



## Sub-national and subject board updates 2024

### Yorkshire & Humber Board

The Yorkshire & Humber Board continues to meet bi-monthly, inviting Place Directors from across the region.

This year the Board has engaged in a wide range of policy topics, with presentations from government bodies, and the public and private sectors. Notable presentations included:

- LEP integration issues by Esther Barrott and Rebecca Cox from the LGA.
- ChatGPT by Rupert Lorraine from the University of Plymouth.
- An update on the LEVI Fund and insights from the wider OZEV team by Christina Stathakopoulou, Head of Local EV Infrastructure PMO at the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, Department for Transport. Kamal Panchal from the LGA also discussed a proposal for a 10-year programme for local roads and transport infrastructure funding. Additionally, Leeds City Council's 'Reintegration to Employment Programme' was highlighted as an entry for the ADEPT Presidential Award.
- Homes to School SEND transport work outputs by Ann Carruthers, Chair of the ADEPT Transport & Connectivity Board, co-chaired with Suzanne Smith from ADCS.
- The Government's Plan for Drivers, a new 30-point plan to support car usage and address enforcement measures, by Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director for Traffic & Technology at the Department for Transport.
- Insights on the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act that received Royal Assent in October 2023, which sets out new legislation to speed up planning, build homes, and level up, by Michael Bingham, Deputy Director at DLUHC.

The Yorkshire & Humber Board recently bid farewell to Paul Woodcock, a long-standing attendee, and is now extending a warm welcome to new members and colleagues eager to join and expand the network. The Board has a forward plan in place for future meetings, which includes discussions on LNRS biodiversity net gain, a focus on road safety, and transport topics. This forward-looking agenda is designed to continue the Board's tradition of addressing key issues and fostering a collaborative environment for all members.

*Karl Battersby, Chair of ADEPT Yorkshire & Humber Board, May 2024*

## Midlands Board

The Midlands Board meets on a quarterly cycle with good attendance, a range of topics presented and a healthy debate between members on key issues. The forward plan of future agenda items and positive identification from Board members of topics for consideration helps with the agenda compilation and identification of key speakers and presenters.

The need for balance between the East and West Midlands is managed by Andy Gutherson, Lincolnshire County Council, and Mary Morrissey, Solihull Council, as Chair and Vice-Chair to discuss the agenda for meetings.

Key topics that have been discussed over the last 12 months include:

- Active Travel
- Devolution
- DfT Funding Allocations – Local Transport Fund and Network North
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act
- Live Labs
- Local Authorities Net Zero and Reducing Other Transport Emissions (LANZAROTE)
- Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)
- Midlands Hydrogen - HyDEX
- Midlands Mindforge
- National Adaptation Programme (NAP) 3
- National Highways Decarbonisation
- National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) Assessment
- UKREiiF

This list of items has involved briefings and updates from civil servants, programme and project updates, discussions on collaboration (e.g. Midlands Mindforge) and development of ways of working (e.g. a joined-up approach with Midlands Engine over the attendance at UKREiiF).

Whilst Teams calls have undoubtedly assisted with the bringing together of us all over what is a large geographical area, the Board have agreed that once a year we should meet face to face, and arrangements are in place to find a suitable location and venue in September 2024.

*Andy Gutherson, Chair of ADEPT Midlands Board, May 2024*

## East of England Board

The East of England regional board continues to meet on a quarterly basis with good attendance from all member authorities. The chairmanship remained consistent throughout the year with Andrew Cook from Suffolk. Grahame Bygrave from Norfolk County Council continued as vice-chair. There were however a number of new faces as the member local authorities saw changes in senior officers and new organisations like the Sub National Transport Boards joined. We also saw the departure of LEP representatives as their responsibilities were subsumed into the relevant local authorities. The meetings are usually an hour in duration with an equal split between guest presentations and discussion of current issues. During the course of the year, the group has had a wide range of speakers on Road User Charging, Home to School Transport and Climate Adaptation. Member discussion during the meetings covered a range of further topical subject matters including budget implications, funding bids, the levelling up agenda, political changes and local government finance.

For enquiries on attendance or presenting, please contact the group secretariat, Emma Cook – [emma.cook@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:emma.cook@suffolk.gov.uk).

*Andrew Cook, Chair of ADEPT East of England Board, April 2024*

## South East Board (SEDEPT)

The South East board met quarterly in 2023. It welcomed a diverse and highly skilled range of speakers covering the following subjects, covering a range of agendas from the immediate pressures facing our sector to several more future-focused challenges.

- Alternative fuels for fleets
- Advanced air mobility
- SuDS approval bodies
- Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding
- Climate change adaptation within the local highway network
- UKRLG workplan relating to adaptation, biodiversity and climate change....
- Consultation approaches for active travel schemes
- Successfully engaging with communities to facilitate implementation of active travel facilities.

Speakers have come from government departments, major consultants and subject specialists.

Attendance has been varied but overall the speakers have had an active audience. We are looking forward to a range of subject matters being aired in 2024 starting with a discussion around water supply and the opportunity for local authorities to work more effectively with water utilities across a range of challenges.

*Matt Davey, Co-chair of ADEPT South East Board, May 2024*

## South West Board

The South West Board has had a packed agenda of meetings in the last year. We have covered:

- Delivery of affordable housing, hearing from Homes England and the Bath and North East Somerset Council arms-length Housing Company
- Relationships with local businesses, in discussion with the CBI
- Expansion of renewable energy and the barriers to hitting net zero, with the South West Net Zero hub and learning from the award-winning Cornwall Council
- Planning reform and embedding the new NPPF
- Delivery and place-shaping in rural areas
- Inclusive design and infrastructure, learning from the Institution of Civil Engineers South West

We enjoy our discussions across Place Directors in the South West and hearing from the wide range of external speakers who have joined our meetings. Do let us know if you would like to join!

This year we have also welcomed Emma Blackham, Service Director Place-Shaping, South Gloucestershire Council, as Vice Chair for the South West Board.

*Sophie Broadfield, Chair of ADEPT South West Board, May 2024*

## Engineering Board

Chair – Mark Stevens (Haringey Council)

Deputy Chair – James Bailey (Staffordshire County Council)

Secretary – Kathy Moore (Haringey Council)

One of the cornerstone documents of the old County Surveyors' Society was the Commuted Sums guidance that local highway authorities up and down the country have used for well over a decade to secure money from developers for new highway infrastructure maintenance that it might not ordinarily take on through the adoption process. The last 12 months has seen a shift from an initial stab at re-writing this to the news at the April 2024 meeting that we are on the cusp of seeing new guidance, this time under the ADEPT banner. At a time when maintenance funding is tight and somewhat unclear, this is a truly positive step so well done to all those who have contributed efforts to make this happen!

Financial woes have been a common theme throughout the last four meetings of the Board. All attendees have been greatly concerned at the lack of certainty about baseline funding beyond the current (last) year of the 3-year financial settlement coming out of the last Comprehensive Spending Review – a situation not much changed by the Network North announcements in November, a topic much chewed over at the January 2024 meeting. With a call for help from the Department for Transport at the April 2024 meeting for evidence to support the argument that more investment is needed, there's a commonly-held view that surely the protestations from the RAC and its membership about potholes being everywhere and a more than £2billion jump in the road maintenance backlog espoused by the Asphalt Industry Alliance in its 2024 ALARM report are indications enough that the need is there now, rather than at some point over the next 10 years.

At the October 2023 meeting, the Board heard about the tree maintenance challenge emerging in Northern Ireland – a significant task to get to grips with but being systematically addressed. Of course, whilst the Board recognised the huge benefits that trees can bring from a carbon

management, cooling, and air quality perspective, planting more of them in the highway does place an additional revenue burden on local authorities, increasingly trying to creatively juggle their still dwindling revenue budgets. But at that meeting, the Board also heard how North Yorkshire Highways was taking great strides at delivering really cost-effective highway maintenance through its Teckal-based approach – it was great to hear someone with some optimism!!

Whilst the Department for Transport attended the April 2024 to seek input into its National Adaptation Strategy as the country battles to address the impact of climate change, the January 2024 meeting was a joint one with the ADEPT Flood and Water Management Group. The meeting explored what we all might expect through the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (once the consultation on that actually gets under way) – new responsibilities and additional financial pressures potentially. But, although the Board heard of the efforts by both Southern Water and Haringey Council to tackle increased and more random rainfall events through practical interventions, the extent to which our watercourses, coastal environment and bluespaces in general are – in simple terms – being abused through pollution and general misuse was hard to hear about from an external speaker, reinforcing what Sir David Attenborough has so vividly brought to our TV screens in recent years.

When the meeting shifted onto the main Engineering Board agenda, hearts probably sank even lower when hearing about the Government's Plan for Drivers. Whilst the thrust of that document seemed to be unpicking decades of effort by transportation specialists, it wasn't warmly received by the Board – just lots of head-scratching as attendees tried to work out how that document could possibly ever align with the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. However, those also attending the April 2024 may have had their spirits lifted to hear of the efforts being made by National Highways to establish electric vehicle recharging facilities at its motorway service stations. Everyone hoped that enough electrical energy can be generated to feed those charge points, though. Hey ho!

*Mark Stevens, Chair of ADEPT Engineering Board, May 2024*

## Environment Board

It has been another very busy and high-profile year for the Environment Board, and my first full year as Chair. Steve Palfrey is my Deputy and has done sterling work in this role, chairing a number of meetings during the year. Thank you too to members of my team at Surrey, Nicola Rivers and Eddie Northwood, who have given valuable support to the Board.

Our agenda for the year has been driven by the implementation of the various aspects of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 – nature recovery, flood risk management, water, air quality, waste and resources. We have continued to be frustrated by delays in government responses to consultations, late funding announcements, and delayed implementation. Local authorities have been hampered by the operational difficulties caused by this delay and uncertainty. We have welcomed the introduction of statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain but raised concerns about some of the practical issues with Ministers and senior civil servants.

The Board had main meetings each quarter with shorter catch-up meetings most other months. In July 2023 we had our first in-person meeting since Covid and it was great to be joined by Robbie McDonald (Chief Insights Officer and Chief Scientist at the Office for Environmental Protection) talking about monitoring of the delivery of the EIP; Brendan Mahon (Defra) and Louise Marix Evans (Quantum) on the Air Quality Strategy and local authority duties, powers, and barriers; and Vicky

Lazarus-Wood (Defra) on the Plan for Water. It was very positive to have an in-person meeting again, we will be repeating this in 2024.

For the other quarterly meetings our guest speakers have included:

- Guto Davies, Director of Policy, Environmental Industries Commission, on the EIC's green growth, skills and prosperity manifesto
- Amber Inman and Alastair Locke, Defra, on protected landscapes
- Julian Harlow, Defra, on local nature recovery
- Kat Bell and Ola Ladapo, Defra, on engagement with local authorities
- Krista Patrick, Planning Advisory Service, on the nature recovery network and LA toolkit
- Victoria Bradford-Keegan, National Trust, and Claire Warburton, Natural England, on urban greening.

As well as our local authority members we welcome regular attendance and updates from colleagues at Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency, these are always valuable.

Our Board has four active Working Groups and I am grateful for the commitment of their Chairs – Steve Palfrey (Waste), Sheryl French (Energy and Clean Growth, Max Tant (Flood & Water Management) and Liz Milne (Co-Chair of Natural Capital & Heritage). My thanks also go to Liz Small who recently stood down as Co-Chair of the NC&H Working Group and to Tim de-Keyzer who stepped up to replace her.

During the year we responded to a number of government consultations including Heat Network Zoning, environmental outcomes, and various aspects of the resources and waste reforms (including extended producer responsibility and waste electrical & electronic equipment). We submitted evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the resources and waste reforms. We published a position statement on nutrient neutrality when amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill were being debated in Parliament.

At ADEPT's Autumn conference in Nottingham last November I was pleased to chair a plenary session on *Delivering our environmental ambitions – opportunities and challenges* on the Friday morning. We had great input from speakers Kate Kennally (Cornwall Council), Jo Wall (Local Partnerships), and Pedro Wrobel (Westminster City Council). This session was well-attended and well-received, although Hannah Bartram has promised me that the environment plenary won't always be the final slot in future!

We worked with the County Councils Network and the seven county and unitary authorities who were negotiating Level 2 devolution deals with government in early 2024 to secure the inclusion of some standard text on strategic local leadership on climate and environment matters. The longer-term aim is bringing together all local ambitions and plans under one framework – a local Environmental Improvement Plan. The local EIP's objective would be to support joined up delivery of these local objectives and delivery of the government's EIP, and its net zero and climate adaptation ambitions.

Although only three of these deals (Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire) were agreed in time for the Budget statement in March, it is important that this principle has been won and can be incorporated into future devolution deals.

Finally, Sheryl and I are pleased to be on ADEPT's Climate Change Board which has been going for approximately 12 months now. It is really important to make sure that as an association we are joining up our work on climate, environment, and green growth.

*Carolyn McKenzie, Chair of ADEPT Environment Board, May 2024*

### Climate Change Board

This is the first annual report from the Climate Change Board, which was established in April 2023. As ADEPT's representative on the Local Net Zero Forum, I am pleased to chair this Board, with support from Andy Gutherson – Andy also sits on the LNZF in his role as Chair of the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel.

The membership of the Board has been designed to get wide representation from ADEPT's other subject and regional Boards, and to include colleagues who are involved in partner organisations such as the Blueprint Coalition and the LGA's Sustainability Action Network.

The purpose of the Board is to be the voice of ADEPT when speaking on strategic climate change issues. It is outward-facing towards government and our partners within and beyond the local authority sector, rather than an internal support offer to ADEPT members. It aims to identify key issues and influence policy and delivery via key national forums including the LNZF and LAAP. We collaborate with a range of partners to do this. Further details of the Board's membership and terms of reference are on the website <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/groups/climate-change>.

The focus of the Board has been shaped by the workplans of the LNZF and the LAAP and by a number of national strategies and reviews published during the year including the Energy Security Strategy and updated Net Zero Strategy, Chris Skidmore's review of the Net Zero Strategy, the third National Adaptation Programme, and the changes announced by the PM last September. We were pleased to have Chris Skidmore MP as the keynote speaker at the ADEPT Spring Conference in May 2023.

The Board has met monthly for most of the year. Guest speakers have included:

- Chris Brierly and Tim German (Energy Systems Catapult), Local Area Energy Planning
- Josh Dunn (EY), Net Zero maturity self-assessment tool
- Isabel Oliver (UK Health Security Agency), Health effects of climate change
- Sophie Kempthorne (UKRI/Innovate UK), Place-based finance for net zero
- Nick Porter (LGA), survey of local authorities' climate actions
- Penny Clark (UCL), Net Zero What Works Centre.

We are now stepping back to reflect on progress to date, review where ADEPT's policy positions on climate change need updating and consider where best to focus our attention for the coming year. We are always keen to welcome new members to the Board so please get in touch if you feel that you can contribute.

*Nigel Riglar, Chair of ADEPT Climate Change Board, May 2024*

## Sustainable Growth Board

The Sustainable Growth Board is a relatively new cross-cutting group with a wide-ranging agenda covering sustainable growth, housing, planning, economic growth and regeneration, and place-shaping through planning and growth. Chris Henning of Derbyshire County Council (taking over from Ian Thompson) became Chair of the Board in September 2023 with Kate Martin of Sheffield City Council becoming Deputy Chair. Meetings are held bi-monthly for an hour and a half.

During the year, the Group has developed its own agenda by initiating virtual meetings on specific subjects. The meeting on 'housing' in January 2024 saw presentations by Homes England, concentrating on its growth strategy with a focus on place-based working, and the work of the National Housebuilding Council, with its emphasis on a partnership approach to working, both proactively and reactively in relation to riskier sites and building safety. Updates to the ADEPT Housing Policy Position were considered, including the challenges of homelessness and rough sleeping, the need for more social and affordable housing, the building of sustainable housing from the outset to avoid retrofitting, the alleviation of climate change, and brownfield land development. A revised Housing Policy Position is being prepared in time to influence post-General Election.

Sustainable growth involves considerable amounts of joint working, and to that end an additional meeting of both the Environment and Sustainable Growth Boards was held in February 2024 to understand issues around flooding, water quality, storm overflows, asset investment, and catchment level management and river restoration. Questions covered engagement with water companies, communication with the Environment Agency, and the process for reservoir development, as well as practical issues such as leakage from taps and surface water run-off from highways.

The March Board meeting focussed on another specific issue, namely sustainable economic growth, with speakers from think tank Localis/IMPOWER's research into councils' role in economic growth, and the UK Infrastructure Bank's role in financing such growth.

Following the Spring Conference in May, a joint meeting with the Planning Working Group in June will focus on planning issues, with topics likely to include planning reforms, constant new legislation and guidance, housing targets, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and nutrient neutrality, infrastructure upgrades, and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Depending on the date of the general election, further meetings are planned for September when there will be an 'election special', and November when finance will be the main agenda item.

Going forward, we will need to consider the future direction of the group, particularly in relation to place-making and place-shaping, with a need to encourage links with a broader range of people to gain the benefits of academic research, perhaps in the form of specific case studies in 'Lunch and Learn' sessions.

*Chris Henning, Chair of ADEPT Sustainable Growth Board, May 2024*



## Transport and Connectivity Board

It has been another busy year for the Transport & Connectivity Board. Our quarterly meetings were all well attended with a range of engaging speakers. Presentations from organisations as wide ranging as the Competition and Markets Authority, National Infrastructure Commission, Confederation of Passenger Transport, Office of Rail and Road, Design Age Institute, England's Economic Heartland and Transport for the North meant we have had a huge variety of topics under discussion. Over the course of the year we have had brilliant support from DfT in presenting topics to us in and the regular update on all things new within DfT. The proactive engagement and candid discussion from Stephen Fidler, Jessica Matthew and a host of their colleagues is hugely valued and appreciated by the board.

Our working groups continue to progress matters under their subject areas and we have seen the chairmanship of the Traffic Systems Working Group move from Adrian Gray of Hampshire County Council to Richard Ling of Cambridgeshire. Also the PROW Working Group chairmanship has moved from Shona Butter of Shropshire Council to Peter Hobley of Somerset Council. A big thanks to Adrian (for his 15 years!) and Shona for their leadership of their working groups in steering them and keeping us moving forward. Continued thanks to Paul Copeland for chairing the Road Safety Working Group, Ceren Clulow for leading our Digital Connectivity Group and Mark Corbin on leading our National Traffic Managers forum and for another extremely successful conference last October. This has become a really important event in ADEPT's annual calendar.

As always we have been busy in providing views on behalf of members to various government consultations and calls for evidence. These include National Networks National Policy Statement, Freight and the Planning System and Street Works: Fines and Lane Rental Surplus Funds.

Our joint work with the Association of Directors of Childrens Services on SEND Transport continued and concluded by producing a paper setting out our asks for legislative changes to Government and a toolkit to help local authorities drive efficiency and manage growth and costs in providing this service. These were launched at the ATCO conference in November and meetings have been held with DfE to discuss what work can be progressed in the short term. The next phase of this work is being set up to continue this collaboration with DfE now that we have opened that door.

My final word has to be a huge thanks to all those engaging with the T&C Board over the last 2 years while I have chaired, whether attending or presenting, to DfT for brilliant support, to my working group chairs and Hannah and Karen for keeping me on the straight and narrow. I have really enjoyed chairing this board and have learned loads while doing it (so a win win!). I am now handing over to the very capable Amy Harhoff of Durham County Council and wish her just as much fun!

*Ann Carruthers, Chair of ADEPT Transport & Connectivity Board, May 2024*

## CSS Wales

CSS Wales has been an integral part of ADEPT for many years and is a professional association of local authority chief officers who operate at the strategic tier of local government in Wales. We have strong links with the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) and the Association of Consulting Engineers (ACE).

CSS Wales values the opportunity to engage with national peers learning from experiences and sharing knowledge to improve how we all deliver services to the public and wants to maintain the working relationship and positively contributing to the valuable ADEPT work.

CSS Wales meets quarterly and discusses matters relating to the planning and delivery of local and national initiatives including transportation, waste management, traffic management, road safety, transport planning, engineering and construction, bridges and structures, street lighting and highways maintenance.

CSS has several groups/sub-groups which have been established to review specific activities and functions and these are supported by a number of staff from the 22 local authorities. These groups report to the management committee and they are vital in providing capacity to tackle common issues and in building skills and capacity.

CSS seeks to help improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by:

- developing and maintaining transport and highway networks which is vital to movement of goods and people.
- sharing and promoting best practice to ensure that service delivery is carried out in the most effective, efficient and economical way.
- protecting and enhancing our natural environment.
- maintaining and enhancing public spaces.
- highlighting the value to the Welsh economy from infrastructure development and the delivery of the services in Wales.
- reducing risk to the public and the public sector organisations.

In recent years, a Common Standards Guide has been produced in collaboration with stakeholders including the Home Building Federations, to assist and bring consistency to enable highway agreements to be successfully completed allowing the adoption of roads serving new developments, with the focus very much on the constructional standards and specifications. These common standards are a live document and are under review to more fully align to current, new and forthcoming guidance.

*Rhodri Llwyd, Chair, CSS Wales, May 2024*