

ATTENDANCE BY MIKE THEELEN AT THE INFRASTRUCTURE NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION UNITED KINGDOM, 16-22 JUNE 2024

1. This report addresses the key learnings and observations from the Infrastructure New Zealand Study Tour – Place Based Solutions: Learnings from the UK - June 2024.
2. The purpose of the tour was to experience and be part of a number of conversations across various sectors (public, private, governmental and NGO) of UK experiences with both devolvement (power sharing) models for local government, and aspects of water reform management in Britain and Wales. The attendees on the study tour included central government representatives, local government offices, and a range of private sector attendees across legal, financing, engineering and planning services.
3. Over the course of 5 days, the delegates had 18 presentations and 3 site visits.
4. The overall shape of the study tour can be broken up into three different approaches: by key areas (City Deals (funding and power sharing)), by sector (water, local government, infrastructure), or by themes (leadership, funding, challenges and opportunities). From a learning perspective, the thematic approach provided the most consistent and useful insights and learning for NZ agencies. In addition to the direct and individual learnings, the study tour provided an opportunity to develop and cement relationships with a number of important parties including DIA and CIP. It was also attended by three of the four high growth councils in NZ (Auckland, Tauranga, Queenstown-Lakes) and provided useful insight and comparison for each of these councils as we collectively and individually navigate what the government may be delivering by way of future reform packages for local government across NZ.

MAJOR CROSS CUTTING THEMES

5. Throughout the course of the week a number of different presentations, often from very different perspectives, offered a sense of insight into key elements that influenced or created success or failure.

LEADERSHIP

6. Leadership for change was the unwritten and unsung hero for many processes and projects. The devolution story across the UK has been 15 years in the making and is nowhere near

perfect or complete. Similarly, the process of change over time has neither been smooth, consistent or easy. While the process of devolution has its roots clearly in some painful economic realities for the UK (highlighted by a frightening lack of economic competitiveness in the UK beyond London) and the evidence that pointed to the lack of economic performance and wellbeing being linked to an overly centric level of control of the economy, and the diminished role of local communities to create their own wealth and futures. In response, what the trip spelt out was that the process to shift the balance away from Westminster/Whitehall to local communities (albeit larger aggregated centres) has been a difficult journey. There have been, in the course of the past 15/20 years, a plethora of centrally led initiatives, grant schemes, and structures to try and lift the economic wellbeing of the UK beyond London. Fifteen different funding and empowerment programmes had variously been in place from 2010 until today, of which the City Deals model has been the most enduring, and only two others remain in play (Levelling Up Fund and UK Share Prospects Fund). The history of these various initiatives has been identified as siloed, centrally led and controlled, and while useful in degree, not enduring in creating change.

7. While we will look at the technical nature of these funds later, what dimension did leadership play in the success of the City Deals model?
8. Cross cutting, enduring (though not necessarily by individuals) and a generally unwavering investment in the vision have been key elements in the success of the model outlined. This has variously required commitment and purposefulness at the central government level (key Ministers/Chancellors) and the Whitehall level (key department leads being prepared to share or devolve central and/or funding) and at the local level.
9. Mayor Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester), provides the pre-eminent example of a person who has been able to command, convene, and carry the debate to Westminster and at the same time, coalesce a series of competing local authority interests (and Mayors) while delivering a series of outcomes that have enabled Whitehall to have confidence (or to run out of reason not to) to devolve considerable power to Greater Manchester. It should be noted that this has not happened quickly, or completely, but had been a 15-year process for Greater Manchester through a series (seven) of City Deals, which has increasingly moved from the transactional to one based on mutually agreed outcomes, and broader fiscal flexibility and empowerment.
10. One of the key leading challenges for the likes of Greater Manchester has been the need to not only champion devolving down but devolving up. Greater Manchester is made up of ten individual councils, the leaders of which each make up the membership of Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Being able to over time navigate the localised and competing interests of individual councils is clearly a major success, helped by the reality that traditionally all but one or two have been consistently councils of a single political persuasion.

11. This sentiment plays into successive government attempts to regionalise local government. One of the key messages coming back in the UK was that larger units of local governance were necessary to provide a weight of investability, and the capacity to make enduring sustainable change. It was also critical for regions to “make sense” and by implication be capable of building a common identity. The typical “travel to work” rule was often cited, and in this context the prospect of regional governance and regional identity at an Otago scale is unlikely to forge the enduring unity of purpose to effect substantive change. Accordingly, the breadth of change from individual councils to NZ scale regionalism is something to be wary of if a strong sense of identity is considered important for success.
12. One of the key leadership challenges and successes was constant positioning over time. The timeframes associated with the devolution programme have taken over a decade. Similarly, the Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) project to construct a new 118 mile rail link was a proposal scoped before the 1998 GFC, an SPV to develop was finally agreed in 2008, and finally made operational in 2024; the builders cited the strong, committed, cross party, and aligned leadership, that assured that the project and its wider benefits were not lost during periods of disinterest in the project. There is a key learning that transformational projects are difficult to land, controversial, but impactful, and rely on enduring commitment for them to succeed.

BUILDING TRUST AND CAPACITY

13. One of the key learnings is the longevity of process, and the need to be deliberate and step slowly and purposefully into the changed relationship between central and local government. When challenged at one presentation about the slow process of devolution it was made clear that the council/s had to build the confidence of Whitehall to let go and had to demonstrate progressing the ability to deliver on both short- and longer-term objectives. The fact that Greater Manchester was entering their seventh City Deal and were only now moving to a point of discussion where the Government and GMCA are considering a Single Settlement Agreement.
14. A key consideration for NZ is that if there is a greater move to localism, that long-term change is likely to be achieved by evolution, not revolution, and that there will be practical limits to how fast and far change can be embraced on both sides. The opportunity for NZ is for both central and local government to actively plan for such a process, based on the experience of the UK and others, but not necessarily seek to circumvent it. Attempting to get there too soon is likely to end badly, but not having an agenda and a goal is likely to leave the City Deals in NZ remaining as transactional funding exchanges, which while practically useful, will fail to realise the longer-term opportunities and potential benefits.
15. The progression of City Deals in the UK needs to be understood in the context of their funding principles which were largely focussed on economic revitalisation and increasing competitiveness, and attracting inward migration. This provided a basis for council to collaborate around (the burning platform), rather than individual capital works projects, and

Opex demands. The four key platforms that the GMCA focussed on (and remains largely focussed on) were Adult Skills development, Transport, Urban Regeneration, and Business Investment. This has evolved over the past 15 years to now also address a net carbon zero outcome. This clearly focussed on issues that could unite, not divide, local councils, and encouraged collaboration.

16. The City Deal model also stands alongside the UK National Infrastructure Commission, whose national focus is on energy prices, potholes, water pollution and punctuality (for the public transport systems). It is not clear how these interact with the City Deals model or the devolved agencies, but despite the City Deals concept there does remain parallel and multiple funding channels.
17. One of the key outcomes of a longstanding and growing trust and capacity has been the evolution and introduction of Single Settlement Agreements, based largely on developing an agreed set of outcomes. The GMCA Single settlement will:
 - Replace individual grants and funding streams
 - Remove the need to bid for funding in scope
 - Address capital and revenue streams
 - Become the default mechanism for funding
 - Enable multi-year funding to be agreed.
18. Some of these benefits reflect the particular funding environment of the UK system, including multiple grant streams to local government (largely contestable), some revenue streams that are currently redistributed to councils from the government, in particular the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) which is used (in addition to rates) to fund councils - this includes a partial redistribution of business rates (we would call that tax) and a redistribution of some business tax to various geographically challenged regions.
19. In addition to these mechanisms, local council taxes fund about 48% of council operations (noting that these are broader than in NZ – Police, housing, education). This, despite being a large proportion in the Europe context, is small in the NZ context where for most councils, rates are the predominant and often sole source of income, apart from NZTA subsidies.
20. Combined Authorities can levy additional precepts on top of council taxes for specific projects. The UK do not, like much of the OECD (not NZ), allow local government to collect a share of income tax, VAT or corporation tax. The whole “build trust” issue is one of significant relevance to NZ councils, and the City Deals discussion is an entry point for NZ. It requires both a maturing of local council leadership and capacity, but also a deliberate re-aligning of how central government relates to local government. The NZ system is very top-down, akin to the UK, but different from the OECD. This suggests that a reliance on the City Deals concept to address this is flawed, and the issue speaks to a wider discussion/debate and direction setting if a changed relationship (and arguably trust to deliver) is achieved.

21. The examples of both the City Deals and Crossrail projects identified additional funding tools that became part of the arrangements with government. The principle is similar to QLDC's ongoing pitch revenue tool. In both cases, the projects were granted additional taxation rights, principally gathered across business rates (business tax). Creating a level of fiscal empowerment and independence is a valuable part of the devolution model.
22. Having digressed, the Single Settlement provides for a consolidated multi-year finding agreement against agreed outcomes vs outputs. In particular, the GMCA deal looks to create additional value from the Single Settlement across six key dimensions:
 - Natural Capital: River Woodlands
 - Social Capital: trust, resilience, relationships
 - Human Capital: health, wellbeing, training
 - Intellectual Capital: innovation, skills, knowledge
 - Manufactured Capital: roads, pipes, infrastructure
 - Financial Capital: cashflow, funding, investment.
23. Describing, agreeing the measures and achieving them, require a level of sophistication in both the expectations of parties and the ability to deliver. Developing a deep and complex benefits realisation model in the NZ context would be difficult due to the lack of experience or the preponderance to measure every output largely through a financial lens. However, in the UK example, the devolution process stemmed from (to varying degrees) the need to lift economic and social performance, and capital, so developing the model to measure this was important. While not touched on through the presentations, how these were to be accounted for was not examined.

VISION AND PURPOSE

24. The third cross cutting theme from the week was Vision and Purpose. It links closely with the other two (Leadership, and Building Trust and Capacity) and the three are part of a traditional three legged stool approach. Elements of this have been touched upon elsewhere in this paper, but why is it important?
25. The overriding message from many speakers was that having a strong vision and reason for action was fundamental in enabling the programme to have purpose, meaning and stickability.
26. At the outset of the devolution process, the driver was the distinct lack of investment competitiveness for key urban centres beyond London, and a recognition that structures and processes, not simply widgets and infrastructure, were elements holding them back. In contrast to many with European jurisdictions, the UK had limited financial independence by local government and historic dependence on either centrally led delivery, or a highly subservient relationship through grants and other programmes. NZ reflects the elements of

dependency to a great extent, and a culture that doesn't pursue growth and development as signals for economic prosperity.

27. A strong vision and purpose needs to exceed the transactional style relationship that marked many of the previous grants arrangements, and arguably are the hallmark of many of the funding models in place across NZ. While the evidence is that for the GMCA, the initial deals were very transactional, the progressive evolution to the Single Settlement Model is more holistically based on an agreed set of outcomes that allow the CA to pool and manage numerous traditional grant sources by Whitehall. This does create a significant onus on those councils to succeed and places many of the larger societal issues for the government back inside local government. While the GMCA has demonstrated success in those areas, it is not evident that this has been evenly spread. It also needs to be noted that keeping the parties in the tent required constant effort based on the reward of acting as a single unit.
28. What is evident was that in the case of Manchester, what was developed was a strong and enduring vision for change, including the economic restoration of the economy, and a long-term investment into education, arts and culture, and connectivity. At a local level, public transport was a key 'demonstration' of success, with the city's bold vision to have the same level of seamless integrated public transport as London. Politically developing, sustaining and practically delivering on the vision would appear to be a key part of the Greater Manchester story remaining relevant.
29. The initial scoping of the challenges and opportunities for Manchester were to apply funding in a manner that focussed on the broader objectives, hence the key focus area of skills, housing, public transport and latterly, carbon neutrality.
30. One of the upsides of the devolution model has been the ability and the necessity to promote local and regional sub-regional collaboration. A high-level vision and purpose has been instrumental in ensuring that the ten contributing councils to the GMCA have remained engaged partly because they are individually incapable of delivering on the key system changes required, and simply due to agglomeration level benefit of collective working. All of the key output areas are relevant across the ten council districts, but their need, opportunity and ability to demonstrate results is only measured at a Greater City or regional level. Once again, the important element of ensuring that the collaboration boundaries 'make sense' has been an important part of setting the pre-conditions for success. This also has considerable relevancy to the NZ situation.
31. An element of the collaboration journey is the significance of creating and sustaining a strong political voice. This is the leadership component, but there is a clear significance of a good and influential leader, but also a strong and established mandate. The Greater Manchester Mayor, like the Mayor of London, have become significant political figures on the national stage, and command a disproportionate level of attention. The flip side of that is their ability to ensure that central government deals positively and respectfully with them. It is of interest that the UK Review on the Covid Response released 18 July 2024, criticised

the government, NHS and the devolved authorities for not dealing well with the pandemic. It highlights both the recognition and the risk of the power being passed down.

32. Another of the key factors of the devolution deals has been the ability to enable enhanced revenue gathering tools for Greater Manchester. It is unlikely that these would have been contemplated or delivered without the Combined Authority (CA) model in place. The tools also required a clear understanding of the purpose of such tools. In the UK space, these tools were often implemented to address gaps in traditional funding pathway to enable the successful delivery of services that were part of the overriding vision and purpose. It was noted, for example, that over 33% of local council revenue was being spent on housing support, which formed part of the CA deals, but had no traditional funding mandate. Once again, this reflects the difference in the UK to many European peers where funding for housing was a key part of a long-established relationship between government and local councils.
33. One of the key by-products of both the devolution journey and the commitment over decades to change is how this has encouraged a diversified field of change. This has increasingly been assisted by unshackling the funding envelopes, so that there is less prescriptive control over how money has been invested. This has supported key new projects such as ID Manchester, which is both urban renewal and a significant investment in the tech sector. It identifies the upside of multiplier effects of both a clear strategy for change, unlocked funding opportunities, and the ability to convene and deliver on change.
34. Overall, a strong sense of vision and purpose has been a significant element in creating a strong and enduring focus and provided a reinforcing message to government and the community, and has played a significant role in delivering change in both the focus and funding basis for councils such as Greater Manchester.

THE WATER DIMENSION

35. One of the strands of the study tour was a number of sessions on water across the UK. Specifically, the tour contrasted both the UK and Welsh water delivery models and experience.
36. The UK model is similar (to a degree) to that proposed for NZ by the previous government. It involves both an independent economic regulator, an environmental regulator, and a water quality regulator. The key difference is that UK water is provided by 14-15 private water companies.
37. The model provides for the economic regulator (OFWAT) to set pricing on a five-year basis, based on plans submitted by the private water suppliers. This invites considerable tension as OFWAT needs to seek to balance the needs of investment proposals of the companies, the environmental standards being set separately, and its goal to drive down retail prices. This has created considerable tensions, and in particular Thames Water, which supports London,

is in a Mexican stand-off with OFWAT, with the owners declining to confirm funding investment until OFWAT confirm what prices they are able to recover. The model is not particularly different to the way electricity is price regulated in NZ and suffers some of the same ebbs and flows of investment.

38. The current debate in the UK highlights many of the same infrastructure problems that occur in NZ, a lack of timely investment in key infrastructure, and regular facilities in local levels of service. Notably there had been no new reservoirs commissioned in the UK in 25 years (these are larger open water bodies, not tank reservoirs, as we define them). There are currently a number being planned or constructed but all face considerable community opposition which is slowing down completion.
39. The UK also has a mixed wastewater and stormwater system. In many urban centres there are Victorian networks which are constantly failing and are discharging contaminated water to streets and waterways. Stormwater (as defined by the UK, not NZ) overflows are a significant national issue. Interestingly, this is also compounded in many centres including London and Manchester by the historic use of waterways, as elements in the Victorian industrial economy both as water, wastewater discharge, and key industrial transport routes. Positioning and changing this scenario across the UK is phenomenally challenging, and ostensibly much more so than in NZ. This challenge is experienced in the system and tension is created between the environmental and economic regulatory and the private water companies.
40. One of the UK's rationale for both private sector ownership and multiple companies is that they can ensure both price competitiveness and drive efficiencies. OFWAT undertakes regular benchmarking of performance by different companies to assist its goal of driving down prices and creating market and regulated efficiencies in the network. This creates tension, and as in the case of Thames Water, threats by the private owners to walk away, which poses the real threat of the network having to be renationalised.
41. The operational model for UK water relies on the private water companies securitising their debts against their customer base (like rates, there is an obligation to pay). There has been concern that companies are over geared but not necessarily making the investment required. Recent changes to OFWAT's powers mean they have a dividend licence control, which better matches the nature of the business as virtual monopolies and supports a focus on longer-term outcomes.
42. Regulatory settings are set on a 5-year basis, which describe outcomes and impose 5-year price controls to match.
43. In addition to service delivery, OFWAT have recently introduced RAPID – Regional Resource Plans - to lead major investment discussions, generally involving multiple providers. This is a government response to the lack of critical major investment by the sector since establishment, and crucially the limited willingness or ability for individual companies to

collaborate on key infrastructure required at a regional or national scale to provide future capacity and resilience.

44. The overall impression was that the system had inherent complexity with the addition of private companies, but that it had driven some efficiencies. The English water system was overall more price effective than the centrally delivered Welsh water model, but as noted above, at some cost to effective intergenerational investment.
45. As part of the trip, the team also met with Water UK, the industry body for the water providers in the UK. The key message they shared was the need for OFWAT to create a stable regulatory environment, and predictably to provide confidence to investors. They noted that the politicisation of the water debate in the UK had made investment unattractive. It is a moot point as to whether the lack of appropriate investment by companies had led to the politicisation of the water debate or vice versa.
46. The case study for centralised water management was presented by Welsh Water. This model sat within the wider Welsh devolution model and was heavily influenced by a desire (explicit and implicit) to deliver in a Welsh way that was different to the wider UK models for water.
47. Welsh Water delivers water to the majority of Wales and has customers in parts of neighbourly England. Where it does, those customers are subject to Welsh law.
48. The Welsh Water model is built on acting like a business, but with a no profit element ensuring that 'profits' are invested into the network. Welsh Water paid great attention to its 'commercial' reputation and the personal reputation of the board of governance, whose desire to protect national and international reputation made them as effective as private sector directors seeking to protect returns for investors. Whether this was real was untested, but the reputational mandate of the Board was the key point of difference.
49. Operationally, the cashflow of Welsh Water remained negative, but the strength of the balance sheet and performance ensured they had a reduced cost of capital, and marginally better interest rates. Performance wasn't necessarily materialised in cheaper costs to consumers, but in consistent investment into the network and infrastructure. It should be noted that the Welsh system was considerably smaller than the aggregated size of the many UK companies, and even smaller than some of the larger individual water companies in the UK.
50. Being able to act as a monopoly enables Welsh Water to implement subsidy models, providing cheaper water to low-income people, based on high charges elsewhere, and internalised subsidy transfers within the business. This reflects both an opportunity from their model, and potentially an inherent cost in the way the service is funded and delivered.
51. Welsh Water also demonstrated significant work in nature-based water management solutions. While not unique to Welsh Water, the implication was that the not-for-profit

driven model was more open to exploring and implementing alternative solutions, in contrast to more cashflow driven organisations.

52. While it is not possible to formulate an absolute view of the pros and cons of both models, the UK model which involves private competition creates additional complexity to the funding, pricing and investment debate. As OFWAT also regulates Welsh Water in addition to the UK services, Welsh Water are also regulated as to price, and possibly benefit from some of OFWAT's ability to drive efficiencies based on national best practice, while ensuring that their profitability is invested back into the network and system.

OTHER STUDY TOUR TOPICS

Crossrail: Transport for London

53. This involved a joint presentation from Crossrail and Transport for London. The discussion reinforced many of the key messages but specifically looked at a major piece of new transport infrastructure for London.
54. This session involved presentation and discussion with both Crossrail and Transport for London (TFL) reps. Key messages out of the discussion were:
55. **Rationale:** The Crossrail project was built on the premise of both improving transport, but equally promoting mode shift (estimated that it attracted an 18% brand new readership), agglomeration benefits at nodes, creating additional system efficiencies, and improved system productivity.
56. **Consistent Vision:** Proposed in the early 2000s, the SPV to deliver the outcome was formed in 2008, and only finally opened in 2022, and fully in 2023. One of the key messages from the presentation was the need for a long-term vision and the endurance to hold with over a range of political and economic cycles.
57. **Market Support**
- London business support was essential and resulted from pressure to ensure the city remained competitive vis Paris and Berlin.
 - The Mayor of London introduced a Business Rate (Tax) Supplement which was a 2p levy on businesses with revenue in excess of 75,000GBP per annum.
 - Two stations on the line were privately funded, one being Canary Wharf. Ultimate cost of delivering the stations and infrastructure far outran the contribution by the private sector partners, and the wider set up, implementation and detailed implementation costs fell to the Crossrail project team.
 - Some development uplifts were obtained but modest compared to what could today be realised. TFL did some work to support above ground building capacity and some joint development rights for above station infrastructure.

- Overall benefits were anticipated to well outweigh developments costs despite these running well over budget. While the development captured some of the economic benefits from the project it was modest in the overall scheme of things.

58. **Key learnings drawn from the programme**

- Clear and consistent expectations to adhere to process.
- Strong clear leaders across the political divide and enduring over time were key to achieving the vision.
- Process will be beset by problems and minor failure in pursuit of the overall goal.
- A relentless focus on the safety and reliability expectations of customers.
- Learning from the best practice of others.
- Building a good team.
- Ensure all parties for the project have skin in the game.
- Dedicating sufficient time to product testing ahead of going live.
- Put Commissioning in the hands of the operators not designers.

VINCI Concessions UK: Private Management of Council Assets: Borough of Hounslow

59. VINCI is the international owner of HEB. The session discussed the concession part of the business with a focus on the current concession model for the Borough of Hounslow.
60. Link: [VINCI finalises financing for Borough of Hounslow highways PFI contract in the UK \(30/08/2012\) - Press releases - Media \[VINCI\]](#)
61. Details include a 25-year contract, valued at 100million GBP, over 5-year revenue period. This addressed system recovery, improvement, and maintenance (including cleaning, asset integration, lighting, planting).
62. Funding came as 350million GBP from the Department of Transport (14million GBP per annum), 250million GBP from the Borough (10million GBP per annum) 15million GBP from TFL.
63. London Borough of Hounslow is required to include agreed inflation after year 5.
64. Programme enabled council to draw down entire contract value and agree a spend programme with VINCI which allowed it to invest surplus income to act as a hedge against indexing cost.
65. **Key Functional Aspects**
- VINCI took total contract for the entire road assets
 - VINCI management became an effective part of the council operations including reporting to council.
 - VINCI had delegated regulatory power in the road controlling space
 - VINCI had access to additional related project work as a preferred provider

- VINCI and council built trust about work programmes and expectation including benefit allocation.
- Significant changes in service by the borough are separately negotiated.

66. **Financial Aspects**

- Funding model provided capitalised funding that was guaranteed for a period of time.
- Upfront funding provided scope for the Borough to manage risk and the contractor to manage expectations.
- Opportunity for the company to bid back and receive some upside in service improvement.
- Some clear caps on expectations and expenditure were key to ensure the VINCI investors were prepared to enter the contract.
- This was still a profit-making venture that came at a cost. The upside to the community was the smoothing of that cost, and the efficiency gains of the procurement and delivery arrangements. It was not evident how this benefit was tested or proven.

SITE VISITS

67. The study tour included a number of site visits which helped break up the balance of the week. These were interesting rather than specifically or significantly informative (at least for me). These were –

Visit to London Gondola

68. Built for the Olympics and initially funded by Emirates, this provides continuous transport between Greenwich / O₂ area etc, and the north side of the Thames. The operators, Doppelmayr, acknowledged that its speed and location continued to make it largely a visitor attraction than a realistic public transportation option. They were, however, confident about housing redevelopment on the north side of the river and the opportunity to extend the line. This may have some relevance to our efforts at promoting an offline transport option, but the scale of the engineering to enable the O₂ gondola to operate is significant and physically dominates the locality, and needs to be looked at cautiously as a networked type of solution or operation in a community like Queenstown.

Site visit to Etihad Stadium, Manchester

69. Specifically looking at the environmental sustainability practice of Manchester City Football Club, but also the integration of being promoted with Manchester train network. The club also touched on its relationship with its local community, and supporting local training and employment.

Visit to Welsh Water, Cardiff Treatment Facility

70. An opportunity to look at the investment being made by Welsh Water into the upgraded treatment plant supporting Cardiff and the surrounding areas.

SUMMARY

71. The study tour provided a very useful opportunity to consider many of the topical issues in NZ around City Deals and water reform from a number of different perspectives. The insights offered greater understanding of the problem definition, but also the key elements, that aside from the technical steps, have become a key part of the journey.
72. The learnings for NZ, and possibly Otago and QLDC, do fundamentally go back to the why and the what, and ultimately the how. There is a risk that in policy settings the focus becomes obsessed with the how. The UK showed examples of plenty of 'how' initiatives that failed to have an enduring positive impact on local government, its role, and its relationship with the central government and its communities. For me in particular, the lessons were about having a clear and deliberate plan that moved slowly but inexorably towards a shared goal and understanding, and that is something that councils, LGNZ, and the government need to think carefully about as it enters this area of debate and decision-making.



Mike Theelen
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Attachment: Infrastructure NZ UK 2024 Delegation Programme