

A NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION FOR WALES CONSULTATION

Question 1: Do you agree that NICfW's remit and output should consist of analysis, advice and recommendation to the Welsh Ministers?

Yes, the remit and output should include analysis, advice and recommendation to the Welsh Ministers. In addition the NICfW should also:

- Be given the task of ensuring that a Vision for Wales is developed - as a priority - to set the context of the Agenda for the Commission.
- Have teeth; any advice and recommendations from the NICfW must be given priority by Welsh Government and they should be responded to by the Welsh Ministers with clear and transparent reasons - if the advice and recommendations are not followed.
- Clearly represent the concerns and interests of future generations.
- Be established with a rolling scope and continual reassessment isolated from the political election timetable and with performance targets, e.g. using KPIs to ensure momentum is maintained.
- Be required to recommend a 10 year forward projects programme based on a 20 year strategy and a 30-50 year vision.
- Be allowed to pursue funding initiatives.
- Be a critical friend to Welsh Government.
- Be independent and resilient.
- Be formalised as a group of individuals with a wide range of skills that recognises the impact of infrastructure across several government departments.
- Be given a realistic budget.
- Be required to be proactive in engagement with the delivery industry.
- Include social infrastructure (housing, schools, health...)

Question 2: Do you agree that NICfW's remit should extend to non-devolved as well as devolved infrastructure?

Yes, it should. There should be representation from the UK Commission on the NICfW and vice versa - otherwise there could be many instances where decisions are made regarding non-devolved infrastructure without due consideration of the impact on decisions made concerning devolved infrastructure.

This is an example of why having a Vision for Wales is so important. With a clear Vision and a fully developed Action Plan, decisions around non-devolved infrastructure can be better informed.

The Commission would have opportunity to draw benefit from the influence it might have on the UK - wide strategy e.g. from Wales' geographical focus on water and energy.

Question 3: Do you agree that NICfW should not advise on programmes and work that have already been decided, or will be decided in the immediate future, by statutory and regulatory bodies?

There is no easy ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to this question because there is no clear long term Vision for Wales to work towards. The World Economic Forums ‘Strategic Infrastructure – Steps to Prioritize and Deliver Infrastructure Effectively and Efficiently’ sets out clearly the steps a country should take to ensure decisions concerning infrastructure are made properly. With such a Vision and Plan, the NICfW would be able to check current programmes and work against the agreed criteria in this Plan.

An inevitable activity of the Commission would seem to be a National Infrastructure Assessment which is needed to inform the baseline for the Vision. This assessment would surely address active work/programmes.

However during development of the Vision and Plan the NICfW will inevitably need to be aware of more immediate planned investments and should endeavour not to generate waste by interfering at inappropriate stages e.g. once financial commitments have been made. It is hoped that the Commission will be sufficiently knowledgeable to recognise such outcomes and look for opportunities to build on the previously identified benefits of such schemes.

It would be useful for the Commission to have opportunity to review the “lessons-learned” from delivery of previous projects.

The likely impact of work already decided upon must be taken into consideration. Whilst there remains differing life expectancy on various elements, the safety and health of workers in demolishing and rebuilding areas could be unnecessarily put at risk. Infrastructure often entails huge amounts of concrete and the lethal silica dust arising from even small demolition jobs fills our workers lungs and drives up the NHS costs.

Question 4: Do you agree that NICfW should be able to look at cross-cutting delivery issues if it considers them a barrier to delivering infrastructure needs, including governance, costs, financing and programme/project management methodology? Please specify any other delivery issues that you consider NICfW should be able to look at and the reason.

Yes, the NICfW must be able to do this. Again, this all revolves around the need for an agreed Vision and a detailed Plan as recommended in **Q3** above.

The Commission needs to explore the inefficiencies created by non-alignment of budget cycles with pipeline projects planning.

The NICfW should be considering best practice from other countries, including:

- Procurement models to try to drive out waste and delay
- Funding and financing opportunities to supplement public sources
- Planning restrictive processes.
- Circular economy models

The NICfW also needs to be involved in skills, education and training which are inextricably linked to the delivery of the infrastructure investment plan. The current published projects potentially suggest a significant skills shortfall in Wales such that the Commission would need to explore sustainable solutions in this regard. Upskilling initiatives will, in turn, create opportunities for economic gain longer term.

The NICfW should be able to ‘stand outside the box’ and consider if another system /

methodology could deliver a programme of works. There would be merit in extending this to consider how other countries successfully – or otherwise – deliver their infrastructure needs. However, some issues should not under any circumstances be removed, ie those relating to best practice for the safety and long term health of construction and maintenance workers.

Question 5: Do you agree that NICfW should engage closely with and consult other bodies that may have an economic and environmental infrastructure remit? Who do you think are the key bodies that NICfW should engage with and consult?

Yes, it should. It is crucial to the success of the NICfW that it has strong working relationships with experts in these areas not least because of the overall Vision but also because of the natural resources Wales has to offer.

The following are other recommended groups and bodies:

- There should be dual representation on both the UK NIC and the NICfW.
- Wales Future Generations Commissioner
- Local Authorities and Health Boards
- City Regions

Some Private Sector partners or consultees could include:

- Financial investors e.g. City Institutions & Economists
- Delivery sector professionals
- Digital communications specialists

Question 6: Do you agree that NICfW remit should extend to participating in other relevant strategic advisory fora, such as the Council for Economic Renewal? Please specify any other forum you consider NICfW should participate in and the reason.

Yes, but the remit and powers need to be clear. Care must be taken not to dilute the powers of the NICfW or for it to lose focus. With a fully developed Vision for Wales and detailed Plan, it would become clear who and what is key to delivering the infrastructure needed to achieve the Vision. As the current Fora are being reviewed, it is difficult to identify other fora that the Commission should participate in.

Question 7: Do you agree that the Welsh Government should undertake and publish a review of NICfW status and remit before the next Assembly election in 2021?

The status and remit should be agreed, and in place, before the NICfW starts - in order that it can 'hit the ground running'. However, the Welsh Government should publish a review but it should be much sooner than 2021 - suggest end of 2018. The Commission by that time should be sufficiently aware of its own likely effectiveness to know whether its establishment on a statutory basis would be more beneficial and/or necessary.

At any review the effectiveness of the proposed exclusion (from the remit) of social infrastructure should be considered in the context of the overall Vision and to ensure "joined-up thinking". The joint group responding to this consultation considers that social infrastructure should be included within the remit of the Commission.

The Commission should also be given the opportunity to self-assess its work, output and effectiveness.

Question 8 Do you agree that NICfW should work collaboratively with the UK National Infrastructure Commission where relevant?

Yes. This is absolutely essential. It should not just occur on matters which are specifically relevant to a particular issue, but rather be embedded in the culture of the NICfW and the UK Infrastructure Commission. There should be a Member of the UK Infrastructure Committee on the NICfW and vice versa.

Question 9: Do you agree that NICfW members should be appointed by virtue of their expert knowledge and experience?

Yes. Members should have a range of expertise across economic, social, environmental, civil & general engineering and infrastructure sectors and comprise a maximum of 10 to 12 individuals - but ideally less to ensure clear accountability and quicker decision making. The inclusion of at least one prominent business entrepreneur is recommended. Whilst the group needs to represent the diversity of Wales both geographically and culturally the individuals involved need to be comfortable making decisions and must have a good understanding of macro-economics. The choice of Chair is particularly important to lead the Commission, to give it stature and presence and having an ability to engage with stakeholders and decision makers at the right level.

Question 10: Do you agree that all appointments to NICfW should be made through an open public appointments exercise?

Yes. Professional Institutions and Trade Federations should also have a role in the selection panel – potentially in an advisory capacity. In addition, they should have a role in drafting job descriptions, advising on suitable locations of the job ‘advertisements’ and with targeting individuals.

Question 11: How do you think we should promote this public appointments process to under-represented groups?

All in accordance with the Equalities Act.

Question 12: Do you agree that NICfW should be able to commission targeted research? Please identify any specific research you think NICfW should commission as a priority in order to best inform its work, and explain why.

Yes. The Commission should have a realistic budget to do this and an independent secretariat to commission and deliver it. The work should start with the development of a clear ‘Vision for Wales’ which sets out what needs to be achieved to grow our economy and why and the infrastructure needed to deliver it. The Commission should set its own agenda rather than be instructed by government. Once clarity of Vision has been established the Commission should focus on the infrastructure needed and relative priorities across Wales, investment opportunities and how finance can be best generated, the optimum delivery methods and a long term skills plan to deliver infrastructure.
The Commission should also undertake a comprehensive review of existing research

and evidence.

A further issue to consider is that relating to mental health:

- There are numerous papers on this subject within the construction industry but it would be helpful if the NICfW could pull these together to ensure key elements are embedded into guidelines to be used on all works overseen by the Commission. This should go some way to reduce, if not prevent, workers being pushed over the edge by ridiculous deadlines and value engineering to secure what is thought to be 'best price'. The misery and suffering for workers and their families is needless.

Question 13: Do you agree that NICfW should publish an annual report on its work? What factors do you think might require reports to be published more than once a year?

Yes, but annual reports to Welsh Government alone are not enough. There should be regular reporting (i.e. within year) on specific matters to ensure transparency of their work as well as coinciding with any changes in Government and/or specific political changes. Reports should be taken to National Assembly Scrutiny Committees as well as the Government. Reports should be performance based rather than just activity/achievement based.

Question 14: Do you agree that NICfW should hold public meetings in North, Mid, South and West Wales to explain and promote its role?

Yes. This should be part of its transparency with all work published. At these meetings the Commission should explain the value of infrastructure and promote the need for it as well as reporting the work of the Commission. Interaction with Professional Institutions and Trade Federations should occur on a formal basis and the Commission should use a variety of media to communicate in addition to public meetings e.g. social media, press articles, fora and seminars, etc.

Wales is geographically challenged. This inhibits collaboration and intensifies regional animosity. The Black Mountains and the Llyn Peninsular are legendary beauties but provide huge barriers to communication, ironically through their challenge to infrastructure.

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

The questions do not appear to address education and skills. A prime objective of the Commission is to establish an improved approach to infrastructure investment to deliver the acknowledged benefits more promptly and efficiently. Implicit in this is a sustainable approach which maximises the use of local resources. Our view is that Wales needs to upskill to achieve this and the Commission will need to address this on a long term basis.

The bodies and Institutions submitting this response should be considered as formal consultees to the Commission, both during its operation and development, and should be involved in giving advice to the Commission.

Name and company / Organisation

This report was prepared following a workshop of circa 40 professionally qualified individuals from the following Institutions:

Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Wales Cymru

Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) Wales

Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) Wales Cymru

Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW)

Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM)

Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Managers (CIWEM) Wales

The Association for Project Safety (APS)

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

Signed

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This statement was prepared by the following organisations:

Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Wales Cymru; Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE Cymru Wales); Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA Wales Cymru); Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW); Chartered Institution of Wastes Managers (CIWM); Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) Wales; The Association for Project Safety (APS).