

ADEPT Strategic Plan 2026-29

Working title: Making Better Places

Contents

1. Executive summary
2. About ADEPT
3. Achievements
4. Context
5. Our values
6. Strategic Priorities
7. Actions for 2026/27.

Executive summary

ADEPT: the voice of local authority place directors and their teams working together for resilient and thriving communities.

We are celebrating 140 years of excellence in place-based leadership across environment, economy, planning and transport.

This plan sets out our strategic objectives for 2026-2029. It celebrates some of our key achievements over the period of the previous Strategic Plan and outlines the main changes and challenges that we must address.

The plan sets out our values as an organisation – the core beliefs and principles that underpin and guide the way that we operate and behave. They are:

- Inclusion
- Collaboration
- Influence
- Innovation.

Our priorities for 2026-29 are:

- Delivering effective devolution and successful local government reorganisation (LGR) to enable local growth and prosperity
- Building resilient places
- Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities
- Tackling the climate and nature emergencies at a local level
- Supporting the workforce– our most valuable asset is our people
- Being the best we can be.

Actions for 2026/27 – add when annual workplan has been agreed.

About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) is the voice of local authority place directors and their teams. Our members manage vital local services - from highways, waste, recycling and planning - while also preparing for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

ADEPT is a membership based, voluntary organisation with members across England. We bring together directors from county, unitary, metropolitan and combined authorities, along with sub-

national transport bodies and corporate partners. Collectively, our members provide services for more than 42 million people, manage 164,000 miles of road and handle around 75% of all recycled waste in England.

ADEPT members develop long term strategies, investment and infrastructure needed to make their places resilient, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous. They drive clean, sustainable growth, delivering the projects that are fundamental to creating more resilient communities, economies and infrastructure. These services include housing, environmental and regulatory services, planning, economic development, culture and highways and transport.

ADEPT develops, supports and represents members to make their places more resilient, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous, leading the transformation of local authorities. We proactively engage with central government on emerging issues, promoting initiatives aimed at influencing policy, regulation and funding, developing best practices and by responding to government initiatives and consultations. We also drive leadership development, foster innovation through programmes and initiatives.

Our values

Our values are the set of core beliefs and principles that underpin and guide the way that we operate and behave. They describe the culture that we want to create and sustain, the way that we collaborate with one another, make decisions and build relationships with our partners and others.

Our values are:

- **Inclusion** – we are committed to promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across our membership and beyond in all aspects of our work. Our commitment and actions are set out in our [EDI Charter](#).
- **Collaboration** – we are committed to building mutual trust and working collaboratively across our membership, with our partners and other organisations. Our collective impact is greater than working alone. We understand the importance of building trust the between individuals, communities and institutions. We aim to be respected as a trusted source of information and advice.
- **Influence** – we use the knowledge and experience of our members to help shape public policy and drive its delivery. We bring an optimistic, positive approach based on a belief that the future of place making can and should be hopeful. We work with the other professional and representative bodies in local government to maximise our collective influence.
- **Innovation** – we encourage innovation in all our activities and aim to add value wherever we can. Our commitment is exemplified in the Live Labs 2 programme, the Digital Academy and the place leaders' [PACE](#) thought leadership programme – Pioneering, Action-orientated, Creative and Entrepreneurial

Achievements

We are celebrating 140 years of excellence in place-based leadership across environment, economy, planning and transport. Dating back to the first meeting of the County Surveyors' Society on 19th November 1885, the organisation has consistently served as an authoritative voice, successfully influencing national policy and providing insight into funding and policy

changes for both local and national government. ADEPT acts as a vital resource for members, providing professional guidance, networking opportunities and knowledge sharing.

We are proud of our achievements over the last three years. We think we punch above our weight. The association has grown in size and influence; we offer an ever-increasing range of membership services, development programmes, research and innovation. Our achievements include:

Leadership and workforce development –

- ongoing success of the Leadership Development Programme
- launch of Leadership Pathway Programme
- PACE Programme
- Gen Z ‘Find your path’ campaign
- Digital Academy launched to accelerate digital and data skill development across local authorities – developed in partnership with Colas and delivered by Multiverse, funded by the Apprenticeship Levy

Innovation and best practice –

- Live Labs 2 programme (including Expo and Parliamentary reception)
- SEND home to school transport toolkit and policy position
- Rapid Adaptation Pathway Assessment toolkit developed and launched in partnership with the Environment Agency
- Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund delivered <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/woodland-creation-accelerator-fund> to create green jobs and accelerate tree planting
- Carbon Leadership Programme

Policy influence –

- Engagement with Ministers and Mayors – Mary Creagh at Spring Conference, Andy Burnham at Autumn Conference, Miatta Fahnbulleh at Energy & Clean Growth Working Group, Wes Streeting at the Joint Presidents meeting
- Evidence to Parliamentary Committees – home to school transport, drought preparedness
- *Public affairs strategy and meetings with MPs?*
- Communications and media profile – regular features in Highways Magazine, Local Government Chronicle, Environment Journal; various ad hoc pieces and increased media responses

Networking and knowledge sharing –

- Delivering a series of devolution and LGR webinars
- Delivering a series of webinars with the Environment Agency and Natural England

Organisational development –

- Appointment of Deputy CEO and Executive Assistant
- Launched the new Economy, Planning & Housing Board
- 140th anniversary celebrations.

Plus all the ‘day job’ of supporting members, Boards and working groups, conferences, webinars and other events, consultation responses, meetings with senior civil servants, updated policy

positions, etc. We have continued to welcome new faces to the Leadership Team as former Chairs of our subject and regional Boards have moved on.

Context

Our new priorities recognise and reflect the major environmental, social and political context changes we have seen since 2023 including:

- data/technology/AI are moving very quickly and having radical effects.
- climate impacts are a lot more real now, so we need greater emphasis on adapting services and assets.
- the public's lack of trust in politics has continued to grow.
- political consensus on net zero/climate change has broken down.
- the international context is more challenging with overseas conflicts and tensions impacting our communities in different ways.
- the rise of populism leading to divisions within communities.
- the wider agenda of the government elected in 2024.

The strategic challenges to local government over the coming period include:

- continuing severe financial pressures and the potential impacts of Fair Funding reform
- the implementation of devolution and local government reorganisation (LGR) – the creation of new strategic and unitary authorities, and the end of two-tier county and district councils by 2028
- the rise of Reform UK as an important player in local politics, alongside a surge in popularity of parties such as the Green Party.

Despite the noise of change, the heart of local leadership still beats strongly.

Strategic priorities

We have six strategic priorities for the coming period - four outward-facing ambitions and two organisational. They are:

- 1) **Building resilient places** – building and maintaining resilient infrastructure and services in the broadest sense – highways, transport, housing, connectivity, flood protection, energy, water – to support local growth and make it resilient to the impacts of the climate and nature emergencies and unforeseen shocks such as pandemics and the effects of international conflict.
- 2) **Tackling the climate and nature emergencies at a local level** – for local authorities to lead decarbonisation and nature recovery in their places to ensure that local growth and prosperity are built on green, sustainable foundations and that the wider benefits of climate and nature action are realised. We will lobby government to provide the right statutory framework and adequate resources to enable this.
- 3) **Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities** – We will work to promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. We will give weight to community voices and engage at a neighbourhood level so that decisions are made as locally as possible. We will provide inclusive public spaces to encourage cohesive and equal communities.

- 4) **Delivering effective devolution and successful LGR in order to enable local growth and prosperity** – our focus for the next three years is supporting place directors and services through the processes of becoming a unitary council and/or strategic authority, supporting and learning from those who have already done so and are trying to make the new structures work effectively, and lobbying government to provide the right powers, resources and capacity.
- 5) **Supporting workforce development – our most valuable asset is our people.** There are significant workforce and skills shortages across the country. Staff recruitment and retention are key challenges. Improving the diversity of the public sector workforce remains critical, along with developing the skills that we need over the coming years to deliver place services. We want to see working in place as the career of choice, and a pipeline of diverse place and thought leaders of the future. We will continue to develop innovative recruitment, skills and development projects that can be rolled out to our members.
- 6) **Being the best we can be.** We will continue to act as good advocates for our members throughout the period of political uncertainty and structural change that they face. We will update and refine the membership offer to reflect the needs of place directors in both local and strategic authorities. We will continue to review the offer to our corporate partners to ensure that it is attractive and gives them added value and enables them to contribute to ADEPT's development.

Actions for 2026/27 – add when annual workplan has been agreed.

End of body text.

Text boxes and infographics

In addition to the core text (above) the Plan will contain a number of pull-out text boxes and infographics giving further information and links to website. These will be designed for visual interest and positioned to make the design work. Possible subjects to include:

- ADEPT in numbers – members, Boards and working groups, corporate partners, financial turnover, development programmes, webinars delivered, conference delegates, etc.
- 140th anniversary – timeline and ‘did you know?’ infographic
<https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/adept-140-anniversary-infographic>
- Partnerships including EA, NE, FC, FHRG, Blueprint
- Government departments we face
- Corporate partners – we have 24 corporate partners from different sectors. Partnering with corporate organisations is a key priority for ADEPT, whether it's co-developing new approaches, embracing emerging technologies, or rethinking how we deliver services. We all recognise the vital role that collaboration across the public, private, and community sectors plays in shaping our places. By working together we can find innovative solutions and build a workforce equipped with the right skills for the future. These partnerships also strengthen our collective voice, helping us influence government policy and investment in ways that support sustainable, resilient, and

future-ready places. By working with our corporate partners, we don't just respond to change — we collectively shape the future for our people and places. *Add quotes?*

- Leadership development and other programmes – how we support members more generally, e.g. lunch and learn, webinars, networking
- Awards: the annual President's awards recognise the outstanding achievements of members and partners across the country. Held at One Whitehall Place in London each May, the event marks the end of the President's year in office. The awards ceremony rounds off our Spring Conference and recognises the important work of ADEPT members and partners, highlighting and showcasing projects that demonstrate achievements in improving the delivery and outcomes of community services. The 2025 awards categories and winners were:
 - Delivering Sustainable Growth – Westmorland & Furness Council *Journey to Net Zero*
 - Innovation in Place Shaping – City of London *Thermal comfort modelling and guidelines*
 - Shaping Places for People – Surrey County Council *Creating a truly circular community*
 - President's Special Recognition Award – Derbyshire County Council *Bus service improvement plan team.*

Back page – bullets and summary of ADEPT, logo, website etc.