

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 27 October 2025

By: Chief Officer, Transport for the South East

Title of report: Centre of Excellence Progress Update

Purpose of report: To provide a progress update on the Centre of Excellence

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to comment on the progress being made with the delivery of the Centre of Excellence.

1. Introduction

1.1 At the Partnership Board meeting in July 2025, Members endorsed the 2025/26 Centre of Excellence (CoE) Work Plan. The purpose of the report is to provide a progress update on the delivery of the ongoing Centre of Excellence

2. Progress update

2.1 Since July 2025, significant progress has been made in delivering the CoE Work Plan. A number of webinars have been held, responding directly to officers' needs identified through the 2025 Capability Survey, and engagement. This includes:

- A joint webinar with Eleven exploring barriers to Gen Z participation in consultations, techniques to improve communication and reach, and examples of best practice, which attracted over 80 attendees.
- A further clinic on active travel modelling, delivered by TfSE's Analysis Manager. This showcased good practice and was supported by a blog that has since become the most visited resource on the CoE.
- A report and a presentation to TfSE's Regional Bus Forum, delivered by Arup, on impacts of devolution on buses. The report also explores cross-subsidy and cross-boundary infrastructure issues.

3. Forthcoming Activity

3.1 Looking ahead, support on the application of artificial intelligence in transport planning has been identified by local authority officers as the highest priority area. A comprehensive package has been developed, including introductory and applied webinars, a deep-dive workshop, and a full-day training course with the University of Leeds, to ensure accessibility and practical application.

3.2 A programme on modelling and forecasting is being delivered covering environmental assessments, the use of transport analysis in spatial planning, the

Regional Travel Survey, a roundtable on applying new technologies, and support on transport assessments. Work is also underway to develop a programme raising awareness of emerging transport technologies, covering the rationale for new technologies and mobility initiatives, current trends and digital solutions, forecasts and trajectories, and real-world applications. These activities will run through to the end of the financial year, enabling regular updates on new and emerging topics.

3.3 The CoE continues to respond to requests for support made through the 2024 Pulse Check survey, which identified needs including bus franchising, carbon assessment techniques, active travel forecasting, planning assessment management, managing supported bus networks, and the use of mobile network data. By the end of 2025, all of these requests will have been met, demonstrating TfSE's ongoing commitment to delivering a resource that responds to officer needs.

4. Engagement activity

4.1 A Centre of Excellence Steering Group meeting was convened on 2 October to further develop the scope for work on emerging technologies. Officers contributed views on content priorities and shared perspectives on how the CoE should evolve for 2026/27 and beyond. Colleagues from the Future Transport Zone presented their project areas and sought feedback on dissemination through the CoE.

4.2 We have had strong engagement with universities, with two sessions exploring opportunities for collaboration and sharing assets. Work is progressing on case studies relating to digital twins and resilience, with further sessions to follow.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

5.1 Monitoring and evaluation remain central to the CoE. To date, webinars and resources have consistently achieved high satisfaction ratings, and membership continues to grow, with 366 registered users, including 280 from local transport authorities. While engagement from partners such as Network Rail, National Highways, Active Travel England and DfT has dipped slightly, a targeted programme of activity is being implemented to encourage greater involvement. The Carbon Assessment Playbook remains the most visited resource on the site, reflecting strong demand following the publication of the Quantifiable Carbon Guidance (QCG).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 The Members of the Partnership Board are recommended to comment on the progress being made with the delivery of the Centre of Excellence.

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Monitoring and Evaluation Summary

Reporting period Jun – Sept

This appendix provides a summary of the key performance metrics from the Centre of Excellence (CoE) Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard, covering the period June to September 2025. The data demonstrates continuous growth, and impact across Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in the South East.

Total Sign Ups:

- During this reporting period, 44 new users registered with the CoE platform, demonstrating continued commitment and interest across LTAs. This growth indicates that the CoE continues to reach new areas and audiences, maintaining relevance and value.
- This brings the total number of sign-ups to 371, which is a strong indicator of reach and influence. This data is being used to demonstrate to national agencies the value of the CoE as an established and growing network, capable of supporting widespread dissemination of resources, updates, and events. Through the platform's Chat Forum, webinars, and promotional tools, national partners can engage directly with local officers, reaching a wide audience efficiently.

Content Development and Curation

- During this period, 81 new pieces of content were uploaded to the CoE website. These include both bespoke materials developed in response to identified needs and research and guidance shared by partners, such as the Blended Finance Approach provided by UKRI, which was specifically requested by LTAs as a support topic.
- This brings the total content library to 368 resources. There has been a slight reduction in total numbers, as a recent site archive and content review to ensure all materials remain current, relevant, and aligned with government policy and guidance.



44 new users = 13% increase.



81 new pieces of content = 30% increase



893 site sessions, 158 more than the previous four months (21.5% increase)

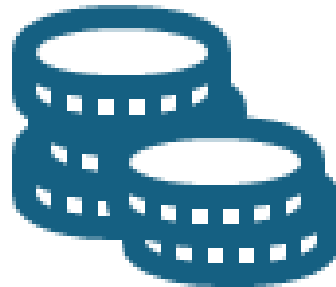
Monitoring and Evaluation Summary

Reporting period Jun – Sept

Estimated Cost Savings

- The estimated cost savings for LTAs during this period is £280,000. This figure is based on the market value of commissioned work provided directly by the CoE (excluding signposted materials, which have no direct cost or time association for TfSE).
- For example, market analysis shows that commissioning a subject matter expert to deliver a technical webinar typically costs around £2,500. If each of the 16 LTAs were to procure this independently, the total cost would be £40,000. While not all LTAs would necessarily commission each session, feedback consistently demonstrates that the CoE's webinars and clinics deliver tangible value, improving officers' skills and capability across key areas of expertise.

The data from June to September confirms that the Centre of Excellence continues to deliver measurable value, increase engagement, and strengthen capability across LTAs. Growth in user activity, consistently high feedback scores, and significant cost savings together highlight that the CoE is an effective and evolving mechanism for supporting the region, and a valuable model for wider national application.

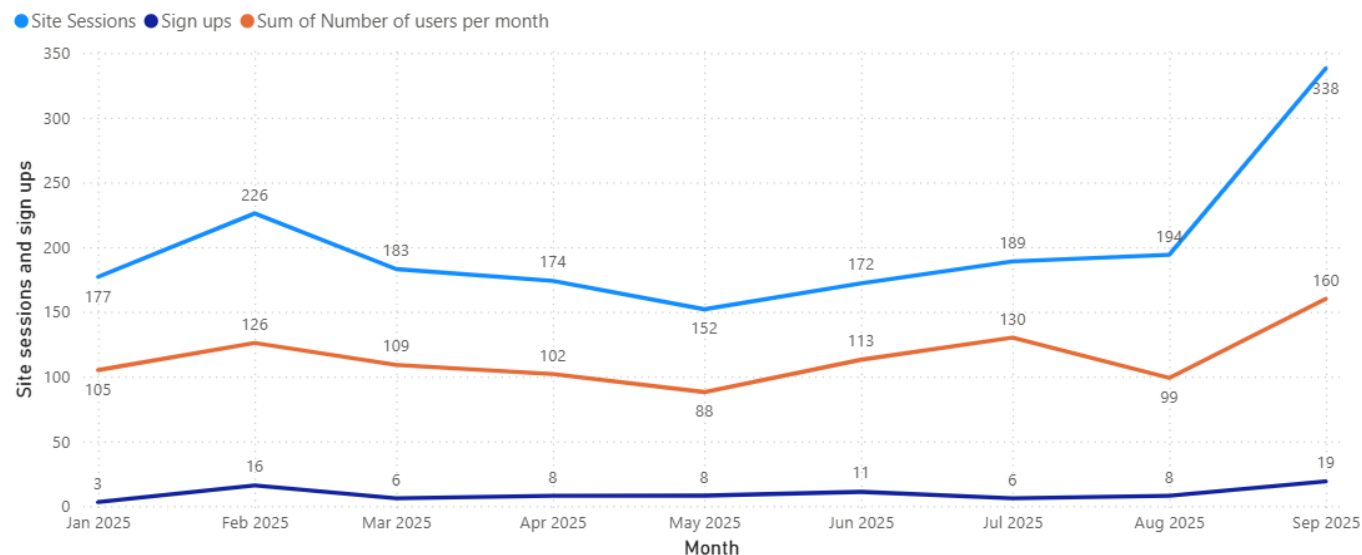


Estimated £280,000 saved for local transport
authorities

Site Sessions and sign ups

- Site sessions represent the total number of visits to the CoE platform. September recorded 338 sessions, the highest since launch, showing that interest in the site is not only sustained, but increasing.
- This growth is largely driven by the promotion of new content through the Chat Forum, newsletters, and direct engagement, where users are notified of upcoming webinars and events, and recently published content.
- In September, these 338 visits were made by 160 individual users, meaning each user visited the site more than twice per month on average. The dark blue line on the dashboard represents new sign-ups, which have remained steady, indicating sustained and consistent engagement.
- The CoE is increasingly being integrated into local authorities as a source of support, providing a practical space for collaboration, peer support, and shared learning.

Site sessions and sign ups by month



Unique visitors

Per Component

- This table highlights the most visited components across the CoE platform, helping identify where users find the most value and where further development may be needed.
- Webinars consistently attract the highest number of visits. However, these figures likely underrepresent true engagement, as many users access materials directly through newsletter links, bypassing the main site navigation.
- Encouragingly, the Webinars, Events, and Forums sections remain among the most frequently accessed pages, demonstrating that commissioned work and interactive opportunities are well utilised by users.

Specific Pages

- The Carbon Assessment Playbook (CAP) remains the most visited page on the site, receiving 71 visits over the reporting period. This high level of interest pre-dates the publication of the Department for Transport's Quantifiable Carbon Guidance (QCG). Since the QCG was launched, the Playbook has been further promoted as a key implementation tool, and usage is expected to remain strong.
- While this was one of the more costly commissions, it continues to demonstrate clear value for money and measurable impact. LTAs have provided case studies describing how the tool has directly supported the development of their Local Transport Plans (LTPs).

Number of unique visitors per component home page

Title	Jun 25	Jul 25	Aug 25	Sep 25	Total
webinars	15	8	8	19	50
events	17	5	7	17	46
resources	7	11	5	11	34
case-study	3	16	4	7	30
forum	7	15	3	5	30
key-tools	6	9	5	10	30
qualifications-and-courses	7	8	6	9	30
data	4	6	1	2	13
funding	2	4	3	2	11
consultations	1	8	0	0	9
contact	1	4	0	1	6
new-to-the-sector	2	4	0	0	6
procurement	0	5	0	0	5

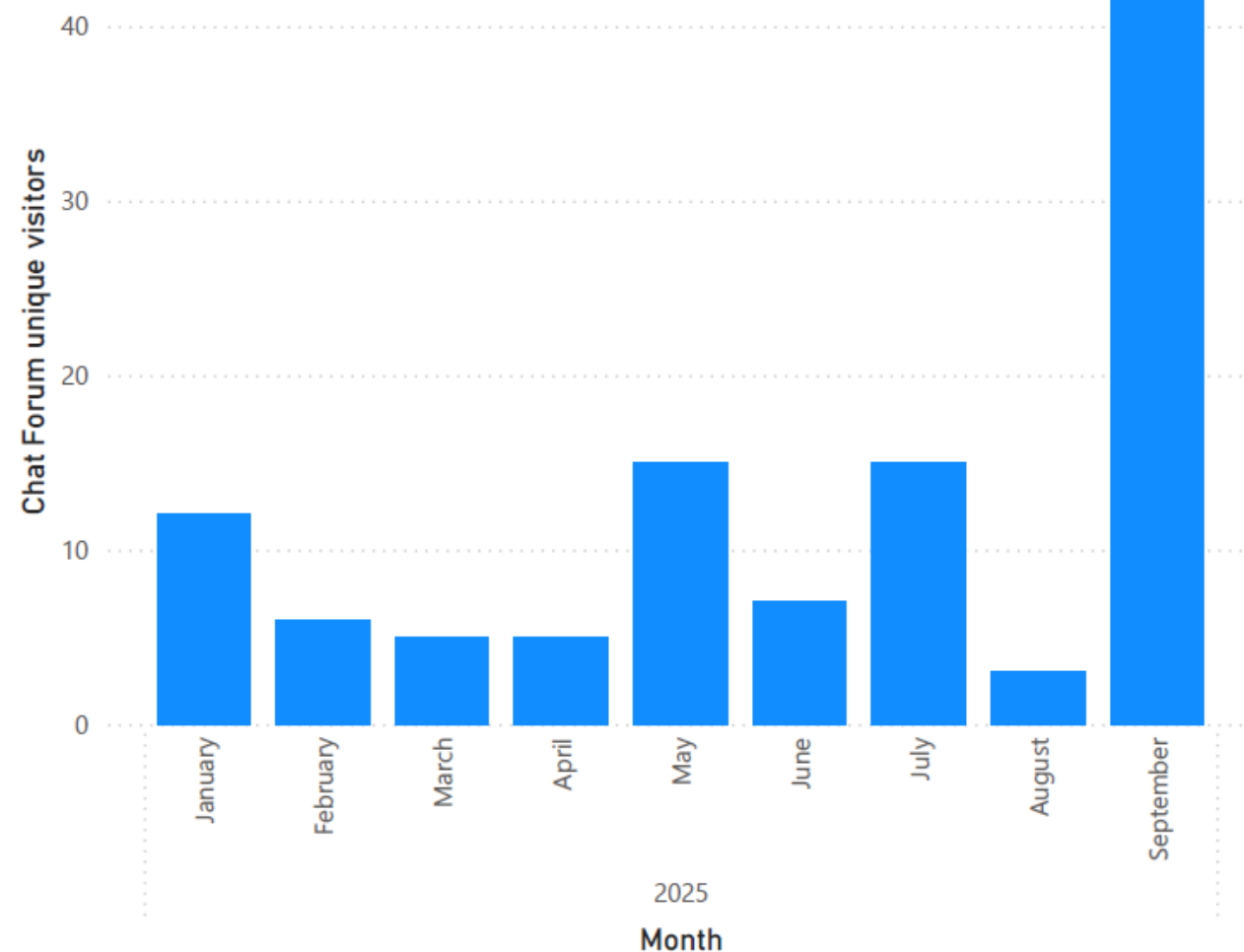
Number of unique visitors for specific pages

Title	Jun 25	Jul 25	Aug 25	Sep 25	Total
key-tools- carbon-assessment-playbook	21	10	24	16	71
forumlocal-transport-authoritiesregister-your-interest-data-science-for-transport-planners-full-day-training-course-offer	0	0	0	42	42
blog-postsforecasting-the-impact-of-active-travel-interventions	5	0	2	18	25
blog-poststransport-modelling	3	4	4	6	17
data- datashine-census-data	2	0	7	6	15
forumnew-to-the-sectortransport-planner-technician-apprenticeship	0	0	12	0	12
guidance	4	0	4	4	12
forumpublic-transportfree-bus-networks-offer	0	0	0	11	11
webinars- tfse-centre-of-excellence- carbon-assessment-playbook-introduction	0	0	5	6	11

Chat Forum Interaction

- This graph tracks the number of unique users accessing the Chat Forum each month.
- The Chat Forum was identified as one of the most valuable components during the CoE's development. While engagement has been modest to date, interaction is now increasing, with September recording a high of 42 unique visitors.
- This growth aligns with the overall rise in activity across the site and suggests that ongoing promotion by TfSE and partner authorities is working.

Chat Forum interaction



Content Feedback Scores

- After each webinar or event, attendees are invited to complete a short feedback survey. This ensures commissioned work meets expectations, delivers quality and value, and enhances capability in the chosen topic area.
- The usefulness scores, calculated as an average of survey responses, have remained consistently high, with none falling below 3.33, with most achieving ratings in the high 4s.
- This demonstrates that CoE outputs continue to provide high-quality, relevant support that is valued by LTAs and that the COE commissioned activities are improving capability and confidence across the region.

Content Feedback Scores

Content	Satisfaction Score	Usefulness Score
Behaviour Change Webinar		4.50
Deep Dive Decarbonisation and climate resilience (Business Case Development Series)	4.25	4.67
Engaging Gen Z		4.60
Funding & Financing Webinar (Business Case Development Series)	4.63	4.50
How to review a business case webinar (Business Case Development Series)	4.33	4.11
Hydrogen Buses Case Study		5.00
Impacts of Devolution on Buses		4.50
Modelling Approaches Webinar (Business Case Development Series)	4.00	3.33
Strood Risk Approach Webinar	4.50	4.00
TfSE Transport related social exclusion #1		4.20
TfSE Transport related social exclusion #2		4.00
TfSE Transport related social exclusion #3		5.00
Average	4.34	4.37