

ADEPT South West Sub National Board – October / November Update 2020

The SW Board has been continuing to meet on a monthly basis to discuss the impact of COVID-19. This has included regular engagement from partner agencies such as the DfT and Highways England. As part of the October COVID-19 call the Board also received an update from Freddie Hopkinson, Transport Policy Lead at the CBI who came to discuss the CBI/KPMG report on the Future of Commuting "Connecting Communities" which was launched on the 02 October.

At the formal Board held on the 12 November, the Chair and ADEPT COO provided an updated on ADEPT business and the work of the Leadership Team. ADEPT has recently published a number of policy positions on e-scooters and active travel, a think piece on devolution and local government reorganisation and an economic analysis of local lockdowns produced in association with EY. Members were also encouraged to join the Towards Net Zero and a Green Recovery joint ADEPT/CIPFA webinar, on Tuesday 3rd December.

The Board then received an update from the DfT on COVID-19 funding and guidance in relation to the Emergency Active Travel Fund tranche 2 and concessionary fare payments. Jamie Hlland and David Carter then provided an update on progress being made by Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway STBs respectively.

Sarah Sutherland, Senior Associate in the Planning CPO team and Olivia Heining, Solicitor at Burgess Salmon LLP, one of ADEPT's corporate partners, then gave an informative and engaging presentation on the Planning White Paper. They provided a detailed overview of the 3 Pillars in the White Paper and its alternative (fall back) options as well as discussing the consultation responses and views from a large number of industry bodies and interested parties on the emerging themes from the consultation. Paula McGeady, Director at Burgess Salmon was also on the call and available for questions.

The Board then welcomed Samuel MacNab from DEFRA who provided an update on the Environment Bill target setting process. The Environment Bill has restarted its passage through parliament and Clauses 1-6, recently scrutinised in March, contain the legal framework for target setting. The new target setting process was outlined requiring government to set at least one target in each of the four priority areas by October 2022; air quality, biodiversity, water, waste reduction and resource efficiency. The Board received an update on the programme of work to develop those targets over a four stage process to take place in approximately the next two years. Public consultation on the targets is due in early 2020.

The Board also received a presentation from Alastair Johnson at the Environmental Analysis Unit in DEFRA who came to discuss the principles of natural capital. Alastair provided an overview of natural capital, an introduction to ENCA (Enabling a Natural Capital Approach) consisting of guidance, assessment templates, data books on natural capital services and assets and case studies as well as discussing ways to undertake economic valuation of the environment.

Finally, the Board heard from Alice Lord at Natural England who updated the Board on the work of the North Devon Landscape Pioneer, the Natural Capital Strategy and lessons learned. The North Devon Landscape Pioneer was one of four DEFRA pioneers which ran from late 2016-March 2020 and was set up as test bed for the 25 year Environment Plan. Alice outlined the innovative process and approach that they had taken with partners to financially map ecosystem assets and prioritise them to develop a suite of innovative strategic interventions to improve the natural environment. These interventions were then developed into business cases to show the need for investment and the benefits that would arise. They are currently in the process of looking at lessons learned from this work with a report available in early 2021 and are also creating a natural capital evidence handbook which provides a guide on the natural capital process for environmental decision making in a place. This will be available in early spring 2021 and has been developed with the Environment Agency as a joint vision.