

# Report back

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

A further round of lobbying in March and April has continued to raise the issues that matter for APSE member authorities across the UK

### Northern Ireland

#### Awards night success

Councils across Northern Ireland celebrated best performance as they gathered to hear the results of the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards for 2008.

More than 300 officers and councillors came together at the Armagh City Hotel on 26th February to hear the winners of the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards, announced by comic actress Nuala McKeever. All local councils in Northern Ireland were invited to make a submission for the awards, with APSE sponsoring the Best Service Team award which was presented to Magherafelt District Council.

### Scotland

#### 'In' service day!

The chief executive of APSE took part in a debate on the future of local authority waste management services in Scotland at the Chartered Institute of Waste Management's conference. The question was whether they should be outsourced or stay in-house? APSE explored the numerous recent private sector failures in the public sector market and local governments proven track record of delivery. Despite the audience being made up mainly from the private sector APSE won the vote!

#### Consumers need access to public services!

Douglas Sinclair the Chairperson of Consumer Focus Scotland was a guest speaker at APSE's Citizen Engagement, Governance and Service Delivery, Strategic Forum, which took place in Motherwell Civic Centre. Douglas outlined the work of the new coordinated organisation that has taken over from previously separate consumer interest bodies. His talk sparked a healthy discussion about how citizens access public services generally and local authority services in particular.

#### The future of council house building in Scotland

The chief executive of APSE chaired a debate on Housing between the four main political parties in Scotland at the recent Housing conference held in Peebles with Livingston MSP, Angela Constance, on behalf of the SNP Derek Brownlee MSP on behalf of the Conservatives, Jeremy Purvis MSP on behalf of the Liberal Democrats and Cllr Jim McCabe, Labour Group Leader on CoSLA on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party.

The event also saw Scotland's young building apprentices rewarded for their efforts in a spectacular awards night which saw Gary Brown of South Lanarkshire Council and Douglas Ferguson of Fife Council crowned overall winners in the APSE Scotland Building Apprentice of the Year awards.

#### Perth plays host to Scottish Liberal Democrats

APSE hosted a joint fringe in the main conference hall at the Liberal Democrats Scotland conference with UNISON's Dave Watson and Jim Tolson MSP. The title was 'Why a recession needs increased investment in public services' and saw delegates debate the importance of providing good public services as demands on public services increase in a recession.

#### Scottish Labour Conference

APSE attended the Scottish labour party conference, held in Dundee promoting APSE's latest research to delegates including the economic footprint research and Insourcing. The reports were well received by delegates

### Wales

#### Excellence Wales

APSE attended the WLGA Excellence Wales Awards 2009 to present the 'Our authority' award. APSE Wales vice chair Cllr Eric Saxon presented the awards with Social Justice and Local Government Assembly Minister Dr. Brian Gibbons

APSE also exhibited at the WLGA 'Our environment national open day' meeting delegates and explaining APSE's role in promoting environmental quality and local government services within Wales.

## Fynnon national performance system for Wales – Pilots agreed

APSE has now agreed 2 pilots in relation to the 'Fynnon' national performance system for Wales covering school meals and building maintenance. The pilots will form the basis for incorporating APSE performance networks data into the Fynnon system. APSE is also finalising a VFM study with the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) with regard to school meals catering performance in Wales.

## Trading in Wales

APSE has submitted responses to the consultations by the Wales Assembly Government (WAG) on the proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure, trading powers and the power of wellbeing.

## England

### CCA 2009

APSE hosted two fringe events at the Conservative Councillors Association Annual conference 2009 held at Oulton Hall Leeds. Speakers included Cllr Paul Bettison, Chair of the LGA Environment Board and Martin Joyce, Managing Director of Enterprise PLC. Delegates debated the issues of sustainability and recycling in the current economic climate.

### Guardian of in-house services

APSE chief executive Paul O'Brien addressed a Guardian conference and took part in a debate on 'Streamlining the Public Sector' speaking about APSE's latest research on insourcing public services. The debate was entitled 'insourcing versus outsourcing'.

### Learning some gritty lessons!

The great salt debate took place at APSE's annual Roads, Highways and Street Lighting conference in Newcastle. With the worst conditions for 18 years this winter has been extremely demanding for those charged with keeping the country's roads moving. Contributors to the debate included Bob Ray of Cleveland Potash who had also been at the Transport Select Committee at Westminster on behalf of the suppliers the day before and brought delegates up to speed with the thoughts of Ministers, Parliamentarians and National Agencies and Derek Heap of Lancashire County Council who outlined what things had been like from a local authority perspective.

### Bridge to success

A young civil engineer, specialising in bridge works, employed by Aberdeenshire Council, found a route to success after being named as the Highways and Street Lighting Apprentice of the Year 2009 by the Association for Public Service Excellence.

Louise Nicol, was chosen after impressing a panel of judges with her knowledge of bridges and bridge works.

## Managing parks in challenging times

The annual parks seminar saw over a hundred delegates listen to the latest opinions from Greenspace north west, with speaker Kirsty Rhind, urging delegates to recognise parks will be valued by the public as a 'free leisure opportunity'. Sue Sutton, Chief Executive of the Institute of Sports, Parks and Leisure spoke of the need to value parks and offer the public 'something they can't refuse' whilst Mike Treharne of St Helens and Halton PCT said that parks were 'critical to physical and mental well being'.

## House call

More than 60 elected members and senior housing and finance officers came to the House of Commons on 26th March for a panel debate and audience discussion entitled 'Financing council new build: from words into action'. The event run on a joint basis between APSE and ARCH (Association of retained council housing) was also attended by Housing Minister Margaret Becket's housing policy advisor.



Louise Nicol with award sponsor Ray Wescott of Volker Highways Mews (left), and Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive (right).



Paul O'Brien presents the APSE award to Magherafelt District Council at the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards



Martin Joyce, Managing Director of Enterprise Plc at the APSE fringe event at CCA conference 2009.