

# JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

ACE WALES SUBMISSION



## ABOUT ACE:

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) is the association for the UK's professional consultancies and engineering companies operating in the social and economic infrastructure sectors.

The ACE champions infrastructure and the built environment to government and other stakeholders, representing the views of around 400 members. Our members employ over 60,000 in the UK and 250,000 worldwide, contributing more than £15 billion to the UK economy. However, the buildings they create actively contribute over £570 billion a year of GVA.

Our **vision** is for a safe, innovative, resilient, and globally competitive UK built environment sector driving economic growth by delivering well-connected, socially valuable, and environmentally sustainable places. Our **mission** is to advocate, anticipate, and educate on behalf of our members. That means proactively engaging with government and stakeholders about challenges and opportunities, ensuring members of all sizes have a voice.

## INTRODUCTION:

In response to the ongoing consultation on the proposed Just Transition Framework and Toolkit for Wales, we are pleased to present our constructive recommendations informed following consultation with ACE Wales members. Our submission seeks to provide a detailed examination of proposals, including the guiding principles, transition planning strategies, and the envisioned toolkit. By addressing these facets, our objective is to contribute to the effective delivery of the Just Transition Framework, ensuring it covers the essential role of engineering expertise in supporting Wales' transition towards a sustainable and resilient future.

### Guiding Principles:

Our response highlights the positive aspects of the guiding principles, acknowledging their effectiveness in facilitating a shared understanding of the just transition. We recommend explicit recognition of the critical role that engineering and consulting expertise play in planning and implementing a just transition. This includes integrating technical assessments and innovative engineering solutions throughout the transition stages.

### Transition Planning:

The proposed approach to planning for different types of transition is welcomed for its comprehensiveness, aligning with the complexity of transitioning to a net-zero economy. Our recommendations emphasise the need to highlight infrastructure development and engineering solutions within each transition context. Specific guidance for consulting engineers would also enhance the integral role they play in transition planning.

### Toolkit Development:

The Just Transition Toolkit has the potential to be a positive guide for practitioners in planning for a just transition in Wales.

## **SUBMISSION:**

### **Question 1: What are your views on the proposed Vision for a Fairer, Greener Wales by 2050?**

#### *Alignment with industry views:*

The proposed Vision for a *Fairer, Greener Wales by 2050* aligns with the industry's overarching commitment to sustainability and responsible development, including much of the work already being undertaken by ACE members. The vision's emphasis on transitioning to Net Zero by 2050 aligns with the industry's recognition of the global imperative to address climate change through urgent decarbonisation efforts. ACE members share the belief that achieving a sustainable future is contingent on collective action, emphasising the need for a collaborative transition involving public, private, and third sectors.

The core principles of partnership and collaboration across sectors, as outlined in the vision, closely mirror the views of ACE members and the broader industry. ACE members recognise the inherent complexity of delivering large-scale projects and advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach in order to ensure efficiency of delivery. They believe that a collective effort, drawing on the expertise of various stakeholders, is fundamental to the success of sustainable initiatives. The industry's commitment to collaborative endeavors is pivotal in navigating the challenges associated with the transition and ensuring the successful realisation of a sustainable Wales.

#### *Technological Innovation and Capacity Building:*

With regards to technological innovation, ACE members are significant stakeholders in advancing sustainable practices. By leveraging their technical expertise, ACE members can drive the development and implementation of cutting-edge technologies in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and green technologies. This includes exploring and adopting innovative solutions such as smart grids, energy-efficient systems, and eco-friendly construction materials.

ACE is currently undertaking research on the impact of technology on the built environment, and we would be happy to share our findings as part of this work. Sustainability emerges as a key focus area for leveraging emerging technologies in the consulting engineering sector. With growing concerns about environmental impact and resource scarcity, there is a heightened demand for sustainable solutions across industries. Emerging technologies offer innovative approaches to address sustainability challenges, from designing energy-efficient buildings to optimising transportation networks for reduced carbon emissions. By prioritising sustainability in their projects and leveraging cutting-edge technologies, members of ACE can contribute to environmental stewardship, meet regulatory requirements, and meet the evolving expectations of clients and stakeholders.

Moreover, capacity building within the workforce is paramount for the successful execution of a just transition. ACE members can actively participate in and advocate for comprehensive training programs aimed at upskilling professionals in the engineering and construction sectors. This ensures that the workforce is not only skilled in traditional engineering practices but also well-equipped to meet the demands of emerging sustainable technologies. Collaborative initiatives with educational institutions and industry partners can facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and ensure a pipeline of skilled professionals ready to contribute to a sustainable economy.

Public Engagement and Awareness:

Effective public engagement and awareness are integral to the success of the transition, and ACE members can act as key communicators in this process. Bridging the gap between technical intricacies and public understanding, our members can communicate complex information in an accessible manner. This involves creating educational materials, conducting public forums, and employing digital platforms to disseminate information about the benefits and challenges associated with the transition.

Moreover, ACE members can actively seek public input in decision-making processes, ensuring that community perspectives are considered. By fostering a transparent and inclusive dialogue, the sector can address concerns, gather valuable insights, and build public support for sustainable initiatives. This collaborative approach not only enhances the credibility of projects but also ensures that they align with the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve.

Knowledge Sharing and Leadership:

The vision's ambition for Wales to become a world leader in the fair transition to Net Zero is highly welcomed by ACE members. They view this as an opportunity to actively contribute to global leadership in sustainability. ACE members can play a pivotal role in realising this vision by engaging in knowledge sharing initiatives. This involves disseminating best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions on a global scale. Participation in knowledge exchange programs and collaborations with international counterpart's positions ACE members as ambassadors for sustainable practices, assisting other regions facing similar challenges. The ambition to share this knowledge and become a world leader is also an important factor when we consider the 'global race' to transition, and the economic benefits of doing so.

**Question 2: What are your views on our proposed approach to just transition in Wales? You may wish to consider: • The use of the WFGA as a guiding framework; • The types of justice included, and whether there are other types of justice or approaches that it could reflect; • Any additional factors you feel should be included in the approach.**

The proposed approach to a just transition in Wales, as outlined in the consultation, is well-received by ACE members, but its application will require scrutiny and review. The following perspectives and considerations have been provided by ACE members during our internal consultations:

Guiding Framework - Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA):

The incorporation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA) as a guiding framework is welcomed for promoting a holistic and sustainable approach. ACE members and industry requires long-term focus, recognising the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors. The industries familiarity with the WFGA has increased over recent years, therefore aligning the guiding framework to the Act is a logical first step. To strengthen the framework, there should be an explicit inclusion of technological innovation and infrastructure development. This ensures that engineering solutions play a central role in achieving the well-being goals, aligning with the industry's expertise and capabilities.

Engagement and Inclusivity:

The commitment to involving a broad range of stakeholders, including those with protected characteristics, people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and children and young people, is acknowledged as essential. This also aligns with the principles of inclusive decision-making, crucial for successful project implementation within the built environment. ACE members propose enhanced collaboration in the engagement process to leverage technical expertise. This collaboration ensures that engineering solutions align with community needs and contribute to positive social outcomes, promoting a more effective and informed implementation.

Application in Different Scenarios:

The recognition that the universal approach can be applied in various scenarios, including spatial, sectoral, or organisational, is valued. This approach allows for flexibility in adapting the approach to different contexts and challenges. To ensure effective implementation within the engineering context, specific guidance on tailoring the approach may be required. Sector-specific considerations can guide ACE members and others in applying the proposed principles to achieve tangible and sector-relevant outcomes. This could take the form of 'best practice' examples, rather than specific guidance.

**Question 3: What are your views on the overarching structure of the proposed framework? You may wish to consider:**

- **Appropriateness of the structure for communicating our approach and actions for a just transition;**
- **Any additional elements you feel should be included.**

The proposed overarching structure of the Just Transition Framework, from the perspective of ACE members, appears to offer a robust foundation for coordinating and communicating the approach and actions for a just transition in Wales. While members have acknowledged the potential of the structure, they have included a series of possible considerations for government.

Appropriateness of the Structure:

The structured approach, integrating just transition into decision-making, building an evidence base, and promoting collaboration, aligns with best practices in project management and policy development. It recognises the multifaceted nature of a just transition. Emphasising the role of engineers within the framework is essential to ensure it can be related to, and used by, the industry. There is an opportunity for the framework to clearly outline how the sector can contribute to decision-making processes, evidence building, and collaborative efforts. This explicit recognition reinforces the integral role of engineering expertise in successfully implementing a just transition.

Additional comments:

The framework should incorporate a dedicated section addressing the integration of technology and innovation in achieving a just transition. ACE members bring insights into cutting-edge technologies and sustainable engineering practices that can significantly contribute to the success of the transition. We have referenced our ongoing work in this area during earlier questions of this consultation.

Similarly, the framework should aim to integrate a specific focus on planning for infrastructure resilience. Given the potential impacts of climate change, resilient infrastructure planning is critical. ACE members, with their expertise, play a pivotal role in designing and implementing infrastructure solutions that can withstand future challenges. Aligned to this, there is an opportunity for the framework to include a clear

strategy for risk mitigation and contingency planning. ACE members and the sector are well-positioned to conduct risk assessments related to infrastructure projects and propose strategies to mitigate potential negative impacts on communities and stakeholders. We are aware of the Welsh Government's ongoing work to develop a new national climate resilience strategy, due to be published later this year – there is an opportunity to align this strategy with the just transition framework.

**Question 4: What are your views on the guiding principles? You may wish to consider:**

- How effectively the principles will integrate the just transition into decision making;
- Whether these principles would be of use to organisations outside of the Welsh Government;
- How organisations might use or apply these principles to integrate the Just Transition into decision making;
- Whether the principles have any gaps or omissions;
- The link between the principles and the WFGA.

The guiding principles outlined for integrating the just transition into decision-making, from the perspective of ACE members, are well-considered and align with the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach. ACE members, during our consultation, have also highlighted further areas for consideration:

*Effectiveness in Integrating Just Transition into Decision-Making:*

The guiding principles effectively facilitate a shared understanding of the just transition and provide a solid foundation for planning and decision-making. The emphasis on a cohesive and effective transition aligns with the complexity of engineering projects, where integration is essential for success. The Welsh Government should ensure that the principles explicitly acknowledge the role of engineering and consulting expertise in the planning and implementation of a just transition. This could involve highlighting the importance of technical assessments and innovative engineering solutions in achieving the outlined goals.

*Relevance to Organisations Outside of Welsh Government:*

The principles have the potential to be valuable for organisations beyond the Welsh Government. They offer a transferable framework that can be adapted to different contexts and sectors, including private companies and consulting engineering firms. It is important to encourage collaboration with external organisations, including ACE members, to ensure that the principles are widely adopted and adapted to specific industry needs. This collaboration can enhance the principles' applicability and effectiveness in diverse settings.

*Potential gaps:*

ACE members believe it is important to ensure that the principles explicitly address the integration of technological innovation and sustainable engineering practices. The Welsh Government should consider adding a specific principle related to technology and innovation to underscore the role of cutting-edge engineering solutions in achieving a sustainable and just transition. This could include language emphasising the importance of adopting green technologies and low-carbon engineering practices.

**Question 5: What are your views on the proposed approach to planning for different types of Transition? You may wish to consider:**

- The different types of transition outlined;
- What processes should be used to integrate just transition into decision making;
- Additional contexts or situations where planning for a just transition will be required;
- Any additional factors you feel the Welsh Government should be including in the approach.

In responding to this question, members have proposed a series of recommendations to the Welsh Government. These include:

Different Types of Transition Outlined:

The identification of various transition contexts, including geospatial or sectoral, organisational, policy development, reflects a nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges associated with a just transition. Government should emphasise the importance of infrastructure development and engineering solutions within each transition context.

Additional Contexts or Situations for Planning:

The acknowledgment of the need for a holistic view that considers multiple sectors within, and outside Wales is forward-looking and important. A comprehensive approach allows for better coordination and understanding of the interconnected nature of transitions. We would recommend using the framework as an opportunity to highlight the importance of cross-border collaboration, especially in contexts where transitions involve multiple regions (North East Wales in particular). ACE members can contribute by fostering collaboration with international counterparts, sharing best practices, and contributing to sustainability goals.

As part of the proposed approach, ACE members also recommend the following:

- **Technological Roadmaps:** Develop technological roadmaps that outline the evolution of key technologies contributing to the just transition. ACE members can contribute by providing insights into emerging technologies, their feasibility, and potential integration into different transition contexts.
- **Collaboration Platforms:** Establish collaborative platforms that facilitate communication and information-sharing among diverse stakeholders, including consulting engineers, policymakers, community representatives, and businesses. This can enhance coordination and foster innovative solutions.
- **Circular Economy Principles:** Emphasise these principles in transition planning. The sector can contribute by designing infrastructure projects with a focus on resource efficiency, recycling, and reducing waste, aligning with circular economy principles.
- **Climate Resilient Design:** Integrate climate-resilient design principles into infrastructure projects. ACE members can contribute by ensuring that projects are resilient to climate-related risks, such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and temperature changes.

**Question 6: What are your views on the proposed lenses from which to explore the economic, cultural and environmental impacts and opportunities arising from transition? You may wish to consider: • Impact and Opportunities across our Emission Sectors over time; • Impacts and Opportunities on Employment and Business; • Impacts and Opportunities for different groups of society; • Impacts and Opportunities in different parts of Wales; • Any additional factors you think should be considered.**

Infrastructure Resilience:

Assessing the resilience of both existing and future infrastructure is a critical consideration in the transition planning process. This includes an examination of the capacity of infrastructure to endure and adapt to the impacts associated with the transition. Vulnerability to climate change, potential disruptions during the transition, and the implementation of adaptive measures constitute essential components of this evaluation. By ensuring infrastructure resilience, particularly in the face of climate-related challenges, the long-term functionality and sustainability of critical infrastructure are safeguarded, aligning with the overarching goals of a just transition.

*Innovation and Technology Adoption:*

Exploring opportunities for innovation and technology adoption across different sectors is critical. ACE members can play a pivotal role in identifying and championing the development and implementation of new technologies. By aligning these technologies with the broader objectives of the just transition, ACE members could contribute significantly to the transformative journey toward a sustainable and technologically advanced future.

*Life Cycle Assessments:*

Incorporating life cycle assessments into the evaluation of transition strategies is highlighted by ACE members as a crucial aspect. They provide a comprehensive analysis of the environmental impacts of different actions, guiding decision-makers toward options with lower overall environmental footprints. This data-driven approach contributes to a more sustainable and informed decision-making process, aligning with the principles of the just transition.

**Question 7: What are your views on the proposed leadership, collaboration and roles and responsibilities for delivering a Just Transition? You may wish to consider: • The Welsh Government; • The UK Government; • Team Wales; • Within individual organisations; • Communities; • Academia and educators; • Any other stakeholders you feel should be included.**

*Welsh Government:*

From the viewpoint of ACE members, the Welsh Government's commitment to leading the development of an approach to a just transition is welcomed. The integration of just transition into national climate policies demonstrates a holistic understanding of the interconnected challenges associated with this complex process. However, it is crucial for the Welsh Government to ensure a transparent and inclusive co-design and co-delivery process. This involves actively involving stakeholders at various levels to foster collaboration, garner diverse perspectives, and ensure that the transition strategies align with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

*UK Government:*

The proposed leadership and collaboration approach acknowledges the significant role of the UK Government in delivering a just transition, particularly in areas such as welfare and trade. The willingness to collaborate with the UK Government on reserved matters is a positive aspect that reflects a commitment to a coordinated approach. Effective communication and collaboration mechanisms between the Welsh Government and the UK Government are essential. Ensuring alignment of efforts and leveraging available



resources through clear channels of communication will be critical for the success of the just transition process.

### Team Wales:

The Team Wales approach, encompassing public service bodies, businesses, and voluntary sector organisations, promotes a collaborative and integrated effort. The encouragement of collaborations within Team Wales for addressing just transition within their plans is a positive step toward fostering a collective commitment. However, for the success of Team Wales, effective communication and coordination among diverse stakeholders are paramount. Emphasising shared objectives, mutual support, and a cohesive understanding of roles and responsibilities will be essential to harness the full potential of Team Wales.

### Individual Organisations:

Recognising the pivotal role of individual organisations, including businesses, local authorities, public bodies, and third sector, is a strength of the proposed framework. Encouraging these to use the framework to initiate or update plans for a just transition is proactive and aligns with the distributed nature of responsibilities. To enhance the effectiveness of individual organisations, there is a need for support in building knowledge and capacity for a just transition. Establishing mechanisms for sharing best practices ensures a collaborative learning environment, fostering continuous improvement and innovation.

**Question 9: What are your views on the proposed toolkit? You may wish to consider: • How you/your organisation might utilise a toolkit; • Any additional elements which could be included to help planning for a just transition; • How the toolkit can be designed to be of maximum value to different types of stakeholders planning for a just transition. • Any online tools and case studies that you feel could be part of the toolkit.**

The success of the toolkit lies in its practicality, adaptability, and relevance to engineering projects. By including specific tools, addressing additional elements, and incorporating online resources and case studies, the toolkit can become an indispensable resource for practitioners navigating the complexities of a just transition in Wales.

### Utilisation of the Toolkit:

ACE members could leverage the toolkit as a practical guide for integrating transition principles into their projects. This involves aligning infrastructure development with the toolkit's emphasis on decarbonisation, evidence-based planning, fairness, and global responsibility. The toolkit should offer tangible tools and frameworks that the sector can incorporate into their decision-making processes. This could include checklists, assessment methodologies, and planning templates tailored to the engineering sector.

### Online Tools and Case Studies:

The toolkit could incorporate online tools, such as interactive carbon calculators or simulation models, allowing the sector to assess the environmental impact of different project scenarios. Curating a repository of relevant case studies showcasing successful transition practices within the engineering sector can offer valuable insights and inspiration for ACE members. These case studies should cover diverse project types, sizes, and geographical contexts.

**Question 12: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

Public-Private Partnerships:

Leveraging public-private partnerships is a key strategy to enhance the effectiveness of just transition initiatives. By fostering collaborations between government entities, private enterprises, and civil society organisations, the toolkit can tap into diverse resources, expertise, and funding mechanisms. Public-private partnerships offer a unique opportunity to combine the strengths of different sectors, accelerating the implementation of sustainable projects and ensuring a more balanced distribution of responsibilities and benefits. This collaborative approach fosters innovation and resilience within the transition process.

Technological Innovation Roadmaps:

Developing technological innovation roadmaps within the toolkit is instrumental in guiding ACE members and other stakeholders. These roadmaps should outline the evolution of key technologies contributing to the just transition, offering insights into their feasibility, adoption, and potential integration into different transition contexts. By providing a structured approach to technological advancements, the toolkit has the potential to empower stakeholders to stay at the forefront of innovation, fostering the adoption of cutting-edge engineering solutions and sustainable practices.

