

INFRASTRUCTURE Intelligence

Join construction and change the world!

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Contact us



Editor:
Andy Walker
07791 997602
awalker@infrastructure-intelligence.com



Commercial Manager:
Ian Parker
07894 053961
iparker@infrastructure-intelligence.com



Reporter:
Rob O'Connor
07790 585396
roconnor@infrastructure-intelligence.com



Design and production:
Riccardo Gualandi
07407 496409
rgualandi@acenet.co.uk



Events:
Chetna Gorasia
07508 518398
cgorasia@acenet.co.uk

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Message from the editor



There's very much a theme of getting things done in this issue as we reflect on two big announcements from the government – the latest budget and the new net zero strategy.

In a year where we have seen much talk about the importance of infrastructure from Boris Johnson and his government, there is a sense that our industry is becoming just a little tired of all the warm words and wants, no absolutely needs, to see some real tangible delivery of major projects and the plans to achieve net zero.

Delivery of those plans will mean real work for our industry, but it will also mean that the government can start delivering on its levelling up promises that are political priorities if it is to maintain the seats it won for the first time at the last general election. There is big pressure building on the government to turn words into action on a number of fronts.

Of course, words are cheap, but the real hard yards come in making things happen on the ground. The government needs to reach out to our industry like never before because making things happen on its much-vaunted 'Build, Build, Build' plans and its net zero ambitions can only be realised by the construction and infrastructure sector being actively engaged.

As always, the last 12 months have flown by. I wish all our readers a safe and relaxing festive season when it finally arrives and let's look forward to 2022 being a year of delivery for our industry.

Andy Walker,
Editor, Infrastructure Intelligence
07791 997602
awalker@infrastructure-intelligence.com

T&T awarded Tyne and Wear transport contract

Nexus, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, has appointed Turner & Townsend to provide project control services across three major programmes.

The new contract will build on Turner & Townsend's existing programme management with Nexus and see it continue to work services across the transport authority's Metro Futures, Metro Flow and infrastructure programmes.

Metro Futures is a major £500m programme to modernise the busiest and most frequent light rail network outside of London to help deliver long-term social and economic benefits for the north east.

According to Nexus, the programme is "a bold vision not just to transform travel, but to use it as a catalyst for economic development". Nexus are engaging with business and local communities as they develop their plans and are also working together with Transport for the North "so projects of huge regional importance also play their part across a much wider stage".

The Metro Flow project is a £100m track dualling scheme in

South Tyneside to further enhance Metro services and boost capacity to provide an extra 24,000 customer journeys every day.

The capital delivery programme will upgrade and renew current infrastructure within the Nexus Service including Tyne Dock in South Shields, Ferry Landings in North Shields, Tanners Bank in North Shields and Christon Road in Gosforth.

Graeme Braithwaite, director at Turner & Townsend said: "The major programmes will be transformative to the public transport network and can boost economic growth and deliver long lasting social outcomes for the north east. We are proud to play our part in their delivery and this contract award is testament to our long-standing partnership with Nexus."

Read more online at
www.infrastructure-intelligence.com



The Metro Futures programme will modernise the UK's busiest light rail network outside of London.

Net zero special issue published

Infrastucture Intelligence has teamed up with Atkins to produce a special net zero edition of our magazine, which was published to coincide with the COP26 climate change conference taking place in Glasgow.

The special edition contains a range of articles, opinion and comment on net zero and sustainability issues and includes contributions from Sizewell C, the Scottish government, Atkins, Oxford City Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Nuclear Industry Association, Drax Group, the Environmental Industries Commission, the UK Green Building Council and Arcola Energy.

The net zero special issue highlights and showcases some of the brilliant work that is taking place around sustainability and net zero and discusses some of the key issues that we need to address as an industry to create a better world. We hope that it will help

to contribute to the current debates at COP26 and beyond around net zero and help amplify and promote the vital voice of construction and infrastructure in those discussions.

Australian Tony Barry elected as new FIDIC president

Australian Tony Barry has been elected as the latest president of FIDIC, the International Federation of Consulting Engineers. Barry has almost 40 years of experience in civil engineering and infrastructure projects and until June 2016, he was Aurecon's managing director for Asia.

Previously he was Aurecon's chief business development officer and its chief executive for the Asia-Pacific region. He was also national president of the Association of Consulting Engineers of Australia from late 2004 to 2006 and was listed three times by Engineers Australia among the 100 most influential engineers in the country.

Since 2017, Barry has been a non-executive director of the Viridian Financial Group and is chair of the board's risk committee. He became a director of the FIDIC board in 2015 and one of FIDIC's vice-presidents in 2018. He succeeds William Howard as president and will hold a two-year term of office.



Tony Barry, president, FIDIC.



Commenting on his election as president, Barry said: "I am delighted to be taking on such a high-profile global role and representing the vital industry we all work in. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on the FIDIC board and its CEO to deliver on FIDIC's ambitious Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and we have many initiatives planned to help develop and drive the industry forward globally, share knowledge and resources and lead and advocate on critical issues facing our sector and society."

"These crucial issues range from climate change and sustainability to infrastructure investment, better procurement and contracting, digital transformation, improving quality and capacity, reducing corruption and supporting our members to address the very serious risk, liability and insurance issues facing infrastructure professionals."

Join construction and change the world!

Explaining the real and lasting benefit that construction offers to society is crucial in attracting the best talent to the industry, according to Andy Mitchell, co-chair of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC). *Rob O'Connor* reports.

Continued industry collaboration, speaking with one voice to influence government and attracting new people to construction to help change the world, all emerged as key themes in a recent wide-ranging live interview with CLC co-chair Andy Mitchell.

Our third *Infrastructure Intelligence* Live In the Spotlight interview of 2021 saw one of the leading figures in the UK construction and infrastructure sector speak freely about the vital role played by the Construction Leadership Council in establishing the importance of the industry in the post-Covid recovery. Mitchell described the CLC's initial struggles to engage with an industry previously known for not speaking as one unified force. But the world changed when Covid struck and, said Mitchell, the CLC pulled the industry together in a way never seen before.

"The year before Covid, 2019, it was clear that the CLC was never going to sufficiently represent the whole industry, but then the world changed overnight," said Mitchell. "The truth is I got on the phone to representatives of the industry to get involved in planning how to help both the industry and the country find a way ahead. That became a taskforce and it was impressive to see people and firms putting ego to one side and working together, a heart-warming response right across the industry," he said.

Working together and speaking with one voice

That spirit of working together with one voice saw the industry become much more influential in government circles, with industry leaders keeping in daily contact with senior ministers. "Pre-pandemic we would have struggled to get that respect in the industry," said Mitchell. "Certainly, during the early days of the pandemic there was fear of the unknown, but we had the courage to put out simple and clear guidance for everyone working in the industry and everyone got on board and worked together. We even heard treasury officials say they never thought they'd actually see the day, that the construction industry was working together and speaking with one clear voice," he said.

"The more we spoke with one voice and that we spoke with the authority of the industry, we found that the government



were more willing to listen and engage with us, happily giving us direct daily access to senior ministers. That never used to happen," Mitchell explained. "The pandemic showed how important the industry is to the economy, and governments worldwide understand the importance of investing in infrastructure. It's an open door we have, and it's up to us to put the case to government," said Mitchell.

"The pandemic showed how important the industry is to the economy, and governments worldwide understand the importance of investing in infrastructure."



Looking further ahead, Mitchell said the roadmap to recovery was still important and the industry had a key role to play in delivering it. "We've got a massive role in changing the way the built environment is delivered. We're putting a coherent structure together for government, showing our understanding and intent. It's a springboard for us to tell our story and let people know how important the industry is in the fight against climate change," he said.

Key role of Construction Playbook

Mitchell also said that the Construction Playbook has an important role to play in changing behaviours in the industry. "The playbook is a bold step by the government, with common sense underlying every page. It's a start for government departments to understand what we do, not just describing what we build, but understanding the positive effects on society. Understanding that it's not just about cost, it's about whole life value and social value too," he said.

As for monitoring the playbook and encouraging the industry to comply, Mitchell said: "It's down to the industry to support the government in delivering the whole thing. If you see people not following guidelines, you have to call them out. And guide them throughout the process to help change behaviours. But if we are to achieve the change we need we



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can't afford to hang around and we can't tolerate those who won't change," Mitchell said.

Asked how the CLC could help reach a wider audience and attract new talent, Mitchell said: "We've got to understand and explain what we're doing for society. Our message should be 'If you want to change the world, come and join our industry'. We've got to have a coherent story and attract the very best talent from around the world," he said.

Summing up, Mitchell said: "The CLC's value has been clear for all to see in the last 18 months, but the industry has to continue working together moving forward. We're all in this together, but we're only going to get where need to be if we learn from each other and work together. In five years' time I'd like to see an industry that's seen in a very different way. We need to see more young people considering careers to think of the construction industry. It's an easy thing to do if you're doing something you believe in," said Mitchell.

[Click here to watch the whole interview with Andy Mitchell.](#)



Supporting investment in nature-positive projects

The new Nature Finance Impact Hub launched ahead of COP26 aims to help build market confidence in nature-positive projects and enable green finance markets to fund them at scale.

There is increasing innovation in relation to nature-positive projects, however there is still much to do to deliver for biodiversity and communities, restore the land and tackle climate change.

In its latest *State of Finance for Nature Report* the UN Environment Programme estimated that investments in nature-based solutions need to triple by 2030 and to increase four-fold by 2050. This will largely need to come from a significant increase in private sector investment and the recently launched Nature Finance Impact Hub aims to help build market confidence in nature-positive projects by pinpointing their financial and environmental benefits.

The new hub is showcasing comparable data to help those running and evaluating projects as well as to support the design of future projects. The aim is to accelerate the range of projects coming through so that green finance markets can begin to work at a larger scale.

With new goals for restoring nature and kerbing climate change high on the agenda at COP26, significant private capital will need to be invested in nature-based climate solutions alongside public and charitable funding. However, the lack of comparable data about the performance of nature-positive projects remains a barrier to attracting investment and getting new projects off the ground.

The new Nature Finance Impact Hub aims to address this by providing instant access to data and benchmarks from existing projects, using comparable financial and environmental metrics. It



has been developed by sustainability scaleup, Accelar Limited, in collaboration with the UK green finance community.

Accelar's co-founder Chris Fry explains: "The Impact Hub quantifies how innovative, nature-positive projects can deliver return on investment alongside significant benefits for biodiversity, decarbonisation, water management and eco-tourism. It is still relatively early days, but with fast growing interest in this area we look forward to working with the financial and environmental communities so that insightful data can be shared. We hope that this will contribute to a snowball effect, encouraging investment in nature to expand rapidly in the future."

For the initial launch, the hub already contains data on projects from nine countries covering 11 different kinds of societal benefits from nature, which are known as ecosystem services. Over 40% of the projects address either biodiversity or carbon as an ecosystem service. The diversity built into the hub also enables many other ways of generating revenue and benefiting nature to be highlighted.

Two recent reports have revealed the investment gap to secure key nature-related outcomes in the UK and globally. The Finance Gap for UK Nature report (October 2021) commissioned by the Green Finance Institute estimates that between £44bn and £97bn private investment will be required in addition to public sector funding over the next ten years for the UK to meet its net zero and nature-positive ambitions.

The *State of Finance for Nature report* (May 2021) from the United Nations Environment Programme sets out that if the world is to meet the climate change, biodiversity and land degradation targets, it needs to close a \$4.1 trillion financing gap in nature by 2050.



Public want more green infrastructure

The latest polling suggests that the public want to see more environmentally friendly infrastructure, says *Ben Marshall* of Ipsos MORI.

In his keynote speech at the Conservative party conference, Boris Johnson described the UK's national infrastructure as "way behind some of our key competitors". This inadequacy also filters through to public opinion, with Britons' ratings of their infrastructure being inferior to four of the other seven G8 nations and 64% thinking that we're not doing enough as a country to meet our infrastructure needs.

The government is in a rush to deliver, buoyed by a sense of impatience among the public as well as the economic and political imperative, identifying transport is one of the "supreme leveller-uppers". Ipsos MORI's annual Global Infrastructure Index, conducted in partnership with the Global Infrastructure Investor Association, has found a pragmatic streak in public opinion - people want to 'get it done' - and a strong conviction that this will create jobs and boost the economy.

The public are, though, sensitive to means as well as ends and there are circumspect forces and strong principles at play. For example, while 31% favour avoiding any delay to tackling infrastructure problems even if it means the public's views cannot be heard properly, a higher proportion, 37%, would slow things down so that views can be heard properly (the remainder are unsure either way).

The Global Infrastructure Index has previously found evidence of a 'delivery deficit' too; a growing sense that we have a poor record at getting national projects right. This year's survey found the public continuing to prioritise maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure before spending on anything new, pointing the way perhaps to prioritising 'easy win'



The latest Global Infrastructure Index reveals that the public places a high priority on the environment.



Research shows that the public also want their views to be heard on the impact of local projects.



Ben Marshall
is a research director
at Ipsos MORI.

projects which improve areas and realise benefits faster than slower-burn mega projects. After all, it is potholed roads, scruffy high streets and shaky broadband connection which are more typically the subject of daily conversation.

Another clear message is that the environment matters as a point of principle - and increasingly so. This sentiment translates into higher priority attached to investments in renewables and energy infrastructure. A third of Britons rank the environment as the most important factor among seven when planning infrastructure for the future, up from 28% last year and 19% the year before. And while 'yimbysm' has weakened across the board, it is much stronger for building wind farms and solar infrastructure locally, than it is for building new local homes, roads and rail.

When asked to choose between prioritising considerations of infrastructure's impact on the environment or on the economy, people choose the environment by a margin of more than two to one. While this need not be a binary choice in practice, the Index helpfully highlights popular instincts and values.

It raises questions too, including one about what is environmentally friendly infrastructure? The public want to see investments which contribute to net zero but are also sensitive to any damage caused by construction. Infrastructure leaders and politicians need to stay in touch with public sentiment and own infrastructure's environmental future, an issue which clearly matters to people. 'Going green' is for life, not just for COP26.

Blueprint for sustainable transport hubs unveiled

Better integrating different forms of transport could open up more low-carbon journeys.

The Go-Ahead Group, one of the UK's largest public transport operators, has teamed up with Arup, to create a blueprint which better integrates public transport with walking, cycling, micromobility and digital services, enabling quick and easy connections between sustainable modes of transport.

Their *Future Mobility Hubs* report presents a flexible framework for a network of interchanges that can be adapted to suit different cities, suburbs and rural areas across the UK. Passengers waiting for a bus could benefit from solar powered lighting and heating, cycle storage and hire, charging points, community gardens and even co-working spaces.

Mobility hubs could unlock opportunities for low-carbon journeys by better integrating different forms of transport, creating an attractive alternative to cars. Services tailored to each location would enhance existing infrastructure such as bus stops, railway stations and park and ride facilities with options ranging from cycle storage, e-bikes and EV charging to improved lighting, amenities and public realm.

The framework is published as local authorities work towards an October deadline for Bus Service Improvement Plans, which will be submitted to bid for a share of £3bn of funding provided under 'Bus Back Better', the government's national bus service strategy. A number of Go-Ahead Group's operating companies have identified potential locations for mobility hubs in submissions to local authorities.

Mark Anderson, Go-Ahead's interim customer and commercial director, said: "The on-board environment on buses has improved markedly with modern



Mobility hubs can provide efficient, integrated and sustainable transport options.



vehicles and better accessibility. But our customers also want a more comfortable environment to wait for a bus, or to change between modes of transport.

"We're setting out a vision of what bus stops and interchanges could look like in the future. For the UK to meet its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, we need millions of people to switch from cars to public transport. We'll only achieve that, as a country, if we think big, work closely with local authorities and come up with ideas to make travelling as attractive as possible."

Richard de Cani, Arup's global planning lead, said: "As people demand improved connectivity solutions and grapple with the impact that their choices have on climate change, this vision for mobility hubs sets out a high-quality framework to spark fundamental change, providing us with a sustainable alternative to shift our behaviour and support decarbonisation of the transport network."

"Currently transport options in our towns and cities can be fragmented. Mobility hubs could combine services to provide more integrated and convenient journey choices while reducing the carbon impact and helping us achieve our net zero ambitions."

More women studying engineering

Big increase in women studying engineering in last decade but sector still has a significant gender gap, as industry works to persuade women to choose engineering as a career.

Despite university engineering courses still receiving four times more male applications than female, new research has shown a 96% increase in female undergraduate applications from 2011 to 2021.

The research, analysing UCAS data from employment lawyers Richard Nelson LLP, found an increase of 96.49% in female undergraduate applications through UCAS for engineering courses from 2011 to 2021.

However, while the gender statistics for this STEM subject may look impressive, engineering courses still face a significant gender gap, with 125,320 male applicants in 2021 and just 29,650 females. These figures imply the industry still has a long way to go in persuading women to choose engineering as a career.

The research also demonstrates that engineering courses are continuing to attract an increasing number of talent, with the overall figures for applications increasing by a healthy level from the period of 2011 to 2021.

Jayne Harrison, employment lawyer at Richard Nelson LLP, said: "The data demonstrates how the employment landscape has changed over the past decade. We have seen a significant rise in the number of females who are interested in studying engineering at university and an influx of women into the workforce. It is encouraging to see the overall rise of applications for engineering courses from undergraduates during the last decade."

"We can see there has been a sharp rise in applications for medicine and dentistry during the pandemic, a period which has shone a light on key workers and the NHS.



Young engineers working on a project for Network Rail.

"We have seen a significant rise in the number of females who are interested in studying engineering at university and an influx of women into the workforce."

Jayne Harrison, employment lawyer at Richard Nelson.

"Despite progress towards gender equality in the last 10 years, social norms around gender roles still pervade. Girls are told from a young age that they should be thoughtful, attractive, and altruistic."

Hannah Titley, director at The Golden Circle Tuition.

In this same manner, the data also shows a significant rise in interest for education degrees. Individuals may have been swayed by the increased strain placed on key workers in the NHS and education sector during the pandemic, deciding this is an area they would like to contribute towards."

Hannah Titley, director at The Golden Circle Tuition, said: "Despite progress towards gender equality in the last 10 years, social norms around gender roles still pervade. Girls are told from a young age that they should be thoughtful, attractive, and altruistic. On the other hand, boys are expected to fulfil an outdated stereotype of being 'tough', being funny and having high-earning job prospects. These gender stereotypes and social expectations to conform influence student choices."

"We need to inform and inspire. Inform girls on what careers are available in science and how these jobs are critical for finding solutions to global challenges - climate change, food security, healthcare. We also need to inspire girls by making these jobs attractive. This generation of young people is inspiring. Global problems are on their radar. We just need to push successful female scientists to the forefront - on social media, TV, Ted Talks, podcasts - to talk about their work, empower young people to get involved, and explain why their job matters."

Time for action on net zero

Leading industry figures have cautiously welcomed the UK government's new net zero strategy but say it's now high time for urgent action to turn words into reality.

The construction and infrastructure sector has delivered a favourable response to the government's new net zero strategy, unveiled by the prime minister in October. Described by National Infrastructure Commission chairman Sir John Armitt as "both hugely ambitious and has to be delivered," some in the industry have highlighted a lack of clarity in how some of the projected outcomes can be achieved and there have been concerns expressed at a potential lack of commitment on decarbonising rail.

While generally positive towards the general strategy, the industry is still looking forward to seeing further details emerge over the coming months, with the hope that action not words will be the order of the day as the government moves forward with this crucial area of its programme.

Here is a brief taster of some of the industry reaction to the UK's Net Zero Strategy.



Chris Stark, chief executive of the Climate Change Committee

"We didn't have a plan before, now we do. This is a substantial step forward that lays out clearly the government's ambitions to cut emissions across the economy over the coming 15 years and beyond. It provides much more clarity about what lies ahead for businesses and individuals and the key actions required in the coming decades to deliver a net zero nation. The critical next step is turning words into deeds."



Patricia Moore, managing director, UK at Turner & Townsend

"Construction has one of the most important journeys to achieving net zero and also one of the most challenging. As the vehicle through which wider societal change will take place, but one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions, we must urgently transform our own ways of working. Across the built environment, we need to adopt a programmatic approach to decarbonisation - one that identifies how milestones will be met through avoidance, offset and innovation. These plans also need to consider risk, especially as the effects of climate change start to be felt in our infrastructure and in our communities."



National Infrastructure Commission chairman Sir John Armitt

"The strategy sets out a range of commitments and timescales for action. It is both hugely ambitious and has to be delivered. The priority now is to get on with it. It is encouraging to see a commitment to developing a whole new industry to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, which the commission has recommended needs to be put in place over the next decade if we are to meet our international climate obligations."



Emma Pinchbeck, chief executive at Energy UK

"We will play a central role in the drive to reach net zero and, by committing to have a decarbonised power system in place in the 2030s, our sector will also be providing the clean power needed to transform other sectors like housing and transport. The energy industry has shown what is possible with the right policies in place and is ready to invest further helping create jobs and growth across the country."



David Clarke, technical director at the Railway Industry Association

"Action is needed now if we are to reach net zero on our railways by 2050. As ORR statistics recently showed, we are electrifying at less than half the rate required to meet the 2050 target and the UK is still yet to see any significant new electrification projects or major fleet orders of low carbon battery and hydrogen rolling stock. This lack of commitment puts at risk our existing electrification and rolling stock capability, which we know we will need to meet the 2050 target. Now is an opportune moment for the UK to show international leadership and support green jobs and investment by committing to decarbonise rail."



Paul Tremble, chief strategy officer at WSP

"The stakes are high and cutting emissions across the UK economy over the coming 15 years and beyond can only be achieved through a partnership between government, industry and the public, backed up by an unambiguous implementation strategy, which is both bold and fully costed. There is a lot to digest in the strategy, but it is a positive step that a sector-by-sector breakdown with associated emissions reduction targets has been established."

This is an edited version of an industry reaction round-up article that first appeared online on our website on 20 October 2021. [Click here](#) to read the full version.

A perfect partnership in a sector leading the way

Kier recently partnered with Thrive, which is delivering a social value calculator that will capture, track and report social value across the group's activities. Thrive's chief executive *Neil Macdonald* spoke to *Andy Walker* about the new partnership and delivering social value in the construction sector.

When leading UK construction company Kier chose a partner to help drive its social value agenda, they found in Thrive what they believe to be the perfect match. In turn, Thrive is delighted to be working with Kier, who they see as a key player in the sector. "Kier has been leading the way on social value for several years using internal tools, and their new partnership with us indicates the intent for the next phase of their social value journey. It allows them to stay ahead of the pack," says Thrive's chief executive Neil Macdonald.

He says that the impact of the partnership will be great and is looking forward to seeing Kier influence the supply chain in the delivery of social value. I asked Macdonald why he thought Kier chose Thrive as their partner. He said that it was down to their agile and flexible approach. "We can provide very off-the-shelf software solutions where appropriate, but the big thing for Kier is that they needed an organisation that was agile and a software solution that was very flexible," he says. "Our system makes it very easy for them to report on various client demands and we can configure the system to meet their exact corporate requirements. There are many other players in the market that are very rigid, but that doesn't give Kier the flex that they needed," Macdonald says.

"Also, there is the social value calculation framework that comes built into our system - the Impact Evaluation Standard - which is very forward thinking and keeps up with emerging best practice in the sector in an agile way. This standard has been built in a somewhat construction-focused way, making it even more attractive to organisations in the sector," he said.

The flexibility of the Thrive platform is clearly something that will be inviting to other businesses in the construction and infrastructure sector. "We can provide a solution that is tailored to an organisation's needs when we start working with them, helping them identify where social value can be delivered," Macdonald explains. "There is uncertainty among many organisations about social value. Often they don't realise that they are delivering a lot of social value in what they are doing - they just don't know that they are doing it! We can help them identify and measure that," he said.

Macdonald sees the sector as one that is leading the way in social value delivery, driven by the Public Services Act and government exhortations to the industry to 'build back better'. "There is a wealth of community benefit being delivered through construction and for an organisation with our ethos it is really



Neil Macdonald, Thrive's chief executive.

important to be working with other organisations that really want to deliver," said Macdonald.

Thrive's software solution is also a smooth fit for companies with many different demands from stakeholders. "By its very nature the construction sector is very disparate in how it delivers work - with sites all over the country - and our system makes it very easy to capture that information," he says. A key part of the Thrive difference according to Macdonald is the way they work with clients. "It's a genuine working partnership. We aim to really understand a client's needs and provide something that works for them. We are approachable and openminded

"There is uncertainty among many organisations about social value. Often they don't realise that they are delivering a lot of social value in what they are doing - they just don't know that they are doing it!"

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Kier is seen as a key player in the construction sector delivering social value on its projects.

- not rigid - and we provide a complete software platform, which other corporate responsibility tracking tools in this space simply don't have."

I ask Macdonald what companies in the sector embarking on their social value journey should expect when they start talking to an organisation like Thrive. "Invariably a lot of our potential customers are already committed to social value but they don't know how to capture the breadth of what they are doing. One of the first things we can do is help them identify where they are already delivering social value and capture it in one place. This means they can report on it much better," he says.

"We have the advantage of working cross-sector so we bring a lot of learnings from other sectors and construction is definitely ahead on this. But there is still uncertainty though, especially amongst the mid-tier."

Given that he thinks construction is a market leader in this area, how well does Macdonald think the sector promotes the social value it provides? "We have the advantage of working cross-sector so we bring a lot of learnings from other sectors and construction is definitely ahead on this. But there is still uncertainty though, especially amongst the mid-tier. It's going to be in the supply chain where there needs to be more clarity and focus to really deliver on social value," he says.

Macdonald also believes that the sector needs to move beyond numbers and start telling a story about the social value it delivers. "Over recent years there has been a tendency to report big numbers, but where the sector needs to get better and will get better is reporting the impact of those numbers and the narrative that goes around it. That's another part of the upcoming trend about how construction talks about social value. So highlighting impact rather than just monetary value," he says.

As a company, Kier is certainly happy with their new partnership. As group social sustainability manager Sheryl Moore, says: "Thrive is the perfect partner to help us demonstrate our social legacy and drive the social value agenda. It has a unique combination of being user-friendly, having the ability to effortlessly capture data across both our business and throughout our supply chain, as well as providing robust and credible metrics and having the flexibility to support our various customer requirements".

Thrive has recently partnered with *Infrastructure Intelligence* to sponsor our new Social Value Hub.

Social Value Hub

In association with
thrive
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It's time to embrace flexible working

In an exclusive opinion piece for *Infrastructure Intelligence*, Sir Robert McAlpine CEO *Paul Hamer* describes how flexible working can combat construction's mental health and productivity crises.



In October, [a survey conducted by Jabra](#) found that flexible working is now globally viewed as more important than a salary for those looking for employment.

For many in the construction industry, this news may feel like it has no relevance, as we tend to assume that our work does not lend itself well to flexible working. Yet, this is simply not true. For all of the chaos of the past two years, the pandemic has at least taught us that embracing a culture of flexible and agile working is not only possible for our industry, but essential to overcoming our most pressing challenges.

Our sector faces productivity issues, and sadly, a mental health crisis. There is no one size fits all approach to solving these concerns, but, as a starting point, we need to take positive steps to empower our workforce. A big part of this will be embracing a culture of flexible and agile working.

Happiness spurs productivity

Fundamentally, flexible working offers employees a greater work life balance. It is shown to increase productivity and employee wellbeing, and there is an abundance of evidence to support this. A recent survey by Wildgoose reported that 69% of workers would be more productive if offered flexible working, and a further survey by Airtasker found that those working from home record ten minutes more each day of productive working than their counterparts in the office. Happy and motivated employees are crucial to the success of any business and flexible working plays a large part in their fulfilment.



Paul Hamer is CEO of Sir Robert McAlpine.



Flexible working can also open up your business to a range of candidates that would not have traditionally applied. As part of a trial to test the offer of flexible working, insurance company Zurich worked with the government to advertise all its roles as flexible and resulted in a 20% jump in the number of women applying for senior roles within the company and double the number of total applications. The commercial benefits of flexible working should not be overstated - and with our industry facing an unprecedented skills shortage, it will be imperative for economic recovery.

Mental health emergency

Before the pandemic, it was reported that two men working in construction take their own lives every working day. This devastating statistic highlights a crushing issue of mental health in our industry, which sadly has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

There is mounting evidence on the benefits of flexible and agile working for improving mental health. As one example, a

recent survey from FlexJobs found that a staggering 84% of respondents believed flexible working would help them to better manage their mental health. This perfectly demonstrates why we need to be further investing in flexible working policies and why these policies could be crucial to mitigating the sector-wide mental health crisis.

Looking to the future

It is pleasing to see that the government has recognised the positive changes that can be catalysed by flexible working, having recently announced that employees should be able to request flexible working from day one of a new job. Recent data from HSBC's latest Navigator revealed that two-thirds of employers believe remote or hybrid working is crucial to their future growth as a business, so why are businesses in our sector slow on the uptake?

At Sir Robert McAlpine, we already have agile and flexible working policies in place and through our partnership with consultancy Timewise we are conducting pilot solutions to bring flexible working to our construction sites.

The weight of the issues that our industry is facing needs cross-industry support for these movements to enact real change. It's time to seize this opportunity and embrace the transformative abilities of flexible working.



Think people not infrastructure, Burnham urges construction

Speaking on the fringe at the recent Labour party conference in Brighton, Greater Manchester's mayor Andy Burnham took the opportunity to deliver a message to the infrastructure industry, reports *Andy Walker*.

Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham has called for Labour to embrace English devolution and adopt a 'people-first' approach as the best way to make a real and lasting difference to local people's lives up and down the country, reports Andy Walker from Brighton.

He also called on the construction and infrastructure sector to work in partnership with devolved administrations and local communities, to think more about people and to focus on place rather than projects.

Speaking at a fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference organised by Centre for Cities, the think tank working to improve economies of the UK's largest cities and towns, Burnham said that the powers that be in Whitehall don't like areas of the north having more powers but warned the government that "things were changing" and "the government will have to get used to the people of the north answering back a bit more".

The man tipped by many to be the next Labour leader, said that he had felt liberated in his mayoral role as it had enabled him to get things done and make a difference. "You can do things differently and devolution helps with that and my message to the Labour leadership is to get behind it and get behind the people



Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham speaking at a fringe meeting at this year's Labour party conference.

because a 'place-first' approach can get real buy-in. That is the power of devolution."

Addressing the issue of public transport, Burnham asked why bus journeys in some of the poorest areas of the country, including Greater Manchester, were so expensive compared to London, making the point that he was planning to address this by taking the buses in the city region back into public ownership.

"I want Labour to much more wholeheartedly embrace English devolution. In Manchester we are fixing things that London has never fixed. If you back all cities outside London with the right resources, then you will make a massive difference."

Burnham said that in Manchester they will build a London-style transport system by 2024 and he was looking forward to discussing his proposals with senior ministers, where he would be calling on the government to fund a meaningful levelling up settlement, which in the transport arena would mean London level bus fares as a first step.

Burnham also had some advice for the construction industry. Returning to a theme he highlighted at an *Infrastructure Intelligence* webinar in October 2020, he said that the industry should develop place-based plans for those areas we haven't even thought about yet. "Come to us, work with us and show how a place-based approach can make a difference and align with our thinking. Think people not infrastructure," he urged the industry.

Read more online at
www.infrastructure-intelligence.com



A clear commitment to reach net zero

The UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) has welcomed the government's net zero strategy as a clear commitment to reach net zero, says its chief executive, *Julie Hirigoyen*.

The UKGBC welcomes the publication of the government's comprehensive net zero strategy and the final report of the Treasury's net zero review. Together, they represent a clear commitment by the government to reaching net zero, securing a just transition and unlocking the wider economic benefits.

The net zero strategy clearly acknowledges the scale of the challenge ahead and the significant emissions reductions required from our sector in particular. As distinct from the recently launched heat and buildings strategy, we welcome the inclusion of further information on plans to support action intended to improve reporting on embodied carbon in buildings and infrastructure, with a view to exploring a maximum level for new builds in the future.

Embodied carbon emissions can make up more than half of the emissions of a building over its entire lifecycle and our sector clearly has an important role to play in relation to design choices. We believe the industry is ready to take meaningful action and are therefore calling for a commitment to introduce the regulation on embodied carbon at the building level at the earliest opportunity, starting with mandatory measurement of whole life carbon on large projects, to be followed by the phased introduction of embodied carbon limits for new buildings.

The planning and design of the built environment also has a

significant impact on other sectors, such as transport and we are therefore pleased to see increased investment in electric vehicle infrastructure and the use of nature-based solutions for carbon mitigation. We hope the government does not miss the opportunity to promote a holistic approach to decarbonisation, resilience and nature restoration through its upcoming planning reforms in England.

Lastly, UKGBC welcomes the conclusion of the Treasury's net zero review that a successful, orderly transition for the economy will deliver significant benefits – including lower household costs and wider health co-benefits. If these are to be realised, then the government must work to fill in the blanks in its plans, including support for a large scale domestic retrofit programme and building the associated supply chain, introducing an array of fiscal incentives to support homeowners and a strong regulatory framework to provide clarity around the trajectory and pace of change required.

As part of UKGBC's *Net Zero Whole Life Carbon Roadmap*, we have conducted a major industry-led multi-stakeholder study into the government policies and industry actions required for the UK to achieve net zero carbon in the construction, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure. The report includes specific recommendations related to embodied carbon. [Click here](#) to view UKGBC's detailed recommendations for policymakers.



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

Mayors need more spending power to make a difference

A new paper from North of Tyne mayor Jamie Driscoll and published by the RSA says that giving greater powers to the North of Tyne and other areas will boost economic growth and help to level up.

Up to £500m of extra investment and 14,000 jobs could be created in the North of Tyne through a new regional wealth fund, a new paper argues. *Regional Wealth Generation*, written by North of Tyne mayor Jamie Driscoll, is the first in a series of events and papers on levelling up from the RSA (Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce). The paper argues for greater powers to be devolved to the North of Tyne - and potentially other areas - to help boost economic growth, improve public services and address inequalities.

The powers being called for include:

- The establishment of a regional wealth fund to invest in SMEs, job creation and other projects. The report estimates that this could raise up to £500m and create an estimated 14,000 jobs by borrowing at lower interest rates.
- Setting up a levelling up board, chaired by the mayor, bringing together ministers and officials from across national and local government, so local knowledge can improve national schemes in the English regions.
- Piloting a new 'invest-to-save' approach to long-term health problems, which allows the future money saved by improving housing and public transport to be invested upfront.

Jim O'Neill, former Treasury minister and chair of the RSA Cities Growth Commission, which led to the first devolution deal in Manchester, endorses the recommendation in the report's foreword, arguing that further devolution of fiscal powers is critical to greater growth. In a separate development, Andy Haldane, RSA chief executive, was recently appointed to lead the government's levelling-up work on a secondment from the RSA, though the series is independent of government and Haldane's role.

Read more online at
www.infrastructure-intelligence.com



North of Tyne mayor Jamie Driscoll says that greater spending power for mayors would boost economic growth and help to level up.

In a separate paper published alongside *Regional Wealth Generation*, the RSA sets out its own definition of levelling up which will be fed into Whitehall stakeholders. It says the UK government must include three key dimensions to make the idea a success.

1. Economic development

Meeting net zero, productivity, regional economic imbalances and raising wages.

2. Social cohesion

Stronger public services, with a focus on wellbeing, life chances, environmental justice, poverty and inequalities.

3. Community voice and identity

A focus on building 'social capital' such as volunteering and neighbourhood trust.

Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne mayor, said: "The best way to improve people's lives is to put more money in their pockets. That means generating more wealth here by investing in our economy and paying good wages. That requires investment in skills, in transport and directly in local firms.

"The challenges of the climate crisis are coming at us whether we are prepared or not. The drag of poverty is just as urgent as the climate crisis and it causes long-term scarring to our whole society. They are two

sides of the same coin. This paper offers solutions, long-term solutions, without increasing taxes. It pays for itself with the wealth it generates. Forget levelling up, this is levelling beyond."

Dr Alice Mathers, director of research at the RSA, said: "The north east is not a problem to be solved, but a national asset we have under-invested in. The levelling-up debate is often polarised between cities versus the red wall, London versus the north, or GDP versus wellbeing.

"In truth, we need an approach with four key elements - growing local economies, powerful local governance, public services focused on reducing social inequalities and stronger community voice. All of which require commitment to effective participatory approaches, creating an equal platform for more local people to have a voice on matters that affect them, to help shape future services and systems. This will be challenging,

"The north east is not a problem to be solved, but a national asset we have under-invested in."

Dr Alice Mathers, director of research at the RSA

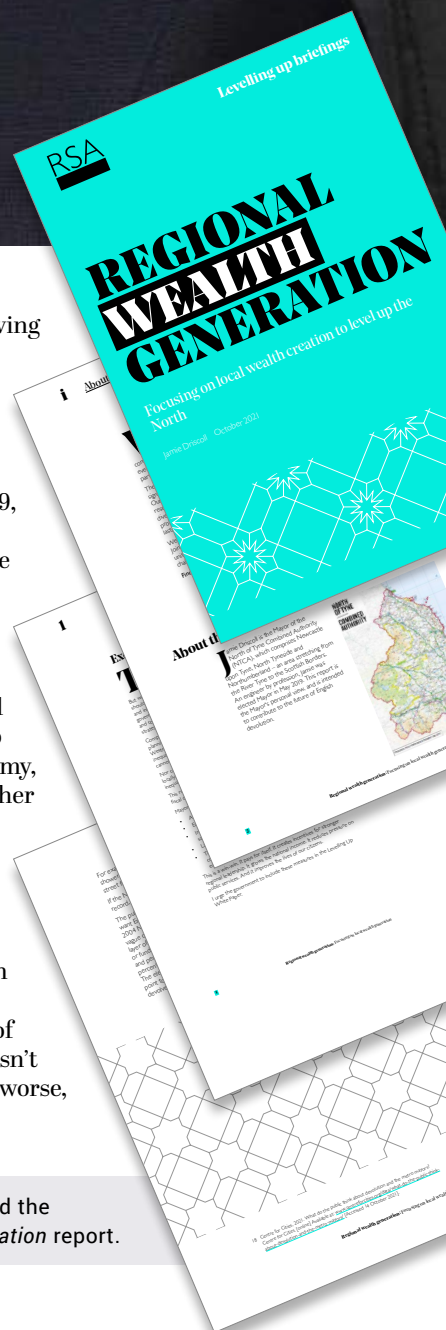
but as this report shows, devolving powers is essential to meeting these four key strands of levelling-up."

Jim O'Neill, crossbench peer and former Treasury minister, said: "During Covid-19, I became a public voice calling for regional equivalents of some so-called sovereign wealth funds, citing the example of Singapore's Temasek, as what might be considered around some areas of the UK to try and provide more patient capital to help truly develop a new economy, with stronger productivity, higher incomes, higher shared wealth and a better society, in the spirit of never letting a crisis go to waste.

"Jamie's proposal for a specific such fund for the north east is an idea that is easy for me to endorse, given the scale of the area's challenges. I hope it isn't dismissed out of hand, or even worse, ignored by Whitehall."



Click here to download the *Regional Wealth Generation* report.



Engage early and often to champion local needs

The government's 'Build, Build, Build' drive should not overlook the views of local communities around transport, says *Joseph Moore*.

Led by the chancellor of the exchequer, Project Speed (the Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce) aims to bring forward proposals to deliver the government's public investment projects more strategically and efficiently.

The time required to develop, design and deliver major transport corridor projects is now coming under greater scrutiny. That is no surprise. The construction sector's ability to develop the Nightingale hospitals in 2020 at record speed provided an indication of what is possible when delivery times are slashed and contractors, design teams, and supply chain partners collaborate more closely.

Time poor, story rich

While there is no question that bureaucracy and red tape play a part in slowing down the speed at which projects are delivered, there are risks to public acceptance and delivery of corridor projects when looking to squeeze a programme.

The success of highways schemes such as the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project, Lower Thames Crossing and A303 Stonehenge (referenced in the National Infrastructure Strategy) depend on the buy-in of the communities and stakeholders affected by them. That buy-in depends on their understanding not only of the local implications of the project, but the wider project need and benefits. Not only that, but to generate the engagement projects seek at statutory consultation, they must tell the wider story at the earliest possible opportunity.

A drumbeat of activity to dispel development myths and to sell project benefits will go a long way in getting individuals, businesses and other sensitive stakeholders on board with the vision.

Such 'big picture storytelling' however, should not come at the expense of local concerns and opinions. While the national narrative is important, local people must feel that their needs and priorities are heard and not lost in the cacophony of noise surrounding the 'levelling up' of the whole of the UK.

This approach is reinforced by central government in its Planning for the Future white paper of 2020. However, this approach is not reflected in its infrastructure papers. Of the 30



Joseph Moore is an account manager at Copper Consultancy.



A still from the fly-through consultation video prepared for National Highways' A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross Scheme.



Local MP Cherilyn Mackrory takes a look at work on the A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross Scheme with Highways England senior project manager Josh Hodder (left) and Costain senior project manager John Lee.

times that the term 'communities' is mentioned in the National Infrastructure Strategy, only once does the document refer to taking "the needs of the communities they serve into account".

As an industry, we can point to highways projects that go above and beyond in listening to individuals – and the corresponding rewards they reap in terms of programme, budget, and reputation. We need to learn from such projects and ensure this becomes the norm and that we take the time to inform communities and provide them with the fullest possible picture throughout the entirety of a project.

Engage early, engage often

Copper Consultancy has worked on a broad range of major transport corridor projects at all stages of their lifecycle. This experience has taught us that the best engagement with local communities is that which is built on long-standing relationships formed over time. Engagement should not start and end at consultation. It is never too early for a project team to begin building their understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by local people and how a project such as the creation of a new bypass or the dualling of a major arterial route could impact stakeholders.

Continuous outreach with communities is crucial to the ongoing success and perceptions of a project. Individuals should feel listened to beyond statutory consultation. This could take the form of pre-construction engagement to explain how works might impact residents and businesses and what will be done to mitigate these challenges.

By remaining in touch with communities throughout each of the

project control framework stages, grassroots advocacy can be fostered. "It's one thing blowing your own trumpet, but when influential community leaders are selling the benefits of your scheme, it really helps boost credibility and creates a positive buzz within the local community and the media," says Josh Hodder, project manager for National Highways' A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross scheme.

This ongoing engagement ensures that communities are provided with the fullest possible picture, helping them to shape their views and providing them with the means of responding meaningfully as and when consultation does arise. From a delivery perspective, this means projects should already understand what objections they could be facing at the close of consultation. All of this means fewer surprises, enabling teams to plan effectively and deliver at pace when the need for this has never been greater.

Build, Build, Build

The development of infrastructure is key to the UK's bounce-back in the wake of Covid-19. The government has committed to delivering an 'infrastructure revolution' with highways upgrades a fundamental strand of this pledge. High levels of investment from central government are admirable, and indeed, greatly needed in our bid to level up the country.

But 'Build, Build, Build,' should not come at the expense of local people's wants and needs. To truly champion communities and deliver for them we must step back, listen, and understand what they require. By engaging early, we can assuage concerns and build buy-in, but this also requires us to fully articulate the project vision to enable stakeholders to respond meaningfully to our projects.



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Designing a people-focused, post-Covid hospital

As the world recovers from the impact of the Covid pandemic, Arcadis health sector specialists *Smriti Singh* and *Chris Waine* share some initial thoughts on designing future post-Covid hospitals.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is enormous and still playing out. It has forced us to think about airborne infections for the first time in decades. Any new hospital design must now take account of airborne infections as well as addressing the longer-standing strategic challenges of aging and lifestyle factors.

We have considered these challenges and set out our initial thinking on how to design a post-Covid hospital, in terms of its purpose, what services it should provide, layout, staff spaces and technology.



Smriti Singh is UK health transformation advisory lead at Arcadis.

Purpose

Our starting point for hospital design is clarity of purpose. Addressing modern healthcare challenges requires cultural as well as practical changes. We therefore recommend directly addressing this from the start, in the design principles. Traditional hospitals require – for reasons valid at the time – people to behave as passive recipients of treatment and care. Modern hospital design should seek to harness people's own motivations and resources and integrate them into the way we manage health.

The modern hospital needs to be more than a hospital. We believe it should be a hub for the local community, housing a range of organisations, some of which directly support people's health and care, and others which will do this indirectly supporting the health of the local population.

Services

We propose that new hospitals must be designed to include a broader range of services, most importantly mental health provision. Including mental health services in hospital design could be through additional dedicated space for mental health practitioners but also the inclusion of mental health expertise in 'mainstream' service areas such as emergency departments.

Layout

Hospitals can be difficult to navigate and feel disempowering to patients and families. This is often because they have developed incrementally, with departments and services set out in ways which feel illogical to users, with signage that uses the language of professionals and not ordinary people.

One simple idea is that services should be organised around parts of the body with all signage in simple English; an area for the 'heart', an area for the 'brain'. Whilst this may not always be possible, having plain, non-medical, language as a design principle is a cheap and effective way of making the hospital easier to navigate.



Chris Waine is UK health sector lead at Arcadis.

The layout must also now be designed to minimise infection control. Even if we don't have a full-blown pandemic for decades, the reality is we are likely to see mutations and consequently infectious outbreaks. For most of the hospital, this means single rooms by default.

Staff spaces

As hospitals have evolved, and healthcare costs increased, staff spaces within hospitals have become eroded. We now need to think seriously about great facilities for hospital staff. If nothing else, the pandemic has brought home the value of the hospital workforce and the urgent need to address the longer-term issue of the NHS' workforce crisis. When thinking about staff spaces, we want to achieve three outcomes: enabling relaxation and decompression, support co-working and driving a safety culture.

Technology

Digital tech is a game-changer. Whilst the NHS is right to focus on electronic patient records, we can do much with cheaper solutions which deliver benefits quicker. Digitising patient pathways, to introduce more self-monitoring, means we can provide more with the same workforce, increase visibility and extend the hospital's reach beyond its walls. Benefits can also include a reduction in 'routine' follow-up appointments and patients getting faster, timely and direct access to specialists.

The ideas set out here represent a starting point. They require further development, and this should be done 'bottom-up', with those who will use it and those who will work there.



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Climate changing the built environment

An ACE Emerging Professionals report explores how net zero has already changed job roles in the industry.

ACE Emerging Professionals has profiled more than 25 industry professionals asking them the simple question of how climate change has impacted on their career.

The varied stories and testimonials range from graduates all the way to managing directors. Working for ACE members, clients, in technology, or in academia, they reveal how climate change and the collective move to net zero, has already positively impacted on their day-to-day roles.

The stories have been collated and curated by the group for emerging leaders and included in the report, *Climate Changing the Built Environment*. Released ahead of COP26, it not only reinforces how the issue of net zero is now central to the consultancy and engineering sector and the wider industry, but also demonstrates



[Click here to find out more about the *Climate Changing the Built Environment* report.](#)



that the built environment delivers jobs with a true purpose.

Commenting on the report's publication, Georgia Hughes, chair of ACE's Emerging Professionals, said: "I know from my own experiences at Arcadis how central climate change is to my role. Our industry makes a real difference, and I'm delighted to share these testimonials ahead of COP26, and – who knows – perhaps encourage more to consider a career in our sector."

Project leader Tom Worthington, who is also a sustainability and carbon consultant at Atkins, added: "Our industry has a central role to play in meeting society's ambitions on climate and I'm passionate about finding the solutions to help us meet net zero by 2050. This project has made me realise that I'm by no means alone. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants for sharing their testimonials with us. I found them inspiring and I'm sure others will too."

ACE Emerging Professionals group seeks new lead

Dynamic, proactive and forward-thinking individuals are encouraged to apply for key industry role.



[Click here to find out more.](#)

With Georgia Hughes soon to reach the end of her term as chair of the ACE Emerging Professionals, the group for the next generation of industry leaders is looking for a new lead.

Her replacement will be an emerging professional themselves (usually 35 years old or less) and will act as an industry champion ensuring the views of the sector's next generation are included in broader ACE activity.

In addition, they will take forward major projects on behalf of the group, such as 2020's Future of the Workforce report and most recently, their latest report, *Climate Changing the Built Environment*.

Finally, the new lead for ACE Emerging Professionals will be responsible for developing and promoting a strong programme of in-person and virtual events aimed at emerging professionals, working closely with the group's regional network and ACE's staff. The application process for the post closes on 18 November 2021.

What does the budget mean for your business?

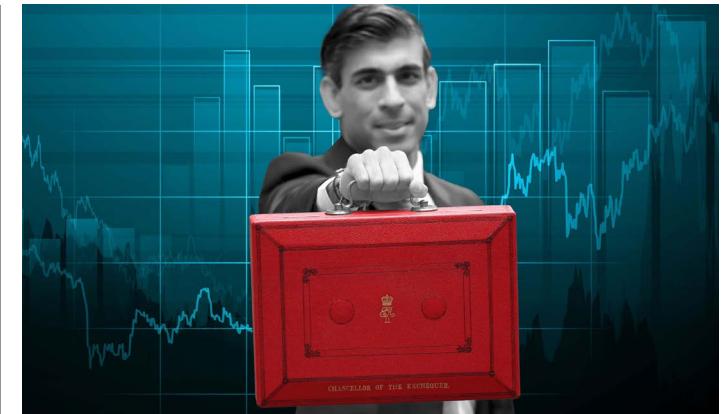
ACE shares member-only briefing on the chancellor Rishi Sunak's recent autumn budget.

The government has revealed details of its future spending plans in October's budget. The *Autumn Budget and Spending Review*, to give it its full title, was – as expected – light on major new infrastructure investment, the bulk of these having already been shared in the infrastructure strategy last year and made in previous budget announcements.

From a construction and infrastructure perspective there was still plenty to be pleased about, although – as is often the case – understanding what is new and previously-announced money is sometimes difficult.

- £5.7bn fund for the regions to create "London-style transport infrastructure".
- £5bn for local roads maintenance – enough to fill one million more potholes a year.
- £5bn in total funding for buses, cycling and walking schemes.
- £2.6bn for a long-term pipeline of over 50 local roads upgrades.
- £1.8bn for regenerating brownfield sites – unlocking one million new homes.
- £1.7bn of funding from the first round of the 'Levelling Up Fund' for 105 local projects.

What was demonstrably lacking, however, were details on rail investment. The delayed Integrated Rail Plan is expected soon



[Click here to download the budget briefing.](#)

and it will outline how major projects like HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, East/West Rail and the Midlands Engine – all key to levelling up – will progress. It is also likely to share how rail moves to full electrification of the network to meet society's net zero targets.

ACE's member-only briefing on the budget sheds some light on the above and more besides and is essential reading for all consultancy and engineering firms looking to make sense of the government's announcements and work out what they mean for the construction and infrastructure sector.

How are we to build back greener?

ACE has published a member-only briefing on the government's new *Net Zero Strategy*, which was announced ahead of COP26.

The government published its *Net Zero Strategy* ahead of COP26 in October. *Build Back Greener* outlines how the UK will deliver on public commitments to reaching net zero by 2050. Alongside its release, the government also published three



additional documents - the *Heat and Buildings Strategy*, *Greening Finance* and the *Net Zero Cost Review*.

Together they explore a series of measures which are intended to help the UK transition to a green future, support businesses and consumers to move to clean power, underpin hundreds of thousands of highly skilled 'green' jobs, and leverage around £90bn of private investment over the next nine years.

To help digest the myriad of announcements, ACE has produced an exclusive member-only briefing.

[Click here to download the briefing paper.](#)

Working for you in 2022

ACE's interim CEO, *Laurence Brett*, looks at how ACE and EIC will continue to support members as the industry emerges from an uncertain period post-Covid.

Uncertainty would be my one-word takeaway from the pandemic and its aftermath. It is something we have all sadly become accustomed to, but the reality is that business planning within this context can be – to put it mildly – challenging.

Thankfully ACE and EIC members have a dedicated team helping them through these difficult times, which I've been lucky enough to work with over these last few months. I know from first-hand experience that members always come first in everything we do.

When Covid hit, it meant producing regular and timely advice, support and guidance on issues such as business finance, redundancy, wellbeing and test and trace. It also meant championing member interests through forums such as the Construction Leadership Council, helping to influence our industry's response on issues such as furlough, loans, prompt payment and contract disputes.

For ACE members this was also the case in our weekly calls with the construction minister and for ACE and EIC members, in our regular engagement with officials and policymakers across Whitehall.



Laurence Brett is interim CEO at the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

Our member-first approach, which ran across all of our pandemic support and activity in 2020 and 2021, will be applied in new areas next year and beyond – whether supporting members to seize new opportunities to shape economic recovery, helping them adapt to a digital-first world, or meeting society's aspirations for a net zero future.

The government has made much of "Building Back Better" and it is clear that ACE members have a crucial role to play in delivering political ambitions around levelling up. Wherever you are based, we are proactively engaging on your behalf with recent member wins on key issues such as the National Infrastructure Bank, Levelling Up Fund, the Construction and Consultancy Playbooks, nationally significant infrastructure projects and, most recently, the Construction Pipeline.

The very nature of uncertainty means it will continue, albeit in a different form. Looking ahead and it feels as if business leaders will need to navigate a post-pandemic recovery in the construction sector, which is clearly being affected by a squeeze on materials and skills in 2022.

The challenge for our industry, of course, is how we adapt to meet both these immediate needs and the longer-term, structural skills issues facing our industry. This is why our work around the future of consultancy is so important, notably the activity of the future skills, digital transformation and future markets groups. Three areas where, once again, ACE is on hand to help all members, no matter their size, adapt to a rapidly changing world.

EIC's key role in industry's drive for net zero

The drive for net zero means that the Environmental Industries Commission will have a key lobbying and coordinating role going forward, says *Matthew Farrow*.

I write this on the train to Glasgow for COP26 where I'm looking forward to meeting up with a number of members and attending some Green Zone events. While using the journey to catch up on current green news, I see that the environment bill has finally gained royal assent, ending a tortuous stop-start process through parliament.

Both these events are of real importance to EIC and its members, but they represent very different types of environmental progress. The Environment Act is a traditional exercise in environmental policy development. A series of government proposals were turned into draft and then formal legislation, UK green NGOs and bodies like EIC have had their say, there has been a flurry of parliamentary amendments (how ambitious some of the targets should be and the powers of the Office of Environmental Protection being particularly controversial) and the bill is now law, with a series of new powers and targets.



Matthew Farrow is director of policy at the Association for Consultancy and Engineering and the Environmental Industries Commission.

The debate has been conducted almost entirely within the UK (in practice largely the English) environmental policy community and for most of the measures included it's straightforward to work out which sectors will need to invest in new environmental technology and which environmental markets relevant to EIC members will be strengthened as a result. I'm exaggerating a little here, as there are some innovative aspects such as Nature Recovery Networks, which will have more unpredictable and complex impacts on business behaviour, but I think the rule broadly holds.

The contrast with COP26 and the broader net zero debate is stark. While the UK legislative driver - the Climate Change Act - is actually simpler, everything that flows from it is many times more complex. For a start, as COP itself exemplifies, this is the ultimate international green issue, where the shape, speed and efficacy of UK action is largely determined by the wider international political and business context.

At the same time, everyone agrees that net zero requires a fundamental re-engineering of the economy, but there is little consensus over what this means in practice. Every trade body has its own roadmap, every government announcement its own pathway, every think tank report its own suite of scenarios. These are uncoordinated and some are little more than wish lists with dates. The problem is that we are dealing with a system of systems and no one can really predict with confidence how an innovation or policy initiative will affect markets and business behaviour across the economy.

What does all this mean, you may ask? For EIC, I think three things in particular.

First, when people say the next few years will be all about delivery, this really means coordination. Coordination between different parts of government, different sectors, the investment community and the policy community. EIC, with its traditional 'broad church' ethos and membership spanning different types of business and our links into academia and the public sector, is well placed to play a key role here.

Second, helping our members interpret policy and economic changes and identify growth markets, will be vital. EIC has always done this, but I think will need to do more in future.

Third, lobbying for stronger environmental standards will remain a core part of our mission, but in a very crowded 'noisy' environmental field, we will need to do it more through building coalitions.



1

SUPPORTING YOU IN CHALLENGING TIMES

We were by your side helping you navigate the pandemic

2

WORKING FOR YOU IN 2020/21

2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

3

SHAPING OUR INDUSTRY'S FUTURE

We're keeping you well connected and ahead of trends

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Budget 2021: No more words, we need delivery

While warm words on the importance of infrastructure are great to hear, what the industry really needs now from the chancellor and his government is delivery, says *Infrastructure Intelligence* editor, Andy Walker.

Once again, in a set-piece political speech in parliament, we have heard a leading politician, in this case the chancellor of the exchequer, laud the importance of infrastructure to the UK economy and highlight the government's commitment to "building back better". So far so good. But talk is cheap and as we know it is far easier to talk about doing something than to actually do that thing.

Rishi Sunak's budget speech was light on specific details in a number of key areas for the construction and infrastructure sector and it's no wonder that his budget has been given a decidedly mixed and, in some areas, lukewarm response from our industry.

Of course, we shouldn't be churlish and it's obviously great to hear the chancellor highlighting the key importance of our industry to the UK. "Infrastructure connects our country, drives productivity and levels up" and "This budget delivers an infrastructure revolution" are absolutely the phrases that the sector needs to hear from the person in charge of the nation's purse strings. However, they are just phrases and on their own they do not build a single house, safely re-clad a tower block, construct a road or railway or tackle some of the deep-seated environmental issues that we need to overcome if we are to meet our net zero targets.

Politicians' promises must lead to real projects

Rishi Sunak's budget confirmed a number of spending pledges around housing, local transport and various levelling up initiatives but much of what was highlighted in his speech had already been trailed in advance or announced some time ago. While the spending pledges on infrastructure are to be welcomed, as the chancellor himself admitted, "what matters is not what is



The prime minister Boris Johnson and chancellor Rishi Sunak need to start delivering on their infrastructure promises.

spent, but what is delivered". And there lies the rub. Delivery not words (Project Speed, anyone?) are what is required for our industry and as the voice of construction and infrastructure, here at Infrastructure Intelligence we won't shy away from highlighting the urgent need to see real tangible projects and schemes emerging from our politicians' promises.

Industry leaders have rightly bemoaned the lack of any concrete announcements on big-ticket infrastructure projects in this budget. Darren Caplan, chief executive of the Railway Industry Association said that the budget was a "missed opportunity to unleash the potential of the railways in helping the country to build back better". Caplan

"Here at Infrastructure Intelligence we won't shy away from highlighting the urgent need to see real tangible projects and schemes emerging from our politicians' promises."

also highlighted the lack of any statement from the chancellor on whether long-term day-to-day funding of the railway network will be maintained at least at current levels in the years ahead. "We still don't know what is in the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the north, we still have uncertainty over major projects, such as HS2 eastern leg, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Rail Hub," he said. And he's right, there was nothing said about those landmark projects, so vital to levelling up.

Sir John Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, also wasn't happy about the lack of any specifics from the chancellor on UK rail. "Ongoing uncertainty hanging over major rail schemes in the north and midlands is not in anyone's best interest, not least because of the timescales involved in taking such large projects from aspiration to delivery," he said.

"We gave our own independent assessment of options to government ten months ago. The government's plan should be published without further delay to help unlock economic growth across the north and break the cycle of committing to schemes only to later reopen or rescope them," said Armitt.

And, while it was good to hear the chancellor bullishly mention the first major investment made by the new National Infrastructure Bank, that is only one investment made on one project in the four months since the bank was officially launched. Clearly, the chancellor needs to do better in this area, like so many others.

A missed opportunity on rail

Effectively, the key decisions about Northern Powerhouse Rail and the eastern leg of HS2 have been kicked down the road for the time being, despite there being strong speculation



that the chancellor would include an announcement in his budget. All that Rishi Sunak was able to offer on these key much-needed infrastructure projects was to say that the Integrated Rail Plan, which will set out the government's plans for key rail investments, will come "soon". Again, this is not good enough and our industry needs and deserves much more.

Sunak appears to 'get' the link between infrastructure, investment, increasing economic prosperity and levelling up. "If the government wants growth, it must tackle the country's uneven economic geography," he proclaimed during his budget speech. But tackling the country's uneven economic geography won't be resolved by saying "levelling up" and "building back better". This can only be done by investing in and delivering the infrastructure that the nation so badly needs. Delivery on the ground. Real projects that transform communities and people's lives that deliver lasting social value across the country.

So, the challenge to the chancellor is this. Saying "build, build, build" is fine, but now we need action and real projects on the ground. It's time to "deliver, deliver, deliver", Rishi!



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