

ADEPT: Parliamentary monitoring May 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

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
			No updates

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
05/05/20	Papers	HoC	<p>Coronavirus: Support for local government</p> <p>The Government has made several sources of financial support available to local authorities in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick said the Government would give councils "the resources they need to do the job," in order to protect vulnerable people and local economies.</p> <p>Financial support to date includes general support to local authorities to assist them with providing services, and funding to compensate for loss of income due to lockdown restrictions.</p> <p>What Government support has there been so far? Read here.</p>
19/05/20	Written Q&A	MHCLG	<p>Local Government Finance: Written question - 45318</p> <p>Asked by Rachael Maskell (York Central) To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional support he plans to provide to local authorities that are within the business rates retention pool.</p> <p>Answered by: Mr Simon Clarke The Government has made £3.2 billion available to support all local authorities with the additional cost pressures they face as a result of the extra work and specific tasks we have asked them to carry out in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have also introduced measures worth over £5 billion to ease their immediate cashflow pressures.</p>

28/05/20	Written Q&A	MHCLG	<p>Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus: Written question - HL4225</p> <p>Asked by Lord Stunell To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reduction of National Non Domestic Rates receipts in 2020–21 consequent upon COVID19; and what discussions they have had with the Local Government Association and councils about the impact of that virus on the operation of the Business Rates Retention Scheme and local authority budgets in succeeding years.</p> <p>Answered by: Lord Greenhalgh The Government is in on-going discussions with local authorities and their representative bodies, including the Local Government Association, to understand the impact that Covid-19 is having on councils' funding, including non-domestic rating income. As a result of those discussions, we have announced the suspension of the planned reforms to the local government finance system, including the Review of Relative Needs and Resources (the 'Fair Funding Review') and the increase to 75% business rates retention. These were due to be introduced in 2020-21 and would have complicated councils' financial planning at a time when the impact of Covid-19 on present and future business rates income is still uncertain. We have also introduced measures worth over £5 billion to ease the immediate cashflow pressures caused by reductions in local authority revenues. We will continue to work with councils and their representative bodies to understand the on-going impact of the pandemic on councils' finances and capacity.</p>
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Transport – Investment strategy

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
14/05/20	Press Release	DfT	Multi-billion pound road and railway investment to put nation on path to recovery. Read here.
18/05/20	Written Ministerial statement	DfT	DfT: Transport for London Extraordinary Funding and Financing. Read here.

Transport – Major road network

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
30/04/20	Press release	RAC	Pothole-related breakdowns jump in first three months of 2020. Read here.
14/05/20	Written Q&A	DfT	Road Works: Written question - HL3761 Asked by Lord Bradshaw To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 28 April (HL3179), when they intend to publish the updated version four of the Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways. Answered by: Baroness Vere of Norbiton The Department for Transport intends to publish the updated version of the Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways on 14 May.
21/05/20	Press Release	Highways England	£150 million A585 Windy Harbour to Skippool improvement under way. Read here.
26/05/20	Press Release	Highways England	Route announced for £1 billion Trans-Pennine dualling transformation. Read here.

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

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
07/05/20	Press Release	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	Government urged to work with Combined Authority on next phase of COVID-19 response. Read here.

Transport – Automated electric vehicle bill

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Transport – rail

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
04/04/20	Press release	ASLEF, RMT and TSSA	Rail Unions: This is not the time to run more trains. Read here.
05/05/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Great Western Railway: Coronavirus: Written question - 40629</p> <p>Asked by Stephen Doughty To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial and other support he is providing to the operator of the Great Western Railway franchise to ensure the continuance of services on the Great Western mainline.</p> <p>Answered by: Chris Heaton-Harris To bring stability and certainty to the industry during this turbulent time, all DfT-franchised train operating companies (excluding LNER and Northern Trains) have seen a temporary suspension of their existing franchise agreements financial mechanisms, and all revenue and cost risk has been transferred to the Government. These arrangements allow us to ensure that trains operate for those who cannot work from home, and essential travel can continue. We continue to manage rail services with close scrutiny of costs, to ensure efficiency and good value for the taxpayer.</p>
05/05/20	Written Q&A	DfT	<p>Railways: Written question - HL3147</p> <p>Asked by Baroness Randerson To ask Her Majesty's Government, following their report Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge, published in March, what consideration they have given to reinstating plans to (1) electrify rail lines, and (2) prioritise rail routes, (a) between Cardiff and Swansea, (b) in the East Midlands, and (c) in the Lake District.</p> <p>Answered by: Baroness Vere of Norbiton</p>

			<p>Electrification will play a significant role in our programme to decarbonise the railway. Network Rail's ongoing work developing the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy will inform decisions about whether electrification or new technologies are the right option for all parts of the network where diesel trains currently run.</p> <p>In deciding which schemes to take forward at each stage of the decarbonisation programme, the Department will consider the environmental impact as well as factors such as affordability; readiness of a scheme to proceed; deliverability; the disruption that might be experienced by passengers or freight operators during works; and availability of suitable rolling stock.</p>
10/05/20	Press Release	DfT	<p>Independent Construction Commissioner to oversee HS2 Phase 2a route. Read here.</p>
21/05/20	Press Release	Network Rail	<p>Passenger satisfaction is priority for new Grand Rail Collaboration chair. Read here.</p>
21/05/20	Press Release	Transport Select Committee	<p>'Next steps for HS2' - publication of correspondence. Read here.</p>

Devolution deals

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
05/05/20	Debate	HoC	<p>Local Government</p> <p>The Minister for Security (James Brokenshire)</p> <p>That the draft Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Fire and Rescue Functions) (Amendment) Order 2020, which was laid before this House on 9 March, be approved.</p> <p>The purpose of this order is to improve the delivery of public services in Greater Manchester by driving greater collaboration and bolstering the accountability of how those functions are exercised. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allows, in certain areas of the UK, the devolution of a number of municipal functions. In 2017, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Fire and Rescue Functions) Order conferred responsibility for the management of the Greater Manchester fire and rescue authority on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Fire and rescue services therefore came under the authority of the directly elected Greater Manchester Mayor, and arrangements were introduced to oversee the operational discharge of functions, with the scrutiny of fire and rescue functions being added to the remit of the corporate issues and reform overview and scrutiny committee. Read here.</p>
11/05/20	Paper	HoC	<p>Coronavirus: How might devolution in England be affected?</p> <p>Read here.</p>

Environment – 25 year environment plan

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Environment – Waste

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
			No updates

Environment – Air Quality

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
12/05/20	Written Q&A	DEFRA	<p>Air Pollution: Pollution Control: Written question - 42012</p> <p>Asked by Peter Aldous To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 38589 on Air Pollution: Pollution Control, whether he has commissioned further analysis of the (a) economic viability and (b) practical deliverability of the WHO guideline limit for PM2.5.</p> <p>Answered by: Rebecca Pow We are developing a clear evidence-based process for setting the fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) target introduced in the Environment Bill. This process will involve thorough analysis and independent expert advice, considering economic, social and technological factors. It will also involve detailed analysis to assess what additional action would be needed to achieve potential targets. Stakeholders, Parliament and the public will have the opportunity to comment on and provide input to the development of an ambitious and achievable target. We are committed to taking action on PM_{2.5}, as it is the pollutant that has the most significant impact on health.</p>
19/05/20	Oral Question	DEFRA	<p>Covid-19 Death and Infection Rate: Air Quality Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the relationship between air quality and the rate of (a) death and (b) infection from covid-19. [902749]</p>

			<p>Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)</p> <p>What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the link between air quality and the exacerbation of covid-19 symptoms. [902765]. Read answer here.</p>
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Brexit – BEIS, Defra, HCLG, DExEU & committees

Date	Type	Organisation	Notes
12/05/20	Debate	HoC	<p>Beyond Brexit (European Union Committee Report) Read here.</p> <p>That the Virtual Proceedings do consider the Report from the European Union Committee Beyond Brexit: How to Win Friends and Influence People (35th Report, Session 2017–19, HL Paper 322).</p>