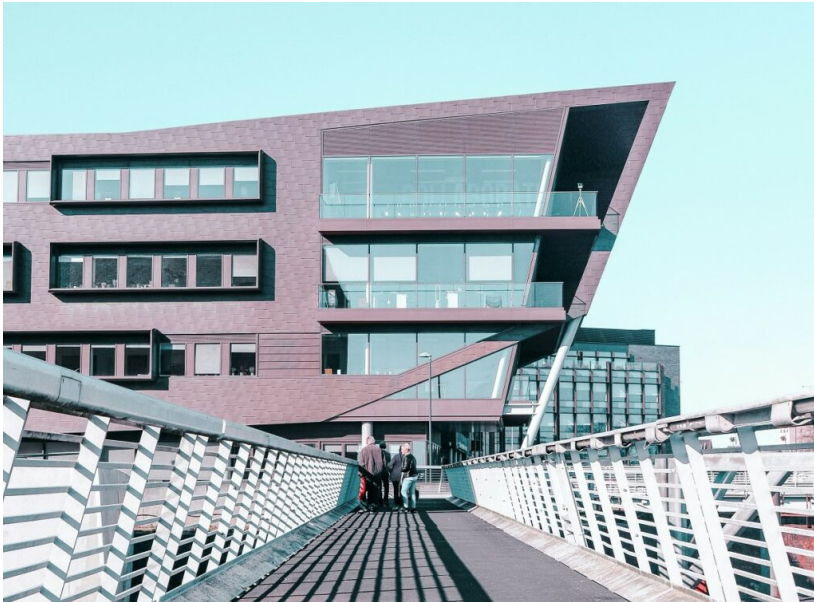


New guidance on design principles for Major UK Infrastructure Projects

June 3, 2024



The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has taken a significant step towards improving the design of major infrastructure projects in the UK. Their Design Group has published new guidance outlining a structured process for developing and implementing project-specific design principles.

This guidance builds upon the NIC Design Group's existing high-level design principles focusing on climate, people, places, and value. The new document goes a step further by providing a framework for applying these principles to each stage of a project's lifecycle.

The guidance emphasises the importance of tailoring design principles to each specific project. It outlines a structured process that ensures project leaders consider a wide range of factors, from climate resilience to positive community impact.

The document also highlights the importance of early and sustained commitment to design principles. It recommends that:

- Project leaders secure genuine commitment from the highest levels of leadership to utilise this structured design process from the very beginning.
- Design principles are firmly established before any major decisions are made and then become a core element of the project's governance framework, guiding all decision-making throughout the project's lifecycle.

- Design principles should be comprehensive, addressing outcomes beyond just operational functionality. They should actively inform each iteration of the project design.
- Principles should be reviewed and adapted as new information emerges, ensuring they remain effective in managing the evolving project.

Case Studies and Industry Support

The new guidance is accompanied by case studies showcasing successful implementation of design principles in ongoing projects like the Lower Thames Crossing, Tideway, and Sizewell C. This practical insight demonstrates the value of this approach.

The Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) has welcomed the new guidance. The UK government's National Infrastructure Strategy, published in 2020, emphasised the importance of good design in major infrastructure projects. This strategy requires all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to have design champions at the board level and to actively consider the NIC's design principles.

The NIC's new guidance provides a clear roadmap for achieving this goal. By encouraging a structured and tailored approach to design principles, it has the potential to significantly improve the quality and impact of major infrastructure projects across the UK.