



England's Economic Heartland Board

24 September 2026

Item 9a: Supporting local authorities

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Notes the extensive support and technical capability provided by EEH to local authority partners through its Centre of Excellence.**
- b) Notes how EEH's approach enables local authorities to access specialist expertise, regional evidence and peer networks that would be difficult and costly to maintain individually.**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To demonstrate the value that EEH adds to local authority partners through the provision of regional data, analytical tools, professional networks and direct technical support, and to outline how this offer will evolve.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. The Centre of Excellence provides practical support to local authority partners by strengthening capability, reducing duplication of effort and enabling access to evidence, tools and expertise at a regional scale.
- 2.2. Through spring and summer 2026, the EEH Data & Analysis Team conducted a series of bilateral/small group engagement with officers, to inform business planning.
- 2.3. Many authorities highlighted the value of EEH's ability to bring partners together, maintain regional datasets and provide specialist analysis that supplements local resources.
- 2.4. 'You said, we did' summaries on how EEH is improving its offer based on feedback, can be found in the annexes at the bottom of this report.

3. Context

- 3.1. The Centre of Excellence remains a key mechanism through which EEH helps local partners deliver better transport outcomes. It is a core part of EEH's role as a locally led partnership and helps authorities achieve more collectively than they could individually.
- 3.2. It provides practical support to local authority partners by strengthening capability, reducing duplication of effort and enabling access to evidence, tools and expertise at a regional scale.
- 3.3. Since the Board approved the Centre of Excellence approach in June 2025, EEH has continued to provide a wide range of technical support, evidence, tools and peer-learning opportunities to local authority partners.
- 3.4. Engagement with officers across the region consistently highlights the value of EEH's convening role, the regional evidence base and access to specialist analytical capability that many authorities would struggle to resource individually.



- 3.5. Underpinning this is an integrated communications and engagement approach, which recognises the two-way flows between EEH officers tasked with supporting the partnership and local authority officers as the partners.

4. Responding to future needs

- 4.1. The EEH Data & Analysis Team has conducted a series of bilateral/small group engagement with officers, with the aim of increasing the understanding of the analytical support requirements of local authority partners, as well as to identify opportunities for working with EEH and inform business planning.
- 4.2. The sections below reflect on that engagement, as giving our EEH response, in a You Said/We Did/We'll Do format.
- 4.3. Feedback from local authority officers has reinforced the importance of retaining a strong capability and support offer.
- 4.4. Many authorities highlighted the value of EEH's ability to bring partners together, maintain regional datasets and provide specialist analysis that supplements local resources. The revised Centre of Excellence approach therefore concentrates effort where EEH can provide the greatest additional value.
- **Cross-Regional Community** is about bringing people together to form cross-regional communities based on common interest. Our mode-specific or theme-based working groups, with officers from every local and combined authority invited, encourage learning and knowledge sharing between authorities and peers, as well as colleagues from DfT, Network Rail and National Highways where applicable.
 - **Information Provision and Tools** is focused on improving access and usage of available information, tools and data. EEH's regional evidence base is formed of data, tools and research, which are available to local and combined authority partners and the DfT.
 - **Better Outcomes** focuses on offering more intensive support to local and combined authorities, including business case development and maximising the benefits of major schemes.

5. Cross Regional Community

- 5.1. Feedback from local authority officers consistently identified EEH's convening role as one of its most valuable services.
- 5.2. Transport Officer Groups and technical forums provide opportunities for officers to share knowledge, learn from peers, coordinate activity across administrative boundaries and engage directly with national organisations. In several discussions officers noted that these networks would not exist without EEH's leadership and facilitation: *"If it wasn't for EEH, [we] wouldn't know our counterparts"*.
- 5.3. EEH continues to evolve and develop our offering in the space. We aim to be flexible and rapidly adapt to partners' need as they emerge and take a proactive approach to horizon scanning that flag up collaboration and data sharing opportunities early.
- 5.4. Please see Annex 1 below for more details on feedback and actions.

6. Information Provision and Tools

- 6.1. Authorities consistently highlighted the value of EEH's regional evidence base, recognising that many datasets, tools and analytical products could not be developed or maintained at an individual authority level.
- 6.2. EEH's ability to combine data, provide regional context and support evidence-led decision making was seen as particularly beneficial when developing business cases, Local Transport Plans and investment priorities.



- 6.3. It was seen as beneficial to be able to position local priority schemes within the regional context/benefits. One authority expressed concern that there is a misconception from the DfT that all local authorities hold extensive data, but the reality is “patchier” – generally asset data appeared to be more comprehensive than other transport-related datasets e.g. active travel counts.
- 6.4. Please see Annex 2 below for more details on feedback and actions.

7. Better Outcomes

- 7.1. Discussions with partners highlighted growing challenges associated with local government reorganisation, devolution and resource pressures.
- 7.2. In this environment, EEH's role in maintaining strategic capability, preserving institutional knowledge and providing access to shared evidence is becoming increasingly important.
- 7.3. Several authorities emphasised that EEH provides a valuable regional function that would otherwise be difficult to replicate.
- 7.4. Please see Annex 3 below for more details on feedback and actions.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. Across all engagement discussions, officers were clear that the greatest value provided by EEH is not any individual tool or dataset, but the combination of regional evidence, specialist analytical support and the ability to convene partners around shared challenges.
- 8.2. Despite the focus on our convening function, our tools remain critical. EEH will continue to engage with DfT and STB colleagues to ensure that the tools developed under the previous STB funding arrangements that remain valuable to EEH partners, do not become obsolete or lost.
- 8.3. EEH will continue to explore opportunities with large data holders such as Google and Amazon Web Services (AWS) – to understand what value they can bring to regional authorities.
- 8.4. Through this focused approach, EEH will continue to provide capability, capacity and insight that would be difficult for many authorities to maintain individually, helping partners make better-informed decisions, secure investment and deliver improved transport outcomes for residents and businesses across the region.

James Golding-Graham
Head of Analysis
September 2026



Annex 1 - Cross Regional Community

Officers Said	We Did	We'll Do
It is helpful for EEH to bring officers together on major developments to discuss the evidence/modelling base that sits behind them.	We have established and facilitated cross-authority working arrangements for East West Rail, bringing together officers from every host authority to share evidence, coordinate responses, discuss modelling assumptions and identify cross-boundary impacts. This has provided a consistent forum for collaboration between local authorities, delivery partners and government agencies. We have launched EEH Data and Modelling forum (EDAM) to support offices to access new, evolving data and tools.	We will continue to bring guest speakers to Transport Officer Group meetings on a quarterly basis, and to other forums where possible/ appropriate. Several of the data driven approaches that EEH are developing for analysis associated with the Transport Opportunity Plans – (aligning with Better Connected ambitions) will be made available to authority partners.
It would be helpful to have a focus on Local Transport Plans.	We established a dedicated Local Transport Plan Working Group following publication of the updated guidance. This provided an opportunity for authorities to share emerging approaches and understand the implications of the DfT's Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport.	We will continue supporting authorities as they develop new Local Transport Plans, helping partners understand emerging national requirements, share best practice and identify opportunities for greater alignment across administrative boundaries. We will review our current peer networks and forums in line with our priorities, ensuring that there is one to support LTPs specifically.
We would like a working group focussed on MRT and a collaborative approach to developing issues to explore.	EEH have developed a significant consultation response to DfT on their approach to developing the Mass Rapid transit (MRT) task force. Our Managing Director has engaged with the CEO and supporting teams within UTG who are managing the MRT task force.	Build an EEH MRT Community of Practice focused on funding, shared learning, phasing and business case development – including novel and new funding arrangements

Annex 2 - Information Provision and Tools

Officers Said	We Did	We'll Do
It would be helpful to have greater visibility of what data EEH holds, as well as how others are using it.	Where possible, we are making much of our data open source through our data portal website. We have revisited our Tools Catalogue to ensure it accurately reflects our current offering. Several STB tools will no longer be available due to funding changes. This will be refreshed	We'll continue to develop our internal capability to analyse national datasets, bringing them to life through blending or identifying complementary sources (particularly where there are challenges with the base data, such as Census 2021). We'll proactively collect use cases



	on an annual basis.	for our tools to understand how they are being used by local authority partners. Highlighting value to DfT.
It would be helpful to have support on presenting and visualising the data local authorities already hold.	EEH has provided bespoke analytical support to local authorities, helping officers visualise data, generate insight and communicate evidence more effectively to decision-makers and stakeholders.	We will develop a more visible analytical support offer, helping authorities move beyond data collection and towards evidence-led insight. This will include support with visualisation, interpretation of national datasets, storytelling and communicating the implications of analysis.
There is appetite for a common data ecosystem across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. There is opportunity to develop common data standards across the region to avoid duplication. This could even become a national data standard.	We continue to maintain and expand a shared regional evidence base that supports Local Transport Plans, Local Plans, Spatial Development Strategies, strategic business cases and investment prioritisation. This reduces duplication across authorities and provides a consistent evidence foundation for engagement with government and delivery partners. We have enhanced the State of the Region evidence base to cover 55 topic areas and continued development of analytical tools and dashboards which help authorities understand travel patterns, accessibility, economic activity and future growth opportunities. We continue to work with CPCA on development of the CPCA and EEH Data Observatory. The EEH Land Use and Economy Model update is nearing completion. Previously iterations have been used by several authorities to inform development strategies.	We are engaging with the developers of MHCLG's ALIGN spatial tool, which is linked to the opportunities of piloting digital SDS's. For the government tools to 'ingest' local information, there will be a need for a level of commonality in the datasets and their treatment – hence being part of this conversation now allows for EEH and local authority partners to influence what those data standards look like nationally, as well as setting the expectation at the regional level. We'll work with Transport for London to understand the potential for EEHELUM to work with their modelling suite. EEH will explore the opportunities for EEH to support digital SDS development within the region – through promoting the use of EEHELUM2 and ensuring that all evidence and data generated by EEH can be applied in future rounds of strategic plan making.
There might be further potential economies of scale to be realised e.g. a joint mobile network data procurement.	We reach out to local partners around joint innovation bids. We provide opportunities for partners to meet delivery partners/the market.	We'll utilise our EDAM Forum to identify opportunities for joint data procurement by seeking to understand the existing baseline years of local partners' models and likely timescales for updating them. This awareness will allow us

		to spot where procurements may be able to run jointly. By identifying opportunities for collective procurement, EEH will help local authorities reduce costs, improve consistency of evidence and avoid unnecessary duplication. We'll develop a forward lookahead of tool/model development, so that local authority partners can make an informed decision around whether to procure their own or use the EEH-developed versions. This should help to avoid duplication.
--	--	--

Annex 3 – Better Outcomes

You Said	We Did	We'll Do
It would be helpful to have a focus on Local Transport Plans.	We have developed a Centre of Excellence Note to <i>Supporting Local Transport Plans</i> , which aligns the metrics/data asks under LOF and LTOF with the new LTP Guidance and the DfT's <i>Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport</i> . This will be developed as more information on local authority performance frameworks become available.	We will provide targeted analytical support to local authorities developing Local Transport Plans, helping partners make greater use of national datasets and ensuring that local evidence can be positioned within its regional context. We are working to identify the links between the LTP and EEH's data offering to ensure that officers can find the appropriate data sources via our data portal.
It would be good to have more shared monitoring and evaluation data to inform our businesses cases and policy development e.g. information around the results of trials; benefits realisation from schemes in the region; and insights into modal splits being achieved at different developments.	We have begun the development PowerBI of Rail and Bus performance dashboards to support the monitoring and evaluation of networks across the region.	We will explore the creation of a shared monitoring and evaluation resource, allowing local authorities to access evidence on performance, benefits realisation and behavioural change from across the region. This will support stronger business cases, more effective policy development and improved understanding of what works.