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Highlights from the Annual Seminar 2024

Charting a new course for local government in Bristol

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National Chair**

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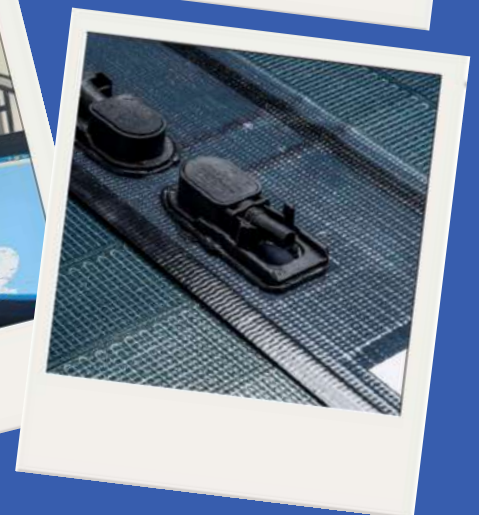


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A message from APSE National Chair 2024/2025

Cllr Archie Dryburgh

Cllr Dryburgh was sadly unable to attend the APSE Annual General Meeting in person, he delivered the following address remotely.

Hello Colleagues, I am sorry that I cannot be with you in person at the AGM, but I wanted to say a few words to commence my year in office.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleagues within APSE Scotland for placing their trust in me to represent them as APSE National Chair on their behalf. It is truly an honour to take on this role.

Many of you will know that I am currently undergoing treatment for a health condition. However, I want to reassure you that with the support of my APSE colleagues - particularly Cllr Lynne Short as APSE Scotland Chair - I will be steering the good ship APSE over the next year.

As is tradition for the incoming Chair, I wanted to take this opportunity to set out my vision to you.

As you know, I am committed to the neighbourhood level services that our local councils provide. For too long, these services have been diminishing under a cloud of cuts to local authorities. During my term of office, I want to ensure that the value of these services is placed front and centre of APSE's campaigning work on behalf of our member councils. Neighbourhood services are hidden in plain sight. Everyone relies on these services from waste and recycling, through to our local parks, and yet we face an uncertain future for these services, which are often left to the bottom of the pile in funding terms. This must change.

Secondly, the value of a decent, warm, affordable home is a basic human right. However, we are witnessing right across the UK the growth of households in temporary accommodation. This is damaging to the life chances of too many people, denying them access to work, and for children a terrible impact on their wellbeing and educational opportunities. I want to step up APSE's campaigning work right across the UK to ensure that the value of new social homes, at affordable rents is a fundamental pathway to addressing inequality in our communities.

Thirdly, many of you will know of my work as a veterans' champion. It is very dear to my heart that those who have served their country should not struggle for jobs, housing, or to get the support they may need. Too often the intentions of

government, and indeed charities, are not realised because of a lack of understanding about the role of local authorities. During my term of office, I pledge to raise the profile of local council engagement with forums for veterans' champions and to work to secure a better understanding of their role and better collaboration between all partners and agencies.

Finally, as you will see from the AGM agenda, APSE is going through its own process of change to secure a resilient future for the organisation, including the development of a trading company. Whilst we reflect that our member councils will see little difference in the delivery of our services to them - we equally want to ensure that all of our operating platforms provide the best business base for APSE and de-risk the association, so that we can continue to provide our valuable services to our member authorities for many years to come.

I will be overseeing this period of change with my colleagues on National Council, whose support I know I can rely on.

In closing, I want to thank Cllr Jacqui Burnett for her last twelve months as Chair and leaving APSE in such a strong and capable position, alongside Colin Rowland as National Secretary. Your service to APSE has been outstanding. I also thank Andrew Kennedy who has agreed to serve as my National Secretary. I know that I can rely on Andrew for his wisdom and advice.

Finally, thank you to the APSE membership for placing your trust in me.

"It is very dear to my heart that those who have served their country should not struggle for jobs, housing, or to get the support they may need."



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Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



APSE Chief Executive Mo Baines appearing on BBC Politics North

Cllr Archie Dryburgh Elected as APSE National Chair 2024-2025

Cllr Archie Dryburgh of Dumfries and Galloway Council has been elected as APSE's National Chair for 2024-2025.

Cllr Dryburgh takes over the Chair's role from Cllr Jacqui Burnett of Luton Borough Council. Cllr Dryburgh said: "It is truly an honour to take on this role."

Cllr Dryburgh will be supported in his year of office by Andrew Kennedy, Head of Facilities and Property Management, East Ayrshire Council, who was elected as APSE's National Secretary for 2024-2025.

You can hear more about Cllr Dryburgh's priorities for APSE on page three.

The latest APSE briefings...

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

- Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most.
- Implementing the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024
- Charging for single-use disposable beverage cups consultation (Scottish Government)
- Building Regulations: Determining the principles for a Scottish equivalent to the Passivhaus standard - Stage one consultation
- Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework
- CCUS - NAO report
- New Government - New Park Priorities
- State of the Market 2024 - Local authority cemeteries and crematoria
- The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness - A report by the National Audit Office

Labour Party conference

On 1-4 October at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, APSE hosted a strategic forum – chaired by Cllr Judy Hamilton, APSE Scotland Vice Chair and addressed by Professor Mark Gregory and Professor Steven Griggs of the University of Staffordshire, Dr Sarah Longlands of CLES and APSE Chief Executive Mo Baines - focusing on how local authorities should be considered to be integral to the growth mission of the new government.

Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership

James Jefferson, Principal Advisor for APSE Energy, spoke at a meeting of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership - a member-led partnership of local authorities that seeks to progress sustainability and the climate change agenda across the county and wider region. James delivered an overview of the announcements coming from Westminster and the implications of new government policy.

APSE on the BBC

On 13 October, Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, appeared on BBC Politics North (North East and Cumbria) to discuss the squeeze on local authority parks and greenspace funding. On the importance of parks, she said: "They are an ill-health prevention issue for local authorities where people can exercise and socialise, it has a positive impact on physical activity and mental health."

APSE Energy in Darlington

On 19 September, Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, attended a climate change seminar in Darlington, where he presented alongside Patrick Allcorn, Department for Net Zero and Energy Security, to update councillors and senior managers on the latest government policy plans and activity within the climate and energy sector.



Cllr Jacqui Burnett's final speech as APSE National Chair.



[L-R] Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive; Cllr Judy Hamilton, Fife Council; Baroness Gillian Merron, Parliamentary Under - Secretary (Department of Health and Social Care); Fiona Sutton-Wilson, Head of APSE Training.

MHCLG appoints APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines as MHCLG Lead Non-Executive Director

Speaking about the appointment the Rt Hon. Angela Rayner, Deputy Prime Minister said: "I'm delighted that Mo will be joining the MHCLG Board. Her knowledge and experience of how local government and public services operate will inform the work and direction of the department, and I look forward to working with her to drive forward our ambitious agenda over the next year."

Scotland

APSE in Aberdeen for the SNP Conference

APSE was delighted to return to the city of Aberdeen for the Scottish National Party Conference to host a fringe event. The session - which focused on workforce issues within the local government sector, was hosted by Louise Melville, Principal Advisor and Cllr Lynne Short, APSE Scotland Chair. Delegates also heard from Cllr Katie Hagmann, Dumfries and Galloway and COSLA Resources Spokesperson at the SNP Party Conference.

APSE at COSLA

On 19 and 20 September, APSE exhibited at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Conference (COSLA) in Edinburgh. APSE Scotland's Chair, Cllr Lynne Short and Louise Melville, Principal Advisor for Scotland, were on hand throughout the conference to showcase APSE's range of services and advocacy.

APSE Energy in Glasgow

Over 22-23 October 2024, APSE held its annual Scottish Energy Summit in the city of Glasgow. A key date in the calendar for officers and councillors from across the UK, the energy team covered a range of topics through presentations, workshops and panel discussions. The summit also gave delegates the opportunity to keep abreast of a vast and innovative agenda, network with colleagues, and share important insights and best practice from their service areas. Presentations are now available to download from the APSE website.

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Sheffield apprentices leading the way from grey to green

With its rich culture and heritage, the famously known 'Steel City' of Sheffield has economic ambitions today that lie beyond its industrial roots, with nature a key feature at the heart of its vision to be 'The Outdoor City'.

Crowned 'the greenest city' in the UK, Sheffield has become a leading ambassador of one very distinctive accolade that sets it apart; boasting 61% green space, that makes it the 2nd highest percentage of any city in the world, offering a multitude of green oasis experiences across the urban and rural landscape.

As Time Out concluded in 2023: "A city once synonymous with coal-blackened buildings and industrial churn, Sheffield is now more familiar with another colour: green."

From ancient woodland to public parks, many of which have significant natural and ecological value, Sheffield City Council (SCC) is responsible for maintaining more than 800 green spaces across 4,000 hectares. This includes 83 parks, 181 woodlands and 262 Nature Conservation sites, and boasts 18 award-winning parks that have received a prestigious Green Flag Award – the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

Helping to firmly establish Sheffield as a national centre of excellence for green spaces, the Council's Parks and Countryside team have responsibility for the management, maintenance and development of Sheffield's parks, woodlands, and recreational green spaces and conserving their built and natural heritage.



Apprentice Rebecca

They recently welcomed their latest intake of Greenspace Apprentices, expanding the apprenticeship team to 10. The new recruits will now embark on their Level 2 Landscape and Horticulture Apprenticeship.

Faced with a climate and nature emergency that SCC declared in 2021, coupled with a skills shortage and lack of training options, the Greenspace Apprenticeships are helping to cultivate a workforce that can evolve Sheffield's green spaces to overcome these challenges and achieve net zero goals.

To establish the required skill set and knowledge and build upon the wider environmental role that Sheffield green spaces offer, SCC has developed its own in-house training programme. This has been vital in providing opportunities to upskill new recruits while also preserving the wealth of experience and knowledge amassed by the Parks and Countryside team.

Recent projects that Greenspace Apprentices have been involved with that are helping to create varied habitats, clean air, flood mitigation, a place to relax and play include:

- Planting a new Mediterranean bed within the Grade II listed Botanical Gardens.
- Renovating a sensory garden within a 20-hectare parkland area.



Apprentice Matt Watson

- Supporting the Rangers and Forestry team harvesting willow, maintaining newly planted trees, building wooden benches and installing cast iron benches in a number of parks.

Projects like these provide a range of benefits which are helping to maintain the high standards people can enjoy across Sheffield's green spaces. Working with the Parks and Countryside team, the Apprentices are all contributing to make sure that green spaces are kept in the best possible condition, are havens for wildlife, providing safe, welcoming and pleasant spaces to enjoy nature and also meet educational and therapeutic needs.

With applicants from all backgrounds - school leavers, career changers and of all ages, one factor consistently shines through: an overwhelming passion and interest for working in green spaces, while seizing the opportunity to gain a hands-on experience from the wider Parks and Countryside team.

Matthew Watson, a Year 2 Apprentice in the Parks and Countryside team, shared his thoughts on the scheme: "I love the outdoors, being surrounded by nature and really wanted to focus on the

maintenance, protection and upkeep of the environment. The Apprenticeship with Sheffield City Council was a great way for me to start my career working in green spaces. At the same time, I'm working towards climate goals and interacting with the public to support their needs. It's enabling me to start a career doing what I really enjoy while making a positive contribution to the climate, ecology and biodiversity."



Apprentice Zak and Ranger Nel

Chair of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee at Sheffield City Council, Cllr Kurtis Crossland: "The Greenspace Apprenticeships are helping to make sure our green spaces are ecologically sustainable for the future, providing environment, economic and wellbeing benefits. At the same time, we are committed to retaining the tremendous experience and knowledge from our Parks and Countryside team, which is now being passed on to the next generation."

As one of Sheffield's largest employers, Sheffield City Council offers a wide range of apprenticeships, where candidates from all walks of life can work towards a professional qualification while gaining valuable skills and work experience.



Apprentice Kaitlin



New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome **Space & Place**

SPACE & PLACE is delighted to announce a new partnership with APSE.

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"We are thrilled to become an approved partner of APSE" comments Natalie McGuire, Director of Business Development and Engagement at S&P. "Our commitment to putting people and communities at the heart of our designs, is mirrored in the purpose set out by APSE to 'promote excellence in front line services'. The synergy was obvious from the initial conversation. At S&P we pride ourselves on engaging with organisations that share our values and work to improve the social and economic health of the nation through innovation, collaboration and networking.

"Our partnership with APSE is a recognition and renewed commitment to this ideology. Through our partnership we can extend our expertise and innovation in sport, leisure and entertainment venue design to the public sector in a meaningful way. We can support local governments in their capital investment programmes, health and wellbeing initiatives and decarbonisation strategies, ultimately enabling our communities to be more active, more often.

"We are excited to work with APSE to showcase the art of the possible when it comes to building the leisure centres of the future, generating a deeper understanding of the needs at local government level and to contribute to collaborative initiatives for the good of the sector."

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Annual Seminar 2024

Report back

A quick look at this year's excellent speakers

Service Awards

Check out the winners and finalists of this year's prestigious APSE Service Awards, which celebrate excellence in local government

A big thank you to our overall sponsor:



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Annual Seminar Report Back

Missed this year's annual seminar? We've put together a summary that captures the two-day programme of presentations, workshops and discussions on delivering greener, cleaner, healthier and wealthier local places.



City Hall, Bristol

The beautiful harbour city of Bristol was the location of this year's APSE Annual Seminar, giving delegates the chance to experience one of the UK's most sustainable cities and its unique cultural offerings.

Hosted at City Hall, Bristol's seat of government, over 500 delegates, exhibitors and speakers from across the UK made the journey to the South West, hearing from a range of experts on the challenges currently facing the local government sector, and the opportunities of a new government.

Opening Symposium: Local authority frontline challenges

The first day was opened by outgoing APSE National Chair, Cllr Jacqui Burnett. Cllr Burnett reflected on her time as National Chair, where she has continued her work advocating for 'municipal pride' and quality social housing. She discussed Bristol's proud history of anti-racism and community-led action, highlighting the Bristol bus boycott of 1963 as a particularly inspiring legacy. Cllr Burnett concluded by thanking the APSE membership for their support, and wished delegates an enjoyable and productive conference.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, kicked off the first expert panel session looking at the new government's main missions and how local government is crucial to the achievement of central government ambitions regarding economic growth, housing building targets, and net zero - to name but a few.

Sam Dennis, Deputy Chief Executive, Derby City Council continued this theme by looking at "how to get it right on the frontline". She described the challenge of trying to meet greater public demand and expectations with an ever-tightening budget, calling for a longer term financial settlement for local councils to enable them to plan their finances and service delivery over a number of years.

Next up was Nadira Hussain, Chief Executive, SOCITM, who focused on the use of "transformational technology" and digital capabilities within the public sector. She stated that the "days of investing in new tech just to invest in new tech" were "long gone", driving home the need for careful, deliberate investment in technology that would allow local government to make the most effective use of its limited resources.

Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council and APSE Scotland Chair, followed with a discussion on the value of community engagement

and how councillors can act as "influencers" to create links and partnerships in their local areas. Cllr Short said "matchmakers" are needed to see what opportunities are available outside of the local government realm, and look at how public money can be used in a more creative way.

The penultimate speaker of session one was Sophie Broadfield, Chair of ADEPT and Director of Sustainable Communities for Bath and North East Somerset Council. Sophie used the example of the ancient Roman baths in her locality to illustrate how pride of place and local culture fits can be adopted into an economic framework that prioritises people's enjoyment of life alongside economic growth.

Chris Noble, Assistant Director - Place Operations, New Forest District Council, rounded out the session by discussing the ongoing transition to environmentally sustainable frontline services. Chris discussed how the importance of effective demand management and community buy-in, especially in the post-Covid era, and how the current financial environment necessitated a net zero transition that was careful, considered and pragmatic.

Frontline roundtable discussions

In the afternoon, APSE held several discussions designed around securing best practice across the following areas:

Discussion 1: Climate change and renewables

Discussion 2: Leisure, health and wellbeing
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Discussion 3: Parks, horticulture, cemeteries and crematoria
Kindly sponsored by Orbitus

Discussion 4: Refuse, recycling and street scene
Kindly sponsored by Resource Futures

Discussion 5: Technical services, highways, transport and fleet
Kindly sponsored by Enterprise Mobility



The parks, horticulture, cemeteries and crematoria frontline roundtable discussion, facilitated by Fiona Sutton Wilson, Head of APSE Training, and Martin Whitchurch, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council.

Keynote address: Can the economy work without investing in public services?

Closing day one, Professor Mark Gregory, Visiting Professor, Staffordshire University and former UK Chief Economist for Ernst and Young, gave a fascinating presentation on the relationship between public investment and economic growth. Mark argued that the UK's "small state economic experiment has not delivered" - citing the dramatic increase in public sector debt despite austerity measures, coinciding with increases in income inequality, poor productivity and low growth. Mark went on to cite research that showed private investment was highest in countries where public investment was significant. He concluded by mapping how local authority services contribute to a large number of economic growth activities - such as transport infrastructure and planning reform - advocating for a new financial settlement for local authorities to allow them to contribute towards economic growth.

Across the UK: How councils deliver

Opening the day two, Sonika Sidhu, Assistant Director - Policy and Place, LGA, discussed the need for local government to speak the new government's 'mission driven' language. She said it was vital that local authorities made the case for how they fit into broader national priorities. Sonika called for the introduction of multi-year financial settlements to give local councils greater scope to plan their service delivery over a number of years.

Our next speaker, Alison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA, addressed the emerging challenges and opportunities for the future of local government in Northern Ireland and across the UK. Alison cited advancements in technology, climate adaptation, and wider societal shifts as just some of the challenges facing local government in the near future. She emphasised the need to maximise citizen and community engagement, whilst taking a pragmatic approach to the management of risk in policy and planning - arguing that "risk aversion" is damaging the public sector.

Providing the Welsh perspective, Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive, WLGA, spoke about how the Wales Future Generations Act has given councils a legal and philosophical framework to follow. Chris explained how the act promoted a 'preventative' approach to challenges that prioritise sustainability and long-term solutions.

Carrying on the theme of sustainability, Natalie Prosser, CEO, Office for Environmental Protection, gave an overview of her organisation's



[L-R] Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive; Sam Dennis, Deputy Chief Executive, Derby City Council; Nadira Hussain, Chief Executive, SOCITM; Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council; Chris Noble, Assistant Director - Place Operations, New Forest District Council; Sophie Broadfield, Director of Sustainable Communities, Bath and North East Somerset Council.



[L-R] Nicola Dickie, Director of People Policy, COSLA; Sonika Sidhu, Assistant Director - Policy and Place, LGA; Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council; Allison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA.

strategic objectives and the progress of the Environmental Protection Plan. Natalie said that whilst ambition is high and some progress was being made, "substantial challenges" remained.

Up next was Anita Brown, Chair of LACA, who made an impassioned call for fairer funding for school meals, highlighting the disparity across the UK and how school meals function as a mechanism for supporting wellbeing, improving educational attainment, and reducing child poverty.

Dr Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive of CLES, wrapped up session five by advocating for investment in local government to improve the UK's economic future. She said that the experiment with 'expansionary austerity' had failed, and that the country "can't afford not to invest in public services". Sarah also asked delegates to reconsider their view of what economic growth means, saying that economic growth should improve people's quality of life and not just benefit the richest in society.

Adapting to the future

Patrick Allcorn, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, opened the final session by giving an overview of the government policy perspective relating to the delivery of net zero in a landscape of competing priorities. He explained the need for net zero neighborhoods to have local buy-in, suggesting that community facilities would not only improve perceptions, but have a positive impact on people's lives.

Up next was Alex Minshull, Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager, Bristol City Council Just Transition, giving a local view on net zero. Alex discussed the 'One City' climate strategy employed by the council - aimed at bringing a cohesive and united approach to creating a carbon neutral and climate resilient city by 2030. He also detailed the Council's long-term approach to engagement with private sector partners to deliver and fund a range of low carbon energy projects.

The penultimate speaker was Hattie Parke, Director - Climate, Local Partnerships, who gave a detailed analysis of the emissions trading scheme in the context of local government.

Camilla Mankabady, Director of Communications, Liverpool City Council, closed the seminar with an in-depth look at the delivery of Liverpool's communications strategy for Eurovision. Camilla discussed the challenges of working with a range of partners from the NHS to the Ukrainian Institute, as well as hosting a 'Eurofestival' to promote the contest within the Liverpool city region. Camilla and her team secured 280,000 pieces of global news coverage, while venues hosting Eurovision events welcomed 473,000 people, what an achievement!

If you would like to view any of the speakers' presentations, please visit the APSE website. Alternatively, email Mike Egerton at megerton@apse.org.uk



Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive.



Professor Mark Gregory delivers the keynote address.



The main conference hall at City Hall, Bristol.



[L-R] Cllr David Hughes, Flintshire County Council; Cllr Andrea Lewis, Swansea County Council; Chris Cutforth, Swansea County Council.



[L-R] Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council; Hattie Parke, Director - Climate, Local Partnerships; Alex Minshull, Bristol City Council; Patrick Allcorn, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.



Chris Noble, Assistant Director - Place Operations, New Forest District Council



[L-R] Ryan Bushell, Head of Public Sector, Enterprise; Andrew Kennedy, East Ayrshire Council; Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council; Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive; Cllr Jacqui Burnett, Luton Council, Colin Rowland, Isle of Wight Council.



[L-R] Sonika Sidhu, Assistant Director - Policy and Place, LGA; Nicola Dickie, Director of People Policy, COSLA; Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council; Allison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA; Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive, WLGA.

Annual Service Awards 2024

Celebrating outstanding achievement and innovation
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Following the Covid pandemic, a staff survey indicated that communications amongst ODS employees and between teams had suffered. ODS introduced the Blink app to enhance communication and consistency among its large, primarily remote workforce.

Finalists

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Kirklees Council
Neath Port Talbot Council
ODS (Oxford Direct Services)
Ringway / Gloucestershire County Council
South Tyneside Council
Wigan Council

Winner: ODS (Oxford Direct Services)

This mobile app enables staff to access corporate messages, connect with colleagues, and utilise various systems and reporting functions. Since launching Blink in 2023, they've achieved 100% usage among employees - a significant enhancement in inter-team communications.

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Top performers in delivering domestic retrofit at scale

The Home Energy Advice and Retrofit Team stepped up their retrofit programme and in 2023, delivered £7.5m of capital grants to improve the energy efficiency of properties under HUG1 and LAD3. This saw 575 properties improved with the team being the top deliverer in the

Finalists

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning / South Cambridgeshire District Council
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Wigan Council

Winner: South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Midlands Net Zero Hub, accounting for 24% of all Midlands delivery under the HUG1 scheme. The Retrofit Academy's PAS Healthcheck in June 2023 declared the team a 'beacon of good practice' in the HUG world.

Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by QRoutes



Raising the bar for Local Authority pest control

LNPS is a pest control company wholly owned by Newham Council. LNPS carries out pest control, providing a Borough-wide free rat service for council residents, and a commercial and residential service across London and the Home Counties. LNPS has expanded its services to

Finalists

Ashford Borough Council
Blackpool Council
East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils (Ayrshire Roads Alliance)
East Renfrewshire Council
Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council)
London Network for Pest Solutions (Newham Council)
Outcomes Matter Consulting (in collaboration with Croydon Council, Essex County Council, North Somerset Council, Staffordshire County Council and Suffolk County Council)

Winner: London Network for Pest Solutions (Newham Council)

offer a ground-breaking rodent proofing alongside specialist cleaning, clearance work and drainage. The company also has the contract to provide pest control services for 505 Cancer Research UK charity shops.

Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by Unison



Stevenage Nightlight Crisis Café

Residents and visitors to Stevenage have access to immediate support when in a mental health crisis, thanks to the Nightlight Crisis Café. Operated by Hertfordshire Mind Network, it provides immediate mental health support for residents and visitors. Created as a non-clinical space,

Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
 Breckland Council
 Cheshire East Council / Ansa Environmental Services
 Lewisham Council
 South Tyneside Council
 Stevenage Borough Council
 Swansea Council

Winner: Stevenage Borough Council

it offers distressed individuals someone to talk to, aiming to provide immediate aid. Open from 7pm to 1am daily, 365 days a year, the café is staffed by professionals, including those with personal experiences of mental health challenges.

Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by LACA



Westminster City Council and Veolia Food Waste Roll Out

Westminster City Council working with Veolia has expanded their food waste recycling service to over 87% of properties in the City, contributing to a 3.7% increase in recycling. Delivering kerbside and communal services, as well as two innovative new service options: an

Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
 Dorset Council
 Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Wakefield Council
 Westminster City Council and Veolia

Winner: Westminster City Council and Veolia

on-street "neighbourhood" service for properties with limited storage capacity, and an on-demand collection service for West End areas. This comprehensive approach has addressed the challenges of food waste recycling in densely populated, highly unique urban environments.

Best Collaborative Working Initiative (with other public sector or third sector)

Kindly sponsored by Staffordshire University



The Dundee Roads Maintenance Partnership

The Roads Maintenance Partnership (RMP), a long established a joint road maintenance service delivery model between Dundee City Council (DCC) and Tayside Contracts, expanded in early 2021 to include DCC's Network Management function. The change in service delivery model to one which promoted further collaboration has seen

Finalists

Aberdeen City Council
 Barnet Council
 Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
 Dundee City Council
 Greater Manchester Local Authorities
 Lewisham Council
 Nottinghamshire County Council
 Outcomes Matter Consulting
 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 Wirral Council

Winner: Dundee City Council

significant improvements made in noticing compliance, a reduction in staff overheads, the introduction of revenue generating service improvements initiatives and the successful delivery of two major events of national significance within the city.

Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Commercial Services Group



Plymouth's Habitat Bank – Ocean City Nature

Plymouth City Council has utilised the creation of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain to create a new Habitat Bank for the city, establishing an arms-length company to the Local Authority. The Habitat Bank will have the ability to raise external investment to improve habitats across the city

Finalists

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Gravesham Borough Council
Lambeth Council
London Network for Pest Solutions (Newham Council)
ODS (Oxford Direct Services)
Plymouth City Council

Winner: Plymouth City Council

in turn generating a local market for Biodiversity Units that can be sold to developers to comply with planning policy and achieve the required BNG.

Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by Roadvert



Streets for People

The Streets for People Programme was an exciting new scheme combining Government Levelling Up Funding (LUF) and Local Transport Plan (LTP) monies into a single 2-year programme to maximise benefits within neighbourhoods. Projects were put forward by local people and

Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
East Ayrshire Council
Fife Council
Nottingham City Council
Plymouth City Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Tyneside Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

prioritised by ward councillors under three key themes: 1.) Highway Maintenance 2.) Traffic Management and Road Safety 3.) Clean & Green. We have improved footways and roads, created urban greening areas with more trees and improved waste management.

Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Socitm



Wirral Council Leisure Services Energy Efficiency Programme

Wirral Council tackled rising energy costs and climate change commitments by initiating an energy efficiency project across its leisure estate. By leveraging best practice efficiency measures, innovative automated project management, and fostering a continuous

Finalists

Dundee City Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Havering Council
Outcomes Matter
Plymouth City Council
Wirral Council

Winner: Wirral Council

improvement culture, the project vastly surpassed targets, cutting annual costs by £236K and emissions by 455 tonnes CO₂e—equivalent to circling the globe 13.5 times in an SUV. The Council is now planning delivery of a wider round of savings building on the project's success.

Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Gul-e by ODS



Working towards carbon neutrality – Viking Energy Network Jarrow

South Tyneside Council's flagship and highly innovative renewable energy scheme, the Viking Energy Network Jarrow (VENJ), harnesses low-grade heat from the River Tyne and exports it to Council-owned buildings across the town. The scheme became operational from

Finalists

- Calderdale Council
- Falkirk Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Plymouth City Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Westminster City Council and Veolia
- Wigan Council

Winner: South Tyneside Council

October 2023 and has inspired two other renewable energy schemes within the borough. VENJ alone will cut carbon emissions by 1,035 tonnes a year and is pivotal in supporting our challenging ambitions of being a carbon neutral local authority by 2030.

Best Service Team: Soft Facilities Management

Kindly sponsored by SchoolGrid



North Yorkshire Council catering team – infusing customer service excellence

North Yorkshire Council Catering team have achieved a remarkable turnaround within the last 12 months. Facing spiralling costs and a trading deficit, the service has delivered a strategy involving front line kitchen staff, schools, parents, carers, and children delivering increased

Finalists

- Blackpool Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- North Yorkshire Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Salford City Council
- Walsall Council

Winner: North Yorkshire Council

meal uptake and customer satisfaction levels. Of significant size and scale, serving over 220 schools not just within the Council area but across the wider Yorkshire, Teesside and Humberside areas, this is a team and story we are proud of.

Best Service Team: Technical Services

Kindly sponsored by Enterprise rent-a-car



Here's the Deal, fewer potholes and more smooth roads

Wigan Council provides highway services to 329,000 residents, working 365 days a year keeping the borough's infrastructure and residents safe. Our frontline services can too easily be taken for granted, particularly when faced with one of the top 10 largest budget reductions - £170m

Finalists

- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils (Ayrshire Roads Alliance)
- Lancashire County Council
- Nottingham City Council
- West Lothian Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: Wigan Council

(43%). In Wigan, we introduced The Deal, an informal agreement between the council and residents to 'transform rather than cut services' to protect the most vulnerable and keep the front-line services that resident's value.

Best Service Team: Waste, Recycling and Streetscene

Kindly sponsored by Villiger



Waste management and recycling service

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service leads the field in promoting the use of underground bins in major developments, social housing and 'bring bank' sites. Over a 15-year period the service has worked with developers and the Councils' Housing Service to build up a

Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Fife Council
Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council)
Hounslow Council
Ipswich Borough Council
Westminster City Council

Winner: Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service

network of 150 domestic bins and six bring sites, successfully collecting general waste, recycling, textiles, WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) and food waste. This has resulted in improved streetscapes, reductions in fly-tipping, and impressive dry recycling rates.

Best Service Team: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service



Plymouth Community Forest tree planting programme

Plymouth City Council's tree planting programme has been delivering in spades over the last 5 years. Since 2019 PCC has directly delivered and supported partners to plant over 18,000 trees across the city, through a range of funded schemes. The campaign has been widespread and

Finalists

Aberdeen City Council
Blackpool Council
Highland Council
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Plymouth City Council
Worcester Council

Winner: Plymouth City Council

involved partnership work with operations teams, developing precise datasets, utilising new digital platforms, new management approaches and staff training. It has been hugely successful and provides a great case study for others with similar ambitions.

Best Service Team: Cemetery and Crematorium Service

Kindly sponsored by PlotBox



Bereavement and Cemetery Services Antrim and Newtownabbey

Our Bereavement and Cemetery Service comprises 19 staff members overseeing 1000 burials and 800 cremations annually across our sites. Last year, the Council unveiled its new £5m crematorium, offering cutting-edge technology services, ensuring the highest standard for families. During this period, the team introduced new rules and regulations,

Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Cardiff Council
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Wigan Council
Wirral Council

Winner: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

digitised booking processes, historical records, enhanced community involvement within sites, and improved biodiversity processes. Staff involvement increased through training and improved management system, facilitating the delivery of service excellence and transformative change.

Best Service Team: Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service

Kindly sponsored by Space & Place



Finalists

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Hounslow Council (Lampton Leisure)
- Knowsley Council (Volair Leisure Trust)
- Rugby Borough Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Wirral Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

East Riding Cultural Services, making a difference

East Riding Cultural Services team are proud of their work ethic and have made significant impacts to not only the cultural agenda but health and digital agendas to name a few. The team strive to make a difference and

create new opportunities for our residents and visitors. These impacts have been commended at a national level.



Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by Brightly



Winner:

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

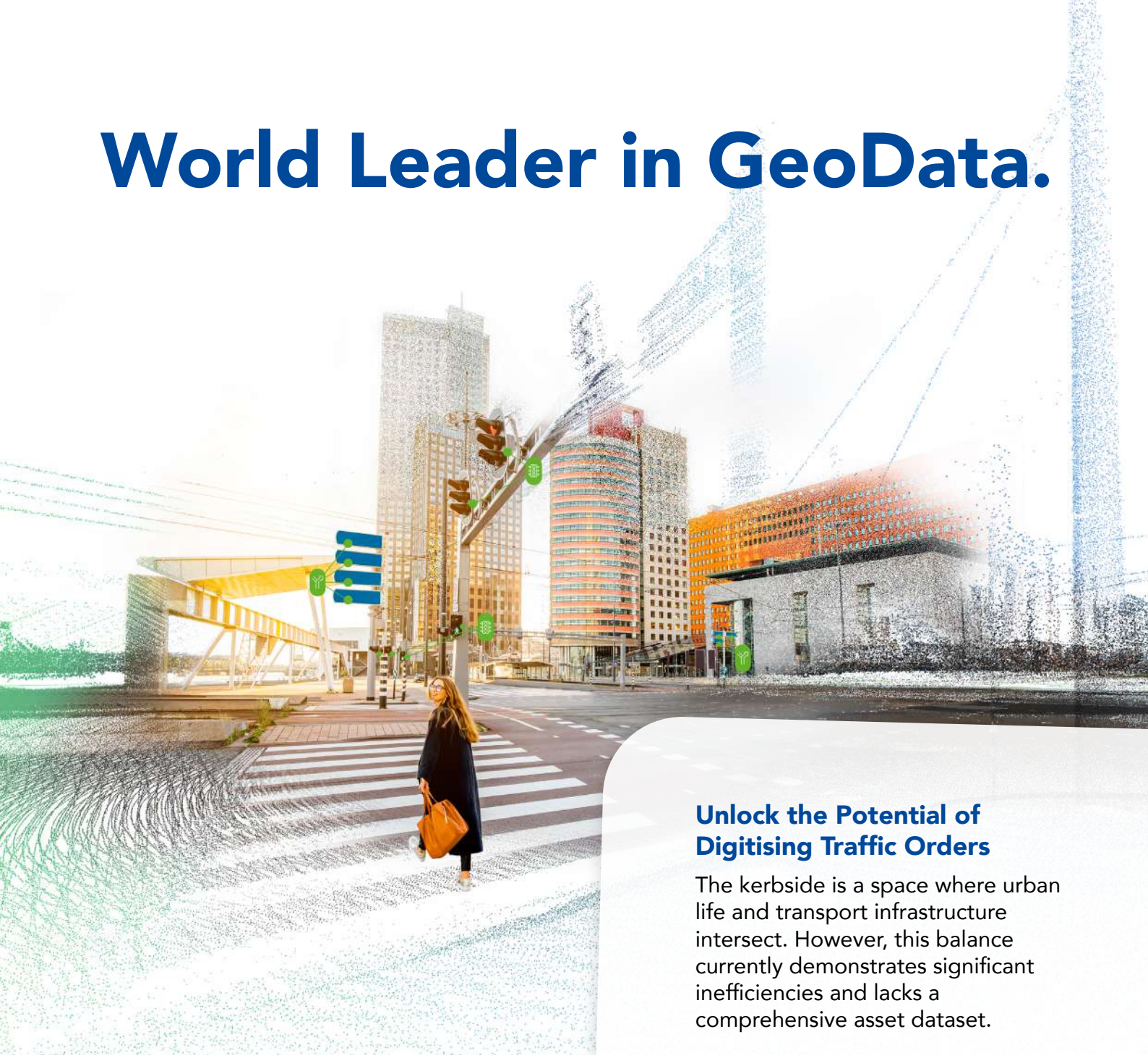
Finalists:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Dundee City Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Plymouth City Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Wigan Council
- Wirral Council

APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the Service Awards 2024 for their support



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Unlock the Potential of Digitising Traffic Orders

The kerbside is a space where urban life and transport infrastructure intersect. However, this balance currently demonstrates significant inefficiencies and lacks a comprehensive asset dataset.

The future of urban mobility depends on making kerbsides smarter and more adaptable. Through the digitisation of traffic orders and enhanced regulatory frameworks, local authorities can take a significant step toward a more efficient, connected, and dynamic kerbside ecosystem.

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**Contact Elizabeth Evans,
Sales Manager UK.**

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Lancaster City Council and partners sign up to new strategic partnership

Nine organisations from across the Lancaster district have pledged to work together more closely to improve the lives of the local community with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Signed at Lancaster Castle earlier this month (Monday, August 19), the MoU marks the creation of a new Lancaster District Strategic Partnership (LDSP).

The partnership has been meeting biannually and more recently quarterly since 2023. In January 2024, all partners agreed that formalising their commitment through the signing of an agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would strengthen the emerging partnership.

The Partnership

The Lancaster District Strategic Partnership consists of local stakeholders from the public, private, third and education sectors. Founding members of the 'LDSP' are represented by organisational leads and strategic decision makers. Through the partnership, member organisations will work together to improve the Lancaster District aligned to agreed strategic priorities.

- Sustainability and the Climate Emergency
- The Economy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Communities

Founding organisations include Lancaster City Council, Lancaster University, the University of Cumbria, Lancaster and Morecambe College, Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Lancaster District CVS and Lancaster Arts Partnership.

The partnership has a defined geographical focus. Members are all located in or have a strategic presence in the Lancaster District. All strategic development and operational delivery of workstreams will aim to improve the entire district as well as enable cross boundary working.

The partnership will apply a proactive approach to amplify the collective vision and ambition. By identifying and developing new opportunities for collaborative working between sectors, the partnership can deliver mutually beneficial local and regional outcomes. The partnership also aims to maximise how organisations use their combined resources effectively to improve the Lancaster District.

Membership and Strategic Objectives

Members of the LDSP will provide strategic oversight of the partnership. It is anticipated that members will meet on a quarterly basis to enable them to steer the partnership's objectives. Quarterly meetings will provide a strategic forum to exchange ideas, whilst also establishing a space to develop strategy, policy and projects for agreed tangible outcome.

The objectives for the partnership and its members are to:

- Improve the transparency of strategic workstreams that already take place in the district.
- Coordinate and facilitate improved ways of working between partners, to add value to existing strategic programmes.
- Identify gaps in strategic and operational workstreams in the district.
- Prepare, plan, resource and deliver new collaborative workstreams with 'Project Teams'. (This will only take place where

there is an identified gap or where new activity adds value to the partnership vision and ambition).

- Mitigate any duplication of efforts between partners.

Additionally, the partnership plans to explore a more formal structure, aiming to facilitate joint funding applications for strategic projects. The partnership's structure of Core Team(s), Project Teams and Members will guarantee clear roles, accountability, and defined processes.

The Forward View

Founding members have shown a willingness to work together to develop collaborative and new ways of delivering effective and efficient services and strategic projects. Outcomes will be defined by the member organisations and supported by the appropriate organisational experts and representatives. As the partnership develops, appropriate metrics and measurements for success for any identified and agreed workstream will be agreed and monitored.

Partners will work together within collective financial constraints, to deliver strategic objectives. The partnership provides an opportunity to identify new ways of working to maximise how organisations use resources effectively and collaboratively.

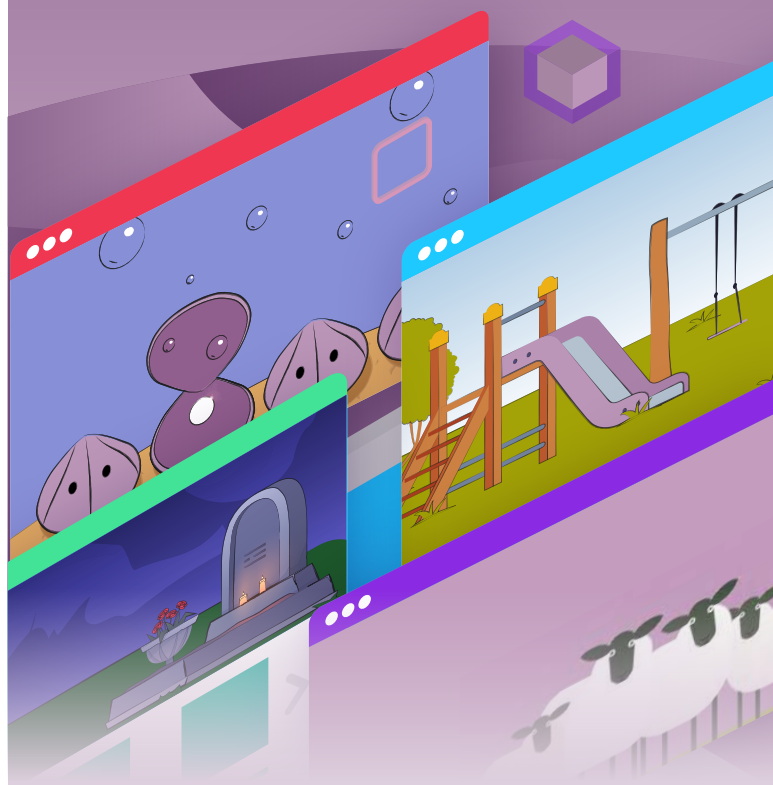
The first initiative of the partnership is already developing - the creation of a Climate and Nature Strategy for the district, accessible to all partner organisations. The development of the strategy is being led by Lancaster City Council and funded by UKSPF.

Other opportunities for collaboration will be in relation to economic strategy, estates, shared assets, linking nature/climate strategies into emerging health policies, digital strategy, workforce (policy and development) and community health and wellbeing.

Councillor Phillip Black, Leader of Lancaster City Council, said: "As organisations within the Lancaster District and surrounding regions, we recognise that our strength lies in unity. By adopting a coordinated approach to regional challenges and opportunities, we can create solutions that resonate throughout the district. Sustainable change will bring lasting benefits to our member organisations, residents, communities, and businesses.

"Through collaboration, we can effectively manage city and regional initiatives via the Lancaster District Strategic Partnership, ensuring that our efforts are mutually beneficial and impactful."

A modern and efficient way to carry out quality inspections



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- » **PIMS – Play Inspection Management System**
- » **MIST – Memorial Inspection Safety Tool**



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Kickstarting economic growth - Maximising the contribution of local council services

APSE's latest research looks at how properly funded frontline public services can serve as a catalyst for growth in their local areas and the wider UK economy.

A new report by APSE, 'Kickstarting economic growth - Maximising the contribution of local council services', produced in collaboration with the University of Staffordshire and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) – argues the Chancellor's economic growth goals cannot be achieved solely via private investment, and that local councils must be part of the 'growth agenda'.

Analysis by the University of Staffordshire identified councils as "investment enablers" uniquely positioned to stimulate investment through their powers over regeneration, housing development, infrastructure, transport, apprenticeships, local business networks and links to higher education.

However, Professor Mark Gregory—the lead report author and former UK Chief Economist for Ernst & Young—warned of a continuing "downward spiral" of local council services. Squeezed budgets and record demand are forcing councils to divert resources away from growth-supporting activities to prevent statutory services such as adult and children's social care from collapsing. In 2022/23, only 11% of local council spending went on activities directly impacting economic growth.

Recent analysis by the Local Government Association predicted that without additional support, English councils will face a £6.2 billion funding gap from 2025 to 2027.

"Plans and strategies are only as strong as their weakest link. The Government's five missions are more reliant on local councils to deliver than any other actor and yet local councils have been the hardest hit by austerity. We need to fix the foundations and invest in local public services for growth", Mark said.

The report calls for local councils to be an integral part of the growth agenda, with public sector investment viewed as an opportunity to not only boost growth, but also deliver long-term savings to public finances by pulling councils out of the chronic underinvestment they have faced – with resources reduced by 9% in real terms since 2010 according to the IFS.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, said: "Sound finances for local councils must be part of the UK's growth strategy. We must fix the foundations of local services - neglected spending areas at a neighbourhood level are key to providing attractive places to live, work and invest. We must recognise the value of affordable, high-quality homes, and the role of councils in the care and wellbeing of local communities to make a better economy where everyone can contribute to society."

Despite these challenges, success in places such as Knowsley, where the local council has embarked on an ambitious growth plan enabling town centre regeneration project, housing developments, and an enriched cultural offering, demonstrates the potential for local councils to transform their local areas by stimulating investment.

Dr Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive of CLES, said: "A growth mission is about delivering the type of economic change communities desperately need – jobs, education, decent housing, and good public services. The best way to deliver that change is by investing in the local councils – organisations that know their communities best and can work creatively and collaboratively to build wealth that works hard for their place."

Professor Steven Griggs, University of Staffordshire, said: "Local councils risk being sidelined from national debates over economic growth as policymakers turn to the promises of devolution and the work of combined authorities. This report brings out the importance, not only of investing for growth but equally of investing in our local councils. Its analysis is a challenge to government not to under-estimate the role that local councils can, and should, play in driving forward alternative economies and reducing place-based inequalities."

The full report can be viewed online. •

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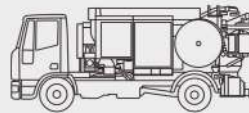
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| First response |



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Housing fit for the future

We are facing a housing crisis; could Wales' world-leading Well-being of Future Generations Act provide solutions? Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, thinks so.

The urgent rising pressures of poverty and inequality; demographic change; and reaching net-zero, in the context of affordable housing and sustainable neighbourhoods, was the subject of a recent APSE event aimed at local councillors.

In Wales, we recognise these issues are intertwined, and that acting on today's biggest problems must also secure a better life for people who will be born in the future.

Wales is the only country in the world with a Well-being of Future Generations Act, and after I became commissioner in 2023, I published *Cymru Can*, a strategy with an overall mission to make this ground-breaking law work harder.

Living in a warm, dry home in a neighbourhood that is safe, attractive and well-connected is fundamental to our well-being. That's why solving housing is so crucial to the delivery of the WFGA. We should all have access to housing that exceeds our basic needs and supports us to contribute socially and economically to our communities. Unfortunately, for many people in Wales – and across the UK – this isn't the reality, and it's leading to bigger challenges. The Bevan Foundation described the situation as "a housing crisis," with increasing numbers of families forced into unsuitable dwellings or presenting as homeless to local authorities.

The consequences of this crisis are a threat to the well-being of both current and future generations.

Poor housing affects educational attainment and long-term health outcomes; it deepens poverty and inequality, particularly for children and young people, with a third of children currently living in poverty in Wales. Many communities experiencing a lack of affordable housing are also Welsh-speaking communities, with some of the lowest incomes in the UK. If we are to reach our national milestone of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, increasing the supply of homes in these areas for local young people is vital.

Our Well-being of Future Generations Act makes us the only country in the world to place a legal duty on every public service to improve well-being for current and future generations simultaneously.

Public bodies, including local authorities, must legally work together, with their communities, in a preventative and long-term way to meet our national well-being goals of a prosperous, environmentally-resilient, healthier, more equal, globally responsible Wales with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.



The Act is about joined-up thinking. For example, improving the energy efficiency of new and existing homes will not only contribute to a healthier Wales (Public Health Wales research found poor housing accounts for £95m of NHS annual costs), but a more equal Wales – given that the worst housing stock often impacts on already disadvantaged people disproportionately.

Creating the jobs, skills and education to retrofit homes creates prosperity and finding eco-friendly solutions to construction will contribute to a globally responsible and resilient Wales. Ensuring these homes are in well-connected communities and promote culture and Welsh language will contribute to more of our goals, increasing the likelihood of a green, thriving and inclusive Wales (our team's vision) in the future.

Good ideas are being put into action across Wales – from Cardiff Council's new partnership with Sero homes to retrofit 153 hard-to-heat properties, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing residents' energy bills, to Swansea where more than 1,000 homes are having solar panels. But we need more.

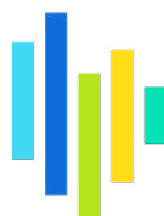
As local leaders, you have a role and responsibility to use the Act as a framework in planning, decision-making and scrutiny.

You are communicators with communities and representatives of your community. The Act is there to help guide better action now and for future generations.

We can all contribute to making Wales a better place to grow up, to live, to thrive.

As I set out in *Cymru Can*, there are challenges to overcome like the climate and nature emergencies, inequalities in health, keeping our culture and Welsh language alive and kicking, and moving our priority towards the planet and away from purely profit. But the benefits, if we meet these challenges head on and solve today's problems, will be a dramatic improvement in living standards for people in Wales.

- If you have examples of change in your local community, let us know by e-mailing contactus@futuregenerations.wales
- For more information on the *Cymru Can* mission for better Implementation and Impact, contact director, Heledd Morgan at heledd.morgan@futuregenerations.wales



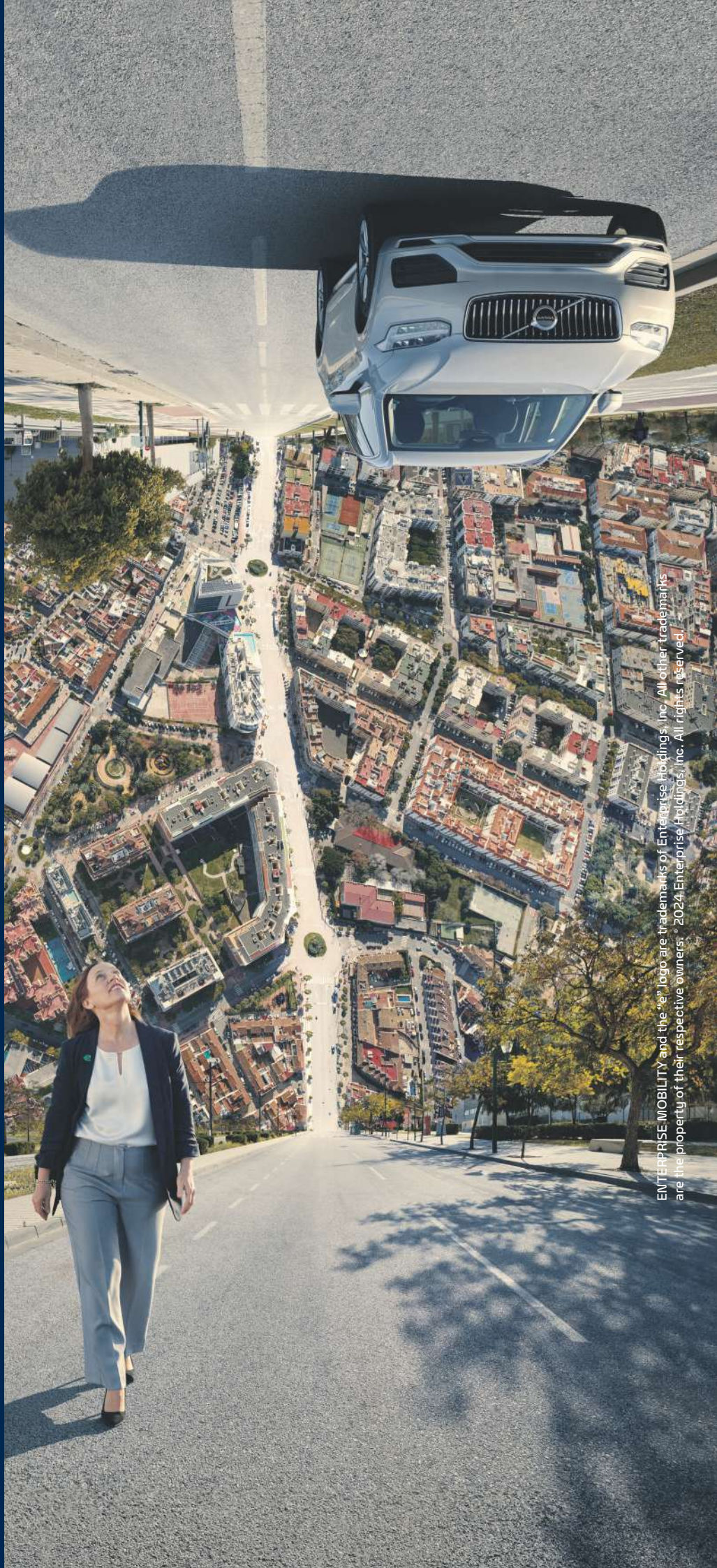
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Creating Communities of Net-zero Practice



An Innovate UK funded approach to embedding a carbon conscious culture which creates step change. Fiona Sutton-Wilson, Head of APSE Training.

Ensuring the principle of decarbonisation is woven through the fabric of all business operations in local government is a complex and potentially overwhelming proposition. Confusing narratives about best practice; conflicting priorities across intricate and siloed systems, warring challenges between capital injections and return on investment in cash-strapped councils (required to present a balanced budget) are common barriers to achieving net-zero.

These are real challenges, but so are the barriers that arise from our own (varied) value bases and willingness to adapt to the new paradigm we face, as net-zero approaches infiltrate the system. The imperative to do things differently has never been clearer, but if culture does 'eat strategy for breakfast', how do we embed a culture of net-zero practice which cuts a 'Cillit Bang' path through the residue of grime left by a heritage of fossil fuel consumption?

APSE has co-designed a programme to better understand and address this gnarly issue. Following a successful bid to Innovate UK, under the mastermind inspiration of Warrington's Bryan Lipscombe and Robyn Lees, APSE has been working with Warrington Borough Council to build on the foundations of their successful Carbon Literacy programme.

A willing group of colleagues from a wide range of People, Place, and Corporate services have coalesced to tackle 'wicked' issues in three 'communities of practice': Buildings and the Built Environment, Transport and Mobility, and Procurement.

For the uninitiated, energy in buildings and transport are the UK's top greenhouse gas emitting sectors. Decarbonising where we live, work, and visit and decarbonising how we get there are crucial factors in determining the health, wellbeing and prosperity of future generations.

In local government, procurement underpins everything we do, from the basic daily things we buy to long-term contracts. We can shape economic growth through procurement, with investment in the circular economy and effective management of the supply chain to nurture market conditions.

What we do now will undoubtedly impact our successors' ability to make decisions for the benefit of all. It will also help us in the short term - building resilience to the climate impacts we are already facing, such as extreme, unpredictable weather systems and food supply.

All three communities of practice, combined, can wield a Thor-like hammer on our use of fossil fuels.

This trailblazing programme comprises three stages, between September 2024 and January 2025. Currently mid-way through Stage 2, Warrington's communities of practice are engaging in a process designed to utilise evidence from the field, build on experience in the room, and hear voices from different levels and perspectives within the council. The motivation is that this process will lever innovative and entrepreneurial practices that will enable Warrington to amplify its ambitions to achieve net-zero by 2030.

The programme has already made good headway:

"It changes your thinking and enables you to listen to other perspectives" - Contact Centre Manager

"Expanded my thinking of the wider picture" - Principle Project Manager

Stage 1: Collaboration and systems thinking: exploring the need for a systems leadership approach. Using the principle of co-benefits, outlined in the 2014 Assessment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an analysis of opportunities and gaps highlighted the connections between the three communities of practice and started to unpick what sort of disruptors might influence a new horizon.

Stage 2: Communities of practice: comprising colleagues from a range of services, each community undertakes a process to implement practices that harness innovation. This is delivered over three modules.

- Module 1: Diagnosing the system – building a picture of the current landscape and how things are done "around here".
- Module 2: Strategic thinking and upskilling – developing a deeper understanding of the art of the possible and the capabilities required to deliver it.
- Module 3: Innovation and action planning – harnessing disruptors to shape a new horizon - a focus on change and how we manage it.

Stage 3: Systems consolidation and next steps: all three communities converge to fuel Warrington's next ambitious steps to embed a culture of net-zero practice.

Only by investing in our local government workforce, will we be able to champion successful outcomes and realise the benefits of innovative practice. If necessity is indeed "the mother of invention", the years of underfunding, the shifting sands of policy change and the increasing demands for services have, on the one hand, led to local government innovation and on the other, an aversion to risk: a heady mix. Warrington has recognised that people make things work and that investment in them, their professional and personal development, their ideas and innovation will undoubtedly motivate them to lead the culture change needed to meet the climate challenge.

APSE Training and APSE Energy services have joined forces to support Warrington with this mission. APSE Energy is the leading UK local government collaboration, with expert knowledge in renewable energy and climate change. In addition to the wide range of courses on the APSE Training webpages, the training team can write bespoke material and deliver a wide range of learning and development initiatives which help local authorities build capacity and meet the challenges of the day.

For more information contact: training@apse.org.uk

Thinking of moving to EV? Then move to ER!

Nick Dunn, Director, discusses the training philosophy at the heart of Expert RoadCraft.

Expert Roadcraft Ltd (ER) is a company specialising in EV (Electric Vehicle) training and proudly recognised as an APSE-approved member. We originally launched our driver training services working with local councils.

Our EV training program is a government-approved initiative designed by the Energy Savings Trust. Notably, we are the only company authorised to train trainers on this program.

For more details on our services and the backgrounds of our directors, please visit www.expert-roadcraft.co.uk.



Our Approach

At Expert Roadcraft, our strength lies in our ability to listen carefully to our clients. We take the time to understand not only the task at hand but also the broader context of the project. By thoroughly understanding your needs, we ensure that every brief is carefully stress-tested, leading to a well-defined project that can be accurately costed. Our goal is to get it right the first time.

Expertise and Experience

With over two decades of management experience, our directors have seamlessly blended management skills with driver training expertise. Working with a variety of training organisations has enriched our approach, allowing us to consult with clients more effectively.

For straightforward needs, such as periodic driver assessments, we can deliver training efficiently with minimal discussion. However,

for more complex projects, we adopt a solutions-based approach, offering tailored recommendations and even consultancy when needed.

Supporting Councils

We understand that every council has its own history and culture, which can influence decisions around outsourcing driver training. We exist because many councils recognise the value of an independent, impartial training provider with specialised expertise. We often see things from a fresh perspective, adding value where internal teams might be stretched thin.

Outsourcing to a trusted partner like Expert Roadcraft can be a strength, especially when operational services are under pressure. We collaborate closely with our clients to protect both the task at hand and their reputation.

Flexible, Focused, and Cost-Effective Training

Our range of driver training services can be integrated with our EV training, making the process both focused and cost-effective. We understand that training can disrupt daily operations, so we work to minimise this impact by delivering "time-limited but effective" training. Our clients appreciate the flexibility we offer within their operational schedules.

For instance, one of our council clients needed a solution to quality assessing temporary drivers. The aim was to try and create a flexible program by training a few core drivers to be able to internally assess seasonal/temporary park drivers. In response, we created a comprehensive training and assessment program, collaborating with their H and S officer and fleet manager. This practical solution was devised in just one afternoon.

Many fleet or transport managers have critical tasks on their "to-do" lists that may never get properly addressed, exposing the council to potentially unnecessary risk. We help resolve those issues efficiently.

Our Ethos

We believe in growing slowly and sustainably. By focusing on a select number of clients, we can ensure that we deliver reliable and competitive services without compromising on quality.

If you would like to discuss your needs, please don't hesitate to call us or send an email.



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Expert-RoadCraft



With UhUb you can now look beyond what training has always been and develop new exciting long-term training & education aspirations for your business and people, then deliver them!

As the challenging economic environment continues, businesses that define and then deliver their training & education aspirations will create the committed, skilled teams necessary for ongoing success. Within the cleaning & FM sector it's not just about the type of training that's delivered but how widely and effectively it's deployed that can ultimately have the biggest impact on service delivery performance. Here at UhUb, it's clear that our clients are increasingly demanding better demonstrable quality training standards, and it is now a priority discussion, through which many successful businesses and service users within the UhUb community are finding new thinking, invention, and adoption emerging which is strengthening their businesses and helps them to stand out significantly from the competition.

Our clients realise training as an 'option' is gone, and training as a fundamental part of their business apparatus is here, becoming more diverse and measured. No more half days here and there, it must be constant, consistent, equitable and integrated to create a significant effect.

So, what are these businesses doing differently? They think aspirationally about education for their people, all their people, and have an understanding that training can and should be going further as people are more than just a resource, are savvier and expect more than ever before. These businesses also recognise that going beyond basic training allows new standards to be set and maintained throughout a workforce, benefitting all involved, internally, and externally. They look at what is possible, developing hitherto unexplored aspirations far beyond what they previously thought they could achieve. They know, delivering the right training to the right people, can dramatically change their business and service offering for the better.

Over the past few years, we have seen a small boom in training solutions within the cleaning sector and choosing the right one is perhaps not an easy task. With a growing choice in both the type of training available and how it can be accessed or delivered, it is important not to be pulled into thinking that being 'on-line' or 'virtual' in itself is progressive (the term 'on-line' was coined in the 50's and 'virtual' in the 70's); just having a technological solution does not guarantee standards are being met. It's how you develop your training that is truly progressive and why the training solution you invest in is so important. It must meet needs today and aspirations tomorrow.

Options range from: simple sets of 'on-line' videos accessed via websites; Learning Management Systems (LMS) which are designed to deliver a set of training, possibly based on specific product ranges, sometimes certified, offering a cost-effective base to establish simple training for some, with more flexible access than traditional 1-2-1 methods; to full Learning Platforms such as UhUb, designed to be as simple or broad as you like that deliver a fully flexible, demonstrable approach, able to deliver unlimited breadth of training for the whole workforce, at all levels.

So where to start? Since 2016 we have certified over 15,000 learners in the UK and believe it's good to consider what you want before seeking a solution. This is not always easy after decades of little choice and with the most obvious sources not necessarily being up to date, forward thinking enough, or the best fit. We encourage our clients to adopt a 'what if we could do anything' thinking to develop aspirations beyond anything they previously imagined possible to deliver. This has enhanced our clients' views on, amongst other things, deliverables around learning, development, engagement, assistance, retention, career

“One question we ask those we speak to for the first time is, “What would the ideal training system deliver for you?” and “If you could do anything with training, what would you do?”. This begins to sort out what they ‘expect’ based on what they think is possible, from what they would ‘aspire’ to if anything were possible. It is there that they realise needs & expectations are not aspirations. It is there they start to realise UhUb is different. It is there that their minds begin to open up to previously impossible aspirations. It is there that the training conversation really starts for us.” Stephen Goodall, MD at UhUb

progression management, sustainability knowledge and demonstrating accreditation credentials.

The big challenge is thinking beyond the common, familiar training needs and defining the businesses aspirations for the future, which as said, is not always easy. We have found it can be something a business has already defined, in as far as it can, but is frustrated at the lack of tools to deliver it, through to taking a couple of years of using the platform to reach a point where aspirations coalesce. However, our clients point out that when the right solution is embedded into a business, aspirations can develop at a surprising pace, but equally the wrong solution can suppress them.

Once standardised skills training has been deployed, businesses serious about developing further focus on the impact training has by analysing data and trends, something that is becoming easier thanks to the increased availability

of ‘live’ reporting, a key part of the UhUb platform. Measuring the success of training delivery, allows businesses to truly aspire to, and deliver, a broader education for their people. As we at UhUb would say, ‘Data is power in planning.’

Fundamentally the cleaning sector needs to realise, as many leaders are, that tomorrow’s standards and aspirations cannot be taught with yesterday’s tools and methods. Change is happening quickly, and is sorely needed, to ensure modern quality training offerings are always provided with equity, through tools that can cope with growing future aspirations. We understand this and constantly explore, collaboratively with our clients, new educational content, learning tools, reporting methods and user-easy solutions. This is expanding aspirational horizons as our community realises that what can at last be delivered effectively and efficiently has, excitingly, few limits.

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Oakfield Gardens Crematorium: A Peaceful Place for Reflection and Remembrance

Lucia Gervis, APSE Solutions Client Coordination Officer, reflects on her visit to the first crematorium in Central Bedfordshire.

On Thursday, September 19th, I had the opportunity to attend the dedication event at Oakfield Gardens Crematorium, which is run directly by Central Bedfordshire Council. I was invited alongside APSE Associate Lee Snashfold, following the recent completion of a project with Central Bedfordshire Council where Lee provided key operational advice to ensure the crematorium could serve the community smoothly and respectfully.

Oakfield Gardens Crematorium is set in the quiet countryside of Steppingley, just north of Flitwick, and offers a serene space for families during difficult times. It's the first crematorium in the region, and not only does it provide essential services for mourning families, but it also serves as a tranquil public green space for the wider community to enjoy.

The crematorium was designed with the grieving process at the forefront. From the tree-lined paths to the stunning views of the surrounding countryside, every detail is meant to create a calming and peaceful atmosphere. The building itself offers a welcoming and respectful environment.

Inside, the chapel accommodates up to 120 people, with options for both traditional and more personalised services. Families can choose from full services, shorter cremations, or even direct cremations. Music and visual tributes are

available to make each service personal. The chapel is also fully inclusive, offering a hearing loop for those with hearing impairments.

One unique feature of the chapel is the water feature behind the catafalque, symbolising the different stages of grief. The water flows in three steps, representing the emotional journey from turbulence to calm—a touching metaphor for healing.

Sustainability is also a key focus. Solar panels have been installed, and the crematorium participates in metal recycling, with proceeds going to charities. These green practices further embed Oakfield Gardens Crematorium within the local community, both socially and environmentally.

The dedication ceremony was a heartfelt event, attended by key stakeholders in the project, including the service manager, architects, and builders. The Bishop of Bedford, the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE, delivered a special blessing, adding a spiritual element to the occasion. Since opening just 19 weeks earlier, the crematorium has already performed over 190 cremations, showing how essential it has become to the community.

We also got to see some examples of public feedback during the service - most of which has been overwhelmingly positive, with many people commenting on the beauty and peacefulness of the space. As the dedication ended, it was clear that Oakfield Gardens Crematorium will continue to be a place of peace and support for years to come, offering not just a place for remembrance, but a vital community asset.

To find out how APSE can help your cemetery and crematorium services, please contact Lucia Gervis at lgervis@apse.org.uk or call us on 0161 772 1810.



Councils managing high demand though waiting times may have peaked

APSE's latest 'State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotments' indicates unprecedented demand of the Covid era is levelling off, Matt Ellis reports.

The survey found that 29% of councils had an allotment waiting list of more than 1000 people, the same as 2023. Although demand remains high following a huge increase during Covid lockdown, it does appear that demand is beginning to stabilise.

With regards to average waiting time for a plot, 67% stated that over 18 months was the average - this is a small decrease from 69% in 2023. Unsurprisingly, 77% of respondents said new allotment tenancies were restricted to people living within the local authority area.

Other key findings

Of the local authorities surveyed:

- 53% of respondents said that their authority has plans to increase the number of allotments.
- 22% of local authority respondents, who do not currently manage sites, had received requests for new allotment provision.
- 46% report having an allotments strategy. For those who do not, 46% say the council is planning to develop one within the next two years.
- 34% of respondents do not offer concessionary / discount prices, this is down from 44% in 2022 and 36% in 2023 - a recognition of the health and wellbeing benefits this service provides to vulnerable groups.
- 23% of respondents stated they had increased costs to rent a plot above the standard level of inflation. A 1% increase from 2023 and an 11% increase on 2022.
- 70% of authorities report a biodiversity strategy amongst plot-holders to promote 'planting pollinator-friendly species', a steep rise of 14% from 2023.

73% of respondents reported reducing the size of their plots to create smaller-sized plots, to allow waiting lists to be reduced



Speaking about the findings, Matt Ellis, Principal Advisor, said:

"The multifaceted benefits of allotments and community growing have not gone unnoticed by the public, and waiting lists and times remain stubbornly high. This year, there has been a modest drop in the number of authorities reporting average waiting times of more than 18 months. Therefore, the 2023 survey results may represent a peak in demand as the sector-wide move to reduce standard plot sizes begins to take effect.

"The increasing costs for allotment plots can be attributed to several factors, namely increases in maintenance and infrastructure costs as well as budget cuts. Many of the costs associated with maintaining allotment sites such as water supply, fencing, pathways, and waste management, have increased above inflation in recent years. Local councils have had to pass these costs on to plot-holders through higher rents.

"Owing to demand, many councils are now opting to reduce plots that become available following their vacation. Reductions in size are generally met with approval, both by new and existing holders. Not only does this approach reduce waiting times for prospective allotment holders, but new plot-holders also tend to find smaller plots less daunting and easier to manage, making it a more practical option for those with busy schedules or limited experience. Existing plot-holders have found the approach has helped introduce more young people into sites; providing opportunities for intergenerational interaction where knowledge and skills are exchanged between older and younger generations.

"In the wake of the new Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill, one can expect enormous pressure to be exerted on councils to convert allotment land for more profitable uses, like housing or commercial development. Though it is vital we alleviate the acute housing pressures being felt across the UK, it is important that existing allotment sites are protected from development unless improved alternative provision is made. Failure to do so risks jeopardising the health and wellbeing of our local communities, as well as national and local climate change mitigation targets."

A full analysis of APSE's State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotment Services 2024 can be viewed online. •

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Energy and climate change in action - lessons from case studies

James Jefferson, APSE Energy Principal Advisor, reports back from APSE Energy's recent event in Derby.

On the 24 September, APSE Energy hosted an event in Derby titled 'Energy and climate change in action – Lessons from case studies'. The jam-packed event was free to attend for all APSE Energy member authorities. After a welcome from Sam Dennis, Strategic Director – Place at Derby City Council, delegates set off on a walking tour of three innovative energy and climate change related schemes, all a short walk from the Council offices.

As part of the walking tour delegates visited the Longbridge Weir Hydro Power House, the Council's hydroelectric plant that generates electricity from the River Derwent and is used to power the nearby Council House, with any excess power exported back to the grid. Following the visit to the hydro scheme, delegates walked along the river, learning about Derby City Council's 'Our City Our River' (OCOR) flood alleviation project, which is helping the city adapt to the increasing risks from climate change. The project has already proved its worth following Storm Babet in 2019 when the river reached its highest levels.

With the city recording five record river levels in five years, the protection provided by the OCOR scheme will likely become increasingly important over the coming years. Significant earthworks have been involved with buildings being taken down and more planned to be removed in future as well as open space drainage areas and flood walls and gates being installed – all within the city centre.

The tour concluded at Rivermead House, which is Derby's only high-rise social housing. Shaun Bennet, Director of Property at the Council's social housing ALMO, Derby City Homes, explained how the flats have benefited from decarbonisation projects that have improved their energy efficiency. Air source heat pumps have been installed on the balconies of each flat, with tenants benefitting from energy bill reductions with further energy savings for the Council coming from solar panels on the roof of the building which are used to light the corridors and communal areas.

The second session of the event started with a presentation on delivering retrofit at scale from Sarah Baker, Group Manager - Climate Change and Environment at the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. Sarah outlined how the partnership has managed retrofit projects across a range of schemes including the Local Authority Delivery scheme, Home Upgrades Grant and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Through the schemes, the partnership has improved the energy efficiency of well over 1,000 homes with residents benefitting from huge bill savings and EPC rating improvements.

Up next, Helen Langley, Senior Agency Support & Development Officer at Dudley MBC provided an insight into the Council's Brockmoor Energy and Environment Scheme (Community BEES). Brockmoor was chosen to be the first 'Net Zero Neighbourhood' to be funded as part of the West Midlands Combined Authority's 'Net Zero Neighbourhood Programme'. Helen discussed why Brockmoor was chosen, outlined the vision of the programme and looked at progress made so far, and what the future of the Community BEES will look like.

Nick Bridle, Customer Success Manager at APSE Energy approved partner, Dynamon delivered a presentation on fleet decarbonisation and the transition to electric vehicles, introducing delegates to Dynamon's planning software, 'Zero'. Zero helps to model a fleet's transition to EVs, ensuring optimal vehicle mix and load requirements aligned with grid capacity.

The event closed with a presentation on the UK's first custom-built hydrogen refuse collection vehicle. Trevor Nicoll, Director of Operations at St Helens Council provided insight into the Council's fleet replacement programme, which has involved procuring 35 electric vehicles and the hydrogen fuel cell RCV.



Trevor looked at the practicalities of procuring a hydrogen RCV and what infrastructure is required to be in place, as well as how the vehicle has been used as a tool for engagement and education within the community.

Thank you to all delegates who attended the event in Derby and thank you to Derby City Council for their support in organising and running the event. All slides from the event can be found on the APSE Energy 'past events' webpage.

If you would like to host a similar event in your authority, please get in touch at energy@apse.org.uk



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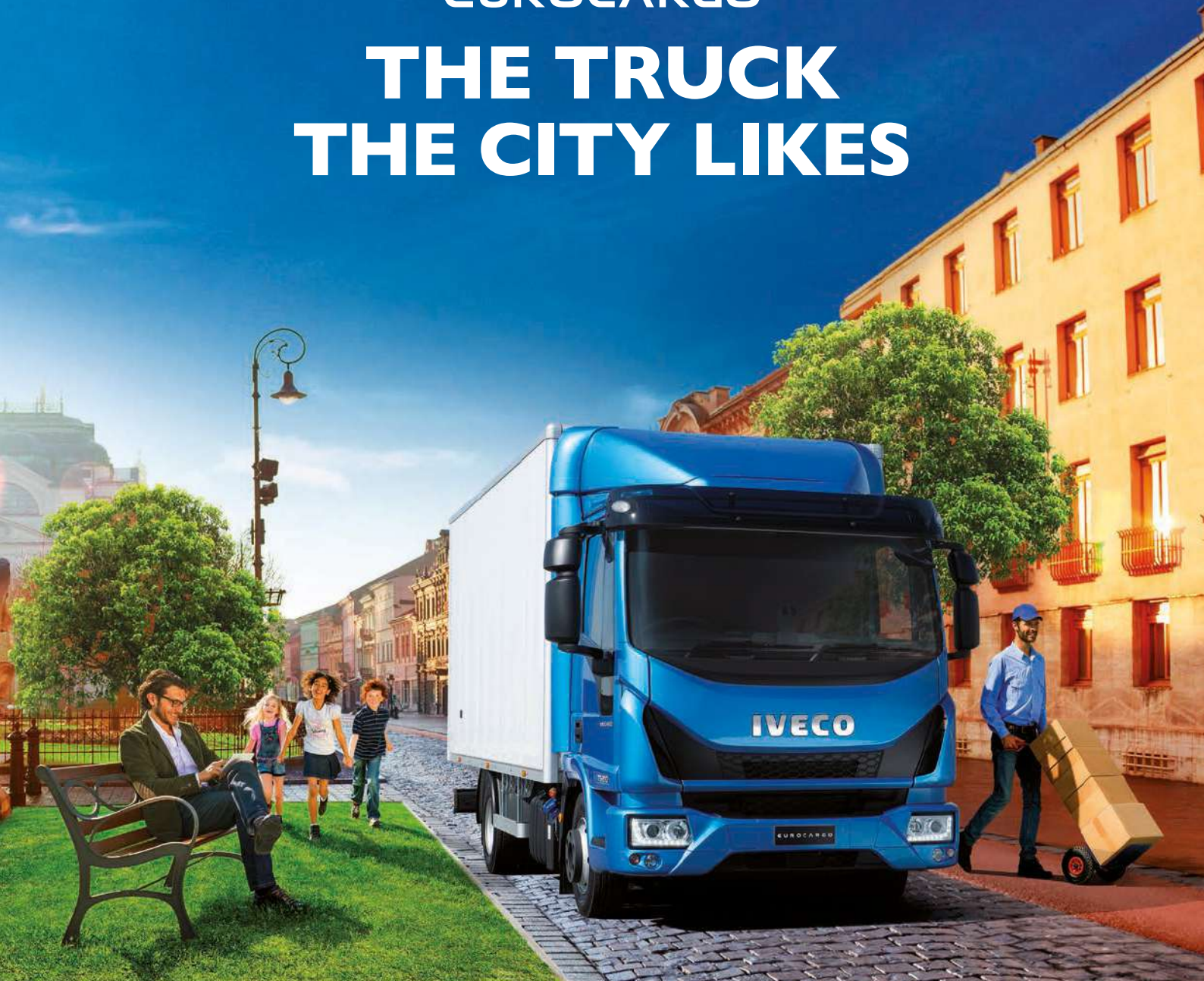
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