

Talking Infrastructure

Generating Better Questions

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF ASSET MANAGEMENT IN 2024!

August 2024 Newsletter

Greetings!

In our search for new lines of inquiry to develop, Lou Cripps has suggested that one fruitful line could be to develop an exit strategy (an 'undo button') for infrastructure projects, indeed all projects, but especially infrastructure. He writes:



"My team makes use of **premortem thinking**: as part of planning action, immediate or long term, consider how it might go wrong. We think ourselves into the future looking back at a project (or a meeting). Humans are surprisingly good at this time-travelling. For me, this is part of a principle Asset Managers should embrace: **the principle of reversibility**. It's not just about understanding the consequences of our decisions, but also about planning for the ability to undo or reverse their effects if needed. Sure, you can't un-ring a bell, but we can find ways to get as close as possible to the pre-action state and minimize the impact if we think about it right from the start. **Do our plans have exit strategies or an undo button? None that I have seen, why not?"**

To read more about this idea [go here](https://talkinginfrastructure.com/2024/07/13/what-could-possibly-go-wrong-and-the-undo-button/). It's a great article! Short, effective! (<https://talkinginfrastructure.com/2024/07/13/what-could-possibly-go-wrong-and-the-undo-button/>).

I am still seeking ideas for useful tools to aid infrastructure decision making. If you are happy with your decision making, what tools do you use? If you are not quite happy, what tool would be really useful to you if only you had it? What do you think of Lou's idea?



This month's story.

This was told to me by Jeff Roorda about 25 years ago and published in the very first of the fortnightly SAM issues in January 1999. It couldn't happen now, could it?

A small regional council had just resurfaced its airstrip at the cost of many thousands of dollars and the Councillors were asking questions.

Councillor: "How many airplanes use that airstrip?"

Manager: "Well, none, actually, they prefer to go to the next town where the airfield is bigger, fully staffed and more convenient."

Councillor: "You mean no-one uses the airstrip?"

Manager: "No, of course not, it is used by gliders!"

Councillor: "But isn't it true that gliders don't like to land on hard surfaces and only use the soft unsurfaced edges?"

Manager: "Well, yes."

Councillor: (in greatly exasperated tones) "Then why on earth did you resurface the airstrip?"

Manager: (indignantly) "Well, to preserve the asset, of course!"

I used to tell this story at AM sessions where about half the audience would side with the Councillors and half with the Asset Manager. But is something an asset if no one wants it, needs it, or uses it?

Finally, a warm welcome to our latest Talking Infrastructure members:

- Peter Idoko
- Eugene Stackpole
- Jackie Dearborn
- Brett Andrew
- Margaret Moorhouse
- Walter Graf

I am always happy to hear from you, and thank you for being a member of Talking Infrastructure.

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