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Association for Public Service Excellence

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Bridging the gap – A new era for local government?

A preview of APSE's Annual Seminar 2024

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Chewing gum taskforce

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Editorial



Mo Baines
Chief Executive,
APSE

**Can we fix it?
Yes, we can!**

The 5 July heralded a new era in UK politics as a new Labour government swept to power with only a spoonful of seats less than the 1997 landslide of the Blair government with a commanding majority of 174 seats. However, already that appears to be where comparisons between the two governments start to thin out. In 1997 the Blair administration effectively pledged to stick with the fiscal constraints of the former administration, under Prime Minister John Major, for the first two years. Hindsight being a gift we are not blessed with, many would argue that this constrained the actions and timescales for policy changes.

Fast forward to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition of 2010, with George Osborne as Chancellor, and the period of austerity was almost immediately put into place. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that policy, and most would now concede there was more 'wrongs' than 'rights', when it came to funding councils, as a lesson in how to 'get things done' it was a Masterclass.

Fast forward to July 2024 and we have witnessed a similar urgency in policy announcements, all of which are designed to set the ball rolling on Labour's missions in government.

For local government, having called for greater devolution, more council housing and affordable homes, and reform of planning, alongside a plethora of other asks for investment, powers and reforms to council finance, there is ironically a danger that councils may start to feel a bit overwhelmed by all the new announcements. It also must be recognised that over the past two decades policies teams have been hollowed out and many management teams are now more generalist than specialists.

As a sector, local government is good at coming together when it matters, sharing best practice and pooling resources. Now is that time. We ought not to be cowed by the challenges but instead grasp the opportunities. We may not get everything that we wish for, and there will be undoubtedly conflicting views along the way, but now is the time for us to show that we can deliver.

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Report Back

A round-up of APSE advocacy and events



Striving to thrive

Councillors' reflections on local democracy



APSE's latest report. Download at www.apse.org.uk

The latest APSE briefings...

APSE has a dedicated team of Principal Advisors providing regular updates via briefings. Our latest include:

- Local Authority Leisure Facilities Operation 2024
- Flood Resilience Strategy Scottish Government Consultation
- Highways and Winter Maintenance Trend Analysis
- Transport Trend Analysis
- Productivity - should it be the focus of council performance?
- Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2024
- APSE local authority public conveniences provision
- National Good Food Plan: Scottish Government consultation
- Draft Bioenergy Policy Statement – Scottish Government consultation

APSE runs one of the largest briefings and research programmes in local government. All briefings can be accessed via the APSE website.

Save the date

Wednesday 11 – Thursday 12 September

This year's APSE Annual Seminar will be held in the beautiful city of Bristol, at City Hall. The venue will also host the APSE AGM. The prestigious APSE Annual Service Awards Charity Dinner will be held at the Mercure, Bristol. Bookings are now open online! Information on what to expect at this year's event can be found on page 12.



Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor for Transport, presenting the latest data on road conditions at the Northern AGM.

'Striving to Thrive' report launch

On 6 June, APSE launched a new report, drawing from a survey of councillors across the UK, that presented a range of findings on the elected members of local authorities, including insights into their demographic profile, standards and behaviour, experiences of harassment and abuse, as well as their views on the effectiveness of devolution, political structures, and the future of local democracy. A big thank you to our academic partners Neil Barnett, Steven Griggs, David Howarth and Jonathan Rose who authored the report. It can be downloaded via the APSE website.

Congratulations Stoke-on-Trent! Winner of the APSE-sponsored 'Best Council Services Team' category at the MJ Achievement Awards 2024

APSE was proud to once again sponsor the Best Council Services Team category at the MJ Achievement Awards 2024. APSE member authority – Stoke-on-Trent City Council – fought off stiff competition to be crowned this year's winner. The Council's Highways Team was presented with the award by APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines, at a ceremony which took place on 21 June in London. Many congratulations to the team at Stoke!

Staff news

APSE has said a fond farewell to two valued members of our team, Andy Mudd and Charlotte Banks. Following a distinguished 25 years at APSE, Andy has begun his (semi) retirement, and will be continuing to contribute his expertise as an APSE Associate. Charlotte, our former



Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, presents the 'Best Council Services Team' Award to the team from Stoke-on-Trent City Council at the MJ Achievement Awards in London on 21 June. Credit: ©The MJ/Alex Deverill



Saying goodbye to Andy Mudd, after a distinguished 25-year career at APSE.

Principal Advisor for APSE Energy, has left to pursue a career in teaching. We wish her the very best in her new role! Following a successful interview, James Jefferson will be taking over Charlotte's role, congratulations James! APSE will be conducting interviews to fill James' previous role as Energy Research and Project Officer. Iqra Ali has become a permanent member of the team as she takes over as Business Support Officer, well done Iqra! Also joining the APSE team is Matt Miller as an Executive Consultant in APSE Solutions.

Northern AGM

APSE Northern Region held its AGM, incorporating a free half-day seminar, in York on 12 June. The event looked at a range of issues including how to tackle workforce shortages, facilities management, parks and greenspaces, and transport. Present at the meeting were APSE Northern Chair, Cllr Tracey Dixon; APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines; APSE Principal Advisor Rob Bailey; Anita Brown, Stockton Council; Andrew Whittaker, South Tyneside Council; Adrian Selby, West Lindsey District Council, and Glynn Humphries, APSE Associate.

APSE in the MJ

Our latest report 'Striving to Thrive: Councillors' reflections on local democracy', gained extensive coverage in the MJ in June. Both the top 'news' and 'opinion' sections were occupied by APSE, including discussion by MJ reporters and an opinion piece by APSE Chief Executive Mo Baines, looking at the crucial role that local services play in people's lives and how this impacts their trust in democracy.

Parklife

Chesterfield was the setting for the APSE Central Region AGM, incorporating a free half-day seminar, on 19 June. Chaired by Central Region Chair Cllr Mark Pengelly, delegates from across the region arrived in Chesterfield to learn how to secure frontline service excellence across local government. The event also included discussions on creating sustainable public

APSE occupying the top spot in news and opinion on the MJ homepage.

Home News Opinion Analysis Best Practice Jobs Events Awards Supplements

News

Council staff 'live in fear of abuse, assault or worse' - APSE study



Opinion

Fortifying local democracy



A new report points towards a failure from the perspective of councillors of devolution and localities deals and copes over

greenspaces. Speakers included: Neil Johnson, Service Director for Economic Growth, Chesterfield Borough Council; Sandra Green, Head of City Services, Worcester City Council; Steve Brunt, Strategic Director of Services, Bolsover District Council; Darren Green and Tom Guilbert-Newell, Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council; Lindsey Maidstone, Acting Service Manager - Community Safety, Derby City Council and Rachel Scarisbrick, Keep Britain Tidy.

Is a just circular economy possible?

On 9 July, Abi Ademiluyi, APSE Principal Advisor for Waste, attended an event at the University of Greenwich, looking at the practicality and feasibility of circular economy policies. The event drew on a number of international case study examples and included several interactive discussion sessions. It was organised by the University of Greenwich Public Services International Research Unit, the Sheffield University Management School, and the University of Manchester.

APSE Energy on the road

Since April, APSE Energy has held meetings in Cardiff, Ballymena, Bradford and Huntingdon, with officers and councillors from many local authorities attending. The events provided opportunities for attendees to come together and hear about local projects and approaches, with examples being:

- Developing hydrogen projects in Pembrokeshire County Council;
- The role of data in energy efficiency at Fermanagh and Omagh Council;
- Significant energy, financial and emissions savings made in Bradford as a result of successful energy management;
- Using HVO as an interim fuel in Huntingdonshire District Council.

Webinars covering the topics of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, community energy and 'moving homeowners towards net zero: Council investment for community benefit' (the latter with Lendology, an APSE Energy partner) have also been held attracting over 60 delegates to each session.

LGIU Local Government Finance Summit

Mo Baines addressed the LGIU summit on Local Government finance on the 17 July and called for councils to be at the heart of the economic growth strategy. Delegates and speakers discussed the overall position on local government finance, the need for long-term multiyear settlements, and the policy pressure points from homelessness and temporary accommodation costs, social care, send transport and the impact on service delivery. Other speakers included the Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz OBE, and the newly appointed Chief Executive of the LGA, Joanna Killian, together with LGIU Chief Executive Jonathan Carr West.

Wales

Fit for the future

On 10 July, APSE held its Welsh AGM in Llandrindod Wells. The event gave delegates the opportunity to come together post-election and look at the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Welsh local government. Discussion focused on the provision of affordable housing, the state of public finances, and the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A free event for APSE Wales members, speakers included: Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive, WLGA; Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive; Reg Kilpatrick, Director of Local Government, Welsh Government; Heledd Morgan, Director - Implementation and Impact, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; Cllr Andrea Lewis, APSE Wales Chair; Cllr James Gibson-Watt, Leader, Powys County Council.



Glasgow City Halls

Scotland

AGM at the City Halls and Old Fruitmarket

On 12 July, APSE Scotland held its AGM at the City Halls and Old Fruitmarket, Glasgow. The AGM provided an opportunity for APSE in Scotland to review its activities over the last year. The Meeting also looked at some of the issues affecting Scottish authorities, such as promoting a mentally healthy workplace for frontline services with Sandy Anderson of Fife Council. Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, discussed the findings of Striving to Thrive: Councillors' reflections on local democracy - APSE's latest research. APSE Scotland Chair, Cllr Lynne Short, and Vice Chair, Cllr Judy Hamilton, were also present at the event to chair the sessions.

Northern Ireland

Enviro NI and AGM

On 6 June in Ballymena, APSE held Net Zero NI. The event incorporated APSE Northern Ireland's AGM, and was delivered in conjunction with APSE Energy. Net Zero NI explored a number of themes relating to climate action including decarbonising council assets, biodiversity initiatives and developing the circular economy. Delegates heard from Rachael Hook, Head of Resources and Waste Strategy, DAERA; Francesca Di Palo, Head of Public Sector Services, Sustainable NI; Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner, Belfast City Council; Jeff Shaw AMSOE AMIRTE, Transport Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council; Charlotte Banks, APSE Energy Principal Advisor; Gareth Lennox, Head of Service for Parks and Amenities, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Patrick McCaffrey, Data and Intelligence Officer, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

Delegates at the APSE Northern Ireland AGM in Ballymena, County Antrim.



Annual Seminar and Service Awards 2024

11-12 September

This year taking place in Bristol!

Hear from a range of local government experts, including:

- Professor Mark Gregory, Staffordshire University
- Nicola Dickie, Director of People Policy, COSLA
- Allison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA
- Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive, WLGA
- Natalie Prosser, CEO, Office for Environmental Protection
- Anita Brown, Chair of LACA
- Dr Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive, CLES
- Patrick Allcorn, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- Hattie Parke, Director – Climate, Local Partnerships
- Camilla Mankabady, Director of Communications, Liverpool City Council

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Striving to Thrive: Councillors' view on local democracy

A new report by APSE, based on a survey of councillors from across the UK, finds councillors feel undervalued, lack the appropriate level of democratic control, and are threatened in their day-to-day work.

Quite startlingly, the research found councillors to be increasingly pessimistic about their capacity to bring about impactful change, even though just under two-thirds of councillors still believe their local authorities are “strongly committed to improving services”. Over seven in ten councillors also agreed that the financial position of their authority was preventing service improvement, indicating the significant impact that ever-tightening budgets, spending constraints and the proliferation of S.114s are having on the ability of authorities to deliver for their communities.

Other key findings include:

Efforts to widen access to elected roles in local government are still not working

The survey findings demonstrate that on average, councillors are older than the general population, more likely to be male, tend to not be in paid employment, and are disproportionately white. However the survey also found councillors are more highly qualified than the general population.

Continuing policy stagnation

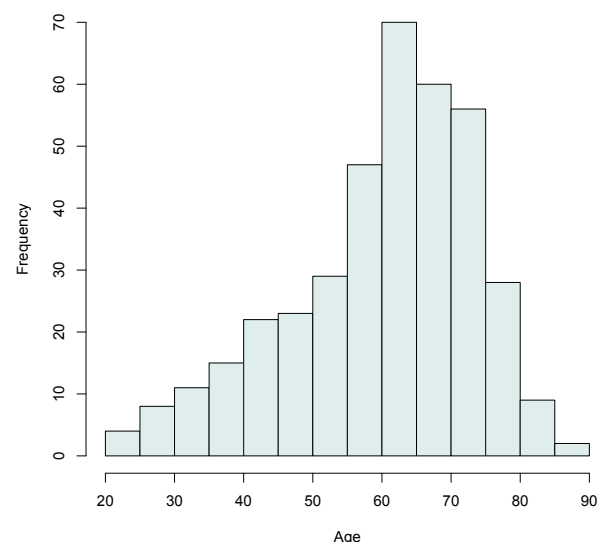
There is a striking resemblance to the 2014 edition of this survey in terms of councillor views of the challenges and obstacles that have hampered local governance.

Local political structures continue to divide councillors

Only a third of respondents agreed that council structures enable them to engage effectively with their communities, whilst less than half (44.3%) agreed that decision-making is transparent and they are provided with the right information to make decisions.

More needs to be done to challenge unacceptable behaviour and intimidation

The research uncovered the shocking statistic that 81.2% of respondents had reported an incident of intimidation or harassment from the public towards a councillor, officer, or other council staff. One in five said that an incident required a safety action plan to be put in place to protect councillors or officers.

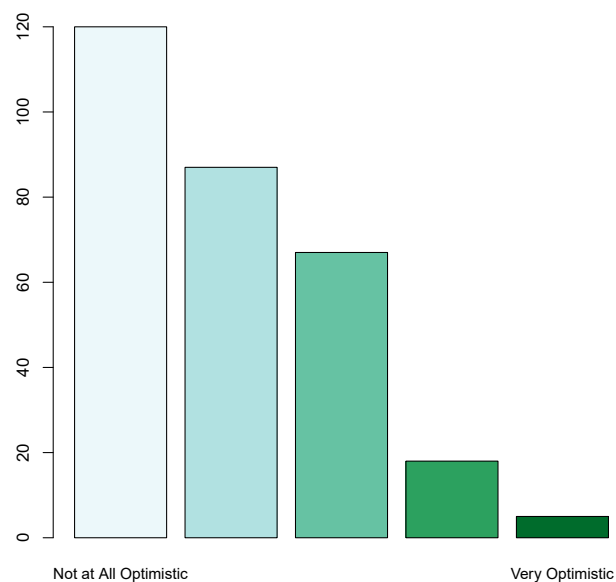


Histogram of councillor ages

Devolution and localism are increasing the centralisation of power

Half of all respondents were concerned about increasing central control over local priorities and policies despite the efforts to implement devolution deals and increase localism across the UK. Six in ten councillors in Scotland and five out of ten councillors in Wales agreed that devolution had increased central control over local authorities. In England, five out of ten councillors agreed that localism policies have increased centralisation.

The report offers a number of recommendations to address the concerns identified by elected members. Regarding the issue of representation and access, APSE recommends that remuneration practices for councillors, along with pension, maternity and paternity rights should be standardised across the UK and brought further in line with that of MPs. Councils must also be allowed to conduct business through hybrid working models – allowing better access for people with disabilities, caring responsibilities, and those in employment – as well as develop concrete plans and development strategies to ensure access to political office is open to people of all backgrounds.



Elected members optimism that desired changes over the next five to ten years will happen

Steps must be taken to address the intimidation and abuse of councillors by including a legal right to withhold home addresses from publicly available documents, dedicated police support and consideration of a specific crime of aggravated assault committed against councillors in the course of their duties.

Additionally, local authorities should evaluate the democratic decision-making process to ensure councillors are fully consulted and engaged in decisions impacting their wards and that robust mechanisms are in place to allow councillors to carry out their responsibilities as elected representatives – including the possibility of implementing alternative political structures to ensure appropriate democratic oversight at a local level.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, said: “As well as offering a snapshot of councillor opinion across the UK, this report further highlights the complex and multi-faceted role that councillors carry out. The survey paints a gloomy picture of the morale amongst elected members, who often feel as though they are undervalued, lacking the appropriate level of democratically bestowed power, and threatened in their day-to-day work.

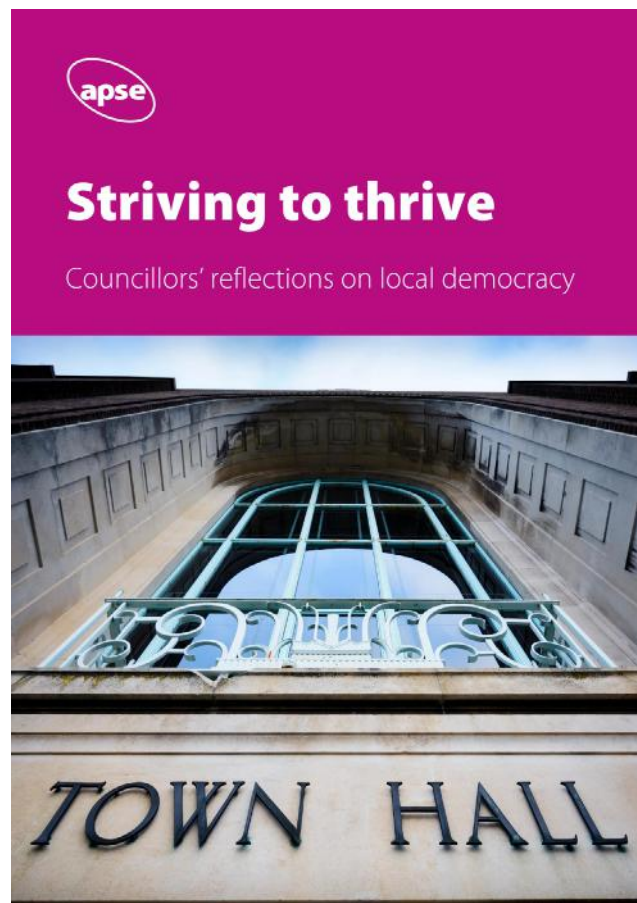
“It is crucial we recognise how much of our citizens’ interaction with the state is at the local level. Everyday functions such as refuse collection, road maintenance, planning permission, leisure, and green spaces to name but a few, are often far more strongly felt than the machinations of central government. These are not abstract concepts – they directly impact how people perceive their quality of life. It is the responsibility of local councillors to make these decisions. Therefore, the Government must ensure that councillors are afforded the appropriate support, recognition, and protection to allow them to carry out their roles. Councillors are democratically elected representatives like any other and deserve to be treated as such.”

Professor Steven Griggs said: “Our evidence reveals the policy cul-de-sac in which the debate over the role of councillors has been stuck in recent years. It remains the case that far too many councillors do not believe that they can influence decision-making and this cannot be good for the health of local democracy.”

The third in a series of surveys going back to 2004, the research also includes comparative analysis, demonstrating the impact of changes and developments over the past 20 years – such as austerity and local devolution deals.

The full report can be downloaded online via the APSE website.

‘Striving to Thrive’ was researched in collaboration with Neil Barnett (Leeds Beckett University), Professor Steven Griggs (Staffordshire University), Professor David Howarth (Essex University) and Dr Jonathan Rose (De Montfort University).





Synergies between assets



Nick Vague, Senior Solutions Consultant at Brightly, highlights the importance of smart and connected asset management.

When assets are not managed correctly, it causes knock-on effects and disruption that could otherwise have been avoided.

For example: Imagine if a gully along a highway was running slowly due to a broken pipe and a weather warning for heavy rain was in place. Overnight, the rainfall would cause localised flooding, resulting in road closures and diversions being put in place. Subsequently the broken pipe would allow the road's sub-surface to be washed away, causing the road surface to collapse, creating further delays and disruption.

Yet a situation like this could easily be avoided. With a single asset management system in place, a proactive plan could be implemented, ensuring regular inspection and early identification and resolution of issues – reducing both cost and disruption.

Getting ahead of the curve

By understanding how assets behave, both independently and in relation to their surroundings over time, local authorities are essentially (and metaphorically) lining up each asset as a domino in

a row. They can stop the 'dominos' from falling over or setting off a chain reaction, which is essential to minimising asset failure and creating wider disruption. In this context, data is the superglue.

The solution? Local authorities can use centralised data across asset classes to not only understand the characteristics of every single asset, but also analyse the impact they have on each other. For example: What are the weak spots that are letting them down and costing them money? Where can they apply that metaphorical superglue to mitigate costly work, health and safety risks and community disruption?

The domino effect in action

The intricate network of assets that supports every journey on UK roads is vast – from carriage and footways to streetlights, traffic signals, bridges, retaining walls and signal gantries. Each of them play their own important role in ensuring the safe and efficient transit of communities.

However, local councils are currently facing the reality of a rapidly ageing road network with ever reducing budgets. On top of this, with more than 300 councils declaring a climate emergency, net zero goals are high on the agenda, so finding ways to operate more sustainably in the midst of budgetary pressures is a real challenge.

Try a united approach to asset management

Assets. United. is a joined-up approach to asset management from Brightly, which gives its users a holistic and detailed view of all assets within their jurisdiction, irrespective of asset class, so they can make smarter decisions. In turn, these smart decisions have the potential to rapidly filter through every stakeholder, from the procurement team and senior managers within the council, to engineers on the ground, right through to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians trying to get around safely. Ultimately, the initiative uncovers synergies while putting the systems' users in control of the actions they need to take.

The logo for Brightly, featuring a stylized blue circular icon on the left and the word "Brightly" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font to its right.

“Confirm enables us to properly account for what’s happened to our various assets right across the network. We now have much more granularity and a deeper understanding of our assets.”

*Carol Valentine, Business Innovation and Technology Manager – Highways
Kent County Council*

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A new era for frontline services?



annual seminar 2024

Bristol, 11-12 September



The event, unique in the local government calendar, will focus on all the big issues and challenges facing the sector. Taking place in Bristol, delegates will enjoy an opportunity to explore this wonderful city whilst gaining unique insight into the challenges and opportunities local councils face with the advent of a new government.

A new era for frontline services?

Environmental protection, net zero, local investment, child poverty, communications, planning and devolution...

This year's Annual Seminar promises to tackle all the big issues currently facing UK local authorities and our communities. The event provides a unique chance to network with leading figures in public policy and acquire the skills and knowledge to navigate a new government.

Speakers will join us from across the public policy landscape – governmental departments, non-departmental public bodies, local authorities and universities – to consider diverse topics:

- Living Locally: The role of housing and planning within local councils. Findings of research from APSE and the TCPA.
- Climate change: Renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions and environmental protection - including best practice case studies.
- A tour of UK policy differences and similarities across administrations: with COSLA, NILGA, the LGA and WLGA.
- Interactive roundtable discussions across a range of frontline services areas.

A rich suite of market-leading products and services

The annual event features one of local government's largest trade exhibitions. Delegates will have the unique opportunity to question suppliers about their latest products and pricing. Contact Matt Paton on m.paton@spacehouse.co.uk for more information.

APSE Service Awards 2024

The Seminar also includes the prestigious APSE Annual Service Awards Charity Dinner, in aid of Parkinson's UK, APSE's corporate charity. The Awards celebrate outstanding achievement and innovation within local government service delivery.

Interest and recognition in the Awards has grown year on year. Judged by a panel of distinguished sector leaders, the local authorities who are winners and finalists receive publicity, both nationally and locally, as well as being exemplars in service delivery from the wider local government family.

Join us in Bristol

This highly interactive conference is the must attend event for all those looking to future-proof the frontline including recovery for local economies, those seeking to develop strategies to and implement climate change objectives. Please note, at this time we are unable to accept dinner only bookings for the Service Awards. Dinner places will be prioritised to seminar delegate packages. •

Don't miss out!



For more information about the event and to book your place, scan the QR code [or click on this link](#) •

The Seminar also includes the prestigious APSE Service Awards 2024, this year in aid of Parkinson's UK

Around the seminar:

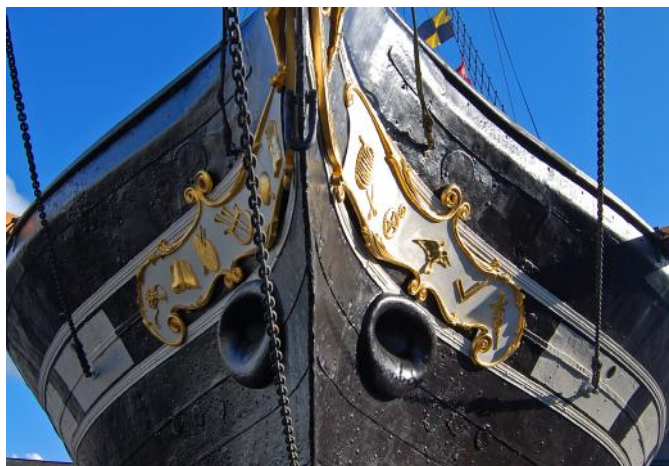
Tuesday 10 September: Welcome reception.

Wednesday 11 September: Day One of the seminar followed by the APSE AGM with an evening reception on the SS Great Britain.

Thursday 12 September: Day Two of the seminar followed by the APSE Service Awards Charity Dinner.



City Hall, Bristol



Brunel's SS Great Britain

Creating Environmental Justice



Humera Sultan, Consultant in Public Health at Birmingham City Council and Pre Doctoral Local Authority Fellow, gives an insight into how local

authorities can improve access to parks for local communities.

In 2019, Birmingham City Council (BCC) successfully bid for a Heritage Lottery Funded grant with support from the National Trust to become a Future Parks Accelerator site (FPA). This allowed us to explore ways to embed nature and the value of parks into the wider council.

BCC is the largest local authority in Europe, serving a population of just over 1.1 million residents, living within 69 wards. The city has 631 green spaces, of which 427 are parks; the remaining green spaces include school playing fields, allotment sites, cemeteries and burial grounds.

Connecting with nature through access to green space is critical not only for the health and wellbeing of people but to tackle the climate crisis. This is an issue of Environmental Justice – it is not fair that some communities don't have access to good quality space within 1km of where they live. We wanted to understand this issue more robustly in Birmingham so we could take action in priority areas, and hence, our metric for Environmental Justice was born.

So, what is Environmental Justice?

This is a term that comes from a social movement which seeks 'the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, income, national origin, or educational level concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies'.

Cities such as Berlin (Germany) and Richmond (Virginia, USA) have used Environmental Justice approaches to map both environmental risks and inequalities.

Birmingham is the first UK city to develop its own metric, our Environmental Justice Index (EJI) and below, we describe how we designed it.

Development of the new Environmental Justice Index

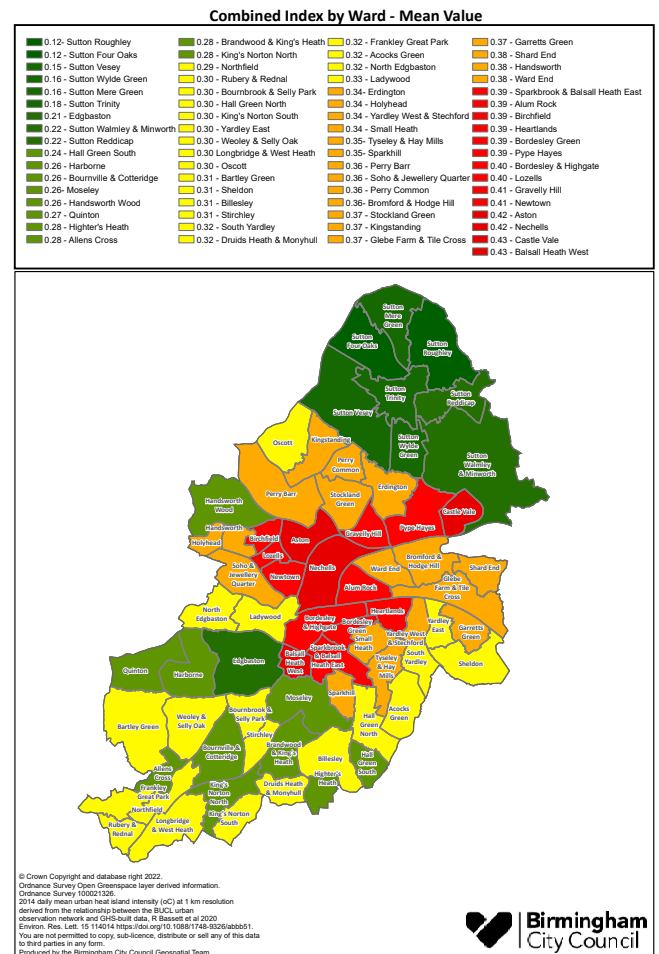
Working with our Geographical Data Systems team, we used the following 5 data sets as inputs:

1. Access to Greenspace
2. Urban Heat Island (UHI)
3. Flood Risk
4. Excess Years Life Lost (YLL)
5. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

We combined these data sets to create an overall index on a scale from zero to one for each of the 69 wards in the city. A score closer to one indicates the residents in that ward are most impacted by all 5 factors and experience little environmental justice. If you wish to explore the detailed methodology, you can read our paper [here](#) or watch a webinar on how we produced it [here](#).

The Environmental Justice Map for Birmingham

We took these scores for each ward and plotted them on the map below. Red wards are those in need of the most intervention to improve access to green spaces, and green wards are in the least need. The map clearly shows that red wards are clustered within the inner city, which coincides with our wider knowledge that residents in living these areas are in greater need of support across a whole range of other indicators.



What we did next

For the first time, we had a clear narrative about how inequitable our spread of green spaces was in the city. This formed the basis of our City of Nature 25-Year Plan, which was ratified by our Cabinet in 2022. It gave us some key areas to start our interventions, given the scale of Birmingham. We chose 6 wards to start – Bordesley and Highgate, Castle Vale, Nechells, Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East and Gravelly Hill. All are red wards and importantly, all are geographically connected so we can consider how we develop green corridors. We developed an audit tool, which we call the Fair Park Standard (FPS), which allows parks staff and volunteers to rate the quality of parks according to some simple indicators.

Impact of Environmental Justice Index

The City of Nature team have assessed all the parks located within six wards identified as 'red' against the FPS and developed associated action plans. The funding to support these action plans was agreed by Cabinet, and is coming from the Community Infrastructure Levy, which is a first for BCC. Senior Managers also

realised that EJ impacted many services and outcomes beyond parks, offering further potential for collaborative working and joint policy.

Given the evidence-based nature of this approach, the City of Nature team has been given the mandate to engage with agencies beyond the LA, to support LA plans to restore Environmental Justice in Birmingham. This has created the 'City of Nature Alliance' (CoNA), made up of a range of Birmingham-based green and community organisations and third-sector organisations, who are now collaborating in a far more strategic way.

The first ward to benefit from the EJI was Bordesley and Highgate Ward, with an EJI score of 0.40. To achieve the delivery of the City of Nature actions at a site level, we audited each of the five parks in the ward against the FPS. We created a plan for action to raise the standard of each park to the minimum required within 12 months. Five organisations from the CoNA were successful at gaining small grant funding to conduct actions from the plan. Rather than focusing their resources on distinct parts of Birmingham, they worked collaboratively to make Bordesley and Highgate a greener place to live.



Engagement with local young people

Examples of the type of action were to engage communities around each site using onsite notice boards to display posters, face-to-face surveys, and social media. We delivered improvements to amenity infrastructure along with habitat creation to increase biodiversity. We worked with the CoNA to deliver healthy activities at each site including sports for young people and sensory walks. Local schools were involved through nature-based activities delivered in schools. At 12-month follow-up, we reaudited all the sites and found the minimum standard had been achieved.

Taking this work further

We continue to make improvements in the parks in the other red wards identified with progress being made in Balsall Heath, Castle Vale and Nechells. We recognise the challenges that all Local Authorities face in adequately investing in parks and this is part of the next phase of our work to continue our journey of achieving Environmental Justice for Birmingham.

Acknowledgements

Nick Grayson¹, Stephen Jones¹, David Pike¹, Sarah Greenham², Debbie Needle³, Jon Sadler², Emma Frew⁴.
[1] Birmingham City Council; [2] Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK;
[3] Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, Birmingham, UK;
[4] Centre for Economics of Obesity, Institute for Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham, UK.



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Safer Parks

Helen Forman, Urban Design Manager, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, details the Authority's initiative to improve safety for women and girls in greenspaces.

In Britain, women are three times more likely than men to feel unsafe in a park during the day. This ratio is much more marked in parks than other public places, such as streets or public transport (ONS 2022), and is shockingly unfair.



At the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, we commissioned Dr Anna Barker from the University of Leeds to help us find out more about women and teenage girls' perceptions of safety in parks, supported by the Safer Streets Fund in 2021. The research was conducted with a diverse sample of over 100 women and girls, as well as parks professionals from our five districts. They told us so much. Many teenage girls felt that parks were not 'for them' and that equipment and facilities were used mainly by boys. Some women hadn't visited their local park due to safety fears; others scheduled their visits during busier times when they felt safer, such as during Park Run.

I was particularly struck by one comment from a teenage girl when asked for comments on an image of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in one research exercise. "What's that white van doing there?" she asked. I hadn't even noticed it, parked next to the MUGA, but its presence was enough to make her wary; she couldn't see who was inside. As women in public spaces, we learn early to scan the environment for potential threats and plan our escape. This is a tough truth, and the women and girls we interviewed told us that society needed to change.

The research identified a number of areas of consensus about how a park can affect feelings of safety. Working with Keep Britain Tidy and Make Space for Girls alongside the university, we used the findings to produce guidance on the design and management of parks. Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls was published in May 2023. It includes ten principles under three themes:

- **Eyes on the Park** reflects that the presence of others, especially other women, makes women and girls feel safer.
- **Awareness** addresses design issues that can help women and girls feel more secure.

- **Inclusion** considers the importance of bringing a diverse cross-section of women and girls into our parks and designing spaces with their input.

The principles include suggestions for placement of facilities, paths and features that are easy to navigate and maximise visibility, ideas for bringing more women to the park through activities and events, and recommendations for ways to a sense of belonging and familiarity. The guidance also includes ten case studies from West Yorkshire, the UK and around the world and features ideas for 'quick wins' which can be achieved at low cost.

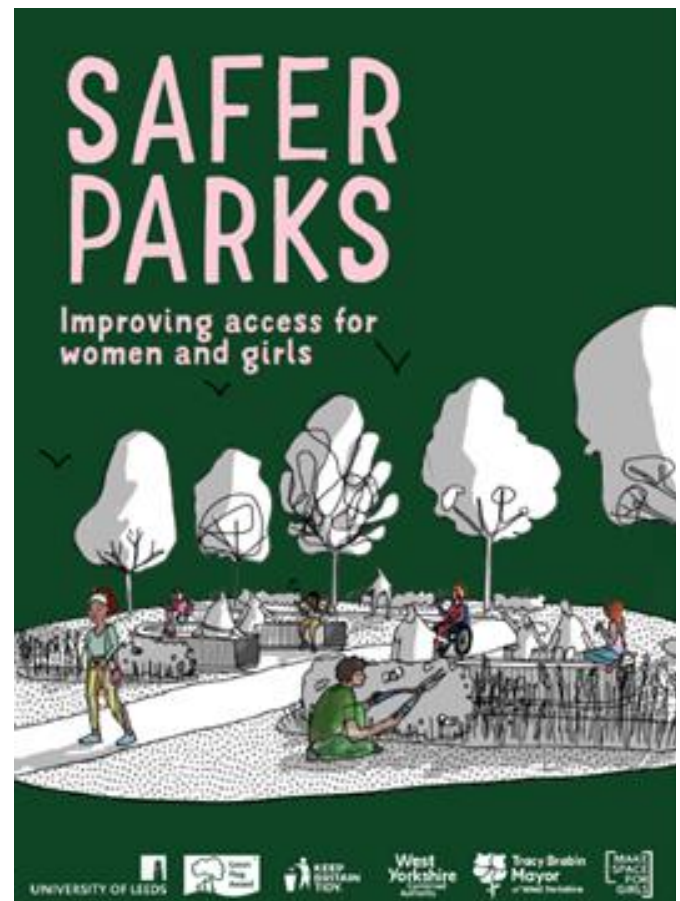
Since its launch, the guidance has impacted on policies, strategies and practices locally, nationally and internationally. Its recommendations for active bystander training have been followed up with sessions where park Friends, staff and volunteers groups attended; 100% stated in feedback that they are more likely to intervene when they see harassment in their local parks. We have talked to many audiences across the UK including an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Parks and Green Spaces. And our powerful behavioural change campaign, #JustDont, aims to empower men and boys to change society for the better.

It is essential that parks are made safer and welcoming for women and girls. Parks have so much to offer, including well-documented health and wellbeing benefits. We should all be able to enjoy them.

The research and guidance can be found at: <https://www.greenflagaward.org/resources-research/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/>

The Just Don't campaign and video can be found at [just-dont.co.uk](https://www.just-dont.co.uk)

Helen's presentation at the APSE Parks Seminar 2024 can be downloaded via the APSE website.



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Tackling transport injustice

Dr Tom Cohen, Reader in Transport Policy at the University of Westminster, outlines the importance of equal access to transport, and how local authorities can help.

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What is transport justice? Put simply, it is the idea that the opportunities and impacts of transport are distributed fairly. In the most obvious sense, we're asking whether people have equal capacity to get to the places that matter to them. This may be a matter of whether the journeys are feasible; it may be about cost and/or time - and it doesn't take much reflection to see that these things aren't distributed fairly at all. For instance, those with access to a car can typically reach a wider variety of destinations and travel more quickly than those who depend on other forms of transport. They may also travel more cheaply, therefore enjoying an advantage.

This is a concern in itself but it's more worrying when we reflect that capacity to move is related to other aspects of life. If you can reach more destinations in a given journey time, you have access to a larger number of opportunities. This may mean you can get a better-paid job or buy lower-priced groceries. At its worst, a lack of transport opportunities can be associated with not being able to enjoy a full life, often described as social exclusion. Transport for the North has adopted the term "transport-related social exclusion" and over the last couple of years has published sobering data concerning the number and locations of people in this predicament.

Graph 6.1 – Statistically significant differences in mean scores: Disability and long-term health conditions



Image credits: 'Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England' - Transport for the North

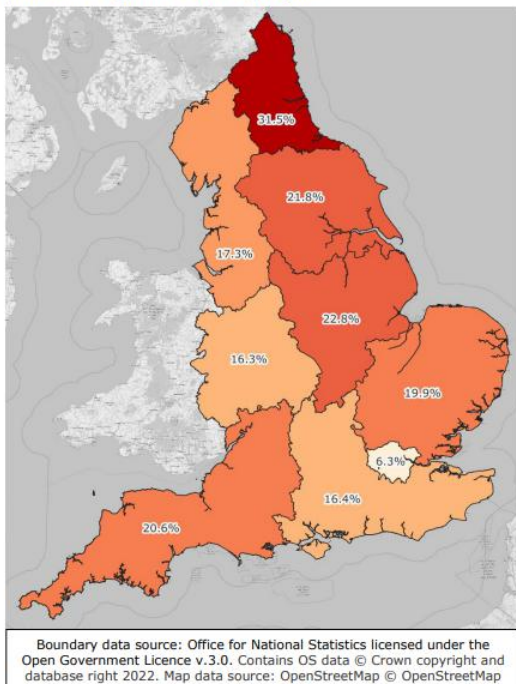
Low income is a primary cause but it often goes hand in hand with being disabled, female, non-white and so on.

We tend to see that people who are already facing social disadvantage are, in effect, hit a second time because of their limited transport options. We also see that the negative effects of transport (e.g. poor road safety and poor air quality) are disproportionately experienced by people facing disadvantage. We at the University of Westminster believe this situation is unacceptable and we know that many people in local government feel the same.

What to do about it? We've published a simple guide that sets out four steps:

- 1. Understand:** Use existing data and consider collecting additional data that will shed light on who faces what barriers and why. The Regional Prosperity Framework for Edinburgh and South-East Scotland uses a Workforce Mobility Deprivation Index based on publicly available data on deprivation.
- 2. Set goals:** Agree where you are trying to get to. Assuming you want to help those who face the greatest barriers, can you say what level of improvement you want to achieve for them? Transport for the North's transport strategy sets specific targets for 2050, including "reducing the number of people in the North living in areas with a high risk of TRSE by 1,000,00."
- 3. Develop policies/projects that tackle injustice:** This should follow quite naturally from the first two steps but a simple appraisal process should help you to identify which policies/projects can be expected to achieve the greatest gains for a given outlay. For example, Bath and North-East Somerset Council employed principles of transport justice in specifying the WESTlink demand-responsive transport service operating in more rural parts of the authority.
- 4. Evaluate:** Having implemented one or more interventions, check whether the expected impacts have happened. In addition to enabling better policy-making in future, this can help persuade stakeholders of the value of this work. For example, an evaluation of Workwise in the West Midlands showed its contribution to people finding and retaining work as well as the financial savings it had achieved.

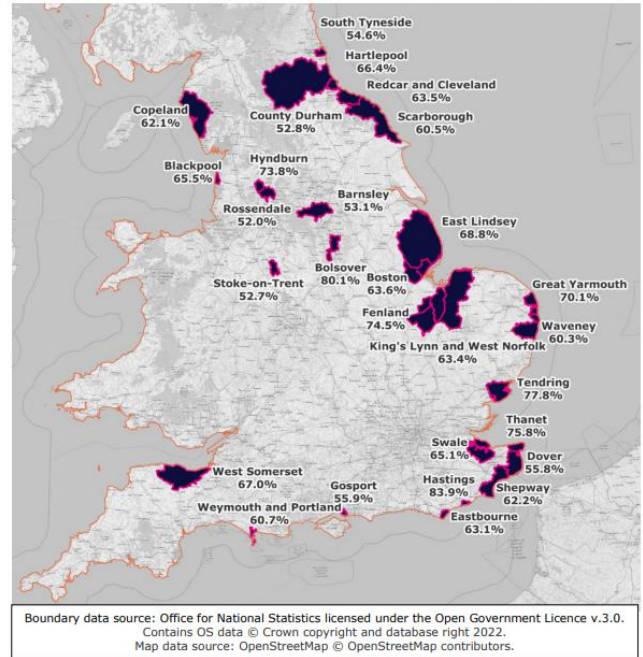
Map 6.1 – Population at high risk of TRSE by region



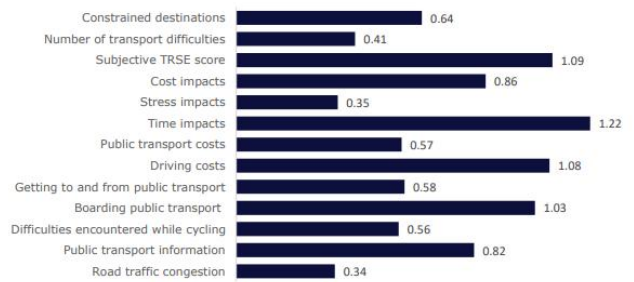
We know that local government is already facing massive challenges. Asking members and officers to think about transport justice on top of everything else may seem just too much. Our response is simple: justice matters most when times are hard. When there is not much to go around, it matters even more who gets it. And what we describe implies a somewhat different approach to planning transport, not a swathe of new work. We hope readers will agree!

Dr Tom Cohen spoke at the APSE Vehicle Maintenance and Transport Advisory Group. His presentation is available via the APSE website. The full guidance report, 'Tackling transport injustice - practical advice for local authorities' can be [downloaded here](#).

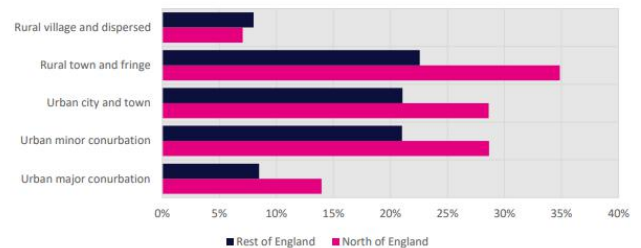
Map 6.3 – LADs where more than 50% of the population is at a high risk of TRSE



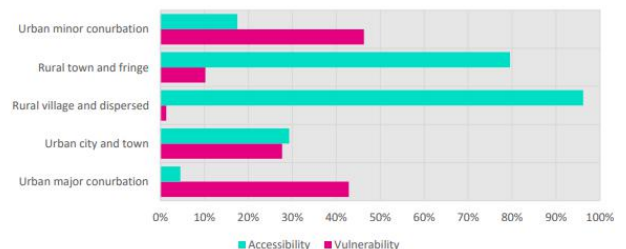
Graph 6.6 – Statistically significant differences in mean scores: Ethnicity



Graph 6.16 – Population at high risk of TRSE by rural-urban area type



Graph 6.17 – Proportion of LSOAs in the lowest three deciles by rural-urban area type





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CSSC calls on party leaders to commit to a healthier, more active UK



CEO Matt Bazeley OBE, details CSSC's #TakeTheLead campaign to promote physical activity, sport, and

healthy lifestyles in the UK

I am proud to announce CSSC's decision to be a cosignatory of a pivotal letter to the UK Government, giving our full support to the #TakeTheLead campaign calling on party leaders during the election to commit to making the UK the most active nation in Europe alongside prominent leaders across sport, physical activity, health, and business sectors.

The letter addressed a critical issue: the urgent need for a national strategy to boost physical activity and improve public health. The UK ranks joint 11th in physical activity levels among 15 comparable nations, highlighting a significant opportunity for improvement. By advocating for this ambitious goal, we can unlock the potential of the sport and physical activity sector to make substantial contributions to the UK's health, economy, and society.

The benefits of achieving this vision are immense:

1. Economic Growth: Increasing GDP by £3.6 billion annually.
2. Reduced NHS Burden: Cutting spending on preventable diseases by £1 billion each year.
3. Enhanced Wellbeing: Elevating life satisfaction with wellbeing benefits valued at £71 billion annually.

At CSSC, we believe that sport, recreation, and physical activity are powerful unifiers that can bridge communities across ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Sport contributes to a healthier, happier, more productive, and more prosperous society. Our 130,000 members from the UK's Civil Service and Public Sector are testament to this, participating in a range of activities that promote health and wellbeing.

In February, our annual Active Wellbeing event engaged over 13,000 members in a month-long challenge, breaking down barriers to exercise. This initiative is a testament to our commitment, but we recognise that more needs to be done on a national scale.

The "Letter to Party Leaders" outlines several steps to realise this ambition:

- Unlock access by removing barriers to participation, improving access, affordability, and usability of spaces for physical activity.
- Build a habit for life by integrating physical activity into children's lives, ensuring every child gets at least 60 active minutes daily.
- Show a red card to red tape by reducing regulatory burdens on the sports sector allowing it to focus on increasing participation in sport and physical activity.
- Support and grow the workforce and volunteers who make sport and physical activity possible.
- Power a prevention-first approach by embedding physical activity within community health and care systems to enhance population health.
- Tackle inequalities by ensuring inclusivity in physical activity through targeted, place-based approaches.
- Enhance our places and spaces by protecting and improving environments to encourage more physical activity.
- Back our world-class athletes and events leveraging elite sports and events to inspire participation and civic pride.

We are united in our belief that the health of the nation is closely linked to our economic health. By committing to making the UK the most active nation in Europe, the next government can drive transformative change that benefits communities across the country.

We call on all parties to #TakeTheLead and commit to this bold vision. Together, we can create a healthier, more active, and more vibrant UK.





Getting to the root of sexual harassment

Girls and women face harassment from boys and men every day. Southwark Council is tackling the issue with their award-winning campaign, Through Her Eyes. Ella Rogers, Senior Media Officer, explains more.

Making Southwark's streets safer for women and girls is a top priority for the council. This resulted in us committing to launch a major campaign to tackle misogyny in the borough. National crime data and our survey on women's safety showed that the majority of women and girls in Southwark and across the UK have been sexually harassed in public.

Seemingly small acts – cat-calling, leering, unwanted touching – are not isolated incidents. They are fuelled and excused by the same sexist beliefs that underpin full-blown male violence against women and girls. But it's not for women and girls to adapt their behaviour to avoid unwanted attention or keep themselves safe. That's why Through Her Eyes is targeted at men and boys.

Our campaign is ongoing, centred on an impactful video that shows men and boys sexual harassment through a girl's eyes. Our aim is to encourage them to challenge their own attitudes and behaviour, and that of others. This helped form our brief that was won by agency Nice and Serious.

From concept to conclusion, every component was tested with our target audience. We ran focus groups throughout the process where they steered the campaign – both the creative direction and content.

In the video and poster artwork, the gender roles are swapped. The narrative follows a teenage boy who navigates sexual harassment from women and girls on his way to school. The actors and settings were chosen to reflect Southwark and its diversity.

Behaviour change can take decades. Even something as simple as drinking an extra cup of water a day can take more than two months to become a consistent habit. Misogyny has been handed down generation after generation. So the change we need won't happen overnight.

We had to ensure our campaign would have long-term impact, which we did in three ways:

1. Achieving initial impact

We targeted a niche group of men and boys in Southwark aged between 16 and 25 as a key moment in adolescence for behaviour change. We harnessed the unique reach of this group across social media channels with paid-for advertising, launching on White Ribbon Day (the international day for ending male violence against women). Having engaging content that was topical meant the video snowballed organically online, with coverage secured across national, regional, local and broadcast media. It has now been watched over 520,000 times.

2. Growing our initial impact

We capitalize on every opportunity to continue driving the campaign forward. We worked with local cinema, Peckhamplex, to show the video to captive audiences as the last advert before every film during the 16 days of activism following White Ribbon Day. During the same

time, we promoted the campaign to commuters at one of London's busiest stations at London Bridge. Over 3.2 million people passed through the station while our campaign was on their screens.

3. Embedding the campaign

We are embedding the campaign within different networks. The video and dedicated resource pack has been rolled out to all secondary schools to integrate into PSHE education. Southwark Young Advisors use the video in their anti-misogyny workshops for primary and secondary pupils, as do charity Bede House who we commissioned to deliver workshops on healthy relationship in schools. Other councils are using the video in their women's safety work and the Metropolitan Police incorporated the video as a resource for their safer school officers who work with over 1,000 schools across London.

Feedback from our target audience

"Before, this was all normalised. But it's definitely something that's going to be in my mind since watching the video because it shouldn't be normal."

"We might not have done [sexual harassment] ourselves but we've definitely all had the chance to stop people doing it and haven't."



The conversations the video has inspired shows the seed has been planted for more conversations to grow, for attitudes to evolve, and for behaviour change to set in. Our key message for the campaign was simple: see it, stop it. But for our campaign, it doesn't stop here.

Get in touch if you have any questions by emailing ella.rogers@southwark.gov.uk



Watch and share Southwark Council's film at:

www.southwark.gov.uk/through-her-eyes



New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome **Green-tech**

Green-tech is proud to announce that they we are now an approved partner of APSE.

Green-tech is the UK's leading supplier of landscaping and forestry products and is a trusted provider of high-quality, sustainable solutions for the public sector, landscaping, forestry, and horticultural sectors. Their diverse product range includes tree planting materials, irrigation, seed, soils, and street furniture products, all designed to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces that enhance communities and promote environmental stewardship.

"We are thrilled to become an approved partner of APSE," comments James Renfrew, Account Manager from Green-tech. "This partnership demonstrates our commitment to advancing sustainability and excellence in public service open spaces. This collaboration allows us to extend our innovative solutions to a wider audience, enabling more communities to benefit from the numerous health and wellbeing advantages that come from access to public green spaces. Our goal is to support local authorities in integrating sustainable green practices into their operations, thereby increasing environmental benefits, and encouraging biodiversity".

As part of this partnership, Green-tech will engage in collaborative initiatives, educational programs, and resource sharing to support APSE members in adopting sustainable landscaping practices. They are committed to driving positive change within public services.

For more information visit www.green-tech.co.uk.

Contact James Renfrew, Local Authority Account Manager at james.renfrew@green-tech.uk



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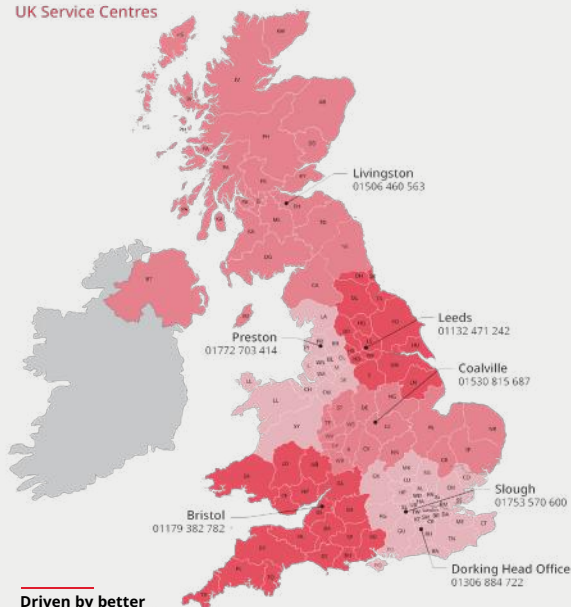
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Council grant scheme to tackle unsightly gum littering has helped 122 local authorities

Leading national environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy says by combining targeted street cleansing with specially designed signage to encourage people to bin their gum, participating councils saw reductions of up to 80% in gum littering in the first two months - with a reduced rate of gum littering still being observed after six months.

Now into its third year, the Chewing Gum Task Force, which is administered by the charity, brings together some of the UK's major chewing gum producers (Mars Wrigley and Perfetti Van Melle) with the chewing gum firms investing up to £10 million over five years to achieve two objectives; cleaning up historic gum staining from UK high streets and changing behaviour so that more people bin their gum.

Estimates from WRAP suggest the annual clean-up cost of chewing gum for councils in the UK is around £7 million and, according to Keep Britain Tidy, around 77% of England's streets and 99% of retail sites are stained with gum.

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE, Keep Britain Tidy's chief executive, said: "Chewing gum litter is highly visible on our high streets and is both difficult and expensive to clean up, so the support for councils provided by the Chewing Gum Task Force and the gum manufacturers is very welcome."

Grants of up to £27,500 were available to councils in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales towards the purchase of cleaning equipment and/or street cleansing this year – marking a ten per cent increase on the amounts available in year two. The grants are supplemented by fully funded gum litter prevention packages for each council.

What can the grant money be used for?

- Purchase of equipment and/or cleaning materials
- Redeployment of existing equipment to other areas
- Repair or refurbishment of existing equipment
- Cost of new or temporary staff members
- Redeploying existing staff members
- Training staff members in the use of new equipment
- Equipment hire and/or subcontractors, if there is a business case for this
- Trials of innovative cleaning equipment or techniques
- Trials of innovative new ways to identify areas in need of cleaning.

This includes targeted signage and advice grounded in behavioural science, designed and produced by the not-for-profit social enterprise Behaviour Change, which creates social and environmental change. Through a five-year innovation programme and collaboration with chewing gum manufacturer Mars Wrigley, they created and tested a range of ways to encourage responsible behaviour, which ultimately resulted in local reductions of gum littering by up to 64%.

In years one and two of the scheme, grants worth £3.3m were awarded to UK councils, and as a result 2.94km² of pavements have been cleaned.

The charity says 127 gum litter prevention packages have been fulfilled, with 22,218 gum litter prevention resources printed and six innovation pilots completed so far, which involved testing new signage designs and the impact of pavement coating, which is designed to make it easier to clean pavements.

The task force's research reveals 100% of councils feel that their project has benefited their local community, and that the grant has helped raise awareness of gum litter in their local areas.

What is Keep Britain Tidy?

Keep Britain Tidy is a leading environmental charity. We set the standard for the management of parks and beaches, inspire people to be litter-free, to waste less and live more sustainably. We run campaigns and programmes including the Great British Spring Clean, Eco-Schools, Love Parks Week, Buy Nothing New Month, Eco-Schools, the Green Flag Award for parks and green spaces, the Blue Flag/Seaside Awards for beaches and blue spaces, and the Green Key for sustainable tourism and hospitality.

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Allison added: "However, once the gum has been cleaned up, it is vital to remind the public that when it comes to litter, whether it's gum or anything else, there is only one place it should be – in the bin – and that is why the behaviour change element of the task force's work is so important."

So far, as many as 70% of councils have used their funding to purchase new equipment, making sure that they can continue to clean up gum in the future.

Applications for year four will open to councils in February 2025, with funding available to help them undertake chewing gum cleaning in streets, town centres, train/bus stations, parks and/or other public spaces.

Local authorities can read more on Keep Britain Tidy's website: <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/chewing-gum-task-force>

Rachel Scarisbrick, Litter and Place Services Manager, Keep Britain Tidy, presented at the APSE central region event on 19 June. Her slides are available via the APSE website.



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At this Stage, we coordinate all architectural, engineering and specialist consultant information to formulate the planning application submission.
- 4 Technical Design**
The technical intricacies are worked into your beautiful architectural and engineering designs to finalise the tender pack. CDS will manage a specialist consultancy team to produce this pack and guide you through the tender process to find the right contractor.
- 5 Construction**
This is when you see your plans materialise with construction on site. CDS will oversee the building works to ensure the delivery of the scheme to the highest standard, as per the brief, and minimise environmental impact as we go.
- 6 Handover**
The contract is concluded and CDS can support you through to formal opening of the site.
- 7 Use**
After handover, we continue to ensure the development operates as intended and is efficiently maintained.

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Local Net Zero Hubs - making net zero projects happen



Michael Gallagher,
Head of Midlands Net
Zero Hub, outlines how
the UK-wide initiative

is supporting local authorities to
achieve climate targets.

Created by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in 2018, the five Local Net Zero Hubs provide free strategic and technical support to local authorities, public sector organisations, and community groups in England to develop net zero projects. The Hubs take net zero projects from the earliest stages of feasibility to investment and delivery.

The Hubs' objectives in providing this support are to:

- Increase the number, quality, and scale of local net zero projects.
- Enable local areas to attract private or public finance for decarbonisation projects.
- Raise awareness of the opportunity for, and benefits of, local investment.
- Support regional co-ordination and collaboration between local partners and share local learning.

The Hubs also work to deliver national projects locally, through programmes developed and funded by the Department including:

- Supporting community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction, and energy supply projects through the Community Energy Fund.
- Domestic retrofit programmes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Home Upgrade Grant, and the Local Authority Delivery scheme. These schemes fund energy efficiency improvements including insulation, draught proofing, upgraded heating systems, solar panels, and heat pumps in low income and social homes.

- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, helping local authorities to make their own buildings easier, greener, and cheaper to heat and power.
- The Local Energy Advice Demonstrator programme, piloting innovative ways of providing energy advice to hard-to-reach communities and for local people who live in hard-to-treat homes.

Each Local Net Zero Hub also delivers key innovative projects in their region.

Greater South East Net Zero Hub

- Exploration of a place-based Net Zero Delivery Vehicle as a replicable solution to increase the flow of capital into net zero projects and address the lack of development and financial capacity of local authorities.
- Partnering with Innovate UK KTN to use their Innovation Exchange process to develop solutions for public sector transport decarbonisation, including fleets, large engine vehicles and car parks.
- Developing a regional training network to upskill and upscale the energy-efficiency workforce to lower the carbon emissions of the 10 million homes in the region, making them cheaper to heat and creating net zero job and business opportunities.

Midlands Net Zero Hub

- Managing national skills training schemes which have delivered more than 25,000 courses to upskill professionals in retrofit, energy efficiency, and low-carbon heating.
- Leading regional retrofit consortia which have delivered energy efficiency improvements to more than 10,000 homes through grant-funded schemes.
- Assisting local authorities to decarbonise their fleet through the Electrification of Council Depots Guide and funding competition.



'The Wave' inland surfing lagoon in South Gloucestershire, powered by a solar 'Smartflower.'

North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub

- Local Area Energy Planning, developing data-driven and evidence-led projections of future local energy demand alongside cost effective proposals to meet that demand.
- Deployment of alternative sources of heat, including a major study looking at unlocking geothermal technology at scale in the UK and projects looking to harness heat from agricultural and food waste and from redundant energy infrastructure such as mines.
- Working to create a Community Energy Ecosystem in the region, where local groups with an interest in generating

clean heat and energy locally can come together to share best practice and shape local and national support offer, alongside training, subsidised energy audits and funding programmes.

North West Net Zero Hub

- Supporting businesses to understand heat decarbonisation options including support for installation of commercial heat pumps.
- Supporting homeowners, schools and other public organisations to invest in solar power.
- Assisting the Net Zero North West Cluster Plan, which identifies a £30bn investment opportunity anchored by the Hynet Track 1 Industrial Cluster.
- Supporting skills and supply chain development and best practice and procurement of local government and social housing programmes of over £300m.
- Building a project pipeline of £196m of public building heat decarbonisation plans.
- Supporting advanced heat zoning and anchor projects for district heating schemes in city centres and industrial parks.

South West Net Zero Hub

- Delivering a £1m Capacity and Development Fund to support local councils towards meeting local net zero ambitions.
- Developing a domestic low carbon retrofit finance solution for Able-To-Pay householders.
- A major research project on green skills and supply chain development.
- Supporting councils to develop innovative mechanisms for power purchase that promotes the growth of local renewable energy generation.

If you would like support to make your local authority's net zero projects happen, get in touch with your Local Net Zero Hub. Find out more about the Local Net Zero Hubs programme.



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Department for Energy Security & Net Zero



Equality on the frontline: How far have we come and where are we going?

Amy Caldwell, APSE Senior Training Officer

In 2010, The Equality Act brought together over 116 pieces of legislation into one single Act. The goal? To make it easier to understand and to use. Over fourteen years later we continue to rely on this guidance to help us navigate an evolving landscape and ensure everyone is treated fairly.

Whilst the world has moved on since the early 2000s, the need to position equalities at the forefront of local government has not. Indeed, the Public Sector Equality Duty that came into force across Great Britain in April 2011 should be at the heart of local government decision-making.

APSE led the way in local government in supporting our local council members through the spate of Equal Pay challenges and in understanding job evaluation in local government. We have proudly threaded the Public Sector Equality Duty through our courses and research. Most recently, we have developed, through APSE's Southern Region Principal Advisor Abi Ademiluyi, and Research Officer, Shami Scholes, a new seminar under the theme of 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'. The latest seminar in May 2024 brought together a range of expert speakers that explored steps local authorities and partners have taken, and are continuing to take, in carrying out, developing and supporting a diverse workforce and community at all levels. This session also covered steps being taken to coordinate better dialogue, promote equality, engaging and responding to the needs of everyone in the community.

Through the success of this seminar and our ongoing work on the Public Sector Equalities Duty it has become increasingly clear that this is something our APSE members and approved partners want to understand and explore how, at any level, you can cultivate inclusivity across the local government landscape. As a result, APSE Training is pleased to share the launch of our newest course: Equality on the Frontline.

Targeting frontline service workers, this training provides a brief overview of the legislative requirement, whilst also taking time to explore concepts such as unconscious bias and 'the bystander effect.' Through a series of thought-provoking and interactive exercises, learners are encouraged to consider what might constitute discriminatory behaviour and how to address this in conversation.

The frontline service workforce is the foundation of a local authority, connecting to the communities they serve, and their roles are critical in shaping the customer experience. To shape this effectively we must understand the differences in human experience specifically across the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We hope this course provides an opportunity for colleagues to engage in productive conversations reflecting on how they currently and can continue to promote inclusivity across a range of service-based roles. In the interest of developing these materials to the highest possible standard, APSE Training held a reference panel on Thursday 30 May where our materials and course content were jointly tested and developed collaboratively with our member councils alongside APSE colleagues.

Participants were invited to comment on the existing content and provide suggestions to enhance their relevance for frontline service workers. This highly collaborative session sought to identify the opportunities and challenges that face the frontline workforce across a range of services, as well as providing a toolkit for learners to utilise beyond the virtual classroom.

As an IIP Gold standard organisation, APSE Training recognises the incredible importance of a course like this in supporting local authorities to continue to exemplify and build on inclusive best practice.

Future courses will be available online, via Microsoft Teams, and in person.

Our thanks for the development of this course must go to Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and West Northamptonshire Council.

Thanks also to APSE colleagues, Lindsay Airey, Head of Business Resources, Shami Scholes, Business Support and Research Officer, Abi Ademiluyi, Principal Advisor for APSE Southern Region and Fiona Sutton-Wilson, Head of APSE training.

For more information about this course contact Amy Caldwell at acaldow@apse.org.uk



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Gail Witchell, Operations Manager Oxfordshire County Council

"Gracias so much for the training, it was fun and I learnt so much even after 10 years cleaning. Very good!"
Valentina, Cleaning Operative

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