

ADEPT: Parliamentary monitoring April 2020

This document is tailored to provide a monthly overview of key activity, debates, questions, reports, PMQs, speeches and bills relevant to the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport.

Key dates

6 – 11 May: May Day recess

21 May – 2 June: Whitsun recess

1 July: Deadline contained in Withdrawal Agreement for transition extension request

21 July – 8 September: Summer recess

17 September – 12 October: Party conferences

31 December: Brexit extension period ends

Planning – Housing

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
21/04/20	Papers	HoC Library	Stimulating housing supply – Government initiatives (England). This briefing paper summarises the main 2015 and 2017 Government initiatives aimed at increasing housing supply in England, aside from planning measures. The 2019 Government will continue with, and build on many of these initiatives. March 2020 saw publication of Planning for the Future – this paper set out a series of actions the 2019 Government intends to take to meet its housing supply commitments. Read here.

Industrial Strategy & Local Industrial Strategies

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

NPPF – Land value capture

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Energy – Local authority projects

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Digital – Broadband & mobile

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Economy – Fair funding review

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
28/04/20	Oral question	MCHLG	Covid-19: Local Authority Funding Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab) What plans the Government have to provide additional funding to local authorities to replace funds spent on the response to the covid-19 outbreak. [901976]. Read answer here.
29/04/20	Press Release	MCHLG	Government confirms allocations of £1.6 billion funding boost for councils Individual councils in England have funding allocations confirmed following Local Government Secretary's announcement of £1.6 billion in additional funding. Read here.
29/04/20	Oral Evidence	MCHLG	Oral evidence: The work of the Department Q1 Chair: Welcome to this session of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee. This morning we will be looking at how local government is responding to the covid-19 crisis, and the challenges in doing so. Read here.
30/04/20	Written Ministerial statement	MCHLG	MHCLG: Local Government Finance update The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published a written ministerial statement on Local Government Finance update: https://bit.ly/2YkVLoy

Transport – Investment strategy

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
30/04/20	Papers	HoC Library	Highways England and the Road Investment Strategy Highways England (HE) is a body corporate, established on 8 December 2014. On 1 April 2015 it was appointed as a strategic highways company by the Secretary of State for Transport by way of an Order in

			accordance with section 1 of the Infrastructure Act 2015. HE is the highway, street and traffic authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). Read here.
--	--	--	--

Transport – Major road network

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
27/04/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Roads: Environment: Written question - 37511</p> <p>Asked by Theresa Villiers To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the term Other structures used in clause 41(c) of the Environment Bill 2020 includes roads.</p> <p>Answered by: Rebecca Pow Clause 41(c) excludes 'Buildings and other structures' from the definition of the 'natural environment' in the Bill. However, individual types of buildings and structures are not specified on the face of the Bill. It will be for the Secretary of State and the Office for Environmental Protection to interpret this definition for the purposes of implementing Chapters 1 and 2 of the Bill respectively, based on the details of the specific issue before them and the clause which they are implementing through any particular decision. If a dispute arises about the interpretation of these provisions, the courts may ultimately provide a judgment on the matter.</p>
27/04/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Roads: Repairs and Maintenance: Written question - 37840</p> <p>Asked by Kate Griffiths To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much money will be allocated from the £2.5 billion pothole fund to each local authority in (a) England and (b) Staffordshire.</p> <p>Answered by: Rachel Maclean Answered on: 27 April 2020</p>

			Funding for 2020/21 for individual authorities in England and Staffordshire from the £2.5 billion Pothole Fund will be announced shortly.
29/04/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Railway Network: Written question - 39796</p> <p>Asked by Olivia Blake To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what process the Government will use to decide which rail routes and stations closed after the Beeching report are re-opened; what the Government's timeframe is for that process; and if he will consider reopening (a) the Woodhead line, (b) the direct Derby to Manchester line (via Bakewell), and (c) Millhouses station in Sheffield, Hallam constituency.</p> <p>Answered by: Chris Heaton-Harris This Government has been clear that our ambition is to level up local economies across the country, improving access to jobs and education and boosting the wider region. Improving connections across the rail network is obviously an integral part of that.</p> <p>The Secretary of State wrote to all England and Wales MPs outlining the process and inviting them to contact him by 28 February if they wished to bid for the first round of study funding for schemes in their constituencies. Outline proposals needed to be submitted by 16 March for initial assessment.</p> <p>For those bids already put forward as part of the Beeching Ideas Fund – such as for the Derby to Manchester line – these are currently under consideration by the Panel of ministerial, local authority and rail industry representatives. We have adapted the process so it is consistent with the Government advice on COVID-19 and a virtual panel chaired by the Minister of State is examining</p>

			<p>bids on paper in the first instance. We are keeping applicants up-to-date on the timetable.</p> <p>For those who have not yet applied to the Ideas Fund there will be another round in June and another in the autumn. We published a progress update on gov.uk on 27 April and my department has written to all MPs about future rounds.</p> <p>For proposals for reopening or new stations that are sufficiently advanced the third round of the New Station Fund closes to applications on the 5 June</p>
--	--	--	---

Transport – Sub-national Transport Boards (STBs) – (TfN, TfSE)

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Transport – Automated electric vehicle bill

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Transport – rail

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
07/04/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Railways: Written question - HL2941</p> <p>Asked by Lord Greaves To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to the improvement of rail services between South West England, the Midlands, and the North of England and Scotland, including significant enhancements of rail infrastructure, so as to reduce any need for passenger air services between those areas.</p> <p>Answered by: Baroness Vere of Norbiton Following investment at Derby and Ambergate, CrossCountry has reduced the journey time of some services from Birmingham to Newcastle by 30 minutes and is</p>

			<p>looking at accelerating more services in future timetables.</p> <p>Additional capacity is due to be provided on the CrossCountry services between Scotland and the South-west via Birmingham during 2020 and 2021. The Department is looking at options to increase capacity and improve journey times on the East Coast Mainline while Network Rail is delivering improvements in the Bristol area and an £80m project to upgrade the sea wall at Dawlish for the future to deliver more reliable rail services to Devon and Cornwall</p>
15/04/20	Press Release	DfT	<p>Government provides construction sector certainty by confirming 'Notice to proceed' on High Speed 2. Read here.</p>
15/04/20	Papers	DfT	<p>HS2 Phase One full business case. Read here.</p>
28/04/20	Press Release	ORR	<p>Review of the rolling stock leasing market competition remedies</p> <p>The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has published its final report outlining its recommendation that there is insufficient justification for recommending the CMA undertake a review of remedies put in place by the Competition Commission to address issues in the rolling stock market.</p> <p>While there have been significant changes in the market in the last ten years, ORR considers that the remedies have provided some benefits and their removal would be detrimental. Read here.</p>

Devolution deals

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
22/04/20	Press release	MHCLG	<p>Devolution annual report 2018 to 2019</p> <p>This annual report brings together information about devolution agreements reached between government and areas, and financial resources devolved up to 31 March 2019. Read here.</p>

Environment – 25 year environment plan

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Environment – Waste

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
31/03/20	Papers	HoC	Briefing Paper: Plastic waste (read here) A House of Commons Library Briefing Paper on plastic waste in the UK, including statistics on plastic waste and information on UK Government and devolved Government plans and ambitions to reduce avoidable plastic waste and examples of voluntary initiatives from the plastics industry, environmental groups and retailers. Download the full report here: https://bit.ly/2UQxZgF .
28/04/20	Papers	HoC	Fly-tipping – the illegal dumping of waste This Commons Library briefing paper gives a general overview of the extent of the problem of fly-tipping in England and the powers and responsibilities of the Environment Agency, local authorities and landowners to deal with it. It also sets out recent Government actions to tackle it and proposals for reform. Read here.
30/04/20	Press Release	Network Rail	Transporting waste on vital freight service helps to create enough renewable energy to power 50,000 homes. Read here.

Environment – Air Quality

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
28/04/20	Written Q&A	DEFRA	Air Pollution: Pollution Control: Written question - 38589 Asked by Peter Aldous To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the steps required to meet the World Health Organization guideline values for PM2.5; and if he will publish those assessments. Answered by: Rebecca Pow

			<p>In July 2019, the Government published a report assessing the progress that will be made towards World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines under a range of scenarios. The report concluded that while significant progress would be made, additional action would be required in large urban areas such as London. The analysis did not outline a pathway to achieve the WHO guideline level for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) across the country, and did not take into account full economic viability and practical deliverability.</p> <p>The Environment Bill establishes a legally binding duty to set a target for PM2.5, demonstrating our commitment to action on the air pollutant that has the most significant impact on human health. We are committed to setting challenging targets and following an evidence based process, seeking advice from a range of experts, in addition to giving consideration to the WHO's air quality guidelines. Stakeholders, Parliament and the public will have the opportunity to comment on and provide input for the process of developing this target.</p>
--	--	--	--

Brexit – BEIS, Defra, HCLG, DExEU & committees

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates.