

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON THE BENEFITS OF MAJOR PROJECTS



Highlights from the Major Projects Association event
held on 20th January 2016

Major infrastructure is at the forefront of the Government's thinking. The new National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has been set up to explore and prioritise future major infrastructure for Britain – which is why it is critical that organisations delivering such projects are clear with stakeholders about the benefits they will bring.

PUBLIC SUPPORT IN A 'GOLDEN ERA'

Introducing an evening of discussion on this topic, the event Chair, Geoffrey Spence said, *'This is a golden era for major projects.'*

According to a recent public opinion survey by **Copper Consultancy** the British public are voicing their support when it comes to major projects. People want investment in infrastructure, and some aspire to world-leading new national infrastructure. They are clear about what should be prioritised, which is influenced by their perceptions of its value to them, but they need confidence that what they need will be delivered.

There is, then, a golden opportunity for the industry to build understanding and develop trust. To do this, we must better communicate the wider benefits of major projects.

Key factors to building confidence in future infrastructure



Independent survey of attitudes to infrastructure in
Great Britain, December 2015

'Benefits can mean very different things to different people.'

Alan Pauling, Group Market Director, Transport, Ramboll

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MAJOR PROJECTS?

Benefits can come in many forms: from economic benefits and jobs to social benefits. The industry already evaluates the economic benefits of major projects effectively, but work is just beginning on capturing wider social benefits, which are what matter most to people. Developers are now realising the importance of their social responsibility when advancing major projects.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

The sector is currently hampered by a perception issue, says Copper Consultancy's Director, Linda Taylor. People think projects are done *to* them rather than *for* them. The challenge for us is to engage people early so that they feel involved and are part of the conversation from the start.

Measuring economic benefits is relatively straightforward. Measuring social benefits is challenging. Social benefits can, in some scenarios, be more linked to project acceptability than economic statistics. The challenge for the industry, therefore, is to try to quantify social benefits and communicate them effectively.

'It's about bringing communities, businesses, unions, and others along with us.'

Tony Caccavone, Programme Director, Heathrow Expansion

Bridget Rosewell OBE, from the National Infrastructure Commission argued that major projects are often based on predictions of future need – which can be difficult, as it is hard to predict, and indeed agree upon, what that future need will look like. It is therefore vitally important to include people's views in shaping the future of infrastructure and the benefits that can be derived from it – something that the NIC will encourage.

HOW CAN WE BETTER COMMUNICATE BENEFITS?

Heathrow Expansion's Tony Caccavone explained how he and his team went about using building blocks to shape their communications with stakeholders. They started with tangible benefits for local communities centred around connectivity, and built up to discussing the wider benefits of Heathrow's expansion to engage a broader group of stakeholders.

'We need to balance empathy with passion.'
Nick Tennant, Head of Communications & Public Affairs, Tideway

According to Nick Tennant we need to humanise the institutions delivering the projects. By doing that, developers can build that all-important trust with stakeholders and ensure that the benefits they are promoting are believed. And finally, feed back the successes. Use the 'you said, we did' approach.

Matthew Yates explained the importance of 'selling the wider benefits'. At Transport for London (TfL), they engage with stakeholders on the holistic benefits of a specific project. For example, when developing large transport infrastructure it is not just about improved travel times and connectivity, it is about access to new housing and the generation of new jobs.

In Scandinavia, the key to engaging stakeholders on the benefits of major infrastructure projects is transparency, according to Sofie Ottesen, Team Leader – Project Management London at Ramboll. It is important to make sure the process is inclusive and is not perceived as huge institutions against people. Sofie also noted that in Denmark there is always an emphasis on communicating the consequences of no action. Using a UK example, we should communicate to stakeholders the consequences of *not* building Crossrail 2.

WHAT NEXT?

There are four areas where projects can do more:

- Stronger narrative
- Earlier engagement
- Greater transparency
- Better inclusivity

'We need to remember that what we do actually affects people's lives.'

Matthew Yates, Head of Planning and Projects, Transport for London

'It's not just about the "big picture" economic benefits – it's about getting to work more easily or being able to stay living in your own home.'

Linda Taylor, Director, Copper Consultancy

POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

- How do you mobilise the silent majority to support future projects?
- How can *social* benefits of a project be measured and communicated?
- Would academic research help to develop methodologies?

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Seminar Chair:

Geoffrey Spence, Global Head of Infrastructure, Resources and Energy, Lloyds Commercial Banking

Panel Members:

Tony Caccavone, Programme Director, Heathrow Airport Ltd
Alan Pauling, Group Market Director, Transport, Ramboll
Linda Taylor, Director, Copper Consultancy
Matthew Yates, Head of Transport Planning & Projects, Transport for London

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