

MINUTES, ACTIONS & DECISION NOTES

Meeting title	ADEPT Midlands Regional Board
Location/Platform	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Date and time	Friday 8 th March 2024, 9am-12pm
Apologies	Angie Astley, Chris Henning, Helen Martin, Maria Machancoses, Mark Ryder, Philip Edwards, Rob Harbour, Sarah Spink, Darryl Evers, Ross Cook, John Hobbs, Derek Higton, John Roseblade, Janvi Shah, Victoria Lazenby.

Attendees	Organisation
Andy Gutherson (AG) - <i>Chair</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Jon Vining (JV)	Staffordshire County Council
Dean Ward (DW)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Hannah Bartram (HB)	ADEPT
Adrian Hill (AH)	Active Travel England
Mary Morrissey (MM)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Kylie Russell (KR)	ADEPT
Dan Taylor (DT)	Department for Transport
Claire Brailsford (CB)	Derbyshire County Council
Janna Walker (JW)	Leicestershire County Council
Katherine Kynaston (KK)	Telford and Wrekin Council
Roger Allonby (RA)	Herefordshire Council
Andrew Pritchard (AP)	East Midlands Councils
Graeme Kane (GK)	North Northamptonshire Council
Scott Tompkins (ST)	Warwickshire County Council
Penny Sharp (PS)	Rutland County Council
Abigail Wells (AW) - <i>Notes</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Guest speakers	Organisation
Josh Hawkins (JH)	Midlands Engine
Jonny Potter (JP)	Midlands Mindforge
Dr Lisa Smith (LS)	Midlands Mindforge
Michael Bingham (MB)	DLUHC
Stephen Elderkin (SE)	National Highways

Agenda Item

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

AG welcomed attendees to the meeting, and encouraged the group to introduce themselves when engaging with presenters. AG advised that there was a range of interesting agenda items for discussion and debate, and welcomed proposals for future agenda items from attendees.

2 Review of Previous Meeting Minutes and Actions

The group were invited to review the minutes and actions recorded in the Board Meeting on 8th December 2023. No significant updates were identified.

3 UKREiiF Update

JH joined the meeting to share an update regarding Midlands Engine’s proposition for the upcoming UKREiiF 2024 event. JH advised that a 100sq metre pavilion has been secured by Midlands Engine, and the space will be utilised for one-hour panel/talk sessions. Session slots are still available for Wednesday and Thursday for those who are interested. JH also noted that there is a large outdoor space available with catering/refreshments provided, which can be utilised for meeting/networking and showcasing University research projects. JH indicated that pop up key note sessions would be facilitated during UKREiiF, and encouraged the group to share ideas for potential speakers. Similarly, Midlands Engine are currently exploring procurement of exhibition towers to showcase propositions and points of interest across the pavilion space.

In addition to the pavilion space, Midlands Engine are also planning the following activities for UKREiiF:

- Roundtable, Tuesday at the VIP Glass Box – Unlocking Global Investment Potential of UK Universities to Support Local Growth.
- Roundtable, Tuesday in the Places for People Boardroom – Strategic at Scale: The Future Role of Regions in a New Era of English Devolution.
- Roundtable, Wednesday in the VIP Glass Box – Twinning 4.0, The Future of Civic Soft Power Post Pandemic: How Can We Revive Bilateral Relationships Between International Cities and Regions to Grow Investment.
- Meet the Midlands Programme – rather than advertising a large programme on the main UKREiiF website, an excerpt will be included and further information can be requested. This will be shared with government and partner organisations.

The group discussed opportunities to promote the Midlands presence at UKREiiF to gain traction and engagement in advance of the event.

ACTIONS:

1. All to propose potential attendees for the Midlands Investment Reception.
2. All to propose potential speakers for pop up keynote sessions.
3. HB and KR to engage with JH regarding opportunities to showcase ADEPT workstreams, and to advertise the Midlands presence at UKREiiF.

4 Midlands Mindforge

LS and JP joined the meeting to share information with the group about Midlands Mindforge. LS advised that Midlands Mindforge has been set up by eight research rich universities across the Midlands (Nottingham, Warwick, Birmingham, Leicester, Aston, Cranfield, Keele and Loughborough). The Mindforge has been developed to address failures in the finance market, which result in Midlands start ups being unable to access as much financial resource compared to those in the golden triangle. Similarly, in the Government’s Research Excellence Framework, Midlands universities rank in the top three in 10 of 12 science categories. Midlands Mindforge have an inclusive investment philosophy, which involves attracting co-investors who are experts in rapid growth/scaling of science businesses.

AG asked whether further detail could be shared relating to the relationship between Midlands Mindforge and the Midlands universities who are not within the group. LS confirmed that support is being provided to universities across the Midlands, alongside Midlands Mindforge and identified opportunities to lean into and invest in universities who are leading in particular sectors (i.e. University of Lincoln and agri-food). MM asked how Midlands Mindforge promote themselves and engage with investors (i.e. through MIPIM and UKREiiF). LS and JP highlighted opportunities to engage with investors and encouraged the group to share further opportunities to network and expand awareness of Midlands Mindforge.

5 National Planning Policy Framework and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act

MB was welcomed to the meeting to provide an update on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA). Relating to the LURA, MB advised that the act is substantial and contains fairly broad legislative powers, resulting in a gradual implementation. The Act seeks to provide for significant changes to the way the current system operates, i.e. plan and new infrastructure reforms, new levy system and environmental assessment. An ongoing process is underway to switch on secondary and substantive regulations, and consultations have taken place relating to these measures.

Updates to the NPPF were published before Christmas 2023, and a recent consultation has taken place relating to further potential changes to the NPPF (particularly in relation to better support development on previously developed land). Through the Budget, a consultation on the Accelerated Planning Service has been published, which proposes a 10 week decision window for certain applications, in return for a higher fee. Questions have been posed regarding what the higher fee may be and how this would be delivered. Additional support for the sector is being considered, including the development of a Planning super squad, intended to act as a local planning authority advisory team for large applications (particularly relating to housing and large scale developments). Principles are currently being laid relating to how this will operate. AG and HB referenced specialist roles within the super squad, and potential for overwhelming interest in support due to recruitment challenges across local planning authorities.

6 Decarbonisation – National Highways

SE joined the meeting to provide a presentation on National Highways' (NH) decarbonisation journey. SE advised that NH published a net zero plan in 2021 to set out headline targets for emissions; the plan proposed corporate emissions net zero by 2030, maintenance and construction net zero by 2040 and road user emissions net zero by 2050. SE shared workstreams underway to reduce emissions in each of these areas, including LED Strategic Route Network lighting, trialling EV and hybrid vehicles, decarbonisation of materials, redesigning construction processes and achieving PAS 2080:2016 Verification (requiring all suppliers to report carbon measurements for monitoring, managing and reducing). Further initiatives include developing a net zero roadmap for key materials which will enable setting of maximum carbon intensity standards for materials and choice editing out carbon heavy producers. Similarly, a low carbon opportunities register has been developed to capture best practice across all NH projects; this is now integrated into the scheme specification processes.

GK asked if NH could continue to share what is being developed, including guidance and requirements set out, to enable all to work towards increasing the focus and standards relating carbon performance in infrastructure services. SE advised that a Carbon Hub had been developed; access to resources can be granted by emailing carbon@nationalhighways.co.uk.

ACTION:

4. Arrange for SE to present a further NH Decarbonisation item at a future meeting.

7 Midlands NSIP Proposals – Verbal Update

AG provided a verbal update to the group regarding the volume of NSIP proposals currently being managed within Lincolnshire. There are currently 32 NSIP proposals covering a range of activity (i.e. solar, pylons, interconnectors) and it is anticipated that further proposals will come forward within the next 12-18 months. This has had a significant impact for LCC's Planning Team, as extra resource, expertise and knowledge are required to deliver the proposals, in addition to retention challenges and BAU workloads.

AG asked the group whether their authorities were experiencing a similar NSIP workload and resourcing pressures as a result. JW advised that whilst Leicestershire do not have the same volume of NSIP proposals to manage, there are challenges in having the expert knowledge to deal with each case, exacerbated by the uniqueness of each proposal. ST also indicated that there are smaller volumes of NSIP proposals for Warwickshire to manage, but there are significant challenges in recruiting non-apprenticeship roles. MM highlighted similar experiences with managing HS2 applications and recruiting planners.

ACTION:

5. HB to facilitate an introduction between AG and CEX of the Planning Inspectorate.

8 Local Transport Fund Announcement

AG invited the group to share thoughts and perspectives on the recent Local Transport Fund (LTF) announcement. DT clarified that the LTF was previously named the Locally Integrated Transport Settlements (LITS), and highlighted that a positive step has been made to provide longer term significant funding settlements to smaller areas. DT advised that the funding would be back-ended across the allocation period, as it is repurposed HS2 funding (which was also back-ended). Work is currently underway with the Treasury to provide allocation information to authorities, and guidance is being developed relating to the fund to enable streamlined reporting.

HB made the group aware that a Highways Maintenance Reporting letter had been shared with Local Authority Chief Executives, due to a short deadline of 15th March 2024. DT advised that the report is high-level and does not require significant amounts of detail, and encouraged the group to reach out if there are any questions relating to the submission request. GK highlighted that streamlined and standardised reporting would be appreciated to avoid duplication and simplify returns processes.

9 ADEPT Updates

HB shared general ADEPT updates with the group; these updates are available in appendix 1. The following actions were agreed during the update:

ACTIONS:

6. AW to arrange item regarding review of the Emissions Trading Scheme.

7. HB to link JW with authorities negotiating level two Devolution Deals.

10 | AOB

AG invited the group to share any items for AOB. The following items were raised:

- Information Sharing – MM proposed that an opportunity is provided for attendees to share information on items which may be valuable for the group to be aware of, i.e. events, workstreams. JW agreed that putting time aside at the end of sessions would be valuable.
- In Person Session – The group discussed arranging an in-person meeting in a central location during September.

ACTION:

8. All to consider potential venues for the September in-person meeting.

Next meeting:

Friday 21st June 2024, 9am-12pm

Microsoft Teams Meeting