

Danish approach to infrastructure delivery a lesson for NZ

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"The Danish parliament's decision, just announced, to build an underwater tunnel to Germany, cutting road and rail journey times between western Europe and Scandinavia provides a lesson to New Zealand on how to deliver environmentally sustainable visionary infrastructure investment", says New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development chief executive, Stephen Selwood.

"This is a bold and exciting project for Scandinavia and northern Europe. It demonstrates a distinct difference in approach to strategic planning and investment in Scandinavian countries that New Zealand can learn from", Selwood says,

NZCID has recently published a report entitled "Insights for New Zealand: Infrastructure Development in Comparative Nations" co-written by Selwood and Paul Buetow, Infrastructure Partner at law firm Kensington Swan, following a study trip to Canada and Europe. The report provides understanding of how comparable economies (in size, population, social and environmental ethos) such as British Columbia in Canada, Denmark and Sweden have managed to build impressive high quality infrastructure to support economic growth whilst enhancing their social and sustainability agendas.

"Not limited at the outset by conceived constraints about funding, governance or planning approvals, each of these countries have set an 'ambitious outcome-focused vision' for national development and then determined how best this can be funded and delivered", Selwood says.

"There is no compunction to using tolls to raise revenue to fund necessary investment and they are investing heavily in both road and rail infrastructure. In Sweden they have imposed congestion charging in Stockholm and Gothenburg to manage traffic demand, promote a shift to alternative transport modes and raise funds for new investment.

"In Denmark the government wants to ensure the country is connected to Sweden and mainland Europe through the construction of road and rail bridges and tunnels. Two major links have been constructed so far; the Great Belt Bridge linking Zealand to mainland Europe and the Oresund combined bridge tunnel link between Denmark and Sweden.

"Now, the Danish Parliament has just rejected plans for a bridge across the Fehmarn Strait in favour of a tunnel to link Denmark and Germany, deciding it would be safer and greener.

"In return for funding the tunnel, Denmark will have ownership and will collect tolls to repay the debt necessary to fund construction of the tunnel", Selwood says.

"A feature of all countries we visited on our study trip was the strong political support for, and direction on, infrastructure planning at both a national and local level.

"The report highlights the need for politicians to build consensus and clearly articulate their vision for their country or their region; the need for long term strategic planning which clearly sets out how that vision will be achieved; the link between vision, planning, funding and investment; the importance of across government, bi-partisan consensus decision making; the value of early political involvement in the consultation and decision making process and the critical importance of aligned central and local government decision making", say Buetow and Selwood.

"These are all important lessons for New Zealand", Selwood says.

"The difference between these countries and New Zealand is that they have identified a very clear strategic direction, and supported that by a fully funded investment plan that has multi-party support across parliament.

"It is critical that the next iteration of the National Infrastructure Plan and the Auckland and other regional spatial plans currently under development all positively contribute to aligned planning, funding and delivery at of infrastructure at both the national and regional levels". Selwood says.

A copy of the report can be down loaded [here>](#)

For further information contact:

Stephen Selwood
Chief Executive

+64 21 791 209
+64 9 2714445

The BBC story is available here:

Fehmarn link: Denmark opts for sea tunnel to Germany

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