

Annual Review 2025/26 and Forward Plan 2026/27

Our Strategic Plan for 2026-29, *Making better places for people*, has six priorities:

1. Building resilient places
2. Leading decarbonisation and nature recovery at a local level
3. Enabling healthy, inclusive and cohesive communities
4. Supporting the delivery of effective devolution and successful local government reorganisation (LGR)
5. Developing the place director of the future, and the workforce
6. Improving our membership offer

Underpinning the Strategic Plan, and Forward Plan, are our values as an organisation: collaboration, influence, innovation and inclusion.

Key deliverables for 2026/27:

- Build on the association's reputation for providing insights, expertise and practical solutions on a range of topic areas (priorities 1,2 and 3).
- Successful delivery of year 4 of the Live Labs 2 Programme that ensures those ideas and solutions are understood, adopted and embedded in the local highways sector across the UK (priority 3).
- Support members in preparing for changes in the local government landscape (emergence of more unitary councils and combined/strategic authorities) and political change (priorities 1 and 2).
- Continue to grow the L&D offer including launching an Energy Systems Training Programme and expanding the Digital Academy (priorities 1 and 2).
- Publish a suite of new or refreshed policy positions and toolkits (priority 4).
- Build the association's policy capacity (priorities 4 and 5).

Objective	Outcomes	Achievements – 2025/26	Ambitions – 2026/27
1. Offer excellent membership services	1.1 Grow the membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98 county & unitary authorities (+1) 8 Combined Authorities (+2) & 4 STBs (-1) 5 national / regional associations (-) 25 Corporate Partners (+3) <p>Reinstated bi-annual events with CPs well attended / received</p> <p>Lunch & Learn webinars continue to be popular</p> <p>Reviewed the membership offer for CPs and CAs; approved at General Members Meeting (Nov '25)</p> <p>Held 1-2-1s with all CA members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 county & unitary authorities (+2) 12 CAs (+4) & 4 STBs (-) 5 national / regional associations (-) 25 Corporate Partners (-) <p>Continue with CP biannual events and 1-2-1s</p> <p>Develop a R&D offer for CPs (5.1)</p> <p>Recruitment drive for more CA members and members from emerging unitary authorities</p>
	1.2 Secure sponsorship income	<p>Secured sponsorship for Spring Conference & Awards Dinner (May) and Autumn Conference (Nov) <i>NB: sponsorship income was -20% compared to 24/25</i></p> <p>National Traffic Managers conference converted to online event</p> <p>Great feedback on all events</p> <p>Secured sponsorship for the 2026 PACE Programme (1.6), Live Labs 2 communications programme (3.1), Carbon Leadership Programme (1.3), ADEPT Digital Academy (1.7)</p> <p>Secured financial support from CPs to establish a Bursary Fund to support LA attendance at ADEPT conferences</p>	<p>Secure sponsorship for key events/programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Conference & Awards Dinner (May) National Traffic Managers Conference Autumn Conference (Nov) PACE Programme 2027 Live Labs 2 events (throughout the year) <p>Boost LA representation at Spring & Autumn Conferences via the Bursary Fund</p> <p>Seek opportunities for sponsorship of other work packages</p>

	1.3 Maintain strong commercial partnership with Proving Services (Future Highways Research Group)	<p>36 FHRG members (-3)</p> <p>Secured DfT funding and launched the 3-year Carbon Leadership Programme (CLP)</p>	<p>Promote membership of FHRG</p> <p>Support implementation of the FHRG Future Research Programme</p> <p>Publish summary report for Year 1 of the CLP; develop more case studies</p> <p>Promote participation in the CLP – target 50 LHAs in year 2</p>
	1.4 Explore options for other commercial partnerships	<p>Support Environment Agency (EA) flood work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative agreement with EA as part of the Flood & Coastal Innovation Programme • RAPA toolkit on Met Office Local Authority Climate Service, MACC Hub website; contributing to ICE's PAS 3090: Adaptation Pathways <p>Delivered webinar series for Environment Agency & Natural England</p> <p>Secured DfT funding to deliver an additional year of Live Labs 2 (see 3.1) focussing on comms</p> <p>Joint initiative with Local Partnerships to deliver a local government reorganisation highways toolkit (completion May '26)</p>	<p>EA flood work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue work with EA supporting the roll out of training and learning from the Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme • Continue to promote RAPA toolkit <p>Deliver joint project with Aether on embedding environmental outcomes into Spatial Development Strategies</p> <p>Develop and launch an Energy Systems Training programme (potentially with a commercial partner) (1.7)</p> <p>Identify other commercial partnership opportunities including delivering more sponsored webinar series</p>
	1.5 Continue to deliver quality L&D programmes	<p>Continued high demand for Leadership Development Programme (LDP) and the Leadership Pathway Programme (LPP)</p> <p>Set up work shadowing with central government departments & 'mock interviews' for LDP cohorts with Tile Hill</p>	<p>Administer the LDP and LPP 2026 programmes and recruit for 2027 programmes</p> <p>Deliver annual LDP alumni event (1.8)</p> <p>Ongoing provision of mentor support, interview experience, work shadowing for LDP cohorts</p>

		Successful in-person LDP alumni event (July)	Develop a better understanding of the skills needed for Place Directors of the future
	1.6 Support delivery of the PACE programme with Amey <i>(Pioneering, Action-orientated, Creative & Entrepreneurial)</i>	Delivered successful 3 rd year and published summary documents, blogs and short videos; Lunch & Learn (Jan) Secured funding for 2026	Work with Amey to deliver 2026 PACE programme Publish outputs from the programme Secure funding for 2027
	1.7 Deliver other training opportunities	Successfully launched the ADEPT Digital Academy (June) in partnership with Multiverse Launched the Carbon Leadership Programme (1.3)	Recruit a second cohort for the Digital Academy; expand to include AI Pilot an AI / digital training offer for senior officers Deliver a refreshed green finance training event Develop and launch an Energy Systems Training programme (1.4)
	1.8 Develop / implement the Workforce Programme	Successfully completed the Gen Z 'Find your path' recruitment campaign pilot and disseminated the learnings Campaign shortlisted for CN award and LGC award (ceremony June 26) Launched the Digital Academy (1.7)	Staff retention: no further action planned Recruitment: explore whether there's interest in running a national Gen Z recruitment campaign (focus on highways? Planning? Enforcement?) EDI: refresh the EDI charter and republish the EDI case studies Organise an EDI focused day for the LDP alumni (1.5)
2. Networking & Learning	2.1 Enhance delivery & impact of subject & regional boards plus working groups	Meetings remain online. Attendance more challenging with some boards than others Good engagement with govt depts / agencies Recruited new chairs for SW and East of England Boards	Continue to deliver (where appropriate) joint board / working group meetings on issues of mutual interest Respond to government consultations & committee inquiries, including giving verbal evidence

		<p>Re-formed the Sustainable Growth Board as the Economy, Planning & Housing Board and merged in the planning working group</p> <p>Responded to a growing number of government and select committee inquiries; gave verbal evidence on home to school transport and integrated transport</p> <p>Established monthly meetings for LA members going through political change</p>	<p>Refresh regional boards' membership with new CA / unitary authority members</p> <p>Deliver 'Lessons learnt from political change' briefing note for members in advance of local elections and provide further networking and learning support for those going through political change.</p> <p>Work with Dr Fred Paxton, University of Glasgow to support research on <i>Navigating Political Change</i></p>
	2.2 Maintain strategic engagement with key bodies to ensure ADEPT's contribution is heard and valued	<p>Ongoing implementation of public affairs strategy, building build ADEPT's profile with parliamentarians – as part of this, met with 20+ MPs, Ministers Simon Lightwood & Mary Creagh</p> <p>Continued engagement with fellow professional organisations (ADASS, ADCS, ADPH, LGA, ALATS) - secured regular meeting slot with SoS Wes Streeting (Health & Social Care)</p> <p>Regular engagement with NISTA, Local Partnerships, Climate Change Committee, etc</p> <p>ADEPT reps on various government steering groups including Planning Capability & Capacity WG, NPPF Roundtable with Built Environment Professionals, 'The role of Digital in Delivering Planning Reform' roundtable, High Streets Roundtable, Improving Health through Economic Development, Water Delivery Taskforce, Flood Resilience Task Force, Defra Regional Water Planning Steering Group, EA Natural Flood Management programme board</p>	<p>Continue regular engagement with key government departments and agencies plus other relevant organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra, DfT, DLUHC, DESNZ, DSIT, MHCLG – support Board Chairs in building strong relations with relevant dept(s) • ADPH, ADASS, ADCS plus LGA, LEDNet, CCN, London Councils, Solace • Net Zero Council (replacing the Local Net Zero Forum), Climate Change Committee • National Highways, Network Rail, Homes England, Office for Environmental Protection, EA, Natural England, UKHSA, NAO, NISTA • Professional bodies such as CIFPA, CIHT, RPTI, LCRIG, CEDOS, TCPI, IED, Green Finance Institute • Blueprint Coalition • Local Partnerships • Continue supporting government stakeholder groups

		<p>Minister Mary Creagh attended Spring Conference; Mayor Andy Burnham attended Autumn Conference</p> <p>Maintained 6-monthly joint meetings with EA on Flood Capital Investment Programme for LAs responsible for delivering 20 largest schemes</p>	
	2.3 Deliver quality events	<p>Live Labs 2 parliamentary reception (April) Spring Conference & Annual Dinner (May), LDP alumni (July), CP seminars (July 25 & Jan 26), National Traffic Managers Conference – online (Oct), Highways UK (Oct), Autumn Conference (Nov), successfully delivered with positive feedback; ensured a diverse range of speakers</p> <p>Delivered many more technical webinars on a range of topics including two webinar series (funded by NE & EA)</p> <p>Delivered in person roundtable with Colas and Equans on ‘Place-Based Decarbonisation: Transforming to Achieve Net Zero’</p>	<p>Continue to deliver quality, to budget, diverse events with high levels of delegate satisfaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Conference & Annual Dinner (May) • 2nd Live Labs 2 parliamentary event (June) • LDP alumni event (June) • CP seminars (July & Jan) • National Traffic Managers Conference (Oct) • Autumn Conference (Nov) • Other Live Labs 2 events <p>Plus, other webinar events / series yet to be confirmed</p>
3. Research & Development	3.1 Use the Live Labs programme to establish ADEPT as leading the way in catalysing innovation in the highways sector and wider	<p>Ensured efficient & effective programme management / spend</p> <p>Regular comms inc. articles, blogs, interviews, presentations</p> <p>Delivered parliamentary reception with Minister Lilian Greenwood (April); launched the highways decarbonisation pledge, ran several webinars for pledge signatories</p> <p>Supported a number of LL2 presentations at various conferences and events</p>	<p>Ensure efficient & effective programme management & spend on year 4 comms programme</p> <p>Support the LL2 Commissioning Board</p> <p>Deliver quality events and opportunities throughout the year</p> <p>‘Shift the dial’ on adoption of the successful LL2 outputs, to ensure those ideas and solutions are understood, adopted and embedded in the local highways sector across the UK</p>

		Secured additional funding for Year 4 of comms; recruited programme director (Giles Perkins) to oversee delivery	Effective communications campaign running alongside events and activities Continue to pursue DfT funding to market test the Live Labs 3 and prepare for launch in 2026/27
4. Influencing & policy development	To deliver on the objectives of the Strategic Plan	<p>Established a support programme for members on devolution and LGR – worked closely with LGA and other LG partners and CPs</p> <p>Lobbied government on Planning & Infrastructure Bill and Devolution Bill</p> <p>Blueprint Coalition: ongoing work promoting a statutory duty for climate change</p> <p>Published new guide to strengthen climate communications across local government in partnership with Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission</p> <p>Wrote MHCLG influencing strategy</p>	<p>Publish policy positions on Local Area Energy Planning, active travel (refresh), pay per mile EVED</p> <p>Refresh the home to school transport toolkit</p> <p>Publish LGR Highways Toolkit</p> <p>Publish Highways Resilience Toolkit</p> <p>Continue to work with other associations, LGA, Solace etc to make the case for place</p> <p>Continue to influence implementation of Environment Act (particularly BNG, LNRS, waste reform) and protected landscapes reform, Land Use Framework</p> <p>Implement MHCLG influencing strategy</p> <p>Water: seek to influence emerging proposals following on from Cunliffe Review, Water White Paper & Bill (when published) – joint work between Environment & EPH Boards</p>
5. Organisational development	5.1 Regular service review	<p>Wrote new Strategic Plan 2026-29, consulted widely (to be published May)</p> <p>Reviewed the ADEPT offer to Combined Authorities, and Corporate Partners</p> <p>Refreshed approach to monthly blog posts</p> <p>Ongoing work with Leadership Team to encourage more active engagement from Executive Place</p>	<p>Publish the new Strategic Plan (May)</p> <p>Develop mini-series of CP projects (1.1)</p> <p>Regular monitoring of comms channels & refresh when necessary</p> <p>Ongoing work with Leadership Team to encourage more active engagement from Executive Place Directors to a)</p>

		Directors to a) ensure resilience within the Leadership Team b) deliver ADEPT messages more widely c) raise ADEPT's profile	ensure resilience within the Leadership Team b) deliver ADEPT messages more widely c) raise ADEPT's profile
	5.2 ADEPT company business	Held regular Directors' meetings throughout the year Published annual accounts	Ensure we meet all legal requirements Effective budgetary management including auditing of annual accounts
	5.3 Ongoing support (Secretariat)	Retained policy support for Environment, EPH, Climate Change, T&C Boards along with comms, finance, admin, events support Ensured resilience by recruiting new chairs and vice presidents when necessary Recruited fulltime Executive Assistant Launched the 140 th anniversary celebrations including publishing a series of essays written by former, current and future president	Identify new policy support (David Dale retiring March '27) Ensure smooth annual membership retention / recruitment processes