

Building Green Britain – the projects we need, in a culture that delivers

Highlights

Highlights from the Major
Projects Association event
held on 30th April 2025



**MAJOR PROJECTS
ASSOCIATION**

As Britain moves towards a greener future, the infrastructure we build today will shape the sustainability of tomorrow. But delivering major projects successfully isn't just about what we construct, it's about how we do it. This virtual seminar brought together industry leaders, project professionals and sustainability experts to explore the critical projects driving the green transition and the cultural shifts needed to ensure their success.

Change at the top

Mission-driven government is the new key phrase to enter our consciousness. To facilitate the infrastructure required in support of **these missions**, and at the top of the hierarchy for public sector projects, sits the newly-created **NISTA – National Infrastructure Service and Transformation Service** – formed from the merger of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and the National Infrastructure Commission. NISTA will be responsible for the eagerly anticipated **10 Year Infrastructure Strategy**.

NISTA has five key objectives:

- Unlocking barriers and speeding up the delivery of major projects.
- Developing and implementing the 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy.
- Setting standards and improving project delivery capability.
- Providing effective assurance and support in delivery.
- Providing leading expertise on private finance.

The 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy will be published in mid-June 2025 and will also include a Clean Power Action Plan and Social Infrastructure Plan.

New ways of working

To create the infrastructure for a greener Britain, the organisations tasked with delivering those projects must reinvent themselves and find new ways of working.

Dr Siân Thomas, Director of Strategic Asset Management at Anglian Water, outlined the scale of the investment challenge: *'Our business plan for the next five years is worth £11 billion and of that £7 billion-worth is capital investment and that compares to just £3 billion that we've invested in the previous asset management period.'*

The key elements of this are progressing two major reservoir schemes, addressing water recycling and pollution challenges, mains renewal, and relocation of the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant. Collaboration with stakeholders and other geographically interfacing projects is essential to success in delivery, and Anglian is working very closely within the region with the **Humber Carbon Capture Project** and the **Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor** to optimise opportunity for change.

The **National Audit Office report** issued last week indicates there might be more than nearly £300 billion worth of enhancement spending in the water industry between 2025 and 2050. That's nearly three times the size of the sector's current regulated asset base.

'The scale of this investment is a once in a generation chance to create places for people, nature and water to come together.'

Dr Siân Thomas, Director of Strategic Asset Management, Anglian Water

The nature of the water industry is changing, and therefore the regulatory framework must change too. The expectations of society at large and communities individually are also evolving. Projects like **Tideway** have shown that there is support for large-scale investment, but we need to look at how we are financing them and how we make the industry an attractive place to invest in. The outcomes from the **Cunliffe Review** are likely to be pivotal in driving change in the sector.

For National Grid, the need to reinvent itself as an organisation has been even more emphatic. Historically, National Grid has been an operator and a maintainer of infrastructure, NOT a constructor. That has all got to change, as it has to deliver six times more in six years than it has in the last 30 years.

The Great Grid Upgrade is the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in a generation, with 17 network reinforcements identified as 'essential' to meet the Government's net zero targets.

The strategy to deliver is to create an Enterprise Delivery Model which delivers these upgrades as a single integrated programme. This approach encourages the standardisation of procedures and processes, promotes effective management of interdependencies, and fosters a collaborative environment where shared success is achieved by measuring final outcomes.

The Enterprise approach also provides the opportunity to optimise sustainability at all stages of the programme. The key levers are:

- Design standardisation and productionised construction.
- Innovation to lower carbon footprint.
- Circular strategy and waste diversion.
- Strategic sourcing of low carbon inputs.
- Optimised logistics operation.
- Delivering resilient projects through climate change adaptations.

But ultimately, the biggest change is in the structuring of the programme so that no one company/partner is responsible for delivering a whole project. They are all delivering parts of projects across the whole programme, so they have to work together to succeed. Driving this culture is key.

'If you see somebody falling behind on a part of a project somewhere, please go and help because you all own this project.'

Isabelle Adams, Great Grid Partnership Director, National Grid

Unlike National Grid or the water industry, the New Towns programme does not yet have a defined map and scope to show the extent of construction of new homes in these state-of-the-art settlements. That aside, Simon Harrison, Head of Design at Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, led us to imagine the possibilities open to us to create a new way of living and a new way of delivering housing for the future. Through the Corporation 15,000 homes will be built to create **Ebbsfleet Garden City**.

Simon advocated for use of many of the existing tools and processes in the sector to help us deliver sustainable towns and cities of the future. Location, master planning and travel planning remain the most impactful ways of embedding sustainability into future new towns.

In addition, using metrics such as carbon emissions and natural capital accounting in day-to-day project management reporting is critical to delivering against sustainability targets.

Simon noted: *'The Major Projects Association's Sustainability Playbook really helped to establish cross-organisational collaboration.'*

Winning hearts and minds

Delivering a net zero project is as much about winning hearts and minds as it is developing new processes. But how do we develop that state of mind and bring others with us on the journey?

Joanna Jarvie, Senior Consultant from ResoLex explained, *'It's really important to align understanding and bring meaning to what the project is trying to achieve. Every person involved in a project is interpreting and connecting to requirements and objectives slightly differently – you need to bring the intent to life as this will become your common understanding and anchor for where people put their effort. This is particularly important for sustainability, because it feels like it's often treated as something separate, but it should really be at the forefront alongside other delivery outcomes.'*

Joanna discussed how to embed collaborative environments on major projects:

- Relationships are key.
- Create a shared vision – align understanding and bring meaning to it.
- Understand what motivates people and how they work.
- Influence perception with effective narratives – know your audience and resonate with them.

She outlined various tools and techniques you can use to help achieve your goals. Further details are available in the slide presentation, available [here](#).

Change for the better?

Change is certainly in the air with regard to delivering the infrastructure that we need to create a greener Britain, but there is still a much greater need for joined-up thinking linked to the much-anticipated infrastructure strategy. An understanding of how projects interface and interact at a national level still appears undocumented and superficial. An appreciation of the supply of raw materials, the carbon budget and the skills necessary to deliver is still, for the best part, unmapped.

As event Chair, Kerry Bangle, Major Projects Director, WSP, said: *'Can NISTA step up and do something different to move us forward?'*

A compelling vision for the future, a clear plan of how to achieve it and the role the major projects sector will play, is still very much needed.

Points for further discussion

- How can we influence policy makers to initiate a genuine portfolio management approach?
- How can the Major Projects Association amplify the urgency of the climate emergency to its members and policy makers?

Chair

Kerry Bangle, Major Project Director, WSP

Contributors

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Participating organisations

AECOM

Affinity Water

Amentum

Anglian Water

Arcadis (UK) Limited

AtkinsRealis

Deloitte LLP

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

EY

HS2 Ltd

Jacobs

KPMG LLP

London Legacy Development Corporation

Major Projects Association

Ministry of Defence

Mott MacDonald

National Audit Office

National Grid

National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)

Network Rail Ltd

Oxford Global Projects UK Ltd

Ramboll

ResoLex

Sellafield Ltd

Southampton Business School

Southern Water Ltd

Sunbeam Management Solutions

The Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction, UCL

The Nichols Group

The Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT)

Tideway

Turner & Townsend

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