

Insights

HOW WILL THE NEWLY CREATED NISTA ACCELERATE INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY?

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SUMMARY

Between 2015-2025 the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) carried out an important function in assessing the UK's long-term infrastructure needs, setting the infrastructure agenda and providing independent advice to the Government.

However, from 1 April 2025, the NIC ceased operating and was combined with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) to form a new unit within HM Treasury called the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA). In this Insight we explore how this change might accelerate infrastructure delivery.

WHY WAS THE NIC ABOLISHED?

When the NIC was established in 2015 it was welcomed as an executive body that would hold the Government's feet to the fire on infrastructure delivery, provide crucial analysis of the UK's long term economic infrastructure needs and provide strategic vision in publication of the National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) every five years. Each NIA was framed within a fiscal envelope, so that there was some clarity of the parameters for the recommendations. The Government published a response to each NIA, detailing how it was delivering in light of the NIC's independent views.

Whilst the NIC was respected for its independent analysis, expertise and advice, recent infrastructure delivery challenges and delays prompted the Government to deliver on its manifesto commitment to merge the NIC with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA). The IPA was the Government body with expertise in infrastructure project delivery and project finance, and in merging these two bodies, the Government hopes the newly established NISTA will accelerate the delivery of infrastructure across the UK.

NISTA

Merging the NIC and IPA into a single new organisation intends to bridge the gap between infrastructure strategy and delivery and provide a more co-ordinated, strategic and cost effective approach.

With a focus on driving change and building consensus on its policy recommendations, along with monitoring Government progress on infrastructure delivery, it is hoped the NISTA will be able to accelerate infrastructure delivery and provide a more stable infrastructure pipeline to improve investor confidence.

WILL NISTA ACCELERATE DELIVERY?

Integrating strategy and delivery into a single body seems a sensible step forward to drive infrastructure project delivery. That said, one concern might be that a combined body means that there is a dilution of the outputs of the NIC and the importance associated. But on the other hand, the combination of delivery and planning under one roof, may well drive benefits.

Wisely, the NIC's experience will be retained with the ten existing members of the NIC appointed to form a new Advisory Council for NISTA, so it should have a firm footing from the outset.

Along with publication of the new 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy later in 2025 and reforms in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, on paper these changes sound promising in terms of creating a more certain and stable infrastructure landscape over the longer term, but whether these will be enough to deliver in light of current and future geopolitical uncertainties is difficult to gauge.

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