed and promoted to the public.

Of course, we understand that large-scale infrastructure projects like HS2 are naturally subject to market fluctuations and plans are always subject to changes at different stages.

But long experience of postponement of major infrastructure projects tells us there will be an inevitable increase in overall costs as well as an overall loss of benefits - including addressing regional disparities across the UK.

Reputational damage to UK

It is of great concern to members of ACE that, as the HS2 project is being viewed on a global stage, what the rest of the world thinks about our ability to deliver major infrastructure projects is impaired by this major setback.

Having to announce such a delay could hamper industry confidence and



HS2 has been delayed by two years.



Click here to read the ACE Manifesto 2023.



HS2 has been delayed by two years.

cause reputational damage to the UK.

Our members contribute more than £15bn to the UK economy and over £570bn globally each year and we simply cannot afford to risk such reputational damage.

ACE policy manifesto

In our 2023 policy manifesto, we recognise that current and future governments face a huge challenge when deciding how to invest in transport, whilst simultaneously working to decarbonise it and ensure the delivery of better value.

ACE's Transport and Mobility Advocacy Group, made up of a variety of large and small consultant engineering businesses, also recognised better transport systems lead to better businesses, connectivity and even better health and

wellbeing - and are key to unlocking other ambitions for the country, from regional development to levelling up.

We have publicly called for the Integrated Rail plan to be delivered in full - including HS2 - to realise significant economic and social benefits.

It is now vital to get all the key players around the table, talking about how we can deliver the much-needed and transformational HS2 project as quickly and efficiently as possible, to reap all the great benefits it has the potential to bring.

Greater collaboration required

ACE has long called for greater collaboration between those working in the transport policy space.

We specifically recommend reforming

ways of working within the Department for Transport, to deliver an integrated approach to transport nationwide, bringing together policy specialists from across the sector.

The rise in inflation is a global problem, so how does the industry allow for that or deal with that on an ongoing basis?

The answers can only be found by increasing collaborative approaches to these issues and where HS2 is concerned, we should use the time we now have to reflect on good practice and plan to make the next phase even better and more efficient.

There needs to be a much longer-term view of how we plan the nation's infrastructure and a shared understanding across all political parties, if we are to make progress when it comes to our major infrastructure objectives and the long-term prosperity these have the potential to bring.

The more HS2 and other significant infrastructure projects get delayed, the more we are hampering the recovery of Britain's economy and the levelling up agenda.



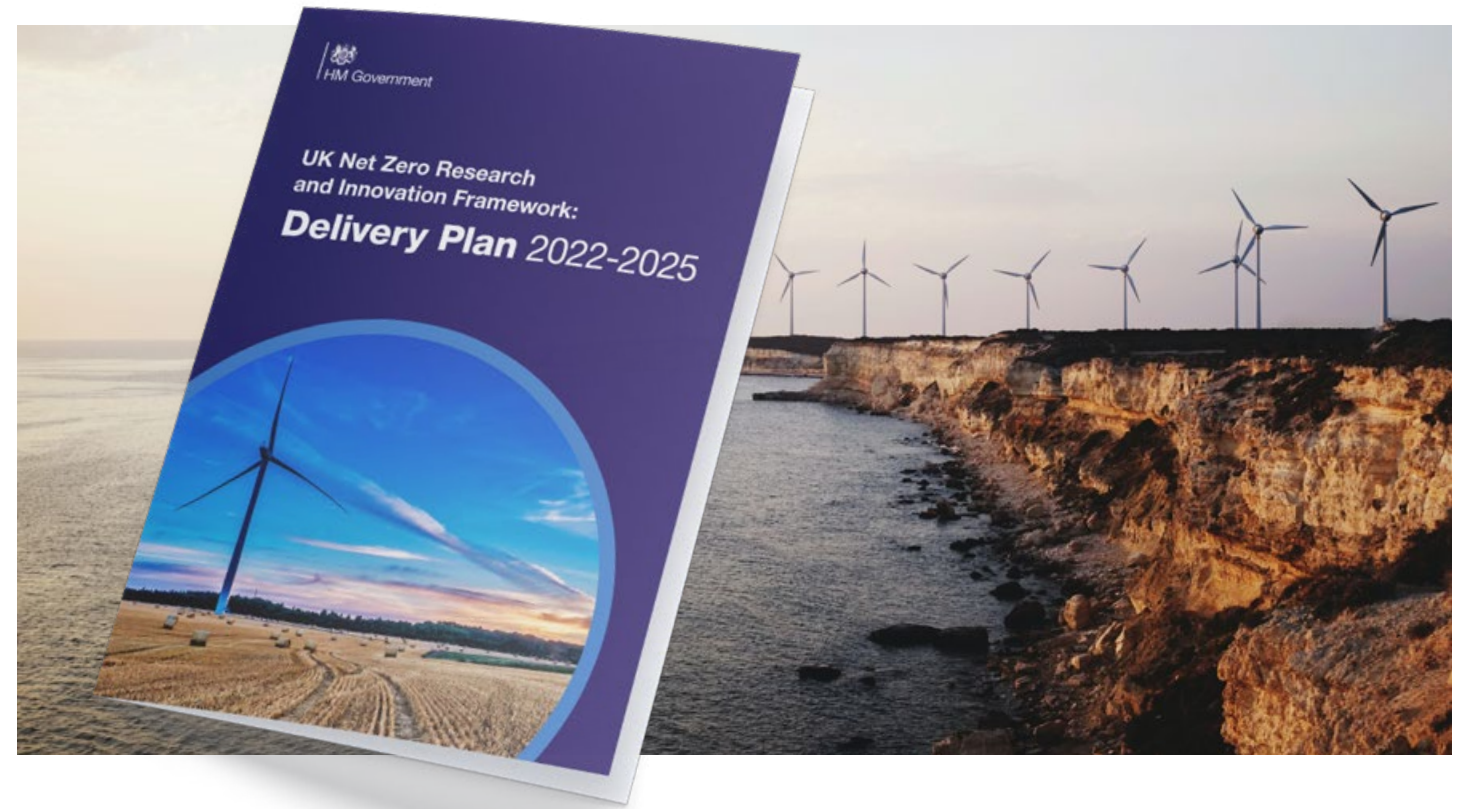
Stephen Marcos Jones

is chief executive of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering and the Environment Industries Commission (EIC).

[Click here](#) to read the National Infrastructure Commission Infrastructure Progress Review.



There have been "negligible advances in improving the energy efficiency of UK homes, the installation of low carbon heating solutions or securing a sustainable balance of water supply and demand." NIC report.



Green Day opens door to innovation?

Last month, the UK government unveiled a series of policy documents on net zero. Dubbed by the industry as 'green day' the announcements also included the [UK Net Zero Research and Innovation Framework: Delivery Plan 2022 to 2025](#).

Many of the announcements were relevant to members of the Environmental Industries Commission, but the focus on innovation was particularly welcome given our ongoing work on barriers to innovation.

Through the work of our taskforces and working groups: Nature and Biodiversity, Air Quality, Waste, Water, and Contaminated Land, EIC is currently identifying challenges facing the sector when it comes to innovation.

Our report, due to be published in July, will include a series of recommendations to overcome these and maximise many of the opportunities.

In early discussions at our taskforces, members have told us that one of the main drivers of innovation is the investment

in research and development.

Another challenge, as well as an opportunity, is the regulatory environment. Environmental regulations can be complex and vary widely across different jurisdictions. This can create uncertainty and make it difficult for companies to plan and invest in innovation.

As the government undertakes a range of policy changes, it's important to ensure harmonisation of regulations, as well as for the development of clearer and more consistent standards that can facilitate innovation and reduce compliance costs.

Collaboration and partnerships in driving innovation, as well as a culture that welcomes innovation, is critical. No single company or organisation can solve the complex environmental challenges we face. Instead, innovation requires collaboration and cooperation across sectors and disciplines.

Governments and other stakeholders need to promote greater collaboration between academia, industry, and

government, and use networks and platforms to facilitate knowledge sharing and innovation.

Finally, there is an increasing link and opportunity with regards to innovation and green growth. The publication of the 'green day' document reflects this.

By promoting innovation in environmental sectors, we can create new opportunities for economic growth while also advancing environmental objectives.

This can lead to the creation of new jobs, the development of new markets, and the expansion of sustainable industries.

The challenge now is for the government to stick to the objectives set and work together with industry and the public to achieve these milestones by the target dates.



Guto Davies

is head of policy at the EIC.



The Feelgood Games encourages industry to tackle mental health in construction.

Pagabo announces return of Feelgood Games

Feelgood Games this May encourages industry to tackle mental health in construction.

The Pagabo Foundation has announced the return of the Feelgood Games this May, encouraging people from across the built environment sector to take part in support of its mission to tackle mental health in construction. Taking place on Monday 15 May in Leeds, the fitness movement and fundraising event is making its return to fulfil the dual

aim of getting the industry moving while raising funds that make the charity's mental health initiatives possible. Building on the success of its first event in 2022, it will bring together hundreds of property professionals on the eve of the second UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREIIF). The main element of the original Feelgood Games was an obstacle course – conquered by 130 professionals – but a move to the John Charles Centre for Sport will see the event take on a new lease of life, with several fresh elements. These include a new wellness village hosting a number of other mental health

charities, activity spectator zones, a more accessible activity list to support individual competitors with various mobility needs, construction themed challenges like a 'brick and trowel' race, and a post-event awards ceremony with live music and refreshments. Jason Stapley, chief procurement officer at The 55 Group and chairman of the Pagabo Foundation, said: "After the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the first instalment of the Feelgood

[Click here](#) to register your interest in the Feelgood Games.

[Click here](#) to find out more about the Pagabo Foundation.

Games in 2022, which raised £31,000, the Pagabo Foundation trustees and I are thrilled to be bringing back the games in bigger and better style. "People from across the built environment sector are enjoying the togetherness of events post-pandemic, which we're keen to promote due to the positive impact this has on our mental health. The activities will be even more accessible and the wellness village we're creating will benefit anyone." Through its fundraising initiatives, the Pagabo Foundation funds mental health first aid training which is made completely free for individuals across the industry to access. The training gives people the tools and knowledge to spot early signs of mental health problems and be confident in providing support or guidance to their fellow professionals. Training and support on how to help each other has never been more important, with the latest statistics for

England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics, detailing that 507 people working in the construction industry committed suicide in 2021 – marking an increase from 483 in 2020. The clear problem requires action, so the Mental Health First Aid Qualification offered by the Foundation via accredited training providers is an accessible two-day course to increase the number of qualified responders. The first two courses were held during January in Hull, with a third in Leeds in February – training 22 people in two short months. Future courses will be virtual, with attendees able to obtain the qualification from anywhere in the UK. Sophie Jessop, project support at Helix CMS and attendee at the first training course funded by the Foundation, said: "I'd highly recommend the free training made possible by the Pagabo Foundation and for people from across the construction industry to get qualified. My role on site means I interact with a lot of people every day, but whether you help just one person or 100 people, anyone can suffer from mental health problems and no one should struggle alone."

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The UK is 'strikingly unprepared' for climate change, according to a hard-hitting report by the influential and independent Climate Change Committee.

UK unprepared for climate change, says CCC

CCC report highlights lost decade in preparing and adapting for climate change.

The UK is 'strikingly unprepared' for climate change, according to a hard-hitting report by the influential and independent Climate Change Committee (CCC).

The CCC says the UK's first 40C day, in summer 2022, was the clearest indication that climate

change has arrived in this country.

And last year's record breaking temperatures brought unprecedented heat-related deaths, wildfire incidents and significant infrastructure disruption.

But the CCC report describes a 'lost decade' in preparing and adapting for climate change – adding that the impacts

of climate change will intensify over coming decades, leaving the UK vulnerable without better resilience planning and preparation.

The report publishes a new appraisal of the outcomes needed to build climate resilience across the economy – and the extent of policies and delivery to meet them.

The report outlines a striking lack of climate preparation from the UK government:

Policies and plans. Despite some evidence of improved sectoral planning by Government for key climate risks, 'fully credible' planning for climate change – where nearly all required policy milestones are in place – is only found for five of the 45 adaptation outcomes examined in this report.

Delivery and implementation. In none of the 45 adaptation outcomes was their sufficient evidence that reductions in climate exposure and vulnerability are happening at the rates required to manage risks appropriately. For around one-quarter of outcomes, available indicators show insufficient evidence of progress.

Baroness Brown, chair of the Adaptation Committee, said: "The government's lack of urgency on climate resilience is in sharp contrast to the recent experience of people in this country. People, nature and infrastructure face damaging impacts as climate change takes hold. These impacts will only intensify in the coming decades.

"This has been a lost decade in preparing for and adapting to the known risks that we face from climate change. Each month that passes without action locks in more damaging impacts and threatens the delivery of other key government objectives, including net zero. We have laid out a clear path for government to improve the country's climate resilience. They must step up."

Assessing the National Adaptation Programme

In 2022, government's own Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) identified 61 separate risks and opportunities for the UK from the changing climate. These span the natural environment, infrastructure, the economy, and society.

The CCC report assesses progress in preparing for these risks.

The current National Adaptation

Programme fails to match the scale of the challenge now facing the country. It lacks a clear vision. It is not underpinned by tangible outcomes or targets. It has not driven policy and implementation across government.

Wider policy priorities, including net zero and nature recovery, will fail if adaptation to climate change is not incorporated from the start.

The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation is also a barrier. Key datasets to evaluate resilience do not exist or have limitations that prevent effective tracking of climate resilience. A well-resourced climate change adaptation monitoring and evaluation programme is now an urgent priority.

A make-or-break moment to improve the country's preparedness

The UK government will publish the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) this summer, and the CCC has described this as a make-or-break

moment to avoid a further five years of lacklustre planning and preparation for the changing climate by Defra.

A strong programme is also a key element of the UK's contribution to the global effort to tackle climate change and an essential part of the UK's international leadership on climate change.

The CCC plans a further appraisal of the third National Adaptation Programme following its publication later this year.



Click here to read the full CCC report: *Progress in adapting to climate change.*



Baroness Brown, chair of the Adaptation Committee.

No delivery plan for power decarbonisation, says NAO

No delivery plan means government risks missing target of decarbonising power by 2035, says NAO.

The UK government risks not meeting its ambition to decarbonise power by 2035 because it lacks a delivery plan, the National Audit Office (NAO) has warned.

The UK's independent public spending watchdog says that, with attention focused on the recent energy crisis, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has made little progress with a long-term delivery plan for all electricity to be generated through clean energy sources.

DESNZ was recently created as a new department taking on the responsibilities for energy security and net zero that were previously held by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

As BEIS, it had internally planned, by October 2022, to have established a clear pathway to decarbonisation by 2035. However, because it was focusing attention on responses to record-high energy bills, the department scaled back its work on co-ordinating long-term power sector decarbonisation.

Lack of delivery plan hits confidence

The NAO says the lack of a delivery plan risks diminishing the confidence of industry stakeholders, who have increasingly expressed concerns about how all the change and investment that is needed across the power sector will be brought together without a strategic vision.

Similarly, the absence of a clear plan and the perception that there could be changes in government policies could deter external investors from providing funds for new

infrastructure or lead them to increase the rates of return they require, ultimately increasing costs for energy consumers.

NAO sets out decarbonisation challenges

The NAO report sets out the challenges of achieving the remaining emission reductions, highlighting that the government's ambitions for the expansion of offshore wind, solar and nuclear power will require much faster deployment rates than have been achieved before.

For the government to meet its goal of achieving 50 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind by 2030, DESNZ will need to oversee the deployment of nearly three times as much offshore wind capacity in eight years as it has in the last two decades.

Transitioning to a secure, affordable and decarbonised supply of power by 2035 will require a step-change in both private investment and the pace at which new generating capacity is built.

In its Net Zero Strategy, the government estimated that £280bn to £400bn of investment would be needed to generate the required new capacity. However this only accounts for construction costs relating to power generation – it does not include costs for all aspects of decarbonising electricity production, such as network construction or research and innovation on technologies.

Clear measures of progress required

The NAO recommends that DESNZ needs to set clear measures of overall progress with interim milestones and that these should be reported annually to Parliament, along with an explanation of how this performance information has been used to determine any significant changes to its overall plan.

Gareth Davies, head of the NAO, said: "It is understandable that DESNZ and its predecessor BEIS has focused on dealing with the immediate energy crisis over the past 12 months. But one consequence of this is that it lacks a delivery plan for decarbonising power by 2035, which is the backbone of its broader net zero ambition.

"The longer DESNZ goes without a critical path that brings together different aspects of power decarbonisation, the higher the risk that it does not achieve its ambitions, or it does so at a greater than necessary cost to taxpayers and consumers."

Christophe Junillon, Atkins managing director, nuclear & power, said: "Decarbonising our energy system is the biggest infrastructure programme the UK has ever seen, and the scale of the engineering challenge to deliver it by 2035 can't be underestimated: we need to build new generation at five times the current rate, double the size of our energy system and install six times the amount of network infrastructure, all in parallel.

"A major infrastructure programme needs a detailed delivery plan behind it: as the NAO asserts, we need to urgently accelerate new nuclear; streamline the development of offshore wind and the network and storage infrastructure to support it; and put in place a delivery plan to coordinate a whole system approach to decarbonising power in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

"It is also fundamentally important that this plan is created by a body that can oversee its implementation and adapt it where necessary. This plan, along with tangible targets and measurement to ensure progress remains on track, is vital to ensure the UK achieves net zero ambitions and long overdue."



Gareth Davies, head of the National Audit Office.

[Click here to download the full NAO report: Decarbonising the Power Sector.](#)



No delivery plan means government risks missing target of decarbonising power by 2035, says NAO.

Industry gives mixed response to Spring Budget

Industry leaders' have given a mixed response to the Spring Budget.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's Spring Budget on 15 March drew a mixed reaction from leading figures in infrastructure.

A plethora of potential significant infrastructure developments were announced, including a dozen investment zones that could become "12 Canary Wharfs". Each Investment Zone will receive £80m of support over the next five years.

Hunt also pledged £400m for "levelling up partnerships" in areas like Redcar and

Cleveland, Rochdale, Blackburn, Oldham, Mansfield, South Tyneside and Bassetlaw.

Over £200m for high quality, local regeneration projects across England was also announced, including the regeneration of Tipton town centre and the Marsden New Mills redevelopment scheme.

Meanwhile, £8.8bn was pledged over five years, in the next round of city region transport settlements, with support also given to new nuclear energy

builds and carbon capture schemes.

On the face of it, this would appear to be a lot to welcome for the industry.

But a lack of guarantees on infrastructure spending was also duly noted and the chancellor has also been accused of not going far enough on building Britain's sustainable future or tackling regional inequality.

Here's just a brief edited selection of industry responses that landed here at *Infrastructure Intelligence*:



Jeremy Hunt's spring budget received a mixed reaction from leading industry figures.



Stephen Marcos Jones, CEO of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE):

"In advance of the Budget, ACE made clear that a clear focus on the green economy and infrastructure is vital to the UK's economic and social recovery and should be essential elements of the statement.

"The ACE Budget submission included a set of constructive proposals for transport, procurement, communities and levelling-up, net zero, innovation and future skills and training.

"With that in mind, we welcome the announcement on the expanded devolution deals, but await to see how the new investment zones will be rolled out."



Richard Robinson, CEO, Atkins UK and Europe was pleased to see an ongoing focus on high quality infrastructure as a catalyst for growth.

However, he added: "The government must now focus on two key enablers which will allow actual delivery on the ground, accelerate the net zero transition and improve productivity across the UK: streamlining the planning and consenting process; and providing a far clearer long-term view of investment priorities which will give businesses the direction needed to recruit, upskill and innovate with greater confidence."



Stefanie O'Gorman, director of sustainable economics at Ramboll:

"The regeneration of our towns and cities" could impact positively on many lives and livelihoods."

However, she cautioned there was a great need to ensure climate action, social value delivery and positive environmental outcomes were embedded in these investments.

"The statement made little focus on the use of and opportunities for this investment to deliver a just transition," she said. "I urge the government to ensure that the processes they put in place around the delivery of this funding allows delivery partners to maximise a wider range of benefits, using outcome-based and multi-year funding mechanisms."



Colin Wood, chief executive of AECOM Europe and India:

The Budget took "steps not strides" to reaching net zero and growing the economy sustainably – something it regards as two of the most important challenges of our time.

He added that for "UK plc" to thrive, the chancellor needed to put new infrastructure at the heart of his plans for sustainable economic growth.

"Infrastructure decisions made at a local level, particularly around transport, ensures outcomes better meet local needs, so confirmation of multi-year single settlements for Greater Manchester and the West Midlands is a step in the right direction," he said.



Patricia Moore, UK managing director of Turner & Townsend:

"In a Budget dedicated to growth, and with talk of industrial strategy, we might have expected the construction sector to be more front and centre.

We can perhaps see the centre of gravity moving away from construction under this government," she said.

On a more positive note, Moore was pleased to see "clear pockets of targeted, strategic decision-making, such as with devolution".

"Putting regeneration, infrastructure, and housing powers in the hands of regional mayors will enable decisions to be made by those closest to the challenges that local economies face," she said.



Kate Kenny, Jacobs people & places solutions senior vice president, Europe praised the chancellor's recognition of the "triple challenge" of energy security, affordability and decarbonisation.

"It was encouraging to see the government commit to future energy needs through the launch of Great British Nuclear, classifying nuclear power as environmentally sustainable in our green taxonomy subject to consultation, and accelerating energy infrastructure innovation through £20bn of investment into CCUS," she said.



Click [here](#) and [here](#) for further and much more detailed budget reaction.

Hannah uses success to inspire others

Award-winning apprentice Hannah Mehr regularly visits schools to talk about STEM apprenticeships. *Sarah Walker reports.*



Hannah Mehr, receives her award as ACE apprentice of the year.

An award-winning apprentice with a passion for tackling both skills shortages and gender inequality is encouraging more young people to get into STEM careers through her work as a STEM ambassador.

Hannah Mehr left school at 16 and began working for Arup in Manchester after enjoying a successful work experience week there in Year 10.

Now 19, she is a data scientist at the firm, while continuing to study for her level 6 qualification - and is passionate about changing misconceptions around apprenticeships.

"Apprenticeships are so wonderful for so many people - I think businesses could support them so much more and schools could be better at promoting them," said Hannah, who recently won the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) Apprentice of the Year award.

"The A-Levels and University route is not right for a lot of people and other paths such as apprenticeships aren't always taught in schools as being an acceptable option."

Hannah receives immense support from her colleagues at Arup as an outreach ambassador, regularly visiting schools to promote Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) based careers.

Hannah discovered Arup when she was just 15, after applying to do a week of work experience at the firm, as part of the Arup Design Programme, which runs annually and encourages students to consider the different disciplines of engineering.

She said: "Because of the Arup Design Programme, I found my career path at Arup and I'm trying to pay back the opportunity that has been given to me."

"I go into schools and talk about apprenticeships because I feel that I got very lucky with mine."

"There is a misconception that apprenticeships are only for certain industries, not necessarily in things like digital."

Changing perceptions

Hannah adds that even though she

was academically successful at school and could have chosen to go down the A-Levels and University route, she experienced the misconception that apprenticeships "are only for people who don't do well at school".

"There's definitely a stigma around apprenticeships that I experienced," she says.

"People would ask 'why would you want to do an apprenticeship instead of doing A-levels and going to university?'"

"I try to do a lot of work to change perceptions, as I don't think students are necessarily given that opportunity or have that option promoted to them."

Hannah particularly loves the way her job role and learning overlaps different subjects, like maths, physics, science, English and even history.

"Engineering is not just maths and physics and schools don't show the crossover between subjects in different job roles," she explains.

"Every different career is a handful of subjects thrown together."

"When you learn subjects in school, they are kept in categories

but in real life, there is so much crossover between them."

Room for more female role models

Hannah is also keen to see more female role models in engineering and digital careers like data science.

"I think women have a massive place in engineering and the digital industry - there definitely should be more women in these industries to tackle skills shortages," she says.

"Apprenticeships could help plug that skills shortage and enable more women to make that journey from school into industry."

"There needs to be more female role models in the engineering space and the digital industry."

"Overall, we are making a lot of progress, but we are not quite there yet - there's a lot more work to be done."

Hannah, who expects to complete her apprenticeship in 2025, also praised Arup for its female role models, noting the company has a digital women's network, which regularly meets and holds events.

Value of mentoring

There is also a mentoring programme at the firm.

Hannah says: "I think mentoring is a really big thing - having someone to bounce ideas off and give an opinion is so valuable."

Speaking of her recent award win, modest Hannah says there were so many candidates shortlisted who "seemed amazing" - so she wasn't expecting to win.

"Just being shortlisted was recognition enough - to win was incredible," she said. "I've had lots of support from work, which has been amazing and it's given me visibility."

Selfless and inspirational, Hannah has tried to use this visibility at the careers events she attends, to inspire other young people.

"Personally, winning the award was validation of my decision to leave school at 16, which was unheard of in my school," she says.

Hannah also praised ACE for recognising the importance

of apprenticeships with a specific award category.

"It validates the fact that apprenticeships are really important to the future of the industry," she says. "On an apprenticeship, you're thrown into projects with actual responsibilities and the industry recognising that through ACE is brilliant."

Hannah has been supported by many colleagues at Arup, but particularly thanked two managers, Galal Mohamed and Marie Kipling.

Galal was a "wonderful support" through her Level 3 qualification, which she undertook from home through Covid lockdowns, while Marie is assisting with Hannah's Level 6 work.

"She also empowers me to do what I want to do with STEM events and projects," Hannah says. "I'm so grateful to be working for Arup - I got so lucky and if I hadn't done that work experience in Year 10, I don't know what I would be doing now."

"I strongly believe that apprenticeships are the future of the industry."

“Apprenticeships are so wonderful for so many people – I think businesses could support them so much more and schools could be better at promoting them.”

-Hannah Mehr, ACE apprentice of the year, pictured at Arup's London office.



Gleeds launches charitable foundation

Gleeds Foundation pledges to donate £100,000 to UK charities every year.

International property and construction consultancy Gleeds has announced the formation of its own charitable giving arm, the Gleeds Foundation.

Through the Foundation the business has pledged to donate £100,000 to worthwhile causes every year, with beneficiaries nominated by employees.

Established by the owners of the business and managed by a steering group made up of Gleeds employees from across the UK, the Foundation will operate independently from the rest of the organisation.

In creating this stand-alone entity, Gleeds hopes to strengthen and streamline its charitable giving, focusing on awarding grants to charities who have a demonstrable track record in creating opportunities for young people aged 12 to 25 years old.

In the Foundation's first 12 months, funds will be allocated solely to UK registered charities, with a view to expanding its remit globally over time.

In addition to supporting two headline charities each year, the Foundation will also match employee fundraising efforts at a local level to ensure the continuation of support for community schemes, and a dedicated relief fund, enabling a swift response to international disasters.

Graham Harle, CEO of Gleeds welcomed the initiative, saying: "The launch of the Gleeds Foundation marks the next phase in our development as a business that places social responsibility at the heart of our ethos and I'm incredibly proud of our colleagues' enthusiasm and generosity in driving this initiative.

"We believe that every young person deserves to be given the tools they need to succeed so, together with our charity partners, the Foundation will seek to create opportunities for them to build



Michelle Regent, Gleeds' head of ESG.

their skills, confidence, and resilience as they work towards a brighter future."

Gleeds' head of ESG, Michelle Regent added: "Since its inception in 1885, Gleeds has seen the world around it change beyond all recognition, however our commitment to giving

back to the communities in which we work has remained a constant.

"We're delighted that, through the Foundation, we're able to deliver vital funding to schemes which provide life-changing support to the young people who will shape tomorrow."

Turner & Townsend holds firm on tender forecasts

UKMI report says Budget offers 'respite not resolution' for industry labour issues.

Turner & Townsend is calling for immediate action to combat the construction capacity crunch – as the market faces rising interest rates, inflation, and a recent Budget that offered, they claim, little comfort for the construction sector.

In its *Spring 2023 UK Market Intelligence (UKMI) report*, the global professional services consultancy has kept its tender price inflation forecasts unchanged from its Winter report.

Real estate inflation is expected to fall to 3.5% in 2023, down from 9.5% in 2022, while infrastructure is predicted to fall from 10.0% to 5.5%.

The report claims the disinflationary effect over 2023 is being driven by a series of factors – with reduced demand on one hand and productivity improvements on the other.

Construction output is estimated to have contracted by 1.7% month-on-month in January 2023, with this trend likely to continue through the year.

Meanwhile construction productivity has performed strongly, with an 8.6% rise in productivity over the last 12 months, and an 11.0% increase since COVID-19, at the same time that wider economic productivity growth has been lacklustre.

However, the report warns that the ongoing labour shortage and high level of industry insolvencies are putting a major blocker on the growth of the construction sector and must not be allowed to undermine productivity progress.

The report also acknowledges the impact of the Spring Budget, which loosens rules on bringing foreign construction workers



"The recent Budget, and weakening commitment to major infrastructure, does not show us a government as committed to the growth of this vital industry as it has historically been."
Martin Sudweeks, UK managing director of cost management at Turner & Townsend.

into the market and credits the sector for boosting traditionally stagnant productivity.

However, Turner & Townsend's analysis explains that this offers a respite, not a resolution, to the capacity problems – and calls on government and the sector to redouble efforts to tackle the recruitment crisis, invest in training, and not allow a dwindling labour force to erode the hard-won productivity gains.

Martin Sudweeks, UK managing director of cost management at Turner & Townsend, said: "The construction sector showed its resilience during the pandemic, helping to power our economy back to strength. Yet the recent Budget, and weakening commitment to major infrastructure, does not show us a government as

committed to the growth of this vital industry as it has historically been.

"The number of 16 to 24-year-olds enrolling in construction training schemes is now barely a quarter of its 2007 level, and too many still see the sector as low-tech, manual labour, with limited opportunities for progression.

"This is far from the truth, and it is our joint responsibility – government and industry – to showcase the modern reality of high-tech, high-skilled construction that is powering our economy forward."

[Click here](#) to read the full Spring 2023 UK Market Intelligence (UKMI) report.

Building a future-proof company starts with talent, not technology

Jacobs' *Kate Kenny* describes how agility and resilience rely on smarter software decisions and an inclusive company culture.

The last three years have served up a rollercoaster of change. The ups and downs of challenges and opportunities have created an impetus to deliver game-changing solutions. Emerging technologies have powered these solutions, but the true success is thanks to people and our ability to adapt, pivot and thrive.

With the increasing rate of change, a partnership is needed to navigate this new world and optimise digital enablement. Employees must be willing to adapt and upskill, and companies must provide clear leadership strategies and build cultures that support career agility, diversity and talent transformation.

Jacobs is no stranger to these kinds of changes. It has undergone a major strategic portfolio transformation and invested heavily in its culture over the last several years.

We've evolved from a traditional, mostly analogue engineering firm to a data-led technical consultancy focusing on three key accelerators: climate response, data solutions, and consulting and advisory.

While digital transformation is accelerating all industries, success is still not guaranteed – even with hefty tech investment budgets.

Research by the Boston Consulting Group shows that while digital transformation is the top priority for most organisations, only 35% achieve their objectives. The two main reasons for this failure: a lack of a strong vision or strategy; and low employee engagement. Beneath all the acronyms and technical terms, successful digital enablement is a human process.



"There's no one-size-fits-all solution to navigating this digital disruption, but we've relied on a combined approach embedded into our culture to engage and retain our talent, including evolving our recruitment policies to offer more flexibility." Kate Kenny.



"You can buy any technology you want, but the only way it will be harnessed effectively is if the right human is behind the controls." Kate Kenny.

Employee & customer engagement is the catalyst for success

We're all still learning important lessons, but to thrive in our new digitally disrupted world, our biggest priority is to upskill and empower employees, and grow stronger customer relationships.

We're not alone in this thinking: a global study of 570 companies by Ernst & Young found that the number one shared habit among the most successful digital leaders is focusing on customers first and foremost.

Having company-wide customer-centricity – not just in customer-facing roles – allows us to collaborate creatively and discover new opportunities in our markets. Aligned with this is the fundamental emphasis on trust, partly earned through track record but mostly reliant on how we deal with our customers. Crucially, trust is built between humans, not technology.

The next step is to empower employees with data-led insights and innovative digital tools. That allows them to scale up solutions and offer more value for clients, wherever they are in the world.

Within employee engagement and

retention, one critical factor is the increase in skills gaps due to the rise of emerging technologies. A global survey from McKinsey in 2021 revealed that 87% of companies say they have skill gaps now or expect them in the next few years.

Harnessing continuous learning and agile careers

There's no one-size-fits-all solution to navigating this digital disruption, but we've relied on a combined approach embedded into our culture to engage and retain our talent, including evolving our recruitment policies to offer more flexibility.

A key ingredient is continuous learning. This provides upskilling and reskilling through in-house, on-demand platforms, supported by a global mentoring system.

The second is harnessing agile careers and sideways mobility. Instead of losing key talent with institutional knowledge, we offer opportunities to work with new people, projects and systems globally through our agile careers framework.

Traditional linear career paths are no longer the default: Agile careers

offer employees greater career growth and satisfaction and the chance to learn new sought-after skills and capabilities. It unlocks higher engagement, retention, and value on an organisational level, and supports the creation of a diverse talent force.

Diversity and soft skills are success multipliers

The last ingredients are arguably the most powerful. The business case for getting the culture fundamentals right in Diversity, Equality and Inclusivity (DEI) has only become stronger for us in the last few years.

Research and corporate rankings from the Wall Street Journal show diverse and inclusive cultures give companies a competitive edge by boosting both financial results and innovation. One of the key strategies in our award-winning approach: our eight Jacobs Employee Networks, each of which offer employees an opportunity to collaborate with others around the world who share similar interests.

While technical skills within STEAM are crucial, it's also the 'soft' skills like empathy, communication and listening ability, and change management that help to make employees more agile and resilient.

At Jacobs, these skills are an integral part of our learning platform and leadership training, and we're not the only company to see their value. Project Aristotle reveals that the best teams at Google exhibit a range of soft skills: equality, generosity, curiosity, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

Start with people, amplify with software

Our biggest takeaway is this: you can buy any technology you want, but the only way it will be harnessed effectively is if the right human is behind the controls. Humans still lead machines in creativity and problem-solving skills – along with other soft skills – which are essential for survival in our fast-changing world. By strategically upskilling and empowering people in your organisation, you'll future-proof their careers and your company's success.



Kate Kenny
is Jacobs' people & places solutions senior vice-president, Europe.

Go big where it counts, says NIC

UK government is off track to meet climate and economic ambitions, warns NIC.



The NIC has called for a “greater sense of certainty” around progressing HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, stressing that delays inevitably push back the economic benefits for communities.

The UK government must develop stronger staying power and focus on fewer, bigger, better targeted initiatives to deliver the infrastructure needed to meet its long term goals for economic growth and a lower carbon economy, the UK’s independent advisers on infrastructure have said.

The last year has seen progress towards major infrastructure objectives “stutter further just as the need for acceleration has heightened”, the National Infrastructure Commission says, warning that “in a range of areas government is off track to meet its targets and ambitions”.

The Commission’s annual Infrastructure Progress Review highlights positive progress towards nationwide coverage of gigabit broadband by 2030 and continued growth in renewable electricity, both of which it notes have enjoyed a relatively stable policy environment.

The report meanwhile criticises “negligible advances in improving the energy efficiency of UK homes, the

installation of low carbon heating solutions or securing a sustainable balance of water supply and demand,” which have been subject to a more short term and changeable approach in recent years.

Introducing the report, NIC chair Sir John Armitt said: “Taking a strategic view on the recent pace of planning and delivery suggests a significant gap between long term ambition and current performance. To get back on track, we need a change of gear in infrastructure policy.

“This means fewer low stakes incremental changes and instead placing some bigger strategic bets, backed by public funding where necessary – after all, the risk of delay in addressing climate change is now greater than the risk of over correction.

“We must have the staying power to stick to long-term plans, to spare cost increases that come with a stop-start approach and to give investors greater confidence in the UK. We

must also accelerate and expand the devolution of power and funding to local leaders, who are best placed to identify their infrastructure needs and economic opportunities.”

The report points out that government has set an ambition for at least 600,000 heat pumps to be installed each year by 2028, while only 55,000 were fitted in 2021 – meanwhile, 1.5 million gas boilers were fitted. Similarly, government expects 300,000 public electric vehicle charge points to be in place by 2030; but only 37,000 public charge points are currently installed.

The Commission also calls for a “greater sense of certainty” around progressing HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, stressing that delays inevitably push back the economic benefits for communities.

Drawing on the Commission’s past recommendations which have been accepted by government, the report identifies ten specific priorities for the year ahead.

The Commission’s top 10 short term priorities for government, with targetted action for the year ahead – based on past recommendations accepted by ministers – are:

Supporting growth across regions

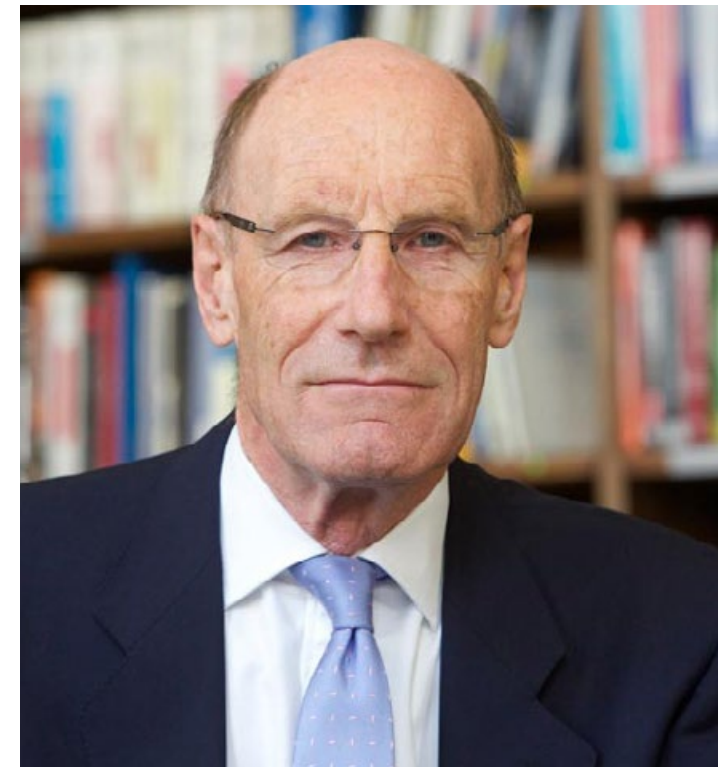
- Move away from competitive bidding processes to give local areas more flexibility and accountability over economic growth funds, and implement flexible, long term devolved budgets for all local transport authorities.
- Demonstrate staying power by progressing the Integrated Rail Plan for High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail and remaining committed to the £96bn investment required.
- Follow through on commitments made in 2018 to the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford growth arc, by setting out how the road and rail infrastructure to support new houses and businesses will be delivered.

Net zero and energy security

- Deliver a significant increase in the pace of energy efficiency improvements in homes before 2025, including tightening minimum standards in private rented sector homes, to support delivery of the government’s target for a 15% reduction in energy demand by 2030.
- Remove clear barriers to deployment in the planning system by publishing National Policy Statements on energy to accelerate the consenting process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
- Accelerate deployment of electric vehicle public charge points to reach the government’s expectation of 300,000 by 2030 and keep pace with sales of electric vehicles.
- Ensure that Ofgem has a duty to promote the delivery of the 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emissions target.

Building resilience and enhancing nature

- Implement schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 this year and without delay.
- Rapidly put in place plans to get on track to reduce per person water consumption to 110 litres per day by 2050, starting by finalising proposals on water efficiency labelling and water efficient buildings this year.
- Initiate a step change in recycling rates, including for food waste, by proceeding with the Consistency of Recycling Proposals, and finalising the Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Scheme.



“Taking a strategic view on the recent pace of planning and delivery suggests a significant gap between long term ambition and current performance. To get back on track, we need a change of gear in infrastructure policy.”

- Sir John Armitt, NIC chair



Click here to read the NIC annual Infrastructure Progress Review.

Building momentum for restoring healthy cities

Ramboll's *Samantha Deacon* outlines the case for building momentum for restoring healthy cities.

At COP15 in December, the UK made the commitment to join the Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework and pledged to conserve 30% of land and sea by 2030.

The journey to achieving the 30x30 target will require significant investment, not in the least because of the UK's poor track record with climate targets.

In January, a report from the Office of Environmental Protection showed that the UK was set to miss each of its legally binding climate targets.

For example, achieving 30x30 will require, amongst other things, a shift in mindset. Conservation is traditionally thought of as Sites of Significant Scientific Interest, or SSSIs.

However, the Framework provides an optimal opportunity for the UK to seize the chance to not only continue efforts maintaining such SSSIs, but to expand conservation efforts to restoring nature across a wider network, including in our towns and cities.

Balancing environmental restoration

Environmental restoration must be balanced with other pressures of course, including but not limited to: food production; resource management for manufacturing; generating energy; and urban expansion.

In fact, the World Bank estimates that our current urban population – half

of the world's population – will more than double by 2050, when nearly 7 out of 10 of us will live in cities.

With demands on all sides, the challenge to reverse nature loss is a complex one, but not without solutions.

As part of 2021's Environment Act, this November the UK's biodiversity net gain requirements become mandatory, requiring all new developments to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain.

This should ensure the protection of high-quality habitats, whilst delivering restoration financed through developments.

Environmental Improvement Plan

The government's recently published Environmental Improvement Plan, or EIP, begins to lay out the roadmap of how developers and private finance will be expected to lead the reversal of biodiversity decline in our urban environment.

The EIP includes a commitment to publishing an updated Green Finance Plan this year, which aims to raise at least £500m per year of private finance for nature recovery by 2027, and more than £1bn by 2030.

However, the EIP falls short though on recognising the role of enforcement and the monitoring of restoration actions to achieve target conditions.

A headline-grabbing part of the

EIP is the commitment that everyone will live within a 15-minute walk of green space or a body of water.

The positive impact green space can have on mental health is now well known, but given a recent study in *The Lancet* laying out the physical health benefits of urban tree cover, the 15-minute access point is particularly welcome.

Heat-related deaths

In a study of heat-related deaths in European cities, the researchers predicted that 40% of deaths associated with the urban heat island effect could have been prevented by increasing tree cover in our cities by at least 30%.

By way of context, the GLA estimates tree canopy covers 21% of the capital's land area, with the Mayor

committing to a further 10% increase by 2050 – is this quick enough given the health benefits of urban trees?

The EIP's 15-minute accessible sites will be measured by the government's Green Infrastructure Framework, or GIF.

Launched recently by Natural England, the GIF was devised for Local Authorities and developers by a 70-strong advisory group and seeks to embed five standards for new developments to increase the extent and connectivity of nature-rich habitats: Green Infrastructure Strategy; Accessible Green Space; Urban Nature Recovery; Urban Greening Factor; and Urban Tree Canopy Cover.

Urban greening

These standards offer architects and ecologists the opportunity to work together to make a real difference to

our urban spaces and building design.

It should be remembered that the benefits of urban greening are significantly linked to the role sites play in wider nature networks – or, in other terms, the spatial configuration of green infrastructure, which should also connect to rural areas.

The EIP rightly platforms local decision-making and delivery, but the EIP should present, in tandem, a role for strategic national planning that ensures habitats are connected to act as species stepping stones and have representation across habitat types. However, questions remain over what the 30% target will comprise?

Ultimately, ambitious new frameworks, roadmaps and policies like the EIP, Green Finance Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain are essential and well-intentioned, but urgently require a

marketplace to facilitate nature action, effective enforcement and strategic oversight to reverse biodiversity decline and deliver climate resilience.

We must remember that what we build now will last. The question mark just hangs over whether that development is a help or a hindrance.

"Once a city is built, its physical form and land use patterns can be locked in for generations," as The World Bank rightly points out. So, we must think strategically now, across both urban and rural landscapes, for physical, mental, social and environmental health in our cities.



Samantha Deacon
is a principal at Ramboll.



With demands on all sides, the challenge to reverse nature loss is a complex one, but not without solutions.

Retrofitting historic buildings could generate £35bn a year

Retrofitting historic buildings could create over 100,000 new jobs and generate £35bn a year, according to a new report.

A new report is calling for industry and government collaboration to build a workforce capable of meeting the UK's climate goals and safeguarding the UK's historic buildings, while creating new construction jobs.

The National Trust, Peabody, Historic England, The Crown Estate and Grosvenor, who commissioned the report, said retrofitting the UK's historic buildings will support £35bn of economic output annually.

The organisations have joined together to highlight the social, environmental and economic opportunities offered by building a workforce with the necessary skills and training to ensure the UK's historic buildings contribute to a net zero future.

Improving the energy efficiency of historic properties could reduce carbon emissions from the UK's buildings by an estimated 5% each year, while making homes warmer and cheaper to run, according to the report.

The report shows that more than 105,000 new workers, including plumbers, electricians, carpenters and scaffolders, will be needed to work solely on decarbonising the UK's historic buildings every year for the next 30 years for the UK to meet its 2050 net zero target.

"As Chris Skidmore's net zero review identified, we need to grasp the historic opportunity tackling climate change offers us," said Tor Burrows,

Grosvenor's executive director of sustainability and innovation.

"The Environmental Audit Committee has called for a national mobilisation on energy efficiency. We believe this captures the urgency of the task. The UK needs a long-term national retrofit strategy, led by the government, positively bringing together training,

funding, and standards to sensitively decarbonise our historic buildings.

"The construction industry, businesses and training providers need support to scale up. That's why we're asking the government to work with us on creating a national retrofit strategy that sets out a clear path for upskilling the current workforce while bringing

in a whole new generation."

Buildings in the UK are responsible for around a fifth of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions, with historic buildings accounting for a significant proportion. Around one in five - 6.2m UK homes - and a third of all commercial buildings - around 600,000 in total - were built before 1919.

Retrofitting - such as ensuring windows and heating systems are more energy efficient - lowers emissions and can prolong the life of an older building. It avoids the carbon emissions associated with demolishing and building new, particularly the large amount of carbon emissions from cement and steel produced by construction.

Adapting historic buildings requires even more specialist skills and training. Plumbers will need to be able to work with heat pumps and hydrogen boilers, and many existing workers will need to be taught additional specialist skills to ensure heritage characteristics are protected.

An estimated 100,000 people currently work on historic buildings, but up to 105,000 new workers - including 14,500 more electricians and 14,300 more plumbers - will be needed each year until 2050 to focus solely on upgrading buildings built before 1919.

The report encourages the government to make the apprenticeship levy more flexible, allowing unspent funds to be channelled into training more people in the heritage retrofit field.

Grosvenor has pledged to transfer up to £50,000 of its levy each year to smaller businesses looking to bring new skills to their workforce. Levy money could also be used to fund six to eight-week bootcamps for people interested in joining the sector, or to help existing workers acquire the specialist skills needed. £3.3bn of unused Apprenticeship Levy was returned to the Treasury between May 2019 and July 2022.

Lord Kerslake, chair of Peabody, said: "The benefits of prioritising our

historic buildings are economic as well as environmental and social. They are an important source of prosperity and growth, with the heritage sector directly contributing £14.7bn to the economy in 2019.

"Making these buildings energy efficient will stimulate spending in the construction industry, support around 290,000 jobs in supply chains and boost heritage-related tourism and hospitality."

Hilary McGrady, director general of the National Trust, added: "The stewardship of our built heritage is in our hands, and we must ensure we prepare it for the challenges of climate change. It's a significant task, but it's one we can achieve through co-ordinated action. But that action must be taken now."

[Click here to read the full report.](#)



Retrofitting historic buildings could create over 100,000 new jobs and generate £35bn a year, according to a new report. Image credit: National Trust/James Dobson.



"The recently released IPCC Climate Report is being touted as a "survival guide for humanity", and for good reason." Lucy Wood.

Put everything on the table to help defuse climate time-bomb

Stantec's *Lucy Wood* describes the recent IPCC Climate Report as a "survival guide for humanity" and says it's time to put everything on the table to help defuse the climate time-bomb.

Every week, we're seeing more stark reports, more glaring evidence, increasingly alarmed climatologists and tangible evidence that climate change is already having serious consequences for the

environment, society and economy. Yet, we're failing to act quickly enough to reduce the negative effects and grasp solutions that would benefit us all.

The recently released IPCC Climate Report is being touted as a "survival

guide for humanity", and for good reason. It concludes human activity is the cause of rapid climate change that will likely see global temperatures soon overshoot the 1.5oC mark on average, altering all aspects of our planet.

With the UN Secretary General saying our world needs action 'everything, everywhere, all at once' – there isn't anyone, anywhere who can sit in ignorance.

It suggests current levels of support and investment are falling well below what is required for us to achieve our climate goals, noting if current trends continue, we will overshoot the 1.5oC of warming as soon as the 2030s.

Moving closer to a point of no return

We're moving closer to a point of no return. This means fast-tracking mitigation measures – by actively slowing down the rate of change, pulling carbon from the atmosphere, and adapting our infrastructure quickly – must be our priority.

Our infrastructure, especially in poorer nations and regions, is vulnerable and will soon not be fit for purpose. As a global climate leader, the UK must act, and be seen to act, urgently. Our

government must focus directly on immediate decarbonisation, while making communities resilient.

The solutions are in plain sight, with the IPCC calling for humanity to harness the 'multiple, feasible and effective options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to human-caused climate change'. Carbon dioxide removal technologies and harnessing technological innovation will be key to controlling future climate change once 1.5oC is exceeded.

Innovative decarbonisation technology

In the UK, channelling our efforts towards more innovative decarbonisation technology is, thankfully, underway. The government's financial backing (of up to £20bn) for the early development of carbon capture and storage (CCUS), which was mentioned in the spring budget, is a welcome move. Investing in the roll-out of technology will be positive for the UK and the green economy.

Effective mitigation is only possible if every industry makes deep cuts to emissions. Cleaning up our energy sector is an obvious next step. Classifying nuclear as 'environmentally sustainable' should be viewed as a positive move, combined with the launch of 'Great British Nuclear'.

The sector will need consistent and robust support from the government, as well as appropriate funding if we are to meet this goal.

Going nuclear

The facilitation of small modular reactors – an exciting emerging technology in development around the world – is another interesting promise. These smaller, simpler reactors will be easier to build while being just as efficient as larger ones. They can be installed in locations much closer to where the power is needed.

If we can help pioneer their development through the forthcoming competition, then we will be in a good position to attract investment and support sustainable growth. Proactive engagement with stakeholders – including local communities – will be key to dispelling myths about nuclear technology and making the case for rapid deployment.

We must also keep focus on driving

large-scale, forward-thinking energy schemes like the Coire Glas hydro project into delivery. This project, which was just given a £100m boost from SSE, could play an integral role in helping the UK reach net zero carbon emissions by vastly increasing Britain's electricity storage capacity.

We have long known that mitigation and adaptation must work hand in hand, particularly as the IPCC report acknowledges that adaptation measures reduce in effectiveness with increased warming.

Nature-based solutions

We need to look closely at nature-based solutions if we want to protect people's health and happiness in a more extreme environment, think bigger and be more inventive when protecting blue and green spaces.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing is central to better adaptation. We need to join up resilient and low carbon infrastructure services through cross sector and public/private partnerships. By doing so, we can minimise costs and maximise value for communities.

We must also focus on having a consenting regime in the UK which is fit for purpose. It needs to better consider new technologies and prioritise the delivery of co-ordinated major infrastructure. At the same time, we should support local government in upskilling themselves and ensure they are properly resourced so they can make informed, important decisions.

The IPCC's "report of reports" underscores the urgency we need, directly pointing to low-carbon buildings, better use of land, cleaner energy networks, and improved air quality as being fundamental solutions for us to grasp and pioneer.

The UK government must stand firm on its net zero ambitions and follow through quickly with commitments. The entire infrastructure community must act urgently as a critical player in a decarbonised and resilient future.



Lucy Wood
is UK climate solutions leader at Stantec.



TfL is forecast to achieve an operating surplus in 2023/24.

TfL set for profit in 2023/24

Transport for London's latest budget has revealed that it will achieve an operating surplus in 2023/24 so it can invest in transport improvements across London.

Despite the pandemic decimating TfL's income and recent economic pressures, the budget shows the organisation can now fully cover operational costs while investing in new bus services, Tube improvements and walking and cycling schemes across the city and outer London.

Over the next financial year, TfL's £9.1bn in revenue will cover its expected £7.9bn operating costs, which cover the operational running of TfL services in London; £745m in capital renewals; and £417m in net interest costs that it will accrue.

This will mean that TfL will achieve

an overall operating surplus of £79m, which will be reinvested directly into enhancements across the transport network as part of its wider £2bn capital programme, with any government funding in 2023/24 allocated to fund capital investments across the network.

Since 2016, TfL has saved £1.1bn from its annual operating costs and it is currently working on the delivery of £600m in further savings commitments as set out in its business plan.

London mayor Sadiq Khan said: "Before the pandemic, prudent financial management had placed TfL on the cusp of breaking even for the first time in its history. Now, after a very difficult few years due to the pandemic, we are set to deliver a surplus for the first time ever.

"However, the hard work is not over

and we will work with the government to ensure we get the national investment we need to continue delivering a world-class transport network for our city – something that is so crucial to building a greener, fairer and more prosperous London for everyone."

TfL states that the 2023/24 budget has been developed on the assumption that the current funding agreement with government, which lasts until April 2024, remains in place and is fully honoured.

The mayor and TfL are calling on the government to ensure there is an agreed longer-term funding for capital investments from 2024/25, stating it is essential to support longer-term investments, particularly for new rolling stock, signalling programmes and network extensions.

CLC announces new leadership team

Four senior industry figures have agreed to join a new leadership team at the Construction Leadership Council, each taking up roles on the CLC's four key priorities.

Last autumn, the CLC confirmed that it would focus on four long-term priorities to boost productivity, growth and improve resilience: Building Safety, People and Skills, Net Zero and Bio-Diversity, and Next Generation Delivery.

The new CLC industry sponsors on the leadership team are: Karl Whiteman, divisional managing director of Berkeley Group, for Building Safety; Nick Roberts, CEO of Travis Perkins Plc, for People and Skills; Matt Palmer, executive director of Lower Thames Crossing, National Highways, for Net Zero and

Bio-Diversity; and Isabel Corman, director of engineering and asset strategy, Transport for London, for Next Generation Delivery.

CLC co-chair and Mace Group chairman and CEO Mark Reynolds and CLC deputy co-chair CEO, Atkins UK and Europe, Richard Robinson, said: "Having set out a clear vision for the CLC, our focus now is to deliver visible action against our four priorities for the benefit of the whole construction sector.

"As such, these appointments represent a significant milestone as we look to accelerate the change needed to address the building safety changes, help deliver a green economy, drive productivity, and enhance our skills to achieve growth across UK construction."



Mark Reynolds, CLC co-chair and Mace Group chair.



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