

# apse direct news

Association for Public Service Excellence • January / February • ISSN 16465-2493

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# Learning to value your town centre assets

A nighttime photograph of a town square. The central focus is a tall, ornate clock tower with a glowing clock face. The tower and surrounding historic buildings are illuminated with warm yellow and orange lights. The buildings have many windows, some of which are lit up. In the foreground, there is a large body of water, possibly a fountain or a pond, which reflects the lights from the buildings and the clock tower. The sky is a deep blue, suggesting dusk or dawn. The overall scene is vibrant and captures the architectural beauty of the town center.

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

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## Editorial

### High Energy

A recent Npower report argued that UK consumers could cut their energy bills if their children learned to turn off their lights, TVs and iPods. The report also claimed that the higher charges were down to Government not industry, claiming that eco-schemes were driving up costs. Whilst the cost issues raised by Npower are clearly controversial, one thing which I did find myself in agreement with was the reference in the report to bills being high because UK housing is old and not insulated.

This to me summarises why local authorities need to be at the heart of both the debate and action on energy. There is little point in developing cheaper energy and then having that energy wasted through porous housing stock, seeping energy into the atmosphere, rather than creating warmer homes.

The lack of a holistic response to the energy crisis is one of the reasons that APSE members have come together to develop 'APSE Energy' which you can read about on pages 12 and 13 of this edition of **direct news**. Local authorities hold both the assets and the strategic capability to drive real partnerships to develop municipal energy schemes. Whether these schemes are to develop wind or solar energy, waste to energy schemes, ensure local residents get a fair deal on energy prices or to develop comprehensive schemes, to address old and draught-riddled housing, through insulation and better heating systems, it is now timely for UK local authorities to be heard in the energy debate.

APSE has written to Ed Davey, the Energy Minister, arguing that changes to ECO announced in December 2013 have had a dramatic, and regressive, impact upon the funding available for public sector housing retrofit programmes which could help address energy prices, and fuel poverty, for many in our communities. A number of APSE member authorities have concluded that as a result of the changes they will now be unable to implement a programme of planned improvements, including external wall insulation and the regeneration of tower blocks, and similar properties. At the same time members are reporting to APSE that Energy Companies are either not considering any new funding requests for ECO or have massively scaled back such funding and are reviewing their future commitments.

This is a regrettable situation. APSE believes that improving insulation and energy efficiency of homes is a vital prerequisite of ensuring a more balanced and affordable energy market in the longer term and reducing CO2 emissions in order to meet national and international commitments on carbon reduction. We are rarely in agreement with major utility companies on energy matters but it has to be said that Npower and APSE are in agreement on one thing at least - which is that UK homes leak energy! And that is something which APSE wants to see addressed through both action and funding to secure warmer homes.

Best wishes

*Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive*

# Lesley Griffiths AM, Welsh Government Minister for Local Government and Government Business

*Lesley Griffiths was elected to the National Assembly for Wales in May 2007 and served on several Assembly Committees. In December 2009, she was appointed Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills. Following re-election to the National Assembly for Wales in May 2011, Lesley was appointed Minister for Health and Social Services and in March 2013 she took up her current local government portfolio.*



Above: Cllr Tracey Dixon

The Budget announced by the Welsh Government in December was the toughest yet. Wales has not faced this scale of financial austerity since devolution. The cuts imposed by the UK Government are deep and lasting, and are now biting into public services for people right across Wales.

Local Government in Wales has received cash increases over the past three years, reflecting the commitment of Welsh Ministers to protect our Local Authorities from the worst of the cuts in England. This extra support from the Welsh Government means council tax levels in Wales are around £230 lower than in England.

Whilst it has not been possible to extend this protection into 2014/15, the impact has been constrained to a relatively modest average reduction of 3.4%. I urge Local Authorities to manage this reduction without passing on the burden of costs as higher council taxes. Families and households have already felt the impact of shrinking pay packets and reduced benefits for long enough. This is a fair settlement and I look to Local Authorities to set a positive agenda for the long-term future of their communities.

However, it is no longer tenable to carry on as before. A whole range of factors such as financial austerity, pressures on services, rising public expectations and an ageing population demands a complete transformation of the way public services are delivered.

The only way public services can survive and prosper is if we move rapidly to intervene earlier when things begin to go wrong. Small investments up front can relieve the pressure on more costly services. This not only reduces the demand for acute services, it can have a dramatic effect on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Despite the progress which has been made on collaboration between public services, more needs to be done and done at pace. It means a step change in the way Local Authorities plan and implement change, in partnership with key public service providers such as health, the police, the Third Sector

and, of course, service users themselves.

Last summer, I visited all 22 Local Authorities in Wales to meet front line staff, service users and their families. In September I published a prospectus of 35 case studies of best practice from the projects I visited. I have received very positive feedback on this publication, which is available on the Welsh Government website.

These case studies show Local Authorities being innovative and providing the leadership necessary to bring about change. This often means brokering extensive collaboration with other service providers, including the Third Sector, and taking an entrepreneurial approach to service delivery.

It also means designing services with users and their families, rather than for them, and giving front line staff the flexibility to respond in the best interests of service users. Sometimes the smallest thing can make a great difference. At the Serennu Children's Centre in Newport, £250 was spent by staff on 'dressing up clothes', so children with complex disabilities could learn to dress themselves confidently. A small price for such a valuable result.

A number of themes emerged from my visits. I visited eleven integrated health and social care facilities which repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of services joining up. At the Awel y Coleg Extra Care Housing Scheme in Bala, I saw a scheme which supports people to live independently, whilst giving them peace of mind 24 hour a day care is

available if needed. It is a complex of 30 flats with state of the art amenities including communal areas, restaurant, hairdresser, computer lounge, guest rooms and garden. In other words, a real community, where people's resilience and independence is fostered and their dignity respected.

To promote this approach, the Welsh Government has announced a £50 million Intermediate Care Fund for 2014-15, which brings together the Local Government, Housing and Regeneration portfolios and Health and Social Services to accelerate effective working across health, social services and housing.

I also saw a number of facilities for children and adults with disabilities, such as Park House in Neath Port Talbot and Parkway in Swansea. Their focus is on joining up services around both service users and carers. I heard first hand from some of our most vulnerable people how effective

these services were.

Leisure centres are receiving a lot of attention in the context of financial austerity. I visited three such centres in Caerphilly, Pembrokeshire and Merthyr Tydfil. What struck me was the range of uses they are now put to, such as the National Exercise Referral and the Cardiac Rehabilitation Schemes. These enable GPs to prescribe a recovery programme of fully supervised exercise sessions over 16 weeks. The programme can also be used for the management of conditions such as osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity and mental health issues. It is vital different public services make the most of these facilities in such innovative and valuable ways.

As I write, the Welsh Government has recently received the report and recommendations of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, chaired by Sir Paul Williams. This report is the

most in depth review of public service delivery in Wales in over a decade. It makes a raft of recommendations, not least in relation to the structures of Local Government.

Whilst it is too early yet for the Government to give its considered response, it is clear change is absolutely necessary. I urge Local Authorities not to be distracted during this period of change. It is essential we continue to focus relentlessly on protecting our public services, which our most vulnerable individuals and communities rely on heavily to maintain the quality of their lives.

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

Email [djohns@apse.org.uk](mailto:djohns@apse.org.uk) (Debbie Johns, APSE principal advisor for Wales)

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# High street wise

**Latest research published by APSE shows how wise use of local authority assets can help respond to the crisis facing the UK's town centres. APSE's chief executive, Paul O'Brien, and Neil McInroy, chief executive of research partner CLES, discuss its findings**

**W**hile there has been no shortage of reviews and initiatives attempting to breath new life into the UK's ailing high streets, a missing link has been recognition of the important role local authority assets can play in revitalising town centres.

Local authority property assets in England alone are worth £250bn and councils collectively own two thirds of all public sector property assets in the UK. The roll call of council assets includes theatres, art galleries, cinemas, airports and sport stadia as well as the town halls, civic centres, schools, leisure centres and other facilities readily identified with local government.

Local authorities have an economic development remit plus planning powers. As democratically elected stewards, they are uniquely placed to bring together partners from the public, commercial and social sectors, lever in resources and create local employment and economic multiplier effects as well as having operational responsibilities in town centres.

An appreciation of the value of local authority assets has been conspicuous by its absence from current approaches to the crisis facing the UK's high streets however. National responses have tended to marginalise local government from policy-making, place too much emphasis on retail and encourage councils to dispose of their assets. We believe that, while councils must be efficient in the use of their assets, instead of disposing of them, it can make more sense to ensure they are able to achieve their full potential.

A new report, published APSE and based on work by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), demonstrates the strategic, place-making, economic, social and environmental benefits local government assets bring to town centres. The role and value of local authority assets in town centres, includes a 'matrix' for measuring and maximising the potential of local authority assets to help address town centre problems. The matrix is applied to case studies in the report, which demonstrate the significance of councils' diverse asset base. This is clear evidence that local authority assets are integral to ensuring a viable future for our high streets.

Central government needs to recognise the role of local authority assets in responding to the perilous state of the nation's town and city centres. Local authorities themselves can take tangible steps to ensure the benefits of their assets are maximised. The report provides a series of recommendations including:

- ♦ Local authority assets in town centres should be used as hubs for delivery of services from a multitude of partners in the public, commercial and social sectors in order to cut costs, reduce duplication and enable services to be delivered in a joined up manner.
- ♦ Local authorities need to engage cross-sector stakeholders in realising the potential of assets and highlight the importance of effective asset utilisation to wider objectives in corporate and community strategies.

- ♦ Councils should promote the historical importance of their town centres and assets they own within them as a means of attracting specialist cultural events, investment and visitors.

- ♦ Town centres should be viewed as 'systems' that require involvement from different organisations and sectors and councils can develop consortia involving the public sector, retailers, investors and the voluntary and community sector to develop town centre strategies.

- ♦ Business Improvement Districts or investment vehicles are a good a means of rejuvenating town centres and attracting resource.

- ♦ Local authorities need to measure and evidence the economic benefits their assets bring to town centres in order to demonstrate their importance and effectiveness.

- ♦ Local authorities and the wider public sector should also develop comprehensive registers of their assets including details of their value and wider economic benefit.

## ASSETS IN ACTION

- ♦ The council owned town hall, county hall and two major arts and cultural venues are a key aspect of Ballymena's economic regeneration, resulting in a 12% increase in tourist trips over two years. With 67% of Ballymena Borough Council staff resident in the town, £6.1m in net wages also provides a massive input to the local economy.

- ♦ Multiplier effects be seen in Neath Port Talbot, with staff from the County Borough Council's civic centre spending £4.4m in the town centre annually and local authority assets attracting almost 100,000 visitors in a single year.

- ♦ Southampton City Council has used its buildings for sustainable energy projects as part of a successful green city strategy, which is driving economic development. This example also shows how valuing the public realm assets and functionality of central locations can yield rewards. Every £1 spent on public realm improvements in Southampton centre has prompted £5 investment and 1,200 jobs have been created as a result.

- ♦ The potential relocation of West Dunbartonshire Council civic facilities to Dumbarton is driving ambitious regeneration plans for the town centre and local authority assets are being used to help develop residents' skills and employability.

**The role and value of local authority assets in town centres can be ordered from APSE priced at £20 for APSE members and £40 for non-members. Contact Wai Lee on [wlee@apse.org.uk](mailto:wlee@apse.org.uk)**

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# Raising the standard of resource management

*When it comes to public services that really matter to people, there are few things that can rival the humble bin collection explains Zero Waste Scotland.*

Just weeks into 2014, resource management issues concerning householders and businesses alike are already making the headlines. Debates around domestic bin sizes and frequency of bin collections have already received widespread coverage in national media. In the commercial sector, the onset of 2014 also brought a major development for businesses in Scotland with the introduction of the new Waste (Scotland) Regulations which require all businesses, large and small, to separate plastic, glass, metal, paper and card for recycling. Many food businesses are also required to separate their food waste due to the new laws, which came into effect on 1st January.

With waste issues currently so high on the agenda, expectations have never been higher for resource management organisations to deliver a first class service to customers. With these growing pressures in mind, Zero Waste Scotland, the organisation leading the delivery of the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan, has devised a new quality standard for the resource management sector that aims to help organisations improve their service to customers and play a role in driving Scotland towards becoming a zero waste society.

## **A new quality standard for resource management**

Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment is a voluntary initiative for local authorities, private and third sector waste management businesses that want to stand out as exemplars by demonstrating a commitment to providing a high quality service to customers and supporting Scotland's zero waste ambitions. The scheme is intended to be like a kite mark for resource management service providers showing that the organisation is aiming to deliver excellent customer service, is committed to continuous improvement and is working with businesses to help them reduce waste and be more resource efficient.

Zero Waste Scotland's Director Iain Gulland hopes the scheme will help promote best practice in the sector: "Signing up to Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment is a way for organisations to show their customers and stakeholders that they are operating at the highest level of customer service. It's a seal of quality that gives providers and contractors who are committed to excellence a way of standing out from their competitors and peers, and to gain recognition for their efforts to support the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan."

Organisations that sign up are asked to do a number of things to show their commitment, including:

- Providing customers with high-quality recycling services, which are supported by clear communications and are consistent with legal requirements and good practice.
- Giving advice on preventing waste and using resources efficiently
- Putting systems in place for customer feedback, and using this to improve their services.
- Making sure contracts and charging structures are clear, reasonable and well managed.

## **Benefits of signing up**

Organisations signing up to Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment can benefit in a number of ways. Becoming a signatory means the organisation is clearly demonstrating its commitment to Scotland's zero waste ambitions, and all signatories receive a logo that can be used on marketing and promotional material that show customers and partners that they are committed to best practice. All signatories can access support and advice from Zero Waste Scotland and are profiled in our online Business Resource Centre.

A wide range of organisations have already signed up, including Biffa, Binn Waste, Changeworks, EIS Waste Services, Lowmac, North Ayrshire Council, Shanks, South Ayrshire Council, SWR Waste Management, Valpac, Viridor and William Tracey. Many more organisations are also currently working through the application process.

Garry Moore, Biffa's Regional Director Manager for Scotland and Northern Ireland explains why Biffa wanted to sign up: "Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment is completely aligned with Biffa's vision of a zero waste society. We help our customers identify why waste is arising in the first place, and establish good practice to ensure the most value is recovered from unavoidable waste streams.

"We invest a great deal of time to help our customers work towards zero waste and implement the most suitable systems so that recycling is made easy. Depending on the materials collected for recycling, in some cases it's even possible to provide a rebate back to the customer so they're saving money on their net waste costs too."



Signing up to the initiative is not just about the initial pledge around customer service, as the scheme will also encourage signatories to turn their focus to other key areas affecting the sector. Signatories are part of an ongoing programme of adopting industry best practice which will focus on areas such as improving resource quality and safety in the sector in the near future. Health and safety is a major area of focus for the resource management sector, as the industry currently has a very poor record. Statistics from a UK waste industry report compiled for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) showed in 2001/02 that the number of fatal incidents was over 10 times the national average and accident rates were four times the national average.

### Health and safety training support

To help address the safety of the sector in Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland is working with partners to create a forum to identify key issues, share ideas and promote best practice. The forum brings together partners from all areas of the resource management sector to work collaboratively to raise standards regarding health and safety, training, learning and development, and technical competence.

Public, private and third sector partners are all encouraged to join the forum, and the inaugural meeting will be held on March 7th. The new forum will link to the UK-wide WISH initiative, which works to identify and draw up solutions and guidance to health and safety issues within the industry which is published through the HSE website.



The forum will work to create a stronger culture of education, training and learning in the resource management industry.

For Iain Gulland, these kinds of measures are vital to achieving the Scottish Government's bold resource efficiency targets: "Schemes like these are all about promoting excellence in the industry. We are working to ensure 70% of waste is recycled by 2025, with just 5% going to landfill. Waste management contractors play such a huge role in helping to achieve that, so it's essential that the industry is evolving and developing in order to meet these new challenges. By helping partners focus on areas like customer service and safety, these schemes provide a way to do that, and also to communicate it back to customers as well."

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*Contact: For more information about Zero Waste Scotland, Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment and the new health & safety forum, visit the Zero Waste Scotland Website at [www.zerowastescotland.org.uk](http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk) or call 01786 433 930.*



# Nu-phalt Contracting - Building on our success

Over the last 7 years Nu-phalt has built a strong client base covering Council Highways requirements the length and breadth of the UK. During this time, we have listened, reacted and delivered a wide range of competitive services to drive value to highways budgets; this has been achieved during a very financially challenging time for the industry.

To meet and support an ever increasing client base has resulted in an expanding portfolio of services, encompassing our award winning Nu-phalt system, Jetpatcher to meet the demands of the rural network and a complete civil proposition including conventional hand laid and machine laid patching.

## Nu-phalt - Thermal Road Repairs

The Nu-phalt design, which is a world first heater, incorporates unique NIT technology at its heat source and comes from over 25 years engineering experience. Our innovative solution delivers the most efficient and controllable next generation thermal heaters. By incorporating our innovative heater into a unique single vehicle delivers another world first, which includes on board hot boxes, material and compaction equipment. The facility delivered significant cost efficiencies and supports the highways industry philosophy for right first time hot patch repairs.

The many cost efficiencies delivered by this facility has resulted in over 30 units to date being operated throughout the UK. Following successful trials and subsequent long term investment by clients has resulted in Highways engineers welcoming the system as a valued addition to their toolbox.

## Jetpatcher UK - Spray Injection Patching

The Jetpatcher agency for the UK was awarded to the Nu-phalt Group in 2011. The combined portfolio of Nu-phalt and Jetpatcher complements our services with cost effective alternatives for both urban and rural networks.

Following the introduction of Jetpatcher we have reviewed the process focusing on a consistent delivery of high quality repairs. We have also introduced a unique management reporting process offering transparency and accountability on all works completed. The success in Jetpatcher to date has resulted in year on year growth for the facility; as a result we have increased our Jetpatcher fleet to 15 units in support of customer requirements for 2014.



## Dorset County Council - Case Study

Dorset Council has 2,653 square kilometres of roads to maintain. Demands on budgets required a new way forward to carrying out pothole repairs which would deliver a significant £/m<sup>2</sup> saving over traditional methods.

Dorset Council could see that they could drive out inefficiencies if they used the eco friendly and lower cost Nu-phalt process, which uses less new material, less energy, and adopt a 'right-first-time-fix' approach. Investment in a second Nu-phalt lease system has delivered savings of £18.32/m<sup>2</sup> over traditional methods; reduced Traffic Management disruption; a reduction in vehicle and plant resource and reduced noise and increased quality of repairs enabling them to safely use the Nu-phalt machine through routine day to day maintenance programs, with the added advantage of night time repairs in urban areas with reduced disruption to all; No waste products to go to landfill; Minimum amount of new material required for repairs; Seamless repair reducing the risk of joint failure; Quick repair time minimising traffic disruption; Smaller carbon footprint; More Environmentally Friendly (less noise, dust etc).

The systems deliver operational efficiencies with reduced travel time which has increased daily outputs resulting in improved productivity. Both systems offer a permanent, right-first-time, hot patch repair, delivering operational and cost efficiencies at a time when achieving more-for-less is high on everyone's agenda.

In addition to the Nu-phalt process, Dorset operates Spray Injection Patching Machines, with a second Jetpatcher system supplied in the spring of 2013. This was initially supplied on a short term hire arrangement to supplement rural workloads and keep Dorset Works ahead of their rural network defects. The systems have helped drive additional efficiencies in the Dorset network, reduce repair timescales and reduce reactive defect repair costs while at the same time offer significant carbon footprint reductions.

From the operation of the first system, Dorset achieved 97% recorded defects repaired within specified timescales (24 hour, 7 or 28 day). This has been complimented by saving of £1.2 million per annum over conventional patching techniques on their first system along which has delivered an annual saving of 1,200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over conventional techniques.

It should come as no surprise that Dorset have since procured the latest Jetpatcher system to add to their Nu-phalt facilities. Both Nu-phalt and Jetpatcher solutions have become welcome additions to their highways toolbox and ensure Dorset Highways Operations continue to drive best value for their network.

*"With reduced noise and increased quality of repairs we can safely use the Nu-Phalt machine at night in urban areas with reduced disruption to all. The Nu-Phalt process has proved to be a good way forward for carrying out pothole repairs and is cost effective, giving a seamless repair that minimises the risk of repeat visits due to failures."*

**Andrew Martin - Head of Dorset Highways Operations**



## EM Highway Services Ltd – Case Study

Nu-phalt Group has provided our award winning thermal repair solution to the London Borough of Croydon for the last 4 years. Initial investment in our unique thermal repair solution was to supplement Croydon highways network requirements. The introduction of EM Highway Services Ltd as Croydon's new Term Maintenance Contractor resulted in a continuation of the Nu-phalt process which has demonstrated best practice and value while at the same time supporting Croydon's sustainability targets.

During this period we have undertaken an extensive patching programme using our single vehicle solution, carrying out over 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> patches over the course of 2013 alone. Every repair has been documented using before and after photos, with the system delivering significant cost and CO<sub>2</sub> savings in the process. The Nu-phalt solution has been backed by both Councillor and the Croydon Highways department and has become a significant tool in EM Highway Services' toolbox.



*Thermal repair's being carried out in Croydon, 2 year old Nu-phalt repairs in the foreground*

More recently, our service delivery to EM Highway Services Ltd has been rewarded with the civil engineering contract for Enfield. This has given us the opportunity to provide a wider service provision and expand our expertise to include conventional patching. Nu-phalt Group has been responsible for the provision of patching and paving crews to London

Borough of Enfield for the past 6 months. We have undertaken an extensive patching programme of outstanding defects offering the flexibility of mobilising anywhere from 4-12 crews.



*Nu-phalt teams in operation on EM Highway Service Enfield contract*

*"The range of innovative and conventional techniques Nu-phalt Contracting Ltd is able to offer provides significant industry expertise and experience that will raise industry standards and forward the delivery and performance of patch repairs in our carriageways."*

**Sonny Singh MCIHT BSc (Hons) – Head of Contracting, Nu-phalt**



*"Nu-phalt contracting has worked collaboratively with EM Highways to provide a service that is tailored to meet the varying requirements of the Croydon and Enfield contracts. The management team of Nu-phalt are always exceptionally quick to react to our changing requirements, and have implemented various service improvements quickly and effectively"*

**Mark Widdess - Commercial Manager, EM Highways**

If you're looking at ways to drive cost efficiencies in your network, please call Robert Muir on 08442 571570 or e-mail

**enquiries@nuphalt.com or enquiries@jetpatcher.co.uk**

Additional information can be found at **www.nuphalt.com or www.jetpatcher.co.uk**



# Introducing APSE Energy:

## Bringing councils together to deliver sustainable energy solutions for local communities

*Assistant chief executive, Mark Bramah, describes how an exciting new initiative, APSE Energy, is helping councils join forces to find powerful responses to pressing energy concerns*

Energy is never out of the news, whether it's price-hikes, security of supply or environmental concerns. This is a global problem that impacts on residents, businesses and communities locally. As major energy users, with annual bills as high as £24m in larger authorities and collective carbon emissions of 6.9Mt, councils have a responsibility to look at cheaper and more sustainable power sources.

APSE has been working with its members to develop solutions to these pressing energy issues and we believe the way forward is through local authorities working together to lead local energy solutions. The result is our exciting new collaboration vehicle – APSE Energy.

For the past two years, APSE has been facilitating collaboration between a group of pioneering local authorities, who have come together to share ideas on the localisation of energy supply. We call this the 'municipalisation of energy'. When we talk about municipalisation we are not referring to nationalisation or privatisation or rehashing old arguments about public versus private ownership. The idea refers back to the late 19th and early 20th Century when local government ran gas, electricity and water services. What we mean in the 21st Century context is the decentralisation of energy generation, distribution and supply from green sources such as solar, wind and biomass, together with heat networks, energy from waste and energy efficient buildings and retrofit.

Individual councils have done and are continuing to do some innovative and extraordinary work in energy efficiency and renewable energy supply. The founding members of APSE's energy collaboration, which includes Southampton, Portsmouth, Reading, Dudley and Stockton-on-Tees councils, are showing the way for a brighter future for local authority energy. Bringing together authorities of different political colours from all over the UK that share a vision enables them to exchange knowledge on topics such as finance, law, procurement and risk and helps make a vision for municipalised green energy more achievable.

APSE believes that this is a bold and exciting vision and opportunity for local government and has, along with a number of its member authorities, invested a great deal of time and resources to put together a collaboration of councils with the stated aim of municipalising energy. We believe that there is both a will and an appetite in many councils to take this vision forward and to make it a reality. APSE energy will therefore be predicated upon a core group of authorities to act as founder members to APSE Energy to

make this a viable new project. With a group of some 70 councils already showing a very strong interest in this collaboration APSE Energy will be based upon the support of this founder group of innovative member authorities and without their commitment APSE Energy will not be able to achieve its core purpose.

The benefits of APSE Energy are that, by working together, councils can have greater leverage in the marketplace; pool experience and knowledge; be a more attractive proposition for institutional investors; have greater clout when talking to Government and the energy industry; access critical technical, financial and procurement skills more cost effectively; and develop infrastructure.

Leading the local response on energy is a prime example of APSE's 'Ensuring Council' approach. The ensuring council means; active stewardship to ensure social, economic and environmental wellbeing; linking strategic decision-making with capacity to deliver; and generating income through municipal entrepreneurship. The Ensuring Council also promotes collaboration rather than competition – and collaboration can prompt local solutions to problems associated with cost, security of supply and environmental sustainability of energy.

APSE Energy has been set up to support local government in taking a leading role and driving forward the local energy agenda in ways that maximise value to local people and economies. Officially launched at the start of April, it will facilitate local government in having a major stake in new renewable energy infrastructure working in partnership with the private and community sectors and energy companies to achieve the vision of decentralised energy. The Government has recently launched its community energy strategy which whilst welcome has to be part of a wider approach to building local capacity and that is about local authorities taking a leadership role in co-ordinating and supporting the development of community energy as part of the municipalisation of energy.

We aim to tackle fuel poverty and climate change, show true local leadership, create resilient and sustainable local economies, through 'municipalised' energy. In a time of continuing financial restraint and public spending cuts, there are few levers we can pull which have such a virtuous cycle of benefits – generating new revenues for local government, saving money, addressing fuel poverty, using resources more effectively, building new supply chains and creating green jobs. Working collaboratively through APSE Energy can help make this happen.



## Benefits of APSE membership

The benefits of bringing local authorities together to share information, knowledge, resources include:

- Support on demonstrator and infrastructure projects including renewable micro-generation schemes, energy efficiency works, energy networks
- Brokerage, building effective links with the energy industry and 'smart clienting'
- Opportunities to access frameworks and supply arrangements with the aim of reducing and sharing costs and shortening procurement timescales for projects
- Consultancy support, strategic advice and specialist assistance
- Legal advice from Walker Morris LLP specialists on local government energy issues
- Exclusive access to intelligence, technical and policy updates
- Dedicated on-line portals and phone support through which to access information and advice
- Discussion groups, practical workshops, meetings and conferences to share solutions with councils experiencing similar issues
- Negotiation and influencing policy through lobbying and networking
- Targeted marketing, profile raising and research and building national, European and International links

Contact: For further information on membership on APSE Energy and what it could mean to your authority, contact Mark Bramah on tel: 0161 772 1810, or email: [energy@apse.org.uk](mailto:energy@apse.org.uk)



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# Wigan gets to grips with gullies!

**Michael Purcell, Technical Manager for Highways at Wigan Council's Infrastructure Asset Group explains why a recent survey on gullies is helping the council's flood management**

**A**s part of a comprehensive highway services review in 2012-13, Wigan Council's Infrastructure Asset Management Group commissioned a visual highway gully survey to assist in building up the gully cleaning service from a blank canvas to a needs based approach built on risk management and on how our highway drainage systems perform throughout the borough taking into account their geographical location, risk to the highway if they become blocked and the silt build over time.

The survey was carried out on the estimated 62,000 highway gully network and was commissioned due to the lack of data held on the asset, the attributes surveyed were,

- Location of gully if not already plotted;
- Type and condition of frame and cover;
- Pot depth
- Silt depth; and
- Assign a unique identification number.

The initial survey was completed in June 2013.

It is very early days in the analysis of the initial survey results, however, the survey at this stage has identified and confirmed the actual number of gullies on the network as being 58,000 and not the 62,000 we had estimated and also confirmed their GIS coordinates.

We attached 4 condition ratings for the gully covers to enable us gain an understanding of the amount of any planned programmes of replacement works would be needed and to inform us of any emerging issues. The 4 ratings are

- As new, no damage visible;
- Slight wearing, polished;
- Fractures or cracks,
- Gully cover missing

From the survey coordinates we now have the ability to overlay our gully network on to the Borough's known local flooding hotspots to help align and identify any areas that may affect the highway during prolonged heavy rainfall when for example local rivers and streams struggle with the amount of rainfall and surcharge our gully network. Whilst in most cases this will be beyond our control it will assist us to understand their individual locations and their effect on the network in terms of potential accelerated highway deterioration.

The results of the initial survey in terms of blocked gullies confirmed that across the adopted highway network using a simple RAG rating, only 1% of the networks gullies were blocked and only 12% at risk of blocking. This then helped us target the blocked gullies in a planned way rather than a reactive response which was a more efficient use of resources and would reduce the risk of local flooding.

Wigan Council will carry out repeat surveys over the next two years which will help identify a trend of the silt build up over a 3 year survey period which in turn will help us to schedule appropriate cleaning frequencies on a risk/need based approach and therefore assist with the efficient use of our plant and labour resources.

We are now evaluating to introduce a tablet PC device to the gully cleaning operations showing the GIS layer of our highway gully network so that they can locate and update the cleaning schedule live from site. This will give real time information which can be used to formulate prioritised programmes of work.

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Contact: Mike Purcell, Technical Manager Highways  
Infrastructure Asset Group, Wigan Council Email:  
michael.purcell@wigan.gov.uk



The government is using the great recession caused by the 2008 banking crisis as cover for drastic cuts to council services. Since May 2010, over 400,000 of our council colleagues have lost their jobs across the UK. If these cuts aren't stopped, your services won't be there when you need them.

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**CUTS**

**HURT**

# Serving up a debate on healthy school meals

*As the Scottish Government recently followed suit and committed funds to Scottish Local Authorities to introduce free school meals in the first three years, Andrew Kennedy, Acting Head of Facilities Management at East Ayrshire Council provides an insight into the experiences of East Ayrshire during their pilot of primary 1 to 3 meals during 2007-2008.*



The UK Governments' announcement to introduce free school meals for the first three years of school has created a wide ranging political and operational debate. Is school food the best way to spend limited resources in these hard times? Does a universal approach benefit those in most need? Have the practicalities of delivery been thought through for schools? What is a hot healthy lunch anyway?

East Ayrshire was one of five local authorities in Scotland that the Scottish Government funded to run a pilot on universal free school meals. The pilots ran from October 2007 until June 2008 for all primary 1 to 3 children in the Authority's 43 primary schools. Overall the pilot offered free meals to 35,000 children in 450 schools across East Ayrshire, Fife, West Dunbartonshire, Scottish Borders and Glasgow.

The pilot in East Ayrshire was a very positive experience. There was a lot of planning that was needed and although we wanted it to be successful we also wanted to make sure we identified any problems or issues that would help inform future decisions to roll the scheme out further.

Since 2004 school food has had extensive media and political coverage and in many aspects has had cross party support over the past 10 years in both the UK and Scottish Government. School Food has widely been shown to help improve eating habits, children's ability and willingness to learn and supports directly children that may not otherwise have access to a nutritious meal, although there remains some debate about the practicalities. Not only do free school meals reduce day to day costs for families it also improves what children eat. How many other initiatives have such a direct impact on children and their family's health and finances?

During the pilot in East Ayrshire uptake increased from 41% to 67% within the P1-P3 children. It was also clear that more of those previously entitled to free meals, more regularly took a school meal. There was also an increase in the P4-P7 children too; families with more than one child able to send both children more often. The atmosphere in the dining room changed and taking school meals became the norm.

Parent and school feedback was positive, many children were trying different foods, it increased their awareness of healthy choices and behaviour did seem to be better. Although not all children took meals every day the overall encouraging influences of the children getting their preferred menu choices and sitting with friends made a positive impact. Some parents were also supported to encourage their children to try something different each day.

It was clear during our planning we had no insight into how many children were going to come for a meal each day, but we did know that the younger children can take longer, have difficulty choosing from a range of unfamiliar options and can be overwhelmed by the dining room.

It has been well documented that many schools operate without kitchens and this certainly brings different challenges. In East Ayrshire we provided a choice of hot meal options in every school through a combination of on-site and off-site production. Our food cost ratios and productivity increased during the pilot and we reduced food waste. Our biggest challenge however was where schools had more limited dining space. This was particularly problematic



in one school, although we solved this by taking the P4-7 children to the nearby secondary school dining hall, which was a bit of an adventure for them.

We took the decision early on to extend our "family service" we had offered in some schools to all the primary 1 to 3 children. This meant we offered a simple 2 course option with soup already on the table when the children arrived. Staff and older children assisted in supporting the children in making a choice for their main meal, we did not offer sandwiches. By not queuing, handling cash and limiting the choice, the amount of extra time needed was reduced and many schools allowed the P1s to come to the dining room five minutes early. The support of the school is really important and talking to Head Teachers early is critical in the success of implementation. There was a great deal of good will during the pilot from all involved but I would certainly look to bring in some additional staff to help supervise and support children in the dining room in future. The evidence from a number of pilots has shown a 70-80% uptake should be expected although with the current economic times the possibility of a higher uptake is certainly possible as families weigh up a £400 a year saving with their children's fussy food choices.

Encouraging healthy eating against a media and high street backdrop of high sugar, nutritionally poor convenience food continues to be the challenge. School Food historically has played an important part in addressing public health issues within the wider community, and with 65% of the adult population currently overweight and 50% expected to be obese by 2050 changing what we eat is important for all.

In Scotland health and wellbeing is now central within Curriculum for Excellence and changing diets can be supported from the lunchtime experience as much as classroom teaching therefore eating healthy food socially, in a positive environment, can help children not just eat better but learn and understand more about their food options. I would really hope catering services and schools across the Country, over the next two years, embrace this opportunity and give as many children as possible, the chance to try good nutritious food and further strengthen the value of the school meals service.



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Contact: Andrew Kennedy, Acting Head of Facilities Management, Department of Educational and Social Services, East Ayrshire Council, email: [andrew.kennedy@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.kennedy@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

# Shaping demand

**Calderdale Council are introducing a whole-council approach to shaping demand. Here Richard Corney, Business Improvement Manager and Gez Roberts, Demand Management Officer at Calderdale Council, explain the strategy.**

Calderdale Council is facing significant challenge. Since 2010 Calderdale's budget has reduced by £56m. With the Council expected to reduce expenditure by £4.7m in 2015/16 rising to £16.5m by 2016/17. This has meant making difficult decisions on how to deliver services with less money. By 2016/17 Calderdale will have £90m less to spend on services compared to our plans in 2010.

We are implementing a whole-Council approach where shaping demand is reflected in our priorities, vision and values, demonstrating our commitment to this guiding principle.

The Council has identified six priorities for the Council unified by the theme of Building Ambition for Calderdale, which we plan to deliver working in partnership with Calderdale's communities.

Our vision for Calderdale is underpinned by our values of we care, we create, we invest, we improve. These core values determine how well we treat people, either as customers for our services or our communities, and how we do our jobs. They influence our behaviours and our organisational culture.

Our values and behaviours are reflected in our transformational strategies for smarter working across all our services, shaping demand in a way that increases individual and community self-reliance and reduces the need for Council services, and in our finances set out in our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

At Calderdale Council we view shaping demand as much more than a response to budget cuts; we see it as a way of transforming services. By this we mean changing our way of thinking from supplying services to reducing the need for them.

Our shaping demand priorities are:

- Build resilience and personal responsibility in order to reduce the need for council services
- Implement methods of early intervention to reduce the need for and reliance on council services

The importance attached to shaping demand as a lever for change is demonstrated in several of the Council's priority outcomes such as:-

- Resilience (Supporting personal, community and environmental resilience)
- Supporting the creation of active and resourceful local communities

- Helping individuals and families to live free and independent lives

- Older people live fulfilling and independent lives

Sustainability (Managing demand and investing for the future)

- Intervening early to prevent the emergence of long-term problems

The Council views shaping demand through prevention and behaviour change as one of the main techniques for transforming service delivery. We realise that just focusing on process improvements will not be enough.

The Council has a long established approach to realising improvements in service delivery. This approach is based on LEAN Thinking but importantly empowers and supports colleagues in making the changes that they feel are necessary. This programme has run since 2010 and has already delivered in excess of £7 million in savings.

We built on the success of this programme to develop our own approach to shaping demand. We developed our own demand management techniques and developed an associate training programme and support mechanism.

By applying these techniques to council services alongside our existing LEAN process improvement initiative, significant savings are being achieved.

We believe that shaping demand offers a more innovative strategic approach, by changing behaviour or early intervention in order to remove some of the need for services.

Our shaping demand journey is now well underway and we have already seen significant successes.

We looked at home to school transport initially and found we had created a dependency on specialist buses among people who may be able to travel in other ways.

By putting in place travel training and intensive support with children, vulnerable adults and their families we have been able to enhance confidence and independence. We identified that behaviour change was more likely to be influenced by doctors and teachers and engaging these professionals proved valuable. This has produced significant outcomes both in terms of the independence and future resilience of our communities but also expenditure reductions in terms of vehicle fleet activity.

We have learned that some aspects of shaping demand are down to simple things. For example, we examined how we can manage demand by improving communications with residents. We found that making the content of letters clearer means a reduction in the number of subsequent contacts with the Council.

To support our ambition, we are now rolling out shaping demand across the Council in conjunction with the current round of budget planning. Everything that has potential for shaping demand is being tested.

Comments from colleagues who have attended the training sessions include:

"I think everyone should attend the course. My colleagues are booked on it already"

"I would go as far to say that it is essential for people to understand Demand Management"

"It's how everyone in the Council should be thinking"

"It re-affirms the need for continual business improvement"

"It does not have to be a huge change to make a difference."

Our target is to train 200 colleagues by the end of July 2014. We are on track to achieve this.

Adult social care is one of the largest areas we are currently looking at. We are considering ways in which personal budgets can be used in conjunction with shaping demand as a way to enhance self-reliance among service users.

We are clear that shaping demand is not just a way of dressing up budget cuts and we need to communicate carefully with our residents to demonstrate this. Decisions will be taken with the support and involvement of service users and their insights will be used in order to find innovative solutions where possible.

A number of other Councils have already been in contact to learn more about our shaping demand approach. We are always happy to share our ideas and also learn from others!

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Contact: If you want to find out more about shaping demand and other improvement initiatives at Calderdale Council then visit the *InnovateCalderdale* website (<http://innovate.calderdale.gov.uk>) or follow on twitter @iCalderdale.



# Putting flesh on the bones of the 'Ensuring' Council

It appears that everyone in the local government sector has opinions on what the future role and shape of councils will and should be. APSE is no different and that's why National Council has identified APSE's research programme as a priority for investment over the coming years.

APSE's work with its research partners of late has been very much about developing the concept of the 'Ensuring' Council. It is our view that various alternative models that are currently on offer, which are mainly based on divesting authorities of their ability to deliver directly, are failing. So it's time for some new thinking. In our report *The Road to 2020 – A manifesto for the Ensuring Council*, APSE set out key principles of the ethos of the ensuring approach to local government management and service delivery. These can be summarised as:

- ♦ Stewardship of the area
- ♦ Maintaining core capacity
- ♦ Municipal entrepreneurialism
- ♦ Collaboration
- ♦ Political accountability
- ♦ Social justice

The 2020 Vision report analysed findings of the 2020 Commission, part of an Economic and Social Research Council Knowledge Transfer Partnership with De Montfort University, which drew upon the views of APSE members. It also set out many examples of what APSE's member authorities are doing in practice around these ensuring themes.

APSE now aims to test these ideas further and put flesh on the bones of the Ensuring Council ethos by commissioning a wide-ranging research programme from well-respected organisations within the local government sector. It is intended that all future research undertaken by APSE will link back to the overarching theme of the Ensuring Council. Previous research reports, considering the ensuring theme, which have had positive media cover, include: *The Ensuring Council: An alternative vision for the future of local government*; *The Transition to the Green Economy: The role of the ensuring council*; and *Municipal Entrepreneurship*.

You will have read elsewhere in this edition of **Direct News** about the launch of our latest research publication, undertaken by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, on 'The role and value of local authority assets in town centres', which identifies the economic importance of the council asset base to localities.

APSE has also commissioned a number of other projects, which are in the research pipeline at present.

These include:

Public intelligence on how local authorities are using change and transformation programmes to build capacity to deliver services from within rather than handing over responsibility to external organisations.

New Local Government Network on how local authorities can challenge and reshape local private sector markets to gain public value, by exercising their stewardship role to secure economic, social and environmental wellbeing for local people.

De Montfort and Cardiff Universities on the future role of elected members in local government.

The Local Government Information Unit on the future of local government finance and how local authorities are having to consider shifting towards a more self-financing, self-sufficient and self-resilient future.

Infrangilis on issues for local authorities around flooding and how councils can ensure better stewardship of water assets within their areas.

APSE is also currently undertaking two direct pieces of research itself. These will be looking at:

- › The value of school meals to public health
- › Operational matters in waste and recycling

These research projects are an opportunity for APSE to shape solutions to current challenges facing local government, share best practice examples and influence future policy-making on behalf of its members.



*Contact: If you have a specific interest in any of the areas upon which APSE has commissioned or is undertaking research, or would be interested in being involved as a case study, then please get in touch with Paul O'Brien. Email: [po'brien@apse.org.uk](mailto:po'brien@apse.org.uk)*



*Community Meals Leeds driver Alan Scott, a member of the team working on Christmas Day, delivers a meal to Margaret Drooker, 75.*

# Community Meals Leeds

***With nutritional care high on the agenda for older peoples services Leeds City Council took a decision to rebrand and renew its community meals offering. Mandy Snaith, Head of Catering Leeds at Civic Enterprise Leeds explains***

**T**he community meals service in Leeds re-branded from a dual titled operation Meals at Home, for those customers who met the Fair Access to Care (FAC) criteria and Yorkshire Community Meals for those who self referred to the service. Although no differential existed in the service delivery the re-branding took place to amalgamate both services under one heading and to further embed in the Catering Leeds overarching branding.

The rebranding and active promoting of the service has led to an increase in the number of meals served daily - rising 10% in the past nine months; increasing the level of self-referrals so they account for about 50% of the customer base which has risen to over 500 vulnerable people across the city. The customer base is not static as many people use the service for a few weeks to 'get back on their feet' after illness or hospital admissions.

The re-branding of the service provided the opportunity to review the forward facing information and develop a communications opportunities plan to further embed the service and the provision of nutritional care within the community. A variety of platforms have been used to promote the rebranded service, see below. It was key to promote as widely as possible, as many of the self-referring

non eligible customers are signposted by health and social care professionals to the service.

'More than a meal' has been a key theme in promoting the service to carers, relatives and professionals. By providing peace of mind through a well-being check as the meal is delivered and any concerns fed back has become a unique selling point of the service. We have an information sheet for professionals highlighting the more than a meals aspect of the service which builds further confidence in the service and helps them promote this to non-eligible service users.

## **Service promotion**

We have developed a new website profile –from one outline page to a series of pages carrying more detailed information on the Leeds City Council site with a wide range of information available for download.

We have also designed new promotional materials such as new posters and leaflets and developed a full plan of disseminating the posters to the key contact points within the communications plans.

The use of direct emailing to all the elected members, key decision makers, stakeholders (Neighbourhood networks & Social Workers) and professionals (LinkedIn contacts) in the



community helps us keep these important groups updated regularly on the developments of the service.

Direct Mailing has also enabled us to communicate effectively with to all community support providers about the re-brand and how the service can assist them in delivering good care in the community. Follow up visits to Health Centres and GP surgeries are planned in areas of low up take to promote the service further.

We have also actively demonstrated the service to community based health care professionals which has helped us to dispel the myths regarding the quality of meals and access to the service. Information regarding the other activities the service delivers is also shared at these sessions.

The service is actively encouraging visits from elected members to the base or to a customer in their own ward. These contacts are viewed as an integral part of promoting the service not just internally but within the communities the elected member serves.

Utilising the national focus of National Community Meals Week, a plan was made to culminate a three month campaign aimed at attracting media attention to raise the awareness of the service in the city. Links were made with the local football club and two former players took part in a delivery which enabled a front page photo to appear in the evening paper, these links further achieved coverage in subsequent months during the week and in the lead up to Christmas. Working with the media link for social care has developed further media opportunities including a radio broadcast over Christmas about the positive support the service provides.

Frontline social workers have been briefed on the re-branding through linking this with the nutritional pathway training on good nutrition and how to access the service was provided through a series of Breakfast Forums.

Ensuring details of the service are available, and correct, through all the social care services contact networks written and web based has been a key element of our success.

Closer integrated working with Public Health and the two health trusts on various nutrition initiatives has improved the profile of the service within these environments. The service is seen as a focus for food in the community, assisting with Hospital Discharge Packs and community based Home Food Baskets has further embedded the service as a key link in providing food in the community.

### Improved customer experience

Continuous training for the delivery staff takes place regularly linking in to other health and well-being initiatives across the city. For example messages on 'eat well because health matters'. These training session for staff have been delivered through the toolbox talk format and this was further underpinned by Food Hygiene Awareness training.

We have also introduced weekly customer telephone surveys to monitor customer satisfaction.

### Added value

As part of the service we have developed an 'added value' stream which includes:-

**Fire Checks:** A partnership developed with Fire Service to ensure everyone has a home fire check. All customers have a visit from the fire service to check their home and CML staff have access to the Fire Service referral system in case of changing situations / cause for concern.

**Hydration:** A cold drink has been added to every hot meal delivery at no additional charge as a result of the NACC's Dehydration in Older People Awareness Week, and the potential for increasing fluid in-take in a practical way by delivering a drink which also acts as a prompt to remind the older person to drink.

**Nutritional Screening:** For all new self referrals a basic nutrition screen is carried out and advice provided should they require further social care support. For all referrals meeting the FAC's criteria a nutrition screen has been added to the general assessment carried out by the social work teams.

**Safer:** Doorstep scams and fraud awareness training for staff with West Yorkshire Trading Standards, has enabled the staff to be aware of the signs of doorstep scams and possible fraud schemes.

These are just some of the mechanisms we've used to promote the service as a vital part of someone's care in Leeds be they eligible or not. Food is something everyone needs in a time of need socially or just to recover from illness and get back on their feet. This is what we hope the service will continue to deliver in Leeds.

Councillor Adam Ogilvie, Leeds City Council's executive member for adult social care said: "Our dedicated community meals team makes a massive difference to the lives of residents across Leeds each and every day.

"The service not only makes sure vulnerable residents have a hot meal, it also helps to makes sure they don't become isolated and gives them the added reassurance of knowing they will have a regular visitor."

Councillor Peter Gruen, Leeds City Council's executive member for neighbourhoods, planning and support services said:

"The hard work of our Community Meals team here in Leeds means that hundreds of vulnerable local residents have the important extra support they need to live independent lives in their own homes.

"Last year Community Meals Leeds was announced as the winner of the National Association of Care Catering's (NACC) National Community Meals Award. The prestigious award recognises the authority, business or individual who has proved themselves the best at providing the vital resource to elderly and vulnerable residents."

Contact: Mandy Snaith, Head of Catering Leeds, Civic Enterprise Leeds email: [mandy.a.snaith@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.a.snaith@leeds.gov.uk)

APSE held the annual catering, cleaning and facilities management seminar on 29 and 30 January at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chester. The seminar included speakers from School Food Plan, Kelloggs and the School Food All Party Parliamentary Group.

To download any of the speaker presentations from the event, visit [apse.org.uk/events](http://apse.org.uk/events)



## Twittering on about social media ....

***The 'Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands' (IEWM) issued a new white paper exploring the use of social media in local government using their 'New Ideas Fund' to support the development of new and innovative solutions to respond to tightening public sector budgets and demand from increasingly tech savvy communities. Here we explore the issues raised in the white paper.***

**T**he world has undergone a digital explosion over the past few years and social media sits at the heart of the rapid changes that have taken place.

These aren't just changes that are affecting the hyper-connected urban cities such as Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country but they're affecting the smaller towns and rippling down the rural lanes of Herefordshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

Social media is now the established default for breaking news and where crises now play out in real time. We were fortunate enough to find in 2013 that the West Midlands was leading the way in the UK and being genuine pace setters in the field.

A natural channel shift is taking place amongst key demographic groups – they are choosing to connect with organisations via social media. It's up to these organisations to be effective in these platforms in order to respond. Social media generally requires a quicker response to other more traditional platforms so its growth is changing the way businesses need to operate.

Organisations are being judged upon their responses to customers on social media.

There are more than 100 hyperlocal sites which write news for a small geographical area. There are 690,000 people with

a Facebook account within 10 miles of Birmingham Council House.

But, there are some butts...

There are barriers to get over as well as issues around trust and training and uncertainty about how to measure effectiveness. Through case studies and targeted advice this document will help the seasoned professional and the uncertain senior officer.

Social media is not a silver bullet for all communications needs. It is not a magic wand. But it is a big, and increasingly growing, part of communications solution. There is still an age divide in the UK when it comes to digital. The advances in digital and social media have made communications easier but more complex all at the same time. 'One size fits all' communications approaches won't work.

And so it's vital to understand your own digital and media landscape and multi-channel approaches are key to your organisations communications effectiveness. There are challenges ahead as budgets get squeezed. Trust is an issue. So is training.

Contained in the IEWM white paper are some case studies from the towns, cities, villages and – quite literally – farms across the West Midlands.

*Contact:* For more details see <http://bestbywm.wordpress.com/>



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**If you're looking at ways to drive cost savings to your network, call us on 08442 571570 or e-mail [enquiries@jetpatcher.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@jetpatcher.co.uk)**

APSE National roads, street lighting and winter maintenance seminar 2014

# Managing the assets: Context and practice

**Bookings are now being taken!**

Visit the APSE website [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) or contact [vstarmer@apse.org.uk](mailto:vstarmer@apse.org.uk) for a booking form

A two-day seminar at the Newcastle Marriott, Gosforth Park, High Gosforth, Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5HN

Thursday 6th and Friday 7th March 2014

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# Report back

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

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

## Wales

### Environment Bill

APSE responded to the Welsh Government's consultation on proposals for an Environment Bill in Wales on 14 January 2014. APSE wrote out to members to ask for their views on this in December 2013 and the feedback was included in the response.

### Just Williams

APSE has produced a briefing paper on the Williams Review 'Report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery' which was published on 20 January 2014. The report contains 62 wide-ranging recommendations and APSE will be working with its membership over the coming months to inform the discussions and look at the implications of any resultant proposals from the Welsh Government.

### Wales Advisory Group

APSE will be holding the next round of APSE Wales advisory groups for environmental services and highways; catering and cleaning; and building maintenance and housing in March/April 2014. A seminar and AGM will be held in July 2014. Full details will be issued to APSE members in due course but for any further information on these, please contact [djohns@apse.org.uk](mailto:djohns@apse.org.uk)

## England

### Chester FM

The APSE catering, cleaning and facilities management seminar took place on the 29 and 30 January at Chester with a range of industry experts and speakers including Miles Bremner, Director of The School Food Plan who outlined next steps in the provision of free primary school meals in England.

### UNITE for a day

APSE addressed the UNITE local government service group executive on the challenges of new delivery models from a workforce perspective in London in January exploring the impact of service reform on local government services.

### Low carb diet

APSE met with the Low Carbon Hub in Oxford during January to explore issues of mutual collaboration on municipal energy schemes following the development of APSE Energy which you can read about on pages 12-13 of this edition of direct news.

For details about APSE energy and membership of this new service contact Mark Bramah on [mbramah@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbramah@apse.org.uk)

## Scotland

### Full House at the Full Association

APSE hosted its Full Association meeting in Edinburgh with attendees from across the UK. The Full Association meeting is an important governance meeting for APSE members in between the annual general meeting of APSE each year. It was a well attended event and delegates heard contributions from Dr Steven Griggs of De Montfort University and Judith Barnes of DAC Beechcrofts

### Assisting Soft FM

APSE/ASSIST are delighted to announce they will be holding a joint conference on the new Scottish Government programme "Better Eating Better Learning" in March. This programme follows on from the successful Hungry for Success initiative and is intended to place school meals in a new and more significant context for local authorities in the curriculum. For further information on this conference please contact Louise McMillan [Lmcmillan@apse.org.uk](mailto:Lmcmillan@apse.org.uk)

### Innovation and new approaches

APSE Scotland is holding its Building, Housing and Renewables and Energy Efficiency Conference on 19/20 February at the Peebles Hydro. The event will open with a political debate on welfare reform and confirmed speakers for this keynote session include Alex Johnstone MSP, Lord Purvis of Tweed and Richard Lyle MSP. Day two of the conference will see a number of renewables topics including a presentation from David Hay, Group Manager Environmental Services, Development and



Regeneration, Glasgow City Council on Glasgow's district heating system for the 2014 commonwealth games athletes' village. The conference will once again hold APSE's apprentice of the year awards in Building and Housing services which this year witnessed an incredible 50 notifications from Scottish local authorities, highlighting the continued pursuit of excellence in apprenticeships within our Councils.

## Rising Stars

APSE Scotland is once again holding its Rising Stars awards sponsored by Zero Waste Scotland at the upcoming Fleet, Waste and Grounds services seminar taking place in Aviemore from 6/9 May. These awards introduced last year recognise the excellent work of individuals, both established and new additions to the team, who are delivering in leadership roles in frontline services. For more information on how to nominate a Rising Star please contact the APSE Scotland office on 01698 459 051.

## Conference Circuit

APSE Scotland will once again be represented at the main Scottish political party conferences taking place in March and April this year.

## Northern Ireland

### Wind farms, planning and community benefits..

The most recent regional meeting was titled 'Wind farms and planning - issues, community benefits and case studies' and was held in Omagh on 12th December. An audience of more than 40 heard from a number of speakers including Angus Kerr, Director of Planning Policy Division at the Department of the Environment and Steve Cirell, APSE Consultant.

Angus informed delegates about the issues to be considered when looking at applications for wind turbines as well as progress with the coming transfer of planning powers to local authorities. Steve spoke about wind as a part of an energy management strategy, the steps that councils can take to put together a local authority owned wind power scheme and the benefits which can be obtained as a result.

### Thanks on your retirements..

Following the retirement of Cllr Shaun Gallagher from Derry City Council, the new Vice Chair for APSE NI is Cllr Gerry Diver. Cllr Eamonn O'Neill from Down DC also retired recently and has been replaced by Cllr Laura Devlin. Cllrs Diver and Devlin will be welcomed into APSE. Both Cllrs Gallagher and O'Neill were great friends of APSE, long standing supporters of the organisation, and both former National Chairs and long standing members of APSE national council; their contributions will be greatly missed.

### Best practice in Northern Ireland

There have been 73 submissions for the Local Government Awards - Northern Ireland which APSE and NILGA manage. The awards in the seven categories including the APSE Service Team of the Year award will be made at the gala dinner following the NILGA Conference at La Mon Hotel, Castlereagh on 27 February 2014.



*Myles Bremner addressing delegates at the APSE facilities Management Seminar in Chester*

## APSE people (and little people)

### Baby Elsa Mae!

Congratulations to APSE senior consultant Gayle Gibson and partner Chris on the birth of their beautiful baby girl Elsa Mae weighing in at a stonking 9 lb 3 oz!

### Welcome to James and Emma

APSE is pleased to welcome to the team two new recruits to its successful and growing consultancy and interim management service 'APSE Solutions'.

James Pearson joins APSE from his career in the armed forces as Acting Senior consultant whilst Emma Taylor joins us from Reeds as our client coordinator assisting APSE clients get the right match for their interim management needs.

You can contact James on [jpearson@apse.org.uk](mailto:jpearson@apse.org.uk) and Emma on [etaylor@apse.org.uk](mailto:etaylor@apse.org.uk)

# New Allotments Guidance from DCLG

The Department for Communities and Local Government have published new guidance for local councils that manage allotment sites in their area.

This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allotment-disposal-guidance-safeguards-and-alternatives>

Allotments are important to local people and valued for the opportunities they provide for physical exercise, meeting new friends and having a healthy diet regardless of income. There are legal and policy safeguards (criteria) in place to ensure that any disposal is properly and thoroughly handled by the Secretary of State.

There are no changes to either the statutory or policy criteria but guidance was last issued on this subject in 2002. DCLG recognises that clarification on this process is important for speeding up the planning decision making process and achieving greater efficiencies at central (and local) government level.

The new guidance:

- distinguishes clearly between the statutory criteria (which councils must meet) and the policy criteria; and
- clarifies what is meant by each criteria and sets out the factors the Secretary of State considers when deciding if they have been met.

The policy criteria will be applied thoroughly to all applications received. However, DCLG recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances in which disposal can be granted even though not all policy criteria have been met.

The guidance also contains a section looking at possible alternatives to disposal and ways in which councils might encourage greater community engagement in future allotment provision.

This guidance also includes a new application form for councils wishing to dispose of allotment land which DCLG hopes local councils will find easy to use. This form can be downloaded from the below webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allotment-disposal-guidance-safeguards-and-alternatives>

Councils should complete the form off-line and email it, together with the relevant supporting material, to the National Planning Casework Unit at [npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

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*Contact: Any questions about this guidance should also be sent to the National Planning Casework Unit, using [npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk)*

APSE one day street cleansing and streetscene seminar 2014

Sweep stake:

Are you gambling on the future of your service?

A major one day seminar at Aston Villa Football Club

Wednesday 26 February 2014

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# Controlling the cost of infrastructure works just got a whole lot easier.

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Appendix H has given you the guidance - now here's three easy ways to apply it.

### 1. Reduction in spread rates - Treated salt



Safecote treated salt is seen as the 'best imaginable' in Appendix H, allowing you to achieve lower spread rates than any other de-icing technique. Typical salt savings are between 30 - 50% compared to traditional methods. In addition, greater residual value offers increased security for longer periods after treatment.

- > Reduced spread rates compared to all other salting methods
- > Increased retention on the carriageway
- > Improved network resilience

### 2. Plough to black - GK5 Plough Blade



The GK5 snowplough blade offers you the ability to put the plough on to the road surface and remove all the snow and ice off the carriageway. It will not remove cats eyes and can accommodate speed ramps. It has a life that is up to 20 times greater than standard rubber blades.

- > Ability to 'plough to black'
- > No removal of cats eyes
- > Less salt needed as all snow & ice removed from the carriageway

### 3. Dealing with extreme conditions - Supamix



Supamix de-icing & anti-icing liquid is specifically designed to tackle the harshest of winter storms. Offering exceptional performance at temperatures as low as -20° C, it works immediately on application and offers increased efficacy compared to alternatives.

- > Works in extreme conditions
- > Breaks up compacted ice & snow
- > Lower application rates than other alternative de-icer's

For more information or advice on how to apply or understand Appendix H, please contact us:

**0870 850 8987**

or email; [info@safecote.com](mailto:info@safecote.com)

Safecote Ltd, Winnington Hall, Winnington, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 4DU