

Government invests in innovation with £30 million for cutting-edge highway decarbonisation projects

- multimillion-pound Live Labs 2 competition announced to bring ideas for net zero highways to life
- innovative sustainable infrastructure proposals will be implemented with help of £30 million fund
- previous funding supported plant-based living walls to tackle roadside emissions and trials of innovative pothole detection techniques

Cutting-edge, innovative ideas to decarbonise the country's highways will be brought to life thanks to tens of millions of pounds in government funding.

The £30 million Live Labs 2 competition, funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), is being announced today (7 April 2022).

The funding will support pioneering projects looking at ways to decarbonise local highways infrastructure in regions across the UK. There will be a particular focus on making the construction, maintenance and running of the UK's roads more sustainable.

Now in its second round of funding, the competition, organised by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), is the latest move in the government's drive to create cleaner air and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said:

Investing in innovation is a priority for this government. That's why we're supporting local highways authorities to develop cutting-edge projects and help drive our decarbonisation mission.

Our £30 million investment will go towards a greener, safer transport landscape. It will help create green, high-skilled jobs across the country and I look forward to seeing these innovative ideas brought to life.

The launch of the second round of the competition follows the success of the [first £22.9 million Live Labs programme which launched in May 2019](#) and supported the creation of 8 local projects testing innovative solutions on local roads.

Previous projects included:

- fibre cables that detect vibrations from vehicles and dynamically change signal junctions to combat congestion

- trials involving drones to detect potholes in Kent
- plastic roads in Cumbria to boost value for money in the construction of highways

Staffordshire County Council also secured the expertise of 2 industry leaders to install plant-based living walls to tackle roadside emissions. The walls act as natural filters made from plants and mosses as part of a national clean air trial.

Meanwhile, Buckinghamshire Council and Suffolk County Council demonstrated how the application of smart transport technology can be expanded to offer greater social value than initially anticipated.

Their project involved repurposing road sensors, typically used to monitor traffic volumes and weather conditions, to be used in adult social care.

The technology was additionally used to allow vulnerable people to live independently for longer by installing the sensors around a house to monitor daily activities, sending signals to carers when needed.

Paula Hewitt, ADEPT President, said:

ADEPT is delighted to be able to move ahead on Live Labs 2 with this new round of DfT funding and support. The highways and transport sector is the UK's single biggest carbon emitter and although we are seeing a transition to electric vehicles, there is a huge gap where we are yet to tackle road infrastructure and maintenance.

Local authorities are perfectly placed to lead the drive to create net zero highways and local roads from the bottom up. The Live Labs format has proven particularly successful for highways authorities, enabling rapid change, innovation and experimentation.

Following the success of the first ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs programme, Live Labs 2 aims to build on the partnerships between DfT, councils, commercial partners, SMEs and academia to deliver scalable zero carbon objectives with potential for commercialisation and applicability to diverse areas across the UK.

The ADEPT Live Labs initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to investing in innovation to decarbonise the UK's transport network, making it greener and more efficient for all.

By issuing significant investments for each project, the fund aims to help local highways authorities and enterprises develop and propel their ideas to market even quicker.