



# APSE response to green jobs and skills inquiry

This briefing provides details of APSE's response to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into green jobs and skills. It is provided to local authority chief executives, councils leaders and all APSE parks and open spaces contacts

## Key Issues:

- This APSE briefing includes APSE's written submission to a parliamentary inquiry into green jobs and skills
- Inquiry looks into prospects for green jobs and policies aimed at increasing employment in environmental industries
- APSE believes that continued support and investment in the public sector infrastructure should be the foundation for tackling the recession.

## 1. Introduction

On 21 April 2009, a parliamentary inquiry was announced by the Environmental Audit Committee into the prospects for green jobs and policies aimed at increasing employment in environmental industries. This inquiry will consider how the UK can maximise the environmentally positive opportunities arising from changes in public spending intended to help tackle the recession. This briefing replicates APSE's written submission.

## APSE response to the Environmental Audit Committee

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) represents officers and members involved in the management and provision of quality public services. APSE's mission statement positions the organisation as 'networking organisation which consults, develops,

promotes and advises on best practice in the delivery of public services'. APSE is currently working with almost 300 authorities within the United Kingdom. APSE is also one of the 15 national organisations involved in developing the national strategy on Skills to Grow led by CABI Space.

APSE believes that continued support and investment in the public sector infrastructure (such as affordable housing, transport, play and recreational facilities, a high quality public realm and creating sustainable communities) should be the foundation for tackling the recession. As the recession will be experienced differently in different regions, local authorities should have a key role to play in developing local jobs needed at their local level. Councils throughout the UK have a critical role, more especially at a time of economic uncertainty, in valuing and investing in the local workforce, which in turn supports the local economy. The public sector is a vehicle for delivering skills and training and equipping the workforce to cope with structural changes in the economy in the long term. APSE believes that the emphasis on skills development should be on front line skills, which is where they will have most impact as the interface with members of the public.

At a time of budget constraints, with 50% of local authorities expecting cuts in their park budgets next year (APSE state of the market survey 2008), APSE would like to see further clarity on the role that national government are going to play in funding skills development. APSE welcomes the pre-budget statement in November 2008 and Budget 2009 making available resources for 200,000 new apprentices, as well as the recent investment by the Department for Communities and Local Government of £1 million available for up to 60 additional local authority horticultural apprenticeships. APSE also welcomed the Apprenticeship Bill 2008 with the regulations to encourage more employers to offer apprenticeship, although APSE would like to see the promotion of new apprenticeships being targeted through local authorities. APSE would like to see more emphasis by government on high quality apprenticeship schemes, as well as identifying and promoting areas of good practice that already exist within local authorities. The benefits of apprenticeships accrue not only to the local authority who is able to maintain its workforce but also to the staff themselves who acquire skills and quality training, the citizens receiving the services supplied by skilled workers and the wider community benefiting from a local skilled labour force and demand for local training colleges and teachers.

APSE is undertaking research for the TUC on the impact of the recession on public services. This research will examine the social and economic role of public services both in terms of the trade off between spending money on public sector jobs and services rather than benefits and also the long term cost of social breakdown on crime, education, housing, health and cycles of poverty and unemployment, health inequalities and improving life chances, improving educational attainment, addressing social exclusion and poverty and creating more sustainable communities.

APSE agrees with the need for a focus on green jobs and skills development and believes that investment can be targeted for not only economic benefits but also to address social and environmental concerns. Local authorities have a pivotal role in achieving the climate change and energy targets and meeting the Carbon Reduction Commitment, including waste management through energy from waste and anaerobic digestion; effective energy management and reducing carbon emissions in council buildings such as education, leisure, housing and community buildings; street lighting; transport; and local authorities' role in raising awareness and educating the public on energy efficiency and reducing carbon footprint. Local authorities can also act as a catalyst for new industries to address key challenges around sustainability and climate change. The challenge to reduce CO2 emissions by 80% by 2050 will require investment in public sector jobs and skills. There are opportunities for new skills development and training including the use of new green technology, fitting energy efficiency equipment such as microgenerators and solar panels. In addition, there is an opportunity to develop a set of 'green' or 'environmental' skills and careers on a holistic basis, across services as a result of new challenges such as the Carbon Reduction Commitment, as opposed to a narrowly defined set of skills for one department or service. This could ultimately support skills development as well as new career paths.

APSE believes that investing in skills brings real benefit to local communities. In addition, investment in public services can provide maximum value for the public pound through procurement such as the use of community benefit clauses, which can include issues such as local employment, training and supply chains. APSE is conducting research into community benefit clauses with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). Our recent research report on the economic footprint of local councils based on a study of Swindon's streetscene services highlighted the strategic argument for local authorities to be employers and it revealed the impact on the local economy; for example, 98% of streetscene's employees

lived within the locality and 64p of every pound invested/spent stayed within that community.

Enclosed is a copy of APSE's research on the Economic Footprint of Public Services. APSE will also send through a copy of the research into the Community Benefit Clauses when this is completed.

For further information in relation to the response please contact Debbie Johns at the APSE secretariat on [djohns@apse.org.uk](mailto:djohns@apse.org.uk) or telephone 0161 772 1810.

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