

**Thursday 4 October 2012**

## **MPs Cast Doubts On Prospects For Infrastructure**

The Government has been called to act after politicians from across the political spectrum expressed doubts about plans to upgrade the country's infrastructure.

107 MPs were surveyed via a CITB-ConstructionSkills ComRes panel, with 54% (58 MPs) responding that infrastructure projects and programmes – from HS2 to New Nuclear Build – would not be delivered on time and to budget.

At a Labour party conference reception in Manchester on Tuesday night, the Infrastructure Alliance called upon Government to adopt a four-point plan to heed recommendations made in its latest publication to avoid parliamentarians fears becoming a reality.

The Avoiding the Infrastructure Crunch: Getting Britain working report recommends:

- Immediate action to stimulate 'shovel-ready' maintenance and minor works
- Analysis of future demand for skills to ensure the UK has a world class infrastructure workforce available to deliver vital future projects
- Rebalancing of investment throughout the UK to rebuild activity in communities and support a more even economic recovery
- Development of greater consensus on the country's infrastructure needs and how they can be best delivered and paid for

Guest speakers at the reception included Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, former Construction Minister, as well as Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan, Chairman of the Strategic Forum for Construction, who said the Government must develop an integrated transport policy that serves the nation's future needs, supporting growth, promoting environmental sustainability and improving deliverability of transport projects.

He added that it was vital that the UK supply chain had the skills to deliver general infrastructure and transport projects, which are vital for local and national economic growth.

Lord O'Neil said: "Investment in Britain's core infrastructure is a key part of how we start to move the country out of the double-dip recession. It creates jobs and growth now, and it facilitates jobs and growth in the future.

"Too often the choices politicians make about where to invest, simply isn't informed by a strategic view of the long-term demands on Britain's infrastructure. I hope we do a bit better than the "can't see beyond the next election" cliché, as cross-party support on HS2 and our call for bi-partisan talks on airport capacity demonstrate – and at last those calls have been heeded."

Speaking on behalf of the Infrastructure Alliance, ICE Director General Nick Baveystock said: "Infrastructure has a pivotal part to play in enabling our economic recovery – not only does it drive jobs and growth but it builds the skills we need to compete internationally. The National Infrastructure Plan is in place but to truly to deliver the infrastructure this country needs, we have to take a long term, strategic and genuinely visionary view, taking in the whole of UK.

"Greater political consensus is imperative, not only on the programme of works in the National Infrastructure Plan but on finance and delivery mechanisms, allowing government to drive down risk and make infrastructure an attractive investment - providing industry and investors greater certainty against which to plan. "Concurrently we must take forward 'shovel ready' projects such as road maintenance and repairs now with all that means for local jobs and growth"

Judy Lowe, Deputy Chair of CITB-ConstructionSkills, said: "Right now Government is spending £8bn in benefits for 188,000 unemployed construction workers. If they commit instead to investment in shovel-ready projects, these people could be trained-up and working tomorrow."

The Infrastructure Alliance is currently promoting the document and its recommendations at the three main party conferences. The Alliance held an event at the Liberal Democrat Conference and following the Labour evening reception in Manchester, the Alliance will be

hosting a panel discussion and reception at the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham on 7 and 8 October respectively.

**ENDS**

Notes to editors

The Infrastructure Alliance brings together the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, the Construction Products Association and Institution of Civil Engineers, working in partnership with sector skills council CITB-ConstructionSkills.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

ACE: Gavin Pearson T:0207 202 0255 E: [gpearson@acenet.co.uk](mailto:gpearson@acenet.co.uk)

CECA: Alasdair Reisner, T: 0207 340 0454 E: [alasdairreisner@ceca.co.uk](mailto:alasdairreisner@ceca.co.uk)

CITB-ConstructionSkills: T: 0300 456 5409 E: [lan.Woodcroft@cskills.org](mailto:lan.Woodcroft@cskills.org)

Construction Products Association: T: 020 7323 3770 E:

[simon.storer@constructionproducts.org.uk](mailto:simon.storer@constructionproducts.org.uk)

ICE: T: 0207 665 2104 E: [kate.ison@ice.org.uk](mailto:kate.ison@ice.org.uk) / [steven.fifer@ice.org.uk](mailto:steven.fifer@ice.org.uk)

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