



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group
connecting the sectors

'Infrastructure' Series

Virtual Live Briefing with Sir John Armitt, Chair,
National Infrastructure Commission

Thursday 1 July, 2021

Expert Insight

We were joined by Sir John Armitt, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission for a virtual live briefing. He discussed the National Infrastructure Strategy and the impact of COVID-19. Sir John touched on many points, including:



- The establishment of the new national infrastructure bank is essential after coming out of the European Investment Bank membership as a consequence of Brexit.
- The decarbonisation of heat and energy, in general, is key when looking forward. There needs to be a move to hydrogen and heat pumps, and the nuclear should only go forward on a one by one policy.
- Ambitious plans set up by the government meant to address the Levelling Up agenda and net-zero now need to be underpinned by very specific policy levers and delivery plans with clear milestones.
- The government's forthcoming strategies for hydrogen, heating buildings, and transport decarbonisation will need to be accompanied by goals with specific plans to ensure targets are kept to.
- The Integrated Rail Plan will give insight to people in the North and the Midlands into what further investment will be made into the Rail network.
- There are questions around how community and town-scale hydrogen plans will be completed - the Government has set a time aim of 2030 for completion.
- There has not been enough discussion around devolution. Is there perhaps a lack of trust in local government when it comes to the devolution of financial authority?
- The National Infrastructure Commission has been asked to do some work on how to increase the regeneration of towns and smaller cities. This will be completed in September and will ask how important infrastructure is in this process.
- The NIC has also completed some work on the impact of COVID, with the impact of transport being a key focus, looking at projected public transport usage going forward.
- More planning and a focus on delivery is now needed or there is a danger that real action will not take place. 2050 is not far away, and plans will help the private sector to know where to invest.

Our members' questions

Attendees from WIG's cross-sector membership tuned in live, and posed a number of important questions. Some of the key issues raised included:

- The role of the National Infrastructure Commission over the last few years and how its role has changed
- The National Infrastructure Commission's work specifically related to COVID
- The lack of hydrogen cell ultra-low emission vehicles
- Examples and learnings from other countries infrastructure
- The priorities for 21-22, and upcoming reports that we can expect from the National Infrastructure Commission
- The role of infrastructure on city regeneration
- UK-EU collaboration on infrastructure and technological developments
- Water regulation and the latest developments in regulation
- How infrastructure can be delivered more efficiently

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