

Ein cyf/Our ref: NICW/25/Review

Rebecca Evans MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
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24 February 2025

Dear Rebecca,

We write in response to the recent review of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW).

We were pleased to take part in the process and to read the views of the independent assessors. We also appreciate the responses to the external stakeholder questionnaire where the majority of those questioned scored NICW highly in terms of our remit, work programme and ways of working.

We agree with the observations made about NICW and have started work on an action plan, supported by the Secretariat, to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

Strategy, Performance Reporting and Lessons Learnt

These three observations relate to NICW's strategic direction and its ability to monitor progress and make continual improvements. As the current Commission has less than a year to run, we feel that our experiences over the last three years can be used to inform the direction of the next Commission following the Senedd elections in May 2026.

We have started to procure research to help us conduct a short form Infrastructure Assessment for Wales. The results of this research will be published next spring. We believe this will not only aid NICW in thinking about its future work programme, but also support the Welsh Government in considering whether any changes are needed for our remit.

We are also discussing how our legacy can be used to support work over the next 18 months, and the best ways that our learning can be used to support future Commissioners.

Risk Management, Board Papers and Terms of Reference

These observations were all very helpful for improving the governance arrangements around NICW. We have implemented them in full for our February meeting.

Commission Status (including funding)

The review report states there is likely to be limited value in recommending significant changes to NICW's status as a non-statutory body, as the Commission is delivering its outputs in accordance with the remit letter.

NICW currently operates in a very flexible way whilst still being a transparent organisation which engages with its stakeholders and fulfils its remit set out by the Welsh Government. We see no reason to change NICW into a statutory body.

NICW recently received early assurances of funding for 2025/26 which means that we can begin planning our projects in good time. We request that this good practice is continued in future years to enable NICW to plan and procure work in a timely manner.

Commission Remit and Objectives

The review report concludes that the remit appears to be focussed appropriately which supports the delivery of agreed objectives.

We agree that the remit has been tailored in such a way that NICW has clear tasks to undertake on behalf of the Welsh Government, but also that it may explore complementary aspects of infrastructure.

In this term, NICW has been able to explore the issues of skills, and to implement futures thinking in our work. These are both important aspects of infrastructure that would not be possible to consider in a very tightly focused sectoral approach.

Our recent work on transport futures has given us the opportunity to work with stakeholders from across the transport sector using a very long-time horizon. We also used a futures thinking approach in our report on reducing the impact of flooding in Wales for 2050. The flexibility of our approach ensures that we can take advantage of different ways of tools or ways of thinking with immediate effect, and to the benefit of our recommendations on infrastructure.

Commissioner Term of Appointment

The review sees the merit in having Commissioners staying on for two terms but is generally inconclusive with regards to the length of these terms, given the variability elsewhere.

We see the merit in having a 'rolling succession' of Commissioners where some experience stays within NICW after a set of Commissioners depart. For example, we have one Commissioner at present who was a member of the previous Commission. The move to a 4-year election cycle from the next Senedd term makes it reasonable to suggest moving to a 4 years + 4 years term of office for Commissioners, supported by enhanced performance management arrangements.

Timeframes for Welsh Government Responses to Commission Reports

The review report is inconclusive on the best timeframe for a response from the Welsh Government on NICW reports. It suggests that deadlines be agreed between the relevant Welsh Government teams beforehand.

We consider that responding in a timely manner is as important as the appetite for the Welsh Government for challenge from our recommendations. Mandating a shorter or longer timeframe for response would be secondary to ensuring a perception across Welsh Government that our contributions are helpful and an important part of a process intended to support delivery of good quality, resilient infrastructure in Wales.

National Infrastructure Assessment

We are about to commence work on a short form National Infrastructure Assessment for Wales which should assist in shaping the NICW remit for the next Senedd term. This initial work may help ascertain whether a 'full' assessment, as stated in the original NICW mandate, is required; or whether smaller targeted pieces of work are a more flexible and responsive way to meet the need.

Thank you again for involving NICW in this review. We would be glad to meet with you to update you on our work programme or to provide any further detail on our response to the evaluation. We look forward to receiving your formal response to the review and the future of NICW in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Dr David Clubb
Cadeirydd/Chair



Dr Jenifer Baxter
Dirprwy Gadeirydd/Deputy Chair

cc. Chair of Climate Change, Economy and Infrastructure Committee