

Presidential Roundtable Summary: *Transforming Infrastructure Performance and the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline*

July 2021

The latest iteration of the update to the Government's Transforming Infrastructure Performance (TIP) programme - the publication of *Transforming Infrastructure Performance: Roadmap to 2030* - will set out how the Government will improve infrastructure performance and boost productivity in both delivery and operation. It is promised to be an ambitious plan to transform infrastructure delivery over the long-term, embedded across the asset lifecycle to deliver outcomes for Net Zero, and use the Government's influence to drive modern methods of construction so Britain can lead the world in high-tech building.

We were delighted to have The Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister with overarching responsibility for both the TIP and The Pipeline, and Nick Smallwood, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Chief Executive, lead us in discussion to explore the new update.

Our discussion highlighted that improving infrastructure performance, including the system, construction and integration, is a never-ending ambition and will take a significant leap forward with the publication of the refreshed TIP Roadmap in the coming weeks.

That Roadmap is just the start and will require a rapid transition from being on paper towards something infrastructure professionals and government can actively work on. In our discussion, we heard about the need to get the project delivery culture right through better communication, a more trusting set of relationships and candid feedback to enable radical innovation where this is necessary. An improved relationship across infrastructure delivery and operation will serve as the core underpinning feature of how we drive transformation.

The main points are summarised below:

- We can't deliver the [National Infrastructure Strategy](#) without a step-change in productivity; investing in people and technology is the number one thing we can do. There was a ringing endorsement from industry about the direction of travel and working to make change happen. This endorsement, coupled with the forthcoming pipeline, means that commitment from both sides can serve as a genuine catalyst for change to ensure all projects improve their performance.
- The [Construction Playbook](#) was widely praised and recognised as the vehicle to allow better dialogue about what we will do differently on a project by project basis. However, there was also a recognition that in some Departments, 'we are still at the foothills' regarding Playbook understanding and implementation. Later this year, ICE will be looking at the progress made since the Playbook was launched.
- Capability across government was also a feature of our discussion. Building this within government will be significant to ensure the good intent behind the pipeline and TIP can be turned into reality. The early work by IPA to provide both assurance and support was seen as a positive step to move Departments in the correct direction.
- Improving capability will be essential to avoid the unintended consequences that will come from a string of mandatory requirements in procurement. The right expertise will be needed to make sure that in applying these mandatory requirements, a holistic view rather than a tick box approach is taken. The latter route could lead to silly decisions being taken in the name of compliance.
- There was also a helpful reminder to focus on reducing whole-life carbon in the infrastructure and construction pipeline and to think about the performance of the infrastructure system, not just the productivity of construction.

This will require sound systems thinking. The move towards that approach is already starting with a focus on assets and their performance, likely to feature in the new TIP Roadmap.

- It is also unclear how we bring retrofit and maintenance into the conversation, particularly as this is often from an op-ex rather than cap-ex budget line and so isn't subject to the same level of strategic planning and delivery. However, maintenance and retrofit, rather than new build, will be necessary when it comes to reducing carbon.
- Overall, the discussion was a positive one that recognised the journey we've been on since TIP2017 and the steps we should take in the short term to swiftly transition towards a focus on outcomes. Government is increasingly recognising it isn't just buying a road or a railway with infrastructure, but economic growth and social progress. Keeping those outcomes, enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, front and centre, will be necessary.