

Innovation Strategy for Wales
Second Floor, East Wing, Pillar G10
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Via email to: innovationstrategy@gov.wales

28 September 2022

Consultation on Innovation Strategy for Wales

Dear Innovation Strategy for Wales department,

I write as Policy and Advocacy Officer at the Association for Consultancy and Engineering and ACE lead on policy in the devolved regions. The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) represents the UK's professional consultancies and engineering companies operating in the social and economic infrastructure sectors. We champion infrastructure and the built environment to government and other stakeholders, representing the views of around 400 members. Our members employ over 60,000 in UK and 250,000 worldwide, contributing more than £15 billion to the UK economy.

This letter summarises many of our members' points and outlines some of our own broader views and positions concerning the Innovation Strategy for Wales as a business association. Particular views about innovation have been sourced from our Welsh Committee made up of representatives from some of the largest engineering consultancies UK-wide, as well as SMEs. This response represents a consensus view of ACE members but does not necessarily reflect the views of individual ACE members.

ACE members, specifically those working in Wales, welcome the increased focus on creating a stronger more resilient economy, higher educational standards and responding to climate change through this new strategy. Furthermore, as an association with Innovation as a key theme in our three-year plan of goals for 2025, we welcome the increased spending on innovation.

In the short term, our members would like to see greater clarity in relation to the procurement process and pipeline through greater collaboration. As previously mentioned, an increase in spending and accessible funding is greatly welcomed, however, the sector needs greater clarity on the pipeline of funding and projects to enable prior planning specifically concerning resources. This would enable greater opportunities to innovate across the supply chain.

Similarly, ACE members broadly support measures to reform public procurement and the objectives to work with internal customers to create procurement pipelines. These will assist our members in pre-planning and provide the time to innovate. As follows we are pleased to see a willingness to collaborate and the creation of a more digitalised system to increase efficiency. We would additionally hope that through these changes the pipeline becomes clearer for all.

In the long term, we hope that innovation in Wales remains at the forefront and that the strategy assists in many of our members' long-term goals of creating a highly skilled workforce and working sustainably.

A particularly relevant recent discussion with our ACE Wales Committee highlighted the issues of a lack of

cohesion regarding value, not only in a monetary sense but also in relation to social value. In the strategy, it is mentioned that there will be 'new measures of value'.

ACE members in Wales would urge the Welsh government to expand on these new measures ensuring cohesion in approach and clarity at the procurement stage. For instance, concerning social value, a decision should be made on a singular model to evidence this such as the TOMS model.

Furthermore, many of our members have highlighted the importance of the Construction Innovation Hub's Value Toolkit. The toolkit aims to drive better social, environmental and economic outcomes by facilitating value-based decision-making. The toolkit mirrors many of the Welsh government's current policy aims and would be useful in the delivery of many Welsh infrastructure projects.

Similarly, within the strategy reference could be made to the Construction Playbook or the creation of a playbook specifically related to Wales, which may be useful to our members and the wider industry. The playbook offers constructive guidance on sourcing and contracting public work projects and a similarly aligned document or uptake by the Welsh government may increase cohesion between clients and encourage collaboration between the public and private sectors to drive innovation further. The Playbook has been developed through industry in collaboration with the UK Government Department for Business, and the sector is keen to see a similar document developed or adopted in Wales

Our members hope that this strategy will assist engineering consultancies in the funding, space and support they need to innovate. We are supportive of the strategy overall and look forward to continuing to work alongside the government, clients and wider industry. We look forward to working with Government on the next steps for this strategy and would welcome the opportunity to welcome relevant officials to discuss its progress with our members.

Sincerely,

Olivia Smalley
(Policy and Advocacy Officer)
Association for Consultancy and Engineering