

MINUTES, ACTIONS & DECISION NOTES

Meeting title	ADEPT Midlands Regional Board
Location/Platform	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Date and time	Friday 29 th November 2024, 9am-12pm
Apologies	Ann Carruthers, Angie Astley, Chris Henning, Darryl Evers, Joe Battye, Maria Machancoses, Ed Bradford, George Candler, Claire Brailsford, Katherine Kynaston, John Roseblade, Kylie Russell, Victoria Lazenby, Kamaljit Khokhar

Attendees	Organisation
Andy Gutherson (AG) - <i>Chair</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Adam Round (AR)	Lincolnshire County Council
Adrian Hill (AH)	Active Travel England
Andrew Pritchard (AP)	East Midlands Councils
Chris Wragg (CW)	North Northamptonshire Council
Dean Ward (DW)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Derek Higton (DH)	Nottinghamshire County Council
Glyn Langston Jones (GLJ)	Department of Transport
Graeme Kane (GK)	North Northamptonshire Council
Hannah Bartram (HB)	ADEPT
James Bailey (JB)	Staffordshire County Council
Janna Walker (JW)	Leicestershire County Council
Jonathan Vining (JV)	Staffordshire County Council
Mark Ryder (MR)	Warwickshire County Council
Penny Sharp (PS)	Rutland County Council
Rachel Telfer (RT)	Birmingham City Council
Sarah Spink (SS)	Midlands Connect
Abigail Wells (AW) - <i>Notes</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Guest speakers	Organisation
Grant Wardle	Midlands Engine
Alan Smith	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Rupert Furness	Department for Transport
Alan Carr	Sustainability West Midlands

1	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies
	AG welcomed the group to the meeting and facilitated introductions.
2	Review of Previous Meeting Minutes and Actions
	AG invited the group to review the minutes and actions recorded in the Board Meeting on 30 th September 2024. AG highlighted the benefit of holding an in-person session in September to facilitate networking, and reflected on the group's agreement to hold one meeting in person per year (in September). Offers to host the September 2025 session were welcomed, though

it was proposed that if there are no location suggestions, a central venue will be selected. AG encouraged attendees to continue to propose items for future meetings.

AG recalled that the group discussed the benefits of having a vice-chair for the ADEPT Midlands Regional Board. Following the meeting in September, both Jonathan Vining and Claire Brailsford have been appointed as joint vice-chairs. AG, JV and CB will meet in between Boards to identify and facilitate future agenda items. AG thanked both vice chairs for their support so far and welcomed them to the role.

3 UKREiiF Update

GW joined the meeting to share an update on Midlands Engine's plans for UKREiiF in 2025. The Midlands Engine Global Investment team are working closely with UKREiiF and West Midlands Growth company to ensure wider regional alignment of plans for the event. Consultations are ongoing regarding whether central government continues to fund pan regional partnerships (PRPs) after March 2025. GW highlighted that Midlands Engine activity at UKREiiF has been paid for in full, and will commence regardless of the consultation outcome.

Midlands Engine have re-procured the same pavilion space as 2024, and are stationed next to the West Midlands Growth Company. This is positioned in a prominent position within the location zone, and is one of the largest spaces on site. GW outlined the fitout of the space and highlighted zones which can be used for a variety of session styles (i.e. keynotes, roundtables, panel sessions). GW reflected on the main session and mini pop-up session model utilised in 2024, and confirmed this approach would be taken again in 2025. GW advised that for any organisations which have an event planned within the pavilion, a mini pop-up can be facilitated free of charge for partners which organisations may want to bring along. Mini pop-ups are charged at £250 +VAT where a main session has not been booked in the pavilion. GW shared a programme outline for the Midlands Engine Pavilion in 2025, and highlighted available slots across the programme. There has been good engagement so far regarding the sessions, and confirmation of session titles and outlines will be required by 31st January 2025. GW encouraged any attendees who are interested in securing a slot to reach out and discuss further. Negotiations are currently underway to secure meeting rooms for roundtable opportunities at UKREiiF.

GW advised that the Midlands Investment Portfolio is updated annually. This hosts the most significant and important investment propositions from partners across the region (and University R&D Midlands), and acts as a 'front door' for potential investors. This will be relaunched on the Tuesday. Midlands Engine will also be holding their annual investment reception at UKREiiF. All Board attendees have been invited to a webinar on making the case for institutional investment into the Midlands on 4th December. Midlands Engine are working with the Good Economy, and Central Pool to support investment into the region and the webinar will explore this workstream in greater detail. The Good Economy are interviewing more than 20 fund managers as part of this workstream to understand what they need, what they are looking for, and how to best engage with them. It is expected that findings from this workstream will be published in January.

GW reflected on the UK R&D Campaign, and highlighted that a pilot has been commissioned in the Midlands. The campaign looks to highlight the strengths of research and development

at Midlands universities, noting opportunities and assets available across the region. A new website has been launched to compile information on sector strengths and investment propositions. A campaign will be delivered around this pilot at UKREiiF, and GW encouraged anyone who is interested in being involved to reach out and discuss further.

AG reported that the Midlands Engine pavilion worked well for Greater Lincolnshire, and sessions encouraged traction and development of contacts. AG encouraged anyone with a proposition to bring it to the event, and highlighted that a Greater Lincolnshire delegation will be attending in 2025. AG asked whether an evening reception will be held in 2025, and asked whether there had been any thoughts on holding a Midlands Mayors event in the pavilion, given that Greater Lincolnshire will have a newly elected Mayor. GW confirmed that the reception will be facilitated in 2025, though it will likely take place in a different venue due to the level of interest in the event. GW confirmed that speeches for receptions and roundtables are still to be planned, though Midlands Engine would be happy to include anyone who wants to be involved; engagement with Mayors on key activity could be facilitated.

JV asked when requests for information for the Midlands Investment Portfolio are likely to arrive. GW advised that a date is yet to be confirmed, but this will likely be in December 2024. MR endorsed the Midlands Engine presence at UKREiiF and confirmed that a Warwickshire delegation will be attending in 2025. SS highlighted that whilst Midlands Connect did not host any events at UKREiiF last year, support was provided to partners and panels. SS confirmed that Midlands Connect would be happy to engage with partners on UKREiiF 2025 where interested.

AG confirmed that a consultation is underway regarding funding for pan regional partnerships, which is due to close on 16th December, and all attendees should have received direct communication on ways which local authorities can help (i.e. letters of support, testimonials, consultation feedback). AG encouraged the group to provide an appropriate response to the consultation. GW welcomed support from partners where they see value in Midlands Engine, but confirmed that it would not be mandatory. GW emphasised that the Midlands Engine activity will be going ahead, regardless of the consultation outcome, and would be delivered by the Midlands R&D Campaign if funding is to be removed. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, AG invited GW to return to the Board and provide updates on UKREiiF 2025 before and after the event.

4	Solihull Heat Network
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AS shared a presentation with the group regarding the Solihull Heat Network. The project is designed to provide cheaper, low carbon heat and power in Solihull town centre via an air source heat pump. The project has been identified as a means to support achievement of Solihull Council's Net Zero Action Plan. The Heat Network project will be phased, and Phase 1 is anticipated to save 26,109 tonnes of CO2 over 25 years. AS advised that the project began in 2018 following a bid for funding from the WMCA. The project is now progressing with building activity taking place in earnest. AS reflected on challenges during the demonstrating return and modelling finance phase, but highlighted that this has been overcome. A DBOM Agreement has been reached for the energy network, which will ensure design, building, operation and maintenance of the network. The Local Authority has set up a heat energy

services company to manage individual contracts and customer agreements associated with the energy network. AS outlined the governance structure of the project.

AS reported that the energy centre will be built adjacent to the Tudor Grange Leisure Centre, and outlined proposed customer connections for heat and power between 2025/26. AS also defined the network route and highlighted that profitability is anticipated to increase as further connections are made in each phase of the project. Next steps will include installation of the heat network pipework, construction and commissioning of the energy centre, and connection activations. Operation and Maintenance is to be achieved between 2026-2036. Activity is underway to identify further customers for development in future phases of the project. As more customers are onboarded, there could be scope for construction and commissioning of a new energy centre.

AG welcomed the group to share any questions, observations, or information on heat network exploration in other authorities. The following reflections were noted:

- MR asked if there is any forward plan for the scale of future opportunities through the heat network, following the initial investment stage. AS confirmed that a range of potential customers has been identified within the town centre, and the project are keen to facilitate as many connections as possible. Similarly, there are opportunities to secure grant aid for future phases of the project.
- AG highlighted that it will be interesting to see the development of the project as it gains momentum, and to understand how it progresses over time. AS was invited to present back to the Board in a couple of years to share reflections on the project.
- JW asked what level of resource was committed to the concept stage of the project before funding received, and how long this stage was. AS advised that this stage occurred before he was in the role, but there may be a business case which could be shared with the group.
- HB asked whether a lessons learned paper will be developed to support other authorities in pursuing heat networks, as Solihull is currently a leading authority in the field. HB confirmed that, if so, ADEPT would be happy to help disseminate. Similarly, HB proposed that AS attends and presents on the energy network at the ADEPT Energy and Green Growth Board. AS advised that whilst lessons learned have materialised, a formalised document has not yet produced. AS highlighted commercial confidentialities around the project and challenges in sharing anything in significant detail.

AG emphasised the value of sharing good practice and lessons learned as a group to support activity within the region.

ACTIONS:

- AS to confirm whether the energy network business case is available to share with the group.
- HB and AS to facilitate a Solihull Heat Network presentation at the ADEPT Energy and Green Growth Board.

5 | Autumn Budget Reflections - DfT

RF introduced himself to the group as the Deputy Director at DfT for Local Highways and Active Travel, and confirmed that updates following the Autumn Budget would be shared with the group. The following announcements and reflections were noted:

- An uplift of £500 million capital to the highways maintenance budget in 25/26, taking the total DfT capital funding for highway maintenance to approx. £1.6 billion. Allocations to Highway Authorities are to be confirmed. The funding landscape beyond the next financial year has not been confirmed, though, it was acknowledged that Highway Authorities are likely keen to secure a long-term multi-year sustainable settlement.
- The Public Accounts Committee held a hearing into local highways recently, where DfT colleagues were questioned about highway maintenance and associated funding. RF encouraged those interested to review the transcript from the hearing. JB confirmed that the hearing was very interesting and highlighted opportunities for DfT to utilise data to make a stronger case for investment.
- An uplift of £100 million capital to the active travel budget in 25/26, reinstating funding which had previously been cut from the budget approx. 18 months ago. Funding now totals approximately £150 million. Confirmation is awaited on allocations to local authorities; this is to be determined by Active Travel England.

JW emphasised the importance of multi-year funding settlements for authorities to make good use of funding, and noted challenges around changes to medium-term funding profiles for authorities. JW asked whether there are any routes to protecting future multi-year funding settlements to support authorities, and whether Network North funding allocations are no longer valid. RF confirmed that the government have announced that they will be reviewing the affordability of the previous government's HS2 savings release announcement. RF recognised the challenges associated with funding announcements and the importance of multi-year settlements to authorities. This will be emphasised in phase two of the Spending Review (likely to be announced in late Spring). JB asked whether any further insight could be shared on the £650 million LTP funding allocation defined in the budget. RF advised that LTP sits within another team and therefore there was not further detail that could be shared around the funding, other than to note that it would be a Section 31 grant and not ring fenced.

HB reflected that the previous Secretary of State had launched her vision for an Integrated National Transport Strategy on 28th November, and considered whether it will endure given today's resignation announcement. RF confirmed that the strategy was a manifesto commitment and therefore activity will continue to progress. RF advised that the government have launched a call for ideas on the Integrated National Transport Strategy, and encouraged attendees to explore details around this further via the DfT website. SS reported that Midlands Connect (alongside all other STBs) have been approached to support with regional roadshows and will assist in ensuring a regional feel within the strategy.

JW asked whether RF could share any insight on the integrated transport block funding allocations. RF reported that the integrated transport block is now looked after by the local transport fund team, and therefore these funds will be looked at in parallel, but there are no further updates which could be shared. AG highlighted that some Midlands authorities have large capital schemes within the MRN programme, and clarification is required on funding available. AG asked whether there is any insight which could be shared on timing for announcements of funding allocations. RF proposed that this may be outlined within the Spending Review and consideration is being given to whether another round of MRN schemes will be launched. AG also reflected on legal cases which have had a bearing on other strategic

infrastructure in terms of carbon impact. AG asked if DfT are considering how wider carbon impacts are going to be accounted for within business case and project assessment processes to justify schemes. RF highlighted plans to review the LTP guidance and produce quantifying carbon reduction guidance alongside this. RF proposed that this guidance may be able to outline required carbon considerations for projects and schemes.

The following resources were shared with the group:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/integrated-national-transport-strategy-a-call-for-ideas>
- The supporting press notice: [Transport Secretary unveils her vision for integrated transport across England - GOV.UK](#)
- The call for ideas: [Integrated National Transport Strategy: a call for ideas - GOV.UK](#)
- The Secretary of State's speech: [Integrated National Transport Strategy - GOV.UK](#)
- Written statement to Parliament: [Integrated National Transport Strategy for England - GOV.UK](#)

6 Adaptation

AC joined the meeting to share a presentation with the group relating to adapting for climate change. AC advised that Sustainability West Midlands is a not-for-profit sustainability adviser for West Midlands organisations. The company engage with organisations outside of West Midlands on adaptation activities, and a roadmap has been developed to track progress and generate adaptive activities for stakeholders. AC defined mitigation and adaptation, and recognised that both need to be undertaken in parallel to build climate resilience. AC emphasised the importance of adaptation and mitigation activities as climate change is now an issue of the present, and we are not on track to meet global temperature reduction targets.

AC outlined impacts of climate change, and highlighted that they have a cross-sector impact (i.e. health implications, environmental implications and infrastructure implications). Resultantly, actions such as hard interventions, nature-based solutions, planning and strategy, and no-regret measures are required to adapt and mitigate. AC shared examples with the group of adaptation in practice across the UK.

AC emphasised the importance of collaboration in adaptation, as climate risks and impacts do not respect boundaries. Through collaboration, organisations can share resources and best practice, and act as a powerful and consistent voice to central Government. AC reflected on activity to develop a Greater Lincolnshire Adaptation Plan, and highlighted the volume of stakeholders engaged to ensure the Plan is as effective as possible. AC advised that Sustainability West Midlands can provide secretarial support for adaptation themed working groups, produce adaptation plans for a place or organisation, produce high-level risk assessments, evaluate impacts on areas/services, provide technical reports around climate projections for an area, embed stakeholder engagement and provide free-to-use independently produced resources.

AG reflected on the value of working with Sustainability West Midlands on the Greater Lincolnshire Action Plan, but highlighted the need to take a smart approach in addressing actions defined to ensure progress is made. HB asked whether measures of success are defined

within action plans, and what levels of political support there are in authorities for adaptation activity. AC highlighted challenges in establishing measures of success due to ability to quantify outputs. AC noted that, once an adaptation plan is developed, a monitoring and evaluation process is undertaken to integrate the plan into existing governance and identify measures for success. Actions included are often defined as no-regret; they can be implemented and have a positive outcome. AC reflected on the national challenge around resourcing to support and guide adaptation, and the lack of mandatory measures for activity, with the exception of flood risk mitigation. AC proposed that if organisations are thinking about how they can deliver adaptation, it would be valuable for them to consider how they could link an adaptation plan to their authority's strategic or corporate plan, and emphasise how adaptation could strengthen other sector outcomes. AG highlighted that 40% of Lincolnshire is below sea level, and is vulnerable to coastal, fluvial, groundwater and surface water flood risk and noted the importance of making the link between adaptation and day-to-day challenges. AG highlighted that experiences vary widely across authorities, and emphasised the importance of getting to a point where climate adaptation is a real issue for all.

JW highlighted flood risk as a key priority and noted resourcing challenges for managing the S19 process. Resultantly, activity has been undertaken to enhance community resilience. JW asked whether Sustainability West Midlands look at funding streams and provide support with how organisations would be best placed to make funding bids. JW also asked whether there are scheme examples which illustrate success and could be implemented by all (for example, addressing melting roads in hot temperatures, and identifying suitable materials for changing temperatures). AC indicated that whilst schemes exist, there can be challenges in trying to seek them out and centralise findings, and there are opportunities to develop in this space. Regarding funding, AC emphasised that there are adaptation funding and financing opportunities, which may not be very well known and may be difficult to access.

AP reflected on national challenges for local authorities to deliver climate adaptation and asked to what extent ADEPT and similar organisations are able to engage with central Government to lobby for greater support and a mandate to deliver adaptation. HB emphasised a focus currently on energy rather than adaptation, and proposed that local authorities may have success through tying the climate agenda to issues such as flooding and excess heat. HB also reflected on the accessibility of language around climate adaptation and noted that activity is underway with other local government bodies to push the climate agenda in a broader sense of adaptation and mitigation. AG highlighted activity to review and update the approach to how the LAAP works, to enable the panel to work at both a strategic and practitioner level.

AC shared the following resources with the group:

- [Climate change adaptation: practical examples for local authorities – Sustainability West Midlands](#)
- [Our Reports & Guides – Sustainability West Midlands](#)
- [Climate change – Herefordshire Council](#)

7 | ADEPT Updates

HB shared ADEPT updates with the group; the items discussed are available to review within Appendix 1.

HB and AG reflected on youth speakers at the ADEPT Autumn Conference 2024 and highlighted that their session was invigorating, thoughtful, and gave valuable insight into how to better bring young people in to influence place shaping. JW highlighted the enthusiasm of newly employed Transport Planning graduates at Leicestershire County Council, and recognised their role as future Place leaders. JW asked whether members of the group would be interested in developing a graduate network to encourage collaboration and engagement. AG agreed with the proposal, and suggested that JW links in with A Harhoff and A Round to discuss potential approaches for the network.

ACTION:

- JW to engage with A Harhoff and A Round to discuss opportunities for a graduate network.

8 AOB

JW proposed a future agenda item relating to activity around street light dimming, which has resulted in carbon benefits and energy savings, and asked if this would be appropriate for/interesting to the group. AG confirmed that the proposal would be a welcome agenda item, and encouraged the group to offer showcase items, items where engagement/support may be required, items for strategic debate, and insights from government departments. MR confirmed support for the item being scheduled at a future Board.

SS proposed facilitating a Midlands Connect update and forward look for 25/26 at the next Board meeting.

ACTIONS:

- JW to provide AG, JV and CB with a rundown of the street light dimming item, for scheduling at a future Board.
- ALL to contact AG, JV and CB with any proposals for future Board items.
- SS to facilitate a Midlands Connect update and forward look for 25/26 at the next Board meeting.

Next meeting:

Friday 7th March 2025, 9am-12pm
Microsoft Teams Meeting