

# Membership, rewired: ISC's bold overhaul to boost impact

The Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC) is overhauling its membership model in a major pivot toward simplicity, strategic impact and stronger member value.

**T**he changes are central to the Council's broader strategy to make sustainability easier to implement – and harder to ignore – across the infrastructure sector.

While the Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC) continues to support programs like its successful RISE mentorship initiative, CEO Toby Kent says the bigger shift is about transforming how the organisation supports, listens to, and activates its members.

"We really want to make sure that not only does ISC value our members, but more importantly that they themselves feel valued," Kent says.

"Being a member of ISC really helps to advance the ambitions and objectives of individuals and their organisations."

## STREAMLINING AND SEGMENTING FOR SIMPLICITY

Under the new model, ISC will cut its dozens of different membership categories down to just 10. This simplification is designed to reduce confusion, enable clearer pricing, and make it easier for organisations of all sizes and types to engage.

"Some of the tiering and groupings had become quite complex," Kent says.

"By simplifying that structure, we can also better target our communications. At the moment, members receive a lot of information – some of it may not be relevant to them. With better segmentation, we can tailor what they receive and make it more valuable."

The change comes alongside the launch of a new member portal, which will be rolled out in early July to coincide with the new financial year. The updated system will support a more responsive, two-way relationship between the Council



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and its members, including deeper participation in working groups, thought leadership, research, and industry advocacy.

## LISTENING BETTER, RESPONDING FASTER

Kent acknowledges that while ISC has long sought input from its network, some members have not always felt heard.

"We've done extensive qualitative and quantitative research," he says.

"This redesign is directly informed by what our members told us they want – whether that's more opportunities to shape the infrastructure agenda, better tools, or simply a clearer way to connect."

The Council has already seen strong uptake in its working groups, which tackle sector-specific or cross-sectoral issues such as water, energy, and modern slavery. These will now be expanded to include new committees – including a policy group chaired by Kent himself – to give

members a stronger voice in shaping the infrastructure conversation.

"Whether you're a small consultancy or a major contractor, members have told us they see strength in being represented collectively," he says.

"They want ISC to influence, collaborate and drive outcomes on their behalf."

## A NEW ROLE: CONNECTING MEMBERS WITH OPPORTUNITY

Alongside its traditional work as a standard-setter and tool provider, ISC is embracing a more proactive role in brokering partnerships and opening doors for members. It's a shift Kent sees as crucial to amplifying the Council's value.

"We want to act more strongly as brokers of partnerships, opportunities and ideas," he says.

"That includes connecting members with commercial arrangements, research projects, or other initiatives that



Toby Kent says the ISC wants to lead real-world, positive change.

align with sustainability and infrastructure goals."

One example is ISC's partnership with sustainability-focused recruitment firm Talent Nation, which offers discounted recruitment fees to ISC members. It's a sign of what's to come.

"It's not about lifting ISC up for its own sake," he says. "It's about creating better outcomes for our members."

This brokerage mindset extends into other areas too, including potential support for sustainable finance initiatives. ISC is exploring how it might appropriately connect members to finance-sector partners or funding pipelines.

"We're not a financial broker, but we do have a role in bringing parties together to achieve shared sustainability goals," Kent says.

### BIG CHANGES FOR ALL SIZES

While smaller and mid-sized organisations may find the brokerage model particularly helpful, Kent is quick to stress that large members also stand to benefit from the changes.

"One of our larger product-based members said, 'I talk to my competitors all the time – but what I want is to talk to my peers in other parts of the market,'" he says.

"That's the value ISC brings. We connect the whole infrastructure value chain."

Kent says the Council's convening power is one of its most valuable assets. Through working groups, committees, and member events, ISC can bridge silos and foster cross-sector dialogue on complex sustainability issues.

The new model also aims to be inclusive of a wider array of potential members – from uniform

suppliers to consulting firms – not just the traditional engineering and construction players.

"Even if a company doesn't immediately see itself as part of 'infrastructure', there's a role to play and value to gain," Kent says.

### AMPLIFY AND SIMPLIFY

Much of ISC's current evolution is guided by a dual strategy of "amplify and simplify": enhancing successful programs and tools while making them more accessible and easier to apply.

RISE, the mentorship initiative now in its third round, is one example.

Backed by Gamuda, the program pairs junior sustainability professionals with experienced leaders. While RISE itself remains unchanged by the membership overhaul, it exemplifies the Council's aim to lift emerging leaders and embed sustainability thinking in leadership pipelines.

At the same time, Kent says work is ongoing to streamline ISC's ratings tools – like the IS Rating Scheme – to reduce friction and make them more user-friendly, without sacrificing rigour.

"We've been told the tools are valuable, but can be hard to apply," he says.

"That's something we're actively addressing."

### REAL-WORLD RESULTS, NOT JUST REPORTS

For Kent, the ultimate goal isn't just smoother processes or broader participation – it's measurable, real-world impact.

He points to data from one rail member which found that land cleared during early-stage development was 80 per cent lower on projects where an IS rating was applied, compared to those without.

"That's an incredible biodiversity and nature outcome," he says.

"We're not about compliance for compliance's sake. Our work must lead to real-world, positive change."

### LOOKING AHEAD


ISC's next major conference, Connect 2026, is already being planned with these shifts in mind.

It's just one of several initiatives that, taken together, Kent believes will transform ISC's reach and relevance.

"When you make multiple evolutions at once – membership, tools, engagement – it starts to look pretty revolutionary," he says.

For current members, the new model offers clearer value and more responsive engagement. For potential members, it offers a pathway into a vibrant, active network with tangible commercial and sustainability benefits.

"To existing members, we're saying: we've listened. We're acting on what you asked for," Kent says.

"To those not yet with us: now's the time to join. There's real value here – and more on the way." 



ISC is embracing a more proactive role in brokering partnerships.