



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Regional and subject board updates 2025

Yorkshire & Humber Board

A busy year for the Yorkshire & Humber Board who continue to meet bi-monthly, inviting Place Directors and colleagues from across the region.

This year the Board has engaged in a wide range of policy topics, with presentations from government bodies, and the public and private sectors.

In March, the Board discussed the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act, which received Royal Assent in October 2023. Michael Bingham, Deputy Director DLUHC, provided updates on the Act's implementation, emphasising the need for commencement regulations before it can be fully enacted. The Act aims to expedite planning, building homes, and levelling up. A notable initiative is the recruitment of a Planning Super Squad to assist local authorities with major and complex schemes.

In May, the focus shifted to flooding, with Steven Tupper, Deputy Director for Surface Water and Pipeline Development, providing updates. The National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) is set for publication, showing flood risks from various sources. The Environment Agency is working with DEFRA on Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and trialling rapid flood guidance statements. The agency is committed to protecting properties through investment programs and improving flood risk management.

July's discussion centred on energy, with Chris Brierley from Energy Systems Catapult presenting on supporting local areas with net zero and public sector decarbonisation. The meeting highlighted Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) initiatives, with examples from York and North Yorkshire. The Catapult works on various aspects, including testing products in homes, decarbonising complex sites, and supporting local authorities with plans and policies.

In September, the Board received updates on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Progress and challenges in implementing LNRS were discussed, with a focus on securing ongoing funding. BNG, part of the Environment Act, involves local planning authorities in creating a market for biodiversity units. The review of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 was also highlighted.

November's meeting featured a presentation by Kumar Niketan from PACTS on road safety. The strategic policy priorities included a National Road Safety Strategy, establishing a Road Safety Investigation Branch, implementing graduated driving licenses, and adopting advanced driver assistance systems. Dr Suzy Charman discussed the Vision Zero initiative, emphasising the need for targets, performance metrics, and sustainable funding to improve road safety.

In January, Jenny Longley introduced the Connected by Water partnership in South Yorkshire, formed in response to the 2019 floods. The partnership includes key stakeholders and focuses on integrated water management and climate resilience. The initiative aims to address significant flood risks and prepare for future challenges exacerbated by climate change.

Finally, in March, Chris Outtersides presented on the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and planning reforms. The revisions emphasise housing, Greenbelt, and Grey Belt land. Rachael Balmer provided an overview of the new local plan for North Yorkshire, highlighting key thematic issues such as sustainable growth, climate change, housing needs, and infrastructure development.

These summaries reflect the Board's diverse focus areas, including planning, flood risk management, energy transition, environmental strategies, road safety, and infrastructure development.

Karl Battersby, Chair of ADEPT Yorkshire & Humber Board, May 2025

Midlands Board

Another successful year with good turnout at our quarterly meetings. The following range of topics and discussion points highlights the varied nature of Place based functions that touch on every aspect of our residents and businesses lives:

- National Highways Decarbonisation
- Flood Alleviation Works in Solihull Metropolitan Borough
- Adaptation and Collaboration
- Waste Carbon Tax Credits
- Funding Announcements (BSIP, Local Transport Funding)
- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
- Updates on UKREiiF

Our structure of mixing Government updates, expert presentations, roundtable updates on common issues and exemplar showcasing of work in practise continues to work as a way of having a diverse and stimulating agenda for each of our meetings.

As chair, I'm now support by two vice chairs in Claire Brailsford and Jonathan Vining, which ensures a spread of workload in developing a future programme for the meeting agendas and hopefully provides resilience and future proofing for ADEPT as an organisation.

We also held one of our meetings in person: thanks to our President, Ann Carruthers, for hosting at Leicestershire. The success and benefits of that in-person meeting means we intend to do again this year.

Andy Gutherson, Chair of ADEPT Midlands Board, May 2025

East of England Board

East of England Board Chair – Andrew Cook, Suffolk County Council

Vice Chair - Grahame Bygrave, Norfolk County Council

Secretariat – Emma Cook, Suffolk County Council

The East of England regional board continues to meet on quarterly basis with good attendance from all member authorities. The chairmanship remained consistent throughout the year with Andrew Cook from Suffolk. Grahame Bygrave from Norfolk County Council continued as vice-chair. There were however a number of new faces as the member local authorities saw changes in senior officers. The meetings tend to be an hour in duration with an equal split between guest presentations and discussion of current issues, the group did however have an extended in-person event in September for the first time since 2020. During the course of the year, the group has had a wide range of speakers on a diverse range of subjects including water resources and scarcity, the delivery of Healthy Homes for people across the region and a really interesting workshop on future scenario planning for our places. More recently the meetings have focused on the potential implications for Devolution and Local Government Reform for our member authorities and the sharing of information and intelligence on how each of us are approaching the issue.

For enquiries on attendance or presenting, please contact the group secretariat, Emma Cook – emma.cook@suffolk.gov.uk

Andrew Cook, Chair of ADEPT East of England Board, May 2025

South East Board (SEDEPT)

Update to follow

Matt Davey, Co-chair of ADEPT South East Board, May 2025

South West Board

April 2024: The board focused on rural delivery in Gloucestershire, Devon, and Somerset. Key participants included Micky Somerset, Nadine Trout (Deputy CEO/Chair of Rural Service Network), and Meg Booth from Devon. An inclusive design workshop was held by ICE South West future leaders, featuring personal experiences of wheelchair use and neurodiversity. Cornwall Council's Devo deal was discussed with Matt Barton.

July 2024: The board heard from the MJ Award-winning Plymouth Skills Hub project and discussed new government policies on planning and transport.

September 2024: We heard from David Bowater of Wiltshire on their award-winning work on local housing delivery

November 2024: Housing challenges were discussed with Ann Carruthers, President of ADEPT. The new DfT local lead, Ben Kempner, was introduced, and Claire Wood from SGC shared best practices on affordable housing.

January 2025: Climate change adaptation was a key focus, with Jon Rattenbury from Local Partnerships introducing the organization. Network rail adaptation and rapid adaptation pathways were discussed with Julie Gregory.

March 2025: Transport updates were provided by Western Gateway SNTB and Peninsula SNTB. The board discussed the Integrated National Transport Strategy with DfT representatives.

This summary highlights the board's efforts in addressing rural delivery, housing, climate change adaptation, and transport innovation throughout the year.

Sophie Broadfield, Chair of ADEPT South West Board, May 2025

Engineering Board

Chair – Mark Stevens (Haringey Council)

Deputy Chair – James Bailey (Staffordshire County Council)

Secretary – Angela Moukouta (Haringey Council)

As has been the case in previous years of activities, the subjects explored by the Engineering Board during 2024/25 have been varied. That reflects the principle that local authority engineers aren't one-trick ponies but expected to cover a sometimes bewilderingly diverse mix of topics that test skills, expertise, and ingenuity – particularly, if that involves adopting new positions and practices in the respective authorities. Of course, whilst everyone's journey out of the house starts and ends on a local road (unless you're off to a conference somewhere or going on holiday!), local authority engineers must consider how their road networks interface with new developments, trading estates, various forms of private land, the infrastructure maintained by others and, of course, the strategic road network presided over by National Highways. And consideration of the latter was where the July 2024 meeting began – considering the safeguarding of roadworkers from roadworks incursions, exemplified by a large vehicle careering through a works compound on a roundabout at the heart of junction 8 of the M5 motorway. Whilst there were thankfully no casualties, it has led to the establishment of regional incursion groups that involve local police forces, National Highways and local highway engineers whose work focuses on roadworkers and what they should/shouldn't be

accepting but also giving greater thought to the impact that vehicle incursions can have and, therefore, how to minimise the risks to all involved.

As we all begin to contemplate what the next comprehensive spending review might deliver, the July 2024 meeting was also one of reflection in that many of the public finance initiatives set up around a quarter of a century ago were coming to an end – and there are 54 PFIs in the Department for Transport portfolio. This was an area where the board heard that the Infrastructure Projects Authority had produced guidance on how to manage those PFIs coming to an end and the transition to more traditional maintenance approaches. The quarterly PFI forums were offering much needed support – as few authorities had personnel that were going to see, the PFI through from start to finish (although one person now in their 70s was in that position at Walsall Council!). And mutual support was sought from volunteers to form an ADEPT working group looking at adaptation – which would look at severe weather events, be that rainfall, heatwave or storm, and their varied and respective impacts on drainage, structures, earth works and roads alike.

The last part of the July 2024 meeting was focused on road safety – from a road user perspective, rather than a roadworker one – and how artificial intelligence might be used to better predict where road traffic incidents might happen, rather than looking at where they had already happened. This was an early introduction as to the art of the possible. Jump forward to the April 2025 meeting and the Engineering Board received an update on where this had got to in a real-world situation. Warwickshire County Council had looked at the AI approach along the Fosse Way corridor with the consultants and identified potential interventions at locations where varying levels of risk had been identified. Warwickshire CC considered this to be a potential game-changer in the world of road danger reduction.

In October 2024, the Engineering Board meeting was hosted by JCB at its headquarters in Staffordshire – a rare provincial meeting that used to be the annual staple for Engineering Boards in years gone by. It was an opportunity to see how JB had evolved from a company best known for its earthwork excavators to the current highway maintenance-focused ‘Pothole Pro’ machine, designed to help with carriageway patch repair work. It was an opportunity for those present to give their thoughts on where there was a gap in the current market for new forms of machinery that would make life easier for highway maintenance engineers! The exploration of the ‘art of the possible’ continued into the main meeting where the Live Labs work being progressed by East Riding on the decarbonisation of street lighting was covered. It isn’t widely appreciated that there is no obligation to provide street lighting for a highway but, if it’s there, it should be maintained – and switching to part-night lighting doesn’t fall foul of that. However, in East Riding, the lighting has started to come out at trial sites, with a greater reliance on road studs for road limit delineation, supplemented by dedicated lighting for footways. This is a space that continues to be watched as this could also be a game-changer!

Prior to the meeting, ADEPT had been approached by the Transport Research Laboratory to explore what could be done more efficiently or effectively in highway maintenance. From this joint work, a set of ideas had been worked up and shared with the Department for Transport – some of which has subsequently materialised in the provision of evidence required by the Department for Transport to secure the ‘incentive fund’ component of the recent supplementary highway maintenance allocations.

The January 2025 meeting saw the President of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, Glenn Lyons, give a presentation on his CLIMATES research survey. This is an initiative that explores possible futures for transport and their environment and their implications

for professionals and organisations. It was a thought-provoking session (as was the content of the survey itself) and reinforced the need for Engineering Board members to think long and hard about the decisions they would be taking on future service delivery, particularly from a decarbonisations perspective. It also reinforced the approach that the Board had taken in recent times in focusing in on climate-related issues. In keeping with that, part of the meeting was also devoted to looking at cross-footway channels for charging electric vehicles – and area that OZEV was trying to better understand and potentially develop specific policy on. Different authorities are in different places on this topic and the lack of consistency was, in some ways, quite surprising – often steered by legal and financial concerns. The meeting was also given a briefing on the work of the Local Government Technical Advisers Group – and included sharing the briefing note that LGTAG had pulled together on charging electric vehicles on the public highway.

The last meeting of the year was in mid-April 2025. Besides the AI-based approach to road danger reduction mentioned above, the Board had also received some advice on the very niche topic of the continued use of aged anchors in vehicle restraint system installations (or, in simple terms, ‘crash barriers’). This was a topic that had only recently surfaced with some concerns expressed in some quarters that it would be wholly unwise not to test the strength of those anchors before installing replacement barrier systems or re-tensioning retained ones. A variety of maintenance regimes existed across attending authorities with some intending to check the protocols currently deployed.

The Department for Transport continues to regularly attend Engineering Board meetings and the April meeting was one where there was a particular focus on PAS2161, the new approach to categorising road condition – a subject that ADEPT has previously worked on with RAC Foundation and argued for changes to the former ‘red, amber, green’ condition assessment which as felt to understate the scale of the problem. The ADEPT Engineering Board had previously welcomed the introduction of PAS2161 so this was an opportunity to get into some of the detail. Tangential to that presentation was exploration of the requirements for submission of information to secure the Incentive Fund component of recent highway maintenance allocations. The presentation given helped clear up some misunderstandings over what was required (and from whom) so was extremely helpful.

Mark Stevens, Chair of ADEPT Engineering Board, May 2025

Environment Board

Update to follow

Carolyn McKenzie, Chair of ADEPT Environment Board, May 2025

Climate Change Board

Update to follow

Nigel Riglar, Chair of ADEPT Climate Change Board, May 2025

Sustainable Growth Board

The Sustainable Growth Board is a cross-cutting group with a wide-ranging agenda covering sustainable growth, housing, planning, economic growth and regeneration, and place-shaping

through planning and growth. Chris Henning of Derbyshire County Council is Chair, with Kate Martin of Sheffield City Council as Deputy Chair. Meetings are held bi-monthly and all ADEPT Member organisations are welcome.

During the year the Board has met (virtually) to discuss a number of issues, including:

- 12/6 – Housing Policy – signing off our Housing Manifesto
- 11/9 – Planning and Growth – with MHCLG, RTPI and Planning Advisory Service
- 13/11 – Devolution White Paper with Metro Dynamics and the LGA
- 15/1 – Joint with Planning Working Group - New National Planning Policy Framework with MHCLG's Director of Planning
- 12/3 – Devolution and Local Government Reform with MHCLG

As is evident from this schedule, there are a number of major policy issues impacting sustainable growth. The Board has given ADEPT members an opportunity to contribute to the national debate and to increase their understanding of the issues from a variety of different sources.

Our single most significant piece of work was a revised Housing Manifesto which was prepared in time to influence post-General Election and set out a series of asks in tune with the Government agenda. This has been widely picked up in social media (including a dedicated podcast) and by relevant professionals and policy-makers.

Numbers at these sessions have generally been good but variable and we will need to continue to consider how to maximise both numbers and the quality of input. We are looking to engage more deeply with Government departments – MHCLG in particular – to ensure that ADEPT Members' views are heard in critical discussions.

Chris Henning, Chair of ADEPT Sustainable Growth Board, May 2025

Transport and Connectivity Board

Update to follow

David Shepherd, Chair of ADEPT Transport & Connectivity Board, May 2025