



# ADEPT

Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29

Making better places for people



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29



**STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29**  
Making better places for people

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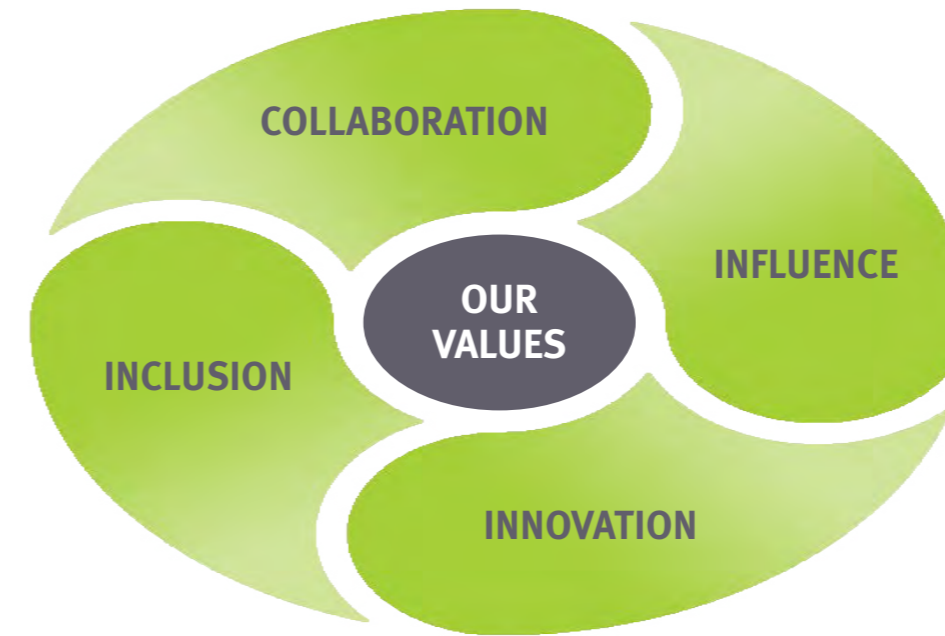
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.

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.



## Our priorities for 2026-29 are:

- Building resilient places.
- Leading decarbonisation and nature recovery at a local level.
- Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities.
- Supporting the delivery of effective devolution and successful local government reorganisation (LGR).
- Developing the place director of the future, and the workforce.
- Improving our membership offer.

## Our ambitions for 2026-27:

- Build on the association's reputation for providing insights, expertise and practical solutions on a range of topic areas (priorities 1,2 and 3).
- Successful delivery of year 4 of the Live Labs 2 Programme that ensures those ideas and solutions are understood, adopted and embedded in the local highways sector across the UK (priority 3).
- Support members in preparing for changes in the local government landscape (emergence of more unitary councils and combined/strategic authorities) and political change (priorities 1 and 2).
- Continue to grow the leadership and development offer including launching an Energy Systems Training Programme and expanding the Digital Academy (priorities 1 and 2).
- Publish a suite of new or refreshed policy positions and toolkits (priority 4).
- Build the association's policy capacity (priorities 4 and 5).

# ABOUT ADEPT

# ADEPT

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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 - including highways, waste and 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 everyday 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 also develop the 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.

ADEPT develops, supports and represents its members in their operational and strategic roles. We also drive leadership development and foster innovation through programmes and initiatives. We proactively engage with central government on emerging issues, promoting initiatives aimed at influencing policy, regulation and funding, developing best practice and responding to government initiatives and consultations.

## Did you know?

ADEPT members serve **80% of households** in England - that's **42+ million people**.



# 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 work with one another, make decisions and build relationships with our partners and others.

Our values are:

- COLLABORATION
- INFLUENCE
- INNOVATION
- INCLUSION



### Did you know?

ADEPT members manage over **164,000 miles** of road across England

### Did you know?

ADEPT members handle **75% of all recycled waste** in England.

# KEY FACTS & FIGURES

106

county, combined and unitary council members

5

Sub-national Transport Bodies

24

Corporate Partner members

140

years of place-based leadership since 1885

## LEADERSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

250+

3 programmes delivered

people completed leadership programmes

50+

apprentices on the ADEPT Digital Academy

4

years of the ADEPT/Amey PACE programme

## INNOVATION & BEST PRACTICE

£50m+

funding to support the transformation of local roads since 2019

60

local highway authorities completed year 1 of the Carbon Leadership Programme

57

councils supported through the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund: • 3.3m+ trees planted • £10m funding • 113 green jobs

## NETWORKING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

6

government departments engaged with to shape place-based policy

1400+

attendees at joint ADEPT and Environment Agency and Natural England webinars

435

attendees at the ADEPT LGR and devolution webinars

# TIMELINE

# ADEPT

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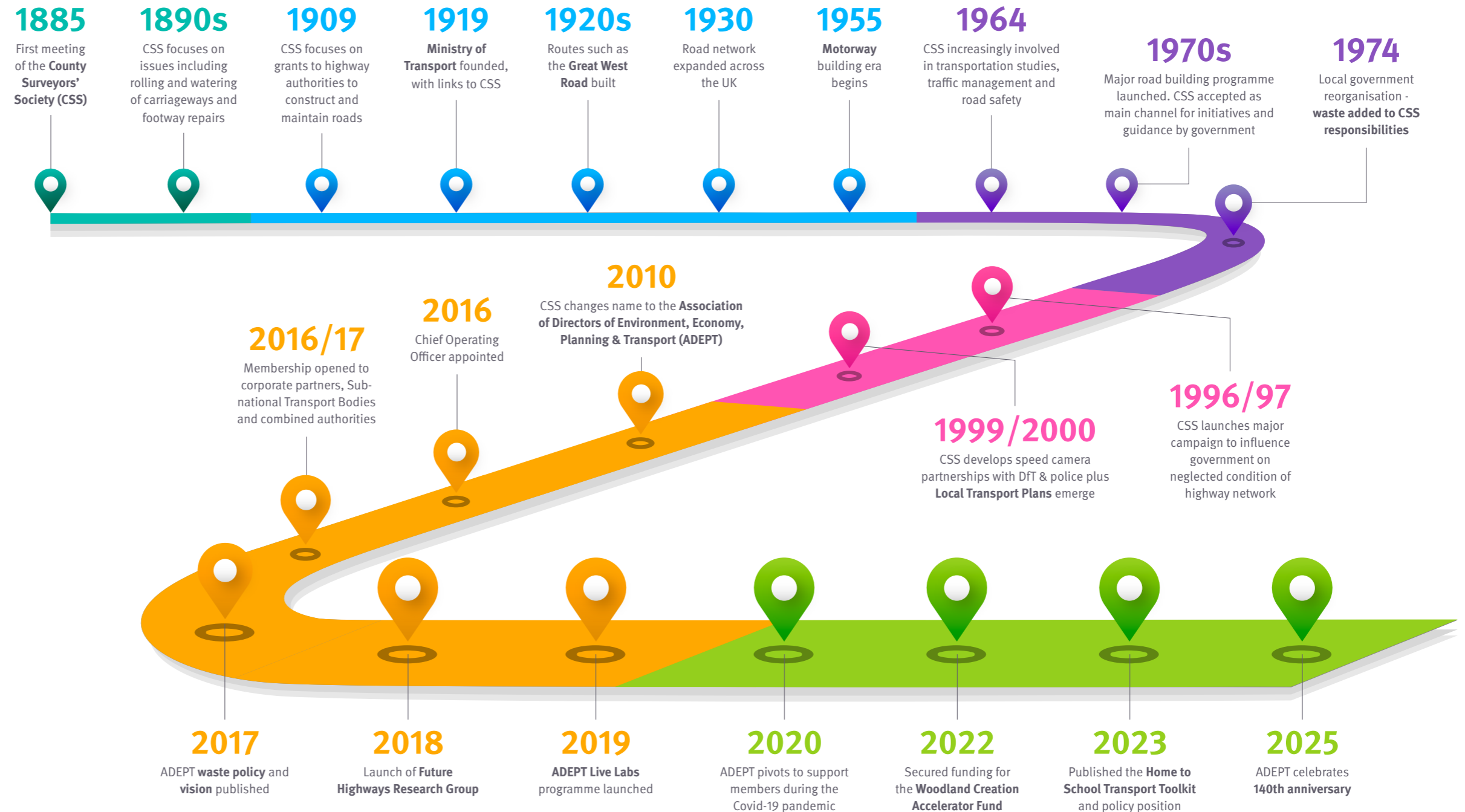


We are celebrating 140 years of excellence in place-based leadership across environment, economy, planning and transport.

Dating back to the first meeting of the County Surveyors' Society in 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.


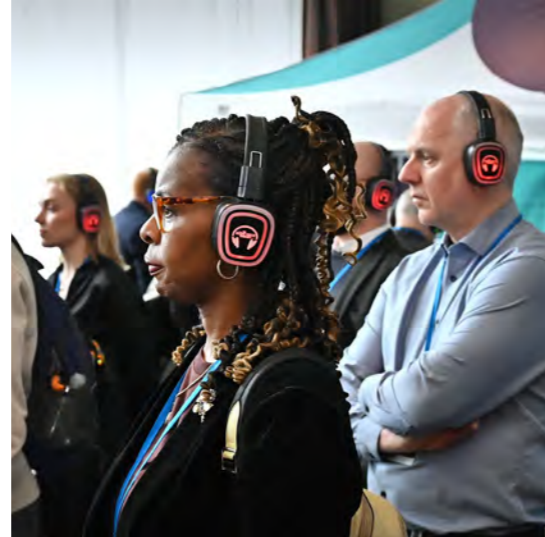



We provide a range of subject and regional Boards, and various working groups and panels. We plan and deliver a wide range of conferences, webinars and other events.



# ACHIEVEMENTS - LAST 3 YEARS

We are proud of our achievements over the last three years. We think that we punch above our weight.

The association has grown in size and influence, offering an ever-increasing range of membership services, development programmes, research and innovation. Our achievements since 2023 include:

<p><b>LEADERSHIP &amp; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b></p>  <p><a href="#">CLICK HERE TO READ MORE</a> about our leadership and workforce development</p>	<p><b>INNOVATION &amp; BEST PRACTICE</b></p>  <p><a href="#">CLICK HERE TO READ MORE</a> about our innovation and best practice</p>	<p><b>POLICY INFLUENCE</b></p>  <p><a href="#">CLICK HERE TO READ MORE</a> about our policy influence</p>	<p><b>NETWORKING &amp; KNOWLEDGE SHARING</b></p>  <p><a href="#">CLICK HERE TO READ MORE</a> about our networking and knowledge sharing</p>	<p><b>ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p>  <p><a href="#">CLICK HERE TO READ MORE</a> about our organisational development</p>
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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.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Leadership & workforce development

**RUBBISH JOBS PAY WELL**

**WHO KNEW?**

**THE BEST JOBS AREN'T ALWAYS OBVIOUS.**  
Local council jobs can pay well, be flexible and give you room to grow. Search hundreds of different roles from waste operatives to recycling assistants.

**VISIT [FINDYOURPATH.UK](https://findyourpath.uk) TO FIND OUT MORE**

#Hashtag

The **Gen Z Find Your Path** recruitment campaign, in partnership with APSE, Midlands Highways Alliance, Colas and the Department for Transport (DfT).

**ADEPT**  
Leadership Pathway Programme

*For early career professionals*

*The entry level programme - learn how to make a meaningful impact and develop leadership skills.*

The launch of the **Leadership Pathway Programme** for managers looking to move into more senior leadership roles.

**ADEPT**  
Leadership Development Programme

*For mid-career professionals*

*The next step - suitable for anyone reporting to an Executive Place Director or the management level below that.*

The continuing success of the **Leadership Development Programme** for aspiring place directors.

**ADEPT**  
Place Leaders' Pioneering, Action-orientated, Creative & Entrepreneurial (PACE) Programme

*Exclusively for place directors and senior leadership*

*The advanced programme - designed exclusively for place leaders.*

The fourth year of the **PACE** thought leadership programme, a joint venture with Amey and for executive directors.

**ADEPT Digital Academy** **NEW**

**Transform your digital future**

The ADEPT Digital Academy is a new, fully funded and bespoke programme designed to accelerate digital and data skills across local authorities. Find out more at [adeptnet.org.uk/digital-academy](https://adeptnet.org.uk/digital-academy)

**ADEPT multiverse**  
Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

The launch of the **Digital Academy** training initiative to accelerate digital and data skill development across local authorities, in partnership with Colas and delivered by Multiverse.

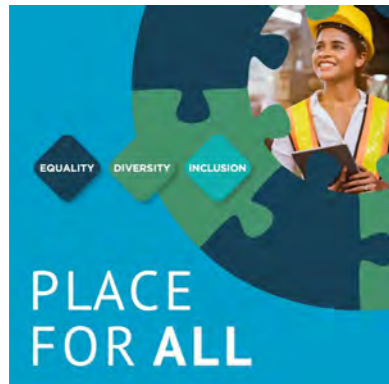
# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Innovation & best practice

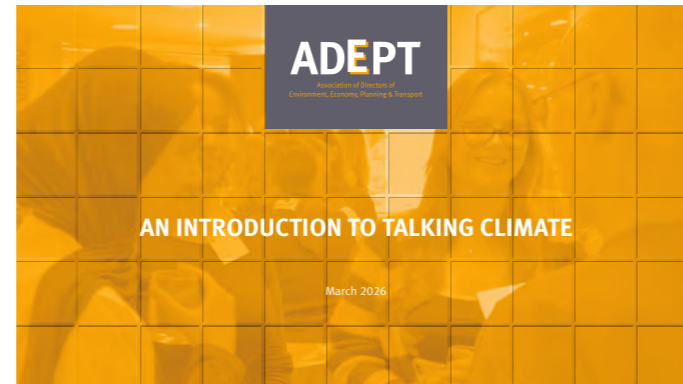
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**STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29**

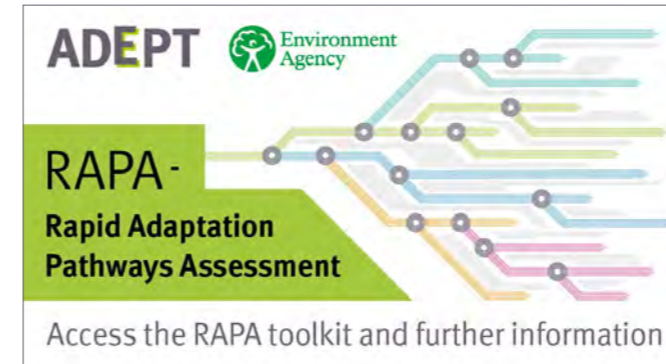
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**A Place for All** suite of EDI case studies, in partnership with Colas.



**An Introduction to Talking Climate** communications guide, developed in partnership with Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission.



**Rapid Adaptation Pathway Assessment (RAPA)** toolkit developed and launched in partnership with the Environment Agency.



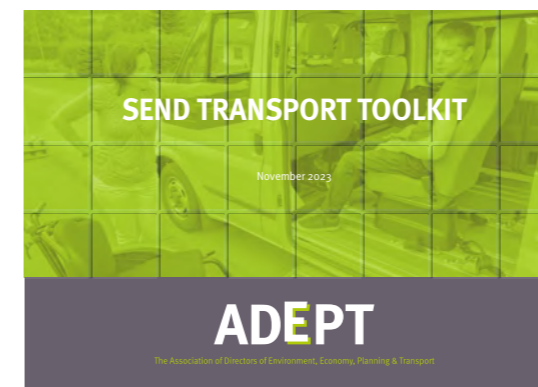
£30 million, UK-wide **Live Labs 2 Decarbonising Local Roads** programme, funded by the Department for Transport.



**Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF)** to create green jobs and accelerate tree planting, in partnership with Defra and the Forestry Commission.



In partnership with Proving Services, **Carbon Leadership Programme**, funded and supported by the DfT, to help local highway authorities measure and identify how to reduce carbon emissions, both saving money and increasing efficiencies.



**Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) home to school transport toolkit** and policy paper, developed in partnership with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Policy influence



- **Engagement with Ministers and Mayors** - we have been joined by Ministers Creagh, Lightwood and Fahnbulleh, and Mayor Burnham, at our conferences and meetings.
- **Evidence to Parliamentary Committees** – we have given evidence to Parliament on subjects including home to school transport and drought preparedness.
- We have published **policy positions and consultation responses** on subjects including devolution, planning reform, housing, resources and waste, and digital connectivity.
- We have established **strong relations with key government departments and agencies**, regularly engaging with senior civil servants on emerging policies and proposals.
- We have begun to build our profile with MPs, **positioning the association as evidence-based** and able to provide insights, expertise and solutions on a range of place issues.
- We continue to raise our media profile through **regular features in publications** including Highways Magazine, Local Government Chronicle and the Environment Journal, plus various ad hoc pieces and responses to media enquiries.



# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Networking & knowledge sharing

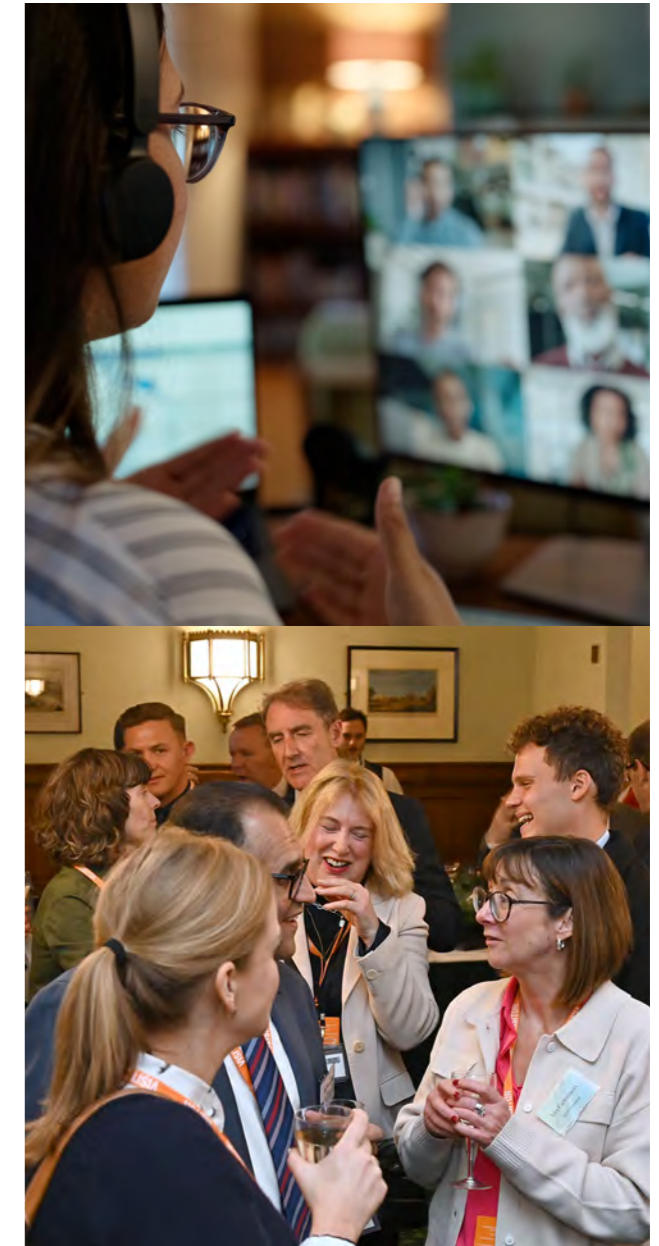
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- The **Spring & Autumn Conferences** remain highlights of the ADEPT calendar, with support from our corporate partners and sponsors.
- The annual **President's awards ceremony** rounds off our Spring Conference and recognises the important work of ADEPT members and partners, highlighting and showcasing projects that demonstrate achievements in improving the delivery and outcomes of place services.
- **Delivered a series of webinars** with the Environment Agency and Natural England.
- Held **monthly information sharing** meetings for members navigating local political change and supporting new administrations.
- **Engaged with many external partnerships** and technical groups.
- **Regular engagement** with bodies such as NISTA, National Highways, National Audit Office & Network Rail.
- The **Future Highways Research Group** continues to offer opportunities to debate, design, develop and test innovative solutions to prevailing and emerging challenges in the highways sector.
- Delivered a series of **devolution and LGR webinars**.



# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Organisational development

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- Developed and implemented a **public affairs strategy**, to build ADEPT's profile with parliamentarians.
- Refreshed the ADEPT offer to **Combined Authorities** and **Corporate Partners**.
- Secured additional funding to deliver a 4th year of communications for the **Live Labs 2** programme.
- Celebrated the **140th anniversary** of the association.



- Ensured resilience in the **Leadership Team** by recruiting new chairs and vice-presidents.
- Recruited a **Deputy CEO** and **Executive Assistant** to the secretariat.



# CONTEXT

**Our strategic priorities for 2026-29 are set out below. They recognise and reflect the major environmental, social and political context changes we have seen since 2023 including:**

- Significant shifts in the political landscape following the 2024 General Election, with the government adopting the Plan for Change and five national missions.
- Rapid developments in data, digital technology and artificial intelligence are having radical effects on local authorities and place services.
- Climate impacts, including extreme weather and flooding, have become a growing reality, placing greater pressure on the adaptation of services and assets.
- The public's lack of trust in traditional politics is continuing to grow, and divisions within communities have become more apparent.
- The breakdown of political consensus on climate change, with some parties now opposed to the Climate Change Act and net zero targets.
- A more challenging international context, with overseas conflicts and tensions impacting our communities in different ways.

**The strategic challenges for local government over the coming period include:**

- Continuing severe financial pressures and the potential impacts of Fair Funding Review.
- The implementation of devolution and LGR, involving 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 other parties such as the Green Party. However, despite the noise of change, the heart of local leadership still beats strongly.



# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

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We have six strategic priorities for 2026-29. Five of these describe our ambitions to support local authorities, work with our partners, and influence government to achieve the stated objectives. The sixth priority describes how we will continue to improve services and benefits to our members in a rapidly changing environment.

CLICK  
to read  
more



1. Building resilient places

CLICK  
to read  
more



2. Leading decarbonisation and nature recovery at a local level

CLICK  
to read  
more



3. Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities

CLICK  
to read  
more



4. Supporting the delivery of effective devolution and successful LGR

CLICK  
to read  
more



5. Developing the place director of the future, and the workforce

CLICK  
to read  
more



6. Improving our membership offer

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## 1. Building resilient places

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“ Our aim is to enable local growth ”

We will support local and combined authorities to create and maintain resilient infrastructure and services in the widest sense, spanning highways, transport, housing, digital connectivity, flood protection, energy and water.

Our aim is to enable local growth and ensure places can withstand the impacts of the climate and nature emergencies, as well as unexpected shocks such as pandemics or global conflicts.

We work to influence government for the resources that authorities need to maintain vital infrastructure and deliver sustainable, inclusive and prosperous places.

We will also work with other infrastructure providers to improve how investment and works are planned and coordinated.



Our next strategic priority:

2. Leading decarbonisation and nature recovery at a local level

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## 2. Leading decarbonisation and nature recovery at a local level



“ We will model local environmental leadership ”

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, improving the environment and making life better for people.

We will model local environmental leadership and work to influence government to provide the right statutory framework and adequate resources to enable this.

### Did you know?

ADEPT members recycle or compost **7 million tonnes** of waste a year



Our next strategic priority:

**3. Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities**

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## 3. Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities



“ We will model local environmental leadership ”

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 and connectivity to encourage cohesive and equal communities.

### Did you know?

In 2025, ADEPT launched the **Rapid Adaptation Pathways Assessment toolkit** - it's had 1,623 views so far



Our next strategic priority:

4. Supporting the delivery of effective devolution and successful LGR

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## 4. Supporting the delivery of effective devolution and successful LGR



“ Our focus is supporting place directors and services ”

### We will work 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, learning from those who have already done so and are trying to make the new structures work effectively.

We will work to influence government to provide the right powers, resources and capacity.

### Did you know?

ADEPT members invest **£3.87 billion a year** on highways and transport services.



### Our next strategic priority:

**5. Developing the place director of the future, and the workforce**

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# 5. Developing the place director of the future, and the workforce

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“ We want to see working in place as the career of choice ”

**A local authority’s most valuable asset is its 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.

In particular, we recognise that the role of the Place Director has fundamentally changed in recent years, demanding a more resilient and agile form of leadership than ever before.

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.



**Our next strategic priority:**

**6. Improving our membership offer**

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## 6. Improving our membership offer



**We want to be the best we can be and improve the ways that we support our members and partners. We will continue to act as 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, including support for those navigating local political change and new administrations.

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.



*“ We will continue to act as advocates for our members ”*

# AMBITIONS FOR 2026-27

Our ambitions for 2026-27 are set out in the [Annual Review and Forward Plan](#).

The key deliverables for the year are:

- Build on the association's reputation for providing insights, expertise and practical solutions on a range of topic areas (priorities 1, 2 and 3).
- Successful delivery of year 4 of the Live Labs 2 Programme that ensures those ideas and solutions are understood, adopted and embedded in the local highways sector across the UK (priority 3).
- Support members in preparing for changes in the local government landscape (emergence of more unitary councils and combined/strategic authorities) and political change (priorities 1 and 2).
- Continue to grow the leadership and development offer including launching an Energy Systems Training Programme and expanding the Digital Academy (priorities 1 and 2).
- Publish a suite of new or refreshed policy positions and toolkits (priority 4).
- Build the association's policy capacity (priorities 4 and 5).



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

**Our corporate partners are essential as we realise our values and deliver our priorities.**

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.

Through the generous support of our corporate partners, we have also established a Bursary Fund to ensure officers from local and combined authorities facing financial constraints can still attend and benefit from ADEPT conferences.



# ADEPT

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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.

**For more information on ADEPT please click here to visit the website - [www.adeptnet.org.uk](http://www.adeptnet.org.uk)**

