



Policy challenge paper No.2:

DEVOLUTION

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ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

RECOVERY AND DEVOLUTION

To move forward successfully and enable a successful national recovery from COVID-19, there must be a focus on the power of place. Give local places the power and resources, and the people in them can do extraordinary things. People understand what they want from their local places; local governance leaders need to recognise this and be enabled to navigate and build alliances necessary at all the levels described to help communities to:

- **Tackle the climate emergency**
- **Make long term decisions about integrated infrastructure provision**
- **Demand place-based funding**

ADEPT has a very clear view that any further devolution needs to understand the importance of place and how people and place interact in practice. The leaders of any new local governance structures will need to be able to operate at all place levels (defined below) in order to deliver the economic, social and environmental outcomes that the Government is seeking.

People understand what they want from their local places, and future local governance leaders need to recognise this and be enabled to navigate and build alliances necessary to help communities to:

- **Tackle the climate emergency by delivering net zero carbon at all place levels**
- **Make long term decisions about integrated infrastructure provision**
- **Demand place-based funding.**

Devolution should be seen as a means rather than the end; it needs to understand the importance of place shaping and give local places the powers and resources to meet these challenges.



Design principles

The one thing all our members share is a common commitment to shaping extraordinary places that work for our businesses and communities. If Government is to bring in new governance arrangements, ADEPT believes there are some fundamental points in how this new structure is designed that must be addressed if it is to be successful:

- Any new governance structure must be as simple and accountable as possible, and not be made more complicated than existing systems.
- It must make sense to people and how they define the places where they live and work, ensuring that local involvement is key.
- The evidence suggests that the replacement of two-tier authorities in county areas with unitary councils offers opportunities to transform services, reduce costs and make it easier for partners and businesses to engage with local government. ADEPT is not, however, advocating any specific model in a particular place as it believes this is a matter for local determination.
- The ability to coordinate activities in a place must be maintained, for example a mayoral authority at a sub national level will still need 'place directors' who understand their localities and can develop plans and co-ordinate funding to deliver the outcomes required.
- The changes to governance structures aim to provide better outcomes for the communities they serve and reduce inequality. For example, making sure places are designed with prevention and resilience in mind, helping to reduce demand on health and social care systems and tackle the impacts of climate change. Or adopting the '20 minutes neighbourhood' concept, where all people living in towns and cities live in a place where everything they need is within a 20-minute walk or cycle - schools, shops, recreation and work - are on their doorstep.
- The process of reorganising local government in a place is complex, intensive and political. It is essential that - once a model has been determined - there is strong local leadership and the organisational capacity to deliver it as efficiently as possible. Place services are universal and visible and face particular challenges in bringing together diverse business models, budgets, contracts and support services.
- Whatever form local government takes, it must be adequately resourced with financial certainty, particularly to enable recovery and renewal from COVID-19. Devolution must be matched consciously with greater funding freedoms and certainty. Local authorities can only meet expectations and create the foundations for growth and longer-term prosperity with that greater funding certainty.



How places work

ADEPT believes that place is created at a variety of levels that must work together and that in combination, these have meaning for people and define their sense of where they live:

- **Micro level** - the basic building block of place is where people live - homes should be decent, digitally enabled, decarbonised and designed to last and provide flexibility.
- **Local level** - people want to travel less and do more in their local places, be able to access services, retail, worship, work, education, recreational / leisure, green and enjoy open spaces as close to their home as possible. The distribution of primary health and social care services and neighbourhood policing structures are important in making local places work for people.
- **Service level** - delivery of day to day place services including waste, transport and highways, needs to be done at a scale that is economic and that can sustain meaningful democratic accountability.
- **Sub-regional level** - local places are shaped by the housing market, travel to work and functional economic areas. These go to the heart of where people choose to live and work, and the level of mobility needed to make lives work in a way that is net carbon neutral.
- **Natural regional level** - blue and green infrastructure work at a catchment / landscape level, while 'grey' / utility infrastructure tends to follow the line of least environmental or physical resistance in terms of how it has developed over time. Infrastructure planning and civil contingencies need to come together at natural regional levels. Within a more devolved environment, local areas can collaborate to achieve strategic sub-regional and regional investment and outcomes.





ADEPT's role

- We will communicate the importance of place to enable the Government to better understand how people and places interact.
- We will highlight the importance of maintaining local involvement and community engagement - places and new development must work for their communities and local businesses.
- We will emphasise the need for local government, whatever the structural changes might be, to be properly resourced to provide the best outcomes for people and places.
- We will provide a network to support Place Directors to bring focus and collaboration across the different levels.

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) draws its membership from county, unitary and combined authorities across England along with local enterprise partnerships and sub-national transport bodies. It has 20 corporate partners, many of whom provide place-based services. Our diversity provides us with unique insights on place and how people interact within it.

- ADEPT members are the place-making strategists and policy shapers across top tier local authority areas
- ADEPT members are specialists, delivering services and sharing best practice across key sectors including environment, planning, housing, transport and economy
- ADEPT members design strategies for the future, taking communities beyond 2035
- ADEPT members operate in networks, cutting through boundaries to work with partners across the political, public, private and community sectors
- ADEPT members provide opportunities to develop new talent, supporting the Place Directors of tomorrow

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