

**ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
WRITTEN EVIDENCE
NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION FOR WALES**

Introduction

1. The Welsh Government is committed to moving towards a better informed, longer-term strategy of investment in infrastructure which enshrines the principles of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and which will enable the more efficient development of specific projects as their importance is more fully understood and supported by the people of Wales, including the need to achieve value for money for public sector investment.
2. To help achieve this aim, the Welsh Government intends establishing an advisory, non-statutory National Infrastructure Commission for Wales to provide independent and expert strategic advice.

Consultation

3. A consultation is currently underway to seek the views from stakeholders of the intention to establish a National Infrastructure Commission for Wales to inform and prioritise investment decisions on medium to longer term infrastructure needs. The consultation will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute views on the way the commission is set up and run.
4. The consultation period began on 17 October 2016 and ends on 9 January 2017.

Remit

5. We envisage that the commission would be an advisory body, responsible for analysing, advising and making recommendations on Wales' longer-term strategic infrastructure needs over a 5-30 year period through making regular reports to the Welsh Government; strategic not just in the context of the size or cost of an individual project but in the sense of what might be their combined effect.
6. The remit would extend to all sectors of economic and environmental infrastructure, including energy, transport, water and sewerage, drainage solutions, waste, digital communications, flood and coastal erosion management and would extend to both devolved and non-devolved infrastructure reflecting the devolution settlement and the cross-border nature of infrastructure – for example the rail network.
7. Responsibility for setting policy, together with the regulatory and planning framework, and for making investment decisions where this is a government function, would remain with the Welsh Ministers for devolved infrastructure and with the UK Government for non-devolved infrastructure.
8. In the interests of stability and accountability, it is not proposed that the commission advises on programmes and work that have already been decided, or will be decided in the immediate future, by statutory and regulatory bodies.
9. The proposal is that that the commission would analyse and advise on economic and environmental infrastructure needs in an integrated way, taking a cross-sectoral approach to identify interdependencies. It may also look at cross-cutting delivery

ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
WRITTEN EVIDENCE
NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION FOR WALES

issues if it considers them a barrier to delivering infrastructure needs, including governance, costs, financing and programme/project management methodology.

10. The remit would not extend to social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and housing. The Welsh Government considers that there are already well-established, effective arrangements for analysing the longer-term, strategic needs in these sectors which should remain the responsibility of the relevant planning and service authorities. However, the remit would extend to providing advice on the interactions between economic and environmental infrastructure and social infrastructure.
11. The commission's work would help inform the Welsh Government's longer -term infrastructure investment plans and in so doing, the National Development Framework, which will provide a longer term, strategic perspective on planning needs.

Membership

12. The intention is for the commission to comprise a maximum of 10 members including the Chair, all of whom would be appointed on the basis of their expert knowledge and experience and not by virtue of their office. Members would need to be able to think and operate across sectors; be creative and inclusive in analysing future needs and the public policy challenges ahead of us, such as decarbonisation.
13. Appointments would be made through an open public appointments exercise in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, the principles of merit, fairness and openness and the wider Nolan principles.

Openness and Transparency

14. The commission would analyse, advise and make recommendations on Wales' longer-term infrastructure needs through making regular reports to the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government would expect the commission to publish regular reports on its work and hold public meetings every year in North, Mid, South and West Wales to explain and promote its role and work.

Conclusion

15. There are a range of models already in existence and different ideas for the status and remit of an infrastructure body. The Welsh Government sees the establishment of an advisory, non-statutory commission as a first stage in strengthening decision making and delivery on infrastructure.
16. Depending on the feedback from consultation, the intention is to establish the commission by summer 2017.
17. The Welsh Government is open to changing the body's status and remit if, with experience, clear benefits emerge for doing so. The intention would be to undertake and publish a review of the body's status and remit before the next Assembly election in 2021.