

Manifesto for Stronger Places: our offer on transport Summer 2024

Who we are

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport ([ADEPT](#)) is the voice of place directors who are responsible for providing day to day services including local highways, recycling, waste and planning whilst planning for the longer term.

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 drawn from key service sectors.

ADEPT members develop long term strategies, investment and infrastructure needed to make their places resilient, 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.

Background

It is timely to set out how we can work differently with the new government to empower local authorities to deliver more effectively and efficiently on the critical issues of the day – tackling the rising cost of living, reducing the market failures in the housing market , expediting progress towards net zero and environmental resilience, ensuring that ‘place’ plays a clear part in reducing the burden of worsening health inequalities. Our centralised and departmentalised system of government is not fit for purpose to tackle these issues effectively. By ensuring local authorities are properly empowered and resourced, they will be in a position to take forward the government’s key objectives of strong economic areas founded on green growth, sustainable and resilient places, and inclusive, connected communities.

Making the case for place has never been more vital. In our [Manifesto for Stronger Places](#), we call on the new government to commit to these strategic objectives:

- Deliver ambitious devolution deals for councils in every area.
- Move away from short-term competitive funding pots to a multi-year, simplified funding framework.
- Tackle geographical inequalities to promote prosperity, inclusion, and better health and wellbeing for all.
- Pursue sustainable growth that delivers green jobs and skills and protects the environment.
- Take a place based approach to the challenges of net zero, adaptation, nature protection and recovery.

Our vision for the future of transport

- A transport system that is well on the way to becoming decarbonised, both in terms of tailpipe emissions and highways assets.
- Widespread modal shift and travel demand management resulting in cleaner air, less congestion, more attractive places.
- We will have found solutions to tackling rural mobility issues.
- We will have strategies in place to improve climate resilience in the transport system both now and in light of the changing climate.
- Councils regularly collaborate and share resources – people, equipment, innovation, knowledge – with each other, the private sector and academia.
- We will have moved a long way from being a society of motorists, to one of mobilists.

Our transport priorities for the new government

ADEPT is ready and able to work with the government to bring forward a decarbonised and better-connected transport system across the country.

1. Move to multi-year integrated transport funding settlements to allow local areas to plan for the medium term to allocate resources according to local priorities

Long term under investment in the local road network has led to a significant decline in condition and widespread public dissatisfaction, exacerbated by funding uncertainty and stifled innovation. Substantial and sustained investment will allow us to stabilise the overall condition of our infrastructure whilst ensuring its resilience in the face of the changing climate and decarbonising operations. More, and longer term, capital investment is also required to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support the growth agenda. Councils want to provide people with quality travel options to work, learning and leisure while enabling efficient movement for business and freight to drive up productivity. **Multi-year funding will allow effective planning across public transport, active travel, maintenance and renewals, safety and connectivity improvements to better drive the outcomes the government is seeking.**

ADEPT was part of the UKRLG Asset Management Board that collated an extensive set of evidence that clearly articulated the [case for investing in highways maintenance](#). The local roads maintenance backlog in England and Wales is now £14bn ([ALARM Survey 2023](#)). It is estimated that it will take 11 years to get local roads back into a reasonable steady state, even if adequate funding and resources were in place.

2. Rapidly accelerate the decarbonisation of the transport sector

Domestic transport (and passenger vehicles in particular) is now the largest emitting sector in the UK, and the projection is for further traffic growth. If it was needed, this gives real imperative to decarbonise both tailpipe emissions and the carbon embedded in highway assets. **Travel demand management** - deploying the principles of avoid, shift, improve - will be necessary, and generate benefits of reduced congestion, better air quality and health. Technological solutions, faster EV roll-out and removing combustion engine vehicles simply won't be enough. Decarbonising at pace and scale requires **strong national leadership backed up by clear policy, regulatory and funding frameworks and guidance that empowers bold, but essential action**. Behavioural science as a tool to deliver change needs turbo charging across both national and local government.

[Live Labs 2](#) is an ambitious three-year, £30 million, UK-wide innovation programme funded by the Department for Transport and programme managed by ADEPT. It is focused on how to decarbonise local road infrastructure, testing new solutions to decarbonise construction and maintenance across the whole life cycle of the local highway network. We are working with seven ambitious, council-led partnerships from across the UK with two aims: to evidence how carbon focused innovations across the highways sector can reduce its embodied and operational impacts and to encourage behaviour change and adoption of such techniques across industry.

3. Invest in a skilled workforce

To deliver the ambitious changes needed in transport requires a skilled workforce with the capacity and capability to deliver. Councils and their private sector contractors report on a high and increasing level of vacancies, with many posts being filled by expensive agency staff, and a lack of youth and diversity. There is a need to bring in different skills to deal with the environmental and carbon reduction challenges and realise the potential offered by new technologies and innovations. The government needs to **promote the development of a skills pool for the future, improve routes into the profession and invest in technical education, including apprenticeships.**

ADEPT is working closely with one of its private sector partners on a Gen Z recruitment campaign pilot. Councils want to attract and retain young and diverse talent to tackle both immediate workforce needs and develop skilled people for the future. They recognise that having a diverse workforce leads to better ideas and collaboration as well as better reflecting the communities they serve. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the variety and attractiveness of roles in local government, including highways, and encourage 16-25 years to enquire and apply for jobs. We have also published a [staff retention guide](#).