



## East of England Board

### Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday 10 December 2025  
**Venue:** Virtual Teams meeting  
**Duration:** 16:00 to 17:00  
**Chair:** Andrew Cook, Suffolk County Council  
**Vice-Chair:** Grahame Bygrave, Norfolk County Council


**Attendees:** Andrew Cook (AC), Alan Richards (AR), Andrew Summers (AS), David Dale (DD), David Gibson (DG), Gidon Wieder (GW) (rep for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority), Grahame Bygrave (GB), Hannah Bartram (HB), Haroona Chughtai (HC), James Golding-Graham (rep for England’s Economic Heartland) and Steve Palfrey (SP)

**Apologies:** Frank Jordan, Judith Barker, Mark Doran, Paul Crick, Paul Thomas, Rob Hancock, Tim Bellamy, Tom Walker

**Guests:** Angela Jones, ADEPT President  
 David Dale, ADEPT Policy Officer

**Notes:** Emma Cook (EC)

Item	Title
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence, Welcome &amp; Introduction</b>
2.	<p><b>ADEPT Strategic plan values and draft priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Plan Overview:</b> David Dale and Hannah Bartram presented the ADEPT draft strategic plan, which is a refresh of the current three-year plan, aiming for adoption by May 2026. The plan focuses on updating language and priorities to reflect recent social, political, environmental, and technological changes.</li> <li>• <b>Values Proposed:</b> Four organisational values were suggested - Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion (EDI); Collaboration; Influence; and Innovation &amp; Delivery. The plan will explicitly reference ADEPT’s EDI Charter and emphasise hope and positive placemaking.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic Priorities:</b> Six priorities are proposed, with four externally focused (devolution/local government reorganisation for growth, resilient infrastructure/services, inclusive/cohesive communities, tackling climate/nature emergencies) and two internal (organisational development and member advocacy). The structure remains similar to the current plan,</li> </ul>

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	<p>but details will be updated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Feedback &amp; Discussion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grahame supported the inclusion of nature emergencies and the reframing of green growth and cohesive communities to align with current political priorities.</li> <li>○ Hannah noted the need to reframe climate agenda language due to shifting political rhetoric, while Andrew highlighted the challenge of 2030 targets in the context of organizational changes by 2028.</li> <li>○ James suggested making AI's impact on policy, strategy, and data management more explicit in the plan, especially regarding staff use of external AI tools. David Dale and Andrew agreed this should be addressed.</li> <li>○ David Gibson raised the need for ADEPT to support transitions to new unitary authorities, especially in service disaggregation (e.g., highways, waste), and suggested external assurance and guidance would be valuable. Hannah and Andrew agreed, noting a gap in support from other organisations and the potential for ADEPT to fill it.</li> <li>○ Steve recommended engaging with ADEPT working groups and referenced local partnerships' toolkits for LGR and devolution, with potential expansion to other service areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION 2.1:</b> The draft paper will be circulated for further comments, with feedback requested from the group by Christmas to inform the first full draft in the new year. <b>ALL</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Paper 6_Developing the ADEPT Strategic</p> </div>
3.	<p><b>National ADEPT Update by Hannah Bartram</b></p> <p><b>Transport / Infrastructure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Public Accounts Committee is holding an inquiry into <b>home to school transport</b>. Likely topics for scrutiny include how to manage rising demand; available support for young people; and efforts to contain costs. ADEPT has submitted written evidence and on 8<sup>th</sup> December Rose McArthur, chair of the ADEPT H2S transport working group, gave oral evidence – you can watch the session <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>2. <b>Carbon Leadership Programme:</b> There's been significant interest in the <a href="#">programme</a> since we launched it in June, and places are limited for the remainder of the 2025/26 programme. Created in partnership with Proving Services and supported by the Department for Transport, the programme is designed to support local highway authorities measure and identify ways to reduce their carbon emissions. Rather than each authority investing considerable time and resources into developing its own carbon baselining tool and working in isolation with limited visibility of comparative performance, the programme offers a coordinated approach. Two more training sessions</li> </ol>

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	<p>are planned for 20<sup>th</sup> &amp; 27<sup>th</sup> January – see <a href="#">here</a> to register.</p> <p>3. <b>Live Labs 2:</b> We have launched a pledge that invites stakeholders to drive meaningful decarbonisation across all aspects of the UK’s road network and rethink how the highways infrastructure reduces carbon – for more information and to sign the pledge, see <a href="#">here</a>. We hosted a webinar for pledge signatories on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, which is the first of three webinars. The focus was 1) circular economy and the Greenprint project (led by S. Glos &amp; West Sussex) and 2) Doughnut Economics (led by the Wessex Partnership). Webinar No 2 will be hosted 9-10am on 28<sup>th</sup> January and webinar No 3 from 9-10am on 25<sup>th</sup> March. If you would to attend please email <a href="mailto:Damon.McVeigh">Damon McVeigh</a>. The latest blog is from North Lanarkshire (<a href="#">here</a>).</p> <p><b>Devolution / Growth / Planning</b></p> <p>4. We responded to the <b>Autumn Statement</b> – see <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>5. We have published a policy position paper on the <b>Devolution Bill</b> (<a href="#">here</a>). Whilst we welcomed the introduction of the Bill, and the opportunity it presents for strengthening local leadership and place-based service delivery, we are very disappointed that the Bill does not propose to transfer or introduce new statutory environmental or climate-related functions to Strategic Authorities. The Bill has just completed the report stage in the House of Commons and will move onto the House of Lords next.</p> <p>6. As part of ADEPT’s <b>2025 PACE programme</b>, participants spent their second session in Cardiff exploring trust, investment and the future of place leadership in a changing Wales. Andy Gutherson, Chair of ADEPT Midlands Board and Executive Director of Place for Lincolnshire County Council reflects on what the group learned and why he came away with a renewed sense of optimism – read his blog <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Environment / Climate</b></p> <p>7. In the latest <b>climate change blog</b>, David Dale, Policy Officer for ADEPT, talks about highways decarbonisation and lessons from the ADEPT Autumn Conference. See <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>8. We hosted a joint webinar with Natural England 11<sup>th</sup> November on <b>Strategic planning for nature and growth: unlocking new opportunities</b>. If you would like to receive this slides and recording, please email <a href="mailto:Hannah.Bartram">Hannah Bartram</a>.</p> <p>9. We held a webinar on <b>highways run off and water quality</b> which attracted 120 people, we will be considering how we take this forward as it is a topic that is of interest to many. We held a webinar with the Environment Agency on Lowland Resilience which 70 people attended. If you would like a copy of the slides or recording of either of these, please contact <a href="mailto:kylie.russell@eastsussex.gov.uk">kylie.russell@eastsussex.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p><b>Events/Other</b></p> <p>10. The <b>ADEPT Autumn Conference 2025</b> took place on 20th &amp; 21st November, with the theme of “<i>Devolution and government reform - the biggest shake-up the sector has seen for 50 years?</i>” Topics included exploring best practice in delivering home to school transport, the impacts of populism on local government and the future of place-based AI. Over 210 delegates from local authorities across England, corporate partners, professional bodies and civil servants attended.</p>

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	<p>A collection of essays (<a href="#">here</a>) was also launched at the event, to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the organisation. You can read more about our history <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>11. The deadline for applications for the <b>2026 ADEPT Leadership Development Programme</b> is midnight on <b>Friday 16th January 2026</b>. If you have questions about the programme, please email <a href="mailto:secretariat@adeptnet.org.uk">secretariat@adeptnet.org.uk</a>.</p> <p>12. <b>Dates for your diary</b> – for more detail please visit the Events page on the website (<a href="#">here</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next in the series of webinars with Natural England takes place 15<sup>th</sup> January. The theme is <i>Navigating the future: Nature Restoration Fund, Environmental Delivery Plans and conservation delivery in local planning</i>. Local authorities are central to delivering national ambitions for nature recovery and building more homes. This session will explain the Nature Restoration Fund and Environmental Delivery Plans, how they align with existing strategies, and set out practical steps for local government to take an active role in its implementation. <a href="#">Register here</a>.</li> <li>• The Spring Conference, AGM and Annual Awards Dinner will be held in London on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Book the date out in your diary now!</li> <li>• <b>Please note the ADEPT Secretariat will be taking a well-earned rest from 25<sup>th</sup> Dec – 1<sup>st</sup> Jan inclusive. We'll be back in the office from Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January.</b></li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>Update from Angela Jones, ADEPT President</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Angela's Priorities &amp; Reflections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Emphasised the value of networking, peer support, and learning from other regions and boards, noting common challenges such as budget pressures, SEND, devolution, and political shifts.</li> <li>○ Highlighted three key themes for their presidential year: influence (working with ministers), innovation (e.g., Live Labs), and inclusivity (workforce and community focus, EDI, Gen Z initiatives).</li> <li>○ Stressed the importance of making the case for "people in place," not just built environment, and supporting workforce development and rising talent.</li> <li>○ Invited feedback on how ADEPT can remain relevant and support resilience and futureproofing for the sector.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Discussion Points</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Andrew Cook noted the challenge of keeping ADEPT relevant amid sector upheaval and differences in board operation styles, inviting suggestions for future agenda items.</li> <li>○ James Golding-Graham asked about engaging UKRI/Innovate UK to drive innovation funding in the East, suggesting ADEPT could help advocate for regional equity. Angela agreed and highlighted the need for balanced geographic focus, with Hannah Bartram noting capacity constraints but openness to collaboration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="359 174 1430 427">○ Haroona Chughtai raised the need for a strategic narrative for the East, support for LGR/devolution, recruitment challenges (especially for engineers), lobbying for multi-year settlements, and addressing issues with street works/emergency permits. Angela and Hannah responded with suggestions for leveraging ADEPT's strategic plan, engaging MPs, and continuing work on recruitment and street works through working groups and campaigns.</li> <li data-bbox="359 450 1337 551">○ Andrew Summers shared that the East of England APPG's "Opportunity East" report provides a strategic narrative for the region, useful for advocacy and collaboration.</li> </ul>

Future Meeting Dates:

Tuesday 3 March 2026

Tuesday 2 June 2026

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Tuesday 8 December 2026