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Media Release

EDS calls for creative thinking on infrastructure projects

EDS has called for serious and thoughtful consideration of what constitutes “good” development as the government prepares to announce its infrastructure pipeline.

“We know we need to address the urgent imperative to create jobs and get the economy humming again,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“But decisions about which projects go ahead need to be subject to robust, future-focused criteria – and “shovel-ready” is simply not good enough on its own. This is an historical opportunity to fix our infrastructure deficit and create a modern, low carbon economy that delivers essential services for all New Zealanders.

“Projects should focus on improved transport linkages especially for public transport and freight; on boosting renewable electricity generation to 100%; on electrification of rail and buses; on grid resilience; on distributed energy like solar; and on building sustainable capacity for our tourism sector ahead of its likely recovery in the medium term.

“We need a strong focus on upgrading our dilapidated potable and wastewater systems in both Wellington and provincial New Zealand. This needs national co-ordination and funding and should go hand-in-hand with a restructuring of the way we deliver those services. Local government has been found out with long deferred maintenance, inadequate responses to prolonged droughts and episodes of drinking water contamination that are unacceptable.

“We also need a massive house-building programme, funded and co-ordinated by the Government, akin to what occurred in the 1930s. This is an opportunity, borne out of adversity, to house every New Zealander in quality, warm, healthy housing – the kind that would provide resilience for any future pandemic shocks. Improved social outcomes for the homeless and inadequately housed, plus the numbers of jobs created, should have that programme at the top of the list.

“And we should also look to emulate President Roosevelt’s New Deal and create a civilian Conservation Corps. Large numbers of workers could assist the Department of Conservation to strengthen our green infrastructure by creating new tracks and facilities, tackling pest and weed infestations, finally getting on top of wilding pines, replanting erosion-prone land in native forests and helping clean up old rubbish tips in danger from sea-level rise.

“Finally, having got a great list of progressive projects ready to go, and while work on resource management reform continues, we need a temporary fast-track approach to consenting that maintains environmental bottom lines but is fast and decisive. We must move at pace with the recovery,” Mr Taylor concluded.