

INFRASTRUCTURE Intelligence



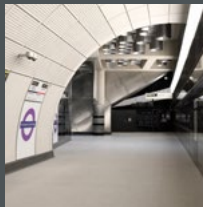
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Message from the editor



This edition of *Infrastructure Intelligence* contains the usual interesting mix of interviews, news and views from across the industry on some of the key issues facing today's construction and infrastructure industry. As ever, net zero and sustainability feature strongly, as does social value, which I am sure will be a key theme for the rest of the year. Our sector makes a difference to people's lives and it's only right that we shout about it.

We also have four interviews with women leaders who are making a difference in the industry, highlighting the importance of diversity to our sector. The industry has made steps forward in this area over recent years, but it can and must do better if we are to better represent the society on whose behalf we all work.

On a personal note, this will be my final editor's comment, as after more than six years at *Infrastructure Intelligence* I am stepping down as editor to pursue other opportunities in the construction and infrastructure sector. *Infrastructure Intelligence* reporter Rob O'Connor will be taking over as editor and I'm sure that Rob will help to take the title to even greater success in the future. I wish him and everyone connected with *Infrastructure Intelligence* all the very best for the future.

Going forward, I will continue to champion and promote the construction and infrastructure sector at every opportunity. It is a brilliant industry that makes a real difference to people's lives and I've enjoyed playing a small part in promoting its value and worth to a wider audience.

Andy Walker,
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Scottish green minister urges more women to join construction

Scottish government minister Lorna Slater has urged more women to join the construction industry and use their skills to build a greener future to help protect the planet. In a wide-ranging video interview with electrical trade association SELECT, Slater said women had a vital role to play in the engineering sector and should be proactively recruited into renewables and emergent technologies.

The minister for green skills, circular economy and biodiversity said that any women considering a career in construction or engineering should “dive in and go for it” to help build a net zero society. Slater, who gained a degree in electro-mechanical engineering in her native Canada before moving to Scotland,

said: “When I was considering engineering as a career, the main pathways into it were maths and physics, both subjects in which girls are historically under-represented, so we have to make these subjects more accessible to young women.

“By the time I started working, it was really normal for me to be the only woman in the room and I guess I got used to that – but we shouldn’t. We shouldn’t allow that to be normal. We need to proactively tell girls what great careers they can have in the emergent industries. So, we have to go out, encourage them, find out what the barriers are and then try to knock them down to get women in and encourage them to stay.”

Slater said other countries, such as China and India, were doing better in terms of gender balance in male-dominated occupations and questioned if there was a cultural reluctance to change in the UK. “There are very good careers available, with lots of opportunities for collaboration. We don’t talk enough about the creative aspect of being involved in professions such as engineering and perhaps if we did, it would make the industry more attractive to a much wider range of talent,” she said.

[Click here](#) to watch the interview with Lorna Slater MSP.



NIC boosted by three new appointments



The chancellor of the exchequer has announced the appointment of three new experts to the National Infrastructure Commission. Nicholas Winser, Kate Willard and Jim Hall will strengthen infrastructure, energy and environment expertise as new commissioners at the NIC, which was established in 2017 to provide impartial, expert advice to government on major long-term economic infrastructure challenges.

Alongside the new appointments, Neale Coleman, Julia Prescot, and Andy Green have been reappointed as Commissioners for further five-year terms.

NIC chair Sir John Armitt said: “I am pleased to welcome Nick, Kate and Jim to the commission at a critical time for ensuring long-term infrastructure policy helps address some of society’s biggest challenges. Their expertise will be particularly useful as we work towards publication of the second National Infrastructure Assessment next year.

Winser, Willard and Hall have been appointed until April 2027, with the appointments taking effect from 1 May 2022. Winser will replace David Fisk as the commissioner with particular experience in the energy sector, while

Hall and Willard have been appointed to further strengthen the commission’s expertise on the relationship between infrastructure and the environment and local and regional infrastructure policy.

Winser brings extensive experience in energy systems, markets and regulation with a 30-year career in the energy sector which included CEO of National Grid across UK and Europe. Willard is chair of the Thames Estuary Growth Board and the government appointed Thames Estuary envoy and Hall is professor of climate and environmental risks at the University of Oxford.

Webinar calls for appointment of net zero tsar

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE week 25-29 April 22

Green Infrastructure Week webinar on offshore wind hears call for net zero tsar to drive smooth energy transition.

A new national net zero department, headed by a net zero tsar with the power to ensure a speedy and smooth transition to renewable energy, was one of the major calls to emerge at a typically powerful Infrastructure Intelligence webinar on Friday 29 April 2022.

Making the Most of Offshore Wind, was part of Green Infrastructure Week and hosted by *Infrastructure Intelligence* in association with communications specialists BECG.

Offshore wind has been identified by the government as a critical source of renewable energy for the nation's growing economy. By 2030, the UK plans to quadruple its offshore wind capacity in order to generate more power than all homes currently use today.

Industry experts on the webinar highlighted the need to speed up development consents for key onshore and offshore infrastructure, plus the need to build and develop the supply chain required to make the transition work.

James Theobalds, renewable energy transaction advice leader at Arup, said: "The energy strategy on net zero and carbon reduction is moving in the direction to support offshore wind. But there are some really interesting challenges to meet in the next decade, and the industry needs government support to ensure the energy transition can be delivered within the timescale we all want to achieve."

Louise Thibierge, supply chain manager at Blue Gem Wind, said: "The timeline is really challenging and it's



fair to ask whether 2030 is achievable. There's currently a lack of suitable infrastructure and consents need to be approved much more quickly to allow projects to move fast."

Lorna Bennet, project engineer, Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, said: "The current energy crisis makes clear we need to move to renewables as soon as possible. We need to look at offshore infrastructure, including energy storage, to move away from fossil fuels. If

we're aiming to power all UK homes with renewable energy the supply chain needs to develop and advance to make sure we can meet energy transition targets."

Jamie Gordon, director of infrastructure and energy at BECG, said: "The new offshore transmission network review has to get up and running very quickly - and I think there has to be a net zero department, with a net zero tsar with the clout to make the changes happen. Be bold. Be brave. The opportunities are enormous."

INFRASTRUCTURE Intelligence Live GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE week 25-29 April 22

Making the most of offshore wind

As the UK government targets offshore wind as a critical source of renewable energy for the nation's growing economy, this Infrastructure Intelligence keynote webinar for Green Infrastructure Week discusses the key issues involved in making the most of offshore wind.

Moderator
Andy Walker
Editor, Infrastructure Intelligence

Louise Thibierge
Supply Chain Manager, Blue Gem Wind

James Theobalds
Renewable Energy Transaction Advice Leader, Arup

Lorna Bennet
Project Engineer, Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult

Jamie Gordon
Director of Infrastructure and Energy, BECG

In association with strategic partner **becg**

[Click here to watch a video of the webinar.](#)

Tarmac adopts pallet reuse scheme

Tarmac has signed up to the Pallet LOOP scheme, which allows manufacturers to use 100% FSC-certified green pallets specifically engineered to be more durable and sustainable.

As part of its corporate commitment to embracing circular economy principles and reducing waste across its operations, Tarmac has signed a charter produced by The Pallet LOOP, an innovative scheme aimed at minimising the consumption of single-use pallets in the construction industry.

Around 18 million pallets are estimated to be used annually in the UK construction sector, but less than 10% are reused. In response, The Pallet LOOP scheme allows manufacturers to pay a deposit for distinctively branded 100% FSC-certified green pallets, which are used to transport products to construction sites and have been specifically engineered to be more durable and sustainable.

As LOOP pallets move through the supply chain, a deposit passes from manufacturer to merchant to end user. Once used, stacked and stored, the scheme operator collects the pallets and returns deposits, before repairing pallets as necessary and recirculating them.

Garry Gregory, packed products director at Tarmac, said: "We're committed to working towards achieving a circular economy and our approach to this starts with designing out waste wherever we possibly can across our operations. The Pallet LOOP is a positive and effective initiative which is already helping to reduce construction waste by transforming the way in which pallets are used - and turning them into valuable returnable assets. We're pleased to have signed up and would encourage others from across the

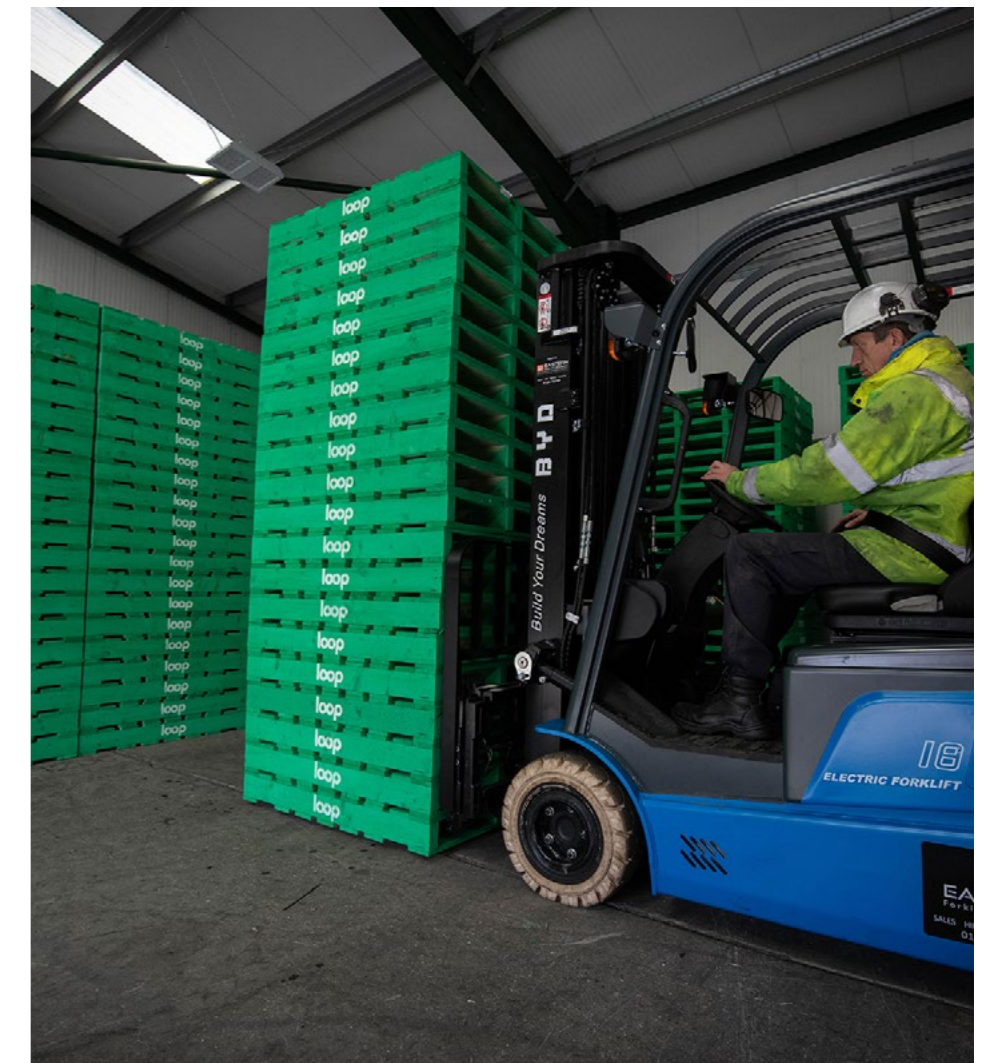
construction industry to do the same."

Paul Lewis, founder of The Pallet LOOP, said: "We are delighted that Tarmac has signed our charter and committed to a comprehensive evaluation of how our circular economy pallet reuse scheme could work across its operations.

"The beauty of the LOOP model lies in its simplicity. While helping the construction sector achieve its net zero and zero avoidable waste targets, The Pallet LOOP will also deliver significant cost savings and efficiencies to the end-to-end building materials supply chain. We've already sent sample pallets over to Tarmac for testing

and look forward to working with the team over the coming months to explore their distribution requirements and the clear advantages to be gained from moving away from single-use pallets."

Tarmac's ongoing sustainability commitment has seen the company achieve a 24% reduction in CO2 per tonne of product since 1990 and use over seven million tonnes of recycled and secondary materials from other industries in 2020 alone. Other recent initiatives have included changing all plastic packaging from its bagged products to a minimum of 30% recycled content.



Investment in skills is key to unlocking net zero

The construction sector will need new skills and new talent to play its part in decarbonising the UK's energy infrastructure, says *Ronan Clancy*.

The war in Ukraine has shone an even brighter spotlight on the future of the UK's energy mix – accelerating the drive to move away from fossil fuel supply chains and towards renewable sources of power, despite a call from some to extract more of the UK's own gas resources. Just months after the commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow last autumn, the message from the government's energy security strategy is that decarbonisation will not only help us to address climate change, but also establish a more resilient grid.

The scale of ambition can't be underplayed. The strategy's ambitious plans for 95% of the nation's electricity to be low carbon by 2030 relies on the construction of up to eight nuclear reactors, expanding offshore wind farms, doubling the capacity of hydrogen production and increasing solar capacity up to fivefold.

The construction sector will be at the heart of delivering these ambitions, not only in developing new energy hubs and transmission infrastructure, but also adapting and refurbishing our current network to support that growth. The scale and urgency of these come as the sector continues to battle market pressures for both material and human resource amidst rising inflation, a particularly buoyant labour market and pent-up investment following the pandemic.

This is a tall order for our industry, and



those working in energy infrastructure will need to work hard to attract and train the workforce we need. Effectively communicating the significance of the work our industry does – and its starring role in UK decarbonisation – will be absolutely essential.

Building the right skills

Getting those already working in the sector to act as good ambassadors is the right place to start, especially

those working in the field, on the front line of delivery. Technical ability will need to be combined with the constant development of soft skills and behaviours that take into account the communities affected, as well as the environment.

Investing in the right tools is one solution. We've had great success over recent years in new construction techniques, such as suction excavation and cured-in-place pipe (CIPP) blue light lining, which speed up project completions while also helping to protect important habitats. That comes

down to the workforce planning works carefully and thinking innovatively about how to care for the natural world throughout the build phase.

The success of these new ways of working relies on training, considering the fundamentals of safe working practices, alongside making sure we are productive and sensitive to the local environment. In our own business, we're continually widening the scope of our work through our Clancy Academy to ensure that our 2,300-strong team are not only technically but also culturally equipped to deliver a decarbonised network.

Communicating change

More resilient networks mean construction works – from substations to cable pipelines – that come with inevitable short-term disruption. It will be down to our industry to engage with impacted communities and communicate the need for change – we need to act as the flagbearers for net zero delivery.

Demonstrating social value is an important part of this puzzle. Whether it's fostering local skills, recruiting apprentices and strengthening the diversity of our workforce, or improving the resilience of local power provision, an emphasis on the benefits of investment in the energy network can help make the case for change.

Attracting new talent

Regardless of how well the current construction workforce is trained, achieving a low-carbon, more resilient network will depend on the 40,000 new jobs which the government states will be supported by its new strategy. We can't underestimate the challenge to find and attract those workers – especially given a highly competitive labour market.

Again, part of the solution comes back to demonstrating the social value of infrastructure to partners, communities and prospective employees – and really showing what a career in low-carbon energy can achieve, as well as the benefits it

can bring. Given the scale of what is needed between now and 2050, jobs in the low-carbon economy can offer exciting, fulfilling and secure careers.

At Clancy we've been investing for the past two years in the expansion of our in-house recruitment hub and specialist programmes to attract new talent across the country, from all walks of life. Through our partnership with the Armed Forces Covenant, for example, firms can benefit from the extensive transferrable skills and experience of veterans, reservists and volunteers from the forces.

Taking the energy network into a low-carbon future is hugely exciting and brings so many opportunities for our industry. We now need to invest in telling that story with enthusiasm and passion if we are to attract, train and retain the teams we need for the job.



Ronan Clancy
is executive director at Clancy.



A passionate voice for making a difference

Mott MacDonald has recently appointed Cathy Travers to its executive board. *Andy Walker* caught up with Travers to get her reaction to becoming a director of a company she has spent her whole career working for.

You can't help warming to Cathy Travers. A real people person and an enthusiast for the role that the construction and infrastructure industry plays in transforming peoples lives for the better, she's undoubtedly a real asset to Mott MacDonald. She's spent her whole working career at the firm, joining after graduating from the University of Sheffield in 1988 with a masters in civil and structural engineering. Now, as managing director of Mott MacDonald's UK and Europe region, she is responsible for a diverse team of 8,000 people who work in the built environment, advisory, transportation, water, environment and energy sectors.

Travers is delighted about her appointment to the Mott MacDonald board. "I've worked here for 34 years and have dedicated my whole life to Mott MacDonald and I couldn't be more thrilled and honoured to be given this opportunity and I hope I can do everyone proud in my new role," she said.

Her people-focused approach shines through when I ask her about the issues she will be concentrating on at board level. "Like our other board members, I'm a really people focused person. We are only as good as the talent we have and attracting and retaining talent and making sure that we develop people and make them the best that they can

be and ensuring diversity will be very important in the future," says Travers.

"I also see net zero as a massive opportunity for the industry. With limited investment from clients, we need to make sure that the investment continues. Digital is also at the top of my agenda in terms of how we optimise delivery for our clients but also the new transformative ideas that we have for the business. So, I'll be looking to bring all these strands together at the board level," Travers says.

An office-based company working in an agile way

I also ask her how she thinks that Covid will affect the working patterns of the industry. "I still believe we are an office-based company - you can't deliver major complex infrastructure from everyone sitting in their bedrooms and our more junior members of staff absolutely need that development and support," she says. "But I think we are an office-based company that can work in an agile way, so people getting that better home-work-life balance is important too. We don't want to lose that culture of people-to-people contact that is so important in an industry like ours," says Travers.

Travers is also keen to address the key issue of diversity and inclusion, something she is clearly passionate



about. "As a company and as an industry we have done a lot, but we need to do more, especially in the area of narrowing pay gaps," she says. "It's encouraging that our group board is now 30% women and our UK and Europe board is 40% women. At the junior end of the spectrum, we are getting a 50/50 intake which is absolutely brilliant, but it's at the senior levels where we need to attract more diversity into the business. We have done lots of unconscious bias training, reverse mentoring and we review all our job adverts for language and are using data to measure whether

we are being fair around promotions and appointments," she says.

Travers believes that creating an environment where people feel safe and able to speak out is also crucial in avoiding group think and also in fostering more diversity of thought. "We can and will improve in this area and this will help to bring in a more diverse intake of people. This will in turn improve the perception of our industry.

Changing people's lives

We are an industry that changes peoples lives and we need to celebrate

that more and focus on the positive good that we do and really value some of the complex stuff that we are doing that is making a difference," she says.

This brings us neatly on to the issue of social value, which Travers considers to be a crucial one for the industry. "It's massively important. We put social outcomes at the heart of everything that we are doing and we have good people doing really great things. We need to think about the effect on communities of what we are doing. Who doesn't want to feel good about changing the world and the communities we work in?"

Travers's passion for making a difference really shines through and is infectious. "Making sure that we empower people through the work that we do is crucial," she says. Our staff are passionate about all this and I am too and that's why I have stayed with Mott MacDonald for 34 years. We are a really good ethical company that wants to do great things for our communities.

"I feel so honoured to be appointed as a director of Mott MacDonald, a company with a purpose I truly believe in and I can't wait to bring my skills and passions to work with the board to drive the business forward," she says.

Industry gives thumbs up to energy security strategy

On the whole, the government's new energy security strategy has been given a reasonably positive welcome by leaders across the construction and infrastructure sector.

Senior industry leaders gave a fairly positive response to the government's energy security strategy when it was announced in April, with many highlighting the commitment to new nuclear, solar,

hydrogen and offshore and onshore wind as key areas to be welcomed.

The new British Energy Security Strategy sets out how Britain will accelerate the deployment of wind, new nuclear, solar and hydrogen, whilst supporting the

production of domestic oil and gas in the nearer term, which could see 95% of electricity by 2030 being low carbon.

Here is some of the industry reaction to the new strategy received by *Infrastructure Intelligence*.



Sir John Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, said:

"The government should be credited with its scale of ambition to expand offshore wind and solar generation. The challenge is to take these stretching targets and turn them into delivery of cheaper electricity into people's homes as quickly as possible. The steps on onshore wind are unlikely to unlock significant new capacity rapidly, while government's aim to build more major nuclear plants will also take many years to realise."



Chris Ball, managing director, nuclear and power EMEA at Atkins, said:

"Accelerating momentum for UK nuclear and bringing forward reforms to fast-track offshore wind development are cornerstones of a plan to meet net zero targets and bolster our energy resilience. Boosting hydrogen production will help to swiftly establish the scale of its role as a low carbon fuel for industry and energy supply as well as its potential for storage to help balance the intermittency of renewables."



Dawn James, vice president nuclear power at Jacobs, said:

"The British Energy Security Strategy rightly identifies nuclear power as a key clean energy solution in the transition to a net zero carbon economy. We believe that large scale reactors, small modular reactors and fusion power will play a crucial part in reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and we are working to ensure that the UK is at the forefront of developing them."



Fiachra Ó Cléirigh, head of energy at WSP, said:

"This plan to boost the UK's energy security comes at absolutely the right time given the reality of rising global energy prices and ongoing volatility in international markets. There will be a significant up-front cost associated with the infrastructure required for our energy transition, so we must focus on the lifetime environmental, social and economic value created by these investments. The government must create the conditions for the private sector to invest and deliver on a large-scale."



Clare Rhodes-James, development director at Mott MacDonald, said:

"We welcome the renewed political focus on energy and acknowledgment of the need to tackle the challenges of energy security and the climate crisis. We see these plans as a positive step towards decarbonising the UK power system by 2035, alongside other, much-needed, measures such as improved efficiency, demand side management and storage, digitalisation and community level solutions."



Stephen Marcos Jones, chief executive of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, said:

"We welcome the investment in up to eight new nuclear plants alongside increased investments in offshore wind, solar and hydrogen - crucial if we are to enhance energy security and meet net zero targets in an affordable way for consumers. However, to help us on our net zero journey, we would have liked to have seen more to encourage the delivery of the cheapest forms of renewable energy, onshore wind and solar, as well as more on driving greater energy efficiency."



Mike Thompson, director of analysis at the Climate Change Committee (CCC), said:

"The government has doubled down on its net zero strategy by accelerating plans to secure clean, green, UK-made energy. For perhaps the first time, the government has made commitments that clearly go beyond CCC proposals in key low-carbon technologies - offshore wind, nuclear, hydrogen. The new commitments are hugely ambitious - they would see the UK produce more electricity from offshore wind in 2030 than it has produced from gas in any year in history."

This is an edited version of a wide range of industry reaction that first appeared online at *Infrastructure Intelligence*. [Click here to see a full range of industry opinion.](#)

Exciting times in the north for Harley Haddow

Following the news that multidisciplinary engineering consultancy Harley Haddow had opened a base in Manchester as part of its UK expansion and recruitment strategy, *Andy Walker* spoke with the firm's director Sarah Peterson about their recent expansion into the north west.

Engineering consultancy Harley Haddow aims to recruit a new team in Manchester over the next couple of years as part of its expansion into northern England to take advantage of the growing work opportunities in the region. It's an exciting time for the practice, which also has offices in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and their aim is to have a ten-person local team in place within 12 to 24 months, cementing their commitment to the north west region.

"We saw huge opportunities in Manchester because there's so much development going on there," said Harley Haddow director Sarah Peterson, who leads the firm's energy team. "I do a lot of work with net zero and net zero planning and we saw that as a huge opportunity for new buildings and existing buildings where we could hopefully win work in those sectors. It's a really exciting time at the moment and there are big changes coming with the building regulations and a period of really rapid change on the way," she said.

Last year, Harley Haddow won ACE's Net Zero Advisor of the Year Award and Peterson said that the firm is looking to build on that profile with clients across the region, especially in the light of increasing opportunities arising from the net zero agenda and also the government's levelling up plans.

"Looking at the growth trends in the north, particularly around the levelling up agenda in places like Liverpool and Leeds, it was really a no-brainer to open an office in Manchester," says Peterson. "There's potential growth across a wide variety of project areas and with our good experience of working across a broad range of areas across all sectors, we should be well placed to capitalise on opportunities that we know are coming on stream," she said.

A track record of delivery

With an extensive track record of delivering high profile projects in northern England, including a major residential-led mixed use development within the Holbeck area of Leeds and Sanctuary Housing's multi-storey sprinkler and life safety project in Chester, Harley Haddow certainly bring a wide range of engineering expertise to the market that they should be able to exploit to grow the firm across the region.

"Expanding into Manchester is an exciting step for Harley Haddow and we are looking forward to capitalising on opportunities in the region. The city has interesting and varied prospects for us and we see it as an ideal location to recruit locally, launch and establish a north west hub and further our business development," said Peterson.



There is much excitement and anticipation about establishing an office in Manchester and speaking to Peterson, it's clear that she can't wait to get started. "We see the move as a huge positive, are really excited about the move into the north west and we're looking forward to working on the opportunities that will come. It's a vibrant place and things are happening and if the region gets its share of levelling up funding, then that should progress things even more," she said.

As with all construction companies, one of the big challenges facing Harley Haddow currently is talent acquisition and retention. So, how are they finding that? "Everyone is finding the right talent a challenge currently. We focus on the person rather than just concentrating on CV requirements. We are developing our staff through our graduate trainee scheme and sometimes even before then from school. We try to support all our staff so they can hit

the ground running," she explained.

"We are passionate about recruiting and nurturing Britain's top engineering talent. We pride ourselves on our director-led approach at Harley Haddow, an approach that we also believe helps to set us apart in the industry, with a multidisciplinary and personal offering under one roof for a wide range of projects and client needs. Establishing a base in Manchester underlines our commitment to the north west region and we're really excited about the local market and what the coming years will bring for Harley Haddow here," Peterson said.

With Sarah Peterson's enthusiastic, positive and open approach, it will be well worth watching Harley Haddow's progress over the coming months and years. Already working on interesting and varied projects, the company is well placed to attract the people and projects it needs to flourish further in one of the country's most vibrant regions.



Harley Haddow staff at their new Manchester office.

Trillion-dollar US infrastructure plan is game changer

Linda Darr, the CEO of leading US engineering association, the American Council of Engineering Companies, highlighted the crucial importance of infrastructure in a recent *Infrastructure Intelligence* Live interview.

The key importance of US infrastructure and its reframing in a new post-Covid era together with the need to attract more young people into engineering were some of the key themes during an exclusive *Infrastructure Intelligence* Live interview with US engineering industry leader Linda Darr in March.

Darr is president and CEO of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), the largest national organisation of consulting engineers in the USA, with 51 state and regional member organisations representing more than 5,800 independent engineering firms throughout the United States.

The organisation has been closely involved with the discussions and negotiations around US president Joe Biden's infrastructure plans, which led to the recent passing of the \$1.2trn Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The ambitious plans, if successfully delivered, will add up to the biggest investment in infrastructure that has ever been seen in any country in the world.

In a wide-ranging and lively conversation with *Infrastructure Intelligence* editor Andy Walker, Darr clearly came across as an enthusiastic and impressive advocate for the plans and the wider industry itself, which is set to rebuild America's infrastructure and reshape the economy on a huge scale.

"The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) represents the largest investment in America's infrastructure in



a generation – and it's long overdue," said Darr. "This bill is a game changer for us. It's a \$1.2 trillion bill with \$550bn in new investment that spans multiple markets from transportation to water to energy.

"The money is starting to flow. Our ACEC Research Institute studied the potential impact this legislation would have on our industry. We found that over the six years the IIJA covers, the bill would create more than 82,000 jobs in engineering, generate \$62bn in wages and add \$75bn to GDP," she said.

Reframing infrastructure post-Covid

Darr also emphasised that infrastructure is now being "reframed" as a result of the post-Covid environment and that now, more than ever, the industry is seen as a vital driver of economic growth.

"It took Covid to push Congress and the administration to look beyond traditional market sectors in the built environment – roads, bridges, airports, water systems and the like – and include things like energy, resiliency, and expanding broadband coverage for rural parts of the country as part of a more comprehensive and wholistic approach to infrastructure," said Darr.

"Prior to passage of the IIJA, Congress tended to approach infrastructure in a very siloed manner – they did separate bills to support surface transportation, water, airports, and other sectors. That changed in a big way last year and I hope it serves as a template for what Congress can do again in the future," she said.

US infrastructure investment remains broadly popular and widely supported across the political spectrum, something Darr attributes to the credibility and influence of the industry, thanks to a clear programme of engagement with the public and policymakers alike.

"Engineers have a lot of credibility with policymakers and the public. They respect our opinions and value our professional expertise. Focus is critical. While president Biden came into office with a broad agenda, the infrastructure piece had the most momentum and broadest coalition of support behind it," she said.

"We had been working this issue extensively with the previous administration and with Congress. Lawmakers understood the needs facing this country in the infrastructure space and understood how a broad infrastructure



Linda Darr with USAID administrator Mark Green and former ACEC chair Manish Kothari, CEO of Sheladia Associates.

package would help to kickstart economic growth following the pandemic.

"President Biden picked up the ball from there and wisely saw the possibility of bipartisan compromise on infrastructure. He was visible in supporting those negotiations and sticking with the agreed upon elements of the infrastructure package and we have a big win as a result."

With work on the \$1.2trn plans already underway, Darr still had time to highlight working with ACEC membership and introducing young people to engineering as two favourite parts of her job.

"Our members span everything from small firms with just a few employees to huge firms that do work all over the world. Just seeing their creativity and ingenuity is energising as they tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the planet," she enthused.

"Another one of my favourite things about my job is introducing young

people to engineering. Right now, there are a shortage of engineers to fill all the open positions in the industry and going forward we are going to need even more. I love showing students how a career in engineering is about more than just designing buildings – it's about impacting their community. Our careers are stable, pay well, and let engineers live their values through their work," Darr said.

Infrastructure Intelligence editor Andy Walker commented: "Linda is a fantastic advocate and industry leader and perfectly summed up the reframing of infrastructure and its importance in the new post-Covid era, both in the US and around the globe. And, with all the work underway, she still had time to focus on the importance of introducing young people to engineering. A great example of strong, clear long-term ambition and leadership for everyone in the industry to applaud. We need more Linda Darrs in the global infrastructure sector."



Click here to watch the full interview with Linda Darr.

Now is not the time to roll back on social value

As the government is rumoured to be looking to reduce the weighting given to social value in procurement, ten years on from the Social Value Act, AECOM's *Andy Barker* says its benefit is indisputable.

It's a decade since the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 was introduced and since then we've seen a huge increase in the importance the built environment sector places on social value and how it is delivered. But with reports that the government is to review and potentially reduce the weighting given to social value in its contracts, at a time when many people and communities are facing increases in the cost of living, has the need for social value ever been greater?

Back in 2012 the new act decreed that when projects and frameworks are procured, authorities must consider how they might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area and how the procurement process can help secure that improvement. Fast-forward eight years and in 2020 Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/20 was published, which said that government teams must ensure that all major procurements explicitly evaluate social value, where appropriate, rather than just consider it. Today, we have an industry which rightly places enormous importance on social value, not least because it is often inextricably tied in with the outcomes the built environment projects are trying to achieve anyway.

The increased emphasis on social value has moved the dial from generic volunteering and corporate social responsibility activity where projects

and people parachute in and out of local communities, to strategic and sustainable activity which directly addresses local needs. This is only achieved by thinking about long-term wellbeing rather than value in purely financial terms.

A step change in embedding social value

In a relatively short space of time there has been a step change in how infrastructure projects embed social value in their delivery and success is often measured by the positive change on people's lives. The potential for social value to deliver life-improving outcomes is extensive. Equitable employment and skills, early careers development, education and STEM programmes, equity, diversity and inclusion, responsible and sustainable procurement, local and SME spend, supplier diversity and capacity building, counteracting modern slavery and supporting human rights, employee and community wellbeing, volunteering and community engagement, green spaces and biodiversity – to name a few.

Those critics who point to the difficulty in defining social value as a cause for concern, miss the point that this is indeed its greatest strength. This flexibility allows projects to understand local and regional needs and consider how they can address them through their scope of works and technical expertise.

At AECOM, through our Sustainable Legacies strategy, we are working to reach ambitious environmental, social and governance (ESG) objectives. As we support our clients and the communities in which we work, to decarbonise operations, develop green energy solutions and deliver climate resilient infrastructure, we do this against the backdrop of a green skills gap and the need to secure a just transition that leaves no one behind. Only by understanding the challenges faced by the communities we work and live in can we leverage our people and projects to achieve our ambitions. For example, using our STEM activity to develop an informed, diverse talent pipeline to sustain the future green economy.

Government to redefine social value?

Despite all these positive outcomes, there have been recent reports that the government is looking to reduce the weighting given to social value in procurement. Reports have said that the minister for Brexit opportunities and government efficiency, Jacob Rees-Mogg, is looking to redefine social value, with comments that he wants to make government procurement more accessible to SMEs.

One argument is that larger firms, through better resources, have the advantage when it comes to demonstrating social value, thereby giving them the edge during procurement. But in reality, procurement that aligns with the UK government's Social Value

Model to tackle economic inequality will enable a collaborative approach so that larger firms and SMEs can work in partnership to deliver local social and economic outcomes.

SMEs play a huge role in the work that AECOM undertakes. In the financial year 2021, we worked with more than 500 SMEs on over 1,000 projects within the UK and Ireland alone. Through collaboration and mutual upskilling and training, social value knowledge is shared and social value delivery is improved. This collaboration also sees an increasingly diverse supply chain which is better for projects through new perspectives, ideas and innovation.

We believe that however social value is framed in procurement in the future, the last decade has shown the positive impact

the principle can have on communities and the supply chain where we live and work.

We don't know what procurement reforms might look like yet, but we do not want to see government roll back on its commitment to social value in procurement, particularly given how much the principle supports wider objectives such as a just transition to net zero and the levelling up agenda. Whatever the outcome, social value will remain a cornerstone of AECOM's Sustainable Legacies strategy and our approach to ESG.



Andy Barker

is the chief operating officer for Europe and India at AECOM and executive sponsor for social value.



Crossrail – embracing uncertainty on major programmes

New ways of approaching programme management best practice will be crucial for the realisation of future mega and major infrastructure programmes across the UK and internationally, says *Russell Pilgrim* of Jacobs.

Having overseen some of Jacobs' key contributions over the past three years on the Crossrail project, I can't help but feel proud of everything people have achieved on this landmark project.

One thing is for sure, the Elizabeth line will revolutionise travel and benefit millions of people, attracting both economic and social investment, reducing journey times, creating additional transport capacity, improving accessibility and providing a huge economic boost to the capital and beyond. With new stations and travel links, the Elizabeth line will support new housing and jobs across London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex.

The Elizabeth line, delivered by Crossrail Ltd, stretches more than 100km, connecting London from East to West and integrating with Heathrow airport, the Great Western and Great Eastern national railways. Thanks to innovative programme and technical management solutions, we are nearing the opening of the Elizabeth line in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year.

No mega or major project of this length of time, scale and complexity is completed without significant challenges and solutions. This mega, safety-critical project has had stratospheric complexities which generated several challenges and solutions along the way.

There is also keen global interest to share these lessons and solutions to help inform future major programmes across the world.

Become the ultimate collaborator and disruptor

Several organisations have been responsible for bringing the Elizabeth line into passenger service. Some of its recent success has been driven by transformational leadership, demonstrating humility which has created an environment of 'owning the whole' and 'shared values'. At all career levels people require diverse thinking, shared goals and values, effective communication, trust, agility and resilience to be successful. There is now a significant opportunity for major programmes to look beyond sector experience and instead focus on skills and competencies learned that could be transferable into other programme types.

Embrace the modern digital world

It has been well documented that all involved in Crossrail did not fully appreciate the immense complexities in delivering the UK's first-in-kind, fully digitised railway. Everything is digitised on the Elizabeth line, with centralised management systems, sub-systems and around 500,000 digital and physical assets all integrated. On Crossrail we found Programme Plateau teams, used a lot in aerospace to co-locate teams in a fully integrated end-to-end way and have provided successful outcomes in areas such as programme and systems integration. In addition,

with the operator placed at the front, our strategy and execution changed to place integration central to everything.

Create a minimum viable product

In going back in time to the design conceptualisation stage, Crossrail would have benefited in locking a minimal viable product (MVP) into its configurational requirements. This is bare minimum scope to provide a safe, reliable, operational and maintainable railway – with high customer experience. Over the past three years, the programme successfully locked down the minimal viable staging, migration strategy, convergence and configuration. Introducing an MVP is now considered a key mitigation to risks, allowing the minimal version of service that would meet programme and user requirements.

Modularise as much as you can

Design for modular assembly (DfMA) and modern methods of construction (MMC) offer significant improvements to productivity, cost certainty and sustainability benefits. In the past, including Crossrail, the rail industry has suffered from a lack of modularisation, otherwise known as 'plug and play'. Pushing the boundaries of what is already achievable in assembling and testing in a factory could make a significant difference in optimising productivity around the world.

The industry faces a significant challenge in balancing projects' need to be unique, the requirement of industry to work together in scaling continuity and a sustainable approach to the pipeline of work.

Centralise programme and systems integration

The concept of having three onboard train signalling systems is very ambitious. However, that is the case on Crossrail, leading some to consider it the world's most complex railway. It is the UK's first-in-kind fully digitised system. Such

programmes need the skills of end-to-end (whole life cycle) decision-making programme management, technologists, digital and railway experts. This, combined with the introduction of an MVP and modularisation brings great benefits, such as simplifying designs which could save significant time in construction

The evolution of these infrastructure projects sees the UK constantly improve its infrastructure through future-smart places. Now is the time to show how we can solve the greatest challenges by transforming uncertainty into interventional and intelligent solutions. In turn, these

connect people and places with the means to work smarter, live better and make a positive difference in the world. It's very exciting to see the Elizabeth line open in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year and create a transport system that will be used by many generations to come.



Russell Pilgrim
is a programme director at Jacobs.



Celebrate the industry and embrace change



One year into his new role as Buro Happold's new chief executive officer, we asked *James Bruce* about his views on some of the key issues facing the industry and his thoughts on the challenges his and other firms face.

What are the key issues facing the industry as you see them currently?

In the short term, we are seeing a real war on talent. We therefore want to continue to ensure Buro Happold is as an attractive a place as possible for all our current and future talent.

Geopolitical tensions and their devastating impact are upsetting for all of us. The industry as a result is now facing significant inflationary and supply chain issues, issues that were already having an impact after years of Covid. We are working closely with our clients and partners to address these.

Buro Happold also prides itself in taking the lead on what we see as the imperative need for collective climate action.

Diversity and inclusion is increasingly important for the sector - are we doing enough and how can we move faster?

To be blunt, no. Everyone needs to bring public commitments into reality.

Every company in our sector needs to set meaningful targets, create inclusive and respectful cultures where everyone is valued and recognise it will take a sustained effort from everyone.

To move faster as an industry, we cannot expect this to be tackled solely by bottom-up activity. Personally, I take this commitment very seriously, as do my leadership team and I'm encouraged when other CEOs do the same.

How do you think that Covid will affect the working patterns of the industry and what are the opportunities arising from changes that will arise?

We must embrace agile working patterns that work for the good of everyone but also allows us to work with our clients most effectively. One of the best things to have come out of working remotely has been the realisation from the industry that we can work on projects seamlessly and still serve our clients around the world. While we were doing this prior to

the pandemic, it has now become an embedded part of the way we work.

The biggest opportunity is more diversity and more inclusive working practices that flexible working patterns can create. We can hopefully bring in, for example, more neurodiversity, more people with caring responsibilities and those from a broader geographical reach.

One of the big issues that Infrastructure Intelligence is seeing currently is social value. How important is this to Buro Happold?

Just as industries now recognise that emissions reduction alone is not enough to adapt to and mitigate climate change, as a sector we must realise the value that a project creates doesn't end at its architectural or engineering merits. Social value is at the core of all our projects as it improves the health, wellbeing and resilience of our communities. Moreover, these principles help to reduce inequalities in health, education and social justice.



Buro Happold's BEEAH HQ project. Photo: Hufton+Crow.

How can we make the industry more attractive to recruit more people into a sector that literally changes the world?

Who wouldn't want to change the world for the better? We must encourage more people to embrace the opportunity to make a difference. We also need to have a big push on equity and attract people

from the broadest of backgrounds.

At Buro Happold we have artists to consultants to architects to traditional engineers. We need to embrace non-traditional routes and encourage more apprenticeships. We need to attract people from every walk of life and communicate clearly what is possible to achieve in this industry, particularly how we can directly

improve the environments in which people live. We need to pay well and equitably, we need to celebrate the amazing industry that we represent and we need to embrace change.

How important is the digital agenda to Buro Happold and how is it changing the way you work?

Buro Happold has embraced a data-driven design approach for many years and digital now flows through every element of what we do. From computational engineering and digital twins to 360 visualisations, there is not an area of the digital future that our people do not get excited about.

A truly awesome, and perhaps somewhat under the radar, digital innovation within our practice was the creation of an open-source buildings and habitats object model (the BHoM). Developed by Buro Happold directors Al Fisher and Rob May and the 'computational collective', the BHoM is an industry-wide computational project that aims to support greater collaboration by enabling architects, engineers and contractors to standardise design data and share code.

The 'computational collective' sums up Buro Happold nicely for me - a diverse and global collective made up of all disciplines, convening for the sole purpose to make a change that has sparked a new conversation about the way we can work better across the architectural, engineering and construction industry.



Buro Happold's Museum of the Future project. Photo: Phil Hanforth.

Breaking construction's bias to attract more women

With diversity and inclusion high on the construction industry's agenda, *Nicky Rance* of Sir Robert McAlpine looks at some of the steps already taken and still yet to be taken to encourage more women into the sector.

The theme for the recent International Women's Day was "Break the Bias", a concept that particularly resonates with the construction industry. After all, it's not just that ours literally remains one of the most male-dominated industries - women make up just 14% of those working in the sector, for instance - but one that retains a notably macho image, too.

Faced with a looming skills shortage, it is clear that we need to break the bias and change the sector's image to encourage more women into the sector. How can this be done? Well, I've seen first-hand how the sector has improved and how it can continue to do so.

Building a greater future

From a young age, I wanted to work in the built environment. I was sponsored by Sir Robert McAlpine to study civil engineering at the University of Nottingham, which allowed me to gain real-life experience during my summer holidays where I worked on the M6/M74 motorway and the Millennium Dome. This, my first taste of building something that would last, confirmed in my mind that construction was the career for me and the satisfaction that this instilled has motivated me ever since.

When I graduated from university,

I started at Sir Robert McAlpine as a graduate engineer and have taken every opportunity that has been offered to me, ultimately becoming project director in 2019. Having worked on projects like the ExCel Exhibition Centre, Riverwalk and the Fulham Broadway Redevelopment, I'm now able to walk around London and feel a great sense of pride at the communities that I have helped create. In my view, this is much more satisfying than sitting behind a desk all day! And it is by giving women across the country such opportunities that we will change the gender balance in our sector.

Breaking the bias

Although I was able to take a traditional route into construction, there are now many alternative routes to take, which has gone a long way to boosting diversity. Indeed, a great way that the industry already encourages inclusivity is by supporting those without a university education through, for instance, apprenticeships to get their foot in the door. In fact, between 2020 and 2021 there was a 366% rise in the number of women taking on construction and engineering apprenticeships.

Reflecting on the past 20 years in construction makes clear that change has already begun. I have witnessed first-

hand how the number of women around me has progressively increased and conversations about why women were not entering the sector - once taboo - are now open and honest. Conversations that might once have taken place in hushed voices are now being given voice in the boardroom - and this can only be positive.

Looking ahead

Although we are a more inclusive sector than was the case even just five years ago, more still needs to be done. To enact real change, we cannot rely solely on the education sector to inform our young people of the breadth of roles that construction offers. It is down to the supply chains, construction companies, industry bodies and universities to transform the way that construction is viewed amongst young people and discuss how roles in construction are not only for men.

We are currently facing a skills shortage in the UK, especially in the trades, so it is paramount that we educate young people on the opportunity to take on trades like bricklaying, carpentry and decorative plastering. These trades can suit personality traits that are - perhaps - viewed as traditionally female, not least, attention to detail and dedication to master these skills over many years. It's not that men or women make for better construction workers. Rather, taken together, a sector that boasts talented men and women will surely skyrocket.

My hope for the future is that anyone who has an interest in construction feels empowered to take the necessary steps to begin their career. Over the past four years, I have been a dedicated member of the Women Leaders Association, which offers women a network of support from like-minded, determined female leaders from a range of industries. It provides opportunities to make real relationships and learn from others on how to develop leadership capabilities.

With groups like these and the foundation of inclusivity that has already been fostered in the industry, there is hope that a more diverse group of people will feel empowered to enter the sector and break the bias once and for all.



Nicky Rance

is a project director at Sir Robert McAlpine.

ACE Live set to bring industry together

ACE curates a new programme mixing online and in-person events.



ACE has launched a new member event programme for the rest of 2022 mixing online and face-to-face events.

Following feedback from members, the new programme has been designed with the primary focus to add value – ensuring the curated programme of online events provides tangible insights and take-aways and in-person events and awards that create opportunities for collaboration, networking and industry celebration.

Most events are free-to-attend for those working for ACE and EIC members and attendees will benefit from knowledgeable panellists speaking on some of the key topics consultancies face today such as delivering society's ambitions around

net zero and levelling up, as well as procurement, inclusivity and skills issues.

ACE Live webinars are split in two. In conversation with... is a new series curated by ACE's policy team bringing together members with a key industry stakeholder. Meanwhile, ACE's Insight webinars provide attendees with the support and information they need to do business.

These are supplemented by a number of in-person and online roundtable events, many of which will be held in-person. Finally, ACE will hold an in-person conference in October, and an awards ceremony in London in November – the first major in-person ACE events in over two years.

Commenting on the launch, ACE CEO Stephen Marcos Jones said: "Following

two challenging years owing to the pandemic, we're delighted to launch our new events programme to help members seize and create the business opportunities that will help drive our recovery.

"In response to member feedback, we've also made sure to include in-person networking opportunities. Whether online or face-to-face, our specially curated events have been designed to provide your business with the support it needs to ensure you keep on top of the major issues facing our industry. Best of all, these events are open to anyone working for an ACE or EIC member, so please do share with colleagues."

Browse the full programme of ACE Live events at www.acenet.co.uk/events

Exploring the sector's recruitment challenges

A member-only roundtable on Monday 23 May is a must for anyone working in the recruitment field.

Already used to working in an extremely competitive recruitment marketplace, engineering and consulting firms now have the added pressure of the rise of flexible working and inflationary effects on wages. This means businesses are recruiting in ever more challenging circumstances.

How companies respond to this environment will be a measure of their continued success in attracting the right people. To help members in this area, ACE

is hosting a special online recruitment roundtable on Monday 23 May from 12pm to 1.30pm exploring the candidate experience and how it can bolster the recruitment process and ensure organisations stand out from the crowd.

Open to anyone working in recruitment in a member firm – be it a recruitment specialist at a larger organisation, or senior leader at an SME – the discussion will be chaired by Stephanie Woolley, HR and recruitment advisor at Curtins and

will also feature Adrian McDonagh co-founder of recruitment experts, Hireful.

As well as touching on industry trends and challenges, the discussion will explore ways to improve the overall candidate experience.

Claire Clifford, director of people skills and culture said: "Our industry has sometimes struggled to break outdated pre-conceptions and articulate a compelling offering. With recruitment even more competitive than before the pandemic, now is the right time to reassess your strategy. This roundtable will help any member struggling with recruiting the right skills mix for their organisation, provide tools to take back into the businesses and offer a space to discuss and share approaches."

Book now at www.acenet.co.uk/events

In Conversation with... National Highways

Find out all about the new environmental sustainability division at National Highways at this ACE member-only webinar.



Join ACE for an exclusive member-only webinar exploring how a key public sector client is meeting national net zero commitments on Wednesday 18 May 2022 at 11am.

National Highways has created a new division focused on environmental sustainability. Headed by Stephen Elderkin, an environmental policy expert with a background in government carbon policy, the new division will spearhead National Highways' efforts in helping to meet ambitions for net zero by 2050.

The new division will work with all

executive directors to raise the profile of environmental sustainability, build capacity and expertise, and develop a new green strategy which will be central to delivery of any future major road or motorway investment.

Elderkin will present the new division's work, how it will change how National Highways delivers new major roads while managing existing infrastructure, how this impacts on procurement, as well as what it means for ACE members and the wider industry.

Commenting on the event, Guto

Davies, head of policy at ACE, said: "We're delighted to welcome Stephen Elderkin for the first of our new look online events exploring the policy space with key stakeholders. The challenges of meeting net zero also present opportunities for ACE members and it will be fascinating to see how National Highways are approaching the issue and where we can work collaboratively to meet national carbon commitments."

Book now at www.acenet.co.uk/events



The right mix for security and net zero

ACE chief executive *Stephen Marcos Jones* explores the government's recently published energy security strategy.

Offering a swathe of investments across renewables (wind and solar), hydrogen and nuclear, the government's energy strategy outlines a near future where the UK's energy supply does not rely on imports from volatile regions across the globe and is helping to meet net zero commitments.

The conflict in Ukraine has brought into sharp relief the need to improve the UK's security of energy supply. With much of ongoing reliance on fossil fuels sourced from often unstable areas around the world, we are overexposed and vulnerable as a nation to volatile markets over which we have little control. The strategy is a first step towards energy independence and while it will do little to relieve market pressures in the immediate term, the longer-term view, if the strategy is realised, augers well.

Of course, all this new energy capacity needs to help deliver our commitments on net zero too. This means we will need to invest in renewables – wind, solar – alongside hydrogen and nuclear. As key partners for government, ACE members stand ready to help design and deliver the right energy mix for our net zero future.

On nuclear, the strategy has outlined plans for eight new reactors, including two at Sizewell, delivering a quarter of the UK's energy supply by 2050. A new arms-length client body, Great British Nuclear, will oversee delivery and their development will also create thousands of jobs.

On hydrogen, the plans to double capacity are both ambitious and welcome and will help provide cleaner energy for industry, as well as for power,



Stephen Marcos Jones is chief executive of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

transport and potentially heating.

For renewables we welcome the ambitions around wind and solar. The moves to speed up the approval process for offshore wind is also good news, but we would have liked to have seen similar moves around cheaper forms of renewable energy – onshore wind and solar.

If I was to be critical, perhaps the strategy takes too much of a long-term view and will do little to address immediate concerns, especially around

consumer energy affordability. More could have been done to encourage domestic energy efficiency such as insulation and improving homes. This not only would cut people's energy bills but would also support the delivery of our net zero ambitions, all the while supporting thousands of jobs.

The proof of this strategy will, of course, be in its implementation and as key partners for government our members stand ready to help realise the vision.

Local authorities key to unlocking net zero future

As the closest form of government to local people, local authorities and the recent local elections will be crucial to the country's green ambitions, says *Guto Davies* of the Environmental Industries Commission.



On Thursday 5 May, voters across England, Wales, and Scotland went to the polls in the latest round of local elections. Local government right across the UK is a vital stakeholder for members of both EIC and ACE, with many working with a number of local authorities to help set ambitious targets on net zero.

Meanwhile, the government's recent net zero strategy has focused on improving the relationship between central and local government and improving coordination. According to the Climate Change Committee, local authorities are "a cornerstone of climate change partnerships". They are, "the closest form of government to local people" and know, "what works best in their areas". This is especially important as many of the areas where reductions will need to be made have "a strong local dimension", such as decarbonising buildings, transport and waste.

Councils – with the help of our members – are already taking a leading role on decarbonisation and, at a time when they are resetting following the pandemic, driving a green recovery. Over 300 local councils have declared a climate emergency and the National Audit Office has found that almost two thirds of English councils are aiming for carbon neutrality 20 years ahead of the national target.

It is only by supporting local government that central government will deliver a "fair" transition which benefits all stakeholders in all communities. This means increasing opportunities for EIC and ACE members to work with local government on the delivery of green solutions to the climate challenge – whether it is supporting the decarbonisation of homes, delivering transport infrastructure and modal shifts, or ensuring local clean energy projects are completed.

Our members are ready with the

environmental solutions to deliver on these ambitions, but it is vital that we establish a transformative model based on collaboration, procuring for outcomes, encouraging the use of smart data and apportioning risk to encourage innovation.

If we get this right, then this smart, local procurement can unlock huge opportunities for all involved. For the businesses behind the smart technology, it will create new opportunities. For towns, cities and local authorities, it will allow them to deliver on their green promises. For residents it will mean happier, healthier, more sustainable and better-connected communities. We are on the brink of an exciting future.



Guto Davies is head of policy at the Environmental Industries Commission.



Implementing social value requirements in tenders

Many businesses struggle to interpret what PPN06/20 and the government's social value regime demands of them in detail. Thrive's Neil Macdonald shares what he and his colleagues have learned.

Since the introduction of the Procurement Policy Note 06/20 (PPN06/20), which highlights how to take account of social value in the award of central government contracts, central government contracting authorities have had to give at least 10% weighting to social value considerations when assessing bids and awarding contracts.

Now, more than a year on from the note's introduction, we're taking a look at the questions and concerns that the

new social value regime has thrown up for contractors and their suppliers. With input from my colleague, social value consultant Stephen Leo, I'll explain how to respond to post-PPN06/20 tenders and why a social value strategy is a must.

Where to start

The single best place to start is by studying the **Social Value Model** and the **Guide to Using the Social Value Model**, which explains how contracting

authorities are supposed to assess and award contracts from application throughout the procurement lifecycle. The guide gives suggestions on how authorities should assess bids against the model award criteria (MACs) and how the weighting should be applied to final decisions, but these are ultimately left up to the tenderer.

But bear in mind that this is almost as new to contracting authorities as it is to you. They are feeling their way through the requirements too. So it's not

unusual to see whole blocks of text lifted straight from the Social Value Model and pasted into tender documents. That gives bidders who are familiar with this document a big head start.

Preparing your response to a tender

Stephen Leo has deep experience in bidding processes and he stresses the importance of understanding the questions contracting authorities are asking at the very beginning. "People write everything they know - not what the client has asked for. So, focus in on what the client is really looking for, as that's what is going to get you the real points," Leo says.

If the documentation isn't clear what the client is looking for, then just ask! "We ask them everything else. This is something new for key account managers to start asking. It needs to be part of the questions and answers process," said Leo.

You can't claim the primary purpose of the project as a social value gain. For example, if you were bidding for a contract to provide training services to unemployed people in a disadvantaged area, that training itself wouldn't count. Social value benefits must be "additional to" that primary purpose - "side-effects" of the contracting authority choosing you, rather than another bidder.

In the training services example, this could include job creation among people from the disadvantaged area to deliver the training - particularly among people from disadvantaged groups. Or holding all suppliers in the supply chain below you to high employment standards, but also treating them fairly (eg prompt payment), or paying to create new green spaces or community improvements, carbon offsetting, or tree planting.

Stephen Leo warns that there are big differences between central and local government procurement practices when it comes to assessing companies' social impact. "Central government bodies are mostly worried about the levelling up agenda," he says. "They'll consider a business as a single entity, so you can show good intent, including information about the company's culture, etc.

"But a lot of local clients won't accept that, because they want the delivery locally. People should look at what they are doing as a business - can any of that be replicated locally? You need to have a real look at supply chains. Can you make that local" says Leo.

How a social value strategy will save you time and money

Leo says that a social value strategy can't exist in isolation. To be successful, a social value strategy needs to be developed within the context of a wider corporate-level strategy. "It needs to align with the purpose of business and with the overarching strategy," Leo says. "That's often the step that gets missed out - that the social value strategy needs to understand the requirements around resources and commercial impact as well. A lot of people don't do that and then they complain that social value is costing them a lot of money to implement," he said.

The corporate-level strategy is then fed through into bid-level strategies via a process of "social value engineering", similar to the concept of value engineering, very familiar to bid managers. The higher-level strategies provide a framework for those involved to ask a key question: "How can we challenge our initial estimates to get the best possible value for the client and for us?"

Does all that sound like a lot of work? It

certainly can be! That's why planning out a comprehensive social value strategy is so important. Amongst other things, a social value strategy will identify and set out the causes you want to promote across multiple bids, highlight the existing sources of value within your organisation and its activities and also set out a reusable framework for measurement and reporting of results. Not only that, but the strategy will also focus thoughts and actions and shows a clear intent to clients and stakeholders.

A detailed social value strategy will also help you choose the types of bid to compete for. If the contracting authority's requirements don't align with your business's goals as set out in the social value strategy, then you should perhaps not be bidding in the first place.



Neil Macdonald

is the chief executive of online software platform and consultancy Thrive.



To find out more about how your business could benefit from social value support or measurement, visit www.thrive-platform.com



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