



Sustainable Growth and Prosperity

A Plan for the Next UK Government



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The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) champions infrastructure and the built environment to government and other stakeholders, representing the views of around 400 members.

They have worked on some of The UK's most transformative infrastructure to date: the Olympic Park, Crossrail, Tideway, HS2, the Queensferry Crossing and the National Highways Net Zero Plan.

The UK consultancy and engineering sector contributes:



The market size of over £62bn



Over 420,000 people employed



The Environmental Industries Commission (EIC) champions new environmental markets to Government and other stakeholders. We work to ensure environmental policies are thoughtful and progressive, regulations clear and enforced, innovation rewarded, and finance and export opportunities are available.

We represent the views of around 70 members - companies, large and small, working in the environmental technologies and services sector. Multi-nationals, technology start-ups, consultancies and universities can all be found within our broad membership base. Comprised of technical specialists and dedicated professionals, we have the knowledge and expertise to advise, guide, and facilitate the delivery of green growth within our economy.

The environmental services and technology sector contributes:



£89 billion turnover for the UK¹



349,000 UK jobs



£28 billion value added over 6 years¹
(including pandemic years)



Contribution of 3.9% GDP

¹BEIS, 2022

Unlocking potential

Our sector offers achievable solutions and is ready to work with the UK's next government. Together, we can improve our living, working, and recreational places and create a greener, brighter and prosperous future.

Engineering consultants and environmental experts are ambitious, skilled, adaptable, and poised to address local, national and global challenges head-on. By harnessing their collective brainpower, they can drive positive change to build resilience, deliver nature positive outcomes and combat climate change.

Consultants play a multifaceted role in driving economic growth, serving as trusted advisors, problem-solvers, and innovators. Their deep industry knowledge provides invaluable guidance to businesses and government seeking to navigate complex challenges and seize new opportunities.

“Government has ambitious goals for infrastructure, but in many areas, it is not delivering fast enough... rarely has the need for speed been more evident”

Infrastructure Progress Review 2023, National Infrastructure Commission

A plan for Government and industry partnership

This plan for Government positions the built and natural environment at the heart of delivering low-carbon infrastructure, sustainable, healthy and vibrant communities, climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Taking a holistic approach, this plan encompasses water management, better air quality improvement, nature recovery, and the transition to a circular economy - reflecting the interconnectedness of the built and natural environment.



Underpinning our plan for Government are three overarching priorities:

- A new Department for Infrastructure
- An updated National Infrastructure Strategy and Industrial Strategy
- And a fair and proportionate approach to risk



For government and industry to work collaboratively, and deliver on this plan, we need:

- **Cross-party consensus** establishing a partnership that is cohesive, attractive to industry and long-term.
- **Long-term stability;** it is crucial to communicate to the public a steadfast and consistent vision for the nation's infrastructure landscape. This means a robust pipeline for delivery, including timelines, milestones, measurable social value outcomes, and an open conversation about cost.
- **The right policy and regulatory tools.** By streamlining decision-making processes, we can deliver swift and informed action. This agility is central to unlocking industry potential, allowing it to drive sustainable and innovative solutions.

“As other nations rapidly advance in upgrading their infrastructure, fostering effective placemaking, and pioneering integrated transport, there is an opportunity for the UK to accelerate our competitiveness and be at the forefront of innovation.”

Kate Jennings, Chief Executive Officer, ACE and EIC

A '100 Day Plan' for the Built and Natural Environment

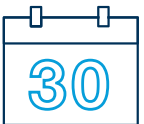


THE FIRST 10 DAYS – ESTABLISHING THE DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

This new department will streamline and expedite decision-making. It will provide the leadership and coordination needed to address the UK's infrastructure challenges. The Department will:



- Foster efficiency and accountability, working with bodies including the Infrastructure Projects Authority, the Infrastructure Bank and the Infrastructure Commission.
- Develop and be responsible for the delivery of a National Infrastructure and Industrial Strategy.
- Play a pivotal role in risk management and mitigation strategies.

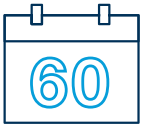


THE FIRST 30 DAYS – 5 PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT

The Government should move at pace to include the following in the King's speech:



- Create a fair and proportionate approach to risk, including legislating for a cap on liability.
- Ensure the Industrial and Infrastructure Strategies survive political cycles by placing key areas on a statutory footing, delivering the certainty needed to increase investment in business, people, and places.
- Review National Policy Statements with clear criteria for triggering reviews of other NPS.
- Strengthen rules on prompt payments, which continue to impact SMEs significantly.
- Deliver planning reforms, including those outlined in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) Action Plan and the Environment Act, that require legislative action.



THE FIRST 60 DAYS – A BUDGET TO PRIORITISE UK INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

As the Chancellor of the Exchequer prepares to reveal the Government's economic strategy and taxation policies, the Autumn Statement can champion the built environment and empower industry growth. We recommend:



A refreshed infrastructure strategy alongside a long-term funding settlement:

The strategy should provide a deliverable roadmap for the built environment and consultants up to 2050. This should include methods to de-risk and grow private investment as part of the funding mix.



A single multiyear financial settlement to invest in local priorities alongside industry:

The next Government needs to move faster in devolving powers and funding to local authorities. Mayoral Combined Authorities are increasingly making major infrastructure decisions. This approach should be informed by national policies and frameworks and mark a shift away from the reliance on competitive bid-based funding mechanisms.



A robust central government procurement pipeline for infrastructure projects:

Published alongside the budget and in collaboration with industry, the pipeline should provide long-term demand visibility. Shifting to portfolios and longer-term contracts will foster investment certainty. Prioritising climate change and nature, the pipeline must showcase major projects to be completed by 2035, demonstrating the full range of water resilience, energy generation, and carbon removal technologies, including offshore wind, CCUS (carbon capture, use, and storage), grid-scale energy storage, hydrogen, and nuclear.



A review of the economics of climate change adaptation including nature-based solutions:

The review, released alongside the budget, should assess the long-term costs of the risks outlined in the Climate Change Risk Assessment. The review should define the level of risk the UK is prepared to tolerate.



A more inclusive and effective skills levy:

Changes to the Apprenticeship Levy would encourage a wider spectrum of upskilling and reskilling initiatives. An expanded approach should incentivise diverse training programmes, ensuring a comprehensive focus on developing the skills needed for a dynamic and evolving workforce and industry.



A brownfield first approach:

Brownfield development is inextricably linked to a number of government priorities, including housing and infrastructure. To improve the economic viability of brownfield sites Government should make a series of fiscal changes, including an increase to land remediation tax relief, and the introduction of a greenfield surcharge. Policies and regulation should incentivise brownfield use and unlock permit issuing delays.



100 DAYS AND BEYOND:

Each government department should be pivotal in delivering this plan, alongside the new Department for Infrastructure:



A 'One Crisis' approach to climate and nature – Departments for Energy Security and Net Zero and Environment Farming and Rural Affairs

Plans for nature and delivering net zero must be aligned. Government should ensure that planning and infrastructure decisions address nature, climate and health together, to ensure efficient delivery. Circular economy, chemical, air quality, water and soil strategies need to be proportionate and align with international best practice.



A new national transport strategy – Department for Transport

The new strategy should set out a vision for a sustainable, multi-modal transport network that delivers environmental, social and economic goals. The strategy should include a clear pipeline of strategic improvements to deliver digital transformation and innovation.



An integrated energy system plan – Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The plan should consider and prioritise energy needs for communities, industry and transport, and coincide with the annual progress report to Parliament by the Climate Change Committee.



A value-based approach to procurement – Department for Infrastructure

Government must do more to drive best practice across all local and national government market opportunities, with a cultural shift in how contracts are scored and awarded. This should be supported through compliance with the Construction Playbook, reinforced through government support and best practice.



An industry skills action plan for net zero and nature recovery – Department for Business and Trade

The plan should include an assessment of when, where, and in which sectors there are skills gaps specific to net zero and environmental resilience. The plan should be accompanied by an industry roadmap of new skills standards, frameworks, and qualifications specific to the built and natural environment. Alongside the plan, Government should review the national curriculum to embed the teaching of engineering, and ensure a renewed focus on lifelong upskilling, and promoting opportunities in innovation and the built environment.



An integrated approach to regional development – Department for Levelling Up

Devolved funding should unlock alignment between net zero and levelling up. The government should outline an integrated approach to investment, aligning net zero with locally accountable levelling up missions and nature-led solutions to climate resilience.



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