

ADEPT ENGINEERING BOARD NATIONAL BRIDGES GROUP

MEETING NOTES

Venue: Online

Date and Time: 10:30 on Wednesday 18th March 2026

Name	Present	Init.	Representing
Helen Rowe	✓	HR	NBG Chair
Rob Causton	✓	RC	NBG Vice Chair South West, Chair
Joanne Saunders	✓	JS	NBG Secretary
Andrew Pierce	✓	AP	NBG Secretary Yorks/Humber, Chair
Osian Richards	✓	OR	CSS Wales, Chair
Edward Rees	✓	ER	CSS Wales, Vice-Chair
Bob Humphreys		BH	CSS Wales
Colin Ferris	✓	CF	Infrastructure NI
Claire McGeown		CM	Infrastructure NI
Maria Lucey	✓	ML	SCOTS
Caroline Haycock	✓	CH	East Midlands, Chair
Ian Booth		IB	East Midlands, Secretary
Rob Pearson	✓	RP	East Midlands, Secretary (substitute rep for Ian Booth)
Clive Woodruff		CWo	East, Chair
TBC			East, Secretary
Patrick Smith	✓	PS	North, Chair
Stuart Molyneux	✓	SM	North West, Chair
Colin Jenkins		CJ	North West, Sec
Paul Tucker	✓	PT	South West, Vice Chair
Emma Cockburn		EC	South West, Secretary
Alan Mclean	✓	AM	South East, Chair
Scott Gregory	✓	SG	South East, Secretary
Maureen Robson	✓	MR	TfL
Sharan Gill		SGi	TfL
Chris Wright	✓	CW	West Midlands, Chair
Chris Plant	✓	CP	West Midlands, Secretary
Claire Richardson	✓	CR	Yorks/Humber, Sec
Guests			
Alan Daines		ADa	Canal & Rivers Trust
Alistair Dore		AD	National Highways - HRE
Kieran Dodds	✓ Item 7	KD	National Highways
Keith Harwood		KH	Independent, Ex Chair
Hannah Bartram	✓ Item 1 & 2	HB	Presenter, ADEPT
James OConnor	✓ Item 1 & 2		Presenter, DfT

Also on circulation: Hannah.Bartram@eastsussex.gov.uk, secretariat@adeptnet.org.uk

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Introductions & Apologies	
1.1	<p>HR welcomed all to the session.</p> <p>Edward Rees introduced himself as Senior Engineer at Carmarthenshire County Council and Vice Chair of the CSS Wales Bridge Group. JS welcomed him and noted she would add him to the mailing list.</p> <p>Helen asked for Chris Rook to be removed as Maureen and Claire are now covering this role (bridge strike prevention)</p> <p>Formal apologies were then recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alistair Door • Clive Woodruff (East) • Ian Booth (East Midlands), but note that Rob Pearson joined in his place <p>Post-Intro Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Harwood shared his apologies via email during the session <p>HR highlighted that the East region currently has no representative and invited the group to suggest potential contacts.</p>	<p>JS</p> <p>JS</p>
2a	<p>PRESENTATION: The purpose of ADEPT, current challenges and key focus areas for the year ahead.</p> <p>Presenter: Hannah Bartram - ADEPT Chief Executive Officer</p>	
2a.1	<p>Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive of ADEPT, opened with an overview of the organisation and its reach across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. ADEPT represents place directors and their teams across county, unitary and combined authorities, supported by 25 private-sector partners. She noted that ADEPT's 140-year history reflects its enduring role in shaping the national place and infrastructure agenda.</p> <p><u>ADEPT's work spans three core areas:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking and knowledge sharing, delivered through regional boards, subject boards, and technical working groups, including NBG. Events, learning programmes and engagement with government bodies form a large part of this activity. 2. Policy influence, where ADEPT provides evidence based insights on practical impacts of national policy across transport, environment, planning, digital connectivity, and local government. 3. Innovation and best practice, demonstrated through major programmes such as Live Labs, toolkits, climate initiatives, and recruitment campaigns. <p><u>Current Initiatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Adoption Pathways Assessment (RAPA) toolkit for climate adaptation planning. • Carbon Leadership Programme, helping authorities measure and reduce emissions while identifying efficiency savings. • "Talking Climate" guidance, supporting clearer public communication on climate and nature. • Local Government Reorganisation toolkit, supporting councils navigating boundary changes. • Digital Academy apprenticeships in partnership with Multiverse. • Live Labs 2, a national programme on decarbonising local roads, soon entering a dissemination-focused extension year. • Leadership Pathway Programme for aspiring senior managers. <p><u>Key national issues impacting local authorities:</u></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing local government reorganisation (LGR), with numerous geography proposals under review – Decision Expected March / July • The Devolution Bill, creating strategic authorities and expanding transport powers – Royal Assent by Spring 26 • Funding changes, including multi year settlements, consolidated transport funding and the controversial pothole ratings map, but there are significant financial pressures • A shifting political environment ahead of widespread local elections. (4851 seats across 134 Councils) • Major consultations, notably the large National Planning Policy Framework review. • Forthcoming policies such as the national transport strategy, RIS3 and EV pay-per-mile duty. <p>Hannah confirmed that ADEPT is closely engaged with central government across these agendas.</p> <p>Hannah concluded with a preview of ADEPT's new strategic plan, "Making Better Places," underpinned by values of collaboration, influence, innovation and inclusion. Priorities include climate action, resilient places, community wellbeing, workforce development and supporting successful devolution.</p>	
2a.2	<p>Helen explained that at the last ADEPT Engineering Board meeting, there was an excellent presentation on how geological features and historic ground conditions contribute to carriageway failures, collapses and retaining wall problems</p> <p>AP to Invite the speaker to a future meeting (get details from HR)</p>	****AP
2b	Reinforcing the purpose of ADEPT NBG (HR)	
2b.1	<p>Purpose of ADEPT NBG</p> <p>Helen explained that the ADEPT National Bridges Group exists for two core purposes:</p> <p><u>1. Acting as one collective, influential voice</u></p> <p>Helen highlighted that by meeting as a group, local authorities can identify shared issues, concerns, and priorities, and present them collectively rather than each authority trying to influence government or national bodies on their own. Although members won't always agree on every detail, the value lies in recognising the scale of infrastructure represented across authorities and the significant collective impact this has on communities.</p> <p><u>2. Knowledge-sharing, consistency and progressing common challenges</u></p> <p>Helen emphasised that NBG provides a space for authorities to learn from one another through presentations, guidance development and focused working groups. The aim is to ensure members work from the same baseline understanding, pool expertise, and tackle common challenges together—ultimately improving consistency and aligning approaches across the sector.</p> <p>Helen also explained that NBG's influence extends beyond bridges. She referenced the importance of linking structures work with wider transport, climate, and decarbonisation agendas—for example, how introducing heavier vehicles such as electric buses affects bridge load capacity. This helps authorities access opportunities through wider funding streams and integrate structures considerations into whole-network thinking.</p> <p>Overall, Helen framed ADEPT NBG as a collaborative forum that strengthens influence, consistency, and shared learning across local highways authorities.</p>	

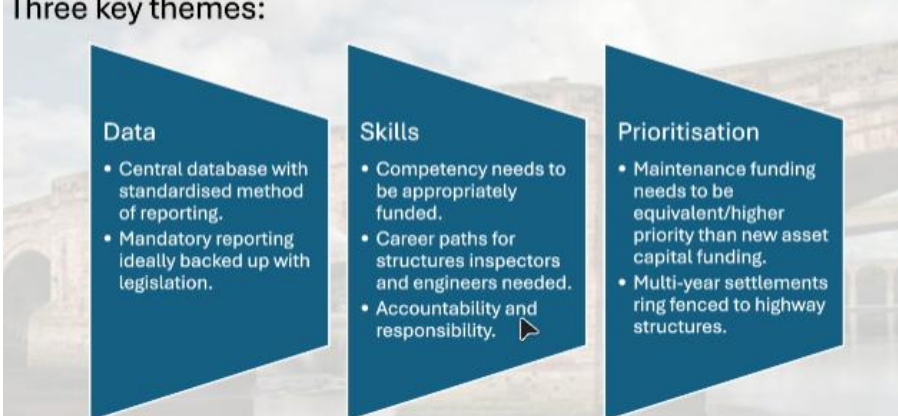
2b.2	<p>ADEPT Wider Governance</p> <p>After Helen outlined the purpose of ADEPT and NBG, Hannah reinforced how the National Bridges Group fits into ADEPT’s wider governance and influence structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBG sits directly under the ADEPT Engineering Board, which is chaired by James Bailey, a member of the ADEPT Leadership Team. • Because of this reporting line, NBG has a formal route for its issues, priorities and concerns to be escalated into senior level conversations. • James Bailey meets regularly with senior officials in the Department for Transport, meaning NBG’s discussions have a clear path into national policy forums. • This ensures that bridges and structures topics are not isolated, but are fed into broader place-based discussions, government dialogues, and cross sector strategies. • Hannah highlighted that this “funnel upwards” is an important part of ADEPT’s value: NBG is not operating in a bubble but is part of a connected system where technical issues travel upwards, and national policy flows back down to members. <p>In short, Hannah emphasised that NBG has real influence: its work and insights shape what the Engineering Board takes to central government, and this two-way relationship ensures structures remain visible within national decision making.</p> <p>From this, Helen raised that many authorities are struggling with the Environment Agency, particularly around permits and delays affecting structural repairs and asked whether ADEPT could help facilitate better engagement, similar to the established relationship with the Canal & River Trust.</p> <p>Hannah Bartram responded that ADEPT is already in regular contact with the EA and invited Helen to email her directly so she can take the issue forward and explore setting up improved dialogue or a joint meeting with them.</p>	HR
2b.3	<p>Engagement with the Department for Transport (DfT)</p> <p>Helen explained that ADEPT NBG has been in active dialogue with the DfT regarding the Structures Fund and its design. She highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEPT and NBG were consulted directly by DfT on how the Structures Fund should be shaped. • As a result of ADEPT’s input, DfT made changes to their initial thinking and allocation approach, reflecting the issues raised by local authorities. • Helen, along with colleagues Alan and Patrick, was invited to DfT headquarters in October to present directly to the department’s Chief Engineer, David Coles. That session brought together multiple national bodies — local authorities, Network Rail, Canal & River Trust, National Highways, and TfL — to present shared challenges around managing ageing bridge and structures infrastructure. She described the day as “a really interesting day,” reinforcing that ADEPT’s structures work is being recognised and taken seriously at national level. <p>In short, Helen emphasised that NBG has a strong and growing influence with DfT, with direct access to senior engineering leadership and tangible impact on national policy design.</p>	

3	<p>PRESENTATION: Structures Fund updates from DfT Presenter: James O'Connor - Policy Lead for the Structures Fund at the Department for Transport (DfT)</p>	
3.1	<p>James O'Connor, Policy Lead for the Structures Fund at the Department for Transport, provided an update on the development of the new national Structures Fund. He explained that the fund was announced following the Spending Review 2025 and is intended to support a portfolio of local highway structural repairs and replacements during the next spending period, from 2026 to 2029/30. The goal is to reflect local priorities while distributing investment fairly across the country.</p> <p>James thanked authorities for responding to DfT's recent survey, noting 148 total responses, including 127 from local highway authorities. He said the volume and detail of submissions underscored the scale of structural need nationwide, which is central to DfT's ongoing design work for the fund. Feedback is now being analysed to refine the investment criteria.</p> <p>James then summarised the proposed key features of the fund, as consulted on in the survey:</p> <p><u>Eligibility and Types of Structures</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fund will cover bridges, flyovers, retaining walls, embankments, and repairs to highways required due to landslips or collapses. • Structures must sit on the local highway network, though assets owned by Network Rail or the Canal & River Trust may be included if they serve local roads. <p><u>Scheme Types and Conditions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities may submit either single structure projects or package schemes, defined as coherent clusters of related structures. • Structures must either require repair now or be reasonably expected to require repair or replacement by 2029/30. • Projects must be beyond what councils can afford through maintenance block grants or other funding. <p><u>Participation and Limits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local highway authorities in England and Transport for London will be eligible. • No proposed limits on the number of schemes an authority may submit, nor on the size of investment per scheme. <p><u>Technical Advisory Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James confirmed DfT intends to appoint a Technical Advisory Body to collaborate with authorities, helping refine scheme proposals and supporting the investment process. • James set out levels of support offered by TAB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1. Light-Touch Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For most authorities. ▪ Advisory only—checking reasoning, helping shape submissions, offering guidance without re-doing any work. ○ 2. Moderate Technical Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For authorities with limited in-house expertise. ▪ TAB may help refine scheme information, strengthen evidence, or fill small technical gaps. ○ 3. Full Support for Authorities With No Bridge Engineering Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designed for authorities without chartered engineers or without the ability to prepare bids themselves. ▪ TAB can help them develop their scheme proposals so they can still participate in the Structures Fund. 	

	James concluded by confirming that DfT intends to publish the finalised investment criteria and process guidance in spring 2026, aligning with the fund's targeted launch timeline.	
3.2	<p>Question from Maureen Robson (TfL) Topic: Eligibility of TfL structures and comparability Question: Maureen asked whether it included TfL—whose structures form a major strategic network—would make it difficult for DfT to compare funding submissions fairly across very different authority types. James' Response: James clarified that the only excluded network is the National Highways strategic road network. TfL is eligible, and DfT's design approach ensures structures of all types can be compared consistently despite differing scales and traffic profiles.</p> <hr/> <p>Question from Stuart Molyneux Topic: Make-up of the Technical Advisory Body (TAB) Question: Stuart asked who would make up the TAB and whether it would be delivered by consultants. James' Response: James said DfT expects the TAB to be delivered by consultants. Its purpose is supportive, not supervisory, helping authorities of different sizes and capabilities develop strong proposals.</p> <hr/> <p>Follow on Concern from Helen Rowe (Kent CC) Topic: Consultants are risk averse especially departures from standards Summary: Helen warned that consultants often refuse to endorse departures from standard due to PI limitations, whereas local authorities rely on them regularly to run their networks. James' Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TAB cannot block authority proposals. • DfT, not consultants, will make final decisions on departures from standard. • James agreed clear guidance is needed and said he would take away the request to include explicit wording about departures in the final documentation. <hr/> <p>Question from Chris Wright Topic: Duplicated work created by multiple consultants Question: Chris explained that when an authority changes consultants, new firms often reject previous work and redo it due to liability concerns. He was worried the TAB might force authorities to repeat designs unnecessarily. James' Response: James reassured the group that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TAB will not redo existing consultant work. • Decisions involving professional judgement—particularly departures from standards—ultimately sit with DfT, not external consultants. <hr/> <p>Question from Chris Plant Topic: Submission timelines and preparation Question: Chris highlighted the tight overall delivery window and asked when DfT expects authorities to submit schemes so they can begin preparing suitable projects now. James' Response: James said he could not yet confirm launch dates, but councils should use the survey framework as guidance to begin preparing candidate schemes. This framework reflects DfT's intended direction of travel.</p> <hr/> <p>Comment from Osian Gruffydd Richards Topic: Balance of expertise on the TAB Question: Osian suggested that if the TAB is consultant led, DfT should consider appointing an independent chair who is an ex local authority bridge</p>	

	<p>engineer, to provide balance and ensure the advisory process reflects real world operational pressures.</p> <p>James' Response: The TAB's design is still being developed and DfT is open to feedback on ensuring balanced, practical oversight.</p> <p>Helen's additions: Helen warned that if DfT intends to make final decisions on departures from standards, it will be difficult unless the department has its own chartered bridge engineer to understand the technical judgement involved. She highlighted a structural issue in the proposed Technical Advisory Body (TAB): it has two conflicting roles—supporting authorities to develop schemes and also prioritising those same schemes nationally. She cautioned this could bias outcomes or inadvertently penalise schemes containing legitimate departures that consultants may avoid endorsing. Helen emphasised that ADEPT NBG is willing to help DfT refine the approach to avoid these pitfalls.</p>	
3.3	<p>Helen invited participants to volunteer to assist James with tasks related to the Structures Fund and requested that interested individuals email Jo, so their contact details could be shared with James after the meeting.</p>	ALL
4	<p>PRESENTATION: RAC Survey data headlines and discussion on what next</p> <p>Presenters: Helen Rowe/Rob Causton - ADEPT NBG Chair/Vice-Chair</p>	
4.1	<p>Overview</p> <p>Helen and Rob presented the work they completed on analysing the RAC Foundation bridge condition survey data. They explained that this dataset—covering more than a decade of returns—had never previously been reviewed by bridge engineers, and ADEPT was asked to help interpret it before their meeting with DfT. They collected, cleansed and standardised all historic returns to eliminate inconsistencies such as missing years, sudden changes in structure counts, and misreported spans. This allowed them to build a Power BI dashboard to interrogate trends across local authorities.</p>	
4.2	<p>Findings</p> <p><u>Data quality and consistency</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical RAC survey data contains significant inconsistencies: fluctuating structure counts, varied reporting standards, missing fields, and differing span thresholds. • Despite inconsistencies, the dataset is the only national evidence base for local authority bridge condition. • Helen and Rob cleaned and standardised the data and built a Power BI dashboard to analyse trends. <p><u>National picture of substandard structures</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across England, roughly 2,500 local authority structures were reported as substandard each year. • This equates to approximately 5% of local authority bridge stock. • Strategic bodies (National Highways, TfL, Transport Scotland, Welsh Government) reported around 1.7% substandard structures. • Patterns have remained broadly stable, indicating a static long-term trend. <p><u>Interpretation challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sub-standard” does not mean unsafe — many are safely managed via weight limits or historic strengthening. • Differing interpretations of “sub-standard” mean authority's report based on management position, not consistent technical criteria. <p><u>Standards and assessment variability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of standards is highly variable: some authorities use DMRB, others use local frameworks. • Lack of uniformity in PTSI cycles and Scour Level 2 assessments, with some dating back decades. • Historic structures (e.g., masonry arches) often do not align with modern DMRB expectations, complicating reporting. 	

	<p><u>Key risk highlighted to DfT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAC data shows the scale of national LA structures need but also exposes the limits of using that data for funding criteria (e.g., TROs on non-LA structures). 	
4.3	<p>Staffing</p> <p>Helen raised findings from a recent FOI request showing the sharp decline in qualified Chartered engineers across local authority structures teams. She stressed this is a major risk: many councils no longer have in-house chartered bridge engineers to act as intelligent clients, increasing dependence on consultants and weakening the sector's ability to manage ageing infrastructure. Helen warned that Local Government Reorganisation would intensify this capacity gap unless addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recent FOI revealed that a substantial proportion of English authorities have no chartered engineers within their structure's teams. Even more concerning, 44% of English councils reported having no in-house engineer at all (Chartered or otherwise) managing their structures stock. <p>Helen noted that these findings have been escalated to the ADEPT Engineering Board, which has asked for the issue to be brought back for further action.</p>	
4.4	<p>Funding</p> <p>Helen highlighted that current funding arrangements are not aligned with structural asset needs. Annual settlements do not suit multi-year bridge schemes, while fragmented pots limit flexibility. Although integrated multi-year settlements are a positive step, allocations are still based on network length, which does not reflect the number, age, or complexity of structures managed by each authority. Helen also stressed that local highway authorities face disproportionately high costs due to statutory service diversions, which national bodies don't experience at the same scale.</p> <p>Helen and Rob's analysis showed a stark resourcing gap (23/24 data):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities receive around £4,600 per bridge per year (and realistically closer to ~£1,500 when accounting for unreported structures). Strategic bodies receive around £31,000 per structure per year. <p>This highlights the severe underfunding of local authority structures compared with the strategic network, despite local authorities managing far more assets. Helen noted that this cannot be taken as gospel but is likely indicative and was eye-opening in discussions with DfT.</p>	
4.5	<p>Summary/Priorities</p> <p>Helen suggested that without a consistent national bridge database, it is impossible to prioritise investment fairly or understand structural risk across the country. The RAC survey shows the scale of the problem but is too inconsistent to drive national decisions. She argued that a light-touch national dataset—capturing only essential indicators like BCI critical values, basic condition markers, and route importance—would transform the sector's ability to allocate funding efficiently.</p> <p>Helen emphasised that this is not about creating a burdensome asset register, but about having enough unified information to make comparisons, identify national priorities, and direct funding where it delivers the greatest benefit. A shared dataset would also avoid duplication, provide transparency, and help authorities demonstrate value for money. Ultimately, she said, a national database is essential for efficient, data-led prioritisation and stronger cases for future investment.</p>	

4.6	<p>Three key themes:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central database with standardised method of reporting. Mandatory reporting ideally backed up with legislation. Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency needs to be appropriately funded. Career paths for structures inspectors and engineers needed. Accountability and responsibility. Prioritisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance funding needs to be equivalent/higher priority than new asset capital funding. Multi-year settlements ring fenced to highway structures. 	
5	<p>Discussion following Presentations</p>	
5.1	<p>Good Stewardship Incentives Stuart's Point: Stuart noted that some authorities have invested additional local funding to maintain good stewardship of their structures. He raised a concern that if future national prioritisation or a new national database focuses solely on condition or need, councils that have proactively invested in keeping assets in better condition might appear to have lower need and therefore risk losing out on future funding, despite having acted responsibly.</p> <p>Helen's Response: Helen agreed this is an important issue and clarified that ADEPT had already raised it with DfT. She explained that the new RAG rating system now includes measures that reward authorities for topping up their funding allocations and demonstrating good stewardship. She added that ADEPT is working with DfT to translate elements of the RAC survey into the RAG framework so that authorities who have invested in maintaining their structures are positively recognised, rather than penalised, in future funding decisions.</p> <p>Patrick supported the idea that future funding and prioritisation should reward good behaviour and competent asset management, not just crisis-driven need.</p>	
5.2	<p>TfL Maureen cautioned that TfL's inclusion may create unfair comparisons: TfL manages far fewer but vastly larger, more complex structures, so funding-per-bridge figures make TfL appear over-funded. She stressed that TfL's asset scale and traffic loads mean simple per-bridge metrics misrepresent its real funding position.</p>	
5.3	<p>DfT engagement (initiation) Claire asked Helen to clarify the context of the DfT engagement—specifically, who initiated the meeting off the back of the meeting with Peter Hill. Helen clarified that the invitation was for those directly employed directly by LA's which led to Alan and Patrick joining.</p>	
5.4	<p>DfT Next Steps Helen confirmed that she is part of lobbying DfT to carry on conversations and progress more workshops. Helen noted we want to be seen to be assisting DfT to help and offer advice, rather than criticising them.</p>	
5.5	<p>LA vs Strategic Road Funding Osian highlighted findings from CIPFA showing a major funding disparity between networks. He reported that for every £1 spent on local authority roads, the strategic road network spends £44.</p>	
5.6	<p>DfT RAG rating Helen explained that, following the RAC survey ending, ADEPT proposed six simple, standardised questions for DfT to include in the RAG rating. She said</p>	

	<p>the questions were intentionally light-touch and based on definitions already in Well Managed Highways CoP, ensuring every authority can answer them consistently.</p> <p>Helen summarised that this is all about highlighting the gravity of the situation and showing that the management of LA structures is so much bigger. The conversation has started, the door is open and the conversation is continuing.</p>	
6	Feedback and liaison with other groups	
6.1	CSS Wales (OR)	
6.1.1	<p>Website Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales is still working to launch a national website for reporting structural collapses. Two apprentices (front-end and back-end) are now available to help, so progress is expected soon. 	
6.1.2	<p>State of the Nation report for Welsh Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSS Wales is developing a State of the Nation report for Welsh Government. Significant difficulty gathering consistent data from local authorities, despite strong attendance at meetings. 	
6.1.3	<p>Need for Better Engagement Across Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants asked whether scour is really a major issue in Wales because some authorities were not reporting much. Osian stressed that scour is a major problem, due to Wales' older masonry structures and changing rainfall patterns (less drizzle, more intense downpours). Plans to deliver a presentation to senior leadership in Welsh local authorities to highlight structural risk and encourage better reporting. 	
6.1.4	<p>Moonshot / GScan Trial (Post Tensioned Bridge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales used G-Scan commercially (separate from the Moonshot programme) to investigate a complex, highly congested post-tensioned structure. G-Scan successfully detected ducts, shear links, bar diameters and even unexpected anchorages located at the top of the deck. Rain delays mean excavation/confirmation still pending, but early results show GScan offers high quality insight, potentially reducing intrusive investigation. 	
6.2	SCOTS (ML)	
6.2.1	<p>Maria outlined that SCOTS is issuing an anonymous national survey to assess structures team capacity across Scottish authorities, covering staffing levels, qualifications, bridge manager expertise, structure counts and five-year budgets. The aim is to identify gaps, support business cases for resources, and repeat the survey annually to track resilience.</p>	
6.3	BOF (RC)	
6.3.1	<p>Cam Middleton: Acknowledgement of the passing of the long-standing BOF Chair and recognition of his contribution.</p>	
6.3.2	<p>Governance: Rob explained that BOF reviewed formalising its governance and considered three possible legal structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charity Community Interest Company (CIC) Non-charitable company limited by guarantee <p>Legal advice indicated the best option was to become a non-charitable company limited by guarantee, as this enables BOF to operate formally, handle funds, and avoid tax complications while still fitting the nature of the organisation. This is the option they intend to proceed with.</p>	

6.3.3	Presentations Updates included the Moonshot project and guided wave innovation work.	
6.3.4	Next Steps: Future BOF meeting scheduled for 13 May in Rochester, with efforts underway to coordinate attendance and a group dinner. Likely to include discussions on finances and priorities for spend.	
6.4	UKBB (RC)	
6.4.1	Code of Practice Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfT has commissioned Atkins to lead the update of the Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure (WMHI) Code of Practice. Update = revision, not a full rewrite. Multiple working groups meet weekly; review checks began in February, with a target final review in August. Final document will be hosted on the UKRLG website and free to access. PDF version may be available, but an online format will support easier navigation. 	
6.4.2	Research Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No research funding currently available. Work such as updating the Safer Asset Management Toolkit, cost-sharing guidance, and collapse prevention remains unfunded. 	
6.4.3	BICS Update (Bridge Inspector Certification Scheme) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year-one improvements underway, with a new structure covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspector level Senior inspector level <p>JS to share BICS presentation and/or contact for Danni Faggan-Shaw with all</p>	JS
6.4.4	Network Rail Possessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When applying for possessions via the ACE system, authorities should always provide feedback when prompted. Rob emphasised that providing post-possession feedback in NR surveys is crucial for improving the process and reducing delays. 	
6.4.5	National Highways Update Colin George provided updates on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection manual progress (see Section 7) Moonshot technology trials Other innovation and standards activities.	
6.5	Network Rail Access Planning Group (CP)	
6.5.1	Next meeting 16 th April 2026 EA plan to attend as they sent apologies for the last meeting	
6.5.2	Zero-Cost BPA Progress continues on achieving zero-cost BAPA for local authorities. David (Network Rail) is still pushing this forward but is struggling with regional consistency.	
6.5.3	Access to Network Rail Asset Manager Contacts Network Rail has agreed to provide details of their structures asset managers, not just the ASPRO engineers. This will allow councils to understand future programme opportunities, collaborate earlier, and coordinate works more efficiently. CP to circulate when available.	CP
6.5.4	NEST Forms Hosted on CIHT Website All NEST documents and forms will now be hosted on the CIHT website, creating a single accessible repository and simplifying submissions.	
6.5.5	ACE System – Low Feedback Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 5% of users respond to the ACE system feedback requests. Chris emphasised that authorities must give feedback to drive improvements in possession applications and reduce delays. He will circulate a presentation on feedback statistics. 	CP

6.5.6	<p>Joint Inspections – Big Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant headway on collaboration: Network Rail and local authorities are exploring joint inspections. Network Rail already inspects LA-owned bridges for their own records (visible on NEST). Plan: tweak the photos they take so these inspections also meet LA GI requirements, reducing duplication and cost. A trial in the East Midlands will run over 1–2 years. 	
6.5.7	<p>Old invoices</p> <p>SG raised a concern about receiving very old Network Rail invoices, some five to six years old and worth tens of thousands of pounds, which suddenly appeared with no prior warning.</p> <p>Chris Plant acknowledged this as a recurring problem for several councils and asked Scott to send him specific examples of the invoices to enable him to follow up directly with Network Rail to understand why such delays occur and how the process can be improved.</p>	SG/CP
6.6	HRE SAF (CW – new rep)	
6.6.1	No update as Clive could not attend (see apologies)	
6.7	Bridge Strike Prevention Group (CH/MR – new reps)	
6.7	<p>Maureen and Caroline explained that the recent engagement exercise felt biased toward Network Rail's perspective and did not fully reflect the realities faced by local highway authorities. Maureen noted that many bridge-strike issues in London are actually network management problems, not purely bridges issues. She emphasised that Network Rail must recognise that responsibility is shared, not solely pushed onto local authorities.</p> <p>Caroline agreed, highlighting that the questioning felt framed around Network Rail's assumptions rather than the lived experience of councils. Both stressed that without better mutual understanding and more balanced engagement, the group will struggle to deliver meaningful improvements</p>	
7	Updates from National Highways (KD)	
7.1	<p>CS 469 – Scour Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kieran explained that CS469 is proving onerous, expensive and difficult to apply in practice, even for National Highways As a result, National Highways' Safety Engineering Standards (SES) team is starting a piece of work to review CS469 and identify opportunities to amend or improve the requirements. Kieran confirmed there is no timeline yet, but when consultation material is released, he encouraged ADEPT members to respond, stressing that local authority feedback is essential because CS469 is used internationally and across all administrations. 	
7.2	<p>CS 472 – Fatigue-prone structures standard</p> <p>Kieran noted that CS472 (new publication), the fatigue-prone structures standard, is still progressing through the approval process. It recently went out for additional consultation, and feedback has now been returned.</p>	
7.3	<p>Helen mentioned that Essex had recently raised concerns about the new guidance on inspection frequencies.</p> <p>She said Essex had highlighted that the emerging approach could unintentionally increase inspection burdens for authorities with large, complex networks, even when they already demonstrate strong stewardship and robust risk-based processes. HR to follow up as required.</p>	HR
7.4	<p>Inspection Manual for Highway Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen asked Kieran for an update on the Inspection Manual for Highway Structures, noting that she hadn't seen any recent progress. Rob explained (based on knowledge from UKBB) that because the Inspection Manual is not a DMRB document, it did not go through the formal National Highways consultation process but now will. <p>KD to enquire and feedback on timescales for publication</p>	KD

8	Updates from Working Groups	
8.1	Commuted Sums (OR/AM)	
8.1.1	<p>Osian's Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WG has shifted to monthly meetings to keep progress moving. They are reviewing current commuted sum rates, many of which appear inconsistent or incorrectly structured, with no background into insights Laura (QS) has shared her SUDS rate set to support benchmarking. Major challenge: obtaining updated and realistic rate data, given the difficulty of securing reliable industry cost information. Group also wants commuted sums to discourage cheap, poor-quality design (e.g., structures built without jacking pads or unnecessarily using bearings), ensuring developers pay for long-term maintenance impacts. 	
8.1.2	<p>Alan's Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted that many local authorities lack visibility of the technical rationale behind existing rates, making it important for the group to create more transparent, consistent methodologies. Emphasised the need to understand where current rates originally came from, noting many were inherited from the SAVVI toolkit. 	
8.2	PROW (AM)	
8.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PROW Working Group brings together ADEPT NBG representatives and the ADEPT Public Rights of Way group to align structural and rights-of-way considerations. The group was created after concerns were raised about how PROW structures were being managed, particularly where they had historically received less engineering oversight. Their purpose is to work through the Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure (WMHI) Code of Practice, section by section, and develop guidance rather than prescriptive rules, recognising that authorities operate at very different resource levels. The most recent meeting was upcoming the following Wednesday, so a fuller update would follow at the next NBG meeting. 	
8.3	CIRIA Bridge Detailing Guide (AM)	
8.3.1	No updates from this meeting	
8.3.2	Helen suggested that Patrick would be well placed to work with Alan on bridge detailing given the excellent work he is doing. AM to follow up.	AM
8.3.3	<p>The group agreed the Bridge Detailing Guide must better reflect real-world maintenance lessons. Osian stressed that previous detailing mistakes—such as inaccessible bearings, missing jacking points, poor drainage, and congested reinforcement—keep being repeated because maintainers' experience is not sufficiently represented. He argued for stronger involvement from local-authority bridge managers, not just consultants.</p> <p>Patrick and Colin supported this, noting many designs that look acceptable on paper become long-term maintenance burdens.</p>	
8.3.4	Alan confirmed that the chair of the group is employed by CIRIA and that the project is being treated commercially.	
8.4	CSS/Railtrack cost sharing protocol/arch assessments (KH)	
8.4.1	<p>Cost Sharing Protocol (email update from Keith)</p> <p>The Cost Sharing Protocol has not progressed. Fred Hartley of CRT has semi-retired and is no longer chairing the group. He has not been replaced yet at CRT, and anyway it's not guaranteed that his replacement would take on this initiative. The group would best be led by DfT but a volunteer from UKBB/ADEPT would also make sense.</p>	
8.4.2	<p>Arch bridges (email update from Keith)</p> <p>CRT have circulated legal advice to the effect that their liability for arch bridge capacity should be based on a MEXE assessment to BE4. Further legal advice obtained by CSS Wales via Osian Richards. I will be discussing this with Osian, and Helen is hoping to get a further legal opinion from Staffordshire.</p>	

9	Knowledge sharing and discussion	
9.1	Well Managed Highway Infrastructure COP Update	
9.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen explained that the working group has been meeting weekly, going through each section of the code in detail to review and update content. The group have now completed the first full pass of all sections, meaning the immediate task shifts to reviewing the draft revisions that Atkins has produced. Helen also noted that the update to Part A—which sets the overarching principles—is being developed in parallel, so some comments raised in the structures sections may already be addressed there, but the group has not yet seen the full Part A draft. Helen flagged that this has made the process more challenging and resource-intensive, but the group will continue working through the drafts to ensure structures considerations are fully and accurately represented. Finally, Helen confirmed that DfT have approved a separate Part E for tunnels. The Deadline for draft is August, with publication planned for November (TBC) 	
9.1.2	Helen asked for any feedback to be sent to the WG members or JS to help represent the views of LAs	ALL
10	Upcoming conferences and events	
10.1	NCE Bridges x (ADEPT NBG + RBT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen announced that ADEPT NBG has been working with the NCE Bridges Conference organisers to introduce a competition for early career engineers. The competition focuses on real world maintenance challenges, not new builds—reflecting concerns that conferences usually prioritise new structures rather than the issues most local authorities face. Entrants must first submit a short problem definition; if the judging panel agrees it reflects a genuine industry issue, they will be invited to develop a full technical paper proposing a practical maintenance solution. Finalists will receive free tickets to the NCE Bridges Conference in July and present their work during a dedicated session. The organisers aimed to publish full details on their website by the end of next week and Helen encouraged entries! 	
10.2	Other Events Helen encouraged all to refer to the BOF website	
11	Minutes & Actions	
11.1	Minutes from last meeting agreed (V2)	
11.2	Actions Tracker Updated	
12	Discussion about in-person venue for Nov meeting	
12.1	Suggest venues to Andrew	ALL
12.2	Helen will try to confirm the location as soon as possible	HR
13	AOB	
13.1	Chris raised a query about CRT challenging fees for technical approvals and other scheme components. He noted that there does not appear to be reciprocal arrangements, and it feels one sided. Regional Chairs to take this question away and feed back to Chris Helen noted that there is an agreement in place so this should be used.	Regional Chairs
13.2	Claire requested slides for this meeting to be shared. JS/HR to request these	HR/JS

Future Meetings/ Date of Next Meeting	
10 April 2025	ADEPT Engineering Board
13 May 2026	BOF
25 June 2026	UKBB
01 July 2026	ADEPT NBG
10 July 2025	ADEPT Engineering Board
16 July 2026	NCE Bridges Conference
16 September 2026	BOF
09 October 2025	ADEPT Engineering Board
22 October 2026	UKBB
25 November 2026	ADEPT NBG
27 January 2027	BOF