

## **ADEPT Engineering Board update – October 2019**

At its meeting at the Department for Transport's headquarters on Friday 18th October, the ADEPT Engineering Board welcomed representatives from the RAC Foundation. All three organisations are working together to better understand road condition across the country based upon current assessment techniques - particularly as the current indices don't appear to accurately portray either the public's or local highway authorities' views on local highway condition. Following agreement that the current analysis by the RAC Foundation should continue, the subject of local maintenance funding was debated. It was agreed that the findings of the Transport Select Committee Inquiry into Local Roads Funding positively supported the concerns expressed by Board members and it has since been encouraging to hear the Government's positive response to that Inquiry. As part of the update from the Department for Transport, the imminent deadline for bids to the Challenge Fund loomed large whilst also being told a case has been made to HM Treasury to assign more money to highways maintenance, using information provided by Engineering Board members. With the potential for a Chancellor's budget flickering on then off again like a faulty light, clarity on next year's capital funding is eagerly awaited but patience continues to be required.

The Board also received updates from those directly involved in three of the Live Labs projects (in Kent, Staffordshire and Suffolk), with a general reflection on progress of the other projects as well as the hurdles that are being tackled. Updates were also received from the chairs of the Board's Lighting Group, the Soils Materials Design and Specification Group and the Bridges Group. For the latter, the issue of how best to tackle the boundaries between local roads and Highways England roads where bridges and other structures are involved continues unresolved- but the Board heard how there may yet be light at the end of the tunnel (boom-boom). For the next meeting in January, it was considered prudent to get an update on the implementation of Street Manager. It was also suggested that the Engineering Board might start to reflect on how it could go on the front foot and clarify its ask from the DfT, irrespective of the broader pursuit of a Highways Sector Deal.