

National Needs Assessment for Infrastructure - Call for Evidence

Overview

General Comments

Scottish Water welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to this important needs assessment process. Scottish Water is a unique public corporation, owned by the Scottish Government, accountable to the Scottish Parliament and ultimately our customers.

Scottish Water's vision is to be trusted to care for the water on which Scotland depends. To do this, we aim to provide continuous high quality drinking water, protect and enhance our natural environment, support Scotland's economy and communities and invest in future water and waste water services. We aim to achieve these goals by listening to our customers and stakeholders.

We understand that the National Infrastructure Commission is working predominantly on non-devolved infrastructure and is only looking at devolved infrastructure unless the Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland government asks them to. For that reason Scottish Water considers that it is not appropriate to attempt to provide full evidence at this stage. If a Scottish Infrastructure Commission were to be established then it would be more appropriate to provide information within the framework of any research being carried out by it.

Detailed Response

Specific Comments

Supporting Scotland's economy and communities

We are currently designing and implementing a number of changes to our organisational design and practices to improve the overall customer experience in this area, and further help support Scotland's economy and communities. This includes investment in specific expertise and additional resources to provide clear points of contact for the development community through an integrated Development Management service.

We are increasingly proactive and collaborative in our engagement with stakeholders. By interacting at the front end of the development planning process and undertaking in-house Development Impact Assessments (DIAs), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and considering the most appropriate funding options, we believe we can attain our aspiration of being trusted as a leading partner in infrastructure management and investment; supporting economic growth in Scotland.

This is a dynamic and changing area of our business, and one where there is a recognised need for improvement. As indicated above, we have taken steps to begin our journey of continuous improvement in this area.

Adapting and mitigating to climate change

We believe that connections between infrastructure and climate change, both from a mitigation and adaptation point of view, cannot be overstated.

On the mitigation side of the equation (cutting carbon emissions), there are significant embodied carbon emissions associated with the supply and construction of new infrastructure, and from the operation of new and existing assets. These whole life carbon emissions must be one of the factors that is taken into account when planning, designing and constructing infrastructure, alongside cost, risk, service provision etc. As well as dramatically reducing whole life carbon emissions, such an approach can also go hand-in-hand with delivering a more innovative modern and efficient capital investment system.

Scottish Water is taking active steps to implement a robust carbon accounting system for its capital investments, in line with our current Ministerial Directions requiring us to take carbon into account when delivering our capital programme, and an aspiration to reduce the carbon in new investment by 30% during current regulatory period.

On the adaptation side, the infrastructure that Scottish Water is now designing and building must be resilient to the likely impacts of a changing climate. Many of the assets that we plan and develop now will still be operational many decades into the future, and need to take into account the future climate as far as possible. In particular, changing patterns of rainfall, temperature, sea level rise and the incidence of extreme weather events have the potential to impact on our assets, networks and on the delivery of reliable water and waste water services to our customers.

Scottish Water continues to carry out studies into the potential impacts of climate change, and to incorporate the lessons learned into our infrastructure planning. Our Adaptation Plan describes how we are implementing a comprehensive adaptation strategy to ensure that we build climate resilience into our networks and assets.

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