

ADEPT gives a mixed welcome to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy Planning and Transport (ADEPT) has given a mixed welcome to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Neil Gibson, Vice President of ADEPT said: "The shift towards local devolved responsibilities is helpful. It suggests meaningful devolution, which is in line with our Prospectus aims, but we still need real tools in order to make it work on the ground, and we are ready to work with Government to achieve this.

"We need sufficient revenue funding, to be able to programme and project manage capital spend. We are already seeing many of our best people leave local authorities to work in the private sector where they are able to use their skills to best effect.

"This Autumn Statement brings a raft of challenges for ADEPT members, but we will continue to inform and work with Government to achieve the best outcomes for our communities."

The Association has welcomed ongoing local economic investment through the Government's continued support for the Local Growth Fund and a new round of Enterprise Zones, but believes the Government could have gone further.

Simon Neilson, Chair of ADEPT's Planning, Housing and Regeneration Board said: "We strongly believe in the importance of continued investment in local projects and therefore welcome the government's re-commitment to Local Growth Fund. However, we want to see even more flexibility for local areas and LEPs to determine their priorities free of central control.

"All areas where there is a powerful enough incentive to grow local economies, should enjoy the benefits of Enterprise Zone status through business rate localisation, and retain the proceeds of that growth. As we have said before, the current system of business rates is deeply flawed. There is a very real risk of a postcode lottery in local government funding based upon the health of your business rate base. We need to be able to plan with much more certainty."

On housing, Simon Neilson said: "Investment in new housing is always welcome and we hope that the principle of affordability is safeguarded for Starter Homes for far longer than the proposed five years. However we would like to see safeguards within the Housing and Planning Bill to ensure viable employment land is protected. We would also like to work with Government to address the issues face by those in the rented sector, we mustn't lose sight of the fact that not everyone will be able to afford to buy."

Rupert Clubb, Chair of ADEPT's Environment Board said: "We are disappointed that funding for DECC and DEFRA has been cut. The cut to DECC is particularly concerning as it is already one of the smallest departments in Whitehall. Following the Energy Policy announcement last week by the Secretary of State, it is a concern as to whether there will be enough resources to deliver this major change in the economy over the coming years. However, ADEPT welcomes the opportunity to work with DECC in delivering on the new Energy Policy and developing how local government in partnership with Government, business and industry bodies can deliver the low carbon future that we need for our national and local economies to grow.

ADEPT is the voice of Local Authority county, unitary and metropolitan Strategic Place Directors across England with responsibility for the key place based services, including transport, environment, planning, economic development, housing and waste.

ENDS

For more information and further case studies, please contact Julie Everett at Coast Communications on 01579 352600 or 07866002635 or email Julie@coastmarcoms.co.uk

About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) represents local authority county, unitary and metropolitan Directors. Operating at the strategic tier of local government, members are responsible for delivering public services that primarily relate to the physical environment and the economy, but which have a significant impact on all aspects of the nation's well-being. ADEPT represents members' interests by proactively engaging central Government on emerging policy & issues, promoting initiatives aimed at influencing Government policy and through the development of best practices and responding to European and UK Government initiatives and consultations.

For more information on ADEPT please visit the website: www.adeptnet.org.uk