



Comisiwn **Seilwaith**  
Cenedlaethol **Cymru**  
National **Infrastructure**  
Commission **Wales**

# Annual Report 2025



The National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW) was established in 2018 as an independent, non-statutory, advisory body to Welsh Ministers.

Its key purpose is to analyse, advise and make recommendations on Wales' longer term strategic economic and environmental infrastructure needs over a 5–80-year period.

NICW conducts studies into Wales' most pressing infrastructure challenges and will make recommendations to the Welsh Government.

The advice provided by NICW will be impartial, strategic and forward looking in nature.

NICW is accountable to the Welsh Ministers for the quality of its advice and recommendations and its use of public funding.

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# Reflecting on a year of delivery and challenge:

## An introduction from the Chair and Deputy Chair

### Welcome to the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales' annual report for 2025.

The end of 2025 marks the culmination of a three-year programme of outreach, research and recommendations set out by our remit in 2021, and subsequent appointment of a new Commission in 2022.

We have taken the opportunity to reflect on our role in tackling the challenges faced and opportunities available for infrastructure in Wales. Our research was dominated by the three main topics we covered; renewable energy, flooding, and climate change adaptation and community engagement. However, we are proud of the ground we covered across a whole range of topics that included the Roads Review, the changes at the Port Talbot steelworks, the Infrastructure Bill, and how Futures thinking can influence our work on transport and other infrastructure sectors.

Our work in 2025 is a microcosm of our activity across the whole three years; radical recommendations, high levels of community engagement, study tours to obtain in-depth feedback on local issues, and a growing profile with stakeholders and the media. This year

has also seen us pioneer the concept of having a Board-level Nature representative in Wales. Our Nature Guardian, Elspeth, has been a positive addition to our discussions. We will be shortly publishing the results of our pilot project to help others understand whether this approach could help them with their own obligations in tackling the Nature Emergency.

2026 will be a time of change across the public sector, with a new Government in Wales that will shape the direction of legislation, policy and investment. High quality infrastructure, grounded in Future Generations Goals and Ways of Working, is key to unlocking the potential of our citizens, communities and organisations, and should be an aspiration for us all.



**Dr David Clubb**  
Chair



**Dr Jenifer Baxter**  
Deputy Chair

# Our aims, objectives, outcomes and values

Our organisational values and ways of working were established in our first year as our guiding principles and to reflect our remit set out by the Welsh Government.

## Our aims

1. To provide radical, challenging and evidence informed advice and guidance to a variety of audiences, but principally Welsh Government, that will inform and future-proof decisions on infrastructure deployment from 2030–2100.
2. To use the frameworks of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the climate and nature emergencies, and the socio-economic duty, to guide our deliberations.
3. To support initiatives, organisations or policies that aim to create and maintain resilient and adaptable infrastructure that delivers well-being until 2100 and beyond.

## Our objectives

Our objectives align with the Welsh Government Programme for Government.

**Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future.**

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**Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation.**

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**Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.**

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**Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work.**

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**Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms.**



*Mynydd y Betws Wind Farm, Swansea*

## Our outcomes

In the first Annual Report of this current Commission, we defined a range of outcomes that we anticipated being able to deliver from 2022 to 2025. We have assessed below how we have performed against these over the last 12 months.

Desired outcome	Summary performance to date
<p>Future policy that improves the capture of wealth from renewables; that better manages land for various infrastructure uses; and that builds on a better understanding of local community perspectives.</p>	<p>Delivered the renewable energy report (October 2023) and maintained ongoing engagement with Welsh Government officials and Ministers. Correspondence with the UK Government regarding the Crown Estate continues, alongside stakeholder dialogue.</p>
<p>Future policy and practice is better informed about ways to minimise the impact of flooding on Wales' communities and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Published the flooding project report in collaboration with sector experts, presenting 17 recommendations to the Welsh Government (launched October 2024). Following a response from Welsh Government we have continued our dialogue with stakeholders and have kept pushing for change through a variety of channels.</p> <p>We are piloting a Nature Guardian role within NICW to demonstrate the practical application of one of our recommendations.</p>
<p>NICW and other stakeholders are better informed about how to communicate long-term risks to communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts.</p>	<p>We published our report, A Perfect Storm, on 15th October 2025. This followed research and piloting of community engagement practices in Grangetown. We await the response from the Welsh Government. In the meantime, we are continuing our work with the communities of Grangetown to ensure a continued legacy from our project.</p>
<p>NICW's activities and recommendations are better informed by a wide and diverse range of stakeholders.</p>	<p>We have engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders, in meetings, events and in the media. These are listed on our website.</p>
<p>An enhanced profile and reputation for NICW.</p>	<p>Whilst it is difficult to objectively assess our reputation, our profile has increased considerably over the last twelve months. We also have good statistics on activity on <a href="#">our website</a>. These statistics are fully transparent and accessible by visitors to the site. The NICW Review (see below) will provide further opportunities for feedback. This year we have also appointed Equinox to support us in our communications and engagement activity.</p>

## Our values

During 2023 we agreed upon a set of values that describe how we aspire to deliberate and operate. We wrote a short piece describing them on the [NICW website](#). Our values are:

- **Inclusive:** creating a warm and friendly environment within which people feel supported, and confident to express their views.
- **Transparent:** pushing the boundaries of reporting in near-real-time on our engagement, and demonstrating publicly how we deal with internal disagreements.
- **Radical:** commissioners have committed to working out of their comfort zones; we aim to deliver advice, opinions and recommendations that diverge from 'business as usual' to alleviate the nature and climate emergencies and deliver on our remit.
- **Challenging:** the Commissioners challenge the status quo with the needs of future generations and an aspiration to do better for the future citizens of Wales.
- **Practical:** the Commission's work is focused on actionable recommendations that move us towards a more sustainable infrastructure for the needs of the people of Wales.



*Members of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales*

## Our strategy

Our strategic approach is outlined in more detail on [our website](#). In summary, we examine our functions as a Commission which allow us to analyse how we contribute to the debate on Welsh infrastructure. We then can monitor this contribution using critical success factors. Although we have tried to produce metrics to measure our success, in some cases the evidence is not numeric. We are comfortable with a narrative-based approach to assessing our performance and have included examples of success where relevant.

Listing our success factors (all of which are reported on in this document) will help us focus on collecting data that will provide evidence on the impact of our work. Publishing this first strategic approach will help us understand how others view our success, so that we can continue to refine and adapt our approach to better serve our purpose. We intend to revisit this approach benefitting from feedback from stakeholders, the NICW Review or any significant change in the socio-economic context.



*The Commission sitting*

# NICW year in review: 2025

## Futures Thinking

Building on last year's progress, we have integrated futures thinking into our strategic approach to policy development. In January 2025, we convened infrastructure leaders for a workshop facilitated by the School of International Futures, focusing on spatial planning and the future adaptation of transportation networks in response to evolving societal needs.

We subsequently published the report with an [accompanying blog post](#). This explored how decisions made today will shape Wales' transport systems by 2100. We argue that transport is more than movement; it reflects societal values, determines connectivity, and influences equality and resilience. The future challenges of climate change, demographic shifts, and technological disruption will require long-term thinking to become embedded in current decision-making.



*Our Transport Futures Event in January 2025*

## Well-Being of Future Generations Act

In June, [we responded to](#) the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee consultation associated with post legislative scrutiny of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Our response argues that while the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has driven cultural and policy shifts, such as new curricula, well-being indicators, and environmental progress, its principles are not fully embedded in infrastructure planning, which still relies on short-term models. This misalignment risks perpetuating climate, housing, and economic inequalities. We consider that, to realise the Act's vision, Wales must urgently integrate its goals into infrastructure governance, ensuring long-term, systemic transformation rather than incremental change.

We await the report from the Committee with interest.

## NICW Review

At the end of 2024, we were pleased to participate in the Welsh Government review of NICW, which was a requirement of our Terms of Reference. The [report was published](#) in January 2025.

We were pleased that the overall assurance was given a 'light green' scoring by the Welsh Government internal audit team. The team noted that the Commission has a diverse membership and that our Values have been clearly defined. The report also notes the proactive nature of Commissioners and our positive approach to managing declarations of interest.

The report made 6 'observations' or areas for improvement. Some of these related to the Welsh Government's role as well as how NICW manages its meetings and processes. We considered these responses quickly [and responded](#) to the Cabinet Secretary in February. We have made changes to the way we conduct meetings and plan for the future as a result of the report. We are grateful for the recommendations in the report.

## CCEI Committee Report

NICW was pleased to be invited for the annual **scrutiny session** by the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee in the Senedd. We welcomed **their subsequent report** and responded to the **NICW facing recommendations** in a positive fashion. We note also that the **Welsh Government response** was positive towards the Commission and gave useful updates.

We welcomed the **subsequent debate** in the Senedd and noted the positive words from Rebecca Evans, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, who oversees NICW's work. We noted the debate in the Siambur focused on the value of having an Infrastructure Commission for Wales and its future role. Whilst this will ultimately be for the Welsh Government to decide, NICW has played our part in the discussion through providing our thoughts on potential pathways for NICW's development.

## Evolution of NICW

Mindful of the CCEI Committee's report on the future direction of NICW, and the debates in the Senedd, NICW has put thought into its own future and what sorts of models could be employed to strengthen the current format of the Commission and how it operates.

In September we published our **Options for the Evolution of NICW** paper which explored different options for how the next Government could take Commission forward. We consider that NICW's current advisory role, while impactful, needs strengthening to remain fit for purpose. Drawing on lessons from international peers and Wales' unique needs, the paper outlines three options for development:

- expanding NICW's advisory capacity with multi-year funding;
- granting statutory powers to enhance independence and scrutiny;
- creating a fully integrated authority overseeing strategy and delivery.

Our roadmap aims to ensure NICW can deliver long-term, coordinated infrastructure planning that meets urgent environmental and societal demands.

We have shared the paper widely with interested audiences and await with interest the outcome of the next Senedd election. We hope that our thoughts will be of interest to the incoming Minister or Cabinet Secretary.

## Visit with Climate Change Committee Adaptation Committee

In December we welcomed Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Chair of the Adaptation Committee, Climate Change Committee and colleagues to Grangetown in Cardiff to discuss our report on Climate Adaptation and Community Engagement (see below) and the Committee's forthcoming Climate Adaptation Risk Assessment. We discussed the impacts of climate change and changing weather patterns on infrastructure in Wales, and the importance of continual community engagement and involvement. We were delighted to introduce the committee to our Grangetown community partners, who outlined their work on discussing climate impacts and the work they plan to do in the future.



*Commissioners meeting the UK Climate Change Committee Adaptation Committee Chair with members of the Grangetown community*

## Study tours

The Commission is interested in deepening its existing understanding of infrastructure issues and hearing about the new and exciting responses being developed, right across Wales. As part of our

information-gathering, and in common with our approach in previous years, we organised several study tours around Wales in 2025.

### Fairbourne and Barmouth

In March, we visited **Fairbourne and Barmouth** to explore how communities and public bodies are responding to the growing threat of coastal flooding and climate change. The visit included discussions with the **Fairbourne Partnership**, a collaboration of residents, Gwynedd Council, NRW, public bodies, utilities, and emergency services that was formed in 2024.

This partnership exemplifies good practice in joint working, addressing long-standing concerns about negative media coverage and its impact on health and livelihoods. The group's efforts to improve resilience, highlight the importance of listening to communities and ensuring that infrastructure planning reflects local priorities.

The Commission also met Network Rail to learn about the ambitious project to replace the Grade II



*NICW Meeting the Fairbourne Partnership*

listed railway bridge, a feat of engineering designed to withstand severe weather while enhancing active travel routes. Walking across the refurbished bridge and along the seafront, provided insight into the complexity of flood defence schemes underway in Barmouth, which aim to protect businesses and improve amenities. These experiences reinforced key lessons: upgraded infrastructure should deliver multiple benefits, and Wales cannot simply build its way out of flood risk, making collaborative approaches and long-term planning essential for resilient coastal communities.



*Fairbourne*



*Barmouth Bridge*

## Conwy and Ynys Môn

In July, we visited **Conwy and Ynys Môn** to engage with stakeholders on the region's infrastructure challenges and opportunities. We met with local authority leaders and held two roundtable discussions with local infrastructure partners.

The first discussion brought together nearly 20 energy specialists to discuss tidal energy, planning processes, port infrastructure, and the need for a cohesive energy vision for Wales. Strong support emerged for tidal lagoon technology, not only for renewable energy generation but also for its potential to deliver coastal protection, tourism benefits, and predictable long-term electricity. Participants expressed frustration at the lack of strategic investment and planning alignment, calling for improved coordination across grid and planning systems. Questions around whether Wales should aim for energy self-sufficiency or surplus highlighted the urgency of a clear national vision.

The second session and site visits focused on transport and industrial infrastructure. Issues raised included delays caused by the Conwy tunnel fire, inadequate public transport provision, and missed opportunities for district heating due to regulatory complexity.

At Holyhead Port, we learned about the reopening of the second berth after extensive repairs and the critical role of the Victorian breakwater, now subject to a £150m tender for future viability. The tour also included the former Anglesey Aluminium site, earmarked for major development by Stena Line, showcasing its strategic potential with strong utility connections. These conversations underscored both the ambition and resilience of local stakeholders, reinforcing NICW's commitment to shaping infrastructure policy that enables economic growth and climate resilience.



*NICW Meeting Stakeholders in Deganwy*



*Visiting the Port of Holyhead*

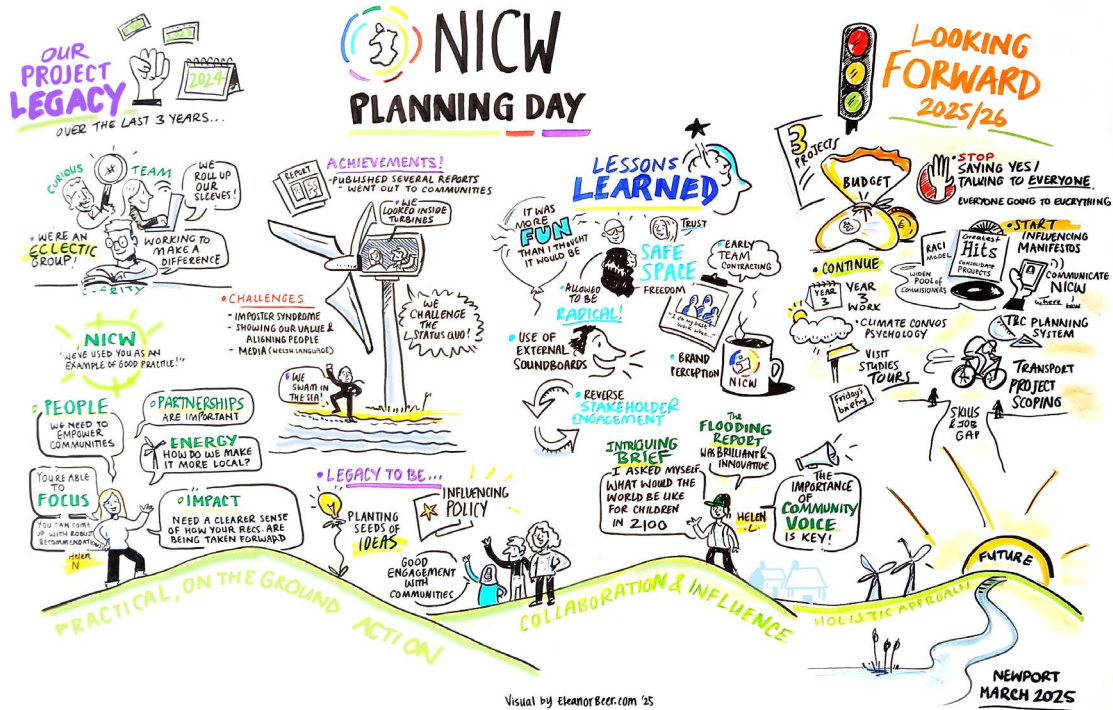
## Pontypridd

In November, we were due to meet up with Natural Resources Wales to take a trip down the Rhondda and Taff Rivers learning about the organisation's role in managing and regulating our waterways from source to sea. However, due to the imminent threat of Storm Claudia we took the joint decision to cancel the trip, both for our safety and being mindful of diverting resources away from NRW.

Instead, we still made the journey to Pontypridd for an internal discussion. We also took the opportunity for a walk around the town centre to see the preparations that were being made in case the flood defences were breached and to speak with local businesses to discuss how they were preparing and responding to the flood warnings.

## NICW organisational development

We are committed to developing ourselves as Commissioners to equip us to undertake our roles effectively and communicate successfully.



We have held two reflective sessions in 2025. Our first session in March in Newport gave us time to hear directly from stakeholders on their impressions of NICW. We were encouraged to keep going on our journey and it was heartening to hear the positive impression we had given to others working alongside us.

In November, we held a second session in Bryngarw Park, near Bridgend. We used creative methods to reflect on our work, resulting in insights that will help guide our work as we enter a year of potentially significant change in Wales.

Commissioners discussed the ability of the Commission to make change through formal recommendations and through other routes, and considered that although the pace of change in policy is sometimes frustratingly slow, there

are many paths to success, and grounds for considerable optimism as our influence grows.

In 2025 Commissioners also undertook media interview expert training, provided by colleagues at Equinox.



Reflecting on our NICW journey through the metaphor of a river

## Digital systems

We have continued to develop our digital communication offering, continuing to build our website that helps us share our updates and narrative about infrastructure in Wales.

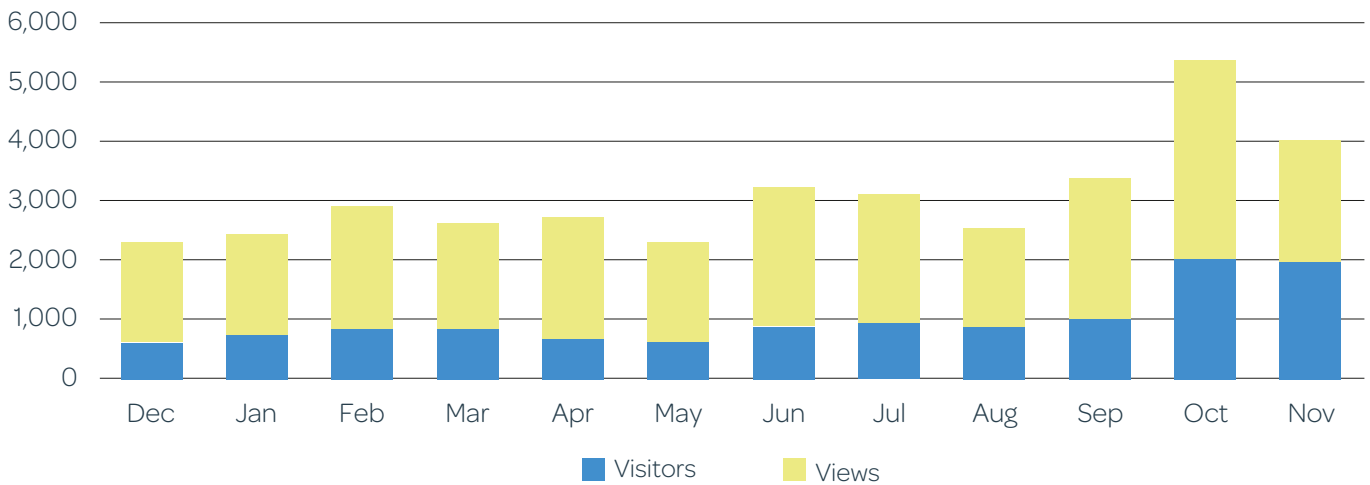
### Website

Our website hosts NICW [meeting notes and other publications](#), records of [external engagements and meetings](#), project information and videos of our appearances in the [media, Senedd or on fact-finding visits](#). It also embeds images from our [Pixelfed social media account](#), and acts as the hub for most of our public activity.

Our [web statistics](#) are open for all to explore. In the twelve months since our last report, the website has been accessed more than 17,000 times, with more than 12,500 individual visitors from 89 countries. The top two countries of origin are the UK and the USA. However the next five countries in the list make up 30% of visits. These countries are Singapore, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland.

Apart from the homepage, our blog webpage is the most popular page. The flooding report page was the second most popular. It is gratifying to see that, several years after its publication, our report on renewable energy is still a very popular destination for visitors, coming fourth on the list of most visited pages.

**Figure 1: Web statistics from the NICW website**



## Social media

We are active on three social media sites and have grown our presence on these throughout the year:

- 1. LinkedIn.** with currently more than 1,775 followers. This is more than a 25% increase on the previous year.
- 2. Mastodon.** Our most popular post highlighted three Commissioners with an account on [toot.wales](#), the Welsh server for Mastodon. We have over 125 followers on this platform.
- 3. Pixelfed.** An open-source social media platform optimised for image sharing.

## Engaging and working with others

We record our engagement and external meetings on our website in an **open and transparent way**. These additional engagements help us to investigate our major project issues in more depth, outside of the main research contracts. We look forward to meeting with more organisations and individuals over the coming year that can enrich our knowledge of issues relating to the built environment and infrastructure more generally.

Working together helps to maximise skill sets, reach and resource availability.



*NICW Engaging with communities on our work in Grangetown*

We regularly meet with colleagues from the UK National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) to update on work programmes, projects and priorities.

## Our profile

Over the past 12 months, our communications partnership with Equinox has helped strengthen the Commission's profile as a trusted, forward-thinking advisory body shaping Wales' long-term infrastructure future.

Our initial approach, focused on laying strong strategic foundations and amplifying NICW's visibility ahead of publishing our major reports. This included launching a revitalised visual identity, enhancing our LinkedIn presence, and delivering targeted PR activity around the 'Building Resilience to Flooding in Wales by 2050' report.



*NICW Chair being interviewed for broadcast media*

These efforts resulted in significant audience growth and engagement whilst exceeding KPIs set – including 2.5m PR Opportunities to See, over 450 new followers on LinkedIn and a reach of 17,600 on the platform and an average engagement rate of 10.3% (well above industry benchmarks). Equinox also developed a suite of long-term strategic tools such as a multi-year engagement plan, refreshed messaging, audience mapping, and a bilingual partner toolkit to support ongoing promotion of our work.

From the summer of 2025, our focus shifted to implementing and monitoring our refreshed Communications and Action Plan while preparing for a series of report publications – including the Climate Communications Report, the end-of-term report and the Short Form Infrastructure Assessment.

Within the first quarter, we achieved an average engagement rate of 8% (3-6% considered excellent) and reached more than 18,000 people on LinkedIn – thereby exceeding the results of contract one within just three months.

The agency also delivered an updated thought leadership programme, media relations activity, newsletter recommendations, and in-person media training for Commissioners – strengthening NICW’s capability and influence across priority audiences. Its work contributed to positive early-year media sentiment (100% key-message inclusion) and strong partner engagement, with more than 400 link clicks and shares recorded e.g., to the NICW website, reports etc.

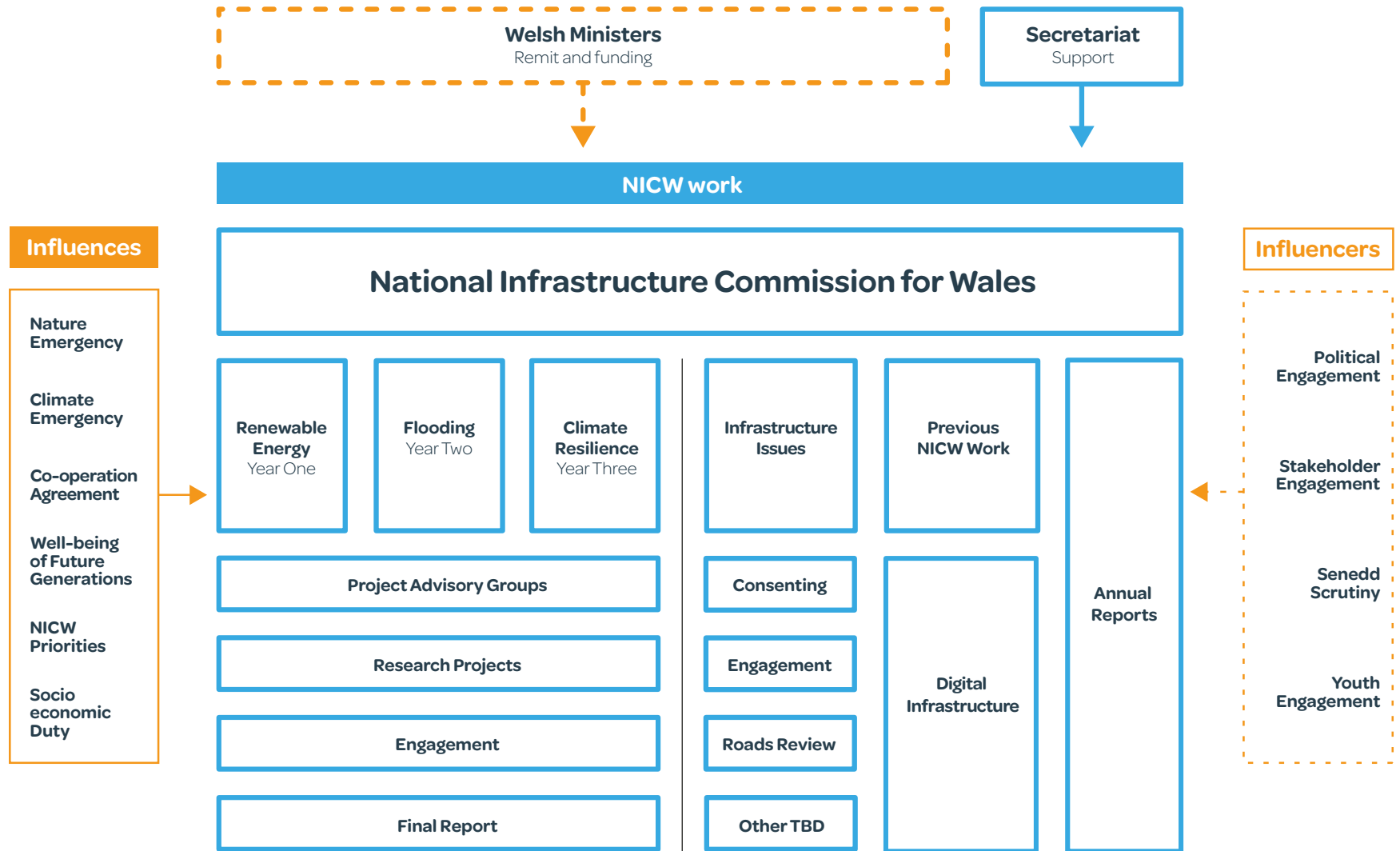
Most recently, from October to November 2025, we successfully launched our third major report, ‘A Perfect Storm: Is Wales doing enough to coordinate action and engage communities in adapting our infrastructure to a changing climate?’. Through a coordinated PR and social media campaign, we achieved 15 pieces of PR coverage (OTS: over 3 million), secured a broadcast interview with Newyddion on S4C, and reached more than 4,000 people organically on LinkedIn within two weeks – all while maintaining an average engagement rate of 8%.

Equinox have also refreshed and rebranded NICW’s Communications Toolkit to equip partners with ready-to-use assets they can use year-round to amplify NICW’s reports and sustain ongoing momentum.

Across this year of delivery, Equinox’s support has helped us to deepen engagement, strengthen our public voice, and build a solid platform for introducing our recommendations to audiences across Wales.



# Our framework



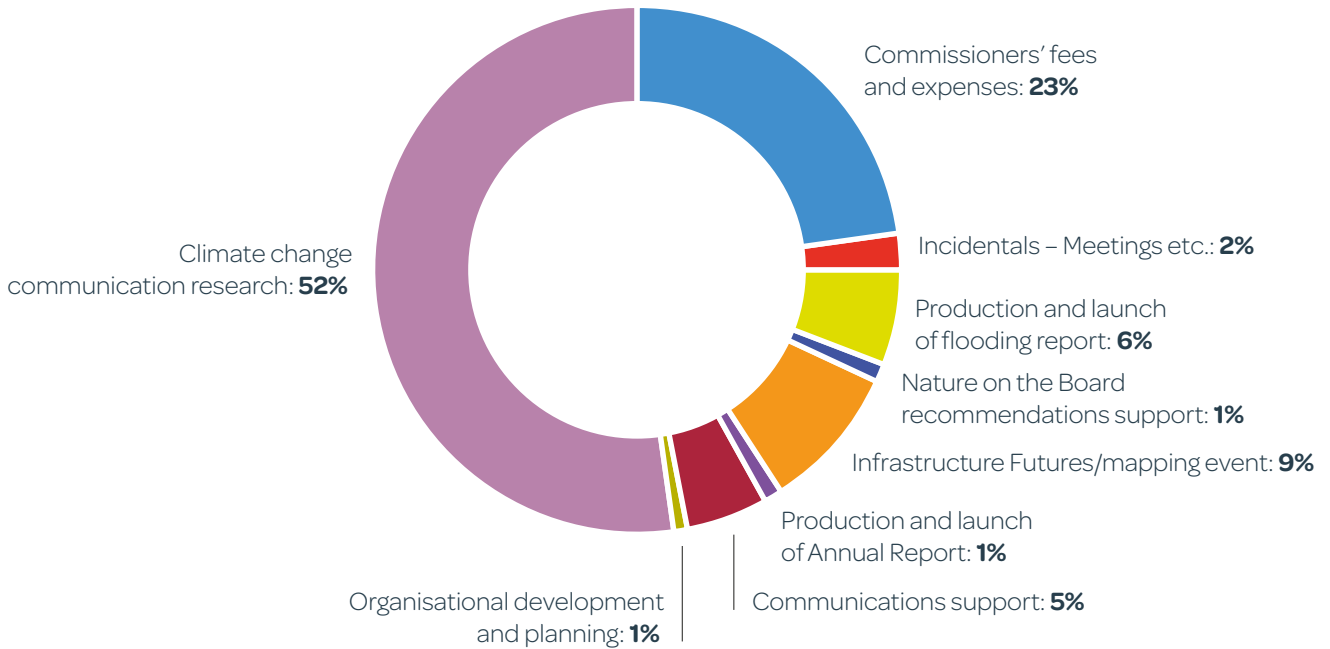
# Our 2024/25 expenditure and 2025/26 budget

NICW is allocated a specific budget from the Welsh Government for it to deliver the work programme and to undertake research. We publish our intended areas of spend for transparency.

In 2024/25 of our £370,000 budget allocation, we spent approximately £335,000. The majority

of this was spent undertaking the climate change adaptation project research which is outlined in more detail below. Other significant areas of expenditure were on launching our flooding report. Underspend was recorded in the budget allocated to Commissioner fees and expenses with only 76% of this budget used.

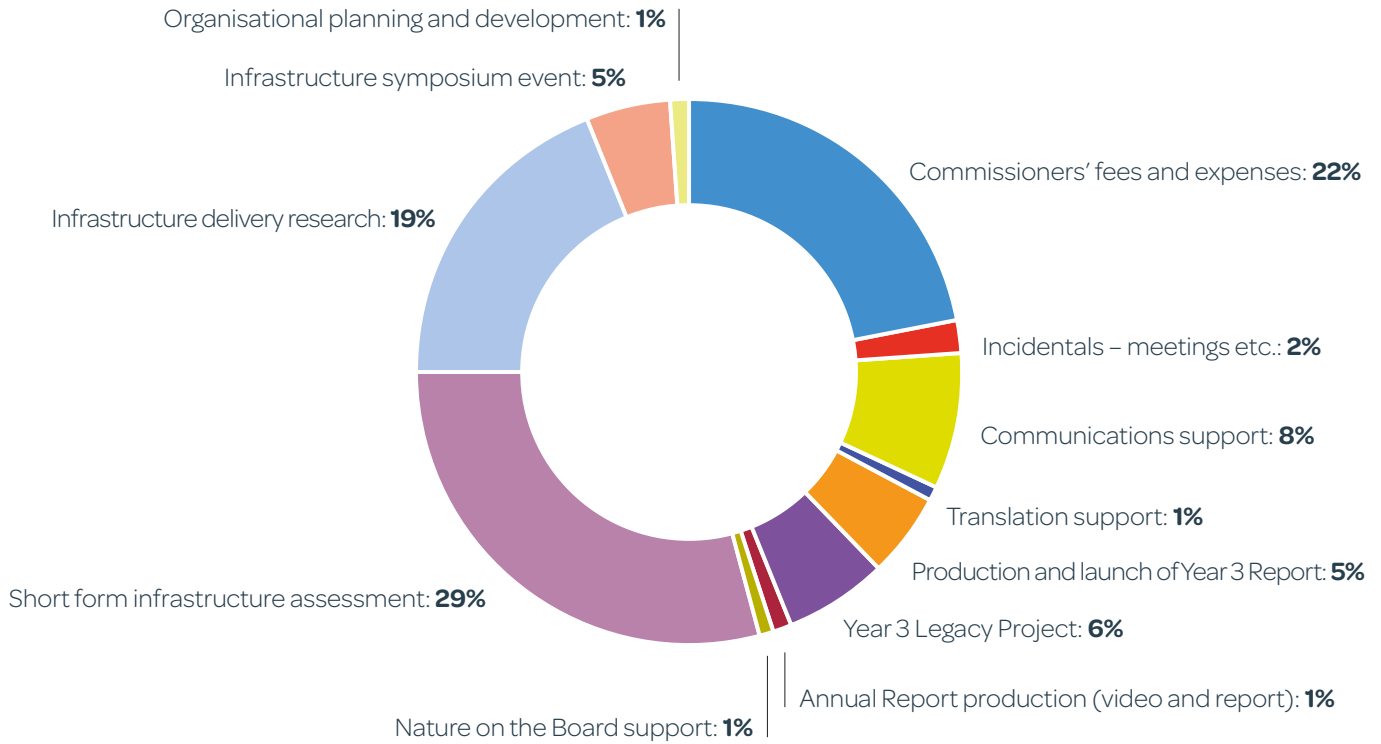
**Figure 2: NICW expenditure 2024/25**



For 2025/26, we have been allocated a budget of £400,000 by the Welsh Government. This was secured earlier than previous years and we are grateful to the Welsh Government for this early confirmation which has allowed us to plan

effectively for the year, decide on our projects and spending priorities and express these through an operational plan for the financial year.

**Figure 3: NICW budget 2024/25**



# Our work programme

## Renewable Energy: 2022/23

### Lead Commissioners:

Aleena Khan and Nick Tune

### Project update

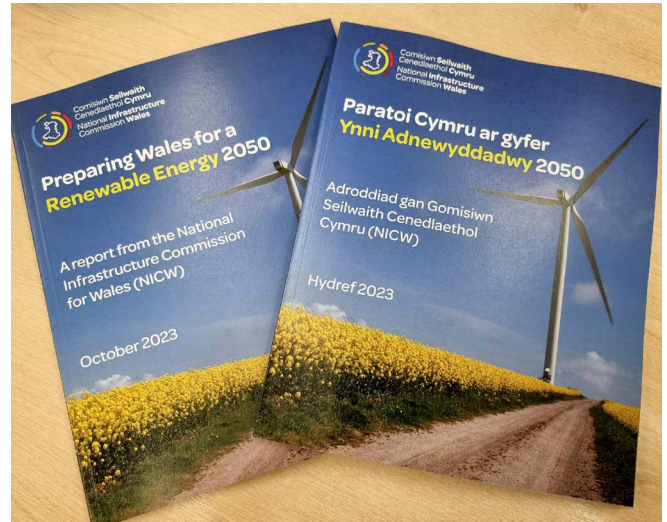
In October 2023 we published our first major report of this Commission, *Preparing Wales for a Renewable Energy 2050*.

NICW made 11 recommendations for the Welsh Government, including:

- rapidly accelerate renewables in Wales by setting a clearer vision and action plan that business and communities can understand.
- provide upfront investment to help more projects get off the ground.
- help communities own and share the benefits of local schemes.
- update planning rules and building regulations.
- use its influence with UK bodies to help solve problems with insufficient grid infrastructure.
- ensure more of the economic benefits stay in Wales and benefit the people of Wales, including pooling of profits in a new sovereign wealth fund.

We continue to urge Welsh Government to seize the opportunity for renewable energy in Wales by:

- having higher expectations on community ownership, in particular for all energy developments
- moving much more rapidly to reduce barriers to installing small-scale renewable energy through permitted development



### Our Renewable Energy Report

- exploring the idea of ‘presumption of consent’ for community renewables
- rolling out pooled expertise to support more timely decision-making and consenting for projects.

Following several meetings with Welsh Government officials and other stakeholders over the course of the year, we **wrote again to Rebecca Evans**, Cabinet Secretary for an update on our recommendations. **The response** is available to view on our website. While we welcome the Cabinet Secretary’s detailed response to our correspondence, several of our recommendations remain without clear timelines or defined next steps. We will continue to encourage greater urgency and specificity so that Wales does not lose momentum on this national opportunity.

In order to progress some of our recommendations, we have responded positively to three Welsh Government consultations this year:

1. The review of **Permitted Development Rights for Air Source Heat Pumps** which we highlighted as a potential blocker on the roll-out of this increasingly popular technology.
2. **Part L to the Building Regulations** concerning integrating renewables into new homes.
3. **The Planning Resources** consultation which asked for views on how Wales could roll-out regional pooled resources for specialist planning functions.

We also continued to promote our recommendations on **local ownership of energy projects** and the potential for **Tidal Energy** in Wales. We also continue to monitor the activities of **GB Energy** to try and ensure that expenditure from this UK Government-owned organisation is fairly distributed. We have also written blog posts on **Wales' renewable energy targets**, how **expenditure on major wind energy projects** leaks out of Wales; and progress on **renewable energy rollout** in Wales more generally.



## Flooding: 2023/24

### Lead Commissioners:

Eurgain Powell and Eluned Parrott

### Project update

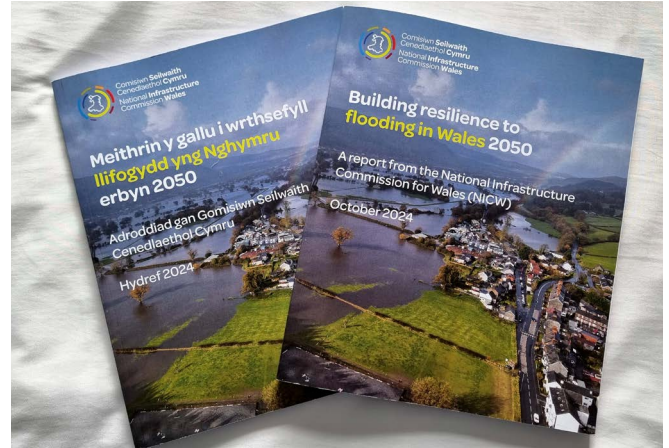
In October 2024, we published our second major report, this time on the topic of flooding. This was established in our remit by the 2021 Co-operation Agreement to assess how the impacts of flooding to homes, businesses and communities could be minimised by 2050.

### *Building Resilience to Flooding in Wales by 2050*

presented 17 bold but practical recommendations for Welsh Ministers to future-proof Wales against the growing risks of flooding over the next 25 years. The report emphasises natural solutions, placing nature and community at the forefront of increasing Wales’ resilience to flooding.

We received the [response from the Welsh Government](#) exactly six months after we published the report.

We are pleased that the Deputy First Minister has welcomed our report and recommendations, and we have held positive discussions with him and officials over the last 12 months. Progress is



*Our flooding report*

being made on scoping a national Flood Forum for Wales, piloting a catchment planning approach for Wales and supporting natural flood management through the new Sustainable Farming scheme. However, given the scale of the challenge, we remain concerned that key long-term issues are not yet being adequately addressed. In particular, the role of nature and communities as fundamental stakeholders in shaping flood resilience does not appear to be fully internalised within Welsh Government’s approach, with longer-term needs too often overshadowed by immediate pressures. This risks compounding future challenges rather than reducing them.



Our report was well-received by the sector –

**“ The report is innovative and bold, and brings forward ideas for consideration, which extend well beyond existing policy commitments and funding programmes. It has the potential to stimulate discussion about the changes that will be needed to ensure that Wales is well placed to respond to the flood risk challenges of the decades ahead .”**

**“ It is an ambitious set of recommendations. I hope your continuing dialogue with Welsh Government over its implementation continues to bear fruit.”**

**“ Thank you for a very useful and timely report, which is helping to shift the thinking and challenge the key players, including Government.”**

**“ I hope you can continue to raise the issues identified in the NICW report with the Welsh Government Ministers, we certainly value the impact you are able to add coming from a wider perspective outside of the sector itself. ”**

We have continued to advocate for our recommendations in our work, including [engaging with Natural Resources Wales](#) and the [Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee](#). We have also written two blog posts on [resilience to flooding in Wales](#) and comparing the [English approach](#) to that adopted in Wales.

NICW has also taken a lead in implementing its own recommendation on governance structures in Welsh public bodies and has piloted appointing a Nature Guardian, Elspeth Jones, for the latter part of 2025. More on this can be found below.



## Climate Adaptation Communications: 2024/25

**Lead Commissioners:** Helen Armstrong and Steve Brooks

### Project update

On 15th October 2025, we published our Year 3 on Climate Change Adaptation and Community Engagement: **A Perfect Storm: Is Wales doing enough to coordinate action and engage communities in adapting our infrastructure to a changing climate?**

Our report contained 12 recommendations on how Wales should be preparing to adapt to the impacts of climate change, which are being experienced by communities across Wales. We also considered how decisions should be taken with the involvement of the communities affected.

We set out our strategic vision for climate-resilient infrastructure in Wales, emphasising the urgency of adapting to climate change. We highlight the systemic risks posed by extreme weather and rising temperatures, calling for a legally binding Climate Adaptation Bill in the next Senedd term. This legislation would establish clear targets and create a framework for coordinated action across government and sectors. We call for a National Infrastructure Resilience Unit and improved intergovernmental coordination to address fragmented responsibilities and ensure Wales is prepared for future climate challenges.

Community involvement is central to all our recommendations. The report advocates early, participatory involvement of diverse place-based communities in shaping adaptation strategies, recognising that climate impacts vary locally. We recommend establishing a Chief



*Our Climate Adaptation and Community Engagement Report*

Participation Officer by 2028 and introducing statutory guidance for meaningful engagement through the planning system. The report also proposes reviewing Planning Policy Wales and creating a Technical Advice Note on climate adaptation to ensure planning decisions fully integrate resilience considerations.



*The report launch event in October*

Our report outlines practical steps to strengthen infrastructure resilience, including establishing a Climate Futures Hub for data and intelligence, improving project assessment processes, and securing dedicated funding streams for

adaptation. We believe the importance of robust data platforms and cross-sector collaboration to inform decisions and monitor progress is crucial to all our suggestions.

Alongside our report, we have published a **Community Engagement Toolkit** which provides practical guidance for involving local communities in infrastructure planning and decision-making. This has drawn on the experiences of piloting work with the community of Grangetown in Cardiff. The toolkit emphasises early, inclusive engagement to build trust, improve project outcomes, and ensure fairness. It outlines principles such as transparency,

accessibility, and co-design, offering step-by-step methods for consultation, participatory workshops, and feedback loops. It also highlights the importance of tailoring approaches to diverse communities and using digital tools alongside face-to-face engagement to maximise reach and effectiveness.

Our work this year has enabled us to extend our participation in youth and community engagement. We are continuing our work in Grangetown into 2026 and are pleased to be supporting community groups in the area with taking climate change related conversations forward.



*Community engagement in Grangetown*

## Year 4 work: A Futures Infrastructure Assessment

**Lead Commissioners:** David Clubb, Aleena Khan and Nick Tune

Following feedback from previous conversations and an agreement on continued funding with the Welsh Government for NICW to continue its work into 25/26, we have begun work on a Wales Infrastructure Assessment.

We have appointed Arcadis to assist us with this work to assess:

- the current issues around the major infrastructure sectors in Wales
- present existing data on these issues in an easily accessible and digestible way
- engage with stakeholders operating within these sectors to gain opinion on the issues faced; and
- use Futures Thinking to envisage our future infrastructure needs in Wales to scope out radical solutions.

For the purposes of this project, we define the major infrastructure sectors in Wales as:

- Energy (including distribution and transmission of electricity, gas and heat)
- Water (including flooding and fresh/waste water management)
- Transportation (including roads, public transport and active travel)
- Circular Economy/Waste Management
- Digital/Telecommunications.

Specific outputs of this project will include:

- A dashboard of current Welsh infrastructure statistics and issues
- A series of roundtable, sector-orientated workshops using Futures Techniques
- Sector specific 'state of play' documents for each infrastructure area
- A written report/s which contains the agreed areas of action

Research is currently well underway on this project. NICW will be organising a Wales Infrastructure Symposium event in March 2026 to share the findings and generate a discussion on the most pressing infrastructure needs for the next Senedd term.



## Year 4 work: Infrastructure delivery research

**Lead Commissioner:** Jen Baxter

During this Senedd term NICW has undertaken various research projects, spoken to numerous stakeholders and visited many parts of the country to understand infrastructure issues facing Wales at this time. We have found that Wales has a mixed track record on the delivery of major infrastructure projects. Over the last twenty years there have been some high-profile projects which have not materialised or ultimately not been taken forward. NICW believes this has left the host communities and the nation, with a sense of loss, disappointment and unrealised economic and social benefits.

Throughout our work and engagement there have been several common themes that have emerged frequently which NICW believes need to be investigated further to uncover some of the root causes of these major projects not materialising. These 'themes' fall into the following categories:

- economics and funding
- skills (both within the sector and of those people bringing projects forward)
- the political environment
- the role of engagement
- the statutory planning/environmental permitting systems

That is not to say that all projects experience the same fate, and NICW would also like to understand how successful projects in Wales have been delivered, so that experience can be learned and shared elsewhere within the infrastructure delivery sector.

To find out more about this issue we have commissioned Arup to research and analyse both

successful and not successful examples of Welsh infrastructure projects through the various stages of the project. The aim is to collate information, data and statistics, which can build on NICW's anecdotal understanding and highlight the systemic issues preventing successful delivery throughout the infrastructure sectors.

The research will:

- help us to understand the key factors which prevent the delivery of major infrastructure projects in Wales;
- use case studies to highlight how success happens and how other projects are not delivered
- use stakeholder surveys and interviews with key players, developers and promoters of schemes to delve into the issues
- back up findings of the opinion with data, where available, to evidence the reports overall conclusions.



The emphasis of the research will be on public sector backed projects, where an element of state intervention is required to fully realise the benefits of a scheme to the wider communities.

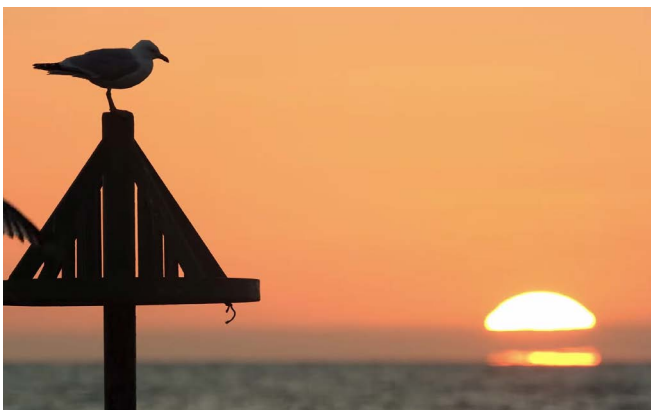
This information will be used to develop recommendations to the Welsh Government and also to inform NICW's work programme for the next Senedd term.

## NICW Nature Guardian

In 2024 we recommended to Welsh Government that Nature should participate in the decision-making process for flooding policy. Having recommended this step to Welsh Government, we internalised the concept, and considered that NICW should be a pathfinder in the implementation of a Nature Guardian role.

We wanted to have first-hand experience of working with a Nature Guardian, and to help share our experiences so that others could consider a similar opportunity in a more informed way.

In 2025, we laid the foundations for this move, by inviting Simeon Rose, Co-Creator of Nature on the Board, to describe how a Commissioner for **nature might work for NICW**, or for other public bodies in Wales. We also invited Dr Eurig Salisbury from the Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies at Aberystwyth University, to reflect on the cultural heritage of Wales which gives a **unique perspective to giving nature a say** in increased relevance, here. Dr Salisbury also composed a poem (see box) **and video** to bring these ideas to life.



In the summer of 2025, we were pleased to announce that NICW had appointed Elspeth Jones as Nature Guardian for NICW for a six month pilot period.

Let's give a seat to Nature on the board...  
 But I've a feeling seeing eye to eye  
 With Nature may well mean a little more  
 Than sharing niceties, saying 'shwmae',  
 And small talk just won't cut it, not with one  
 Whose schedule works on a different scale  
 To coffee breaks and tea, perhaps a bun,  
 Think peat bogs, tree rings, melting-pots of shale.  
 But let's not say nothing, for all our sakes,  
 Across from its two stony eyes, let's use  
 The long view of language to give and take  
 In kind, for our words alone are suffused  
 With truth and knowledge the ages amassed  
 In this corner of earth, both small and vast.

In October, we were pleased to commission Lawyers for Nature to work with us to develop principles for representing nature within decision-making processes, focusing on how an individual can effectively act as a Nature Guardian. Their work will include a targeted review on nature representation and environmental governance, the development of clear, actionable principles to guide organisations adopting similar models, and the production of a report outlining their findings and recommendations. The project aims to address challenges such as capturing the diverse interests of nature, ensuring accountability and legitimacy, and mitigating the limitations of single-person representation.

We will be sharing our findings and promoting our work in an event in the Senedd in January 2026.

## Elsbeth Jones – NICW Nature Guardian 2025

I am a lawyer by background and have worked on the twin challenges of climate change and nature depletion for the last 12 years. Over this time, I have seen too often what can happen when nature is left out of the conversation, deprioritised or simply forgotten about.

The future of the people of Wales is inextricably intertwined with the future of nature in Wales. People can only thrive if nature is also thriving – clean water, clean air, clean energy, healthy food, ecosystems and landscapes, and a deep cultural connection to the wonders of the natural world. But Wales is now one of the most nature depleted places in the world – a place where wolves, wild boar, lynx, bears and wildcats once lived, where our poetry and folk stories are so connected to the land – is now losing nature at an alarming rate.

A small number of organisations – in Wales and beyond – are starting to ask themselves the question – would bringing nature’s voice into our decision-making and governance spaces help to change this trajectory? And how can we do that in a way that is genuinely impactful?

This is what NICW is piloting – nature is so connected with Wales’ infrastructure, what happens when we bring nature’s voice into the room? So far as we know, NICW is the

first public body (in the world) to appoint a Nature Guardian. This presents a unique opportunity to contribute learning to this nascent field, and for Wales to help lead the way.

As the Nature Guardian, I don’t make the decisions – the Commissioners do that. My role is to attend meetings, receive reports, review and observe, with a nature lens – ask good questions and sometimes just provide subtle nudges – helping to link the work of the Commission back to nature and keeping nature central in the conversation, making sure it’s not lost as an annex or a footnote.

With this pilot we are all on a learning journey, and I look forward to sharing what we learn.



# Commissioner reflections

Our commissioners look back on their third year in office and reflect on their NICW term.

## Helen Armstrong



This year I was very proud to be able to publish our report on our Year 3 research project. This was the culmination of two years' work in exploring the extent of community engagement in climate conversations and resulted in our case study based at Grangetown Pavilion, Cardiff. The project set out to test the effectiveness of using

creative methods to engage diverse communities in futures thinking, infrastructure decision-making and developing climate resilience.

It was a fun and interesting project to be involved in, and I am thoroughly indebted to the community groups based at the Pavilion who welcomed us and gave their time, energy and insights. In addition to the work with community groups we produced a Toolkit outlining the creative methods we used, which is on our website and freely available to everyone. We hope to inspire and pave the

way for infrastructure providers and decision makers to engage citizens more in responding to the challenges that face us.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my term at NICW. We have tried to live up to our values in how we work as well as what we deliver. We have aimed to fill a gap between industry, government and communities, and to provoke and inspire with our recommendations and musings. I hope the next Commission can press for our recommendations to be adopted and to continue to add value in this space for the future generations of Wales.

## Steve Brooks



Over the past year, the Commission has made significant progress in strengthening the evidence base and insight needed to support long-term, resilient infrastructure for Wales.

The publication this year of 'Perfect Storm', our Year 3 report has provided an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how communities, public bodies,

and infrastructure providers are responding to increasingly complex pressures linked to climate change.

Working closely with fellow Commissioners, the Secretariat, and a wide range of stakeholders, we have been able to draw out lessons that highlight both the strengths of existing systems and the areas where further reform is needed.

Reflecting more broadly on my time as a Commissioner since 2021, I have valued the Commission's independence which has enabled us to convene diverse viewpoints, offer constructive challenge,

and make the case for long-term thinking in a policy environment often dominated by immediate pressures. Over these four years, I have particularly appreciated the opportunity to champion approaches that place people, place, and social justice at the centre of infrastructure decision-making.

As NICW enters its next phase of work, the insights developed through our work will provide a strong foundation for continued impact. I am grateful to colleagues and partners for their expertise, collaboration, and ongoing commitment to Wales' future.

## Aleena Khan



My most recent year on the commission has been the most reflective yet!

Witnessing firsthand the increasing frequency of severe weather related events in Cymru has reinforced the importance of the Commission's role in advising, recommending and challenging Infrastructure policy to build resilience.

As an early professional, I often worry about the uncertainty

of future infrastructure challenges that my peers, future generations and I will have to navigate if we continue on our current trajectory. However, seeing bodies like NICW, and the organisations engaging with the commission, actively working towards solutions gives me confidence that change is on the horizon.

## Eluned Parrott



In the year following the launch of our report into flood resilience, Eurgain and I have been advocating for a renewed sense of urgency to help communities in Wales tackle the challenges they face. In November 2024, we chose to launch our report in Pontypridd, a community that has seen first-hand the devastation that flooding can bring. Ironically, when we returned in November

this year to meet with flood management authorities, our meetings were cancelled due to an incoming storm. Instead, we saw teams from Natural Resources Wales setting up pumping stations and met with some of the businesses that have been repeatedly flooded over the past few years. We learned about the labyrinthine bureaucracy that ties businesses and householders up in knots, the confusion over who is responsible for what, and the frustration and anxiety that people feel every time it starts to rain. Storm Claudia spared Pontypridd this time, but sadly, Monmouth was not so lucky.

In many ways, the opportunities we have had to meet communities and talk informally about their infrastructure needs have been the greatest privilege of serving on NICW, but also the most challenging and thought-provoking part of our work. Our assumptions have been challenged. Our eyes opened. Our passion for progress reignited. When we have spoken to ministers, members of the Senedd and public bodies, I hope that we have been able to share the communities' voices with them effectively. I'm immensely grateful to the community groups that have shared their thoughts with us, and the community leaders who have enabled us to come together.

## Eurgain Powell



Following a focus on flooding for myself and Eluned, I've been really pleased with how our report has been received, with very positive feedback from key partners. It's been described as "ambitious, bold, innovative, helping to shift thinking and challenge key players". However delivery is key. Flooding events are increasing with communities across Wales being impacted

today. Our report sets out the path that we need to take to develop long-term resilience, with people and nature at the heart of our approach. We continue to speak with the Deputy First Minister and Welsh Government colleagues to monitor progress and explore further opportunities for NICW to support. I'm really pleased that as a Commission we have piloted one of our recommendations – to bring nature into our discussions and decision making – and I'm looking forward to sharing our experiences with others at our event in January.

Another highlight has been our visits to Bannau Brycheiniog, Barmouth and Fairbourne, Conwy and Colwyn Bay to speak with partners and communities about the challenges they are facing, and how they're responding to climate change and other issues. These visits have been hugely informative and enjoyable. It is so important that we listen to all perspectives, and involve communities in our decision making, to identify local solutions to the challenges we face.

## Nick Tune



The threat posed by the increasing frequency of floods and extreme weather events necessitates an unprecedented acceleration of climate action. It is now more critical than ever that we secure the long-term resilience of our national infrastructure.

I take significant pride in the work the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW) delivered in 2025. This includes providing robust, evidence-based recommendations on effective flood risk management, underpinned by a successful programme of communication and engagement designed to inform and collaborate with the people of Wales on climate change adaptation.

Despite these strides in adaptation, the Welsh Government's current hesitancy to adopt our

essential recommendations for transitioning Wales to a 100% renewable energy system, may hinder progress.

This is a matter of urgent national priority. We require, without delay, a detailed national deployment plan for renewable energy generation, comprehensively integrated with a clear roadmap for necessary grid upgrades. Additionally, legislative reform is essential: Building Regulations must be strengthened to make the installation of PhotoVoltaic (PV) technology mandatory for new structures.