SUSTAINABILITY DELIVERY SUMMIT

Harnessing Disruption to Deliver Resilient Infrastructure

JUNE 9 - 11, 2025 | CHICAGO, IL

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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Key Takeaways

Introduction

Emma Chynoweth
Editorial Director

This year's Summit took place at a pivotal time, when the foundations of environmental progress are under pressure. Yet the expertise, resilience and leadership within our community continue to stand strong.

These takeaways, compiled by the Environment Analyst content team, provide a comprehensive summary of every session at the Summit. Whether you missed a session or want to catch up on parallel discussions, you'll find all the essential insights here.

Feel free to share this download with colleagues, and we'd love to hear your feedback.

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Monday
9 June

Environment Analyst Market Data – Trends & Forecast plus Q&A Discussion

Ross Griffiths, *Managing Director*, Environment Analyst
Indrė Jakaitytė, *Research and Data Manager*, Environment Analyst

Summary:

The presentation centred around Environment Analyst's recent Global and US Environment & Sustainability Consultancy Market Assessments, including overall market trends for 2023, service and client area details, key drivers, and the impact of M&A activity (30% of 2023 acquisitions were in the US).

It included a view of the top 35 market players and market leaders by geographies. And the leaders of the US market – including Jacobs, Tetra Tech and AECOM.

Considering the roll back of federal funding, it was noted that Environment Analyst's market assessment shows that 40%-70% of the top four companies' revenues are based on work from federal and local governments.

There was a review of the first 140 days of the Trump presidency, and assessment of polarisation on US environmental and sustainability policy between federal and state legislators.

The question was asked: "Are we facing a sustainability recession?"

With rising economic concerns, poorly defined ESG has become an unwanted overhead. Current constraints are difficult for consultants to respond to – they need to control their bottom line.

The global E&S consultancy market is forecast to reach $83bn revenue in 2028. It is difficult to forecast the US market. (The original market assessment predicted $41bn of revenue, but has now been adjusted to $34.7bn for the North American market – or $29.2bn for the US by 2028.)

Actions in order to adapt to the current US situation:

- Follow the opportunities, do what you do best – growth markets (energy, power transmission), critical mission solutions (AI, data centres), remediation and regeneration (PFAS), water resilience and resources.
- Repurpose underutilised staff, nurture your staff (combat disillusionment).
- Prepare for a fractured landscape globally, identifying organisations committed to sustainability.
- Communicate the true value of your project work. Value-driven service offerings (slide 85) avoid being commoditised ie compliance driven.
- Rise to the challenge. Embed the business case into everything now.

Audience comments:

- There is an opportunity for consultants to connect with communities – work for clients can be better embedded in them. Reclaim hope within communities/neighbours. Volunteer in local communities.
- Engineers and scientists – we have to become story tellers.

Market reports, including annual Global and US Market Assessments, M&A report, Future of Sustainability findings and competitor rankings are available to Environment Analyst members. Learn more here or speak to the team to understand how our reliable forecasts and robust baselines can help you forecast future business opportunities.

Business Leaders' Forum: Navigating Change – Reshaping Sustainability to Align with New Economic Realities

See separate session report to be published later in June.

Tuesday
10 June

Welcome and Opening Remarks from Environment Analyst

Ross Griffiths, *Managing Director*, Environment Analyst

Summary:

Environment Analyst drives conversations that may not be easy, connects people, and it takes the pulse of the infrastructure delivery space. This industry has in the last 140 days experienced a lot of uncertainty. The Summit comes at a difficult time.

At the half way stage to 2030, it feels like we are stepping backwards rather than forwards. Governments and nations are becoming insular and their negotiations transactional. We seem to be willfully ignoring an evolutionary trait that makes us unique: human foresight, the ability to anticipate the future.

While business leaders in the environmental solutions space may optimistically say that the sector will be OK. It must be difficult to watch decades of work coming under threat like never before.

Actions like:

- US AID, founded in 1961 by Kennedy with 10,000 employees in 2023, obliterated;
- FEMA, founded by Jimmy Carter in 1978 to help states or local authorities overwhelmed by natural disasters, have its head removed for protesting against its potential abolition;
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, founded in 1970 by Nixon, will no longer track the cost of climate crisis-fuelled weather disasters, including floods, heatwaves, wildfires and more;
- NEPA, enacted in 1970, having its implementing legislation put under review;
- The Justice40 Initiative scrapped and environmental justice support halted; and
- The SEC's attempts to catch up with global ESG reporting rules coming under extreme pressure.

The task in hand is helping clients and colleagues to be as environmentally risk-averse and sustainable as possible.

People working in the sector share a passion for:

- Regenerating impoverished neighbourhoods
- Safeguarding communities from the impacts of extreme weather
- Protecting the environment and designing infrastructure communities are proud of

- Providing a reliable source of energy and reducing operating expenditure through efficient design
- Helping stakeholders safeguard against future litigation
- Cleaning up contaminated sites

The passion remains unchanged, but the mechanisms and language have altered. The landscape has shifted, not just in the US but around the world.

In the last 15 years, consultants have had to navigate the global financial crisis, the resources downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic and now Trump 2.0. Combined with geopolitical uncertainty, economies are under strain like never before.

If history has taught us anything it's that when economies struggle, political and social priorities shift. It has also taught us that these challenges are never a short-term fix. It needs long-term planning, and investment. Is sustainability and ESG a casualty of this?

Did the environmental pillar supporting sustainable development grow ahead of economies and social considerations?

Some say sustainability is in a recession. But I think something deeper is happening. Sustainability for sustainability sake is over. The era of greenwashing is over. Real sustainability – where committed parties continue to embed sustainability into projects because it makes long-term business sense – is upon us. These parties won't shout about it, they will just do it.

We see companies diverge between those engaged in federal preservationist green hushing, and those who feel liberated from their need to greenwash.

While money flows out of ESG investment funds, there is no doubt in my mind … investors will want to protect their money. ESG is going nowhere, but it will retreat back to its true purpose of due diligence and asset protection.

Much has been said about the US and the new administration in bringing about our current moment. Make no mistake, the role, the influence this great nation can have on the world is astonishing. Its heritage in environmental protection and sustainability runs very deep. The world needs the US to combat climate change, and for economic stability.

The role of infrastructure, environmental and sustainability leaders has just become extremely important. It is possible for the US to get left behind again in terms of climate resiliency and green economic investment. Consultants need to harness their passion, developed over decades, to communicate the business case for developing infrastructure sustainably.

You need to answer the question: How do you make sustainable infrastructure projects normal for your clients, investors and users?

Across the event's agenda, the topics have been selected for the moment we find ourselves in: How do you respond and nurture new ideas, develop lasting relationships, and come away energised and ready to harness the passion to deliver the projects your children and grandchildren can enjoy in years to come. Because that passion is needed more than ever.

Opening Keynote: Full Steam Ahead – Climate Action at the Local Level

Laura Jay, *Deputy Director*, Climate Mayors

Summary:

Despite political shifts in Washington, DC, mayors across the US are strongly committed to climate action. Trust in the US federal government is at an all time low, but trust in local government is higher than ever.

Mayors know there is a need for pragmatic solutions and meaningful change in their communities. And they are reframing their work in climate to respond to local needs, rather than just pushing back against federal policies.

Climate Mayors is working to create spaces for mayors to feel inspired and supported, especially in these challenging times. Projects include providing better housing, improved public safety and lower energy costs.

Use language that is meaningful to communities, rather than leading with climate arguments.

Examples of projects include:

- Atlanta's Energy Efficiency Rent Boost Program, which offers landlords discounts, rebates and access to capital to retrofit rental units to significantly lower utility costs for renters;
- Mount Vernon, New York's Summer Safety Initiative, an anti-crime initiative, which combined efforts from the fire department, police department and public works to tackle high temperatures in summer to reduce stress and hence crime. It included cooling tents, water distribution, tree planting and youth engagement, and led to a 32% drop in reported crime.
- Cleveland's program to support installation of solar panels on low-to-medium income homes, which reduced energy bills for low-income residents by up to 60%.
- Lincoln, Nebraska's Future Ready Workforce Program provides job training for high-demand careers in clean energy. It focuses on underemployed individuals with barriers to employment, offering support for child and elder care, uniforms and tools. The initiative is a partnership with local community colleges, job centres and the Office of Economic Development. It aims to address employment gaps and provide skills training for careers as electricians, HVAC technicians, and in automotive services, with a focus on EVs.

Cities are exploring public-private partnerships, municipal bonds and local tax levies to sustain funding for climate initiatives.

Environmental and sustainability consultants can support mayors by providing “connection points” on climate and other issues. For example, by sharing information on how problems have been addressed in other cities and how that has helped to address the cost of living for people. Provide information that assists them in making the political case to decision makers, and to make those connections.

Stand out quotes:

“We need to meet people where they are, and address their top priorities.”

Plotting the Transition Roadmap to a Resilient Future Energy Mix

Chair: Kristin Urbach, *Executive Director,* Connecticut Wind Collaborative

Panellists:

- Jeff Hanson, *Director of Environmental Services and Corporate Sustainability,* Alliant Energy
- Gary Greenblatt, *Vice Chairman*, Marathon Capital
- Brian Granahan, *Director,* Illinois Power Agency

Summary:

A number of challenges were identified:

- Interconnection bottlenecks and delays in renewable projects coming online.
- Uncertainty around tariffs and tax policy affecting project financing and timing.
- Meeting capacity needs due to rapid load growth, especially from data centres and AI.
- Delays in transmission infrastructure development in relation to generation projects.
- Regulatory uncertainty and evolving policies impacting utility planning and investments.
- Supply chain issues and long lead times for critical equipment like gas turbines.

Insights:

New technology and evolving regulations require utilities to understand and respond to changes more quickly and effectively than ever.

The levelised cost of electricity from renewable sources is increasingly competitive, driving up demand for these sources. But thanks to the IRA and IIJA, many renewables developments have relied heavily on tax credits – losing this creates major difficulties for many projects.

Energy demand forecasts are being revised up, mostly driven by AI and data centres.

A diverse power mix is needed to meet this – gas may not be enough alone, which will drive demand for renewables and nuclear, regardless of net zero commitments.

Corporate agreements between energy providers and large companies seeking their own power supply – eg data centre developers – are becoming more common.

Making the Business Case for Sustainability

Chair: Philippa Spence, *Managing Director Environment & Health*, Ramboll

Speakers:

- Johanna Jobin, *Global Head of Environment and Sustainability*, Takeda Pharmaceutical Company
- Jennifer Ninete, *Director of Engagement*, Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure
- Abhinav Krishna, *Vice President, Commercialization & Development,* Constellation Energy
- Annalise Dum, *Senior Vice President Sustainability*, JLL

Summary:

The question was posed: “Why do we have to make a business case for sustainability?”

Panellists from different backgrounds, covering sectors in energy, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure and real estate, shared their perspectives and journey in embedding sustainability across their businesses.

Key insights:

- Sustainability is facing a backlash – the topic has become politicised and polarising. Scepticism and accusations of government overreach are growing. Yet many organisations remain committed due to long-term investments, while others are pausing to reassess.
- Cost remains a key factor. Some businesses prioritise short-term savings. But others see clear long-term financial benefits in energy efficiency, reduced resource use and resilience. Split opinions here, whether the cost is actually higher.
- Language matters. The framing of sustainability needs to evolve. The panel questioned whether the current language still resonates across different audiences and stakeholders.
- Investors are still engaged. ESG continues to hold weight with institutional investors. Supply chain stability and compliance with client targets remain strong motivators.
- State-level regulations drive demand. Regions like Washington, DC, Boston and California continue to enforce sustainability mandates, shaping how companies respond.
- Real estate is a major contributor as commercial properties account for 40% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For many clients, real estate drives more than 15% of their carbon footprint.
- Healthcare and climate are connected. Climate change affects public health and access to care. The healthcare sector must embed climate resilience into its systems now, not later.
- Energy reliability is business-critical. Companies that lose power lose revenue. Clean, reliable energy is seen as an operational asset, not just a cost-saving measure.
- Sustainable buildings yield higher value. Certified buildings can command up to 7% higher sale prices. High-performing, healthy spaces also attract and retain talent.
- Compliance is now a competitive necessity. European buyers and stakeholders are applying pressure on US supply chains. Businesses risk losing partners if they don’t comply with sustainability expectations.
- Long-term thinking is essential. Sustainability is a decades-long commitment. Projects with 2035 completion dates require planning and integration now.

- Mindset change is essential, moving away from business-as-usual requires embedding sustainability into early planning. Consultants often find client expectations don't match their sustainability goals – closing this gap takes time and dialogue with clients in a language that is meaningful to them.
- Smaller communities need targeted support. Organisations like Constellation Energy work with councils to revise power contracts and introduce energy efficiency programmes. Education is key to help smaller municipalities understand long-term benefits.

Actions:

- Reframe sustainability as a business strategy, not a separate goal.
- Align sustainability efforts with core business KPIs and growth drivers.
- Use sustainability credentials to differentiate in the market and attract top talent.
- Integrate sustainability early in project lifecycles to avoid costly retrofits.
- Develop and share case studies to promote brownfield development as viable and safe.
- Ensure cross-sector coordination – especially in energy, infrastructure and health.
- Prepare for increased scrutiny and compliance requirements across global supply chains.

Standout quotes:

"Energy is an asset. If our customers don't have power, they lose business."

"Everyone expects short-term results, but sustainability is a long game."

"Real estate isn't just a sustainability issue – it's a business issue. It drives 40% of global emissions."

Promoting Transportation Mode Shift in the Chicago Region – from Policy to Implementation

Moderator: Emma Chynoweth, *Editor,* Environment Analyst

Speakers:

- Elizabeth Scott, *Principal Policy Analyst*, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
- Neha Soni, *Senior Planner*, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH)

Main points:

- Chicago plans $500m investment over 30 years across transit, roads and active travel to address growing transportation needs and climate goals. Transportation accounts for 28% of US GHG emissions, with 57% from light-duty vehicles. The Chicago region's emissions have increased 2% over the last decade despite climate targets.
- Without legislative action, service cuts of up to 40% could start next January, threatening regional mobility, equity and climate objectives.
- Cook County implements bike counters and a Bike Access Tool (with the University of Minnesota) to track biking activity, support short local trips, and measure infrastructure impact on safe school routes and transit connections, focusing on equity and real usage data.

Building consensus:

- CMAP and partners face major challenges coordinating across 300+ municipalities and overlapping jurisdictions, especially on complex projects like the $500m 290 corridor requiring cooperation between IDOT and CTA.
- Public participation and communication are crucial early in planning, with Cook County working closely with municipalities and nonprofits. CMAP helps agencies and stakeholders to work together, including elected officials, labour and business leaders, to create comprehensive plans for service and governance improvements.

Working with consultants:

- Consultants are engaged either to augment internal staff during capacity constraints or to provide specialised technical expertise when it is not efficient to build in-house. The first model is task-focused, while the second is collaborative and strategic.
- Long-term consultant partnerships support recurring programmes like Invest in Cook, providing continuity, technical expertise and insights from other regions.

Looking to the future:

- Scenario planning and foresight guide long-term transit planning by analysing future trends and their impacts, helping align current investments with anticipated conditions and fostering resilient, sustainable transportation systems.

Standout quotes:

"Figuring out how to make it convenient and make sense for people to get out of their cars and into biking and walking and onto transit is a really, really, really critical piece of this puzzle."

"The public sector is in the lead in transportation, so it has some stronger, more centralised planning functions than you see sometimes in other industries."

Workshop: LEED v5: Driving Real-World Impact and Positive Change

Deana Haynes, *Vice President, US Market Transformation and Development*, US Green Building Council

Summary:

- LEED v5 is the first update to the certification since version 4.1 ten years ago.

Main points:

- V5 now includes:
  - A five-year development cycle rather than ten
  - New platinum requirements for projects
  - New user experience
- New features include:
  - Human impact assessment
  - Climate resilience assessment
  - Carbon assessment
- The US Green Building Council relies on volunteer engagement to make decisions on standards
- There are three levels:
  - Building Design and Construction
  - Interior Design and Construction
  - Operations and Management

Grid Modernisation: Developing a Resilient, Flexible Transmission Network to Manage Future Demand Profile

Chair: Michael Bates, *Co-Founder*, Bring Your Own Power

Panelists:

- Moshe Bonder, *Director & Business Development & Leader in Energy Transition*, National Grid Ventures
- Jeff Gulock, *Director, Clean Energy Solutions*, Davis H Elliot Company
- Zongjie Wang, PhD, *Associate Director,* Eversource Energy Center, University of Connecticut
- Daren Timmons, *Director, Industrial and Strategic Partnerships,* Savannah River National Laboratory

Main points:

The audience was asked whether the US power grid was undergoing an evolution or a revolution – most people raised their hand in support of the latter.

The idea that we face an energy trilemma – between resource adequacy, net zero and energy resilience – provided the discussion's backdrop.

It was noted that the US power grid is designed for centralised, large power plants. It has not been set up with decentralised and renewable, intermittent supply in mind.

Competition between high demand workloads was raised as another major challenge. Many industries are built on access to low cost, accessible energy – for example, semiconductor manufacturing. The need for a larger workforce, and smarter supply chains, also came up.

Better policy and regulation, as well as AI tech to make grids more flexible, can speed up project completion and help the US realise its grid ambitions.

Understanding the Water Infrastructure Crisis and Building Resiliency: A City of Chicago Perspective

Sayeh Amirshaghaghi, *Chief Water Engineer*, Department of Water Management, City of Chicago

Main points:

- Water systems are under increasing stress from:
  - Climate change
  - Ageing infrastructure
  - Increased demand
- Nearly 30% of treated water reaches a tap
- Outdated infrastructure is not just inefficient, it is a risk
- Need to:
  - Anticipate risks
  - Design robust systems
  - Fund strategically
  - Invest now to avoid higher future costs
- New tech includes:
  - Trenchless pipe replacement
  - AI leak detection
  - Integrated data
- Need to digitise infrastructure records:
  - Fewer than 30% of US utilities have accurate digital records
  - Need to collect real time data, leverage analytics, and deliver equitable service
- Chicago's pumping station was given as an example.
- Need to:
  - Leverage strong public-private collaboration
  - Make the water system more visible, similar to what they are attempting to do for the electricity grid.

Q&A:

- The City of Chicago
  - Uses an in-house team and external consultants. Limited capacity in-house. Consultants used for AI, expertise and in capital investment programmes.
  - Uses asset management base and different variables to prioritise projects – as funding is a key barrier it can be hard to do this.
- The question was asked: Should we manage water in the US as a single system for the whole hydrological cycle to avoid competing priorities?

Standout quotes:

"Modern resilience means more than recovery. We must prepare systems to absorb, adapt and thrive amid uncertainty."

"We can't afford to keep rebuilding the same way – we need cost-effective resilience."

"In today's climate, resilience is not optional."

Leveraging Low-Carbon, Energy-Efficient Transportation Solutions to Reduce Operating Costs and Achieve Sustainability Goals

Chair: Dana Lowell, *Director, Center for Clean Transportation*, WSP

Panellists:

- Elizabeth Irvin, *Deputy Director, Office of Planning & Programming,* Illinois Department of Transportation
- Dave Schaller, *Industry Engagement Director,* North American Council for Freight Efficiency (NACFE)
- Yann Kulp, *Sales Director North America*, Driivz

Biggest changes currently seen:

- There's been a mindset shift from "Can EVs work?" to "How do we create an ecosystem of vendors to make this work. How do we scale it?"
- There's a huge number of makers of vehicles – all the new players are battery/ electric, semi (hybrid) or hydrogen. There are new vehicles that can charge trucks to high power levels. The EV question has changed from "What's the range?" to "How far can it go in one day?"
- Who owns property? Land owners need to be interested in multimillion dollar infrastructure.
- Lots of learning from a [authority] level. Coordination across departments.

What does the future look like?

- What direction are we going in? Biodiesel or EV infrastructure. Think about the big picture – the investment to build electricity to support EV infrastructure.
- One of the most efficient ways for trucking is to make sure the truck is full.
- If no one is willing to take on the costs associated with new transport systems, it won't happen.
- Keeping up to date on what governments are doing. Where are the choke points? What are our priorities? Access to charging in residential areas. We need to know what the questions are?
- There is some funding still available from the previous administration. There's a desire to keep moving on this. There is finance around, but it is the hardest part of the equation. How much still remains to be seen.
- Trucks have a ten-year plus life span – so any plans take a long time to execute.
- Even if the big trucking players don't need financial support to shift to low carbon, they represent a huge part of the industry – getting them to switch will have a big impact.

Leveraging AI and Digital Tools to Enable Sustainable, Resilient Infrastructure

Chair: Kim Watkins, *Global Solutions Director, EHS Operational Excellence*, Jacobs

Panellists:

- Rodrigo Fernandes, *Director, Sustainability,* Bentley Systems
- Monali Shah, *Transformation Catalyst CEO*, inflow.io (former Strategic Business Executive, Google)

Main points:

The panel is excited about AI's potential. The technology is being embedded across industries, from digital tools to the application to the energy efficiency of industrial sites like data centres.

Several inspiring examples of AI saving lives and money were presented.

For instance, geological spatial mapping tools have predicted risks from unstable land ahead of time, leading to early evacuation from soon to be highly hazardous locations.

Systems like energy infrastructure are so connected with other sectors like water supply, and communications – digital twins can help deal with this complex web of interconnectivity and make them more resilient.

There are quick wins today – for example, water utility sensors, and geospatial tools, for advanced hydraulic modelling, can vastly reduce water leakage. Mapping the atmosphere in vast detail using AI can predict future weather risks.

It was also said that the democratisation of advanced technologies like AI puts expert tools in the hands of everyone. This is empowering people to better tap their creative potential across various use cases.

Standout quotes:

"AI and digital twins can help us see things in ways that the naked eye can't."

"Always start with an outcome that matters to someone in the business – those who use the tool may not care about the technology."

"We have no shortage of data, but a shortage of insights."

Bonus Environment Analyst content: How to measure, report and reduce embodied carbon in the construction industry.

NATURE: Using Nature as a Functional Tool in Infrastructure Project Design

Chair: Chris Allen, *Global Principal Regenerative & Nature-Based Solutions*, Jacobs

Panellists:

- Georgie Geraghty, *Executive Director and Midwest Partner, Illinois*, The Nature Conservancy
- Kate Agasie, Cook County Department of Environment & Sustainability
- Michael Skowlund, *Principal*, Hoerr Schaudt
- Kate Newman, *Vice President Sustainable Infrastructure and Public Sector Initiatives*, World Wildlife Fund
- Jen Molnar, *Nature-Based Solutions Lead for Climate Adaptation*, AECOM

Main points:

- L536 Project: a levee setback and rehabilitation project to alleviate flooding in Atchison County, Missouri, which had caused significant damage to agriculture, roads and homes in 2019.
- Emiquon Project: reconnecting wetlands to address flooding and improve biodiversity in Illinois.
- Rain Ready Infrastructure: addressing frequent flooding in the Calumet corridor of Cook County.
- Wild Mile Project: restoring wildlife habitat along Chicago River, addressing channelisation and ecosystem disruption.

Standout quotes:

"Nature-based solutions require very different skill sets versus typical engineered infrastructure, particularly up front. We really have to have an interdisciplinary perspective bringing together ecology, landscape architecture, social scientists, social value engineers, [and] a whole range of different perspectives to be able to set these projects up purposefully and correctly, to get off on the same path, and [progress] on the right path."

"There can often be considerable cost savings ... but they can also be revenue generators. So think about carbon offsets and other ways that design can implicate additional revenue streams [such as] local economic stimulation. We talk about recreation and ecotourism, but there are also things like in a major reforestation project. You need trees, and that requires tree nurseries, and there are a lot of local economics stimulators that can emanate from a nature-based solutions project."

"Procurement is everything before procurement. Anything can happen after procurement. Forget about it. Nobody's going to want to invest in stuff that wasn't in the contract. So the innovation has to come from the owner or the proponent of the document."

Bonus Environment Analyst content: Corporate Guide: Embedding Nature for Business Resilience.

Documentary & Panel Session – Force of Water: Lessons Learned from Front-Line Communities

Moderator: Bob Beinstein, *Vice President, Global Sustainability Integration Lead*, AECOM

Panellists:

- Andrea Johnson, *Executive Director*, Green Empowerment
- Meghana Kharod, *Project Consultant - Sustainability, Energy & Climate Change*, WSP US
- Jennifer Obertino, *Global Energy Practice Leader,* AECOM

Summary:

- The documentary, Force of Water, follows two green empowerment projects in Uganda and Ecuador.
- Green empowerment uses strong community engagement, including subsidised water infrastructure and setting up water committees. The rates then pay for the water system for the community and for any maintenance.
- Discussion focused on how consultancies can interact with NGOsin this way
- Some focus on corporate water stewardship and 'water positive' initiatives.

Main points:

- 'Water positive' is still a relatively new concept with only some guidance on it eg volumetric accounting guidance.
- For companies looking to be water positive, finding the right projects with the right implementation targets is a challenge. Also there is carbon financing for some clean water projects – (as there are carbon benefits if people no longer boil water to clean it).
- For green empowerment, 60% of funds for projects is philanthropic.
- These projects are relatively inexpensive ~$120,000 for Uganda, ~$3,000 for clean water to 100 families in Ecuador.
- A lot of similar projects fail after around two years. But the model green empowerment uses, with strong community engagement, stops this from happening.
- Community engagement and projects, such as community warehouses with shared parts.

Workshop: Implementing the Envision Framework for Sustainable Infrastructure

- Jennifer Ninete, *Director of Engagement*, Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure
- Kailey Eldredge, *Verification Director*, Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure

Summary:

Envision is a tool that provides a framework to assess infrastructure projects' contributions to sustainability. It is designed to help infrastructure stakeholders (eg, project owners, design teams, constructors, regulators, community etc) to implement more sustainable, resilient and equitable infrastructure projects.

Main points:

- Begin with asking questions! About pre-conceived decisions on the project, exploring more sustainable alternatives even before the project kicks off.
- The tool:
  - should be used throughout the entire lifecycle of a project. If only implemented mid-delivery, its full sustainability potential is not realised.
  - incentivises to aim for higher performance goals beyond minimum requirements.
  - establishes a Sustainability Management Plan for better visibility and tracking.
  - addresses issues around human wellbeing, community development, collaboration, planning, economy, materials, water, energy, emissions etc.

Impact on organisations

- Organisations not previously focused on sustainability often shift direction after using Envision on a single project.
- This experience can drive a bottom-up change, embedding sustainability more broadly across teams and processes.

Read further about the Envision tool in the Environment Analyst's Corporate Guide: Delivering Resilient Infrastructure. Chapter: Making your project investable - embedding ESG throughout delivery authored by the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI).

Developing Actionable Decarbonisation and Sustainability Strategies that Add Value and Deliver Competitive Advantage

Chair: Brian Imus, *Executive Director*, Illinois Green Alliance

Panellists:

- Neera Chawla, *Director Sustainability*, North America, Worley Consulting
- Patty Lloyd, *Director of Sustainability*, Leopardo Construction
- D Evan van Hook, *Chief Sustainability Officer*, Viridi
- Alyssa Norris, *Director of Sustainability*, Aether Fuels

Main points:

When it comes to decarbonisation strategies that add value to businesses, "the conversation has shifted from what are we going to do, to how we are going to do it".

Just as good companies prioritised quality and created processes to make it consistently high in the mid-20th century, modern business can treat sustainability in the same way – it should be a mark of excellence, not a mere compliance exercise.

A crucial barrier to many organisations in their decarbonisation journeys is power grid congestion. Many on both the supply and demand sides, can't get access to the grid for five years or more.

In some cases, this is sparking decentralised, proactive solutions. For example, one medical company wanted to add energy intensive high-tech microscopes, but couldn't get access to the power grid for the equipment for five or six years. The company therefore added onsite battery storage to meet the new demand.

As scope 3 emissions become increasingly important to many companies, clients are starting to consider the decarbonisation efforts of consultants – they want partners who truly want to achieve it.

Standout quotes:

"There is a cost to doing something about carbon today, but there is a long-term cost to doing nothing, too."

PFAS: Managing Contamination Risks and Liabilities across your Organisation and the Supply Chain

Chair: Matt Burns, *National Director and Global Practice Area Network Leader for Emerging Contaminants*, WSP

Panellists:

- Mohamed Ateia Ibrahim, *Environmental Engineer and Group Leader*, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Daniel W Longbrake, *Director of Commercial Business*, PFAS Environment & Infrastructure, Battelle
- Rosa Gwinn, *Vice President, Global PFAS Technical Lead*, AECOM

Summary:

PFAS: the chair gave a description of what they are, their properties, where they are used and their toxicity.

Regulators are acting to research, restrict and remediate them. However, the US EPA is rolling back some of its limits, which is at odds with the EU approach.

While the OECD definition of PFAS is generally accepted, there is still a debate and some industries are challenging it.

One panellist hoped the US would look for the middle ground between the Canadian (specific PFAS) and EU (grouping) approach.

Because different regulators have different priorities, products, definitions, regulations and clean up levels – the picture is tangled – eg some organisations have responded by applying the strictest limit values.

Costs – there are a lot of projections for what PFAS contamination will cost. Hundreds of billions of $ to clean up environmental media and remove the substances from industrial processes and products.

The reason. They are highly functional, in a lot of products and processes that depend on them. There's a big question on how you substitute? Eg fire fighting foams going fluorine free still need to work well and the substitute to be non toxic.

It is also hard to find out where PFAS are used in commerce, because they are often used in concentrations below reportable levels.

One panellist suggested the solution was to manage the risks related to their use, rather than impose bans.

Although people talk about thousands of PFAS, the panel felt that realistically there are not a huge number to deal with. They also pointed out that they are not technically 'forever chemicals' as they can be treated. Although it was acknowledged that nature itself doesn't have tools to destroy them.

There are commercial techniques to tackle PFAS contamination – and new methods are emerging to do it sustainably.

Actions:

- Better knowledge is needed on where PFAS are coming from and how they behave in the environment – what are the precursors and metabolites?
- Better analytics are needed to prioritise which sources you are going to take a holistic approach to for clean-up.

Innovator Hub

Chair: Ryan Jeffery, *Senior Managing Director of Sustainability*, gener8tor

Panellists:

- Cristina Paredes, *Executive Director*, SC Nexus
- Andrew Loulousis, *Vice President, Strategy & Venturing*, TechNexus Venture Collaborative
- Chris LaFleur, *Managing Director*, ZQuip
- Bin Chen, *Research Associate Professor*, Northwestern University
- Jia Mujtaba, *Senior Research Associate*, Northwestern University
- Filip Formalik, *Research Assistant Professor*, Northwestern University

Innovations on show:

- SC Nexus: Energy security and cybersecurity risks for grid-connected devices.
- Northwestern (Capture): water competing with CO_2 in carbon capture materials.
- Northwestern (Transform): transitioning refineries from fossil fuels to renewable feedstocks.
- zquip: lack of consistency in deploying and managing battery-operated or EV vehicles.

Workshop: Leveraging AI, Geospatial and Digital Twin Tools for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

- Rodrigo Fernandes, *Director, Sustainability,* Bentley Systems
- Ben Shinabery, *Vice President, Land Survey,* Qk4
- Stephen M Ahron, *COO,* ClimaTwin

Summary:

The panel shared powerful examples, from early evacuation enabled by geospatial mapping to improved water management through AI-enhanced modelling, demonstrating how these technologies are already saving lives and resources. Emphasis was also placed on the growing accessibility of AI, empowering more people to innovate in infrastructure planning, risk prediction, and resilience-building.

Refer to the session **Leveraging AI and Digital Tools to Enable Sustainable, Resilient Infrastructure** for more!

Bonus Environment Analyst content: Corporate Guide: Delivering resilient infrastructure.

Roundtable Discussions

A. Making Sustainability Add up – Talking the Right Language to "Sell" Sustainability within your Organisation
Philippa Spence, *Managing Director Environment & Health*, Ramboll

B. The Evolving Direction of the Energy Transition
Melinda Truskowski, Global Energy Transition Market Development Director, Ramboll

C. Digital Solutions and Strategies for Sustainability Data Management
Christie Kochis, Manager, Sustainability Advisory, Arcadis

D. Data Centers: Navigating the Sustainability Challenges of Data Center Growth*
Daniel Socha, Global Sustainability and ESG Services Lead, WSP

E. Regenerative Remediation – Making Every Clean-up Count
Aimee Ruiter, Civil Engineer, AECOM

F. The Metals & Mining Sector's Role in Enabling Decarbonisation
Dr Mary Lou Lauria, Senior Vice President, Environment & Sustainability, Global, Worley Consulting

G. Developing a Sustainability Roadmap
Sunny Sanwar, Managing Director, Digital Solutions & Platform, Constellation

H. Navigating the Talent Crisis: The Future of Sustainable Executive Leadership
Chris Swan, Managing Director & Global Practice Leader: The Built Environment, Transearch USA

I. Trends in ESG: Lessons from CEOs in the Built Environment
Mike Stopka, Principal, Advisory Practice, Buro Happold

J. The Critical Importance of Public-Private Partnerships in Climate Adaptation
David A Dodd, President & Founding CEO, International Sustainable Resilience Center

K. The Evolving Role of a Chief Sustainability Officer
Michael Sutton, CEO, Infrastructure Engineering

L. Improving Societal Resilience through Innovative Financing and Alternative Risk Transfer (ART) Solutions
Alex Korb, Alternative Risk Transfer Consultant

M. The Energy Transition Investment Response to Evolving Global Trade Dynamics
Everett Currier, Managing Director, Lincoln International

Roundtable moderators will be providing a summary of discussions that will be shared with delegates later in June.

Wednesday 11 June

Developing a Future-Ready Workforce

Chair: Alexander Polzin, *Deputy Director, Master of Science in Energy & Sustainability,* McCormick School of Engineering, Northwestern University

Panellists:

- Kristin Urbach, *Executive Director*, Connecticut Wind Collaborative
- Chynna Hampton, *Equity Director*, Climate Jobs Illinois
- Sara Oliver, Director, *Master of Engineering in Climate and Sustainability Program*, Pratt School of Engineering, Duke University
- Soliman Khudeira, *Adjunct Professor, Dept of Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering*, Illinois Institute of Technology & Section Chief of Major Projects, City of Chicago's DOT
- Karmen Hewitt Smith, *Senior Workforce and Special Projects Manager*, SC Technical College System

Priority actions:

- Exposure, awareness and providing opportunities at a young age – engaging parents and the community – are key.
- Understanding what the barriers to individuals getting these jobs is important. Meeting folks where they are at and providing a pathway for them, along with built-in support to overcome obstacles.
- Community is vital – we all have something to give and to learn.
- Sustainability work has to be industry led and make sense to the everyday person and congruent with their core needs and desires.
- Industry needs to be more involved with academia. And we all need to advocate for sustainability even in roles that are not directly related.

Main points:

- The chair said that at the moment we are in a state of transition and uncertainty – but the need for new skills for the future is not uncertain.
- Working with already-established community organisations is important.
- Critical thinking is a key skill and we need to work on communication and start getting engineers to be story tellers.
- With an ageing workforce we need a process of renewal. It is important to develop our own people and work with the supply chain, schools, and universities to develop career pathways. Industry-led education is also important.
- A lot of people don't know what a 'clean' or 'green' job is. We need to educate people that these are the jobs of the future and go into communities and work through them to present opportunities.

- Companies need timely investment in their workforce to stay competitive. The earlier the better and a robust talent pipeline is key. For wind in the US, if talent is not continuously developed even at this time, then, when the greenlight is given again to projects, these companies will be behind.
- There is a clear divide between industry and academia in engineering. To bridge this gap, people in industry can:
  - Volunteer to be a project mentor or guest lecturer
  - Take interesting schemes and introduce them to universities to make them capstone projects
  - Sponsor capstone projects
  - Sponsor awards for students
  - Fund more scholarships and internships
  - Volunteer to be a part of academia advisory boards

Q&A:

Roadways and bridges design seems to be lagging on sustainability (in terms of certifications etc) compared with buildings etc.

Environment Analyst's North American Early Career Advisory Board is made up of young professionals working in the environmental & sustainability consulting sector. The board seeks to understand the recruitment and retention challenges, and help it to attract the next generation of talent. To discuss joining the group or to learn more, get in touch with emily.ridge@environment-analyst.com

Embedding Long-Term Resiliency into Critical Infrastructure to Mitigate Extreme Weather Impact

Chair: David A Dodd, *President & Founding CEO*, International Sustainable Resilience Center

Panellists:

- Michael J Flood, *Resilience Lead*, WSP
- Alex Korb, Alternative Risk Transfer Consultant
- Zane Marshall, *Director of Water Resources*, Southern Nevada Water Authority
- Chris Semlies, *AVP Construction Project & Business Resilience*, North America, Zurich

Summary:

A $240bn annual shortfall in resilient infrastructure investment is projected by 2030. The urgency to close it is rising. Investment still lags behind.

Traditional approaches to infrastructure resilience no longer work. Old frameworks don't reflect today's risks or data realities.

There are two sides of resilience:

- Physical – design, infrastructure, traditional climate adaptation tools.
- Financial – insurance, risk transfer, contingency planning.

Both are essential to reduce exposure and recover faster from extreme events.

Main points:

Data is available – use it. There are claims that the data is already there on the financial impact of extreme weather. Yet many businesses fail to act on it. This could be because it is not easily available to everyone.

Historical models are outdated; current data requires a systems-thinking approach.

- For most organisations, what costs them the most isn't the damage – it's the business interruption. Failing to embed resilience directly threatens operations.
- Rapid intensification of events is changing preparation requirements. During the 2021 hurricane season, ten out of 12 storms quickly escalated. Preparing for a Category 1 storm isn't enough if it becomes a Category 4 within 24 hours.
- Community involvement is critical. Resilience must extend beyond the business. If employees and communities are affected, recovery and business continuity are at risk. Educating the public on water and climate risks can lead to stronger local mandates and action.

Q: "How did you manage to convince the community of LA to invest upfront a substantial amount of $1.3-1.5bn in building resilience systems around water?"

A: "We invested a lot of resources and time in educating everyone about water, its role, systems and risks. The educational programme ran for over 18 months, making sure that all stakeholders are on the same page. And we continued to raise awareness of potential consequences of inaction. Once they've learnt what damage may cost, the answer is clear – we can't let the disaster happen."

Actions:

- Define resilience structures upfront before designing solutions and make sure to consider both physical and financial resilience.
- Use insurance and contingency financing to derisk major infrastructure projects – Insurance 2.0.
- Focus messaging on the real cost of inaction – business and community disruption.
- Back up with examples emphasising real savings and avoided losses – lessons learnt.
- Update risk models with real-time data and stop relying on historical baselines – today's scale of events is not relevant to historical occurrences.
- Involve as many stakeholders as possible – primary, secondary etc.
- Establish community committees to build awareness and support local adaptation efforts.

Standout quotes:

"Old resilience structures don't work anymore. We need to define what we're building for before we design the solution."

"Insurance 2.0 leaves no excuse. It derisks infrastructure and makes resilience bankable."
"Different regions, businesses and events need different strategies – but everyone needs awareness, alignment and buy-in."

"We're not just building infrastructure. We're embedding adaptations for 40 million customers across state lines for a long-term future."

Case Study: The Hudson Tunnel Project

- Jeslin Varghese, Gateway Development Commission
- Garima Kaushal, *Senior Sustainability Manager*, AECOM

Main points:

The sustainability achievements of the Hudson Tunnel project hinged on coordinating an exceptionally complex network of stakeholders and objectives around a common framework.

The $16bn rail project will serve 200,000 passengers daily, create 95,000 jobs and save 2m tonnes/year of carbon.

Partnership is the glue that brought the stakeholders together on such a complex and large project.

With each organisation involved in the work having their own unique sustainability plans, a central challenge for the project team was to map these onto a common, third party framework – the Envision framework.

Geographical barriers were removed by regular sustainability charettes, in which the various teams congregated on a digital whiteboard system, Miro.

The sustainability requirements were then made a key part of selecting contractors to deliver work packages – ten of the 100 available points in the tender process were awarded based on this.

The myriad metrics required to track the project were distilled into an impressive dashboard system. These tell the project team if contractors are delivering on their sustainability promises, from material sourcing and reuse, to pollution prevention and health and safety.

Finally, a core tenet of the approach is to learn from past experience, and apply it to subsequent work packages, even within the same project.

Standout quotes:

"Sustainability requires doing more with less."

Exploring how Economic Transformation can be Achieved through Effectively Supporting Energy-Dependent Communities

Chair: Matthew Dalbey, *Founder and Principal*, Corner Shop Strategies & *Adjunct Professor of Sustainable Urban Planning*, George Washington University

Panellists:

- Rusty Bell, *CEO*, Energy Capital Economic Development
- Tonyisha Harris, *Climate and Energy Program Manager,* The Nature Conservancy

Summary:

- The Nature Conservancy is a huge advocate for strong community engagement. This was echoed for consultants.
- Many energy dependent communities, such as those in Wyoming, need to work in a proactive way to use the great infrastructure already in place (transmission, transport, workforce etc) to create an economic plan for how energy can be generated, but in a different way.

Main points:

- The Nature Conservancy has not changed following the change in administration.
- Attracting investment by showcasing the infrastructure and other assets is key.
- The challenges for energy dependent communities are still present even though now federal funding that helped is cut – the work has to go on.
- For consultants, figuring out how to work with community members is really important. As they do work for the project developers they don't always interact with the community.
- Sometimes communities resent solutions, not because of the solution itself, but because of the way it is presented and communicated to them.
  - It can be slow to build trust as often bad actors have been there previously.
  - Community organisations already established (like TNC) can help with bridging this gap in trust.
  - It is crucial to bring the community in from the start and before construction, if possible, to gain lots of grass-roots support.
- It is important that consultants coming in use past studies and existing data in a community to streamline the permitting process.
- Working with the towns and communities near big projects eg nuclear power plants can have big benefits and is often overlooked. Give time and space for this.
- In Wyoming (coal-dependent communities), many industries are looking at onshoring, switching to critical and rare earth mineral processing (for data centres) → combined with solar on reclaimed land can be key.
  - A transmission study shows there is capacity available.
- We need to show and build community issues into project plans. Communities know what works for them best.
- When we talk about the energy transition, we forget about energy dependent communities. 'Coal' has/is becoming a bad word but we don't want to attach this negativity to the workers who were vital.

Financing Infrastructure Development to Support a Sustainable Transition

Chair: Masjood Jafri, *National Energy Transition Strategic Adviser*, Arcadis

Panellists:

- Jesse Hertstein, *Director, Sustainability & ESG Strategy and Operations*, BDO
- Susan McGeachie, *CEO & Co-Founder*, Global Climate Finance Accelerator
- Chris Meister, *Executive Director*, Illinois Finance Authority – Climate Bank

Main points:

- While federal and philanthropic funds play a role, they don't cover the scale of climate infrastructure needed. Bridging the gap requires aligning public funding, private capital and market tools.
- Mitigation projects get more attention because they're easier to quantify in returns. Adaptation – though vital – is often harder to fund due to complexity and unclear risk metrics [from a previous session: only around 5% of total climate investments go to adaptation].
- Private capital is ready – but conditions matter: investors want de-risked, bankable projects. When local governments take on debt, complexity grows. Insurance mechanisms, government loan guarantees and clearer risk-sharing structures help unlock private finance.
- Insurance providers need tools like CAT bonds and biodiversity credits. These are underused but can reduce exposure and improve fund availability. Faster claims processing and digital monitoring can speed up recovery and flexibility.
- Data inconsistency can still be an issue. Poor or delayed data undermines risk modelling and slows decision making. Better tracking and digitised reporting systems are essential, especially for adaptation projects and nature-based solutions.
- Mid-sized companies in the US and Europe, following the major regulatory backtracking, are waiting for clear regulatory direction or peer signals before investing in net zero and broader sustainability strategies. Uncertainty in carbon pricing and reporting standards stalls action.
- Tariffs, supply chain volatility and site-specific resource risks (eg water, minerals, agriculture) now influence how companies assess and price infrastructure projects. AI-driven modelling can improve this, though lack of robust methodology is a risk still.

Actions:

- Build partnerships across government, philanthropy and private investors to close early-stage funding gaps.
- Use blended finance, insurance instruments and public guarantees to de-risk climate infrastructure projects.
- Develop simpler, faster insurance claim processes using digital tools to accelerate recovery. AI embedding?
- Encourage mid-cap firms to move from 'wait and see' to pilot investment, especially in adaptation.
- Strengthen collaboration with capital markets to handle residual risk more effectively.

Site Restoration and Development: Optimising Land Use to Increase Value, Revitalise Communities and Deliver Multiple Positive Outcomes

Chair: Nin Prakash, *Global Land Contamination Lead,* Amazon Web Services (AWS)

Panellists:

- Megan Zack, *Chief Sustainability Officer*, Wight & Co
- Rhiana Barkie, *Project Coordinator,* Clallam County
- Jennifer Trautman, *Architect, Global Design and Innovation,* Ada Infrastructure

Main points:

- Community opposition to development projects can be a challenge.
- Under-funded or -resourced city agencies can hamper regeneration efforts.
- Environmental clean-up costs can be a barrier for developers on brownfield sites.
- Siloed communication within government organisations can hinder project progress.

Standout quotes

"Meeting the community where they're at and making sure we involve them from the start makes the whole process move more smoothly, and you're up against way less of a hill that you have to climb to get to where you hope to be."

Addressing Scope 3 Emissions Across the Supply Chain

Chair: Alain Lefevre, *Sustainability Strategy Director*, Schneider Electric

Panellists:

- Kelly Weger, *Senior Director of Sustainability North America*, Qcells
- Hyrine Munga, *Senior Manager, Supply Chain Environmental Sustainability*, Microsoft
- Austin Omer, *Sustainable Agronomic Scientist*, Ostara

Summary:
Scope 3 emissions are the hardest to measure and influence. Success depends on supplier engagement, internal coordination, and setting clear reduction goals across the supply chain. Each company has a different strategy that works best for its sector and its supply chain.

- Overall, scope 3 is a shared challenge – it requires executive commitment on both sides of the supply chain relationship.
- Internal engagement across departments improves progress.
- Tracking KPIs and open conversations at all levels drive results.
- Where direct control isn't possible, focus shifts to influence and collaboration.

Different approaches:

Qcells

- Develop a carbon roadmap.
- Focus on domestic supply chains.
- Start with asking the right questions – this sparks action and helps to evolve strategy.
- Emphasise feasibility before pushing suppliers too far.

Microsoft

- Set net zero by 2030 targets and embed sustainability into products and strategy.
- For better control, shift certain scope 3 emissions to scope 2 (through energy procurement).
- Invest in in-house sustainability capacity, but still work with external consultants.
- Help suppliers to get started – most don't know how. Once engaged, improvements follow.

Ostara

- Set strict requirements for suppliers.
- Ensure compliance by setting clear standards early in the relationship.

Actions:

- Build internal awareness and integrate scope 3 goals across departments.
- Support suppliers with clear starting points, training and simple tools.
- Focus on data tracking and process improvement, once suppliers are engaged.
- Review procurement policies to favour lower-emissions inputs.
- Encourage executive-level alignment across the supply and buyer sides.
- Market sustainability improvements to justify any value-added costs.

Standout quotes:

"Suppliers don't always know where to begin. Once they do, deeper process analysis and improvements become possible."

"We begin with questions – it's an evolution. The aim is to first understand what's feasible before enforcing sustainability."

Closing Keynote

Dr Cris B Liban, *Chief Sustainability Officer*, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

Main points:

Decisions made on large infrastructure projects have real impacts on real people.

Liban therefore urged those in the room to talk to people affected by their work as neighbours, not experts.

He explained that LA Metro used this approach as it rolled out low carbon buses in the city, set up a green workforce initiative, and created education opportunities for young people with less access to opportunities for mentorship and learning.

Amidst many optimistic case studies and stories about the use of AI and advanced tech in businesses, across other talks and panels, the audience was reminded that many of the people most vulnerable to climate change do not have access to such tools. “Are we building things for everyone, or just the few?” Liban asked.

Therefore, he said, when talking about technology, context matters –
what works in Chicago may not work in Cambodia.

Liban drew on several metaphorical and artistic anecdotes to demonstrate the way sustainability professionals can translate their often technical, data-driven work into something digestible and inspiring for non-experts – a theme woven through numerous other discussions during the summit.

In one touching story, he explained that he used art from children to translate the key messages of a technical chapter on transportation in a piece of national climate documentation through emotion and expression.

Standout quotes:

“It's not just about clean air, it's about economic dignity, jobs.”

“If we want these ideas to land, we need to be translators.”

“We can't, and we don’t eliminate risk – we learn to live alongside it.”

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