



Regional and subject board updates 2026

Yorkshire & Humber Board

A busy year for the Yorkshire & Humber Board who continue to meet bi-monthly, inviting Place Directors and colleagues from across the region. This year the Board has engaged in a wide range of policy topics, with expert presentations spanning transport, flooding, climate resilience, energy, planning reform, and major regeneration.

Rail and strategic transport dominated early discussions, including updates on post-HS2 connectivity, the TransPennine Route Upgrade, Northern Powerhouse Rail timelines, and East Coast Main Line capacity planning.

Flood and water management remained a central theme, with the Connected by Water partnership showcasing integrated climate resilience work across South Yorkshire and informing approaches elsewhere in the region.

Home-to-school transport challenges were explored in depth, with significant financial pressures highlighted by North Yorkshire and national policy developments through ADEPT's engagement with the Public Accounts Committee.

Place-making features prominently through major regeneration schemes such as York Central and Barnsley's Health on the High Street programme, alongside early-stage discussions of the NISTA 10-year infrastructure strategy.

The Board also explored the East Coast Hydrogen project, supporting industrial decarbonisation and future energy resilience in key regional clusters.

Climate action and communications were strengthened through the Talking Climate guide, co-developed with the regional Climate Commission.

Workforce and leadership development continued through ADEPT programmes including the Digital Academy, PACE, and the 140th anniversary reflections.

Throughout the year, members also engaged in consultations on planning reforms, nature recovery, and the Environmental Improvement Plan, supported by a wide schedule of ADEPT national events.

Karl Battersby, Chair of ADEPT Yorkshire & Humber Board, May 2026

Midlands Board

The Board continues to review a variety of matters based around key policy updates, development of region wide initiatives, engagement with key partners and reviewing best practise taking place across the region. The agenda reflects the asks and suggestions of members and the assistance of Jon Vining and Claire Brailsford is crucial to generating agendas and speakers for meetings.

Turn out continues to be good and debate amongst members is positive and stimulating demonstrating the importance of peer support for all members in what continues to be a challenging workspace.

Specific topics this year have included:

- Review of CSR and budget announcements;
- Regular devolution and LGR debate;
- Consideration of the changes to SNTB's specifically Midlands Connect;
- Environment Agency funding;
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
- Climate adaptation;
- Inward investment and economic development;
- Planning reform;
- Feedback on the ADEPT Strategic Plan.

For the second year running we also met in person as members welcome and value the opportunity for those face to face interactions that are impossible on Teams

Given my position as the ADEPT Vice President I will over the next few months be looking to announce a successor as the Midlands Chair so watch this space

Andy Gutherson, Chair of ADEPT Midlands Board, May 2026

East of England Board

East of England Board Chair – Andrew Cook, Suffolk County Council (outgoing) / Mark Doran, Hertfordshire County Council (incoming)

Vice Chair – Grahame Bygrave, Norfolk County Council

Secretariat – Emma Cook, Suffolk County Council (outgoing support) / Jo Brush and Charlie Webber, Hertfordshire County Council (incoming support)

The East of England regional board meets on a quarterly basis with good attendance from all member authorities. Across the sessions, significant attention was given to long-term infrastructure and resilience challenges, particularly water resources in the East and South of England. Presentations from Ofwat and Water Resources East underlined the scale of future water scarcity driven by climate change, environmental protections and growth pressures, with no scope for new abstraction licences. The discussion reinforced the need for a coordinated “twin-track” response, combining demand reduction with large-scale supply solutions such as reservoirs, desalination and water reuse, alongside stronger alignment between regional planning, national infrastructure bodies and strategic authorities.

The meetings also explored the wider national policy and funding environment affecting local authorities. Ongoing uncertainty around transport funding, new structures funds and delayed multi-year settlements was highlighted as a constraint on effective planning and delivery. In parallel, Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) continued to place pressure on capacity and timescales, with concerns raised about government bandwidth, implementation timelines and the challenge of progressing major programmes alongside political and financial uncertainty. The importance of aligning national transport and rail reform with emerging devolved arrangements was a recurring theme.

Finally, discussion focused on institutional readiness and leadership capacity. ADEPT’s refreshed draft strategic plan was considered, with support for its proposed values and priorities, particularly around resilient infrastructure, inclusive communities, and responding to climate and nature emergencies. A linked session on senior leadership recruitment highlighted high turnover, skills shortages, limited diversity progression and increasing reliance on the interim market. The overall message was that LGR and devolution risk intensifying these pressures, making early workforce planning, succession management and cross-authority collaboration critical to maintaining leadership capacity and organisational resilience.

Andrew Cook stepped down as chair of the group at the last meeting of the year with Mark Doran, Hertfordshire County Council chairing going forwards.

Andrew Cook, Chair of ADEPT East of England Board, May 2026

South East Board (SEDEPT)

The South East board has met 3 times in the last 12 months.

In June 2025 **Joanna Averley, Chief Planner in MHCLG** came to talk to us about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the aspiration for the new Bill and the expected impact on local planning decision making. Joanna took questions on the timetable for delivery of the new Bill as well as how this will fit within existing planning legislation and the way this works through the devolution process.

In December the SEDEPT explored the critical water supply situation across the South East and in particular the role of Local Government in managing impacts. Presentations were from WRSE and members and the discussion focused on the WRSE 2025-75 Regional Plan, upcoming spatial development strategies and the need to align these with regional plans to consider growth consistently across the region, as well as cooperation between the water industry and local government. Attendees discussed how predicted water stress affects our communities and the growth and environmental improvement agendas, and how best to mitigate this.

In March 2026 we had a presentation about **Autonomous Transit Networks from Tim Strong - New Mobility Lead and Peter Day** Senior Technical Director both of Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited.

The group heard how ATNs are being developed and in some areas commissioned to provide alternative transport options, support links to transit hubs, manage vehicular demand in major developments and re-utilise existing infrastructure whilst supporting local industrial and green growth strategies. The presentation described the propositions, benefits to users and how ATNs can be delivered in the UK and cited specific example projects that are due to come into operation shortly as demonstrators of the new technology.

At each meeting we were updated on ADEPT activities and given a brief synopsis of recent or upcoming publications and legislative changes relevant to Place.

Matt Davey, Co-chair of ADEPT South East Board, May 2026

South West Board

The South West Board leads ADEPT's understanding and response to strategic issues and policies in the South West of England. While local authorities in the region may have differing priorities, economic growth is a shared aspiration and often needs to be unlocked and fostered through joint partnership working. In all situations, sustainable growth requires good quality planning, investment and infrastructure.

The Board provides space for its member organisations to respond to, influence and support each other in addressing and implementing strategic policies and issues relevant to the region.

Meetings are held for one hour bi-monthly via MS Teams. The meetings are chaired by Mickey Green (North Somerset Council) and Alan Denby (Plymouth Council) Deputy Chair. Secretariat is provided by Sara Stock (North Somerset Council). Mickey Green took over as Chair from Sophie Broadfield back in Autumn 2025.

30 September: The meeting focused on national policy updates, major infrastructure strategy developments, and regional projects, with an emphasis on improving collaboration, integrating spatial planning with infrastructure delivery, and shaping future agendas around rail and climate priorities.

5 December: The meeting focused on Network Rail's future priorities and improving collaborative planning, shared lessons from recent Southwest rail projects, provided an update on the Railways Bill and the shift toward Great British Railways, and covered ADEPT updates on transport, devolution, climate programmes, and upcoming sector events.

22 January: The meeting focused on the LGA's "Force for Growth" work and its implications for unlocking inclusive economic potential in the South West, alongside reflections on how the region can develop a distinctive, place-based model of inclusive growth; this was followed by ADEPT updates on transport, devolution, climate policy, and upcoming events, with members agreeing to revisit inclusive growth and prepare for a future session on the 2040 public services agenda.

11 March: The meeting focused on long-term public service planning through the LGA Horizons 2040 programme and explored how foresight methods can help councils move from reactive to future-shaping approaches, alongside a practical case study on drone technology's role in transforming council services, followed by updates from ADEPT on transport, planning, climate work, and strategic priorities, and a member discussion emphasising inclusive growth, cross-authority collaboration, and future agenda themes.

Mickey Green, *Chair of ADEPT South West Board, May 2026*

Engineering Board

During 2025/26, the ADEPT Engineering Board has continued to provide strong national leadership on highways and infrastructure asset management, with a sustained focus on safety, resilience, decarbonisation, data, and professional capability. The year marked a transition, with James Bailey succeeding Mark Stevens as Chair, supported by Dean Sargeant and Pat Clarke as newly appointed Vice Chairs, ensuring continuity and capacity.

The Board maintained close engagement with the Department for Transport, influencing key national developments including the refresh of the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice, the evolving PAS 2161 condition data framework, and emerging approaches to carbon quantification, climate resilience and adaptation, including the development of new ADEPT highways adaptation guidance to support authorities in responding to climate risks. Members provided expert challenge and feedback on data quality, benchmarking and reporting, highlighting risks associated with inconsistency, professional capacity and unintended consequences for local authorities.

Significant attention was given to emerging engineering risks, particularly in relation to structures, geotechnics and climate impacts, with growing concern about skills shortages, asset knowledge, and funding disparities for bridges and retaining structures. The Board also facilitated collaboration with industry, academia and national bodies on innovation, including Live Labs 2, drone use, AI and data-led road safety, materials and specification development, and modernisation of street lighting and design standards.

Overall, the Engineering Board continues to act as a trusted forum for knowledge sharing, evidence-based leadership and national influence, supporting the sector to respond to increasing technical, environmental and workforce challenges while shaping future policy, guidance and good practice.

James Bailey, Chair of ADEPT Engineering Board, May 2026

Environment Board

It has been another very busy year for the Environment Board, actively helping to shape and deliver government's legislative agenda on environmental improvement, planning reform, land use and devolution. In addition, a number of new government policy papers were published including the refreshed Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP25), the Water White Paper, and the Land Use Framework.

During the year we responded to several government consultations [here](#) including Biodiversity Net Gain, private finance and nature, and elements of the Local Government Outcomes Framework and National Planning Policy Framework consultations. We set out policy positions [here](#) on the (then) Planning & Infrastructure Bill and the English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill and worked with partners to lobby Parliamentarians and senior officials to strengthen the nature protection and environmental leadership elements of these Bills.

In addition, ADEPT through myself and others has a seat on the Environmental Improvement Plan Steering Group, National Regional Water Planning Steering Group, the National Nature Reserve Steering Group for Natural England, and Rebuilding Nature Steering Group.

The Board had main meetings each quarter with shorter catch-up meetings in most other months in between. Our guest speakers last year included:

- Andy Turner (Environment Agency) and Ali Morse (Wildlife Trusts) – water resources and quality
- Gavin Ellis (Hubbub) – supporting residents and businesses to make environment-friendly decisions
- Clare Warburton (Natural England) – NE strategy *Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security*
- Ian Fenn (Defra) – EIP25
- Mike Webb (West Midlands Combined Authority – LNRS delivery and nature finance
- Yasmin Shah and Henry Gilliver (Defra) – place-based delivery Pathfinders.

As well as our local authority members we welcome regular attendance and contributions from colleagues at Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency, these are always valuable. We have also delivered several workshops and webinars with these partners.

At ADEPT's Autumn conference in Manchester last November, I was pleased to join the panel for a workshop session on the implications of the Independent Water Commission (Cunliffe review) for local authorities. The other speakers were from Kier (workshop sponsor), Arcadis, and Norfolk County Council. We will work with these and other partners in 2026/27 to help shape the future of regional water planning under the anticipated Water Bill.

Our Board continues to have four active Working Groups, and I am grateful for the commitment of their chairs and members. Steve Palfrey and Wendy Barratt have been co-chairs of the Waste Group, and Steve is also the Vice Chair of the Board. He stepped down from the Waste Group in April 2026 following his promotion to Service Director (Growth, Highways & Infrastructure) at Suffolk County Council, Wendy is continuing as sole chair. Tim de Keyzer chairs the Natural Capital & Heritage Group, Daire Casey chairs the Energy & Clean Growth Group, and Doug Hill chairs the Flood & Water Management Group. Daire and I are also members of ADEPT's Climate Change Board to help ensure that as an association we are joining up our work on climate, environment, and green growth. Last but not least, many thanks also to Kristi Nicholls and the team here at Surrey County Council who support me in my Environment Board role.

Carolyn McKenzie, Chair of ADEPT Environment Board, May 2026

Climate Change Board

The Board is the voice of ADEPT when speaking on strategic climate change issues. It aims to identify key issues and to influence policy and delivery. We collaborate with a range of partners to do this. 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. You can find details of the Board's membership and terms of reference on the website [here](#).

The main policy development in 2025 was the publication of the government's revised plan for meeting the UK's net zero target, the Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, last October. This plan sets out how the government would meet the emissions reductions for carbon budgets four to six (2023 to 2037). This was followed by the Warm Homes Plan for reducing carbon emissions from existing housing and the Future Homes Standard requiring all new homes to have heat pumps and generate renewable energy.

The Board's focus in 2025/26 has been on trying to strengthen and clarify local authorities' roles in relation to climate action. We responded to the LGA's consultation on statutory duties [here](#): local authorities are essential to the delivery of national ambitions on climate and environment. We need a genuine partnership with national government that recognises the need for a place-based approach to mitigation and adaptation, with adequate funding and support.

We aim to engage with government ministers and officials where possible. We published a policy position on the English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill [here](#) calling for a more robust statutory basis for local climate leadership (in line with our submission to the LGA). With partners, we lobbied for the Bill to be strengthened as it progressed through Parliament. ADEPT's response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation called for strengthening the planning system to help meet climate objectives. ADEPT is a member of the Local Government Net Zero Roles & responsibilities Working Group set up by DESNZ under the political-level [Local Net Zero Delivery Group](#) and we have made submissions to the framework that the Working Group is drafting.

On adaptation, Andy Gutherson chairs the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel and is continuing to pursue with Defra the idea of supplementing this with a more strategic forum for central/local collaboration on adaptation. We hope that the proposed Local Climate Adaptation Forum will be launched early in 2026/27.

We were pleased to welcome Emma Pinchbeck, CEO of the Climate Change Committee, to a joint meeting of the Board and the Leadership Team to talk about the 7th Carbon Budget. Other guest speakers who have attended the Board's meetings during the last 12 months include:

- Neil Jennings and Ed Sudall (Grantham Institute, Imperial College) – health benefits of climate action
- Nick Porter (LGA) – local government and legal responsibilities to act on climate change
- Place Directors (various) – local elections 2025: impact of new administrations on climate policies and programmes
- Barry Wyatt (South Gloucestershire Council) – progress against local net zero/carbon neutral targets
- Emily Bolton (Cambridgeshire County Council) – locally determined contributions
- Emma Parker-Reynolds (Coast Communications) and Kate Lock (Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission) – the new guide for effective climate communications [Talking Climate](#).

We commission a monthly blog that appears on the ADEPT website [here](#) and covers a wide variety of subjects including some of those that have featured at Board meetings.

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 2026

Transport and Connectivity Board

Over the past year, the ADEPT Transport & Connectivity (T&C) Board has operated as a key national forum for strategic engagement between local government and central government, working closely with the Department for Transport (DfT), the Local Government Association (LGA), ATCO and sector partners. The Board has focused on the most significant policy, funding and delivery challenges facing local transport authorities during a period of substantial reform and uncertainty.

Regular engagement with DfT has covered the Spending Review, funding simplification and outcomes-based accountability, bus reform and franchising, highways maintenance and structures funding, the Major Road Network, taxis and private hire reform, and the development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy. The Board has played an important role in testing emerging policy, highlighting operational impacts, and providing evidence-based feedback on deliverability, capacity and unintended consequences, particularly in the context of devolution, local government reorganisation and rising pressures on home-to-school transport, including SEND provision.

The Board has also overseen a strong programme of thematic working groups, including Road Safety, Rights of Way, Traffic Systems, Digital Connectivity and Home to School Transport. These groups have supported collaboration across the sector on priority issues such as SEND transport sustainability, digital and mobile connectivity, traffic systems resilience, inclusive transport design, rights of way reform, and outcomes-led approaches to major transport and rail investment. Best practice and innovation have been shared throughout the year, including digital permitting, AI and automation in highways services, and integration of transport with economic growth and regeneration priorities.

In parallel, Board members have contributed directly to parliamentary processes, strengthening the profile and influence of the sector. Rose McArthur provided important evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee on SEND reforms and their impact on Home to School Transport, while Graeme Bygrave and Rory Davies contributed to a parliamentary session on transport and economic growth, reinforcing the role of locally-led transport investment in enabling regeneration and productivity.

Overall, the work of the T&C Board has strengthened collaboration, influenced national thinking on funding and outcomes, and ensured that the voice of local transport authorities is clearly heard. This collective contribution has informed *Better Connected*, the Government's Integrated National Transport Strategy launched on 2 April 2026, helping to ensure it reflects the realities of local delivery, place-based decision-making and the central role of local government in achieving a more integrated, resilient and inclusive transport system.

David Shepherd, Chair of ADEPT Transport & Connectivity Board, May 2026