

ADEPT President's Awards 2026

Entry form

Award category

Delivering Sustainable Growth

Project Title

The Northumberland Line

Local authority

Northumberland County Council

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

The Northumberland Line – returning passenger services to South East Northumberland and providing a step change in public transport connectivity.

Delivering Sustainable Growth: How is this project delivering sustainable growth – demonstrating ambition and vision, anticipating future challenges, protecting and enhancing the natural environment and futureproofing growth? (150 words max)

The Northumberland Line is supporting sustainable growth by improving connectivity, reducing car dependency, and stimulating regeneration across South East Northumberland. By restoring passenger rail services between Ashington, Blyth, and Newcastle, the line is improving access to jobs, education, and services, helping residents reach opportunities more quickly and reliably. This improved mobility strengthens the regional economy, with long-term growth expected as businesses gain access to a wider labour market and investment becomes more attractive along the corridor.

Additionally, the line encourages a modal shift away from the private car with further investment improving first and last mile connections. This is cutting congestion and emissions on key commuter routes and forms part of a broader strategy to create greener, more inclusive transport options. By reusing existing rail infrastructure and aligning transport, regeneration, and climate goals, the line provides a model for sustainable, long-term regional development.

Delivering Sustainable Growth: How is this project working across boundaries and with different partners to achieve long lasting clean and green growth? (150 words max)

The Northumberland Line project has brought together Northumberland County Council and the Department for Transport to work in partnership in terms of delivery, along with Network Rail, Northern, Nexus and the North East Combined Authority.

The partnership approach has been used in both the construction and the operation of the line. In terms of fares and ticketing, the council worked in collaboration with Nexus and Northern to include the line in the region's "Pop" ticketing system which also allows travel on the Tyne & Wear Metro without the need to buy another ticket. The Pop range includes great value ticketing for young people, with U21 single fares priced at £1 which is encouraging young people to stick to sustainable travel through higher education or early years in employment. Interchange between rail and Metro is available at 3 stations on the line.

Delivering Sustainable Growth: How is this project proactively engaging with businesses and communities to tackle problems and find solutions, stimulating the clean growth sector at the same time? (150 words max.)

Our work with Cobalt Business Park is a highlight of our engagement work as the line improves access to their site from an area with high employability but poor transport access. Throughout construction, we've shared progress and ahead of station openings, we've presented to business leaders and shared information on fares, timetables and connections.

The Dales School is a special educational needs school that is located close to the new station at Blyth Bebside. The school has a keen interest in railways and was one of the many schools to take a redundant Pacer train into their hearts. The train has been converted into a STEM learning hub in one carriage and a library/reading area in the other. The Northumberland Line project has provided volunteers to help with the cleaning and painting of the train's interior, with a team from Northern working to seal the carriage roof and the windows.

Delivering Sustainable Growth: How is this project going beyond the 3–5-year budget cycle to prepare for future challenges including the use or consideration of innovative funding solutions? (150 words max.)

As the popularity of the Northumberland Line continues to grow, we're now looking at ways to fund the additional car parking provision needed for some stations and also to increase train capacity by providing additional rolling stock. Mayoral funding is one route to address this challenge although a refreshed Local Plan also provides an opportunity to further align developments to station locations and thus draw on s106 funding.

In addition, Land Value Capture mechanisms have been used by the council to secure contribution agreements from land owners and developers. This ensures that a share of the uplift in land value generated by the presence of the Northumberland Line will contribute to the capital cost of the scheme once these developments secure planning consent. This model ensured that the full scope of the project could be delivered and can also be applied to future planned extensions to the line.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

When the Northumberland Line celebrated its 1 millionth passenger in January 2026, Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy said:

"Delivered with the help of over £300 million in Government support, the Northumberland Line is a shining example of how a revitalised route can transform local communities – connecting thousands of people, unlocking economic growth and opening job opportunities across the North East.

"With over a million passenger journeys already completed on publicly-owned Northern services, we're on track to deliver the reliable, modern transport system that the British public deserves."