



National Infrastructure Planning Association

# THE NIPPA PLAN

2025 – 28



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# Welcome

## TO THE **FIRST NIPA PLAN**

### Statement from the Board Chair

Tom Carpen, *Thames Water*



**The National Infrastructure Planning Association (NIPA) has grown as a voluntary organisation from small beginnings to the leading membership organisation for national infrastructure planning and delivery. This reflects the dedication and passion of our members who work every day on the most significant infrastructure projects across the UK.**

We are going through a generational shift in national infrastructure planning, where the urgency for delivery is driven by global and national factors and the pressing needs of every community in the country. This plan is our way of galvanising and bringing together existing and prospective NIPA members to play an even bigger part in our story of infrastructure success, showing that we can overcome the biggest challenges by pooling our expertise and experience in the national interest.

In developing the NIPA Plan, the Board has set **a new vision for NIPA to become a vibrant community of practice, driving better infrastructure planning and delivery.**

Our members are already the bedrock of this community, and over the next three years our purpose will be to exist for members, partners and stakeholders, so that we can collectively identify and tackle a wide range of challenges in all infrastructure planning regimes.

Our ability to do this requires a culture shift in infrastructure practice, to connect even more as people, acting beyond just our organisational or professional boundaries.

I firmly believe that we in infrastructure practice have the opportunity and most critical role to play, building understanding and finding effective ways to drive positive change in infrastructure planning and practice, in the national interest and equally in the local interest too.

NIPA is at the heart of this opportunity, to build and showcase good practice around the country, to help you build your skills and to bring our collective expertise together to tackle the knottiest infrastructure challenges.

I hope you find inspiration and opportunity within the plan and my sincere thanks to everyone who has made this plan happen, in particular Board members Catherine Anderson and Matt Sharpe, Robbie Owen and Michael Humphries KC.

July 2025



## Foreword

Steve Norris, NIPA Council Chair

*Since I chaired the inaugural meeting of what became the NIPA Council in 2010, our NIPA family has grown and now proudly represents a diverse base in professions and interest - whether these be promoters, central government, councils, regulators, consultants or others. In a time of continuing evolutionary policy development, and increasing importance of national infrastructure, I am genuinely excited about how the NIPA Plan demonstrates how we will continue to grow, disseminate the professional and technical agility to assist in the delivery and implementation of our UK's infrastructure and showcase our collective expertise. This can only happen with our membership as NIPA's fundamental core, and therefore the NIPA Plan represents you and how our membership informs what NIPA could be in three years' time.*

NIPA'S

# Purpose

ESTABLISHED

November  
2010

AIM

Bring together individuals and organisations involved in the planning and authorisation of major infrastructure projects.


NIPA is an individual membership organisation governed by a Board and Council, and supported by an Early Years Practitioners' Steering Group. Collectively these groups make up NIPA's leadership team, and you can find our profiles on the NIPA website.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest or involvement in national infrastructure planning, and we focus on enabling every member to bring their full experience regardless of who you work for.

Our principal focus to date has been the planning and authorisation regime for nationally significant infrastructure projects introduced by the Planning Act 2008. Our members have built up incredible experience and expertise in what it takes to work in this particular planning process and get under the skin of the complexities of major projects to make sure they can be consented and delivered whilst delivering a range of benefits and mitigations for their impacts.

The national impact is tangible, from the growth of offshore wind, the completion of the Thames Tideway Tunnel and the delivery of major road improvements. All this through a process that prioritises engagement with stakeholders before being tested through a transparent impartial examination led by the country's top planning inspectors.

However, times move on, and the Planning Act process has not kept up. The current Government has set new national missions and the target of delivering 150 major infrastructure project decisions in this parliament. Through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the forthcoming 10 year infrastructure strategy, as well as wider planning and regulatory reform, it is clear that NIPA has a new opportunity to play a strong role in the planning and delivery of national infrastructure across all planning and consenting processes.



We have, and are motivated to share our real world experiences and insights, to drive innovative practice and problem-solving, so that policy and implementation go hand-in-hand.

To do this effectively we are committed to growing an inclusive and diverse membership base so that we draw on practitioners from across public, private and third sectors, from host communities, from all professions with an interest in infrastructure planning and from people at every stage of their careers regardless of background.

As NIPA, this purpose and these values are fundamental to shaping this Plan and all the activity we are known for.

### **NIPA EYPs**

**NIPA is consciously an association of individuals, and we want to enable all members to bring their whole career experience and individual strengths to the Association. The NIPA Early Years Practitioners (EYP) was established as a special interest group to create an accessible way into NIPA and provide opportunities for early years practitioners to develop their knowledge of infrastructure planning and network with those working in the area.**

# What is the NIPA Plan?

The NIPA Plan sets out a clear framework that allows for the NIPA Board and Council and sets out how the NIPA Leadership team will deliver a wide range of activities in a focused way.

The Plan outlines NIPA's commitment to our membership base, builds on our Objectives and Values, recognises our industry standing and influence, and is also intended to be agile, recognising the evolving legislative environment in all aspects of nationally significant infrastructure within the UK.

## The NIPA plan is how we will...

- ▶ **Set the foundation** for what NIPA could look like over the next 3 years, building on our core strengths and purposes, addressing the challenges in major infrastructure in both topic specific and delivering on our outcomes.
- ▶ **Address the strategic challenges** that face those working in national infrastructure planning and delivery and use NIPA's collective expertise and leadership to navigate:
  - 1 the dynamic and transformative policy and legislative environment
  - 2 the need to stay engaged with current and prospective members
  - 3 the need to sustain and strengthen the skills in our diverse leadership group
- ▶ **Harness the breadth and collective expertise** of our membership, and be fundamentally influenced by the involvement of our members, Council, Early Years Practitioners and Board representation.
- ▶ **Ensure that the outcomes set out in this NIPA Plan will be delivered** primarily via Working Group Delivery Plans and our Early Years Practitioner's programme. These will also be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure adherence with the NIPA Plan.

# From Vision to Delivery

The following diagram demonstrates how our collective vision for NIPA is core to the NIPA Plan and how the NIPA addresses strategic challenges. The Plan remain nimble and agile to those challenges, delivering on priorities and strategic outcomes into focused delivery.

## OUR VISION

*“A vibrant community of practice shaping better infrastructure planning”*



## ADDRESSING NIPA'S STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Staying relevant to members

Staying relevant in a changing world and policy environment

Maintaining a strong leadership team



## THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Driving and showcasing good practice;  
shaping better policy

Developing practitioner skill and  
capability, building inspiring networks

Tackling complex issues in  
infrastructure planning



## THREE-YEAR OUTCOMES

- ▶ quality activities and resources for members
- ▶ stronger infrastructure planning capability
- ▶ a broader, deeper membership base
- ▶ collective practice shaping better policy and projects
- ▶ effective leadership and strategic collaborations



## FOCUSED DELIVERY

**NIPA Board**  
governance, budget, strategies  
and sponsorship model

**EYP Steering Group**  
Early Years Practitioners (EYP) Programme

**NIPA Council Working Group**  
focused annual delivery plans

# NIPA Listens

The feedback of the 2025 Membership survey has significantly influenced the NIPA Plan and its Outcomes. The NIPA Leadership team commits to listening to our membership base and also actively encourages our members to be involved. This can be in a multitude of ways, and these will be outlined in the Delivery Plans.

We received the following feedback in our 2025 membership survey:

- ▶ NIPA to diversify topics areas and include more major infrastructure delivery, secondary consent management, emerging legislation and good practice.
- ▶ Considerable value recognised in online webinars with the conference and dinner both also recognised as key NIPA activities.
- ▶ Nearly 90% of respondent agreed that timely notice was provided for events and services but that NIPA should improve the experience provided by NIPA events by making them more frequent and allowing for a variety of formats (Insights, NIPA stories, in person events and online).
- ▶ Increasing the geographical diversity of in person events to locations across the UK and Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Increasing the awareness of working groups, who to contact and also how to set up a specialist topic group in response to a particular requirement including greater visibility of Council and Board on the NIPA website. Approximately two thirds of the respondents were aware of the opportunity to contribute to working groups.
- ▶ Exploring new partnerships (for example with local authorities, academia and construction delivery partners) in addition to maintaining those with other planning and technical bodies.
- ▶ Enhance transferable learning through a knowledge pool.

The survey also confirmed that members receive effective and informative communications (92% of respondents) and that legislative and policy updates in addition to requests to consultations are timely and provide appropriate notice (84% of respondents) but less felt that these were available and visible after completion. The Plan will ensure that these both continue and that all communications will be available on the membership space on the NIPA website for reference.

The survey also highlighted the following priorities for the next three years:

- ▶ Maintaining the good work done to date and building on the strong reputation of NIPA in influencing and informing major infrastructure policy across the UK and Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Growing the membership base with diversity in the range of disciplines and services representation in addition to a wider reach via into key partnerships and transferable learning opportunities.
- ▶ Increasing awareness of major infrastructure within academia and inspiring the next generation.
- ▶ Increasing the evidence base of major infrastructure delivery and good practice, acknowledging the depth of experience and knowledge within our membership base.
- ▶ Delivery of high quality communications and contributions.



# 5 STRATEGIC Outcomes

**The NIPA Plan will provide a foundation for what NIPA should be in the next 3 years and so needs to be both forward looking as well a plan that people can relate to in their everyday work.**

The NIPA Plan will recognise and adapt to membership feedback throughout the duration of this Plan.

To meet our three priorities, it is our bold ambition for the following outcomes to be achieved in the next three years

- 1 High quality events, communications, publications and opportunities for our members, promoting knowledge transfer across industry and academia where possible.
- 2 Recognisable contribution to improved consenting regimes and the implementation of infrastructure delivery through policy recommendations and good practice, and with better outcomes.
- 3 Accessible resources showcasing good practice in infrastructure planning and delivery, alongside strengthened capability in infrastructure planning practice as a result of NIPA activity.
- 4 A broader, deeper membership base across the UK that reflects the people who practice in national infrastructure, and effective leadership capabilities within NIPA to sustain the organisation in the future.
- 5 Effective collaborative leadership across infrastructure planning and delivery, shaped by NIPA in partnership with Government and organisations that we have a shared interest with.

**The Outcomes contain the relevant underpinning commitments to NIPA's core purpose. Noting that these Outcomes will include commitments relevant to all Delivery Plans, collectively the Outcomes will all achieve the sum total of the NIPA Plan, demonstrating our core purpose.**



# Delivering THE NIPA PLAN

The NIPA Plan will be implemented from June 2025 until June 2028. Below we outline our commitments during Year 1 in line with the NIPA budget and then aspirations for Year 2 (2026 to 2027) and Year 3 (2027 to 2028), which ensures that the Plan remains adaptive and agile.

# OUTCOME

# 1

## Delivering high quality events, outputs and publications

Recognising the 2025 Membership Survey results and feedback from other events and communications, we acknowledge that this Outcome is a cornerstone of NIPA activities, upon which we can build year on year in content, format and subject matter.

### YEAR 1

- ▶ Using our events to shape effective infrastructure planning policy through credible evidence and advice to policy makers, including NIPA Matters events and opportunities to participate in working groups.
- ▶ Focusing our activity to enable better transition from policy to practice, using our collective expertise to develop good practice resources, shared on our website.
- ▶ Exploring new ways to help members strengthen their practice, for example through site visits and expert talks, whilst maintaining our showcase events – the NIPA conference and NIPA dinner.
- ▶ Using events and research to explore regional and local issues in major infrastructure to contribute to devolution and strategic planning.
- ▶ Investing in our NIPA Research programme to create effective foresight and analysis of strategic issues to shape longer term infrastructure planning.

### YEARS 2–3

- ▶ Expand our regional presence with further events across the UK, exploring opportunity to hold additional major NIPA events outside of London.
- ▶ Showcase practice across the country through NIPA communications; opportunities for members to shape infrastructure planning practice closer to where they are based.
- ▶ Use NIPA activity to play an integral role in regionally focused major infrastructure planning policy and practice, bringing together the expertise of members across private, public, third and research sectors.

## OUTCOME 2

### Improved consenting processes with better outcomes

NIPA has a unique membership base drawn from across a range of professions and interests, from the public, private, research and third sectors, and from inception to delivery of major infrastructure in the UK.

We want to develop better ways of harnessing that expertise and positively influence more dynamic and overall improved consenting processes for national infrastructure in the UK.

#### YEAR 1

- ▶ Represent our membership in contributing to new and amended national and devolved planning policy through responses, engagement with Government and the provision of evidence in delivering and implementing major infrastructure.
- ▶ Establish an NSIP reform taskforce focused on supporting Government to develop effective Guidance and drive best practice on pre-application consultation and engagement into delivery.
- ▶ Test new ways to gather the member insights that underpin the quality of our responses and our engagement with Government; provide opportunities for members to engage directly with Government.

#### YEARS 2–3

- ▶ Accelerate the effective transition from policy to practice using memberships expertise and working in partnership across the infrastructure planning system in the national interest.
- ▶ Grow our ability to engage with Government departments, agencies and organisations involved in infrastructure planning and delivery, providing evidence from practice and representing our membership in contributing to updated national and devolved infrastructure-related planning policy.
- ▶ Establish external advisory capabilities at the leadership level to strengthen the way we run NIPA, and ensure the plans we put in place reflect the full infrastructure planning system we operate in.
- ▶ Identify and understand the wider factors shaping how we plan for and deliver infrastructure, including the role of data and technology; establish a research framework within NIPA that allows members to participate in how we do this.

A series of offshore wind turbines are visible in the background, receding into the distance over a calm blue sea under a clear sky. The turbines have white blades and yellow-tipped towers.

## OUTCOME 3

### Accessible resources to share good practice in infrastructure planning and delivery, and strengthen capability in practice

Delivering national infrastructure requires considerable investment, both financially and technically. Our 2025 membership survey has identified that lessons learnt and transferable learnings regarding this delivery and implementation phase is key.

In addition, capability and capacity is a significant challenge across national infrastructure planning, with real impacts on the time it takes to progress national infrastructure projects through consenting processes.

#### YEAR 1

- ▶ Test ways of sharing good practice more readily and accessibly for members, building on our Insights programme and research, and seek member feedback on what proves most helpful.
- ▶ Develop a skills programme focused on how we can all learn from the range of disciplines and breadth of expertise across our membership, and on growing the infrastructure planning skills base in partnership with other organisations.
- ▶ Create opportunities for members to participate in our three working groups, which are currently made up of NIPA Council members with named NIPA Board sponsors..

#### YEARS 2–3

- ▶ Invest in our NIPA Research programme to create effective foresight and analysis of strategic issues to shape longer term infrastructure planning.
- ▶ Actively promote the experience of a range of participants within national infrastructure projects which transition from consenting through financial decision to implementation, building on the expertise of the membership and strategic partnerships.
- ▶ Play a leadership role in the development of infrastructure planning skills, capacity and capability, through working with employers, universities and training providers, professional bodies and Government.

## OUTCOME 4

### Broader, deeper membership base with leadership pathways

NIPA is a voluntary organisation including all Board, Council and Early Years Practitioner Steering Group members. The enthusiasm generated by our membership is inspiring and drives real learning and change in infrastructure planning, so we are committed to growing the opportunities for members to lead and participate in NIPA activity.

In addition, NIPA offers a wide range of opportunities for people who want to bring their skills to help run the organisation, build our community of practice and steer our contribution to excellence in infrastructure planning. We have already strengthened internal Governance to provide more opportunities for our Council and Early Years Practitioners to shape NIPA and delivery activities. We have also already strengthened direct communication with members in recent months and will grow this capability further.

#### YEAR 1

- ▶ Connect NIPA members to other professions and area of knowledge and expertise to strengthen our ability to understand what it takes to plan for and deliver national infrastructure projects.
- ▶ Engage more widely with people interested or involved in national infrastructure planning and delivery to grow our membership base and expertise.
- ▶ Strengthen knowledge and understanding on topical policy and practice matters from membership forums including partnerships with other industry bodies via roundtables, webinars, regular policy discussions and NIPA Matters publications.
- ▶ Communicate more directly with members, and enable more direct communication for members through All Members Surveys and Calls, and other formats an improved who's who on the NIPA website and clearer details on how members can be involved or suggest special interest groups.

#### YEARS 2-3

- ▶ Create a leadership pathway where members can benefit from opportunities to complement technical skills with opportunities to take on responsibilities across the organisation, supported by the NIPA leadership team.
- ▶ Strengthen our communication and engagement strategy to grow awareness of what NIPA does and what we offer our members, and to support all 5 strategic outcomes in the NIPA plan.

An aerial photograph showing a large-scale construction project on a river. A long, rectangular barge serves as a temporary construction platform. On it, a large circular structure, possibly a bridge pier or a large storage tank, is under construction. Various construction materials, equipment, and cranes are visible on the barge. The barge is positioned in a wide river. In the background, there are green spaces, trees, and some residential buildings. A road with cars and a roundabout are also visible. The overall scene depicts a major infrastructure project in progress.

## OUTCOME 5

### Successful and collaborative partnerships

NIPA has a track record of publishing high quality research through its Insights programme and building collaborations beyond the organisation. We want to strengthen this capability in ways that provide more for members and built more lasting collaborations.

#### YEAR 1

- ▶ Invest in collaborations by seeking joint sponsorship and joint research opportunities to grow collective industry experience and collective evidence base.
- ▶ Put in place a formal Partnerships strategy, focused on collaboration opportunities aligned with NIPA's core vision, to be delivered by our Research and Learning working group.

#### YEARS 2-3

- ▶ Build on our collaboration strategy, learning from year 1 and seeking to strengthen positive partnerships and identify new opportunities that align with NIPA's core vision.
- ▶ Explore opportunities with research bodies, in academia and other educational bodies to and invest in research that gives us a stronger understanding of how we can achieve better national infrastructure planning.

# Delivery & Review

Our Early Years Practitioners (EYP) Programme will form part of the Delivery Plans, but will focus on activities designed by and for our EYP members. All Delivery Plans, regardless of the ownership will contribute towards the implementation of the outcomes of the NIPA Plan

## Delivery Plans

The NIPA Plan will collectively be implemented by individual Delivery Plans owned by our Council Working Groups. Delivery Plans will be published on the NIPA website annually, and serve as an annual commitment to how the five Outcomes will be achieved.

These will go into further detail and contain success criteria demonstrating how an Outcome or part of an Outcome will be achieved, recognising that there are cross cutting themes across all Outcomes.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Every member of NIPA is responsible in some way for the implementation of the NIPA Plan and therefore should also celebrate its success and collective achievement. NIPA Council Working Group leads are responsible for the production and implementation supported by their Board sponsors and an approved Budget.

## Endorsement

The NIPA Plan is endorsed by the NIPA Board and the Board will ensure that the outcomes are delivered during the next 3 years. In addition, an Investment Plan supports the forward planning of NIPA activities and events, with the Board ensuring that funds are invested appropriately and transparently and with focus on achieving the NIPA Plan Objectives.

The Board commits to an annual review the NIPA Plan in addition to the previous and new year Delivery Plans. This review will be transparent and identify any issues, risks and opportunities for the year ahead, demonstrating how the outcomes have been or will be adapted to achieve NIPAs objectives and core values.



July 2025