

# apse direct news

Association for Public Service Excellence • November / December 2011 • ISSN 16465-2493

## Public services in Wales

Carl Sargeant, Assembly Member,  
Minister for local government and  
communities

PAGE 4-5

## Coming up top down under

Prof John Howard, Canberra  
University

PAGE 6-7

## Highways and winter maintenance special feature

PAGE 8-11

## Teenage kicks

Helen Beaman, Hartlepool Council

PAGE 22-23



**Highways and winter maintenance  
special feature edition**



# Service Delivery Models: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and frontline services



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Thursday 19 January 2012

# Contents

APSE Direct News

November / December 2011

<b>APSE one day seminar advertisement</b>	2
<b>Contents and editorial</b>	3
<b>Standing up for public services in Wales</b>	
Carl Sargeant, Assembly Member, Minister for Local Government and Communities	4
<b>Coming up top down under</b>	
Professor John H Howard, Australian Centre for Excellence, Canberra University	6
<b>Highways and winter maintenance special feature edition</b>	8
<b>Countryfile</b>	
John Skidmore, Head of Streetscene, East Riding of Yorkshire	12
<b>Be careful what company you keep</b>	
Judith Barnes, Head of Local Government , Eversheds	14
<b>Unleash the power of the green economy</b>	
David Arnold, National Officer, UNISON & Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive, APSE	16
<b>Proud to call it home</b>	
West Lancashire District Council	18
<b>Report back</b>	
A round up of APSE events and advocacy work	20
<b>Teenage kicks</b>	
Helen Beaman, Senior Environmental Officer, Hartlepool Council	22
<b>Class of 2011</b>	
APSE Apprentice awards 2011	24
<b>A money problem shared</b>	
Charity advertorial	25
<b>APSE people pages</b>	26
<b>Events diary</b>	27
<b>DAF advertisement</b>	28

APSE Direct News is published by the Association for Public Service Excellence  
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## Editorial

This is our last edition of 'direct news' in 2011 and what a year it has been!

We started the year with headlines on the global financial crisis and risk to the Eurozone economies and we end the year on well.....the global financial crisis and risk to the Eurozone economies.

For local government the impact has been the on-going reduction in resources with wide-scale staffing reductions and reorganisation. The reform of the public sector is an on-going journey and despite the 'shock and awe' of the early reductions in council budgets we are not there yet.

In the midst of this it is easy to think that the only way of tackling radical reform is to look at alternative delivery models, outside of the public sector or indeed to withdraw from state provision all together. Some councils are hoping that the gaps in future service provision can be picked up by either the private or the social enterprise sector. But these solutions are not easy and risk a growth in inequality and access to core public services.

I am not arguing for a 'state knows best' position but we should equally recognise that the reason local government is so successful (and it is despite our detractors) is that we have the capacity to respond. The capacity to be the linchpin that binds together local communities and ensures fairness. The capacity to stimulate and boost local economies – not necessarily by our own spending power, which we know we can better harness, but by attracting inward investment and encouraging local economic growth. The capacity to tackle climate change, develop clean technologies and create green jobs. We should not therefore assume that quick wins in alternative models of delivery will necessarily deliver the longer term sustainability, which is vital for renewed economic growth, at both a local and national level.

Before we embark on the latest fad or idea for new models of delivering local services the vital question is what is it we are trying to achieve? Many supposed new forms of delivery are rehashed ideas of past mistakes. We may well end up in the mire of the employee ownership schemes that failed on the back of bus deregulation – how many local bus companies are now owned by their employees? Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past. If there are no quick fixes lets have an honest debate about what we can afford to reasonably deliver on a fair and equitable basis. Our future may be one about the adequacy of provision rather than Rolls Royce levels of services. Let us not pretend we can deliver Rolls Royce services under different models if the pockets of local government will now realistic only stretch to a budget car.

Best wishes for the festive season and see you in the new year.

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

# Standing up for public services in Wales

***Carl Sargeant, AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities explains the vision for public service reform in Wales***



In September the Welsh Government published its Programme for Government. It is an ambitious agenda for Wales. It translates the manifesto on which we were elected into action and we are determined to deliver it in full. The focus is on people - on working together to create a fairer and more prosperous country - and creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the community they live in.

Public Services underpin that fairer and more prosperous vision. To achieve that vision we have to deliver public service reform at an unprecedented pace. As the Minister with that responsibility in Wales, my reform and improvement agenda is a practical programme of action. I will support the delivery of improved services against a backdrop of continuing financial challenges.

The findings of the review I commissioned from Joe Simpson of the Local Government Leadership Centre are at the heart of my approach. What services are best delivered where sets the agenda for a re-examination of service delivery in Wales. The aim is to realise the benefits of scale and expertise by configuring services at the most appropriate level: nationally or regionally, or by recognising the need for responsiveness to local service demand. Underpinning this is, of course, local democratic accountability.

Simpson provides a clear route-map to determining the most effective service configuration whether that is local, regional or national. Achieving this will require an

unprecedented degree of collaboration between all organisations delivering public services. The principles of the agenda as it relates to local government in Wales will be set out in a Concordat, agreed between Ministers and local authorities. That will enable both parties to be clear as to what needs to be delivered and by when, creating a new type of accountability for delivery.

## **Mobilising Leadership**

Delivering effective change requires strong political and executive leadership across public services, nationally and locally. I have already convened a Public Service Leadership Group comprising leaders from across Wales. It will support the work in maintaining the momentum for change and build on our earlier work that sought new solutions to providing better services with less money. The Group will also provide a direct link between national leadership and regional delivery.

The Group's work will accelerate the pace of service reconfiguration and drive the adoption of national solutions to shared public service challenges such as procurement, asset management and service effectiveness. We already have strong evidence of major potential gains from working as one Welsh public service on these issues, and the leaders, political and executive, will be held to account for delivering that change.

The national aspects of work led by the Public Service Leadership Group will have an ambitious programme. On procurement and estates management, we will build on earlier work to realise efficiencies and effectiveness from proactive, strategic estate management and drive savings and wider value from the £4.3bn spent annually on procured services.

On organisational development we will disseminate existing good practice from Wales and elsewhere. This will support the application of tested methodologies, such as Lean and shared services to improve organisational efficiency.

The final aspect of this work is transformational. More effective services for the most vulnerable in society need to be developed to promote innovation and sustainable change in the way that public services are designed and delivered. Ultimately this will improve outcomes and make better use of resources.

## **Encouraging greater collaboration**

Much of the evidence as to what works supports increased collaboration to deliver better services regionally or nationally. To provide clarity around how public services



should collaborate I have set out a common geographical footprint for the delivery of public services and I expect this footprint to be the basis for future collaborative work

Providing this common footprint will enable and support joint working between local government, health and police services. It will reduce complexity and provide a clear framework as we move to implementation of the Simpson review and the other major reforms already underway.

The footprint responds to calls for clarity – in particular from local government – and is designed to put collaboration on a more stable, long term footing so that partners can get on with the job of joining up services to meet the needs of individuals and communities across Wales.

Further, the footprint will support delivery by enabling stronger governance and accountability especially for the delivery of shared outcomes in a particular geographical area.

### Promoting innovation and best practice

A common foundation that supports, guides and informs all of this work is my intention to generate best practice and to spread that across the Welsh public service. We all need to realise efficiencies within existing budgets; secure improved services and achieve better outcomes. There is some tremendous work already underway across Wales and we should make the most of those valuable lessons in service

improvement. The Welsh Government is supporting this through a number of programmes including our Invest to Save Fund. This helps improvement projects that will deliver significant cash-releasing efficiency savings whilst ensuring effective citizen-centred services. This repayable investment Fund is provided over and above core budgets to pump-prime collaborative efficiency projects.

In addition to the Invest to Save Fund, there are a number of projects attracting European Structural funding to invest in improving public services through collaboration and capacity building. There are a range of ESF projects that will support more efficient service delivery in future.

**“Organisations like APSE make a valuable contribution to disseminating best practice and promoting innovation and excellence for the benefit of service users. I have common cause with that”** I am committed to supporting Welsh public services in improving delivery and reducing cost. While I will continue to value public services, I will also continue to challenge them to raise performance, and to demonstrate how they are contributing to the economic prosperity and social wellbeing of everyone in Wales.

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# Coming up top down under

*Dr John H Howard of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government in Canberra, an organisation with a similar remit to APSE, discusses challenges facing local authorities in his country at present*

Coming from what might be described as an 'Australian version of APSE', I was very pleased to have the chance to speak at APSE's annual seminar in Bristol and learn more about local government in the UK. There is a clear parallel between the remit of APSE and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) and it is envisaged that regular contact will be maintained by the two organisations.

## **About ACELG**

ACELG was established in 2009. It is a unique collaboration of universities and professional bodies committed to the advancement of local government. The Centre's vision is: "World-class local government to meet the emerging challenges of 21st century Australia".

Local government in my country is going through many of the challenges being confronted in the UK—diminishing resources,

high expectations of service quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and greater community engagement in decision-making. There is an urgent need to build capacity to meet these new management challenges.

## **Funding and governance in Australia**

Before examining the challenges facing Australian local government, it is necessary to outline the funding and governance context in which it operates. Over here, local government is the 'third tier' in the federal system. Councils are constituted under the legislative jurisdiction of the States and Territories. State Governments, through Ministers for Local Government, have exclusive responsibility for supervision of councils.

There are currently 565 elected councils in Australia. Of these, 135 are designated as cities. The number and size of councils varies considerably across States. Their functions are concentrated on: infrastructure and property services, including local roads, waste collection and management; recreation including parks, sports

fields, golf courses, swimming pools, sport centres and life guards at surf beaches; public and environmental health; community services, such as child care, aged care, accommodation and welfare; statutory planning, building and development control; cultural services, including libraries, art galleries and museums; business enterprise and economic development. Australian local government does not have a responsibility for education, law courts, or policing. Councils may administer services on behalf of Commonwealth and State Governments on fee for service and agency arrangements.

Local government revenue comes from taxation, grants, sales of goods and services and income from public enterprise. A profile of local government expenditure from 2000-01 to 2009-10, based on Government Finance Statistics, points to relative increases in expenditure of general administration, community amenities, and "other" categories. The data also point to a fall in relative expenditure on transport and communications (predominantly road construction and maintenance) and public debt transactions—reflecting a strategy of many councils to reduce debt levels and meet risk profile criteria of ratings agencies.

The capacity of councils to raise income from taxation is constrained by rate capping regulations in some States and the limited options to raise taxation from other sources. As shown in the table opposite, this is reflected in the declining proportion of rate income in the overall revenue profile, coupled with the declining proportion of income from grants and subsidies from the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Elected local government in Australia constitutes an important, but by no means exclusive, vehicle for the delivery of locally based services. Other vehicles include: regionally constituted statutory authorities with responsibilities for the management of infrastructure services—particularly for water supply, sewerage, and electricity distribution; natural resource management agencies; and local hospital networks.

Local Government Areas can be the focus of devolved functions executed by State and Commonwealth Governments delivering services on a regional basis (school and vocational education, administration of justice, community welfare services, etc), although areas are generally aggregated for the purposes of regional administration and delivery. More often than not, councils are not involved in regional delivery, although regional administrators and service personnel retain close, informal, ties with local government.

Regional Development Australia was established by the Australian Government in 2008 with the objective of bringing together all levels of government to support the growth and development of Regions. A key focus is on economic, social and environmental issues. The Commonwealth Department of Human Services has recently been constituted to deliver a wide range of income support and welfare services on a local level. The Department operates on a highly devolved management and service delivery model.

### Challenges facing us

Australian local government is confronted by a number of challenges, some of which echo those experienced in the UK. The first issue we face is a growing gap between revenue growth and

expenditure demands. The second is a relative decline in property rate revenue. The third is skills shortages and scarce management expertise. The fourth is huge infrastructure backlogs.

Around a quarter of councils in Australia have intractable viability problems. There is a need to build size and scale. This is vital in order to remove inefficiencies resulting from duplication and sub-optimal use of assets and enable growth of knowledge and innovation. It is important in terms of providing effective political leadership for communities facing fast-paced change. It is also necessary as a means of developing 'strategic capacity' for local government to be an effective partner in the Australian federal system. Australian local government therefore has an urgent need to build capacity to meet these new and emerging management challenges.

Like APSE, our role is to enhance professionalism and skills in local government, showcase innovation and best practice, and facilitate a better-informed policy debate. Like APSE, we are endeavouring to do all we can to support councils in these difficult times. I hope the two organisations can learn from each other and help promote excellence in public services.

Local Government Revenue - Australia

	2000-01		2009-10	
	\$m	%	\$m	%
Taxation revenue	6,389	38.1%	11,566	35.7%
Current grants and subsidies	1,944	11.6%	2,894	8.9%
Sales of goods and services	5,264	31.4%	9,276	28.6%
Interest income	433	2.6%	667	2.1%
Other	2,758	16.4%	8,015	24.7%
Total	16,788	100.0%	32,418	100.0%

Source: Government Finance Statistics, Australia, 2009-10, Cat. 55120DO019\_200910

### Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG)

Like APSE, the ACELG's mandate is to enhance professionalism and skills in local government, showcase innovation and best practice, and facilitate a better-informed policy debate. The Centre will:

- Build on existing local government programs and networks
- Encourage innovation and best practice across local government
- Foster good governance and strategic leadership
- Support action to improve local government workforce capability to address skill shortages and attract and retain skilled staff
- Promote new and improved training and development programs and
- Stimulate and inform debate on key issues for local government in coming decades.

Visit the Centre's website at [www.acelg.org.au](http://www.acelg.org.au)

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## Highways and winter maintenance special edition



# Getting it white

***Last winter had the most severe weather in 100 years and councils have been gearing up for snow again this year. The APSE northern winter maintenance forum in Bradford was a chance for members to share ideas and best practice in preparing for the worst***

'The world has woken up to the fact that winter is upon us and I've done dozens of interviews with reporters wanting to know if the council is ready for a harsh winter,' said Cllr David Green of Bradford MBC.

Cllr Green opened APSE's Northern Region process benchmarking forum, Winter Maintenance: Meeting the Challenges, which took place in Bradford on 11th October. The event was a chance for APSE members to discuss the benefits and pitfalls of different operational approaches to winter maintenance.

As one of the highest places in Yorkshire, Bradford has its fair share of snow and Cllr Green's authority operates a gritting run that covers 750 miles and provides 500 gritting bins to try to keep things moving. The council did 76 full runs and 12 emergency runs last winter. He told some 60 delegates at the seminar: 'Last year schools closed, streets were gridlocked and mobile phone networks went down across the UK, but councils managed to minimise the impact of the bad weather with a first class operation. Over this winter, the spotlight is going to be on all of you doing an incredibly hard and valuable job. Today we can learn from best practice and take away ideas of how to improve services and make them more efficient.'

The good news is that councils seem to be getting better at preparing for sub-zero temperatures, snow and ice. Presentations and discussions at the event showed that technical expertise is improving all the time. There is also recognition that communication is crucial to keep the public informed and engaged when dealing with, and preparing for, demanding weather conditions.

David Mazurke, group manager for highways maintenance at Bradford, said the final Quarmby report on winter resilience, published in October 2010, had provided valuable technical guidance and his authority has concentrated on several issues it identified. The authority's stock of salt has been increased and it has bought nine new gritters and improved precautionary footway gritting. The council increased its emphasis on public engagement and communications during bad weather last year. It also worked closely with bus companies and transport groups and the relationship between transport and emergency planning remains a close one.

APSE's principal advisor for highways, Phil Brennan, facilitated discussion on; salting, staffing and routes, equipment and products, public engagement and ways in which to optimise performance and efficiency.



## Highways and winter maintenance special edition

Delegates at the event were very aware of the need to provide the best possible service with resources that are available and viewed finding optimum salt spread rates as an important aspect of this. Councils are developing their thinking on salt stock management and usage having taken on board Department for Transport guidance. When they compared spread rates across the country, there was great variation as a result of the use of different products and local circumstances. There was however a general view that work is required to look at spread rates in relation to height above sea level.

APSE members are optimistic that they are learning lessons they can put into practice this winter and technology is adding to their armoury. Thermal mapping and route based forecasting are helping route optimisation. New equipment has come on the market and innovative solutions are being found to help cope with bad weather. Edinburgh City Council for one has invested in new equipment and retrofitted mowers and other vehicles to provide a mechanised method of blading snow. Investment has been made by many councils to address footway gritting following public demand.

A key point that emerged from the discussion was that it is necessary to look at the level of winter resilience across the whole city or location, rather than just within the council. Local authorities are talking and planning with other organisations such as the emergency services, PCTs and health authorities, education departments and individual schools, industrial companies such as chemical factories, transport companies and

others, many via their emergency planning officers. It is important that all know their responsibilities including local residents. A culture shift has occurred in Wakefield, for example, where community resilience workshops have helped local people plan and prepare for bad weather and reduce their expectations from the council.

There was a lively discussion about snow wardens. Sheffield City Council has recruited 100 volunteer snow wardens, who are trained and fitness assessed and many other councils are looking at similar approaches. Kirklees MBC has provided 1,300 grit bins to 60 community groups that are helping elderly and vulnerable people. Feedback is extremely positive from people who are grateful they can get out and about and carers can get to them. On a less community spirited note, delegates highlighted that theft of salt from grit bins – and indeed entire grit bins – remains a problem in some areas.

The challenges of dealing with harsh weather are never to be underestimated, but this year APSE members seem better prepared than ever for snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures – and sharing approaches and expertise can help prepare for the worst.

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## South Gloucestershire drives forward with a new fleet

**S**outh Gloucestershire Council has recently purchased a new gritter fleet to replace its old one. Despite the current economic climate, it has taken the long term view and made the bold decision to invest wisely in the fleet, making sure that the specification would meet the needs of the authority and the community it serves. The fleet is expected to be in operation for 8 years.

Whilst specifying the fleet, managers, drivers and mechanics were all involved to ensure the new vehicles were fit for purpose. The resulting fleet is probably one of the best in the Country, but will save Council tax payers in the long run.

The new gritters (pictured opposite at a launch on Filton runway in South Gloucestershire) comprise of Volvo FMX chassis, with Econ bodies. As a result of the consultation exercise with drivers and mechanics they are also fitted with fully automatic gearboxes which help with getting consistent salt spread, drum brakes to reduce maintenance costs, Red Force weigh cells to reduce salt wastage and offloading time and a camera view into the hopper for drivers which reduces the need to climb onto the vehicle during salt runs.

South Gloucestershire Council has been a high performing authority through the last few harsh winters, attracting compliments from residents and Councillors alike, as well as winning the APSE Most Improved Highways and Winter category in 2010. It is expected that this new fleet will help South Gloucestershire Council continue to provide a first class service.

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## Highways and winter maintenance special edition

# Durham winter maintenance best practice example

*Like other councils across the UK, Durham County Council has done its utmost to be as well prepared as possible for harsh winter weather this year.*

Despite the pressure to make budget savings elected members in Durham have confirmed their commitment to ensuring the winter service is maintained, as residents have identified this as a priority to them. This year, new measures have been introduced following severe winter weather over the last three years and are in response to the outcomes of reviews by overview and scrutiny as well as feedback from local communities.

Working in partnership enables the Council to provide a better service; therefore town and parish councils are fully engaged; farmer contractors and volunteering activity is maximised and on a wider note Durham recognised that collaboration with other authorities is key to prepare the region as a whole for severe winter weather. Durham chaired the North East Regional Winter Maintenance Working Group of 12 North East local authorities to forge closer working links between councils.

The county's winter maintenance budget was boosted in 2009 when County Durham and Darlington NHS Trust provided £1m towards winter maintenance. The fund was allocated over two years to enable the authority to take a proactive approach to help prevent snow and ice-related accidents and therefore reduce the overall costs of the service. The funding was used to buy equipment such as small tractors with ploughs and hand operated salt spreaders to clear pavements and footways.

Both new equipment and a coordinated approach to redirecting staff from other operations, such as streetscene and neighbourhood wardens, will enable the Council to ensure that pathways are cleared for the more vulnerable communities, including those around homes for the elderly and sheltered housing.

Last year, despite having 40,000 tonnes of salt, sub-zero temperatures from 17th November through until Christmas meant supplies ran low. This year it has 46,000 tonnes of salt stocked in barns. This will help the Council to maintain its target to grit 45% of the county's roads. There are also 2000 salt bins countywide with an additional 200 available if a request is made.

This year the Council is piloting a number of schemes to develop the service further and to engage with communities

Durham's area manager for technical services, Charlie Rand, says. 'We have worked out the optimum spread rates and will deploy our resources based on detailed mapping exercises'. The highways team operates across the county's topography of high pennines, low pennines, central and coastal locations. Rotas are organised into three eight-hour patterns and all three go on shift when conditions require it.

Durham has been operating "climatic domains" for a number of years, with 37 routes operating according to thermal mapping reports from 9 weather stations. 'That gives us the backing to know that we are planning operations as efficiently as possible,' says Mr Rand.

Communication with the public is obviously key so in addition to information in leaflet form, in the press and on the website, the Council uses SMS texting and information posts on twitter to keep everyone up to date with the latest position. 'So even when salt ran low last year and we had to temporarily cut our coverage to 32% of the county's roads, strong communications meant people realised we were doing our best to keep things running.'



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## Highways and winter maintenance special edition

# On the right track to improving Highways efficiency

Sharing best practice is a philosophy that APSE obviously holds dear. So the association was pleased to work with the Asphalt Industry Association and ADEPT (the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport) to host a Sharing Best Practice event, at the National Cycle Centre in Manchester on 16th November. It is part of the sector's response to the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), a national initiative bringing councils together to promote good practice in managing some 183,000 miles of highways.

Although HMEP is a welcome initiative by the Department for Transport (DfT), the sector must be seen to drive its own improvement programme, rather than being led by the DfT.

Any increase in spending to improve road conditions has been lost in increasing cost, according to the Audit Commission in recent years. The Spending Review 2010 has resulted in 25% of cuts in some areas and three severe winters have also placed the condition of the highways network under severe pressure. Learning across the sector to maximising the impact of limited resources is therefore essential.

Lloyd Miles from the DfT explained the thinking behind the HMEP, which was launched in April 2011. Local authority roads in England alone have a £300bn asset sheet value, but upkeep requires major resources for 153 highways authorities. HMEP, which has £6m funding, is not a short-term initiative, he said: 'We are looking at partnership working between national and local government and public and private players. We know there's a huge amount of good practice out there and our aim is to build on that work – striking a sustainable balance between meeting the needs of highways users, improving quality and minimising costs.' HMEP will enable the sharing of information on matters such as products, contract management and collaboration on supply chains.

A survey for DfT by Ipsos Mori earlier this year found that the biggest transport concerns among the public are: fuel costs; road condition; congestion; safety; and bus frequency. Mr Miles pointed out that the last three are all affected by the condition of roads.

Steve Kent, director of community and environment at Cheshire West and Chester Council, who is chair of ADEPT engineering board, told delegates: 'We are all sitting down to try to make a highways budget balance and deliver a good service but do it with a lot less...If everyone comes up with one good idea, that's 150 good ideas. We need those good ideas to make the books balance.'

Phil Brennan, APSE's special advisor for highways and transport, told delegates: 'Highways is one of the major losers under recent budget cuts, so we need to change the way we do things to manage the asset as efficiently as possible with less resources. Councils are very good at dealing with change and organisations such as APSE are here to help share good ideas and initiatives. Hopefully the sector will develop as a result of HMEP. By working together we can provide a better and more efficient service.'

Alan McKenzie, Chairman of the AIA, explained that private sector contractors and suppliers are as keen to see improvements across the sector as local authorities are. 'In order for the private sector to be ready to invest in research and development, they need to be sure there will be a demand and that means a willingness by local authorities to utilise new techniques and products'

Delegates heard from Martin Duffy of Buro Happold about getting the best of procurement as well as case studies from authorities that are changing the way they manage their highways. Blackpool Council has looked at the asset from a social point of view to ensure funding is being invested in the right places at the right time to save money overall. Cheshire West and Chester Council has developed an 'asset recovery plan' quantifying the benefits of investing in the network. Stoke on Trent has seen dramatic service improvements as a result of applying systems thinking principles and practice.

There were also two workshops looking at communication and collaboration. A number of suggestions and ideas were raised in the workshops which will be fed into the work streams of the HMEP.

This was a successful event for all those attending and will hopefully be the first in a series organised jointly by APSE, ADEPT and AIA.

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# Countryfile

***John Skidmore, Head of Streetscene Services for East Riding of Yorkshire explains how engaging rural communities has helped to meet the streetscene challenges.***



In this age of localism, the 'Big Society' agenda and increasing budgetary pressures, more than ever before Councils need to provide the services that their customers actually want in a more creative, cost effective way. Within the East Riding of Yorkshire Council efforts have been made to help meet these challenges focusing on the involvement and empowerment of rural communities in the provision of our Streetscene Services.

Community engagement and empowerment in rural communities, such as those which are predominant in many areas within the East Riding Councils' thousand square mile boundary, does not look like nor feel like community engagement in more urban areas. Despite the vitally important role played by our rural Parish Councils in how their community works, residents in small villages sometimes think that their views are underrepresented, and can feel isolated, not just from our administrative centre in Beverley, but also from each other. Those communities are made up of individuals and groups whose particular views and service requirements often differ from both their rural and urban neighbours.

Therefore, the Council's task is not just about ensuring the provision of high quality Streetscene Services on a consistent and regular basis but, importantly, to ensure that East Riding residents have a 'voice' and feel comfortable and

able to come forward with streetscene issues that are important to them and their community.

In common with many Local Authorities across the Country, the East Riding has provided coordinated Streetscene services for several years now. Here, since 2004, this has been in the shape of an extremely popular and effective Village Taskforce programme which, amongst other things, coordinated a biennial 'spring clean' of the Council's 156 rural villages bringing together, at one time, resources from the Highways, Grounds and Environment Teams.

Against the backdrop of the Government's localism agenda, public service budget cuts and a goal of continual improvement in service design and delivery, it was timely at the end of the 2009/10 programme, to consider ways in which to secure greater community involvement and empowerment, to become even more joined up and cost effective and to revitalise the format of delivery of Streetscene Services.

The Council wanted to develop a closer collaborative relationship between local residents and the Council staff maintaining their villages. In addition, we wanted to make communication of 'local need', and the response to that need, immediate. It was also true that the Council needed to deliver substantial cashable savings, transform service delivery and secure value for money. Not an insignificant task but one which has been achieved here in the East Riding!

At the outset of the service review it was recognised that we were dealing with a very large, predominantly rural area with no 'single horse for the course'. The popularity and perceived effectiveness of the 'outgoing' delivery meant that satisfaction levels would need to be risked in order to secure this step change in delivery. It was vital that any new approach did not lose any impact on the popularity, inclusivity and effectiveness that the traditional Village Taskforce had already achieved.

Following a small scaled pilot in the Holderness area of the East Riding in 2010/11, a multi-skilled Village Taskforce principal was rolled out as a county wide pilot in 2011/12 covering all rural areas of the East Riding. Now, a group of teams undertake all basic streetscene maintenance tasks on a 15 working day cycle rather than trying to co-ordinate the work of the separate workforces of highways, grounds and environment biennially as previous existed.

The multi-skilled Village Taskforce operates during the late spring and summer months coinciding with the grass-cutting schedule. As well as the routine grass cutting and street cleansing tasks, the team members have been trained to undertake basic highway maintenance tasks such as minor pot-hole repair, hedge pruning, sign washing and



asset painting. This has proven to be a far more efficient and higher impact approach to streetscene maintenance reducing waste and duplication and increasing flexibility.

More importantly though is that local residents see that works carried out on the 15 working day rolling programme have maximized the visual impact of the area. The teams, whose regular presence can now be anticipated and outcomes predicted, are as well known as the postman or milkman. This regular, familiar face means that local residents are more comfortable approaching the team there and then with any concerns that are important to them. The resultant, immediate, attention makes a real difference when delivered in 'one hit' promoting further local involvement, maximizing impact and contributing to overall satisfaction levels in the service.

A massive by-product accruing from this step change in service delivery has been the benefits to the Council and front line operatives. On-site presence has dramatically increased and far greater co-ordination, work sequencing, effectiveness and value for money has been achieved than previously ensuring that every 15 days during the growing season the villages are left in a neat, tidy and cared for condition. The Village Taskforce team is able to advise of any additional works outside of their remit, and pass the information on to the relative departments, thus making the

council much more pro-active in dealing with maintenance issues and avoiding larger scale consequential repairs developing.

There is a greater sense of pride, responsibility, ownership, flexibility, and job satisfaction of the operational staff for their area in their multi-faceted role. The enthusiasm displayed by the operatives whilst carrying out the variety, rather than singular task, is tangible.

As for the future delivery of collaborative Streetscene Services, monitoring and feedback from the extended pilot currently in operation will continue to be scrutinised and will help to inform the way forward. However, from what is already evident, I fully expect the dedicated multi-skilled team approach, which engages, includes and empowers local residents on a more frequent visible and meaningful basis, to result in the most cost effective delivery and maintenance method than has ever been achieved previously. This is a model likely to be formally adopted in the East Riding of Yorkshire from 2012/13 and one that I would commend to other authorities, particularly those of a rural nature.

Contact: [John.Skidmore@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:John.Skidmore@eastriding.gov.uk)

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# Be careful what company you keep

*Establishing Companies for Service Delivery is the mode de jour but Judith Barnes and Denis Cooper of Eversheds urge a little caution.*



Local authorities establishing and being involved in companies to deliver services appears to be all the rage at present, whether the pressure comes from the need to transform service delivery, cut costs or change the culture. There is also the central push from the Coalition Government to create social enterprises and mutuals, alongside the drive to convert public sector jobs to private sector jobs. Creating new entities can assist in this transformation and in some cases eg leisure trusts can give access to new funding streams and reduced business rates.

It can be tempting to see some things that have happened elsewhere and think we should replicate this for our authority, rather than starting with key questions about what the authority is trying to achieve and why, then considering all of the options that might be available to deliver the required solution. Such

options could include increasing income through charging and trading by the authority itself, rather than creating a separate entity.

Alternatively, where there is an appetite for employees to set up their own new enterprises, perhaps that is a route which will suit some authorities (so long as there is the delivery capability and a solid business plan in support); this can be empowering and create more employee commitment to the success of the organisation.

There may be advantages in setting up a separate legal entity, such as a company, including the ability to change the nature of the organization through its separate legal identity and potentially freeing it from some of the more bureaucratic constraints of being a local authority. The business case/business plan will no doubt identify these clearly. However, the downsides include:

- liability to VAT;
- corporation tax liability (unless an exemption can be found or charitable solution or LLP is formed) even where profits are reinvested;
- the need to file documentation at Companies House and comply with Company Law requirements;
- the need to avoid unlawful state aid;
- directors have duties to act in the best interest of the company and minimize conflicts of interest etc;
- there may still be links to parent authorities for equal pay purposes;
- an inability to devolve functions to a company completely;
- the application of controls on local authority companies eg Part V Local Government and Housing Act 1989 etc.



Another key element is the potential for the company to have to bid for work to its parent local authority. Whilst there are limited exemptions to the procurement rules, any trading entity established under s95 Local Government Act 2003 would need to tender for work in the same way as the private sector generally.

In respect of other companies the 'exclusive rights' exemption could be applied in some cases; or certain types of concession arrangement may be outside the requirements of the Regulations; or another option may be reliance upon the Teckal exemption, for wholly owned and controlled companies, which arises from case law. There was a long judgment outlining the requirements of the Teckal exemption as part of the Supreme Court appeal on the London Authorities Mutual Limited case, and this also commented on the Commission v Germany case (that considered the form of public sector collaboration in a waste project in Hamburg before procuring a private sector partner).

The Teckal exemption appears to mean many things to different people, however, the two legal requirements are as follows:

- it must satisfy the control test, that is a requirement to control the entity in the same way as if it were a department of the council/parent body; and
- the body must undertake the greater part of its activities for its parent/parents (in other words this can be an appropriate vehicle for shared services arrangements).

A Teckal company also has a number of other facets including:

- no private sector shareholding;
- no wide scale trading;
- geographical limitations;
- limitations in its constitution to demonstrate control; and
- control does not necessarily have to be proportionate to involvement ie different partners could have different levels of control so long as together they have control.

Additionally, a Teckal company may not be used with the intention in mind of being given contracts and then being "floated off" ie fattening up a public body for sale with public sector contracts. So a Teckal company is more of a 'community' focussed vehicle rather than a company set up purely to trade for commercial purposes under s95 Local Government Act 2003.

There are many types of companies outside of the Teckal and s95 companies mentioned above, including leisure trusts, housing companies, asset vehicles, economic regeneration vehicles, adult care companies, LIFT/PFI companies, Joint ventures/PPPs, social enterprises, mutuals and many more. Sometimes they have a name that does not necessarily fit their legal form eg we have seen so called 'local authority trading companies' rely upon the Teckal exemption, when in law the two are not compatible. Where an authority has aspirations for wide commercial trading as well as establishing a service delivery company, then it is often appropriate to establish two vehicles, one for each purpose in parallel to each other. While initially the companies may share some expertise, accommodation and resources, the aim should be for them to grow apart, relying upon their own resources, staff and support in due course. Any s95 trading company is required to pay commercial rates for staff, assets and other support provided by a local authority or local authority company, in order to avoid any state aid or competition law issues.

We would normally say that 'form follows function' and so before embarking upon any new venture, we would suggest there is a need to identify the outcomes sought and overall objectives you are hoping to achieve/secure; powers will then flow from the purposes. Other key questions include:

- what role will the organisation play?;
- what assets are involved and how will they be utilised?;
- are staff involved and will there be secondment or TUPE transfer?;
- what accountability and responsibility will there be back to the parent authority?;
- where will the money come from?;
- how will decisions be taken and who will the council's representatives be?;
- in what ways may the council exert influence, without constraining its operations?; and
- what exit provisions should be put in place.

Quite often the form of vehicle is a secondary consideration, rather than an end in itself and we would therefore advocate an appropriate options appraisal before thinking 'Oh I would like one of those'.

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Contact: *Judith Barnes, Partner, Head of Local Government*

*Denis Cooper, Senior Associate, Eversheds LLP*

# Unleash the power of the green economy

***In the midst of the doom and gloom that seems to have engulfed local government it may seem dreamlike to imagine a positive vision for the future but a new research report, written by APSE for public sector union UNISON, spells out how a greener future not only creates green jobs but boost local economies.***

The new research launched in October demonstrates the huge potential for councils to link efforts to combat climate change with the need to kick-start economic growth and create decent, and often very local, employment opportunities. The new green team: Local government, sustainable energy, jobs and skills which is supported by the TUC explores how councils can act as the local champion within a green local economy, particularly in the area of sustainable energy.

Nottingham, and Wrexham are just two examples of areas where sustainable energy projects are offering a way of both boosting ailing local economies and combating climate change. But such projects need to be properly and practically embraced at national and local level.

The term 'sustainable energy' is used to cover renewable energy from wind, solar, tidal, biomass and geothermal sources as well as energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation and energy efficient heating. Many councils recognise and want to contribute to issues such as fuel poverty. Being able to address such issues through schemes such as cavity and loft insulation not only reduces residents fuel bills but help to create local green jobs. At a council wide level energy efficiency can help to balance the books as energy spend represents an increasing proportion of corporate expenditure.

In this context our research surveyed both officers and elected members in councils across the UK and we were pleased to find a hugely positive attitude towards sustainable energy projects exists in local government. An overwhelming 99% of respondents said this would reduce their energy costs and 94% think there is an urgent need for such projects. And 82% believe the public in their area would be supportive of a high profile emphasis on sustainability and jobs growth through renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.

There are a number of all too real obstacles to achieving the full potential of sustainable energy at present however. For a start, the majority of respondents do not believe sufficient skills exist to respond to sustainable energy opportunities – and only 12% think the national

skills development programme is moving rapidly enough to equip people to meet green economy opportunities. With the global economy for green goods and services predicted to expand to £4.3trillion by 2015, the UK therefore needs to ensure political, professional, managerial, technical, trades and communications skills are in place to respond to opportunities this presents.

Considering the economic and environmental threats we face, it is also worrying that 94% of respondents think there is a need for closer links between environmental and economic policies nationally. Less than half believe there is sufficient strategic emphasis on the sustainable energy agenda at local level and lack of coherence between councils' environmental and economic policies was evident from the research. The recent announcements on changes to feed-in tariffs ( or FITs ) appears to exacerbate this issue.

If there were ever a case for a truly joined up approach to the problems we face, this is it. Our new research contains case studies that demonstrate how bringing together measures to reduce carbon emissions with efforts to create employment can be an engine for economic recovery. Yet levers such as the Feed in Tariff (FITs) are not working as they could for local government. Many schemes planned by the public sector based on the old FITs rates are now being reviewed in light of recent changes announced by Government which will reduce the financial benefits from those available on earlier schemes potentially hampering the viability of some schemes and with the changes brought forward to December 2011.

Uncertainty also surrounds the new Green Deal energy efficiency programme. The government needs to ensure the FITs regime provides clear incentives, and to work with local authorities to establish how the Green Deal can best operate to stimulate economic growth.

Local government leadership is also crucial. A total of 79% of survey respondents believe councils should have a direct delivery as well as a facilitation role in sustainable energy projects. The establishment of new green teams would be a fruitful alternative to cuts.



APSE's 'revolving fund' model, outlined in the report, shows how councils can provide income streams by tapping into renewable energy generation assistance packages. Although local authorities will be understandably cautious about any expenditure at the current time, our number-crunching proves such investment is ultimately self-funding.

Local and national government coming together for joint, practical actions to overcome barriers would enable sustainable energy projects to offer a long term, local solution to some of the economic as well as the environmental challenges we face globally. Councils are enthusiastic and have made a good start, but budgetary pressures, lack of knowledge and skills, the newly reduced FITs scheme and a lack of a joined up political vision for greening local economies are all thwarting the efforts of local councils.

*Paul O'Brien is chief executive of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and David Arnold is national policy officer at UNISON. The report *The new green team: Local government, sustainable energy, jobs and skills can be downloaded free of charge at [www.unison.co.uk](http://www.unison.co.uk)**



*Above: David Arnold discusses the new research at the APSE annual seminar in Bristol*

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## **Overweight? Feeling Bloated? Under performing? Do you need an effective solution in 2012?**



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# Proud to call it home

***West Lancashire Borough Council's new development shows that councils are well placed to build new homes quickly, efficiently and to the highest standards of sustainability, security and accessibility.***

Paul and Rebekah Scully moved into their new homes in Elmstead, Tanhouse in Skelmersdale and within days, they were welcoming a new addition to the family – baby Phoebe. The Scully family are among tenants in West Lancashire who are delighted to have taken possession of the first new council homes to be built in the borough for fifteen years.

These first four homes have been completed in a new development of 17 properties at Elmstead, Skelmersdale. The development comprises eight two-bedroomed houses, five three-bedroomed houses and four two-bedroomed bungalows.

Construction of the properties has been financed using £914,000 council funding and £807,000 national government funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. The scheme not only provides much-needed new homes for local people; the homes have been built to latest energy efficiency, accessibility and security standards to provide high quality, sustainable accommodation.

Councillor Val Hopley, portfolio holder for Landlord Services, said: 'We're delighted with the finished properties and pleased to see that our tenants love their new homes too. We've worked hard to ensure they are fit for purpose, environmentally sustainable and somewhere the new tenants are proud to call home.'

The properties have been built according to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 energy efficiency standards. The Code considers the effects on the environment caused by the development and occupation of a home. There are high levels of insulation to reduce amounts of energy needed heating and cooling the building, internal and external water saving measures, provision of good daylight quality and sound insulation.

Photovoltaic panels on the roof will generate electricity from the sun and a meter within the property will indicate how much electricity is being

generated and used. A highly energy efficient Class A combi-boiler will provide heat via radiators and hot water. Ventilation will be provided through a combination of natural and mechanical ventilation.

The combination of these energy efficiency measures are likely to mean lower fuel bills for tenants as well as reducing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

The new homes have revitalised a brownfield site in Skelmersdale. This was a site where youths had previously gathered and vandalism had been a problem. The scheme has been designed with 'Secure by Design' principles in mind including natural surveillance, good lighting, and elimination of hiding places. Planting adjacent to buildings has been kept low to allow views out of public areas from windows by residents. Safety has been improved through the introduction of footpaths around the new development and the new homes have off-street parking and defensible space.

The internal design of the new homes has been specified according to Lifetime Homes standards to allow for adaptability to meet future needs. This means that doorways, halls and rooms have been designed to take into consideration wheelchair maneuverability.

Door handles, locks, switches and sockets are positioned at a suitable height for all, including people in wheelchairs to reach.

The development has been built close to public transport routes to provide access to shops, local amenities and transport links. The site is located in an area ranked amongst the 10% most deprived nationally and the council is keen to ensure that local people have opportunities to access the job market and training opportunities. The contractor, appointed through a thorough tender process, is working in partnership with Skelmersdale Construction Academy to maximise training opportunities during the building programme.



The council is using its Homefinder system to advertise the new properties and, as expected, they have been extremely popular. Elected members agreed that people living in neighbourhoods near to Elmstead should be prioritised for allocation, so residents can remain close to family and friends, which helps ensure socially sustainable communities. Tanhouse Action Group residents' body has been supportive and open events enabled locals to find out more about the development and meet the consultants appointed to work on the project.

The council is hoping that people will 'downsize' from under-occupied larger properties. Councillor Val Hopley, portfolio holder for Landlord Services, said: 'In order to sustain the local community and integrate the new development into the local area, we have decided to give priority in the allocation of these homes to applicants with a local connection to the Tanhouse area. This will also give the opportunity for existing tenants to move to downsize which in turn will free up larger properties for other applicants or enable them to move to a property more suited to their needs.'

Direct development by the stock retaining local authority has enabled high quality, sustainable homes to be built in a way that responds to specific needs in a particular community. West Lancashire's strategic policy and projects manager, Louisa Blundell, said: 'Being a council project means we are in control and can work with other departments to overcome any issues that arise to make the project as fast and efficient as possible.'

Planning permission was granted in April 2010 and construction work began in January 2011. The final phase of the scheme is due for completion prior to Christmas 2011.

Contact: Louisa Blundell, Strategic Policy and Projects Manager at West Lancashire Borough Council

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*Below: West Lancashire councillors welcome families to their new Council homes in Tanhouse, Skelmersdale*



# Report back

## *A round up of APSE advocacy and events on behalf of our members*

October and November proved busy months for APSE with a range of conferences, meetings and advocacy activity on behalf of APSE members.

## England

### Wake up to Wakefield

APSE northern hosted a special event on street scene services which saw over 60 delegates attend a forum hosted by Wakefield Councils' streetscene and environmental team. Amongst the best practice shared was innovation on litter and garden clearances, working with partners, including health, police and fire bodies and engaging staff and the public in change.

For details on future APSE northern events, which are usually free to attend please email Mo Baines on [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk)

### Ready for Winter?

Bradford hosted a special winter maintenance forum for APSE northern councils exploring preparedness for severe winter weather. As well as looking at how council's handled the past severe winters councils learnt about new and developing techniques and technologies, including salt spread differentials dependent on sea level which were informing local responses. For more details on future winter maintenance events please contact Phil Brennan on [pbrennan@apse.org.uk](mailto:pbrennan@apse.org.uk). See the full report on pages 8-11 of this edition of direct news.

### No rush to outsource

Paul O'Brien attended a Public Finance roundtable event on behalf of APSE with public sector colleagues to debate the future of outsourcing. Not unsurprisingly concerns shared by the discussants centred on the speed with which public sector reform was needed and how outsourcing is a relative slow process by which to respond. APSE pointed out whichever models of delivery are proposed by councils the need to place public value at the heart of service delivery was crucial as well as ensuring value for money and local accountability.

### Yorkshire stone

The historic City of York hosted APSE's national housing and building maintenance seminar 2011 with speakers including Mark Johnson of Nottingham City Homes, Ian Douglas of South Lanarkshire and Martin Nicholls of Swansea. The debates focussed on responding to how services could deliver improvement and efficiencies in the current economic climate.

### Health and safety

York also hosted a special one day event on health and safety issues with the Health and Safety Executive addressing delegates on a cross service basis focussing on risk minimisation and a whole organisation approach to health and safety. Eversheds and Balfour Beatty provided expertise from both a legal and industry perspective.

### Spotlight on sports development

Manchester City's newly named Etihad stadium hosted a major APSE one day event on the future of UK sports development with speakers from Sport England, CLOA, Edgehill and Southampton Universities, as well as local authority speakers from Manchester, Salford, Lancashire Sports Partnership, Broxtowe and Birmingham.

### Show me the money

The 12 October saw APSE's chief executive Paul O'Brien present at a public sector income generation event at the Barbican Centre London on how local councils are delivering innovative solutions to efficiencies through income generation.

Continuing the theme the 20 October saw Paul attend a conference on estate management transformation at Porticullis House, Westminster to explore how better realisation of property portfolios, and better management of public sector assets, could release £15 billion of property related savings from space utilisation, maintenance and better productivity.

### The future's bright. The future's green.

APSE environment seminar was held on the 2 November once again at the Stoke Moat House. Guest speakers included DEFRA and Keep Britain Tidy. Despite the budget reductions in environmental services that many have experienced delegates were upbeat about moving towards greener service delivery and reconfiguring services to meet the financial challenges that they face. Presentations from the event are now on the APSE website or contact Debbie Johns for more details on [djohns@apse.org.uk](mailto:djohns@apse.org.uk)

### Time to party

APSE attended both the Conservative and Labour Party Conferences hosting or speaking at fringe events and forums

On Monday 3 October 2011, the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) hosted a working lunch at the Conservative Party Conference, bringing together a number of experts to discuss the leadership challenges facing public services. The participants were senior figures from a range of backgrounds including APSE assistant chief executive Mark Bramah who contributed to the wide-ranging discussion.

Cllr Paul Findlow, Chair of the APSE Strategic Forum on Communities, Neighbourhoods and Localism, hosted a forum event also on Monday 3 October during the Conservative conference and amongst the topics raised were defining what is meant by localism as well as some practical examples of dealing with engagement within rural communities. Concerns were also raised about effectively tackling planning issues particularly in the light of recent changes to planning regimes.

Labour party conference saw APSE attend fringe events on housing and environmental issues. APSE pressed the case for a fair review of feed-in-tariffs so that the public sector is not disadvantaged by the gains made by private developers. APSE advocated local government should be able to maximise local economic gain from green technologies.



## Fit review

APSE has written to the Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, Greg Barker MP to urge a delay on the implementation of changes to feed in tariffs until closer to the original date of 31 March 2012 or alternatively to provide an exemption for public sector schemes already underway.

## Wales

### Yes Sargeant

APSE met with the Welsh Local Government Minister Carl Sargeant on 22 September 2011. APSE pressed for further discussion on a number of areas including the way in which local government responds to the collaborative and shared services agenda. APSE also updated the Minister on the APSE Wales research on shared services which will provide member authorities in Wales with the practical knowledge to respond proactively to the collaboration agenda and appraise the options for future service delivery. This research is being conducted by APSE in partnership with De Montfort University and will be finalised in December 2011.

## Scotland

### There is nothing soft about FM services

APSE hosted a soft Facilities Management seminar on 2 November 2011 which was well attended by delegates from across Scottish Councils. Speakers included Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for local government and planning, at the Scottish Government, Ian Ellison, Senior Lecturer, from Sheffield Business School, and Ian Waddell, Managing Director, Tayside Contracts.

The seminar addressed a range of issues including the future outlook for local government, an overview of Facilities Management Services, service delivery options and delivering services across boundaries. See the APSE website for presentations.

### Out performing in Scotland

Two performance networks development sessions were held in Scotland. The first session was held on 26 October 2011 and was for employees who provide building and housing services. The second event which was held on the 11 of November 2011 was for Soft FM professionals. Again both events were well attended and addressed a range of issues associated with the need for quality performance information in order to demonstrate competitiveness in the delivery of local government services.

## Northern Ireland

### Castlewellan hosts fleet management and maintenance conference

Castlewellan in Down hosted a conference on fleet management and maintenance issues with speakers from the

transportation regulation unit of the DOE in Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council. APSE associate Chris Frake led discussions on performance improvement whilst Ciaran McClintock of Consilium Technologies addressed delegates about the benefits of using integrated technologies.

## Get your submissions in for the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards 2011

Northern Ireland Awards for 2011 winners will be announced at a special awards event on 23 February 2012 at the NILGA annual conference which will be held at the Hilton Hotel Templepatrick. For details about submissions please contact Phil Brennan at APSE on pbrennan@apse.org.uk. The submission deadline is 9 December 2011 so get your skates on...!

*Pictured:*

*Ciaran McLintock of  
Consilium  
Technologies*



*Aileen Campbell,  
Minister for local  
government and  
planning*



*Below: Delegates at  
the recent APSE  
northern event in  
Wakefield*



# Teenage kicks

***Helen Beaman of Hartlepool's Environment team explains why they have taken a new approach to tackling youth littering!***



Faced with increasing costs, political and community pressure and a desire to make a commitment for lasting change, Hartlepool Borough Council's Waste and Environmental Services section has come up with an innovative approach to tackling the problem of litter around schools and along school routes.

Like many local authorities, Hartlepool has suffered litter problems in the areas around secondary schools and in particular along routes where pupils walk into the school. This problem intensifies in schools where pupils are allowed to eat out at lunchtime and a stream of pizza boxes, chip trays and cans litter the paths and hedges from the takeaways to the school gates.

In the past Hartlepool has tried a vast range of educational and practical approaches to try to change the behaviours of this age group, from interactive seminars to litter picking sessions, but whilst pupils knew that littering was an offence this did little to make them change their behaviour as it was widely accepted that legislation would not be used. Extra resources were allocated for bins and increased cleansing regimes in these areas in order to try to maintain levels of cleanliness.

With the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act and the use of fixed penalty notices for environmental crimes, the authority considered issuing these to juvenile offenders but this

was met with strong opposition from all quarters as it was not felt to be a reasonable approach for a relatively minor offence. Hartlepool tried targeted action using 'warnings' which were sent to parents, but again the 'weakness' of this threat made it ineffective.

In 2010 the authority decided to look again at developing an approach to tackling juvenile litter crime, it was decided that a stronger 'stick' was needed to make any impact and all were in agreement that fixed penalty notices or further environmental legislation had to be used. The key to doing this successfully was to show that all reasonable steps had been taken before this and that the use of legislation was a final resort.

Craig Thelwell Waste and Environmental Services manager said "I was certain that education was still needed. Following previous initiatives we knew that the juvenile courts viewed littering as a relatively minor crime and were reluctant to support a programme where youths who perpetrated this relatively minor crime may have to face the trauma of a court appearance.

Following the attendance of one of the team on the 'National Speed Awareness' course for a minor speeding offence, a new idea emerged of using education as an alternative reprimand for first time offenders. When caught littering, youths between 10-17 years old could have the option of attending an awareness course or to pay the fixed penalty notice."

As environmental educators, the team were determined that the course must make some difference and would not just be sessions where attendees sat and switched off. A carefully thought out programme has been developed lasting 90 minutes (which is felt to be an appropriate length to be a punishment but not too long so that attention spans are exceeded). The course is held straight after school and, where possible, at the secondary school the offender attends.

Helen Beaman Senior Environment Officer adds "We wanted to make the most of the 90 minutes 'captive time' that we had and so developed a fun and very interactive course which looks at why people litter as well as looking at the potential impacts, we have also used research into youth littering in order to maximise results".



Jo Taylor, Schools Environmental Project Officer, says "We wanted a course that not only pricked their consciences but also wanted to hear their views on problems and potential solutions in order to give them a sense of empowerment and involvement in making changes."

The option of attending a litter awareness course as an alternative to payment of a fixed penalty notice is now offered only once every 3 years to offenders. Those caught re-offending within this time period will be served with a fixed penalty notice. Failure to pay the fixed penalty notice results in court actions and a summary conviction, and a fine of up to £2,500.

The pilot programme commenced in Hartlepool in October 2010, a total of eight courses were run throughout the academic year. 83% of 10-17 year olds that were caught littering attended one of the courses whilst a number of others chose to pay the fixed penalty notice.

This alternative approach has been extremely well received in Hartlepool where it has been developed with support from the community, schools, politicians, youth offending team and the youth magistrates court.

The feedback from the courses has been extremely positive:

"Enforcement is an effective way to tackle the problem of littering but the real key to prevent people dropping litter in the first place is education. The Litter Awareness Course has already had a hugely positive impact on young people and their perceptions of the environment." (Mayor of Hartlepool)

"Our Litter Awareness Course has been very successful in training and educating 10-17 year olds who drop

litter. The course is based on the principles of why they dropped litter in the first place and the consequences of so doing.

It is delivered by our in house team and receives support from our Environmental Enforcement Team and school staff. I am a big believer in that people should face the consequences of their actions but this educational model has shown me that there needs to be a complimentary approach as well as fining young people.

I would recommend this scheme to all schools in the Region." (Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Hartlepool Borough Council)

"I think that the course is an excellent idea in backing up the work of the litter wardens and trying to educate the students rather than a heavy handed approach in the first instance. I have noticed a drop in the number of complaints I receive from local residents which again is a good indicator. I will fully support the initiative and look forward to working together in the future." (Secondary School Teacher)

"The course is important and backs the College as we have the same beliefs. It is no problem at all organising a night or two and we would support future courses." (Secondary School Teacher)

For further information on the course or to order a course pack please contact the Environmental Action Team on 01429 523358 or email [helen.beaman@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:helen.beaman@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Contact: [joanne.taylor@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.taylor@hartlepool.gov.uk)



# Class of 2011: The Apprentices

**Lord Alan Sugar is not the only one to value apprentices as the APSE apprentice awards 2011 amply demonstrate the value local councils place on their apprentices.**

**T**he APSE apprentices class of 2011 provided a stunning showcase to the value of apprenticeships. From school leavers seeking out their first career to professional soldiers looking to a new career back in civilian life, the 2011 apprentice awards saw some fantastic entrants from across the UK.

## **Building up to be a winner!**

First up in October the historic City of York set the scene for the APSE Building and Construction Apprentice Awards which recognised the winners from a competition of local authority apprentices from building and construction trades.

Speaking about the awards, APSE National Chair, Cllr Jim Docherty said 'Apprenticeships are so important to both local councils and their communities. Skilling local people with good trades sustains both local employment and high standards in building and construction'.

The APSE awards also recognise the development of women in construction by encouraging and rewarding those councils that have strived to ensure there are women apprentices across different trades.

Cllr Docherty added "When we see increasing unemployment that blights our communities I would encourage all local councils to see what they can offer in terms of apprenticeship places to both young people and older workers who may need to consider a change in career".

The winners in each category for Building and construction went to:-

## **Male Building Skills kindly sponsored by UCATT:**

Billy Adams, a joiner from Kirklees Council.

## **Female Building Skills kindly sponsored by Trukrax Vehicle Racking Systems:**

Katie Redden, a joiner from Dumfries and Galloway Council

## **Male Mechanical and electrical kindly sponsored by APSE:**

Matthew Derbyshire, an electrician from Nottingham City Homes.

## **Female Mechanical and electrical kindly sponsored by Consilium Technologies:**

Lynne Fox, an electrician from Fife Council

## **Green shoots of success**

Next up the Best Western Moat House hosted the Horticulture Finalists 2011 on the 1 and 2 November.

Nordic Pioneer sponsored the horticulture apprentice award and presenting the awards Paul O'Brien APSE's Chief Executive said that this years finalists 'were an outstanding example of why the public value public parks and open spaces' he added 'the commitment to the work by these apprentices is awesome. They do not treat their work as simply a job but as a creative enterprise in which they take pride'.

## **The winner for APSE Horticulture Apprentice of the Year is**

Paul Thompson Gough, Kirklees Council.

## **Driving up standards**

Not to be outdone by the Horticulture Apprentices the **APSE Transport Apprentices** once again revved up the success of their own category with some excellent entrants to the awards for 2011. The judging panel commented that their task in choosing a winner was made all the more difficult by the sheer technical knowledge and skills that the apprentices bring to the awards.

The finalists for 2011 saw their category once again **sponsored by Faun Zoeller** who have generously offered the category finalists a working visit to their manufacturing plant in Germany.

The lucky winner was Gemma Hadden, of Newcastle City Council who will be joined on the visit by the other finalists.

Contact: [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk)

*Pictured below: Paul Thompson Gough of Kirklees Council*





# A money problem shared...

The trade charity for anyone working in parks, grounds care and all other areas of horticulture is Perennial, and the charity's casework team is here to offer expert advice on a whole range of issues – in particular with debt and money matters. Help is entirely free for anyone who is working or has worked in landscaping or any other horticultural profession - and is only a phone call away.

Perennial's support begins just as soon as you get in touch and, depending on your particular circumstances, is likely to include:

- A home visit from a friendly, non-judgemental professional who will help you to understand your true situation and possibly prepare a financial statement.
- A telephone conversation with a qualified debt adviser who will assess your situation and talk through your options to agree a way forward.
- With your permission Perennial can negotiate with your creditors or if you prefer, will help you do this for yourself by providing the support and information that you need.

- Perennial will help you to challenge unfair or illegal financial practices and if you are faced with court action will act as your representative.

- Perennial's debt advisers are qualified debt relief order intermediaries, so can help you with DRO or bankruptcy paperwork, arrange court dates and attend with you. A Perennial grant may be available to meet the court fees.

- Perennial's casework team can help you to look at ways of maximising your income, minimising your expenditure and working out a household budget so that you can stay debt free.

If you, a colleague or employee needs help with debt or money issues, contact Perennial's debt advice team on 0800 2 044 244 (free from land lines), 0845 676 0623 or email [debtadvice@perennial.org.uk](mailto:debtadvice@perennial.org.uk). Visit [www.perennial.org.uk](http://www.perennial.org.uk) for information on the charity's advice and support service, and to see how you can support Perennial.

## How Perennial helped...

Mr G had been a groundsman since leaving school. Perennial became involved with him when he separated from his wife and obtained residency of his 3 year old daughter; at this point he had become homeless and was living in local authority temporary accommodation. He was finally awarded a tenancy by the council, but although he was working full time and in receipt of all the correct benefits, he was finding it hard to purchase all the items that were needed for his house. Perennial's case worker stepped in and raised enough money to purchase kitchen appliances and completely furnish his daughter's bedroom. There was also enough money to buy his daughter some badly needed clothes.

With this start up help Mr G was able to continue furnishing his home comfortably. The case worker kept in touch with Mr G, and when he was having difficulties paying for his winter electricity bill Perennial made a grant to cover the costs. Mr G and his daughter are now back on their feet and Mr G has been able to carry on working to support himself and his daughter.



# APSE people pages...

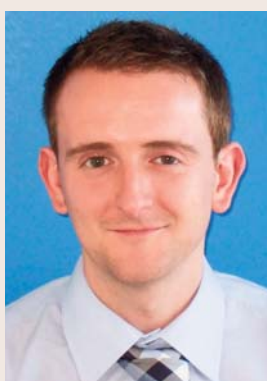
It's goodbye from her and its goodbye from him.....



## Alex Gardiner

Alex Gardiner, client coordination officer for APSE's interim management and consultancy services has landed a new role with New Economy, which is one of the six Association of Manchester Authorities (AGMA) commissions which were established in 2009.

New Economy leads on economic development for the Manchester City Region and its priorities include creating better life chances in the most deprived areas, increasing high level skills and attracting and retaining talent. Alex will specifically be working on an initiative aiming to boost the area's employment and skill levels. A further aim of the initiative is to provide expert analysis to identify where demand is not currently being met and to predict future market trends. Alex will combine her project responsibilities as part of Greater Manchester's 14-19 agenda and provide administrative support to the Director of Skills and Employment.



## Gary Mooney

Meanwhile in APSE's Scotland office Gary Mooney our research and advisory group officer will take on a new challenge as a Regional Procurement Analyst at Scotland Excel.

Scotland Excel is the the Centre of Procurement Expertise for Scotland's local government sector and if of course an APSE member as well!

Gary's new role will focus on developing and maintaining positive business relationships with local authorities, initiating and providing support for local and regional collaborative procurement and reform initiatives, providing analysis and reporting, and maintaining a communication link between local authorities and colleagues within Scotland Excel.

These are exciting new challenge for Alex and Gary and whilst we are sad to see them go they take our very best wishes with them from all at APSE.

## APSE briefing notes update

Briefing notes and research reports produced since the last issue of Direct News

11-63	Scottish Government economic strategy	November 2011
11-62	Transport state of the market survey	November 2011
11-61	Scottish Government spending review and draft budget	November 2011
11-60	Future of public audits	November 2011
11-59	Waste collection in alleyways	October 2011
11-58	Performance networks and new frameworks	October 2011

For more information on the briefing notes and research reports, contact the APSE office on 0161 772 1810 or visit our website at [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk)



# Events diary

Date	Event	Location
December 06	Catering and Cleaning supervisory skills for team leaders	Edinburgh ●
December 7	Renewables and Climate Change advisory group	YHA Manchester ●
December 8	NI Parks, Open spaces and Cemeteries seminar	Craigavon ●
December 9	National council meeting	Dublin ●
December 13	Cemeteries and Crematoria Seminar	City of London Cemetery ●
December 12	Tools for efficiencies in street cleansing	Manchester ●
December 14	Tools for efficiencies in building cleaning	Birmingham ●
December 15	Supervisory skills in Leisure	Birmingham ●
January 10	Building Maintenance Advisory Group	Manchester Town Hall ●
January 11	Highways Advisory Group	Manchester Town Hall ●
January 11	LLD Streetscene	Southampton ●
January 12	Service improvement advisory group	Manchester Town Hall ●
January 12	Wales building cleaning advisory group	Llandrindod Wells ●
January 13	Catering and Cleaning advisory Group	Manchester Town Hall ●
January 13	Scottish Waste and Recycling advisory group	Glasgow ●
January 13	Managing parks: Fight or Flight?	Manchester ●
January 15	Catering and cleaning supervisory skills	Cardiff ●
January 17	Leisure advisory Group	Manchester Town Hall ●
January 17	Accident investigation masterclass	West Lothian ●
January 18	Customer care for Olympic games authorities	Central London ●
January 19	<b>One Day Policy Seminar</b>	Harrogate ●
January 19	APSE Full association meeting	Edinburgh ●
January 25 / 26	<b>APSE Facilities Management Seminar</b>	Chester Crown Plaza Hotel ●

## Contacts

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