

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

20 June 2025

Item 4: Technical Capacity and Capability – the EEH Centre of Excellence

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Leadership Board:

- a) Notes the support available to local partners**
- b) Notes publication of the EEH Tools Catalogue, setting out each of the data and analytical tools that have been developed by EEH, for the benefit of our local authority partners**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper outlines EEH's Centre of Excellence approach and our role in supporting the capability of our local authority partners.
- 1.2. Key points
- 1.3. The EEH Centre of Excellence is designed to support local authority partners: ensuring they have the skills, knowledge and capability available to deliver their transport planning and strategy functions.
- 1.4. Alongside this, the growth of EEH's analysis and modelling team is enabling us to provide greater support to our partner authorities with technical capacity and capability.
- 1.5. During the Board meeting, EEH officers will provide a showcase of some of the tools and data we have available to local and combined authorities.
- 1.6. A new tools and data catalogue will be launched at the meeting.

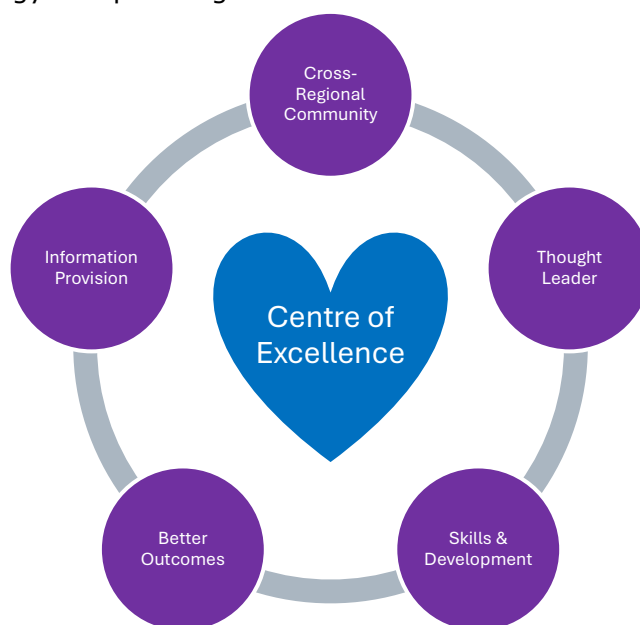
2. Context

- 2.1. A core part of EEH's remit is to support the capacity and capability of local authority partners.
- 2.2. Through region-wide delivery of a product, service or data, we can share best practice and realise economies of scale for the benefit of our local authority partners. By hosting subject specific forums and sharing best practice, we ensure officers have access to the best information, resulting in better productivity and enhanced outcomes.
- 2.3. Over the last six months EEH has accelerated development of the 'Centre of Excellence', building on our collaborative ethos as a locally-led partnership. For the past six years, EEH has pushed for recognition by DfT of the need for STBs to become regional centres of excellence to enhance local authority capability in planning the delivery of transport infrastructure more effectively.
- 2.4. This paper and the accompanying presentation gives Board members insight into what is available, and how this supports the ambitions of their authorities.

3. Centre of Excellence

3.1. Our Centre of Excellence consists of five, cross-cutting areas:

- **Cross-Regional Community** – bringing people together to form cross-regional communities based on a common interest
- **Information Provision and Tools**- improving access and usage of available information, tools and data
- **Thought Leader** – supporting EEH partners by working with academics/universities, and sharing insights through our own masterclass programme
- **Better Outcomes** – offering more intensive support to our local and combined authorities, including business case development and maximising the benefits of major schemes
- **Skills & Development** - tackling the skills and capability needs of the region in transport strategy and planning



4. Cross-Regional Community

- 4.1. EEH convenes seven cross-regional communities of practice on topics determined by our partners. These are a mixture of mode-specific or theme-based working groups, with officers from every local and combined authority invited. These include innovation, decarbonisation and capacity and capability.
- 4.2. They encourage learning and knowledge sharing between authorities and peers, as well as informing potential future EEH work. In some themes, such as freight, neighbouring STBs add expertise and scale.
- 4.3. In addition, our Transport Officer Group brings together officers from all our partner local and combined authorities, and provides access to colleagues from DfT, Network Rail and National Highways.
- 4.4. Our Early Careers Network also offers officers opportunities to meet colleagues in the first five years of their transport careers on a quarterly basis, with the aim of building a peer community.

5. Information Provision and Tools

- 5.1. EEH's regional evidence base is formed of data, tools and research, which are available to our local and combined authority partners and DfT. We have made it a key requirement that the regional evidence base is easily accessible and does not require specialist knowledge, to provide a consistent evidence baseline.



- 5.2. EEH's analytical and modelling team has recently grown, meaning that we can offer a greater level of bespoke support to our partners. We encourage partners to get in touch with us to understand how we can support them.
- 5.3. Our tools allow users to interrogate specific data and understand the implication of potential policies. For example, we have a tool which maps optimum locations for public EV charging points, while our Bus Bid Booster calculates the high-level monetary benefits of an intervention.
- 5.4. **Cadence GIS:** This is our geospatial mapping offer for local authorities. It provides a visual representation of key data. It has a broad range of uses including. For example, it can display the locations which can be reached within one hour from any point within the Heartland, by bus, rail or car. It also visualises road congestion hotspots, and the locations of housing sites within local plans.
- 5.5. **Data Hub:** We are currently in the process of developing a web-based data hub to better visualise relevant datasets for the Heartland region. The data hub will be publicly accessible through EEH's website. It will be 'soft launched' at this Board.
- 5.6. **EEHELUM:** EEH is looking to enhance and improve the functionality of our strategic land use model of the EEH region, designed to show how transport interacts with where people live and work, and therefore how transport can influence land use and vice versa. We are exploring new ways of making the data held within EEHELUM and our other tools more accessible and simple to interrogate via graphs, tables and charts.
- 5.7. **Tools Catalogue:** Details of our current tools can be found in our Tools Catalogue. This will be launched during the meeting and made available to partners there on.
- 5.8. **Knowledge Hub:** In addition, guidance, forum papers, tools and EEH research is available through our new Knowledge Hub – a digital library available to all officers. We are working with DfT to use the Knowledge Hub as part of their engagement with local authorities around analytical capability.
- 5.9. EEH will be developing our engagement through additional opportunities to share data and modelling tools through our Innovation Working Group and working with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as they further develop the functionality of the regional data hub, formerly overseen by the Pan-Regional Partnership.

6. Thought Leader

- 6.1. EEH has established relationships with the Smart Mobility Unit at the University of Hertfordshire and with the planning school at Oxford Brookes University. EEH staff are repeat invitees to guest lecture to students.
- 6.2. This summer, EEH is sponsoring a student research project via UCL's Consumer Data Research Centre Masters Dissertation Scheme for the first time. The student will be utilising their experience in urban data science to provide insights into tourism impacts on traffic flows within the Heartland. It is hoped that this research will be able to be used as an input to other workstreams, representing a significant saving on data costs.
- 6.3. EEH hosts a masterclass programme aimed at sharing knowledge and experience from expert guest speakers in a way that is directly applicable to transport strategy and planning officers. In 2025, our programme is themed a people-first approach to transport strategy and planning.

7. Better Outcomes

- 7.1. Since 2022 we have offered critical friend/peer review for business cases and bids being submitted by local partners to DfT for capital funding, including major road network priority schemes and ZEBRA2 (electric buses). Whilst this service has been paused for much of the past year given DfT's ongoing internal capital projects review and the general move away from competitive bidding to allocate funding, we will look to resume a similar initiative in line with the findings of the Green Book review.



- 7.2. As part of the 2025 Green Book review, EEH discussed with HM Treasury the capacity and capability conditions needed for successful major infrastructure scheme development by local government. We emphasised the need for funding certainty; collaboration; acceptance/funding criteria stability; and challenges around resourcing for very early development (i.e. before capital funds can be drawn down). Many of these themes are reflected in the final in the Green Book Review¹, published alongside the Spending Review.
- 7.3. EEH welcomes the formation of a new cross-departmental taskforce on place-based business cases and actions proposed to support the capacity and capability of local and regional government. We will continue to work with DfT and Treasury colleagues and will seek to understand how our region will be represented in this.
- 7.4. EEH and the East West Main Line Partnership have jointly commissioned a report looking at the lessons learned from the planning and construction phase of East West Rail between Oxford and Milton Keynes, through the lens of local authorities. Whilst providing recommendations to improve the ongoing delivery of the East West Rail scheme, this report will also provide valuable insights for other major projects in the future.

8. Skills & Development

- 8.1. Since our initial research into capacity and capability of transport infrastructure delivery, EEH has continued to consider the skills gap within local authorities undertaking transport planning and strategy. This includes identifying a number of high-level capabilities required by local authorities to undertake transport planning/strategy, business case development and scheme sponsorship.
- 8.2. EEH has developed a 'Skills Matrix': a blueprint skills and competency framework for use by local authority officers working in transport planning, strategy and infrastructure investment. The Skills Matrix was developed in collaboration with local authority partners' transport strategy officers and aligns with the professional development/chartership pathways for TPS and CIHT, as well as DfT research into local authority capability and capacity.

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England's Economic Heartland
June 2025

¹ [Green Book Review 2025.pdf](#)

