

MANIFESTO

2023



*Delivering a safe, innovative,
resilient and globally competitive
built environment sector in Wales.*

Foreword CEO

Following the launch of ACE's three-year Blueprint and publication our UK Manifesto, I am pleased to introduce ACE's Manifesto for Wales, outlining the Built Environment sector's policy aspirations for 2023 and beyond.

Wales is a country of huge potential, with a proud history of innovation and engineering excellence. From the construction of bridges and buildings, to the development of cutting-edge renewable energy projects, Wales has long been at the forefront of the engineering industry.

ACE members have a central role in unlocking Wales' potential, through the delivery of the infrastructure projects which will underpin future success of Wales. Whether it be the development of new transport links, the expansion of renewable energy generation, or the upgrading of existing infrastructure, our work is essential to the nation's economic growth and social well-being.

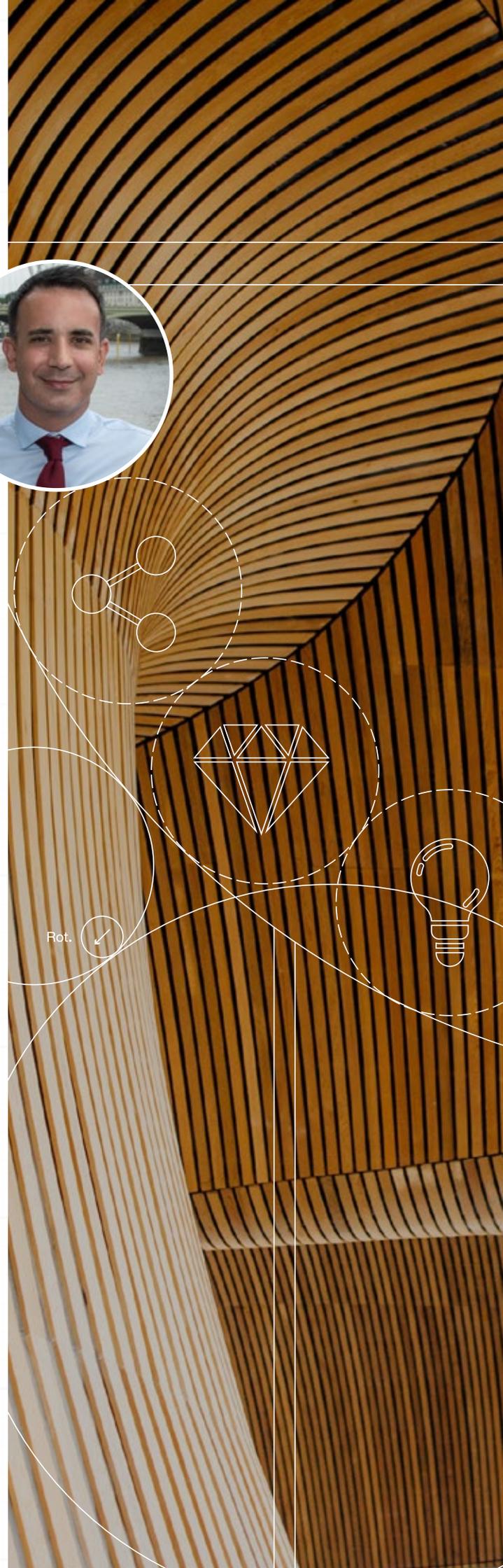
This manifesto sets out our asks of policy makers. It outlines the challenges that we face, including the need to develop a more sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and the opportunities that lie ahead, such as the development of new technologies and the expansion of the green economy.

As the business association for the Built Environment sector, we will continue to champion our members' work and ensure all political voices readily understand that, given a competitive business environment, our sector will unlock economic growth, create jobs, and nurture opportunity for all.

ACE Wales looks forward to working with you to make this happen.



Stephen Marcos Jones
CEO



Foreword ACE Chair



Wales is a country of great opportunity, with a diverse economy and a proud history of innovation and engineering excellence.

As consulting engineers, we have a crucial role to play in unlocking this potential, by providing the technical expertise and innovative solutions that are essential to delivering infrastructure projects that support Wales' economic growth and social progress.

The creation of a Climate Change Department within the Welsh Government, underpinned by the Future Generations Act, means the whole sector is having to think differently.

This manifesto document highlights the important role that consulting engineers play in Wales, and sets out a clear vision for the future of the industry. It outlines the challenges that we face, including the need to develop a more sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and the opportunities that lie ahead, such as the expansion of the green economy and the development of new technologies.

As a committee, we are committed to working with stakeholders across Wales to ensure that the engineering industry continues to drive economic growth and social progress.

We are proud to represent the best of the consulting and engineering industry, and we are dedicated to promoting the interests of our members and the wider industry in Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Attwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Attwood
Chair, ACE Wales

Introduction

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) champions infrastructure and the built environment to government, industry and other stakeholders.

Our members employ over 60,000 in UK and 250,000 worldwide, contributing more than £15 billion to the UK economy. However, the buildings and structures they deliver actively contribute over £570 billion a year of GVA. Our members operate right across Wales and contribute significantly to the Welsh economy.

Our **2023 Wales Manifesto** provides a foundation for working with the Welsh Government, Welsh Parliament, and others for ACE to deliver a safe, innovative, resilient and globally competitive Welsh built environment sector on behalf of its members – against a backdrop of economic uncertainty.

Whether building a diverse and inclusive workforce, delivering social value, improving procurement practices, rethinking risk, or encouraging new technology and innovation, this Manifesto provides realistic recommendations, and an overarching ambition for greater collaboration to achieve these goals.

These are increasingly turbulent political and economic times, yet all recent administrations have committed to supporting infrastructure delivery. This Manifesto provides a basis for the current and future administration to support the sector in unlocking the potential in Welsh transport, energy, flood resilience, water, waste, and digital networks.

Innovation, people and social value

If we are to grow and transition our economy, innovation will play a critical part in making that happen. However, the current reality is of a fragmented and inconsistent approach to innovation, increasing challenges over IP, cost, awareness and adoption. We must also recognise that the international market poses both an opportunity and a risk to the sector right across Wales.

Our manifesto recommendations aim to drive best practice in innovation, and ensure that the Welsh Government plays an active role in creating the conditions to support the sector to be a strong player in an internationally competitive marketplace.



The built environment is not alone with challenges around **people and skills**. We know of the recruitment and retention challenges, the lack of sector-specific data, and inconsistent workplace cultures. Recommendations from across our advocacy groups are aimed at ensuring government can support the delivery of a reliable and diverse talent pool to serve both the immediate and future needs of our industry.

At the heart of all our members' projects is the positive impact it has on local communities in all parts of Wales. We also know that **social value** can be an ambiguous concept – difficult to measure, and there continues to be low community engagement in too many areas.

At this current moment in time, many public and private procurement opportunities are focused on price rather than value. Our members in Wales have supported the development of practical solutions as part of this Manifesto, agreeing to develop a set of metrics, language and approaches which will deliver social value.

Finally, to deliver any project, **excellence and risk** need to be carefully considered as part of the procurement process. In practice, quality tends to be measured by cost rather than value.

It is also difficult for new companies to attain recognition on the project frameworks of major clients, and the perception of risk has not evolved with the current industry reality – leading to a disproportionate burden on companies. Some of the practical solutions outlined in this Manifesto will ensure continuous quality improvements across the supply chain, support procurement activities, and promote a competitive market.

Recommendations in this Manifesto have been formulated following **discussions at the ACE Wales Committee**. The Committee feeds into the delivery of ACE's three-year Blueprint and ACE will be working with the Welsh Government and other policymakers to make the ambitions in this Manifesto a reality. In a noisy policymaking and political space, it will ensure we have a distinct voice in debates around Net Zero, regional development and levelling up, and skills.



People

A reliable and diverse talent pool to serve the future needs of our industry.



Social value

A common language and approach to delivering social value across the sector which understands and meets the needs of communities.



Excellence

Continuous quality improvement across the supply chain supporting procurement activities and promoting a competitive market.



Risk

A transparent, fair and proportionate appraisal of risk that supports and drives the use and uptake of standard tools.



Innovation

The right conditions to support the UK sector to be a stronger player in an internationally competitive market for new technology.



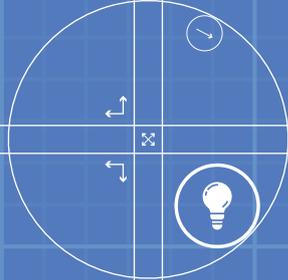
Association

A relevant, resilient and sustainable business association dedicated to serving its members regionally, nationally and internationally.

Blueprint (2022-2025)

[Click here to view the ACE's Blueprint.](#)





Innovation

Current reality

- A fragmented and inconsistent approach to innovation.
- Challenges over IP, cost, awareness and adoption.
- International market a risk.

2025 Ambition

The right conditions to support the Welsh sector to be a stronger player in an internationally competitive market for new technology.

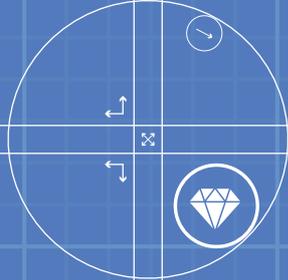
Challenge

Innovation presents an opportunity to encourage new entrants to the sector, to decarbonise businesses and the projects they design or produce and work towards modernisation.

Innovation was noted to be challenging throughout all member organisations within the ACE from SMEs to large-scale organisations. Members raised concerns over the Government locking in one technology and were additionally cautious over the development of new methods and technologies and the need to ensure flexibility in approach. Specifically, problems were noted with a lack of space to innovate as well as a lack of reward for innovating.

Recommendation 1: Remain flexible in policy measures and strategies to include new technologies and modern methods such as digitalisation and carbon-reduction technology.

Recommendation 2: Drive forward collaborative research and development partnerships, allowing for demonstrator projects or even pre-project simulations to allow businesses a safe space to experiment and test their innovations.



Excellence

Current reality

- Quality measurement tends to be eclipsed by cost rather than value.
- Difficult for new companies to attain recognition on project frameworks of major clients.

2025 Ambition

Continuous quality improvement across the supply chain supporting procurement activities and promoting a competitive market.

Challenge

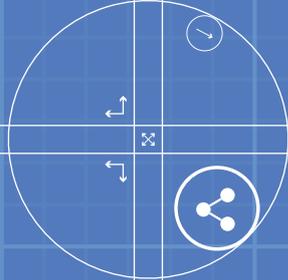
Excellence is key for our members who are continually striving to improve their internal processes, and it is vital the Welsh Government is as supportive as possible in this area to ensure Wales has a comfortable footing in a globally competitive market.

Members noted a lack of uptake of the Construction Playbook which differs from its use more widely in England. Furthermore, members noted a lack of clarity in relation to funding such as understanding how local authority funding works, TCF funds, and RIS3. A more collaborative approach to funding would lead to greater efficiency for all those involved across the supply chain.

Recommendation 1: Publishing a clear pipeline of infrastructure projects to provide clarity for the industry in relation to future planning and the delivery of infrastructure.

Recommendation 2: Provide greater clarity on how to access funding at all levels (local authority, framework, national).

Recommendation 3: Promote the use and wider adoption of the Construction Playbook.



Social Value

Current reality

- Social value is an ambiguous concept, and difficult to measure.
- Low community engagement continues.
- Focus still on price vs. value.

2025 Ambition

An agreed set of metrics, language, and approaches to delivering social value across the sector.

Challenge

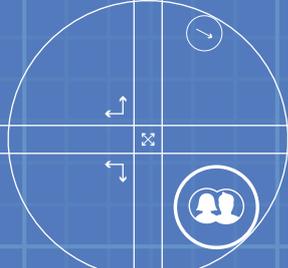
Social Value in Wales lacks a clear definition among Government, ACE members, clients, and the wider industry. This lack of clarity results in an inconsistent approach to social value and means it is often seen as a box-ticking exercise.

Additionally, where existing policies are in place these are not monitored or enforced efficiently resulting in an inability to reach their full potential. The Built Environment Sector produces social value at all levels and stages, and it is vital more guidance and clarity on how evidence for this is provided.

Recommendation 1: Promote the use and wider adoption of the Value Toolkit.

Recommendation 2: Retain a clear position and the direction of travel in relation to social value and a cohesive approach to evidencing this within bids utilising a single TOMS model.





People

Current reality

- Severe challenges in recruitment and retention.
- A lack of sector-specific data.
- Inconsistent workplace cultures.

2025 Ambition

A reliable and diverse talent pool to serve the future needs of our industry.

Challenge

In order to reach a number of the Welsh Government, UK Government and our member's goals, it is imperative that our member's individual businesses and other stakeholders that they collaborate with are sufficiently staffed with a happy workforce. Specifically looking into 2023, members have noted issues with a high turnover of staff with it being evident that clients were also struggling with staffing issues and retention.

The industry has raised particular challenges with young entrees into the sector, specifically due to different funding for degree-level apprenticeships and the need to revisit courses and specifics within these.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen financial support for Degree level 6 apprenticeships to align with similar interventions made in England to encourage new entrees into the sector.

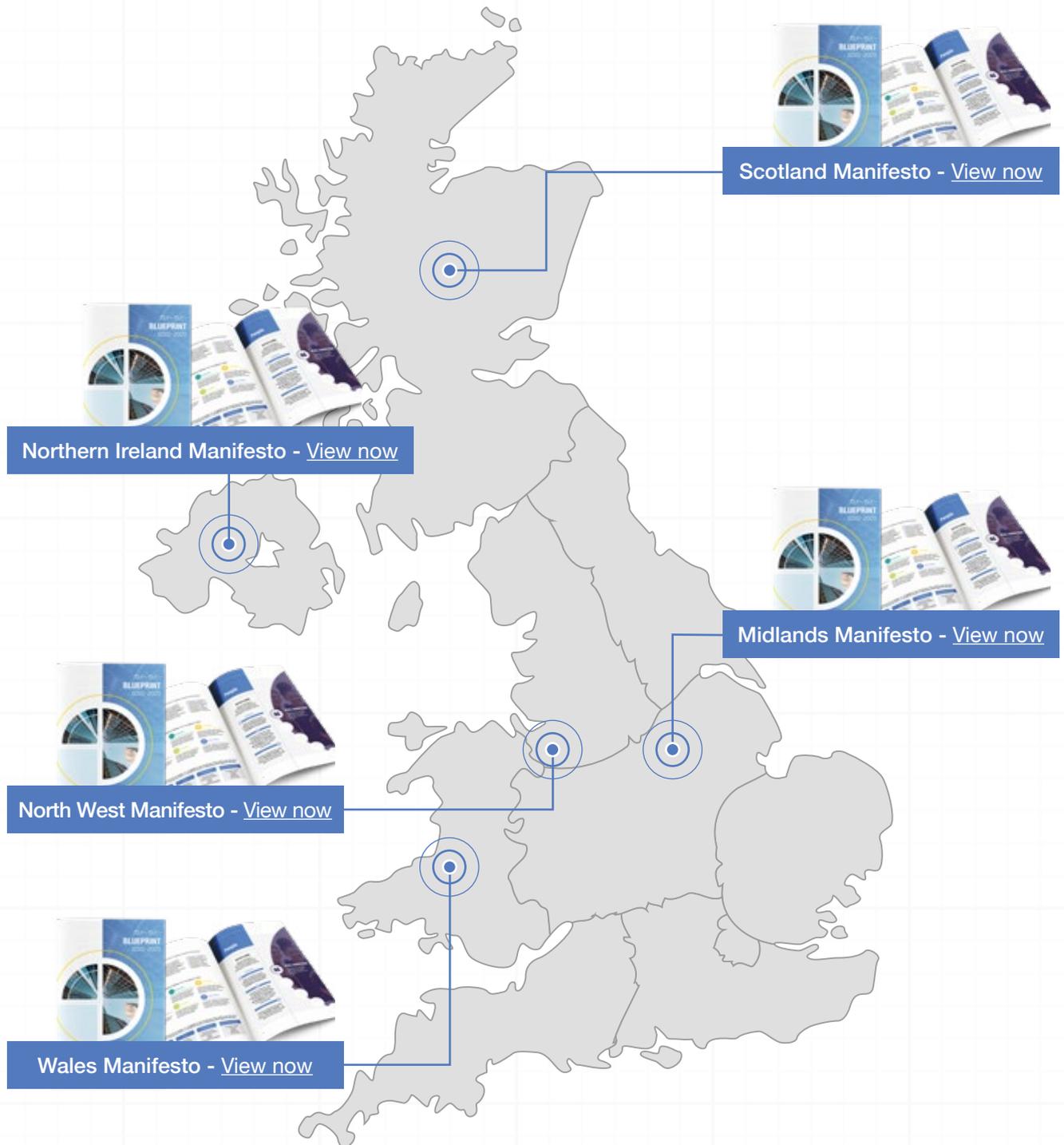
Recommendation 2: Ensure that skills and the workforce are prioritised in Government funding and planning in relation to achieving the goals of the Future Generations Act.

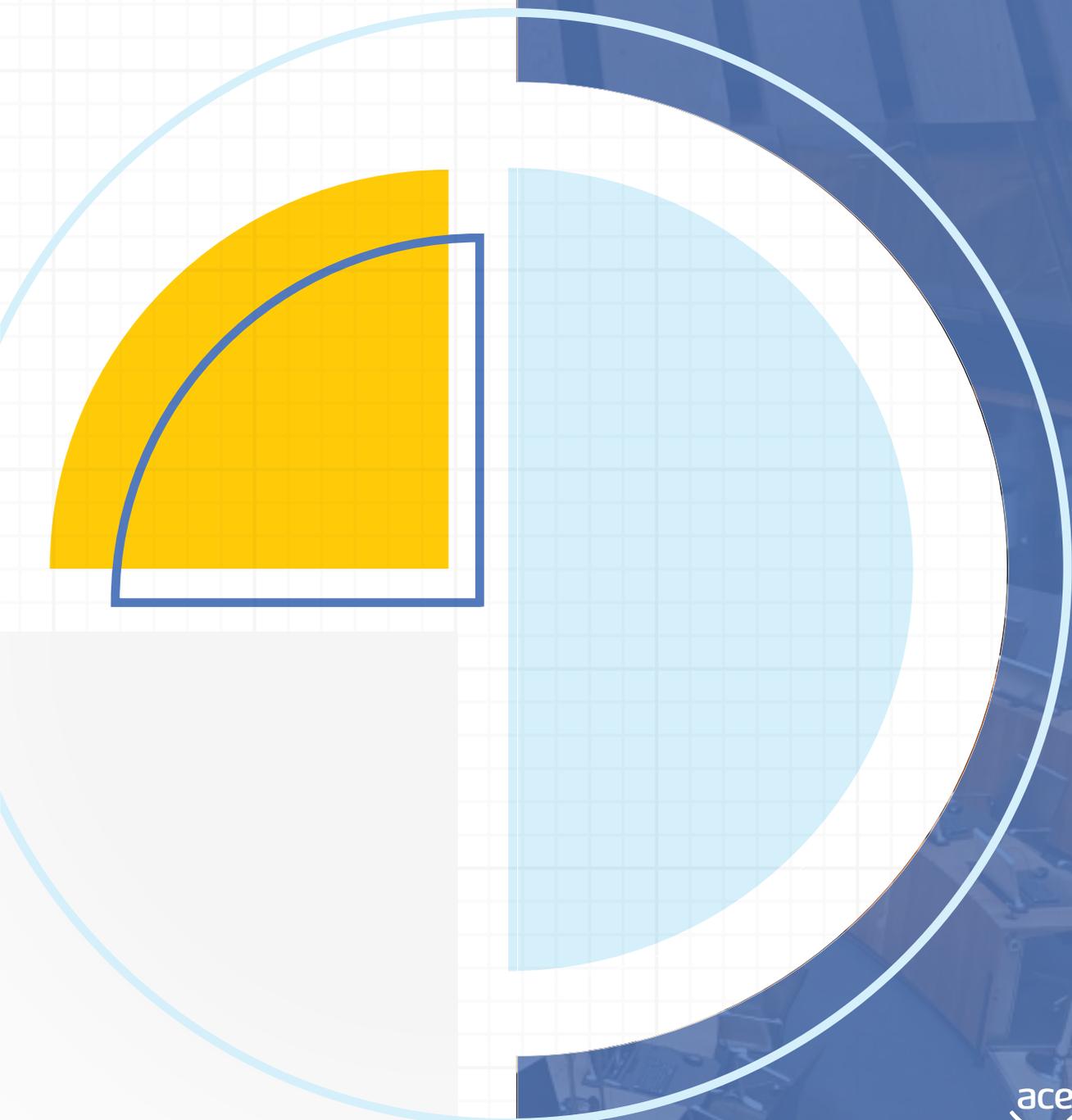


ACE Policy

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) is a UK professional organisation that advocates for the interests of consulting and engineering companies. As part of its advocacy efforts, the ACE has published a series of manifestos across the UK that promote the importance of investing in infrastructure to improve the economy.

These manifestos typically include recommendations for policymakers and analysis of trends and challenges in the infrastructure sector. To coincide with this manifesto, ACE has published a [UK-wide manifesto](#).





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