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Coming out of Covid

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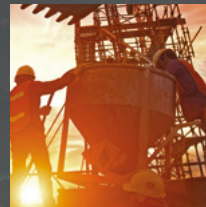
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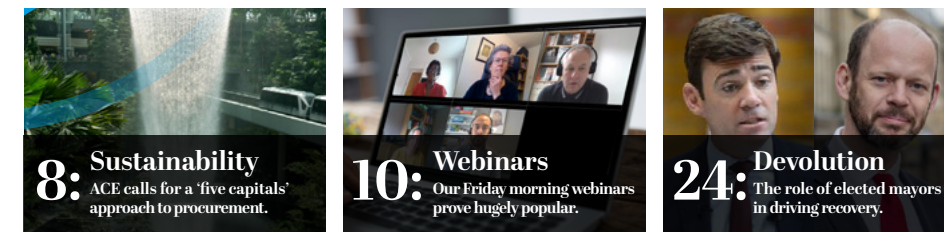
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Message from the editor



Welcome to the second digital edition of *Infrastructure Intelligence* published under the coronavirus lockdown. As I write this editor's comment, we are but days away from a further easing of the government's pandemic restrictions that will see bars and restaurants open for the first time for months, albeit under strict safety conditions.

While it's right that people should raise a glass at a further return to normality, any celebrations must be tempered by knowing that many people have suffered dreadfully during this crisis and, as we enter this new phase of recovery, the economic aftershocks are likely to be extremely severe, especially on construction and infrastructure businesses and their staff.

This latest issue is of course dominated by the pandemic but we strike an upbeat tone with news of the government's big focus on "build, build, build" to drive economic recovery, an update on the Construction Leadership Council's industry revitalisation plans and a number of heartening articles that show how our industry is looking to the new normal with optimism and a renewed sense of collaboration.

One thing that we can be sure about in the weeks and months ahead – and the experience of the past three months has borne this out – is that whatever the challenges placed before our industry, we know that it has within its ranks some of the most conscientious, caring and socially minded people anywhere. They are determined to play their full part as the UK emerges from this crisis and must be given every encouragement and opportunity to do so.

Andy Walker,
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PM promises to “build, build, build”

The government's new “Project Speed” taskforce is set to drive faster infrastructure project delivery as the prime minister promises a massive spending programme to boost the economy. *Andy Walker* reports.

Boris Johnson's infrastructure speech in Dudley on 30 June 2020 was widely trailed in the press, with media reports predicting that billions of pounds will be spent to rescue the economy in the face of what Johnson described as the looming “thunderclap of economic consequences” of Covid-19. In a signal of intent, the PM tweeted “We want to build our way back to health” and he reiterated this in his speech in the West Midlands with a bold pledge to “build, build, build” the country out of the forthcoming economic crisis.

Promising the country that there would be no return to austerity in the face of an economic contraction in the wake of the Covid crisis, Johnson said that his government would oversee the building of new schools, hospitals and homes, ensure that infrastructure projects are completed and employment created for people whose jobs might disappear as a result of the predicted economic difficulties in the wake of the pandemic.

Johnson also announced the creation of a new “Project Speed” taskforce, led by the chancellor Rishi Sunak, that will get Britain building and deliver key projects faster. How precisely this will be done is yet to be clearly outlined and the construction industry still has a number of unanswered questions following his speech, especially in regard to procurement, planning and the role of SMEs in the recovery plans.

Speaking to Times Radio on 29 June 2020, prime minister Johnson promised a “Rooseveltian approach to the UK”, referencing the former US president's massive programme of public works in the 1930s under the New Deal policy which boosted the post-Depression US economy. “We really want to build



The prime minister Boris Johnson has promised to “build, build, build” his way back to recovery.

back better, to do things differently, to invest in infrastructure, transport, broadband - you name it,” said Johnson.

Initially, Johnson plans to bring forward plans to spend £5bn on infrastructure projects. Included in this £5bn plan are:

- £1.5bn for hospital maintenance, enabling hospital building and improving A&E capacity
- £100m for 29 road network projects including bridge repairs in Sandwell and improving the A15 in the Humber region
- £900m for “shovel ready” local projects in England this year and in 2021
- £500,000 - £1m for each area in the towns fund to spend on improvements to parks, high street and transport
- Over £1bn to fund a schools building project
- £83m for maintenance of prisons and youth offender facilities and £60m for temporary prison places.

The government is also expected to bring forward funding to speed up infrastructure projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Commenting on the PM's pledges, National Infrastructure Commission chair Sir John Armitt said that in order to speed up

project delivery the government and ministers would have to be clear about they want and “create a collaborative environment amongst all those who will enable delivery, fix the budget, don't change what you want and provide strong leadership”.

Armitt said that delivery would require a particular focus and that it would be essential for there to be clear guidance from those making the decisions and look to achieve political consensus about the long-term priorities facing the nation. “Having had a really good debate and deciding on what they are going to do government should make sure that it sticks to that policy and don't keep flip-flopping backwards and forwards because that reduces the confidence that people have to invest in the economy.

“Spending on infrastructure is one good way to get the economy going is by spending on infrastructure. There are lots of green things that we can go forward with and the private sector wants to invest in onshore and offshore wind, we need better broadband and an EV charging network and clear support and direction from government will enable the private sector as well as the public sector to invest and we can get the economy moving and most importantly of all we can get people back to work.”

The government is expected to publish its long-awaited and updated National Infrastructure Strategy in the autumn and already some in the business and construction sector are calling for it to give all firms a chance of winning work, especially SMEs. Federation of Small Businesses national chairman Mike Cherry described the prime minister's infrastructure announcements as “encouraging” but said it was vital that small businesses were not “locked out of the ambition to build... because of cumbersome public sector procurement rules”.

Mark Robinson, chief executive of public sector procurement specialists Scape Group, said: “Industry will no doubt welcome these announcements from government. Construction is a significant contributor to the UK economy and this investment is urgently needed to reintroduce confidence to the sector, accelerate our path to recovery and protect jobs across the United Kingdom.

“That said, it is vital we keep a long-term view. As an industry, we must make this investment count. Every single project must be delivered with quality, value for the taxpayer and integrate green technology that will help us to shape a more sustainable future as we work to recover. To realise this will require collaboration and shared vision across all supply chain partners as we address the challenges that lie ahead.”

Sir John Armitt continued: “Building back better, greener and faster are welcome ambitions and it is critical that we take immediate steps to secure jobs and build confidence across supply chains. To attract private investment to build on the public funding and to ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to deliver, building schemes need to be set within a longer term strategy that gives clarity on the future direction of government policy. We look forward to seeing more details of the government's plans over the coming weeks and, most importantly, in the *National Infrastructure Strategy* later in the year.”

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Construction industry recovery plan published

The Construction Leadership Council has outlined the industry's three-pronged plan for recovery post-Covid setting out a 'restart, reset and reinvention' approach.

Plans for a post-Covid revival of the UK construction sector have been published by the Construction Leadership Council's (CLC) Covid-19 task force. They have set out proposals to secure the future of construction businesses nationwide, while setting the industry on a three-stage sustainable path towards recovery.

The three-pronged plan – restart, reset and reinvention – outlines a roadmap to recovery for the industry as it emerges from the Covid-19 crisis and the CLC task force is now engaging with the government to test how the plan's proposals might be delivered.

The plan, entitled *Roadmap to Recovery: An Industry Recovery Plan for the UK Construction Sector*, puts forward a strategy to drive the recovery of the construction and built environment sectors and through them the wider UK economy, following the Covid-19 pandemic and economic downturn. The CLC make the point that construction is uniquely placed to drive the national economic recovery as it operates throughout the UK, employs 3.1 million workers, and exports billions of pounds of products and services.

Outlining the importance of the construction sector to UK plc, the CLC point out that the industry generated £413bn in 2018, which is 8.6% of GDP. This is nearly four times the combined annual output of the aerospace and automotive industries, which generated £107bn in 2018. The importance of the sector is further illustrated by the fact that the enterprises that work within it include 405,000 firms, 900,000 sole traders, 300 large contractors and 41% of workforce (943,000) are self-employed.

Given that the Construction Products Association estimates that construction output will fall by 25% in 2020, with the largest falls in activity in private housing (-42%), commercial construction (-36%), and private repair maintenance & improvement (-35%), it is clear, say the CLC, that the sector needs significant government assistance to recover from the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic and that assistance needs to be quick and targeted to make an impact.

The recovery strategy aims to increase the level of activity across the construction ecosystem, accelerate the process of industry adjustment to the new normal and build capacity in the



Andy Mitchell,
co-chair, Construction
Leadership Council



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industry to deliver strategic priorities, including increasing prosperity across the UK, decarbonisation, modernisation through digital and manufacturing technologies and by delivering better, safer buildings.

There are three phases to the plan, which is expected to be delivered over two years:

- Restart: increase output, maximise employment and minimise disruption (0-3 months);
- Reset: drive demand, increase productivity, strengthen capability in the supply chain (3-12 months);
- Reinvent: transform the industry, deliver better value, collaboration and partnership (12-24 months).

Key outcomes, the CLC say, will be a more capable, professional, productive and profitable sector, which delivers better value to clients, better performing infrastructure and buildings and competes successfully in global markets.

The CLC says that failure to act by the government will miss an opportunity to deliver this and risks the industry lapsing into a longer term recession, which erodes capability and skills, and leaves a smaller, weaker sector as a legacy. They outline some key deliverables and benefits from the plan as follows.

Valuable investment outcomes including essential social and economic infrastructure, driving long-term productivity improvement across the economy and supporting the delivery of public services. Delivering the national

strategic infrastructure priorities identified by the National Infrastructure Commission, and a better co-ordinated approach to the planning and delivery of infrastructure.

Reducing carbon emissions and improving the sustainability and resource efficiency of the construction and built environment sectors and making measurable progress towards delivering net zero carbon.

Meeting societal needs, including more and better residential accommodation and safer buildings.

Direct contribution to **regional economic recovery and prosperity**, through high multiplier investments, relatively high earnings, fast cashflow and local supply-chains.

Transforming the business model of the sector to create a **more collaborative, fairer and resilient industry**, supporting firms in the supply chain to succeed and maintain the workforce at all levels.

Create an innovation culture that delivers efficient products, processes and built assets, to improve productivity, quality and increase output, including through embedding digital and offsite manufacturing technologies.

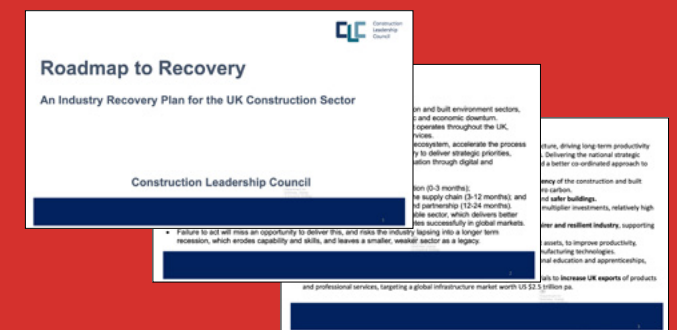
Increased investment in skills and training, at a professional level, through vocational education and apprenticeships and improving occupational health and safety for the workforce. Building on UK strengths in digital design and systems, manufacturing and materials to **increase UK exports** of products and professional services, targeting a global infrastructure market worth US \$2.5 trillion per year.

Four industry working groups have been set up to help deliver the recovery plan and liaise with government. The groups are infrastructure, housing, domestic renovation,

maintenance and improvement and local, social and commercial construction.

The recovery plan also points out the importance of the industry minimising disruption due to contractual disputes over the coming period. "Disputes will damage the industry, cost money, and fracture supply chains – it is essential to minimise this disruption to get the industry back to work," the CLC says. To achieve this, they have called on all public and private sector clients to commit to following government and CLC guidance on responsible contractual behaviour and consider adoption of the Conflict Avoidance Pledge to avoid disputes and to seek adjudication through the most cost effective process.

To download *Roadmap to Recovery: An Industry Recovery Plan for the UK Construction Sector* visit <https://bit.ly/3iivmdE>



ACE calls for ‘five capitals’ approach to procurement

With sustainability increasingly high on the political agenda, ACE has issued a clarion call for a new approach to measuring and assessing sustainability in construction procurement, reports *Andy Walker*.

A new report published on 27 May 2020 by the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) explores the potential for the development of a new approach to procurement, which places a greater emphasis on value. *Measures for Successful outcomes: the five capitals approach* argues that value needs to be considered in a holistic way by exploring the natural, human, social, manufactured and financial capitals for every project and programme.

Through the sharing of best-practice, the report highlights where the industry is already leading the way in the measurement of impact and in developing metrics across the different capitals. It also explores in more detail how the capitals are interconnected and how they relate to wider issues such as government procurement and the Treasury’s ‘Green Book’, as well as the UN social development goals and the Net Zero agenda.

Natalie Cropp, chair of ACE’s sustainability group and sustainability director at Tony Gee, said: “This report puts forward our recommended model for measuring and assessing sustainability in procurement, design and delivery. The five capitals model is intended to provide a balanced approach to defining value on a project and allows the social and environmental aspects to be considered on a par with the traditional economic factors.

“While not providing all of the answers, the five capitals approach provides a clear framework where finding a common language is one of the major hurdles that need to be overcome. This paper does a great job in kickstarting that conversation.”

Hannah Vickers, chief executive of ACE said: “Sustainability has never been higher up the political agenda and ensuring we’re able to meet Net Zero expectations on infrastructure and construction will be crucial to making the most of any post-Covid recovery programme. The government has made clear its ambitions to deliver a net zero society. But before we can turn that aspiration into reality, we need to make sure that our



Hannah Vickers,
chief executive of
the Association for
Consultancy and
Engineering.

procurement process rewards value creation.”

Keith Waller, programme director for the Construction Innovation Hub said “We welcome the publication of *Measures for Successful outcomes: the five capitals approach* and are delighted to be working with ACE as we develop our *Value Framework*. This framework will enable clients from both public and private sectors to make informed choices that are not based simply on how cheap a service or project can be bought, but by how much value is created, allowing wider social, economic and environment outcomes to inform decision-making and whole life performance measurement.”

Download the *Measures for Successful outcomes: the five capitals approach* report at <https://bit.ly/31wtDR6>



Is there something else catching about Covid-19?

Covid-19 has pushed the construction sector to find alternative ways to communicate but, *Jamie Gordon* asks, is there a better way we could be communicating digitally?

If Covid-19 has taught us one thing, it’s that we can exist, work and even socialise without the need for face-to-face contact. Of course, there are exceptions and as a bald man I haven’t missed going to the hairdressers, but on the whole a significant number of businesses have continued to operate, albeit with a reduced workload.

And the solution has been to operate digitally. Teams, Zoom and Skype have become commonplace and webinars have sprung up everywhere. Indeed, I spoke at one for *Infrastructure Intelligence* on the very topic you are reading about now.

But while we’ve managed to get by using these digital platforms, in their most basic form they do have some serious limitations. The well regarded 7-38-55 rule states that 7% of meaning is communicated through spoken word, 38% through tone of voice, and 55% through body language. Throw in dodgy PC microphones and the fact you only see people’s faces on a video conference call and you risk missing a lot of what is being communicated.

So, while digital communications will never replace face-to-face contact, there are ways of doing digital communications better, and some major benefits as well.

For instance, in the modern world of infrastructure consultation you have to illustrate engagement with hard to reach groups and individuals, which was challenging. But now the Silver Surfer is prevalent, websites can be coded with screen readers for the blind, translation is just a click of a button away and many libraries now have computers with free internet access.

Any project website can act as a repository for all public facing documents with a plethora of information available. So, instead of lengthy responses to a technical query, you just need to signpost the individual to the correct area of the website with a link in an email.

And because Covid-19 meant no more public consultation events, digital solutions filled the gap. Here at BECG we developed a platform that allows a person to move around a virtual room online looking at exhibition boards, much the same as they would



Jamie Gordon
is director of
infrastructure and
energy at specialist
communications
agency for the built
environment, BECG.

in reality. They can watch videos, give feedback, even ask an expert a question. It’s worked so well that the National Infrastructure Planning Association endorsed it as a solution for continued working during Covid-19.

You can even adapt the tool to work for collaborative workshops, a process that is commonplace in the infrastructure world from project inception days to risk workshops. At BECG, we are currently developing a version of our virtual tool that allows people to speak live, thematic subgroups to form and the use of traditional tools like Post-It note boards and flip charts.

So, while there is no doubt the pandemic has restricted us all, it’s also highlighted and fast-tracked a different way of working, which could mean more engagement not less, more collaboration due to a lack of geographic boundaries and even more knowledge sharing. Now that does sound contagious.



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Friday morning webinars prove hugely popular

More than 1,000 industry professionals have signed up for the *Infrastructure Intelligence* Covid webinar series, with the free online events continuing throughout July, writes *Rob O'Connor*.



Friday mornings quickly became an essential date in the diary this summer, as more than 1,000 industry professionals signed up for our series of Coming out of Covid webinars – and a brand new series of Covid Recovery webinars is now running every Friday morning throughout July.

Hosted by *Infrastructure Intelligence* editor Andy Walker, a top line-up of leading industry figures from across the infrastructure, construction and consultancy sectors has grappled with a range of key issues as the UK entered the latest stage in the fight against coronavirus.

Book now for July's webinars!

After Covid-19: a boost for Net Zero?
Friday 3 July 2020 at 11am.

Delivering the public sector pipeline after Covid
Friday 10 July 2020 at 11am.

Delivering the private sector pipeline after Covid
Friday 17 July 2020 at 11am.

Infrastructure after Covid – what will it look like?
Friday 24 July 2020 at 11am.

Post-Covid – the skills challenge for construction
Friday 31 July 2020 at 11am.

www.infrastructure-intelligence.com/tablet-events



With the easing of the lockdown, what is the new normal for construction?

Leading industry figures called for the industry to be both creative and bold in its thinking, in the first webinar on Friday 29 May, as they described the current Covid-19 pandemic as a once-in-a-generational opportunity to make positive changes in the construction and infrastructure sectors.

ACE chief executive Hannah Vickers outlined three areas of lasting change – the changing demands on the industry, changing how the industry works and future funding and finance. Looking at the economy of the future, Vickers outlined the government's key priorities of both creating and protecting jobs in the UK in a new era likely to be dogged by persistently high unemployment.

Fellow panellist Georgia Hughes from Arcadis described the current pandemic as a once-in-a-generational opportunity to change the infrastructure and construction sector, saying the lockdown has proved that the industry has been able to change the way it works very quickly.



The role of infrastructure investment in kick-starting the economy

The environment and an increased focus on social and community infrastructure were key topics for debate on Friday 5 June, as the webinar looked at the role of infrastructure investment in kick-starting the economy.

Ben Marshall, transport and infrastructure specialist with pollsters Ipsos MORI, said that political will is shaped by public opinion and that infrastructure was currently pushing at an open door as far as public opinion was concerned. Outlining how infrastructure has a crucial role in kickstarting the economy, he pointed to recent polls that showed the public saw infrastructure as pivotal for future economic growth.

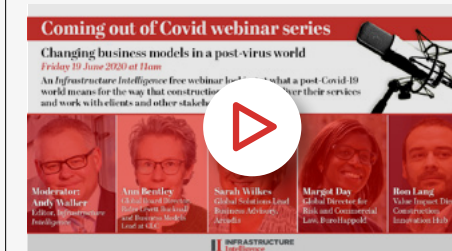


Guarding against the next time - making the industry resilient

The environment, long-term planning, communities, and adapting to new ways of working all took centre stage at the resilience webinar on Friday 12 June.

Chris Young of Tony Gee highlighted the vital importance of focussing on long-term goals, including environmental issues, rather than short-term crisis measures. "The industry has to aim for long-term resilience rather than short-term sticking plasters," he said. "Long-term planning investment is what we have to do, rather than constant short-term firefighting."

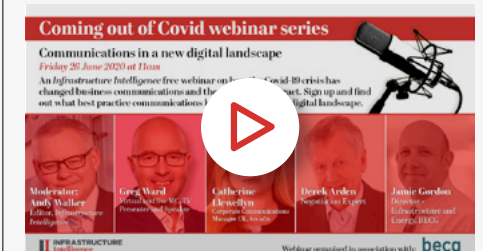
Ramboll's Mathew Riley also looked to the longer term and to paid tribute to the Construction Leadership Council, saying it was the first time he could remember the industry speaking effectively with one voice, displaying exactly the type of clear leadership required when dealing with government and other major decision makers.



Changing business models in a post-virus world

Redefining best value, industry collaboration and the environment were major talking points as a typically strong panel discussed changing business models in a post-Covid world on Friday 19 June.

Sarah Wilkes from Arcadis said that although the industry had already been changing, the pandemic had sharpened the focus and presented a great opportunity to change the way the industry works for good. Changing the perception of best value, with the emphasis on sustainability, local economies and the environment were all key to building a successful future, she said.



Communications in a new digital landscape

Embracing the new digital era and involving communications specialists in decision-making were the key talking points on Friday 26 June, as the panel looked at communications in a new digital landscape.

Catherine Llewellyn from Arcadis said the industry needed to think differently about how it gets its messages across. Previously, she said, 60% of marketing budgets had typically been spent on events – money that should now be spent embracing digital and social media and investing in media training for industry leaders. Crucially, she said: "Communications specialists need to be in the room when both day-to-day and important strategic decisions are made," helping to shape and inform the decision-making process.

Describing the summer's webinars so far, *Infrastructure Intelligence* editor Andy Walker said: "The coronavirus crisis has had a significant impact on every business sector and we wanted to help the industry as it emerges slowly from its worst effects by holding a series of webinars to help firms as they 'come out of Covid' and try and adjust to the new normal.

Read more online at www.infrastructure-intelligence.com

Thanks to BECG, Atkins and Barton Willmore for their support for the webinar series.

BARTON WILLMORE

ATKINS
Member of the SNC Lavalin Group

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One year on from the UK net zero pledge

Saturday 27 June marked one year since the signing of the net zero pledge into UK law. This made the UK one of the first countries to commit to a net zero carbon emissions target in law. Theresa May signed up to the target of the Extinction Rebellion protests and the pledge was a testament to public pressure forcing government to take action on the existential reality of the climate emergency.

A year on from the signing of the pledge, it is clear that progress has been slow, with the only concrete achievements being the consultation on bringing forward the phasing out of petrol and diesel cars from 2040 to 2035, a commitment of £800m for CCS and plans to double the UK's international climate finance funding from £5.8bn to £11.6bn.

The government will be under an increased amount of pressure to lay out their net zero plans when the Committee on Climate Change publishes their progress report on

25 June 2020 providing a statutory assessment of the UK's progress in reducing emissions. Following on from their letter to the prime minister in May, the CCC will recommend a green recovery with the government required to provide a response.

Despite repeated assurances that the net zero target remains a priority, billions of pounds spent to bail out carbon emitting sectors did not come with green conditions. If the government wants a shift in investments towards net zero technology, they need to lead that shift. Meanwhile industry is seeking more regulation that provides clear signals that private investors will follow, as well as support for trials of new green technologies, such as hydrogen fuel and carbon capture and storage that are essential to reach our net zero target.

Whilst the measures taken by the government over the last year have only resulted in a tiny fraction of the change needed to get to net zero by 2050, there is potential that the Covid-19 pandemic can be used as a catalyst for bigger change.

Whilst the measures taken by the government over the last year have only resulted in a tiny fraction of the change needed to get to net zero by 2050, there is potential that the Covid-19 pandemic can be used as a catalyst for bigger change.

As Shaun Spiers, executive director of Green Alliance, recently wrote: "There are encouraging signs that the government is beginning to realise that all policy and public spending must be put through a net zero filter. The whole government now needs to shift gear and ensure that 'build back better' and 'green recovery' are not just slogans but drive the economic recovery from Covid-19."



Sarah Longlands is the director of IPPR North.



Julie Hirigoyen is the chief executive at the UK Green Building Council.



Jacqueline Hughes is a senior risk analyst at the risk management consultancy, Equib.

The north deserves better

Boris Johnson's infrastructure speech was deeply disappointing for anyone who hoped that it might set out an ambitious programme of change to tackle our regional inequalities. In the face of the biggest challenge ever to face these islands, it merely reheats existing announcements and does little to 'level up' power and resources across the UK. The north deserves better.

Given the economic crisis facing our regions, we need far more than rhetoric. We need ambition, investment and action at pace and scale to help people and communities who have been hit hardest by our regional divides, by austerity and by

this pandemic. These divides haven't happened by accident, but as a result of our uniquely centralised political system. It's a system that has proven itself unsuitable to respond to crises. The prime minister completely failed to recognise this in his speech.

We need to build back better with more than just bricks and mortar. This is about our capacity to respond, to be resilient. To build a better future for our children. In the north that means building a stronger system of devolution. It means a sensible funding settlement for local government. It means creating new green jobs as part of a Plan for Nature in the North, and it means building decent health and education into all policies to secure an inclusive and productive future economy.

We asked for 'Build Back Better', but we got 'Build Build Build'

If we do not seize this moment and take the opportunity to underpin our recovery plans with climate ambition, we will not achieve our target of net zero emissions by 2050. Yet the infrastructure plans announced by the PM make no reference to energy efficiency - perhaps the most urgent of all infrastructure priorities - that can create jobs right around the country, improve health and reduce costs to NHS, and increase consumer spending power by lowering energy bills.

All this despite universal support for a national retrofit strategy

over the past few weeks from wide-ranging industry and academic institutions and a 2019 manifesto promise of £9bn in insulating our draughty homes.

The UKGBC welcomes a focus on levelling up the fortunes of individuals right across the country through investment in new homes and infrastructure, but a frenzy of building is not equivalent to building back greener. Such investment must be underpinned by the highest quality outcomes including efficiency, net zero emissions, waste avoidance, social value and biodiversity net gain. Yet on the basis of current building regulations and planning standards, none of these outcomes would be guaranteed.

I sincerely hope that the chancellor's forthcoming budget announcements will provide much-needed detail on the way this government will practically 'build back better'.

Project speed-ups mustn't cut corners

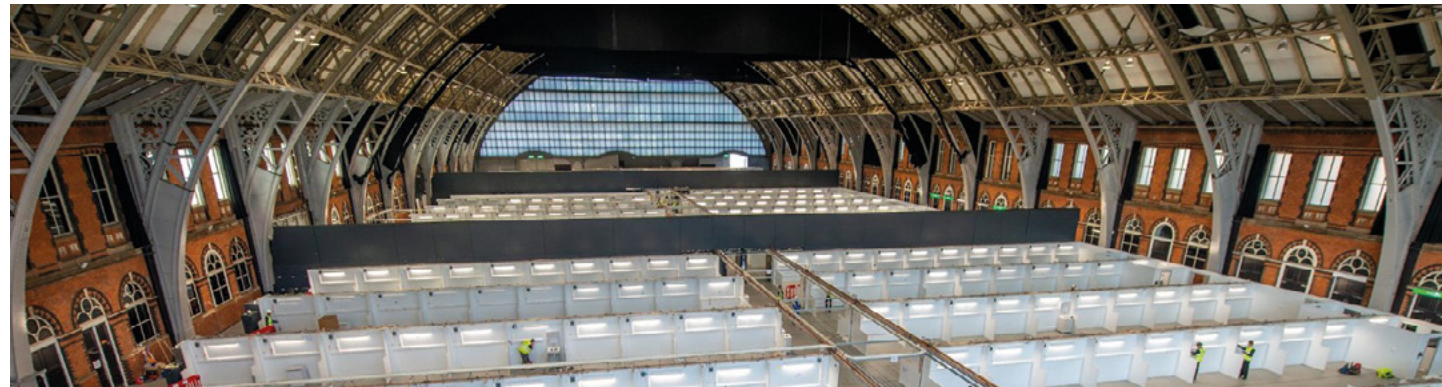
Boris Johnson's government's decision to accelerate infrastructure spending underlines the important role it can play in kickstarting economic recovery. However, a longer-term strategy is still needed.

Working at speed brings challenges, which will require careful project management. In particular, project teams will need to balance the need to adhere to Covid-19 constraints, with the need to deliver buildings that are fit for purpose, as quickly as possible.

Speeding up the delivery of infrastructure projects must not lead to corners being cut. There are several potential issues here - for example, if procurement procedures are circumvented or abbreviated in some way, this could mean taxpayers don't get value for money. Early-stage workshops must also be thorough, ensuring there is input from contractors, to avoid the need for costly delays or re-designs at a later stage.

This is a chance for the UK construction industry to put past lessons to good use and drive national economic recovery.

Public opinion and infrastructure post-Covid



Ipsos MORI's research on coronavirus and public opinion is providing valuable insights for the infrastructure sector to take note of, says *Ben Marshall*.



Ben Marshall
is a research director at
Ipsos MORI.

Stay at home. Three small words with huge impacts for the nation's infrastructure and the services run on it. The sector now has a surfeit of supply – an unwelcome stress-test of its resilience – but what of 'demand'? What about infrastructure's consumers, their perspectives and priorities?

In April, National Grid warned that record low demand for electricity could lead to windfarms and power plants being turned off. TfL could, reportedly, "run out of cash". The railways are back under government control. Aviation is imperilled and housebuilders are struggling. Our roads went quiet. We are living through unprecedented and dramatic changes to our society and psyche.

The new normal? Possibly. Half of Britons think it will be a year or longer before "life will return to normal", six in ten that it will be at least this long before the economy starts growing again. Only two in ten would be happy to use public transport. While these numbers suggest that it will take time to return to anything like normality, it can be tempting to read too much into what is happening; no-one

really knows what the future will look like. But in terms of public opinion and infrastructure, there are at least four signals we should watch out for.

1. Recession bites and infrastructure deprioritised. Our surveys find almost nobody disagreeing that investing in infrastructure is vital to the country's future economic growth. But benefits are much less tangible than costs, and past failings linger in cultural memory. While there is no appetite to return to austerity and cuts, sensitivities about budgets will become more acute. Infrastructure will need to restate its case, and well.

2. Priorities shift towards social. The next generation of economic infrastructure projects might have to play second fiddle to social ones like hospitals and schools. Before coronavirus, the public were cool on the idea of paying more in tax, even borrowing more, to fund infrastructure but were supportive of anything that helps fund the NHS.

3. A refocus on digital rather than physical. Two years ago, 66% agreed that "because of technology I expect people in the UK will be travelling to work less in the future". The crisis and its digital hyperactivity will no doubt accelerate this expectation. Superfast broadband has been a 'mid-table' priority in the past, but is that about to change?

4. Thermostatic attitudes towards decarbonisation. We saw a sharp increase last year in the salience of environmental sustainability as a preferred factor in decision-making about infrastructure. Now, the public mostly say they want the environment prioritised in the economic recovery, but are divided (almost equally) on whether or not the government should take actions which might harm the environment to help the economy recover.

In a few short weeks coronavirus has potentially shifted us into a new paradigm. But for how long? Just as public attitudes and behaviour have played a pivotal role in getting us through this crisis, so too will they have profound implications for infrastructure's future.

Read more online at
www.infrastructure-intelligence.com

Climate change victory is there for the taking

The Committee on Climate Change has outlined new advice to government on delivering an economic recovery and a transition to a cleaner net zero economy.

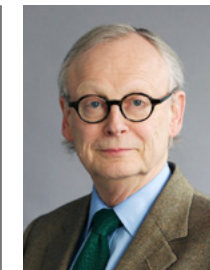
Ministers must seize the opportunity to turn the Covid-19 crisis into a defining moment in the fight against climate change and, although important steps have been taken in the last year, much remains to be done, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) said in its annual report to parliament.

The CCC has provided comprehensive new advice to the government on delivering an economic recovery that accelerates the transition to a cleaner, net zero emissions economy and strengthens the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change. For the first time, the committee has set out its recommendations government department by government department.

CCC chairman, Lord Deben, said: "The UK is facing its biggest economic shock for a generation. Meanwhile, the global crisis of climate change is accelerating. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address these urgent challenges together; it's there for the taking. The steps that the UK takes to rebuild from the Covid-19 pandemic can accelerate the transition to a successful and low-carbon economy and improve our climate resilience. Choices that lock in emissions or climate risks are unacceptable."

Its report highlights five clear investment priorities in the months ahead:

1. Low-carbon retrofits and buildings that are fit for the future.
2. Tree planting, peatland restoration, and green infrastructure.
3. Energy networks must be strengthened for the net-zero energy transformation to support electrification of transport and heating.
4. Infrastructure to make it easy for people to walk, cycle, and work remotely.
5. Moving towards a circular economy.



**Lord Deben, chairman,
Committee on Climate
Change.**

The report also outlines opportunities to support the transition and the recovery by investing in the UK's workforce, and in lower-carbon behaviours and innovation.

1. Reskilling and retraining programmes. The net-zero economy will require a net zero workforce, able to install smart low-carbon heating systems and to make homes comfortable; to design, manufacture and use low-carbon products and materials; and to put carbon back, rather than taking carbon out, from under the North Sea. Now is the time to build that workforce and to equip UK workers with vital skills for the future.

2. Leading a move towards positive behaviours. There is a window for government to reinforce the 'climate-positive' behaviours that have emerged during the lockdown, including increased remote working, cycling and walking. The public sector must lead by example by encouraging remote working and needs to innovate so that customer service can be provided effectively remotely.

3. Targeted science and innovation funding. Kickstarting research and innovation now in low-carbon and adaptation technologies will facilitate the changes needed in the decades ahead and build UK competitive advantage.

Achieving the UK's climate goals and rebuilding the economy fit naturally together, says the committee. "Each makes the other possible and success demands that we do both," say the CCC. The committee claim their recommended actions will deliver an improved economy, better public health, improved biodiversity and access to nature, cleaner air, more comfortable homes and highly productive and rewarding employment.



Learning from crisis to build long-term resilience

In the run-up to a recent *Infrastructure Intelligence* webinar on industry resilience, we spoke to technical director at the Resilience Shift and webinar panellist, Juliet Mian, about how they are learning from crisis.

The current Covid-19 crisis is highlighting just how critical it is to have resilient, reliable infrastructure networks. The essential services that are front of mind at the moment such as healthcare and food supply, depend on transport, power, digital networks and water.

The Resilience Shift is focused on the urgent need to improve infrastructure resilience and highlighting the opportunities of recovery to transform infrastructure and build long-term resilience. The Resilience Shift was created by two highly respected global firms, Lloyd's Register and Arup, who came together to assure the future of critical infrastructure, which is fundamental to the sectors in which they work.

The organisation's work benefits from and amplifies the breadth and depth of knowledge of its founding partners. At a time of dynamic global change and challenges, they advocate the need for innovation and creativity to deliver the most resilient and sustainable solutions. "We need to know that our infrastructure networks and services will be able to absorb, and quickly recover from, acute shocks and chronic stresses, and adapt to a continually changing world," they say.

Dr Juliet Mian, technical director at The Resilience Shift, is a longstanding infrastructure resilience specialist at Arup and leads the Resilience Shift's technical programme that aims to accelerate the resilience of critical infrastructure. Her area of focus is the resilience of critical infrastructure systems, recognising that resilience is an essential property for infrastructure to be truly sustainable and an agenda that is equally as urgent as decarbonisation.

"We think about resilience as our ability to prepare for, withstand where possible, recover from and adapt or transform, in response to a sudden shock, rapidly changing circumstances or chronic stress," says Mian, who cites the National Infrastructure Commission's recent report *Anticipate, React, Recover: Resilient infrastructure systems* as a framework that can help all those working in infrastructure.

"The NIC's framework of Anticipate, Resist, Absorb, Recover, Adapt and Transform is one that we will find ourselves referring to frequently as we all travel through the current crisis," Mian says. "The importance of decision-making during recovery to make sure that our infrastructure systems do adapt, and do transform to enhance future resilience, particularly thinking about the even greater crisis that climate change threatens, is very immediate, and very urgent," says Mian.

The Resilience Shift has also defined ten insights into what matters for resilience: -

- Thinking about whole systems
- Developing guidance and standards
- Managing deep uncertainty



Juliet Mian, director, Resilience Shift.



- Demonstrating the benefits of resilience
- Overcoming fragmented governance
- Transferring knowledge widely
- Adopting technology to enhance resilience
- Engaging the whole value chain
- Focussing on outcome-led approaches
- Becoming safer, resilient and more sustainable

These insights can help all those working across the value chain of infrastructure resilience to think about the factors that will have an impact on their asset or their organisation's resilience. One, in particular relation to Covid, is that of deep uncertainty. Decision-making in such an uncertain time will be a skill more and more in demand from senior leaders.

To understand decision-makers' real-time response to crisis and what can be learned from this, the Resilience Shift is currently interviewing 12 senior leaders from diverse organisations, following their journey over 16 weeks of reflective learning. Seven of the participants are senior executives in large, globally significant corporations like Arup, Lloyd's Register Group, WSP, SAP and Siemens, one is with a global development finance organisation and five are the chief resilience officers of a major city in Europe, Africa, India, Brazil and the USA, all members of the Global Resilient Cities Network.

Real-time resilient leadership insights are curated by the Resilience Shift and shared weekly as blogs and through a podcast reflecting on these insights. Participant, Barbara Humpton, CEO of Siemens USA, said: "We say hindsight is 20/20, but what about our vision in the midst of a crisis? This project is documenting the world's response to pandemic, week-by-week, from the perspective of diverse leaders. The resulting narrative reveals the true nature of resilience as it takes root and grows."

The Resilience Shift has also collated Covid-19 resources for those facing the challenges of the pandemic across the infrastructure value chain. The learning from crisis theme has also explored decision-making at the time of Cape Town's Day Zero crisis through filmed reflections, distilled into structured learning modules. Another has brought together those dealing with the post-earthquake reconstruction of Christchurch and captured their critical review.

Mian said: "We recognise that we have a unique opportunity to learn from current events to improve infrastructure resilience going forward. This also means building the resilience and knowledge in terms of preparation, response or recovery, of the humans who are part of every infrastructure system".

Speaking at the *Infrastructure Intelligence* webinar, "Guarding against the next time – making the industry resilient" on 12 June 2020, Mian said that existing infrastructure in a range of key areas including water, the food supply chain, transport and energy had coped remarkably well in a clearly unprecedented time, but the industry couldn't be complacent.

Describing the industry response to the pandemic as an opportunity to do things differently, and that going "back to normal" was not an option, she outlined how society and communities rely on resilient local infrastructure and said that the sustainability and net zero should be at the heart of the industry's future transformation.

"If we're not resilient to pandemic, we're certainly not resilient to climate change - and that needs to be front and centre of everything moving forward," said Mian.



Frameworks have role to play in post-Covid recovery

When Covid struck, framework organisation Pagabo wasted no time in connecting with the supply chain across its portfolio of framework agreements. The outcomes of Pagabo's efforts have created positive results, as their CEO *Simon Toplass* reports below.

Our framework suppliers are an integral part of our growing 'eco system', including a strong and loyal number of consultants, contractors, clients and alliances. It's never been so important to support them and quickly adapt our practices to bring new Covid-based solutions to help.

When lockdown happened, we created a focussed strategy. The first part of that strategy was communication and to have as much 'face to face' and telephone contact with our eco system as possible. We also launched new webinars, one of which is PUBS (Pagabo Update on Business Strategy) - a fortnightly webinar which our contractor and consultant ecosystem can link into to inform on a range of topics.

Industry listening has been vital. We've had great feedback to our response and have been told by partners that we've maintained impetus and that we are providing the information they need at a time when they need it most.



Simon Toplass
is CEO at framework organisation Pagabo.

We responded positively to the release of the government's *Procurement Policy Note 1/20: Responding to Covid-19*. Our initiative was to offer framework agreements rebate free where extreme urgency was required. We had several requests to this initiative and a notable one was emergency works on a crematorium.

As well as communicating with partners, we have been keeping close to our public sector clients to understand their challenges at a time when their attention has been on responding quickly to their communities. We know that clients will come back strongly and that development will be stimulated.

We know from Build UK statistics that while contracts awarded since lockdown have fallen, the value of the contracts has increased. And we read in a survey by *Building* that 43% of respondents expect works to restart on site within weeks and 65% are confident about their business' future.

But also, when looking to present day supply chains and supply of products, we've been heartened to see five strong bids returned with four within the budget envelope. It shows that framework providers who really understand their partners understand the need that a project is tendered properly. If it had gone independently through OJEU, it would not have had the interest – but we are there to help with this process.

For some organisations, though, there may not be bid opportunities just yet. We are listening to clients and understanding which projects they are looking to activate and when. We are sharing that information with partners, where and when we can, to instil confidence and help them plan.



Pagabo CEO Simon Toplass (left) pictured with Gerard Toplass, Pagabo executive chairman.



PAGABO

Find out more at
www.pagabo.co.uk



We are also seeing a tremendous amount of client access agreements coming through, which is really encouraging. Despite current challenges, we can see clients signing up and activating services from the design and early stages. There has been no real waning in the design side of things – which is positive and interesting.

We can see clients progressing – and even accelerating – the design phase. Clients want to be prepared and get their design discussions progressed, ready for when projects begin again. This early work is buoyant because clients are making use of the time to progress the design elements.

Partners are also telling us that while productivity may be lower, it is giving them an opportunity to look at their long-term strategy and they say they see great benefit to align with opportunities through Pagabo.

We have increased our training offer. Over the coming weeks, we have more initiatives and support practices in place for our eco system. Post lockdown, we launched an NEC4 training programme, run by our very own Dr Stuart Kings, a drafter for the NEC and an expert in the field.

The ten-part online course equips people with the skills to be able to manage a project under an NEC4 form of contract, with particular focus on the important role of the project manager.

Another key element is wellbeing. Not only are we pressing ahead with the launch of Moodbeam, a wearable device which allows users to measure mood on site, we are also taking the mental health of our supply chain and partners very seriously – so much so that we have already activated trials of Moodbeam on site with two of our contractors. The information obtained from the device will allow site managers to assess mental health and understand the general wellbeing of their workforce.

This will be more necessary for the foreseeable future and we are hoping to roll out Moodbeam further. Just 12 weeks ago, individuals had stable jobs, flexibility in their work and opportunities. People's mental health is likely to deteriorate, and we need to talk and listen to them a lot more to support them.

We are finding out more from our eco system that health and wellbeing in the built environment is critical. We need to be getting ready for a different kind of workforce and operating in a different space. Allowing people to work within a good working environment is absolutely crucial – and Pagabo takes that very seriously.

Read more online at
www.infrastructure-intelligence.com



Our recovery journey has only just begun

The Covid crisis has brought into sharp relief the value of businesses speaking openly to each other and the industry speaking as one to government, says ACE chair *Paul Reilly*.



Hannah Vickers,
chief executive of
the Association for
Consultancy and
Engineering.

The dull repetition of the word 'unprecedented' has seen each of us reaching for our thesaurus over recent months. This unparalleled public health crisis has challenged many of our assumptions regarding business-as-usual and perhaps even our growth ambitions, but as business leaders we are quickly adapting our plans to compete in the evolving environment.

In such a landscape it could be a daunting challenge, but we are fortunate at Stantec to have a great client base as well as incredibly resilient and adaptable staff, so we are moving forward with cautious optimism. As well as the urgent requirement to upgrade health and care estates, the need for long-term investable places has not changed and the supporting infrastructure has continued to be rolled out all year. Putting climate change adaptation and resilience at the heart of our recovery plans will create exciting new design challenges for all of us.

The immediate requirement to support our clients and deliver on projects has taken up the majority of all our time. We are an agile industry and working from home with excellent collaboration software has made demobilising from our offices relatively easy. However, interpreting the changing social distancing policies for



Paul Reilly is managing director – infrastructure & buildings, Stantec UK and chair of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

site safety, the application of furlough and considering the future workplace have been issues we have all had to grapple with.

Like many, I have found ACE's close involvement with government, breadth of contacts across the industry, and agility in producing guidance a terrific source of insight. Through ACE's Navigating COVID-19 webinars, members have benefited from ACE translating complex policy issues into practical actions – vital for any busy leader looking for answers and short on time.

I haven't been the only one to appreciate this work – the record-breaking visitor numbers to the ACE website, webinar sign-ups and guidance downloads are testament to how valued this support has

been. Through the regular SME forum and large consultancy group virtual meetings, ACE has created safe spaces for business leaders to share their personal insights into the unique circumstances we're facing with peers.

I know from my regular catch-ups with ACE CEO Hannah Vickers that she has been in daily contact across government and the civil service since the crisis began in

March, promoting our members and the wider industry. Thanks in large part to her efforts, ACE influence brought about crucial changes to the emergency bank loan scheme, created a top-20 priority project list for the IPA pipeline and just this week has been pushing government on vital issues such as the extension of planning permissions. When we speak with one voice as an industry we are listened to.

As a proactive member of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC), ACE is now shaping our industry response ensuring we are in the best position to act as a catalyst for the wider economic recovery that our country needs. There are nine million people on furlough and whilst we hope they will all be back at work soon, we have to play our part in stimulating the recovery and get Britain working again.

ACE is coordinating the activity of the CLC's local, social and commercial working group and working with other business groups to pull together ideas, recommendations and proposals to help shape a recovery by the industry and for the industry. Thanks to ACE support, further ideas on skills, talent, value-based procurement and sustainable business are being developed within the CLC.

The crisis has brought into sharp relief the value of "speaking as one" to government and speaking openly to each other. Our recovery journey has only just begun, and there is a long road ahead, but if we travel it together, we will get there.

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Collaboration is key to creating a better world

Coronavirus has changed the way the construction industry works together and that can only be a good thing, say WSP's *Neil Swallow* and *Mark Coates* of Bentley Systems.

The coronavirus lockdown went far beyond anything seen during wartime, in terms of the restrictions that it placed on people, including banning all non-essential travel, gatherings of more than two people and restricting people to an hour outside their home each day.

The impact on the construction industry has been severe. As *Infrastructure Intelligence* has reported, record low construction market figures pointed to the fastest downturn in UK output for almost 11 years as emergency public health measures to halt the spread of coronavirus led to stoppages of work on site and a slump in new orders.



Neil Swallow
is a BIM associate at WSP.



Everyone in Britain, and almost everyone in the world, has had to adapt their lives accordingly. From Arcadis to WSP, the infrastructure sector has come together like never before to help the NHS and wider care and community groups. It is an effort that has been replicated across the country and across industries, including businesses as varied as Brewdog and Burberry to BAM and Bentley Systems.

At WSP, project controls manager, Tim Neobard, worked with the East Essex community workshop Hackspace, to manufacture 4,000 much-needed face masks for the NHS. WSP's BIM model manager, Peter Townsend, used 3D printers to make more than 100 masks a week for staff.

Bentley Systems has supported the British Military and the UK construction industry, including supplying software to the British Army's 170 Infrastructure Support Engineer Group. In addition, Bentley is supporting construction sector organisations by waiving subscription fees for its ProjectWise® 365 cloud service until 30 September.

From manufacturing 4,000 face masks in a weekend to building a 4,000-bed Nightingale hospital in just nine days, our businesses have worked on behalf of and side-by-side with the NHS and army engineers to achieve things which people would have previously not thought possible.

As members of the innovation community i3P, it is great to see our parent body Innovate UK, working in partnership with the British Business Bank and HM Treasury to roll out GBP 1.25bn for British businesses driving innovation and development. And, thanks to the power of digital applications and collaboration software, millions of us have turned our homes into virtual offices to keep the economic wheels of Britain spinning.



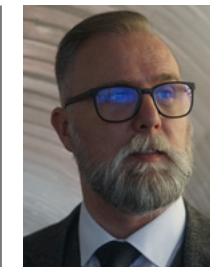
NHS staff in Essex wearing face masks produced on 3D printers by WSP.

WSP's Peter Townsend with one of the face masks they made for the NHS.

At WSP, it is business as usual. We are currently designing and modelling new railway stations, including the new Brent Cross West Thameslink Station. While people frequently talk about collaboration, this virus has taught us how to collaborate and communicate more effectively. As a project team, we are having regular calls and meetings using Microsoft Teams, and there are now more communication platforms available to help projects progress during such challenging circumstances.

Combining virtual meeting and document sharing software, the Beaulieu New Station project team ran an interdisciplinary check (IDC) to rival the traditional in-person meeting favoured by the industry. The IDC is an integral part of Network Rail's design process, enabling the effective integration of different designs where they interface.

Typically involving upwards of 20 individuals, it had previously been



Mark Coates
is a digital transformation specialist at Bentley Systems.

thought that these day-long meetings are only effective if done face-to-face, not just because of the complexity of discussions that they involve, but also because of the need for clearly presented diagrams and drawings. That was until we combined Microsoft Teams and Microsoft OneDrive software to host a remote IDC for around 40 people involved in the design of Beaulieu New Station, owing to the Covid-19 lockdown.

With businesses demonstrating that projects can still be progressed, could their actions provide a new way of working post-lockdown? While we may have experience working remotely, none of us had ever worked this way so intensively for such a sustained period of time. It is heart-warming to see colleagues on video conference calls, share our stories of how we're coping during this time, offer tips on software packages to use and ways to help each other's physical and mental wellbeing.

Even if the coronavirus has severely limited our geographical boundaries, it has opened up people's minds to what is possible if we work together. Before this, no one would have believed you if you'd said that you could build a new 4,000-bed hospital in the centre of London in less than ten days. Even if the Nightingale hospitals are not used as extensively as planned, nothing should detract from that achievement.

The coronavirus has not only changed where we work, it has changed the way we work and, most importantly, it has changed the way we work together. The virus has put a strain on us all, but it has also made us realise that we are all in this together. Let's not revert to the old ways of working and put walls up between ourselves after this has ended.

Elected mayors key to effective Covid recovery

Amidst all the talk of infrastructure revolutions and “build, build, build”, something is missing - and that is the vital role of devolution and the elected metro mayors in driving the UK’s recovery, says *Andy Walker*.

The economic aftershocks of the Covid-19 crisis are yet to be fully felt but with new construction firms announcing plans to cut staff almost daily, things are clearly going to get worse before they get better. Against that background, the economic stimulus measures announced by the prime minister when he spoke in the West Midlands at the end of June were always going to be keenly listened too, especially given his focus on “build, build, build” and investment in infrastructure.

So far however, the announcements we have heard have been big on rhetoric and short on detail. In the increasingly devolved UK we are all living in, effective delivery has to mean effective liaison and listening to those who are going to be affected by change – and that means local people in every region of the country and their elected politicians.

So far, we have seen little sign from the government that it is reaching out effectively to local politicians on the ground. This is something that needs to change fast if Boris Johnson’s administration is to succeed in its oft-repeated aim to ‘level up’ the country and invest in those areas where economic stimulus is most needed.

Tory grandee Lord Heseltine’s words are worth listening to on this issue. “I was deeply disappointed in the speech the prime minister made at Dudley,” he said. “It was simply the sort of speech with a lot of proposals remarkably similar to what all governments have done faced with rising unemployment. They announce packets of money in housing, transport and repairs for the health service - all of which may be perfectly desirable projects - but they lack the one thing that is essential and that is the local enthusiasm, energy and enterprise based upon the experiences of the opportunities that are there on the ground,” said Heseltine.

The former secretary of state for the environment, who made his name overseeing the economic regenerations of regions in the 1980s, said that engaging the local metro mayors was crucial in any government plan to get the UK economy back on its feet.



North of Tyne mayor, Jamie Driscoll (left) and Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham (right).

“The glaring omission in the prime minister’s speech is any attempt to draw the leaders of the local economies into the dialogue - and they are the elected mayors,” Heseltine said. “We have this extraordinary situation where in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland you have devolved authority and yet in London, Manchester, Newcastle, Bristol, Cambridge, they are being told by officials in London the money they can spend and the sort of projects they can spend it on. It’s so naïve,” he said.

The government should listen to Heseltine and take his advice. Whitehall should be asking local areas how to spend the money that it is making available as that will encourage enthusiasm, creativity, innovation and ultimately, the timely delivery of what is needed. You cannot hope to succeed without involving local people, local organisations, local businesses and local politicians. In fact, it could be argued that you can’t even make a proper start.

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Flexibility key to working well in new normal

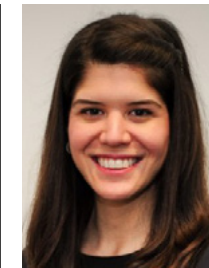
As lockdown measures begin to ease, *Ipek Kaymak* considers how organisations can make plans for a more flexible way of operation to cope with the ‘new normal’.

The impact of Covid-19 has tested the resilience of UK infrastructure companies through decreased revenue and straining of already tight resources. Now, as the lockdown measures ease, how can the sector continue to meet customer demand?

It’s during this phase of recovery that the sector needs to plan for a more flexible way of operating to account for the uncertainty that lies ahead. Without an effective business continuity plan, incorporating regular engagement with workforce and supply chains to capture lessons learned, there is a danger that organisations will exceed budgets and fail to meet regulatory targets.

Below are some elements for infrastructure organisations to consider incorporating as part of business continuity and overall strategic planning to prevail against the ‘new normal’.

The UK government has recently indicated that social



Ipek Kaymak is a business transformation consultant at Arcadis.

distancing will remain for some time. With fewer people outside, utilities responding to emergency works have found it easier to maintain social distancing. But how will they adapt once more people are out on the streets? Increasing investment in technology, enabling certain maintenance and repair tasks to be carried out remotely, can help to avoid putting people at risk. As construction activities continue to accelerate, more innovative solutions such as modular construction could help reduce time on site.

This is the time to review business strategies and asset management plans against various recovery scenarios to ensure they are still fit-for-purpose. Even as the government allows people to return to offices, employees are likely to be reluctant to enter public spaces without assurance that their safety has been considered. Increased cleaning and a people first mentality need to be established to help reassure staff that their safety has been prioritised.

Staff will need clear guidance with appropriate training on new ways of working, including interacting with colleagues and customers without breaking social distancing measures. Organisations may further consider enhancing remote working capabilities by creating and embedding a formal ‘flexible working culture’, promoting virtual collaboration and empathetic engagement. To successfully establish workforce safety, it’s important to consider areas of greatest risk within the workplace, engage staff in deciding mitigation measures and effectively communicate your approach.

One of the government conditions for recovery is around increased, widespread testing and tracing of the virus. Whilst the detailed workings of the system are still unclear, people are likely to have to respond quickly to infection notifications, disrupting work continuity. Companies can prepare for potential disruption by establishing clear responsibilities, opportunities for shared work and creating contingency plans for critical works. Business continuity plans should clearly dictate what a staff member must do if they are contacted.

In the short term, following these steps will be critical to combat against uncertainty. In the long term, regulated infrastructure organisations that can mitigate against climate change, build more sustainable integrated systems and successfully embed change stand to profit the most. Ultimately, the positive actions taken now will provide greatest benefit for the uncertainty ahead.



Wates has devised a five-step plan for returning to work.

Shoring up the pipeline

An Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) review of the construction procurement pipeline hit the headlines in June. *Michael Lunn* takes a look at the IPA's analysis of upcoming projects.



Michael Lunn is head of public affairs at the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

The headline figure will be what sticks in many people's minds. £37bn of projects over the next two years. While many will welcome the certainty that this will bring our

industry, we need to take a step back and explore what this means in practical terms for ACE members and the sector.

The analysis covers 340 individual procurement contracts across more than 260 individual projects and programmes over the next 18 months, with around £20bn of that open for tender this year. To be clear, the end goal is to increase transparency and build confidence in our sector, rather than identify new investments. Indeed, this is why most of the projects in the list will already be well known to members, including Birmingham's Curzon Street HS2 station, water investments under AMP7, new builds in the free schools programme and Manchester's North West Quadrant.

In all, nearly two-thirds (60% or up to £22.3bn worth) are for economic infrastructure projects, with social infrastructure, utilities, defence all splitting the remainder fairly evenly (between up-to £4.7 and £5.3bn, or 13%-14% each respectively), so we've a series of projects which is starting to clearly reflect this government's views on infrastructure being the bedrock for further economic growth and essential to rebooting the economy.

Obviously, I hope all of this will be further cemented in upcoming announcements over the coming months – whether the expected extraordinary fiscal intervention this summer, or the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

For HS2 alone, there's still plenty more that could be done. Movement on the London Euston section, more detail and a framework for announcements on sections 2a and 2b would be an easy next step to bring more certainty to our sector. Work on the East-West rail project could also be brought forward relatively easily. Equally, the long-anticipated programme to rebuild 40 hospitals feels like a political open-goal following the NHS's collective response to combatting coronavirus.

This analysis by the IPA has mainly succeeded in its primary aim of delivering clarity on the work that will be available to members over the coming months and as such forms a key part of the Construction Leadership Council's Roadmap to Recovery.

While I welcome its publication, we will need to return to the pipeline on an ongoing basis – perhaps as early as 2021 – as the realities of waking our economy after a lengthy lockdown become apparent. We will need new projects if infrastructure and construction are to be the catalyst for recovery that the government wants it to be.



How Birmingham's Curzon Street HS2 station is expected to look when complete.

Shaping the recovery

Over recent months, ACE has been at the forefront of the industry's response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Whether in Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont or Cardiff, ACE has been representing members and engaging with decision makers, making the case for construction and infrastructure investment to be the catalyst for wider economic recovery.

Since the start of the crisis in March, ACE chief executive Hannah Vickers has been proactively representing members at the Construction Leadership Council (CLC). While initially focused on emergency response, the group's focus has now turned to recovery.

The CLC's recently published Roadmap to Recovery outlines an industry-led plan. Split into proposals to help restart, reset and reinvent the industry, the roadmap is seeking a series of immediate, short and medium term recommendations to help the whole supply chain re-emerge from hibernation and help society 'build back better' from the Covid-19 crisis.

ACE has led work on the local, social and commercial construction working group, co-ordinating the activity of ten business groups from across the supply chain, and is working up a set of recommendations for government which help to kickstart the sector and wider economy, whilst meeting ambitions on net zero and 'levelling-up' the regions.



Commenting on ACE's initial call for proposals and ideas to input into the recovery plan, Hannah Vickers said: "We have a once in a generation opportunity to put forward impactful ideas to a government that is ready to listen. Let's make the most of it."

The working group is expected to publish its report in July. Meanwhile, in parallel, ACE's groups across the devolved nations have been influencing key decision makers locally.

Leading the Scottish forum

Through the local industry's emergency response group, the Construction Industry Coronavirus Forum (or CICV Forum), ACE Scotland has been making the case on behalf of its members.

Bringing together 24 industry groups, the forum has been instrumental in ensuring the industry speaks in one voice to the Scottish Government around planning, employment, skills, clients, health and safety, communications and commercial issues.

Simon Innes, managing director of Goodson Associates, ACE board representative for SMEs, and former chair of ACE Scotland, said: "Speaking in one voice to Holyrood will create a powerful opportunity to shape a single, industry-led recovery which is for the benefit of our members in Scotland."

Driving engagement in Belfast and Cardiff

Through the Northern Ireland Construction Group, ACE Northern Ireland is writing to the finance minister in Stormont to highlight the urgent issues which need to be addressed – including guaranteeing a pipeline of local projects, as well as a timeline for them to move on to the construction phase.

As a member of Constructing Excellence in Wales, ACE is backing Building Back Better which unites the local construction sector, clients, regulators and the supply-side to pull in one direction and enable Wales to deliver a dynamic, flexible and efficient built environment.



COVID-19 hub

Visit ACE's COVID-19 hub for the latest advice, support and guidance: www.acenet.co.uk/COVID-19

You can also replay and download the slides from the latest episodes of our webinar series exploring the practical steps your business can take, Navigating COVID-19.

- Expanding Furlough
- Preparing the office for a safe return
- What does recovery look like?
- Improving cash flow through tax credits
- Business loans and finance

and more

Not “Build, build, build” but “Deliver, deliver, deliver”

Concrete proposals and real projects are essential to build the industry’s short-term confidence if the government wishes to truly speed up delivery, argues ACE’s *Hannah Vickers*.

The Prime Minister’s “Build, build, build” speech has, once again, reaffirmed the view that construction and infrastructure are core to this government’s vision for economy and post-Covid recovery. There can be no doubt that Boris Johnson recognises the vital role that our industry plays as the catalyst in any recovery.

The truth is, however, that there was little new in the speech. The prime minister shared £5bn worth of projects that the government has decided to bring forward, he announced a new taskforce, the somewhat obviously titled ‘Project Speed’, to find more, and he also re-announced pledges on green jobs. While we welcome the ambition and overall theme of his speech, it needs to quickly translate into tangible action.

The fact is that the primary challenge we’re currently facing is less about “build, build, build” and more about “deliver, deliver, deliver” and while the government may wish to speed up delivery of programmes and projects, in the short term this simply won’t be possible without business confidence.

It is only by sharing impactful and concrete proposals that the businesses in our sector will gain the assurances to retrain or reskill workforces accordingly.

The Infrastructure Projects Authority’s recent procurement pipeline analysis was a positive step in the right direction on this, it now needs monthly updates by government departments to provide additional clarity. Furthermore, we need to add to recent positive news on planning to ensure that public sector spend that has already been committed to can progress.

In addition to short-term confidence, we will need to cement the changes in the medium to long term that will help our industry to deliver the reality to back up the government’s rhetoric. Our role in delivering the NHS Nightingale hospitals has proved that we do have the skills, agility and imagination to deliver differently and at speed. Furthermore, we need to build on this and use a mix of offsite manufacturing, modular, AI and digital tools in sectors like housing, education or healthcare to speed up delivery.



Hannah Vickers, is chief executive of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

Yet, alongside all of this we also need to be mindful of quality and ensure that we do truly ‘build back better’. Here the work that the Construction Innovation Hub is spearheading on procurement is vital. Not only will this streamline processes, but it will eventually allow the government to lock-in and standardise ambitions on a range of currently difficult to measure metrics such as society’s net zero ambitions, support for SMEs or job creation.

All of this will ensure increasingly complex projects and programmes deliver for an increasingly demanding public and government. Most importantly, it will support informed decision-making at speed.

The work ACE is currently undertaking with the CLC to shape the industry recovery brings many of these issues to the fore. Whilst we all share an ambition to do things better and faster, we need to ensure that the environment, tools and processes are in place for us to do so.



The PM needs a new slogan says ACE’s Hannah Vickers.

Shovel-worthy projects needed to drive green recovery

It is crucial that the right things happen to ensure that environmental standards don’t lose out in the rush to get construction back to work, says *Matthew Farrow*.

For the last couple of years, the environmental movement has been riding high. As George Monbiot, a veteran left-leaning environmentalist put it: “[The government] has been saying things I’ve been waiting 20 years to hear ministers say”. And we have become used to a string of regular ambitious goals - ‘net zero by 2050’, ‘ending plastic waste by 2042’, ‘diesel/petrol car sales banned by 2032’, ‘exposure to high particulate levels halved by 2025’.

But in recent weeks anxiety has swept through the environmental movement. The prime minister’s ‘build back better’ speech in Dudley talked a lot about building but made only passing references to green issues. Traffic levels are back towards their pre-lockdown levels. The talk of ‘Project Speed’ alarms those who fear it means ripping up planning controls.

Justified alarm? Or just another example of Tony Blair’s frustrated description of the green movement: “Whatever you give them, they always want more”.

I think there is a risk to the green agenda, but not because the government has lost interest. The problem is one of timing. Back in January, three things were happening in parallel. The infrastructure revolution agenda was gathering speed, with the National Infrastructure Strategy being developed and the final confirmation of HS2 imminent. Alongside this, government work on net zero was picking up, with the COP26 summit in November



Matthew Farrow is director of the Environmental Industries Commission, the leading trade body for environmental firms.

2020 focusing minds and policy statements from BEIS on energy and heating being worked up. Meanwhile the environment bill, the most ambitious green legislation in 25 years, was about to start its parliamentary progress, on course for royal assent by July.

Covid-19 has skewed these timings. Number Ten is trying to dramatically speed up the infrastructure agenda in an attempt to avoid unemployment soaring and give business confidence. Meanwhile the environment bill has been delayed as parliament struggled to operate during the pandemic as virus-related legislation took priority. COP26 has been delayed till late 2021 and work on climate change policy has slowed down, with the Committee on Climate Change pointing out that the policies to deliver the legally-binding net zero target are mostly nowhere to be seen.

We also have significant holes in the enforcement of environmental regulation. 87% of councils no longer routinely do site visits to check land remediation work. Outside London there are no controls on emissions from the construction machinery that will build all the new infrastructure.

Two things must happen to ensure that we do not let environmental standards lose out in the rush to get construction back to work. First, business has to take the lead. I know of examples of developers who have asked environmental consultants to ensure that developments now deliver 10% biodiversity net gain, even though the legal requirement to do this is not yet there. This is exactly the sort of private sector leadership we need. Secondly, as well as getting its green policy work back on track, the government needs to properly resource local councils and agencies to enforce environmental regulations.

Ministers are desperate to see ‘shovel-ready’ projects moving. Let’s make sure they are ‘shovel-worthy’ too.



How will DFID's abolition impact UK infrastructure exports?



Brexit has placed a new emphasis on driving exports to the emerging markets of Asia, Africa, Middle East and Latin America.

How will the abolition of the Department for International Development and new UK foreign policy direction impact the UK's infrastructure exports? *Tom Cargill* considers the potential opportunities for UK companies.

Given our focus on driving UK exports of infrastructure, capacity building and international development, British Expertise International (BEI) and our members engage extensively with relevant departments in the UK government. As a result, we have both a stake and some depth of experience in current discussions around the future of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID) and Department for International Trade (DIT).

In fact, at BEI we have increasingly found ourselves at the core of wider discussions around the future of UK trade, development and influence. Not only is infrastructure recognised now by HMG as central to the UK's future growth and prosperity, it's also seen as essential to our security and influence globally, as well as to international development objectives. A recent study by DIT established there are around 25 separate infrastructure export related initiatives underway across different parts of government. This speaks to the growing recognition of a key export sector. Yet few of these initiatives were found to be coordinated or strategically linked, demonstrating the need for a far more joined-up approach.



Tom Cargill
is the CEO of British
Expertise International.



Catalysing and supporting a more joined-up, focussed and effective UK effort around infrastructure exports has taken a renewed urgency for BEI in recent months. The change of direction heralded by Brexit has placed a new emphasis on driving exports to the emerging markets of Asia, Africa, Middle East and Latin America where BEI has a particular focus. Climate change has also brought a renewed focus on the need to promote resilient and sustainable infrastructure globally, with UK expertise central to delivery.

The Covid-19 crisis has placed further weight on the role of government in driving export recovery and growth, but we had already been forming ever closer working relationships with counterparts

in DIT, DFID, FCO and the Cabinet Office as we began to lay the groundwork for a new strategic foreign policy direction with large scale infrastructure development and government-to-government engagement playing an enhanced role.

Now BEI has revitalised and initiated additional streams of activity. We have used our position on the Board of Infrastructure Exports: UK, the government/industry body established to boost UK infrastructure exports, to reform, refocus and prioritise activity in support of infrastructure export wins. We have also established a number of working groups of members to drive forward an export agenda which better serves the UK supply chain. In addition, we are revitalising UK efforts to

catalyse a sustainable financial model for delivery of large-scale infrastructure projects globally - with a defined, differentiated and communicated UK 'offer' on global infrastructure at its heart.

Like many others, we are finding that moving our events online has actually increased our reach and relevance and despite, or perhaps because of, the challenging circumstances our membership is growing again. It has also enabled us to undertake more comprehensive monitoring of the changing export environment through the crisis, for example by hosting events with all relevant Her Majesty's trade commissioners, who are responsible for coordinating trade efforts across key global regions.

Next month we will be drilling down further by hosting 14 panels combining the views of around 60 UK heads of mission on the market opportunities in the countries to which they are posted. All of this amounts to an important evolution of our mission. With additional online tools, materials and initiatives, BEI will be relaunching early in the autumn to reflect this new phase in our development. Core to all of this are partnerships - with our members, but also with other organisations that share a common interest in supporting the strength and vitality of the UK's infrastructure industry. We will all need to pull together to recover and rebuild over coming months and years.

The merger of DFID and FCO into a new department - the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Department, may signal a welcome level of coordination, particularly, as has been mooted, if the Department for International Trade is also brought into some degree of greater coordination. Outside government, we will also need to work together to inform government policy in support of the UK's wider growth and success, with infrastructure growth, both at home and abroad, playing a central role.

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