

C|B|I|



## Preparing to Launch:

How commercial pipelines can help drive UK growth



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# Executive summary



The UK needs to focus on driving strong economic growth. Businesses are currently facing a range of pressures including labour shortages, supply chain disruptions, and sharp increases in the cost of doing business – all of which are stifling investment in the future. Industry and government need to work closely together to build confidence, unlock investment, and seize the moment before the opportunity for a UK economic resurgence disappears.

Government should help drive these changes by emphasising improvements in the large-scale spending already undertaken. Commercial pipelines are an essential yet underutilised tool in the government's toolkit – from highlighting key projects and programmes to investors, to ensuring suppliers are positioned to bring these projects to delivery from the outset, commercial pipelines are essential for ensuring visibility, planning, and delivery of government's key projects.

Consistent, accessible, and up-to-date commercial pipelines, accompanied by strong engagement between public and private sectors, would drive better outcomes for public bodies and suppliers. More effective pipelines would not only give businesses the confidence they need to plan for the future, but also ensure projects contribute to government's strategic objectives like Net Zero and regional growth.

## Summary of recommendations

### **Give industry clarity and confidence**

1. Cabinet Office and IPA guidance should define a consistent and standardised format for pipelines of all government departments.
2. Extend the minimum publication requirement to 3-5 years.
3. Improve forecasting by providing regular updates in commercial pipelines, making them more flexible and responsive to external shocks themselves.
4. Update pipeline frequently as indicating the likelihood of projects proceeding key gateway stages.
5. Distinguish between projects which already have approved business cases and those still waiting for approval.
6. Ensure projects are bankable by providing evidence of a project's social, economic, technical, environmental, and administrative feasibility. Identify funding model and revenue stream.

**Improve digital accessibility and data quality**

7. Draw on examples of best practice such as the Scottish Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool and Australian pipeline to improve the accessibility and format of central government pipelines.
8. Make pipelines living platforms by investing further in the Government Commercial Function, so they have the resources and capacity to update their pipelines as live, agile documents.
9. Public authorities to tailor information to different stakeholders by offering various levels of granularity to contractors, investors, suppliers and clients.
10. Break down the data and split commercial pipelines into multiple phases, whereby encouraging earlier and proactive interaction with potential investors.

**Collaborate and resource to improve pipelines**

11. The UK Infrastructure Bank to collaborate with the IPA on the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline, given its remit to engage with both private investors and local authorities.
12. Invest in supporting commercial reform programmes, including engaging with industry to shape any future policies and ensuring any efforts at reform are utilising existing best practice in other commercial pipelines.



# Introduction



## The current climate means pipelines are more important than ever

### Public sector commercial pipelines

This briefing paper focuses on public sector commercial pipelines which outline public bodies' future plans to contract with suppliers. Examples include the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline, as well as other departmental pipelines and those published by local authorities, for planning and construction of schools, prisons and NHS trusts. Most of the schemes in the National Infrastructure and Construction pipeline are major (£100 million – £1 billion) or megaprojects (> £1 billion), with their combined value amounting close to £600 billion, representing over 80% of the total pipeline spend.

The government spends almost £300 billion a year on public sector procurement, making up approximately a third of all public expenditure.

Ahead of contracts coming to market, commercial pipelines are a crucial tool to give both investors and suppliers working in the public sector the certainties they require to invest or prepare their workforce and supply chain. Done right, they also provide an important signal to the market not just of the government's ambitions, but the scale and timing of commercial opportunities which are key to business confidence, planning, and delivery.

Effective pipelines are not only positive for industry. Through better and earlier communication with the market, public sector buyers set themselves up with a greater opportunity to explore opportunities to innovate, decarbonise and expedite project delivery. By opening channels for industry to share their expertise and insight ahead of work or services beginning, commercial pipelines play a key role in supporting that early market engagement and discussion.

Considering the big picture and allowing suppliers to work in collaboration from the outset can ensure that not only does the client receive the best possible outcome from a major project, but there is also a lasting contribution to the UK beyond the benefits of the actual programme.<sup>1</sup>

The IPA and Cabinet Office recognise that commercial pipelines are a key tool for driving investment in England and Wales, and strong efforts continue to be made to improve their use. These include the updated **Sourcing**<sup>2</sup>, **Consultancy**<sup>3</sup>, **Construction**<sup>4</sup>, and **Digital, Data, and Tech**<sup>5</sup> Playbooks, the IPA's **Transforming Infrastructure Performance**<sup>6</sup>, as well as the **Commercial Pipeline Guidance**<sup>7</sup> document published by the Government Commercial Function. There is a range of maturity that exists across government pipelines and the **National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline**<sup>8</sup> looks at areas highlighted in this paper, following feedback from industry and pipeline users. Some areas of government such as the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline have achieved change with relatively straightforward additions. This paper builds on this important work, drawing on international examples of best practice and identifying further practical steps that can be taken to make pipelines more effective, with the aim of unlocking more private investment and improving project delivery.



# Examples of best practice



Leaders in the public and private sectors around the globe have been demonstrating what good commercial pipelines look like and the benefits that can be realised. To avoid reinventing the wheel, the CBI has pulled together examples highlighted by members to showcase what can be achieved.

## Infrastructure Ontario

### **Infrastructure Ontario relies on clarity, transparency, and contingency planning.**

Their pipeline provides an update every quarter containing clear and reliable information about the scope and size of upcoming projects in the infrastructure market (two major and two minor updates).<sup>9</sup> Businesses have also noted that the information within the Ontarian pipeline is clear, including the participation details for available projects. Businesses in Canada have noted that the market is predictable and different provinces in Canada proactively take steps to inform the market of new investment opportunities. This includes engaging private sector leads to sophisticated projects and procurements, such as the extension of existing projects with incumbent parties. The agency is also supporting the Ontario government's initiatives to modernise and maximise the value of public infrastructure. A significant focus is on ensuring contingency in budgets and on quantitative risk analysis to reduce any potential risks.

### **Their pipeline consists of three phases:**

- **P3 projects in a planning phase:** back end, no project details (asset class only). This is the initial signal to the market and may be removed.
- **Pre-procurement:** approved by government, there is a date, but it is not on the market yet. The agency communicates what the delivery model is and gives a range for capital cost estimate.
- **Projects currently in the market:** Looking at whether and how data are changing and being completely transparent about it. This phase is also about finding out when the government is looking to get a contract.



## Infrastructure Australia

**This pipeline is designed to be 'user-friendly', containing information that is readily accessible for investors.**

Infrastructure Australia's pipeline for infrastructure projects is designed to be user-friendly, with its information being easily accessible.<sup>10</sup> The Infrastructure Forum's submission to the government's Infrastructure Finance Review, *New Measures to Boost Investment*, notes that the pipeline distinguishes between 'initiatives', which are potential projects which do not yet have a completed business case, and 'projects' which have a business case and approval from the Infrastructure Australia board.<sup>11</sup> The Infrastructure Forum highlighted the Australian pipeline as a model of best practice, and it was also noted by a number of businesses during the consultation process for this paper.

## Team Tempest

**Driving innovation in the UK's aerospace, technology, and defence sector, Team Tempest's approach to the Future Combat Air System is illustrating how early market engagement and discussion can build foundations for better outcomes.**

Team Tempest is a consortium including core industry partners BAE Systems, Leonardo UK, MBDA UK and Rolls-Royce, alongside collaborative partners such as GEUK, QinetiQ, Thales UK, and Spirit Aerosystems.<sup>12</sup> Faced with the long delivery times of complex projects, the approach of Team Tempest has brought together industry and government in a truly collaborative fashion to tackle the question of Sovereign Air capability and broader strategic social or economic objectives.

This has only been made possible by the UK's Ministry of Defence highlighting the opportunities at an early stage, and by industry seizing the initiative with the knowledge of what the project will entail and where they can contribute.

## Scottish Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool

**Built around accessibility and flexibility, this digital pipeline tool provides clear information with regular updates.**

Following feedback from construction companies in Scotland, this tool addressed the need for a clear visibility of an anticipated pipeline of work across the public sector. Develop an outline proposal for a forecast construction pipeline database extending to the wider public sector. Such a system was welcome and helps to support business planning, jobs and investment within the sector.

Fast, easy and understandable access to commercial pipelines is crucial to save investors and contractors time and to allow them to navigate the policy landscape better. A good example of an interactive, digital and easily accessible pipeline is The Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool, developed by the Scottish Futures Trust in partnership with industry and public sector bodies. The tool was launched in July 2021 in response to the Construction Recovery Plan and was recently updated in January 2022. It maps £11.1bn of projects across 45 authorities and has been praised by the private sector as a good example of enhancing project delivery.<sup>13</sup>

## US federal states

**Long-term horizons in pipelines provides suppliers with the certainty to invest and plan.**

CBI members based across the USA note how federal states like Pennsylvania and Texas have specific commercial pipelines with 25+ year horizons. Despite the cultural procurement differences between the UK and US, the use of long timeframes in pipelines has demonstrated the significant benefits that come from future security of work.

Businesses report feeling incentivised to confirm multi-year business plans and recruit both staff and supply chain partners knowing when contracts will be coming to market, what will be required, and the estimated longevity of projects.

Some public bodies in the UK already have longer-term visibility for key projects but the introduction of a minimum 3-5 year requirement would accelerate industry confidence, promote ongoing partnerships, and encourage private finance into the UK economy.

# Common business and investor challenges and solutions

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The purpose of commercial pipelines is to outline potential commercial activity and clearly identify what projects, programmes, and contracts are coming to market. Yet it is still complex to provide all stakeholders with what the specific information and intelligence they require.

Investors will seek clear information about where private capital is being sought, what market mechanism is going to be used, and the intended outcomes, estimated timeframes, and expected usage of the project. This could include the number of nuclear reactors, the anticipated use of a road, or the ongoing legacy output of a project.

Suppliers will have a much keener focus on the material requirements, the procurement mechanism, and the resources needed to deliver successfully in order to plan for their own capacity and capability needs. Examples include recruiting the right workforce, upgrading their digital technologies, or developing their supply chain.

Investors and contractors have identified persistent challenges with pipelines which damage confidence and slow down delivery. The CBI has spoken with its members about the common issues investors and contractors face, and about how these might be resolved.



## Common business and investor challenges and solutions

Challenge	Explanation	Solution
<b>Lack of consistency increasing resources required to understand a pipeline</b>	Each department has a different format and presentation style when publishing pipelines, which can make it difficult for industry to navigate the key and updated information.	<p><b>1. Cabinet Office and IPA guidance to define a consistent and standardised format for pipelines of all government departments.</b></p> <p>With Cabinet Office and IPA guidance to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project or programme owner, and a key contact within that organisation</li> <li>• A clear indicative range for project timeframes</li> <li>• Details of the funding model to be used, and the commercial process for procuring during the project</li> <li>• Likelihood of project proceeding to key delivery stages and estimated timeframe ranges</li> </ul> <p>The more consistent the format, information, such as commercial terms and presentation, the easier it is for industry to navigate the key information. A unified format across government departments could be copied across public bodies and modified as necessary, rather than unnecessarily reinvent the wheel.</p>
<b>Short horizons hampering long-term business planning</b>	<p>Prevents businesses from planning effectively and seeing the value of investment. If pipeline timescales are too short, business finds it difficult to make long-term investments in new sites or new technologies.</p> <p>Given the scale of the green transition the UK is undertaking, firms are calling for longer timescales in pipelines, to give industry enough confidence to get best value from the investment, training of staff, planning for equipment etc.</p> <p>CBI transport members have stressed that if firms want to make the right investments in decarbonisation and skills, stable pipelines need to be in place, otherwise people will move on to other sectors. If businesses are to offer longer-term career prospects to their staff, they need long-lasting pipelines to support the programme of work.</p>	<p><b>2. Extend the minimum publication requirement to 3-5 years.</b></p> <p>Businesses welcomed the announcement of the government in 2019 that all departments should look to publish commercial pipelines a minimum of 18 months ahead, while recommending three to five years to be truly effective.</p>
<b>Forecasting and contingency planning introducing additional risks</b>	Forecasting work on some major or megaprojects is challenging due to the risk of rapidly changing circumstances, which then in turn require a rapid change of solutions.	<p><b>3. Regular forecasting updates should be reflected in commercial pipelines, which would make them much more flexible and responsive to external shocks themselves.</b></p> <p>Clear forecasting and improved contingency planning would provide the foundation for businesses to then respond more flexibly to unforeseen demands (such as a pandemic or the emergence of new technology).</p>
<b>Uncertainty about the fluidity of commercial opportunities</b>	Pipelines are very unpredictable, changing last-minute without giving enough notice to industry. If external circumstances change, there is low confidence that projects will actually go ahead.	<p><b>4. Update pipeline frequently as indicating the likelihood of projects proceeding key gateway stages.</b></p> <p>The government should indicate what the priorities are in pipelines, and outline where there is a clear opportunity for private sector investment. This would reduce the risk of conflicts for resources and labour when multiple large-scale projects take place at the same time.</p>

Challenge	Explanation	Solution
<b>Lack of transparency around financing discouraging investment</b>	<p>Specific private sector capital will only be released for investments in projects which are bankable against the relevant equity investor or lending institutions' set of internal requirements.</p> <p>Apart from making the duration of pipelines generally longer, private investors are heavily influenced by the likelihood of a project going ahead. Businesses are aware that external factors can radically change, but they demand certain assurances and updates as to how likely the projects are.</p>	<p><b>5. Distinguish between potential business cases that do not have a completed business case and projects that have been approved.</b></p> <p><b>6. Ensure projects are bankable by providing evidence of a project's social, economic, technical, environmental, and administrative feasibility. Identify funding model and revenue stream.</b></p> <p>The IPA/Cabinet Office should outline the financing streams for the projects listed in the pipelines, and the need to make projects bankable. Members insist that feasibility should no longer be perceived solely in the financial context, but that an environmental consideration has to be made. The IPA/Cabinet Office need to take sustainability as one of the priorities when assessing the feasibility and benefits that can be created from a programme of work.</p> <p>Similar to the IPA's assessment of the likelihood that major projects will achieve their objectives on time and on budget, projects on other public sector pipelines could be awarded a red/amber/green (RAG) delivery confidence rating, informing stakeholders of the current state of a project. If a project remains in the amber or red column for too long, it is in itself an indication for investors and contractors.</p>
<b>Inaccessible format preventing new and old suppliers from identifying opportunities</b>	<p>The format of a pipeline is crucial for understanding it and for investment strategies. Some UK government departmental pipelines only contain minimal information about upcoming commercial projects on a spreadsheet. This reliance on spreadsheets can create challenges for long-term investment decisions in infrastructure that can support growth and achieve levelling up and carbon net zero ambitions.</p>	<p><b>7. Draw on examples of best practice such as the Scottish Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool and Australian pipeline to improve the accessibility and format of central government pipelines.</b></p> <p><b>8. Make pipelines living platforms by investing further in the Crown Commercial Service, so they have the resources and capacity to update their pipelines as live, agile documents.</b></p> <p>Government should use new digital technologies as the basis for publishing pipelines in an accessible digital format, as is the case in the Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool, created by the Scottish Futures Trust. This digital platform should reflect the principles of open data standards and digital accessibility.</p>
<b>Inadequate level of detail raising questions for public bodies</b>	<p>Investors, contractors and members of the supply chain all require different levels of detail in order to plan and deliver effectively. Currently, there is not enough differentiation in the granularity of information for the different audiences.</p>	<p><b>9. Public authorities to tailor information to different stakeholders by offering various levels of granularity to contractors, investors, suppliers and clients.</b></p> <p>Provide a multi-tiered information database for various members of industry, so that they can more easily find and navigate the information they need.</p> <p>The government should look to best practice examples when considering how to improve the support for planning of commercial procurement for industry. Members have expressed that the 'minimal viable pipeline' (MVP) needs to be published in more granular detail to embed outcomes for net zero, sustainability, and environmental enhancements, pointing to the IPA's Transforming Infrastructure Performance Roadmap to 2030.</p>
<b>Outdated projects causing distractions</b>	<p>Some public bodies include in their pipelines projects that have already been completed. This creates confusion for industry in accurate assessment of upcoming work opportunities.</p>	<p><b>10. Break down the data and split commercial pipelines into multiple phases, whereby encouraging earlier and proactive interaction with potential investors.</b></p> <p>The structure of commercial pipelines should be split in multiple phases reflecting the different stages of a project lifecycle, to encourage greater clarity and collaboration with investors and contractors.</p>
<b>Lack of collaboration causing government to reinvent the wheel</b>	<p>Given the limited resource and capacity of departments and the IPA, sharing knowledge and expertise from the market with institutions such as the UKIB will be useful when publishing the National Infrastructure and Construction pipeline.</p>	<p><b>11. The UK Infrastructure Bank to collaborate with the IPA on the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline.</b></p> <p>Given its remit to engage with both private investors and local authorities, it would be useful for pipeline creation, in particular for more nascent markets such as hydrogen or CCUS.</p>
<b>Resource challenges undermining potential opportunities</b>	<p>Government is facing restricted resources and capacity with multiple competing priorities. This often means that programmes of reform, including for commercial pipelines, can be deprioritised and fail to be fully implemented as quickly as needed.</p>	<p><b>12. Invest in supporting commercial reform programmes, including engaging with industry to shape any future policies and ensuring any efforts at reform are utilising existing best practice in other commercial pipelines.</b></p> <p>More resource will ultimately allow pipeline owners implement some of the above recommendations faster and encourage reform beyond scope of this paper.</p>

# Conclusion



Government has an opportunity to leverage the use of commercial pipelines across the public sector to deliver economic growth and better outcomes for businesses, citizens, and communities. This briefing paper provides helpful guidance for improving commercial pipelines and early public-private engagement. It summarises feedback the industry as to what the perceived challenges are, how they impede successful planning and delivery of projects, and what can be done to address these issues.

The CBI recognises the importance of pipelines for the private sector - members state that around 60-70% of the commercial pipelines they utilise are for business-to-business contracts, not public sector projects. The principles that have been discussed in this paper are therefore applicable across both the public and private sectors. As part of our work to champion the reform of commercial pipelines to unlock UK investment, we will begin to open conversations with members about this.

The CBI and the business community are invested in making commercial pipelines work well. Improvements to commercial pipelines would drive higher productivity, better investment in skills and supply chains, and more reliable and efficient delivery of projects. Positive changes to how pipelines are used can also ensure the government achieves its ambitions for a net zero country and a regionally prosperous economy.

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# About the CBI

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Founded by Royal Charter in 1965, the CBI is a non-profit business organisation that speaks on behalf of 190,000 UK businesses of all sizes and from across all sectors, employing nearly 7 million people between them. That's about one third of the private workforce. This number is made up of both direct members and our trade association members. We do this because we are a confederation and both classes of membership are equally important to us.

The CBI's mission is to promote the conditions in which businesses of all sizes and sectors in the UK can compete and prosper for the benefit of all. With offices around the UK (including in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and representation in Brussels, Washington, Beijing and Delhi, the CBI communicates the British business voice around the world.

## **Our mandate comes from our members who have a direct say in what we do and how we do it**

The CBI receives its formal mandate from 9 Regional Councils, 3 National Councils from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland plus 16 sector based Standing Committees. These bodies are made up of members in that region, nation or sector who serve a term of office. The chair of each Standing Committee and Regional and National Council sit on the CBI's Chairs' Committee which is ultimately responsible for setting and steering CBI policy positions.

Each quarter this formal engagement process across the CBI Council reaches over 1,000 senior business leaders across 700 of our members who have a direct say in what the CBI do and how they do it, from refreshing their workplan to discussing the key business issues of the day and re-calibrating its influence. Over 80% of the businesses represented on the CBI Council are outside of the FTSE350 as the CBI represents a wide range of sizes and sectors from the UK business community. This formal governance process is supported by a wide range of working groups, roundtables, member meeting and events that makes the CBI unparalleled at listening to and representing British business.



## CBI Council in numbers

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**1000+**

Committee and Council representatives



**28+**

Regional and National Council and sector based  
Standing Committees



**50%**

Representatives of the CBI Council at C-Suite level



**80%**

Of the CBI Council from non-FTSE 350 businesses

To share your views on this topic or ask us a question, contact:



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