

MINUTES, ACTIONS & DECISION NOTES

Meeting title	ADEPT Midlands Regional Board
Location/Platform	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Date and time	Monday 1 st June 2026, 1pm-4pm
Apologies	Darryl Eyers, Dave Brown, Derek Higton, Ed Bradford, Janna Walker, Joe Battye, John Roseblade, Kylie Russell, Maria Machancoses, Mark Ryder, Perry Wardle, Philip Edwards, Tammy Stokes

Attendees	Organisation
Andy Gutherson (AG) - <i>Chair</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Andrew Pritchard (AP)	East Midlands Councils
Bernard Evans (BE)	Leicestershire County Council
Claire Brailsford (CB)	Derbyshire County Council
Emily Barker (EB)	Worcestershire County Council
Hannah Bartram (HB)	ADEPT
James Bailey (JBy)	Staffordshire County Council
Jo Barnett (JBt)	Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
Jonathan Vining (JV)	Staffordshire County Council
Kam Khokar (KK)	National Highways
Nick Henstock (NH)	West Northants Council
Penny Sharp (PS)	Rutland County Council
Ross Cook (RC)	Telford
Sarah Alder (SA)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Sarah Spink (SSp)	Midlands Connect
Steve Smith (SSm)	Warwickshire County Council
Abigail Wells-Susewitz (AWS) - <i>Notes</i>	Lincolnshire County Council
Guest speakers	Organisation
Giles Perkins (GP)	GageCo
Chloe Kelly (CK)	Staffordshire County Council
Sarah Simpson (SSi)	Staffordshire County Council
Andy Baines (AB)	Systra

<i>Agenda Item</i>	
1	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies
AG welcomed attendees to the meeting and highlighted apologies.	
2	Review of Previous Meeting Minutes and Actions
AG – project groundwater, ADEPT spring conference award. Importance of showcasing activity.	

Presentation and potential to bring royal academy into leadership team. HB to follow up with new CX.

ACTION:

- HB to follow up with the Royal Academy of Engineering regarding potential engagement with the ADEPT Leadership Team.

3 Live Labs Update

GP outlined the Live Labs 2 programme, a £30 million innovation fund supporting seven regional labs across the UK, each focusing on decarbonisation and efficiency in the local highway sector. The programme includes a unique longitudinal monitoring and evaluation component, with the aim of embedding learnings into business as usual across the industry.

GP described major innovations and outcomes from each lab: North Lanarkshire and West Midlands developed a knowledge bank and mandated use of new materials; East Riding piloted street lighting reductions with significant safety and carbon benefits; Liverpool implemented a carbon hierarchy and procurement guidance; South Gloucestershire and West Sussex explored verge management and biochar production; Wessex adopted a whole-service carbon lens; and Devon applied carbon-led value engineering to road upgrades.

GP and HB discussed the establishment of regional workshops, a triage service, and a large language model query engine to facilitate knowledge transfer and support for practitioners. They emphasised the importance of direct engagement, offering bespoke events and access to project leads for deeper learning.

In response to JV's question, GP explained that public response varied by project: East Riding's street lighting changes received strong support, while Devon faced more resistance due to road closures. The importance of contextualising interventions to local communities and political environments was highlighted.

AG prompted a discussion on the potential for Live Labs 3, with HB outlining early-stage plans focused on embedding technology and AI for climate resilience. The team is engaging with DFT and key partners to secure future funding and shape the next phase, aiming for a 2027 launch if successful.

ACTIONS:

- AG to arrange a conversation with East Riding to discuss the practicalities and details of their rural street lighting programme.
- AG and GP to coordinate a regional workshop in the Midlands, including practitioners and potentially East Riding for expertise on street lighting.
- JB and GP to arrange a follow-up discussion to explore running Live Labs workshops for ICE members in the East and West Midlands.
- HB to share the programme of upcoming conferences and events where Live Labs 2 will be presented with the leadership team to ensure political alignment and avoid scheduling conflicts.

4 Midlands Connect Future Model Update

AG summarised the two main options for Midlands Connect's future; a streamlined pan-regional body reporting through a combined authority, and a themed approach aligned to

rail and roads. Three funding models were discussed; population-based, flat rate, and tiered by authority type, with further work needed on voting rights and influence.

SSp noted strong attendance at recent meetings and a collective desire to maintain momentum. The steering group will review recommendations before the board meeting on 24 June, with ongoing dialogue to ensure all authorities understand the implications and benefits of proposed changes.

SSp and HB discussed the varying progress of other STBs across England, highlighting the importance of sharing updates and maintaining awareness of national trends, especially as devolution arrangements evolve.

ACTION:

- SSp to investigate and provide an update on the current status and approaches of other STBs across the country for ADEPT's awareness.

5 Care Leavers into Employment Programme

CK and SSi explained the programme's origins in business support and corporate parenting responsibilities, describing how breakfast events and social value initiatives engaged local employers to support care leavers into employment, education, or training.

The team introduced the guaranteed interview pathway to standardise access for care leavers, and a tiered quality mark system (bronze, silver, gold) to recognise employer contributions, with 20 businesses awarded and 94 placements achieved to date.

A bursary fund, match-funded by the Staffordshire Community Foundation, was established to remove financial barriers such as travel and equipment costs. Additional support includes bus passes and a bike programme to ensure sustainable access to opportunities.

The programme has been developed into a licensable model, with 32 local authorities expressing interest. The licensing fees are intended to sustain the programme post-pilot, with minimal operational costs due to leveraging existing business networks and match funding.

CK reported a diverse range of participating businesses, with larger firms more likely to achieve gold status. The model is adaptable to different local contexts, and monthly reporting tracks sectoral engagement and outcomes.

6 Systra – HS2 Lessons Learned

AB shared insights from the HS2 main works, focusing on engagement, legal frameworks, and collaboration with local authorities. AB emphasised the importance of early and proactive engagement by local highway authorities in securing undertakings and assurances during the hybrid bill stage, noting that private landowners often secured more favourable terms than local authorities due to earlier involvement.

AB described the unique consenting process under the HS2 Act, the need for clear legal understanding, and the benefits of early agreement on design requirements. Delays and complications often arose when requirements were introduced late in the process.

AB highlighted the value of comprehensive memoranda of understanding (MOUs), as exemplified by National Highways, and recommended their adoption by local authorities to clarify processes and responsibilities from the outset.

The handover of completed infrastructure to local authorities revealed the need for earlier agreement on boundaries and adoption responsibilities, suggesting that formalising these arrangements at the consent stage would streamline future projects.

HB and SSm raised the issue of systematically capturing lessons learned from HS2 and other major infrastructure projects, noting the lack of a centralised effort by HS2 or DFT. The group discussed the potential for ADEPT and its partners to facilitate knowledge sharing and avoid repeated mistakes.

7 UKREiiF 2026 Roundtable

AG invited the group to reflect on their experiences at the UKREiiF conference. Participants shared positive feedback on the conference, highlighting opportunities for business development, sector networking, and showcasing local authority initiatives. The event facilitated both structured and informal collaboration among officers and members.

AG and HB discussed the potential for ADEPT to play a more prominent role on conference panels and in industry discussions, suggesting a need for strategic engagement to advocate for sector-wide issues and share best practice.

8 Devolution and LGR Update

AG invited the group to reflect on the status of devolution and LGR in their areas. AG outlined the expected timing of government announcements on devolution deals. Participants discussed preparation activities, including developing programme management structures and joint governance arrangements to respond to forthcoming changes.

Participants also discussed the challenges of building capacity for LGR, with a preference for using existing staff and backfilling roles rather than relying on external consultants, though practical implementation remains difficult given ongoing service delivery demands.

9 ADEPT Updates

Please see Appendix A.

10 AOB

AG encouraged the group to share potential future agenda items.

Next meeting:

Monday 21st September 2026, Timings TBC

Location TBC