

Manifesto for Stronger Places: our offer on climate change and green growth

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 preparing 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

With the advent of a new government, it is timely to set out how we can work differently with 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 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 local authorities 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 local climate action

- We have decarbonised the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions– buildings, transport, energy – from existing infrastructure and vehicles.
- We have a planning system that ensures all new infrastructure and developments are net zero, sustainable, resilient, and support nature recovery.
- We have climate resilient places with long-term strategies to ensure local places are able to plan and adapt to future climate hazards.
- Local businesses and residents are empowered to take action that contributes to achieving climate change targets and resilience and support local authority action and leadership in this space.
- All local authority services are adapted and made resilient to meet the challenges of the changing climate and have robust plans in place to respond to more extreme weather events.

- Local authorities regularly collaborate and share resources – people, equipment, innovation, knowledge – with each other, the private sector and academia.

Our top three priorities for the new government: devolution, green growth, adaptation

Local authorities are ready and willing to help kickstart economic growth and make the UK a clean energy superpower. A place-based approach is an essential and cost-effective way of delivering green growth and clean energy, securing a fair transition to a net zero economy and building resilient infrastructure and communities. ADEPT will work with the government to meet its climate and environment ambitions.

1. Devolution

Local authorities are essential to the delivery of national ambitions on climate and environment. We need a genuine partnership with government that recognises the need for a place-based approach with adequate funding and support. Ambitious local climate action agreements should be part of all devolution deals, where local authorities and central government are confident of being able to deliver agreements at pace and scale, that can evolve over time and likely differ from place to place and will unlock private investment for net zero and resilience.

ADEPT has worked with local authorities and the County Councils Network (CCN) to embed the principle of Local Environmental Improvement Plans (LEIPs) into the devolution deals for Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire. These aim to secure the local delivery of national environmental ambitions by giving the local authority the responsibility for strategic leadership in planning, advising and coordinating action on climate and environment matters for the area, working closely with other local authorities, utility companies and government agencies. This approach provides a platform for developing ambitious local climate action agreements.

2. Green growth

Local authorities can help deliver sustainable growth that creates green jobs and skills and protects the environment. Decarbonisation of our places is a significant investment opportunity and local action delivers bigger benefits at a third of the cost compared to national action alone. The transition to clean energy represents a big economic opportunity. This can be achieved locally by giving councils a clear remit to develop Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) to manage the transition to net zero energy systems in their places.

ADEPT has engaged with Energy Systems Catapult to support the roll-out of local energy system decarbonisation via LAEPs. Each local area is unique, and the right decarbonisation strategy will depend on the geography, building types, energy and transport infrastructure, energy demand across homes and businesses, growth plans and other ambitions of the local community. LAEPs will identify the right net zero projects that will be central to local growth plans.

3. Resilience

Preparing for the future means not only means not only decarbonising to mitigate the climate and nature emergencies but also adapting to the changes that are already happening and making our places more resilient. Many areas of the country started the year with serious flooding with homes, businesses, infrastructure and agricultural land under water. The government has so far failed to provide proper leadership on adaptation and resilience. Local authorities can help deliver but need national leadership and a clear framework of roles and responsibilities.

ADEPT provides the Chair and some secretariat support to the government's Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP). This valuable forum is constrained by an inadequate National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) and ineffective support across government. We want to work with local government partners to build a new relationship with central government, that provides strategic and cross-departmental leadership to help build resilience in our local infrastructure, services and communities.