Media Statement

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Looking After What We Have, Better

New Zealand must urgently rebalance how it invests in infrastructure, focusing far more on maintaining and optimising what already exists, according to a new report launched by Infrastructure New Zealand and written by Beca.

The report warns that decades of underinvestment in maintenance, combined with fragmented funding approaches, are placing increasing pressure on essential infrastructure networks across the country.

Infrastructure New Zealand Chief Executive Nick Leggett says the findings point to a fundamental shift required in how New Zealand approaches infrastructure.

“New Zealand doesn’t have a shortage of infrastructure ambition - we have a discipline problem. We’ve prioritised building new assets while allowing existing ones to degrade. That set-and-forget mentality is now catching up with us.”

The report calls for a decisive move toward long-term asset management, improved planning, and funding models that support maintenance and renewal, not just new builds.

“Better outcomes for communities and the economy will come from getting more out of what we already have. That means investing earlier, more consistently, and with far greater discipline across the full lifecycle of assets.”

Importantly, Leggett says the current fuel supply disruption highlights an immediate opportunity for Government.

“A fuel shock means there is a strong case for prioritising maintenance and renewal work across central and local government assets. That keeps businesses operating, supports jobs, and ensures productivity continues.”

The report outlines how improved asset management practices can extend asset life, reduce long-term costs, and improve service delivery. Key recommendations include:

- Embedding long-term asset management planning across all infrastructure sectors
- Aligning funding tools with asset management approaches
- Strengthening accountability for maintenance and renewal performance

The report also highlights the need for stronger system-wide oversight and assurance.

“If we are serious about lifting performance, we need a single national regulator that can set standards, monitor performance and ensure consistent asset management practices across the board – if given appropriate powers, the Infrastructure Commission is in a good position to take on this role.”

Current funding settings are also criticised for favouring new capital expenditure over maintenance, increasing long-term costs and reducing resilience.

“Smarter funding is not about spending more, it’s about investing better. Right now, we are often deferring maintenance only to pay significantly more later.”

With population growth, climate pressures, and fiscal constraints all intensifying, the report argues that improving asset management is one of the fastest and most practical ways to lift national productivity.

“This is not just about fixing pipes and roads. It’s about ensuring New Zealand’s infrastructure system is reliable, resilient, and economically productive. If we get this right, the gains are immediate and long-lasting.”

The full report Looking After What We Have, Better is available now.

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https://infrastructure.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/21973-INZ-Asset-Management-Report_FINAL-25.03.26.pdf

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Infrastructure New Zealand is the nation’s leading infrastructure member association. Our core purpose is to advance best practice development of world-class transport, energy, water, telecommunications, and social infrastructure for all New Zealanders. We do this through research, advocacy, and public and private sector collaboration. Our membership is comprised of over 150 organisations, including central and local government agencies, consultants, contractors, financiers, utilities, and academics – collectively employing approximately 150,000 people in infrastructure-related roles. Together, we are committed to creating a better New Zealand through outstanding infrastructure.

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