



ADEPT Transport & Connectivity Board Meeting

Friday 12th December 2025, 10am- 12:00pm

ATTENDEES PRESENT	Paul Copeland Kamal Panchal Hannah Bartram Rea, Richard (E,I&S) Dan Johnson Jessica Matthew Elizabeth Harrison - GT GC Louise McBride Richard Ling Simon Jeffrey Richard Bruce Sarah Spink (MC) Eleanor Heikel Lindsey Vallis Tim Gibbs Damien Jones Battye, Hannah - Oxfordshire County Stephen Fidler Lynne Stinson David Shepherd - Chair Steve Birdsall - Gaist CEO
APOLOGIES	Peter Hobley David O'Donoghue Gary Bartlett Kylie Russell Rose McArthur Jamie Hassall Danny Williams Rachel Ford Mark Corbin Dipika Kaushal

Meeting Notes

Item	Detail	Actions/Slides
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The meeting started slightly late due to access issues at the DfT building; sound/video were confirmed working before business commenced. David Shepherd opened the meeting and welcomed attendees</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of last meeting (19.09.25) and Matters Arising</p> <p>Nothing raised.</p>	
3.	<p>Updates from National Organisations</p> <p><u>Department for Transport — Stephen Fidler</u></p> <p><u>Headlines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus funding allocations: multi-year stability; formula broadly similar to last year with a “accessibility” element (via concessionary patronage proxy) added for the capital side. Caps/collars applied to RDL year 1 (no one lost >5% or gained >25%). Capability allocation embedded within overall RDL; local authority BSOG rolled into the main pot (abolished as a separate concept). • Enhanced Partnership review: content ready; publication likely early in the new year (ministerial clearance pending). Minimum standards expected; authorities and operators to adopt within ~12 months. • Bus Journey Survey: participation now expected and funded within allocations; authorities may fund larger local samples with Transport Focus if desired. • Zero-Emission Buses: manufacturing pipeline publication expected early in the new year; final UK panel in February with ministers seeking strong mayoral commitments (incl. social value to support UK manufacturing). • Taxis: amendment to the English Devolution Bill to enable national taxi licensing standards; forthcoming consultation to lift taxi licensing to LTAs (reducing authorities ~263→50–70). DfT keen to avoid unintended cost escalation (esp. home-to-school transport). Discussion points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-to-school transport: cross-government dialogue; potential PSVAR changes focusing on outcomes; request for ADEPT support in shaping narrative/cost case. • <u>Actions</u> • DfT to publish EP review and ZEB pipeline (timelines as above). • ADEPT members to participate in Bus Journey Survey and engage DfT on PSVAR outcome-focused approach. 	

Department for Transport — Jessica Matthew

Headlines:

- Planning: NPPF consultation shortly (before/after Christmas), with emphasis on density around stations; Connectivity Tool now with public access (not full-fat), referenced in NPPF. Planning Infrastructure Bill expected Royal Assent next week; New Towns strategic environmental assessment reporting January, consultation March, decisions May/June (not all 12).
- Local transport funding consolidation: Single letter to leaders/mayors setting multi-fund flexibility (buses, LTG, highways maintenance, active travel, EV). Authorities can move money between funds against delivery plans and outcomes; portal for upload (phased); retained schemes for >£50m or novel/contentious. Integrated National Transport Strategy targeted early new year, followed by LTP guidance/publication next year.
- Active Travel: capability ratings continue and will influence future funding; no strict minima per mode, but outcome delivery will matter. Delivery plans envisaged by March (later where elections).
- **Actions**
DfT to issue letters/templates and outcomes draft; authorities to prepare Delivery Plans and use comms/branding/evaluation per consolidated T&Cs.

Department for Transport — Richard Bruce

Headlines:

- MRN & Structures Fund: 28 MRN schemes proceeding; 41 under review with announcement in the new year. Treasury linked MRN and Structures Fund (£1bn combined). Survey to authorities soon; prospectus early 2026; decisions early summer (Technical Advisory Board to assist). Split between MRN/Structures yet to be determined.
- Highways maintenance: £7.3bn over 4 years; further detail on 2025/26 uplift in a letter soon; capability ratings published in the new year with support for authorities needing improvement (not a “stick”). Pothole funding wrapped into announced packages; emphasis on resurfacing/asset condition over pothole counting.
- **Actions**
Authorities to respond to forthcoming structures survey and prepare for MRN decisions; await maintenance letters and ratings publication.

	<p><u>LGA – Kamal Panchal</u></p> <p><u>Headlines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA welcomed highways and bus funding announcements; noted relatively low publicity compared with typical “pothole” media cycles. • Consultation: Permitted Development Rights (PDR) for EV charge points, including pavement crossing channels— deadline 21 January; LGA to coordinate sector input (linking to LEVI experience). • Engagements: Intro meeting planned with minister (Simon Lightwood); session with National Infrastructure body on alternative transport funding. Report launched in Sheffield on inclusive growth and transport (business and youth mobility focus). Rail engagement (GBR, station/services influence; LA seat at the table). Offers to collaborate with Essex/Kent/Hertfordshire on PDR and rail discussions. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEPT/LAs to feed PDR consultation evidence (incl. safety regs for pavement channels); coordinate on rail influence with LGA <p><u>Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers – Damien Jones</u></p> <p><u>Headlines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint work with Rose McArthur on NAO inquiry into school transport. • Devolution/LGR group launched to examine impacts on integrated transport units. • PSVAR collaboration (DfE/DfT/ADEPT) and outreach to CPT/operators. • High interest in transport management IT systems—forming a group to pursue shared IT solution; invitations for new board members following recent changes. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities to nominate participants for the IT systems group and consider ATCO board representation. 	
4.	<p><u>Roughwood Lane Digital Permit Scheme – John Pateman</u></p> <p><u>Case summary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrow lane parallel to the M25 was inundated by sat-nav re-routing during incidents, creating gridlock and disrupting local journeys. Initial TRO proposals were insufficient due to interlinked village usage. The solution was a digital permit area covering six parishes (~15,000 households) with free permits for residents. • Implementation: Using Microsoft Power Automate (three “agents”) and AI document reading to verify address match (V5C/driving licence) against form data; virtual permits issued in minutes (e.g., application at 07:01, permit 07:04). Exception 	

	<p>approvals handled via Microsoft Approvals; data held in SharePoint.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact: Sat-navs now avoid Roughwood Lane for through traffic; compliance survey showed ~40% non-compliance (considering ANPR to lift compliance). Overall peak flows now sit below the saturation threshold, restoring local function without widening. • Scaling: Approach is being shared through Bucks’ Innovation Hub and replicated (e.g., Blue Badges, weight-limit permits); focus on productivity gains and redeploying resources, not headcount cuts. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckinghamshire to assess ANPR deployment; share implementation pattern via ADEPT for authorities facing sat-nav rat-running. 	
5.	<p><u>AI in the highways sector – Steve Birdsall</u></p> <p><u>Key messages:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality vs. hype: AI is software and pattern recognition, not magic; performance varies by training data quality; hallucinations can occur when asked for out-of-pattern tasks. Governance, KPIs, service-level clauses, and human-in-the-loop are essential—especially for safety-critical decisions (e.g., inspections). • Big data backbone: High-quality data before/after the AI (“hamburger buns”) determines usefulness; measure outcomes rather than fixate on the “AI” label. • Use today: Back-office automation (triage, document checks, reporting) delivers efficiency; autonomous agents will orchestrate tasks; quantum computing may transform capabilities in future but is years away. • Q&A: Autonomous vehicles exist in constrained geographies; for highways safety inspection Gaist uses AI for heavy-lift plus human QA until AI reaches parity or better. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Authorities to adopt responsible AI: define</u> problems/outcomes first, ensure quality plans and human oversight, and avoid long, inflexible contracts for emerging tech. 	
6.	<p><u>Working Group Updates (Written Updates)</u></p> <p>Rights of Way Working Group – Peter Hobley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEFRA updated the group on significant staffing reductions in the Access team, from 16 to 6. Awaiting to hear who will be the lead for Rights of Way. • LGR/Devo guidance in its final draft following further discussion. • Network Rail MoU revision in relation to Public Rights of Way and the rail network ongoing and awaiting detailed feedback from Network Rail. 	



● **Traffic Systems Working Group – Richard Ling:** Not received.

Digital Connectivity Working Group – Liz Harrison:

The ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group has met twice since the last ADEPT Transport and Connectivity Board meeting (30th September and the 18th November).

The group continues to focus on the delivery of fixed broadband and mobile infrastructure at the local level – and the vital role that local authority digital infrastructure teams can play in enabling and facilitating this connectivity.

Whilst Ofcom's published data indicates that significant progress has been made in rolling out full-fibre or gigabit-capable broadband connections across England, significant gaps in provision remain. In addition to harder-to-reach rural properties, many authorities are reporting that operators are failing to connect properties where there are no ducts (e.g. phone lines have been buried directly in the ground so there is no duct to reuse to install the new full fibre connections). Many wayleave-dependent properties are also not being connected as a result of operators not being able or willing to secure wayleaves (legal access agreements) to cross private land or enter property to install the internal cabling frequently required to connect flats and apartments.

In addition, the Government's new targets for standalone 5G connectivity, along with the growth in mobile data consumption, is creating the need for further mobile infrastructure investment, especially to enable greater network capacity.

In light of the above challenges, the Digital Connectivity Group has agreed to focus on three priorities:

1. Supporting the deployment of the Government's Project Gigabit programme at a local level, including sharing best practice on connecting harder-to-reach properties and encouraging greater recognition within national policy and programme delivery of the challenges around connecting wayleave-dependent properties and those impacted with direct buried cable issues.
2. Collaborating with telecoms providers to help remove the barriers to full-fibre deployment to reduce the incidence of these properties falling out of commercial build programmes.
3. Facilitating the deployment of mobile infrastructure, including small cell deployments utilising street-lighting assets.

The group received presentations on the 30th September from the Chief Executive of INCA (the alt-net trade body) on the key challenges facing the alt-net sector. There was also a presentation on plans to refresh the LGA Digital Connectivity Guide, along with an update from Mobile UK.

	<p>Mobile infrastructure was the focus for the meeting on the 18th November. Gareth Elliott from Mobile UK provided a comprehensive update on industry developments, and ongoing challenges in mobile infrastructure. The pending government call for evidence on changes to permitted development rights for mobile infrastructure was flagged and it was agreed that an ADEPT Digital Connectivity response should be prepared once this is released. Tom Williams and Freya Lockwood from the West of England Combined Authority shared their process mapping work on small cells deployment. Concern was raised by group members that many small cell agreements have been signed to date by local authorities to enable the reuse of street lighting assets but there has been little take up to date. There was also an update from mobile infrastructure provider, Cornerstone, followed by a discussion on how best to ensure that new housing developments were planned with the necessary mobile provision. The group has also reestablished the informal Project Gigabit group to network officers tasked with supporting the local roll out of BDUK's Project Gigabit contracts and voucher schemes. The next meeting of the ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group will take place on the 13th January 2026.</p> <p>Road Safety Working Group – Paul Copeland: Meeting 17/12</p> <p>National Traffic Managers Forum – Kevin Hagreaves: Not received</p>	
7.	<p><u>General ADEPT Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan review (May 2026–2029) underway; paper to be circulated for comments. • Leadership Development Programme for aspiring place directors — Expressions of Interest due 16 January; details to be shared. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to submit EOI by 16 Jan and provide feedback on the Strategic Plan discussion paper. 	
9.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>No other business</p>	
	<p>Date of next meeting – 27th March 2026</p>	