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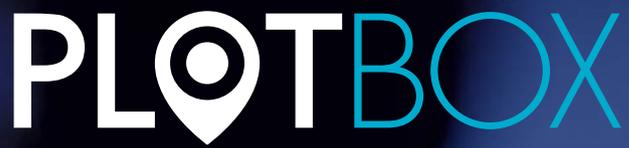
A look at how councils can build on local strengths to secure greater health, wealth and environmental wellbeing for their communities



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Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive,
APSE

Fire, Police, Ambulance, Council

Once again councils are in the national spotlight as part of the emergency response to severe flooding. We have heard glowing reports of local councils and workforce actions; the public recognising the workers out clearing highways and managing traffic, delivering sandbags and alerting residents, and setting up relief stations for evacuated residents. In one heart-warming case a council worker in their own time visited a frightened resident to just sit with them and reassure them.

These actions are often heroic but understated. Councils don't have the nationally recognised uniforms of police, fire or ambulance workers but they are the fourth emergency service for the UK. That is why hollowing out council services is an on-going danger and one which APSE has continuously warned against. It is easy to dismiss councils as having 'managed' through budget reductions – with few councils actually falling over as a result. It is easy to consider the tipping point claims as merely councils once again crying wolf about the precarious state of their finances. However, when faced with the very real danger to life that extreme weather events present,

the mood amongst council responders is very much a case of 'we just about got by'. The recent Whaley Bridge Dam incident highlighted the collaboration and coordination needed across all emergency services, including local councils, who mustered supplies and labour to help alleviate the dangers.

So whilst we can and should applaud the efforts made by our local councils and frontline teams we should not be complacent about the necessity to operate at a workable capacity. Hollowed out councils will struggle to meet basic needs but they will also struggle to act as the local coordinator in an emergency; with the potential for emergency situations to quickly escalate into a calamity. Local resilience can only be assured if councils can call on adequate resources to act; without resources we will fail to be resilient to the challenges of extreme weather events which to all of us are seemingly becoming ever more prevalent.

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Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



Professor Steven Griggs, who is taking evidence as part of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030, met with Chief Executive of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Anne Donaghy, Alderman Nicholl MBE and Director of Corporate Services, Louise Kennedy as part of the evidence gathering sessions at the NILGA Conference 2020 on 21 February.

APSE Service Awards: Call for entries!

These Awards, designed to recognise excellence in local government frontline services, are eagerly anticipated by councils across the UK. They specifically highlight local councils that have embraced change, innovation and best practice in order to continually offer outstanding services. Register your interest before the 13 March deadline. Visit the APSE website for more information!

APSE Local Government Commission 2030: Oral evidence-gathering sessions

The APSE Local Government Commission 2030 has now entered into its second stage of evidence gathering. This stage includes obtaining oral evidence from respondents to the written Call for Evidence who the Commissioners believe will provide further expert insights and support the differing lines of inquiry identified by the Commission.

On 11-12 February, APSE held its first oral evidence-gathering sessions at the TUC Congress Centre in Central London. A diverse range of expert witnesses – LGA, WLGA, NILGA, TCPA, LGiU, IPPR North, NAC, Fawcett Society, UNITE, PPMA, NPI, UNISON, SOCITM, NPC, NALC – were invited to provide evidence over the course of the two days. Visit page 14 for more information.

Conservative Councillors' Association Local Government Conference 2020

APSE hosted two workshops – both chaired by Leader of West Lindsey District Council Cllr Giles McNeill - at the CCA Local Government Conference in Leicestershire 28 February. Themed on the APSE Local Government Commission. One workshop addressed local government finance and futures with the second workshop addressing sustainability and the local environment.

APSE also hosted a plenary on the morning of 29 February which asked Conservative Councillors: "What does the APSE Local Government Commission 2030 mean to you?" The plenary sought the views of Conservative Councillors on the issues that matter for the future of local government including future finance and

structures, and the big public policy issues such as housing, an ageing population, and future environmental sustainability. APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien opened the session followed by former Chair of the LGA and APSE Local Government Commissioner Lord Porter.

General Election debate at UNISON

APSE's Mo Baines attended a UNISON Service Group Executive Meeting in London on 6 February to discuss the 2019 General Election and what local authorities can expect from the newly elected Government. A briefing on this topic is available to download for free from the APSE website.

APSE Soft Facilities Management Innovation Awards – Announcing the winners!

APSE are delighted to present the winners of our inaugural Soft FM Innovation Awards; celebrating outstanding local councils that use innovative ideas and solutions to tackle the current challenges facing their frontline soft facilities management services. Congratulations to the winners:

- Building Cleaning - Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Catering – Dudley Council
- Green Innovation – Telford & Wrekin Council

The ceremony took place as part of the APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar in Nottingham on 30 January. For more information and to view photographs of the winners visit the APSE website.

Approved Partner News - GovPlanet is now GPSV!

Effective from 1 February 2020, there are some changes to let you know about when it comes to re-selling your plant and equipment with APSE Approved Partner GovPlanet. GovPlanet has been re-branded as Government, Plant and Specialist Vehicles – GPSV. Same team, same service. For more information about their services and products turn to page 23 or visit the suppliers page on the APSE website.

APSE services round-up

- APSE Performance Networks continues with its systems improvements, new services and is now transitioning to the new portal. Visit the APSE website for more details.
- APSE Energy's 'Big Energy Summit' with key note speakers including BEIS is once again taking place in March. Visit the APSE website for more details.
- APSE Training has a newly developed course on Carbon Literacy Email Fiona Sutton-Wilson at fsuttonwilson@apse.org.uk for details
- APSE Solutions has a new cohort of expert Interim Managers ready to fill gaps before the financial year end. To access the service email Emma Taylor at etaylor@apse.org.uk.



The finalists of the APSE Scotland Building & Housing Apprentice Awards 2020 line up for a photograph in Dunblane on 6 February 2020.

Northern Ireland

NILGA Conference 2020

APSE were delighted to once again sponsor the NILGA Conference 2020 and Local Government Awards Northern Ireland 2020 on 20 February in Belfast. Mo Baines, APSE lead for Northern Ireland, was on hand at our exhibition stand whilst APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, addressed the Conference on "Our Future Environment: Climate, Councils and Communities" discussing the role of council frontline services in tackling the climate emergency.

As part of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030 evidence-gathering process, APSE also hosted a special evidence session for Northern Ireland local government to further inform the work of the Commission.

Scotland

Recognising excellence in Dunblane!

APSE are delighted to announce the winners of the APSE Scotland Building & Housing Apprentice Awards 2020. The Awards – kindly sponsored by Jordan Electrics Ltd – celebrate the hard work and exceptional accomplishments of apprentices in the housing and building sector. The competition this year was tough but after careful deliberation, the following were successful:

- First Year Trade - Puskar Bhandari, Heating Engineer (South Ayrshire Council)
- Second Year Trade - Dylan Allan, Joiner (Fife Council)
- Third Year Trade - Christie Brogan, Electrician (East Lothian Council)
- Fourth Year Trade - Grant MacGregor, Electrician (Fife Council)
- Non-Trade - Aidan Maguire, Modern Apprentice Construction Management (East Dunbartonshire Council)

The ceremony took place as part of the APSE Scotland Building and Housing Seminar in Dunblane on 6 February. Congratulations to all of this year's finalists. For a full list of this year's finalists and photographs of the winners please visit the APSE website.

Amenities Forum in Edinburgh

On 4 February, APSE Principal Advisor Wayne Priestley spoke at a specially convened conference focussing on the challenges and opportunities in the amenity sector, held in Edinburgh. Wayne discussed the challenges local authorities in the UK are facing as regards to weed management amidst growing concerns about human and environmental health.



Former Chair of the LGA and APSE Local Government Commissioner Lord Porter joins APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien and Cllr. Peter Golds at APSE's plenary during the Conservative Councillors' Association Local Government Conference 2020 on 29 February.

Wales

Waste and Resources Strategy

The Welsh Government has launched a consultation on its plans to make Wales the world's top recycling nation; helping it become a "truly circular economy". APSE Wales Principal Advisor Rob Bailey provides an overview of the consultation on page 26.

News in Brief

Councils need to play a key role in housing the nation say UNISON

UNISON, the local government trade union, has called for a mass programme of house building and a return to local councils having a core role in the delivery of social housing. 'Safe, Decent and Affordable Homes for All' was launched in January 2020 and recommends that the UK embarks on a national house-building programme to construct 340,000 new homes a year, which they argue should include 150,000 homes for social rent.

The paper also suggests that the current definition of 'affordable' is not fit-for-purpose and should be replaced by affordability linked to people's incomes rather than market rent. It also calls for England to mirror Scotland and Wales in ending Right to Buy and welfare reforms to address housing costs, largely associated with an increase in evictions and a recognition that regeneration schemes should be done in such a way as to ensure there is no social housing loss in regeneration schemes. Reflecting the Grenfell tragedy, UNISON calls for a new 'consumer regime' in housing to raise standards and make homes safe, in addition to affordable and stable private rents, permanent tenancies and an end to no-fault evictions.

Finally - perhaps reflecting recent fragmentation in housing management, supply and delivery of homes - the paper calls for widescale investment in the housing workforce to deliver well-funded and resourced housing service.

The full manifesto can be found at www.unison.org.uk

Point of view



Wakefield Council has appointed Denise Jeffery as its new leader, making her the first woman to hold the position. APSE Direct interviewed Cllr. Jeffery to learn more about her priorities as the Council's new leader.

Q: Cllr Jeffery you took over as leader of Wakefield Council in December 2019 after serving as Deputy Leader. Has this new role changed your priorities for Wakefield?

A: I became leader at the dawn of a new decade and start of a new Government so it certainly felt the right time to reassess what we need to do as a Council and deliver for residents. I very much want us to be ambitious and focussed on creating a better future for the people of Wakefield.

It has been said that 2020 is the last chance to bring the world together to tackle climate change and I believe that this Council must seize this opportunity and play a part in protecting the environment for future generations. To do this we will need to significantly change the way the Council works. There will be some bold and potentially difficult decisions ahead but this is a challenge we will meet.

We also have to deal with reality that a decade of austerity has left its mark. Many of our residents need us now more than ever and my Council will prioritise providing a programme of support to help mitigate the impact of poverty on local people.

Q: What do you now see as the biggest barriers and opportunities facing you and your residents over the coming years?

The continued uncertainty of funding from central Government is not helpful, and the growing adult social care crisis must be brought to an end. Public sector services must have a long term sustainable solution from Government if we are to meet the needs of our adult population.

“I believe that this Council must seize this opportunity and play a part in protecting the environment for future generations”

I think this decade has great potential for Wakefield. Despite the huge challenges of austerity, we have worked extremely hard to manage our budget ensuring we could continue to be very future focussed with investment. This has created opportunities for growth that we can now push forward and build on. We are developing an incredible cultural and creative reputation, and have ambitious plans for Wakefield to become the creative heart of the North. We want to use this as a platform to bring new jobs to the district and help develop new skills.

We are well positioned to continue to boost the creative industry we already have here, as well as creating a vibrant, culturally rich

environment to attract new business and investment that will benefit all our residents and district.

Q: In your first few weeks of office Wakefield suffered a fire in a well-known local bakery meaning residents had to be evacuated from their homes and the councils emergency response, rightly praised by the local media, was tested to the full. What lessons have you learned from that?

A: When a crisis hits, everyone looks to the Council and we have to step up. This is something we were well aware of and ready to deal with, although it was challenging at times. Our resilience was put to the test in February, when for three successive weekends, we had teams working round the clock to deal with the fire and then two severe weather incidents, and I must pay tribute to everyone who pulled together and delivered the emergency responses during this period.

Q: If there was one new power available to local council leaders what would it be and how would you use it?

A: I don't know how it would work as a legislative power but I'd like to see everyone treating each other, and our environment, with more kindness and compassion. Perhaps if we could make that happen then it would solve a mountain of issues. •

2020 APSE dates for your diary

10 March	Southern Parks and Horticultural Services Advisory Group	Pinsent Masons LLP, London
10 - 11 March	The Big Energy Summit 2020	Chesford Grange Hotel, Warwickshire
13 March	Catering Advisory Group	Van Coulter Suite, APSE Manchester
13 March	Parks Seminar	Telford Hotel and Golf Resort, Telford
17 March	Scotland Renewables and Energy Efficiency Advisory Group	Council Chambers, Stirling
18 March	Scotland Transport and Mechanical Advisory Group	Whitehill Service Centre, Bathgate
19 March	Building Cleaning Advisory Group	Van Coulter Suite, APSE Manchester
19 - 20 March	Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar	Grand Hotel, Blackpool
24 March	Housing Advisory Group	Van Coulter Suite, APSE Manchester
27 March	Scotland Roads and Street Lighting Advisory Group	Tayside Contracts, Ruthvenfield Depot, Perth
2 April	Loving the Local: APSE Policy Seminar	Birmingham Council House, Birmingham
16 April	Cemeteries and Crematoria Seminar	National Conference Centre, Solihull
23 April	Southern Sports and Leisure Seminar	The Oval, London

For more information, visit www.apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810

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Cemeteries & Crematoria



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- Design and development
- Drainage management
- Project management
- Mausoleum development
- Groundwater Risk Assessments

Environmental Solutions



The CDS Group undertakes environmental assessments including groundwater monitoring, contamination sampling and environmental investigations to access the suitability for re-use of parcels of contaminated land.

This enables a valuable resource to be repurposed and regenerated in the form of parks and open space, communal or commercial development. Following the results of investigations, the CDS planning, design and engineering team will aid the regeneration of underused and unutilised sites into valuable public asset.

- Groundwater monitoring
- Contaminated land
- Drainage management
- Land regeneration
- Project management

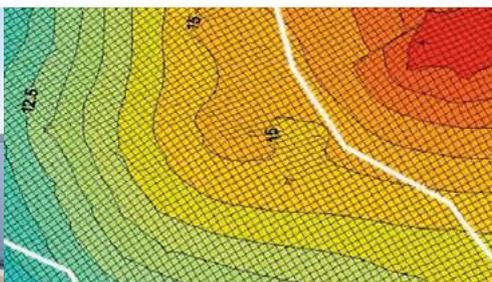
Parks & Leisure



The CDS Group have an in-house team of planners, designers, drainage engineers and environmental consultants who can provide an unparalleled capability in ensuring the highest level of project delivery.

CDS offers extensive experience in the development and delivery of parks, sports grounds and public open space. Innovative ideas and technical expertise can help to transform tired and old areas of land into new and vibrant open spaces for local residents and wildlife to enjoy.

- Parks and open spaces
- Sports grounds
- Sports facilities
- Country parks
- Project management
- Drainage management



Making Liverpool city centre cleaner and safer



Like many city and town centres across the UK, Liverpool is faced with the challenge of begging, addiction, poverty and anti-social behaviour. To meet this challenge, a new approach to delivering support to those living a street lifestyle was devised. Lorna Quail of Liverpool Streetscene Services Limited spoke to APSE Direct about this award-winning scheme.

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liverpool.gov.uk/alwaysroominside

In 2016 Liverpool City Centre was being affected by an increased number of people involved in a street lifestyle. Begging, addiction, poverty and exploitation are just a few of the issues that were preventing Liverpool from reaching its full potential as a safer, cleaner and greener city. The accumulation of tents, bedding, cardboard, street living items, disguised used needles and drug using equipment posed a risk to the public and to street cleansing staff. Regular call outs for these areas meant regular interruptions to cleansing operations, which was becoming custom and practice and therefore absorbed into mainstream provision. This was affecting the cleansing programme by causing timescales to be missed, and time spent catching up with core services and expectations.

Incidences of anti-social behaviour such as aggression, drug taking and disposing of human waste openly in the city centre are common activities around these sites. Therefore quite understandably, staff became reticent about cleansing these hotspots. This further hindered cleansing programmes, having an impact on businesses, tourism, and generating media attention and complaints from the public.

In 2016 the estimate per month for cleansing interventions and call outs was approximately £2,000 per month and £24,000 per annum.

The innovative approach taken

The issue needed to be tackled with a competent and robust approach to cleansing operations coordinated alongside a comprehensive engagement and enforcement process. A City Centre HIT (High Impact Team) called the 'Site Enhancement Team' was introduced, to provide an additional dedicated resource to focus primarily on tackling environmental blight at these specific areas. The team are highly trained, proficient, and have the transferable skills to deal with these specific problems sufficiently, ensuring that hotspots are cleansed in a safe manner.

The other objectives were to reduce begging and anti-social behaviour in the city and support vulnerable individuals through working with partners. Alongside the dedicated cleansing resource, a street lifestyle group was also formed

with partner agencies Merseyside Police, Whitechapel and Addaction, to work closely with a cohort of rough sleepers every day. Whitechapel support individuals in accessing accommodation and Addaction provide specialist support to tackle addictions to improve the health and wellbeing of service users. The balance of this support and intervention combined with enforcing the law when support and services have been offered and refused, has proved successful in reducing overall activity of this nature in Liverpool City Centre.

Partnership working has proved particularly successful in tackling street lifestyle problems. With the right people, tools, powers and, most importantly, the joined-up approach of all partners, the challenge of building relationships with vulnerable members of the public became less of a challenge and many users on the service cohort were able to build trust with the team and receive the support they needed.

The outcomes achieved

There has been a reduction of street lifestyle activity in Liverpool City Centre since the programme began. In 2016 there were 40 sites of concern, which has been reduced to 20 sites as of September 2019, halving the areas of concern.

The Site Enhancement Team is responsible for enhancing areas of environmental blight to aesthetically improve their appearance and minimise ongoing undesirable behaviour. They are returned to public use by installing lighting, fencing, plants and flowers, painting and removing graffiti, and of course carrying out a regular cleansing programme tailored for each site which includes removing materials dangerous to the public and ensuring that litter is recycled properly. Some sites are more difficult to improve and require constant and repetitive attention due to the nature of the problem. Persistence is key when working on these sites, as is an understanding for the people who congregate there, and patience when attempting to build a relationship with them in order to offer them support.

Going forward, the Council plan to expand this project outside of the city centre to widen and

grow the impact of this innovative approach. There is even the opportunity to use the space at these sites to promote recycling and positive environmental campaigns. One suggestion to achieve this is by engaging with art students from local universities to create a programme wherein they would have a chance to create some environmental based art, in a voluntary or competition format, widening the diversity of partners engaged in this programme and giving students the opportunity to showcase their talent in the city.

The team will continue to map out new sites, provide a dedicated resource to tackle any problems at them, engage the people and signpost to partner agencies for support. Liverpool Streetscene Services Ltd's vision is to work with local people and businesses to support those who are vulnerable and resolve local environmental problems. •

A personal story from a service user

“C has been rough sleeping with her partner and two dogs for over 12 months now. They did have a property in Kensington that they would sporadically use but they let it get unmanageable and they were unable to live in the conditions. SLP and Premier Cleaning deep cleaned the property to try and encourage them back but they both let the property return to the same state shortly afterwards.

Both were extremely stubborn and refusing any support in regards to housing and were rough sleeping in a tent. Eventually, after months of hard work SLP managed to get both to agree to move to separate hostels with a dog each. Her and her youngest dog were offered a room in Andrew House she happily accepted as she felt like she'd had enough of rough sleeping.

Since moving into Andrew House C is now engaging really well with both staff and the SLP team. She is working with JobcentrePlus and is in full receipt of benefits. She is now stable on her medication and is picking her prescription up daily from the chemist. C has been attending creative classes within the hostel and has started making origami and salt dough figures which she states she is really enjoying.

C said she feels so happy since moving here and said it is the best decision she has made in a long time. C hopes to get herself to an even more stable point and hopes to be able to start having contact with her two young sons who are currently adopted by family members.

Overall, this has been a massive success for C who has struggled with homelessness and drug addiction for many years.”



This initiative won the APSE Innovation Award 2019 in Streetscene. This summary has been taken from the APSE Environmental Services Innovation Awards brochure. The brochure contains the summaries of every shortlisted submission in 2017, 2018 and 2019, and is free to download from the APSE website.



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APSE Parks Seminar 2020

Parks in a changing climate



Friday 13 March 2020

Telford Hotel and Golf Resort, Telford TF7 4DT

Selling services to schools

The continued fragmentation of services has undermined the natural connections between high performing local authority support services to schools and the education sector itself. APSE's latest research - written in collaboration with CIPFA - looks at the position regarding the provision of a selection of discretionary support services to schools by local authorities.

The majority of local authorities with education responsibilities have traded at least some of their services to schools for many years. In areas like Scotland and Wales the role of local council provided services has remained relatively strong, albeit within the context of budget pressures. Within Northern Ireland the Education Authority has overall responsibility working to the Department for Education. However, within England the role of local authorities in running schools is now minimal. Many have seen a significant reduction in the demand for discretionary services from schools, as governors and head teachers exercise their new found freedoms to choose which services they require and from where. Changes in legislation has led to a growth in academies and coupled with uncertainty about future levels and sources of funding this means that local council services are de facto placed into a very competitive marketplace.

These changes have had two major impacts. First of all local authorities are now essentially the commissioners of educational outcomes rather than the default provider of education services, although they continue to provide statutory services such as the distribution of funding, school place planning, admissions and supporting schools forum; and secondly the traditional services to schools - such as school meals, building cleaning, building safety and maintenance and grounds maintenance services - are on a traded basis, with no obligation for schools to take any of these services from the local authority or indeed elsewhere. Consequently, there has been an opening up of competition and a significant growth within the alternative provider market for services to schools. This has led to local authorities adopting a variety of approaches in the provision of these services at a local level.

Many local authorities have successfully retained in-house teams that provide a whole range of services to schools, whilst others have looked for solutions that are rather more radical, including:

- Transfer of school support services to another local authority.
- Externalisation of certain services either individually or as a multiservice package.
- Formation of council-owned trading companies which provide services to schools.
- Formation of Joint Venture companies with private companies, to deliver all or some support services to schools.
- The report identifies examples of these approaches and illustrates some in a little more detail in case studies.

Schools and academies are becoming ever more demanding, sometimes expecting the provision of services for less than it costs local authorities to provide them. They also continue to mature and the current trend for schools to work in clusters means that there is an increasing likelihood that they will look at alternative providers given



their collective purchasing power. The marketplace is continually evolving and we are seeing new entrants both large and small.

The ever-increasing number of academy conversions has undoubtedly triggered a drop in demand for council services as a significant number look either to support themselves or look for provision elsewhere. Some multi-academy trusts (MATs) provide a core set of support services across all academies in their trust network, which is often seen as precluding the local authority from trading services into these schools, albeit local authorities do have wide powers to trade across boundaries and through collaborative inter-authority arrangements the geography of MATs can be problematic. Academies are often looking for alternative local, regional and national providers as they seek to make a clean break from the local authority.

In spite of the difficulties presented by academies and Multi Academy Trusts, it is clear from the research that across a broad range of local authorities, for many the relationship between them and their maintained schools remains strong, particularly within the primary sector. It is also evident that local authority General Fund subsidy is still widely used to support discretionary services to these schools. However budgetary pressures continue to increase year on year. What is clear is that 'subsidy' is not a dirty word if there is a political will to support services to schools to help achieve broader social outcomes. For example achieving payment of the real Living Wage to otherwise low paid, part time, often female workers, or developing approaches to school food such as breakfast clubs and cookery classes alongside dealing with statutory requirements.

However, the use of additional support or subsidy will be a matter for local decision making and local leadership. So whilst the main reason many local authorities provide, or attempt to provide support and services to schools is their commitment to educational outcomes, they will undoubtedly have to re-evaluate their financial models and level of service provision. This will entail looking at how to ensure this provision can be delivered in a financially sustainable way for the medium term and how any changes support their broader objectives for the local economy and wellbeing outcomes.

Clearly, in the wake of the Carillion collapse early in 2018 and Interserve going into administration early in 2019, there is a robust ongoing debate about the risks associated with the outsourcing of services and the value of local authority trading with schools to ensure capacity and service continuity. The continued fragmentation of services has undermined the natural connections between high performing local authority support services to schools and the education sector itself.

However, local government continues to see a rise in insourcing in many of the services previously utilised by schools as part of the local authority support services to schools; these services include grounds maintenance, school meals and building maintenance services. This growing phenomenon could provide different and new opportunities to recalibrate the relationship between schools and local authority service providers and help to de-risk schools exposed to outsourced contractors. Furthermore, the research suggests that schools that do not utilise the local authority's in-house or controlled contractor services may not be fulfilling health and safety legislation, regulations and recommendations. This also includes concerns that some support services have an impact on the longer term sustainability of the school estate, and any reduction of service in areas such as repairs, maintenance and premises compliance can have significant longer term financial and safety implications.

Given the likelihood that public sector funding will continue to be subject to increasing pressure, it is increasingly important, given the research findings, that the DfE, local authorities and schools work together to meet the challenge of ensuring that high quality, cost effective services are available to schools. Equally importantly, schools need to understand their roles in providing adequately maintained, safe and secure environments for staff, pupils and community users and their wider role as part of the public sector family when make contracting decisions.

The research suggests that schools that do not utilise the local authority's in-house or controlled contractor services may not be fulfilling health and safety legislation, regulations and recommendations.

In conclusion, the research report raises a number of issues which are worthy of further debate. There has been a clear decline in services to schools provided through the local authority family of services but this is often to the disadvantage of the schools or academy clients. Local authority services to schools are found to enhance quality, bringing expertise as well as experience to the management of school sites and services like school meals. Local authority services are also provided by staff often paid the real Living Wage and in higher quality employment. The fragmentation of services to private providers can be accompanied by diminishing quality and lower employment standards.

Another really worrying concern is the complexity of some statutory duties which are often now self-managed by schools, such as electrical safety checks, water testing and building safety. Whilst schools have a duty to ensure the health and safety of school pupils, users and their staff the research finds growing concerns about the loss of expertise in these fields compared to the professional services provided by local councils. Schools and academies are of course free to buy services from whomever they so choose, within reason, but this does open up questions of quality and wider social justice issues within local economies. These issues are certainly worthy of greater consideration before schools or academies determine who they choose to provide the vital services which hold together the functioning of educational assets.



- The full report can be downloaded for free from the research pages on the APSE website.

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In a tough financial environment, investing in training has been shown to improve staff morale and performance. With the new financial year fast approaching, our new Head of Training, Fiona Sutton-Wilson, highlight the importance of nurturing skills as well as some of APSE's most popular courses.

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Great training can allow staff to grow within their role which can result in better customer service, better work practices and improved productivity. By developing skills within different areas, training can also allow staff to undertake a greater variety of work; keeping them motivated and offering greater flexibility to an authority.

Future Investment

Many employers make the mistake of investing resources and efforts into recruiting new members of staff when they already have the talent available in-house. Investing in upskilling helps to support innovation and keep the best of your team on board to successfully prepare you for the future.

Stability / Staff Retention

Training programmes demonstrate an organisation's commitment to employees and their personal development. If a member of staff understands the investment their employer is making in them can help improve their performance and lead to them taking on a bigger role, it can have a powerful effect on the wider team; reinforcing the value you place on them and increasing the satisfaction they feel towards their jobs.

Identifying Development Areas

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ICCM Legal & Practical Management of Cemeteries

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION 2030



The APSE Local Government Commission 2030 has now entered into its second stage of evidence gathering. This stage includes obtaining oral evidence from respondents to the written Call for Evidence who the Commissioners believe will provide further expert insights and support the differing lines of inquiry identified by the Commission.

On 11-12 February, The Commission - Elma Murray, Jon Collins, Heather Wakefield, Gary Porter, Neil Schneider and Chair Paul O'Brien - held its first evidence-gathering sessions at the TUC Congress Centre in Central London. A diverse range of expert witnesses were invited to provide evidence over the course of the two days on a variety of themes.

Roles and Powers

Sessions 1 and 2 asked "What should be the role of local government and how can that role be brought about?" This discussion involved contributions from Rebecca Cox, Principal Advisor at the Local Government Association (LGA); Dr. Chris Llewellyn, Chief Executive, and Naomi Alleyne, Director of Social Services and Housing at the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); Karen Smyth, Head of Policy at the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA); Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy and Planning at the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA); and Luke Raikes, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Public Policy Research North (IPPR North).

Funding

Sessions 3 and 4 asked "How should local government be sustainably funded and how should we address financial inequalities between local authorities?" Sharing their insight and offering recommendations in these sessions were Dr. Jonathan Carr-West, Chief Executive at the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU); Peter Kenway, Director at the New Policy Institute (NPI); Duncan Whitfield, Strategic Director of Finance and Governance at Southwark





Council and President of Society of Municipal Treasurers 2016/17; and Ines Newman, former Head of Policy at the LGiU and former Director of the Warwick University Local Authorities Research Consortium.

Organisation and Culture

Which organisational structures and cultures can best balance competing requirements for efficiency, community cohesion, representation and democracy? Session 5 involved contributions from Karen Grave, President of the Public Services Peoples Managers Association (PPMA); Andrew Bazeley, Policy Insight and Public Affairs Manager at the Fawcett Society; and Richard Bourne, specialist in then NHS and social care.

Addressing Inequality and Empowering Communities

Session 6 asked “How should local government address inequalities across the diverse communities it serves?” Kindly offering their insight were Cllr. Sue Baxter, Chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC); Cllr. Ken Wyatt of the National Association of Councillors (NAC); Dan Corry, Chief Executive at the New Philanthropy Capital (NPC); and Gordon Elliot, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement, and Lee Copeland of Durham County Council.

Workforce and Skills

“What should be the skills of the future local government workforce?” Session 7 involved contributions from James Lazou, Research Officer at Unite; Nadira Hussain, Director of Leadership Development and Research The Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (Socitm); Jon Richards, Director of Leadership Development & Research, and Mike Short, Deputy Head of Local Government at UNISON; and Graham Farrant, Chief Executive, and Kate Langdown, Head of Neighbourhood Services at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

Centre-Local Relations

The final session asked “What future mechanisms or governance arrangements should be in place for effective dialogue and working relations between central departments, national agencies and local government?” Joining the Commission for this session was Michael Burton, Editorial Director of the MJ.

What next for the Commission?

With a range of expert witnesses from across the UK providing evidence, the Commission are hoping to identify and assess the capabilities and capacities of local government; capturing good practice and investigating the powers and responsibilities required for local councils to meet the challenges of the upcoming decade. •

If you want to make sure your voice is heard in the future of local government, please download the consultation document from the APSE website. For more information about how you can engage with the Commission, please email algc@apse.org.uk.

Memorial stabilisation: The West Lothian Way

In June 2019, The Scottish Government published guidance for Scotland's local authorities on burial ground memorial safety. Davie Cullen, Open Space and Cemeteries Manager at West Lothian Council, takes us through the progress his Council has made in ensuring safety in its cemeteries.

Against the backdrop of concern across the country in relation to the safety of memorials and headstones within cemeteries, West Lothian Council had, for some time, invested annual capital funds in ensuring that cemeteries within West Lothian were safe and remained a fitting tribute to the memory and history of the people of the local area.

Following the Fatal Accident Inquiry relating to the tragic loss of life of a young person in Glasgow, the Scottish Government undertook to provide guidance to local authorities on Burial Ground Memorial Safety and had consulted on the issue across a range of local authority and stakeholder organisations before issuing their guidance in June 2019.

West Lothian contributed to the guidance as part the consultation process and as a member of the Scottish Burial and Bereavement Group (SBBG).

Ahead of this, and conscious of the varying standards being applied across Scotland, the Council undertook a review of its own position with a view to developing a more robust, realistic and cost effective inspection programme that had the safety and the integrity of the circa 30,000 memorials and headstones at its heart. The outcome from the review was the introduction of a new 5 year cyclical programme of headstone stabilisation in 2018. The programme was financially supported by the council through the 10 year capital programme with a committed budget of £500k. What made the West Lothian model different was that at the

heart of the inspection programme was the principle that in the vast majority of cases, the council would identify, fund and repair unstable memorials and that trenching or laying flat would be temporary if used at all.

In developing the new programme, the service was conscious that a comprehensive review would have to be carried out following the release of the Scottish Government guidance, but that the fundamental aim of ensuring the safety of our cemeteries would not be affected by that.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the West Lothian model for headstone / memorial safety were to:

- Develop a robust, realistic and cost effective inspection programme that maintained the integrity of the headstones and memorials in West Lothian Cemeteries as fitting reminders of local people and history.
- To maintain memorials upright and to avoid trenching and laying flat where possible.
- To identify priority areas for the early years of the programme.
- To ensure a programme was developed that could be managed within the resources available in terms of staff, budget and contractor capacity.

- To empower Team Leaders and cemetery staff to take ownership of the programme and input into its development.

Initial Challenges

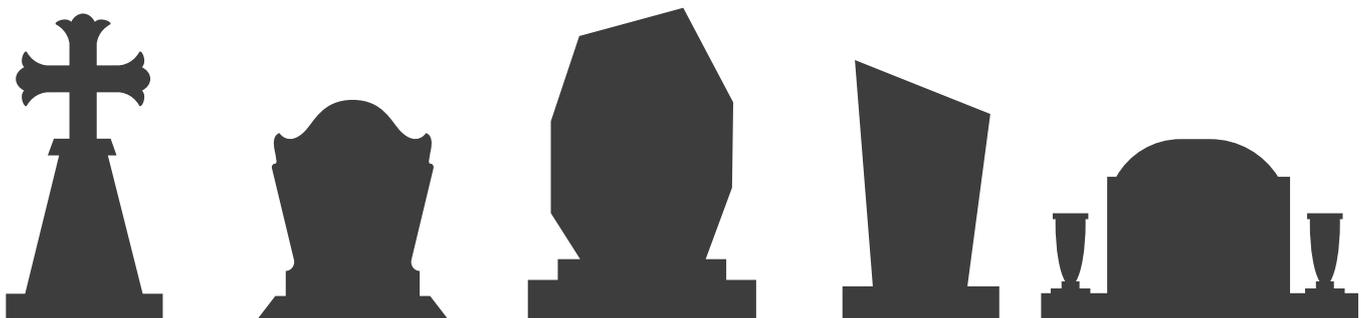
In developing the programme, a working group consisting of cemetery staff and management was set up to review existing working processes and procedures, review available guidance, determine priorities for West Lothian and also to look at what was happening elsewhere. It was clear very early in the process that the expectations of the residents of West Lothian would have resisted any attempts at wholesale trenching or laying flat of memorials; it was also clear that a different approach could be achieved within the capabilities of the resources we had. Early discussions and available guidance pointed to a need for a 5 year cyclical programme, so anticipating that any future guidance would maintain this, this is what was developed.

Once the 5 year programme was developed the Council produced relevant process maps and procedures that identified responsibilities for the inspection process and tracked and allocated responsibility from inspection to repair and recording and which culminated in the completion of a cemetery before moving on to the next one.

Industry standards were used to determine repair categories and a conscious decision was made not to repair memorials below 1m in height unless they presented a significant risk which was to be determined by the inspector at the point of inspection; however these were to be recorded for more frequent review. This decision allowed the council to concentrate on the highest risk memorials above this height. It was also envisaged that memorials above 1m would therefore be stabilised in the first 5 years of the programme allowing for a shift in emphasis to smaller memorials in future years.

The next stage was to procure a contractor, which was done via Quick Quote given the anticipated levels of spend, and to determine the rate of inspection!

The biggest challenge was convincing and developing staff buy-in to ensuring a rate of inspection and repair that tempered the urge to inspect well ahead of the ability of the contractor to repair the findings. The



service developed a system where the findings determined the rate of inspection and this ensured that whilst approx. 15 headstones could be repaired per week, the inspectors (Squad Leaders x 2) inspected the cemeteries in small sections and stopped when 2 weeks work was identified, they then progressed their inspection pace to ensure that they could constantly feed the contractor with the 15 repairs per week needed.

The advantages of doing this is that the inspection process is kept tight and that there is no wholesale cordoning, staking and netting or requirements to lay flat as any findings can be temporarily cordoned ahead of a repair within 10 days of identification.

One of the early challenges was the time it has taken to clear a cemetery as the findings have been high and repairs time consuming, but a conscious decision was made to ensure that we do not move on until completed in the cemetery under inspection.

Against the implementation of the West Lothian approach the Scottish Government issued guidance in June 2019 which although aligning to the West Lothian model in terms of the expectation of ensuring safety in cemeteries, placed significant emphasis on the role of the lairholder. This differed from the West Lothian model which is premised upon a repair being carried out, in most cases, without the need for lengthy and protracted tracking of lairholders. The approach is justified on the basis that currently in West Lothian lair transfer does not require to take place on the death of a lairholder making identification of the current rights difficult and the fact that the Council fund the repairs.

A comparison exercise of the West Lothian model and the SG guidance was carried out by the service and this was submitted to senior management and elected members to highlight the differences in approach with recommendations that the West Lothian model should remain "as is". This was supported.

Achievements and Future Goals

The programme in its current form is providing the Council and staff with confidence that when a cemetery is "signed off" as complete, then there is an extremely high probability that there are very few issues with any memorial over 1m in height within that cemetery and that the 5 year inspection cycle at the next pass should find very little.

The process does not reduce or remove the capacity for adhoc reactive repairs in any other cemeteries and staff are encouraged to repair findings as an when identified.

The capital budget allocation of £500k has been phased to overspend in years 1 to 5 when the majority of repairs will be identified, and to underspend in years 6 – 10 as less repairs will be required. The budget will be monitored and reviewed through the first inspection cycle.

Older cemeteries are taking longer to complete which may impact on the planned programme but again this is expected to speed up when we move into the less problematic areas and balance out over the programme.

The service believes that the programme is robust and will significantly contribute to the safety of our cemeteries, Equally as important the cemeteries within West Lothian will remain fitting tributes to the history and people of the area well into the future in a manner that is expected by the people.

- *Davie gave a presentation on this topic at the APSE Scotland Parks, Grounds and Street Services Advisory Group on 30 October 2019. APSE also released a briefing on this topic - 19/28: Burial Ground Memorial Ground Safety - Guidance for Scotland's Local Authorities - in July 2019. Both are available to download from the APSE website.*

APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Seminar 2020

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The 'Invisible Army': Recruiting and retaining local authority heroes

Anne Marie Scott, Director of Human Resources at Oxford Direct Services (ODS) talks about local authority recruitment in 2020 and how ODS recruits, retains and rewards the brightest and best for the job.

Last Christmas, Channel 5 screened a fascinating behind-the-scenes documentary entitled *Cleaning up Christmas: Grime and Punishment*. Delving 'behind the scenes' to see exactly how the Great British Christmas clean-up happens, it was a gripping, touching and occasionally stomach-churning look at what goes on – including footage of our wonderful front-line colleagues here in Oxford, who are busy 365 days a year maintaining the City.

As you might imagine, it takes a special person to carry out this type of work – someone who is motivated to do good for others and looks for job satisfaction through making a difference.

It was expressed succinctly during the documentary with the phrase: "the bigger the mess to begin with, the greater the satisfaction of seeing the results of your work".

These dedicated individuals are our 'invisible army' at ODS; they are dedicated to the general public, who rely on them to keep their city and surrounding environment safe and clean. These team members take on essential work which, for many people, wouldn't necessarily be a first-choice career path – creating a major challenge for us to find candidates and keep them engaged in both the work and the organisation. So how do we do it?

Primarily, I think all recruiting managers need to keep in mind that you need to first attract the right kind of person for the job. At ODS, our whole ethos is about 'doing good' but this isn't only in public service – it is also for our people, our community, and our city, so that local heroes like Gary, featured in the documentary, remain committed to doing a great job.

We have public sector values, but a commercial sector practice, which allows our team members to effect change on a meaningful scale and in a timely fashion. We want to attract people who share our public sector values and who actively want to work in an environment that serves the community. But we also want people who can work in an environment where they can action meaningful change where it is needed and which will do good. We strive to make sure that our values permeate everything; through our policies, practices, rewards and development because these values build on our reputation and purpose for doing good.

Another key point is our commitment to paying the Oxford Living Wage for all of our roles; this promotes liveable earnings for all workers and recognises the high cost of living in Oxford; we always try to recruit from our local community so there is local investment; and we work with local partners to try to help people into work who might otherwise struggle.

ODS is focused on rewarding its people for demonstrating its values through nominations from peers and colleagues, and I am constantly amazed by how our frontline teams go above and beyond the call of duty in their day to day work.

Turning towards employee benefits, we are always looking for ways to support our team, and we allow for flexible working wherever the

business needs allow, good pension provision, reduced cost access to local leisure facilities, and the option to buy extra holiday, all designed to suit individual lifestyles – especially in the context of being a family-friendly employer.

Most importantly we try to make ODS a community where we support and help each other to balance work and life, deal with personal challenges and pursue professional growth.

Additionally, a key part of our plan is to encourage employment from the point of leaving school, particularly in some of the diversity campaigns we are promoting this year like girls into trades, feeding back into our 'doing good' agenda. ODS actually employs more tradespeople in skilled trades than you will find anywhere else locally, and that's partly to do with the opportunities we offer to do good, whilst progressing professionally. We train our people, multi-skill them, support apprenticeships, and create as much education and opportunity in the local area as we can.

People are rewarded by more than just their salary when they do a good job, and we offer more than just a salary in return. There are many other daunting cleaning-up tasks required beyond the fat in the drain. If I tell you that one of our colleagues says to camera "that's one Yule log you never want to see" it will give you an idea of what we are talking about, and why it's so important to recruit the most dedicated team members available for what really is one of the most important jobs in the city. •

"Let your values shine out - be clear what your values are and you will attract like-minded people. Be proud that you are serving the common good and making money at the same time - it doesn't have to be conflict; and training, teamwork and camaraderie are powerful rewards - demonstrate and deliver on them on a daily basis."



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Activity and adequate hydration are the foundations for healthy young lives



Councillor Evelyn Akoto discusses how Southwark Council is making water more accessible in schools and across the Borough to help address the issue of childhood obesity in the local area.

Once the UK left 'dry January' behind, participating local authorities eased into 'Fizz Free February'. The third year of Southwark Council's campaign to encourage the public and most importantly, primary school pupils to resist the temptation of sugary soft drinks. When children are thirsty during break times and at meal times, their instinct should be to reach for a bottle of water, rather than a can of flavoured syrup. Studies show the 'pop', 'sparkle' and 'fizz' of soft drinks create a sense of anticipation and enjoyment.

This is how professional marketers make soft drinks attractive; consuming cola or similar beverages will be fun and emotionally satisfying. If this proposition is marketed to be irresistible to adults, we can only imagine the temptation for a ten-year-old or eleven-year-old child.

Childhood obesity in Southwark

Childhood obesity remains a challenge for Southwark. We're making progress with our healthy weight strategy. When we first did the research into excess weight gain, we found that our children were second highest for obesity in England for Reception and Year 6. Now, children in the borough are taking advantage of healthy meal options and activity in schools and we're seeing improvements with fewer children becoming obese.

The science around the physical and psychological need for sugar is clear. Just six teaspoons a day in total are considered 'safe' by organisations concerned with health issues like diabetes, heart disease, and musculoskeletal conditions. Nutritionists and other healthcare professionals don't recommend sugar as an ingredient in food and drink as it has no nutritional value and can cause metabolisms to drop. This makes it even more difficult for children to burn calories.

The reality is one can of cola, name brand or own brand can contain up ten teaspoons of sugar. This is too close to being nearly double what is acceptable. Like any of us, children respond to convenience. If we want them to make healthier choices, it's our responsibility as parents, carers, teachers and council teams to make those choices accessible.

Water is integral to good health

Along with our free healthy school meals for all children in Southwark primary schools, we encourage physical activity during school break

times and after school. We support disabled young people to get and stay active with our local offer. Our initiative to make water more freely accessible means all Southwark residents and visitors can stop and fill up their water bottles so there is no need to buy a sugary drink. Water supports the nervous system and good brain function so energy drinks are not necessary to give anyone a boost.

Some retailers in Southwark are taking note by not positioning energy drinks near typical after school snacks like crisps and chocolate. We hope that more small businesses will support the push for children and young people to benefit from healthy physical development and be aware that displaying impulse items is important and can make a difference to the wellbeing of individual children.

Soft drinks can contribute to dehydration as studies indicate at present children aren't drinking enough water during the day. Physicians cite that our bodies are made up mostly of water and vital organs - brain, heart, kidneys, liver - all rely on adequate hydration to function. Severe hydration can cause heart palpitations, dizziness, weakness and confusion. These symptoms would cause concern for an adult whereas they may be the first signs of serious illness in a child.

Making water free and accessible

'Fizz Free February' began as a purely local campaign but local government professionals concerned with public health and wellbeing recognised the issue of childhood obesity in their own boroughs. Year on year, more councils have been joining the campaign.

This, of course, is welcome as we all rely on local health and social care services and again, there is a shared sense of responsibility to consider the cost to the NHS. While there are no published figures for the cost of managing childhood obesity, caring for obese adults is more than £6bn and is forecast to rise.

Simple steps like those we've taken in Southwark have and will pay off especially in working with the public to raise awareness that we have provided free and accessible water in public spaces. By 2022, there will be 50 water fountains available for public use.

Southwark Council regularly maintains public drinking facilities to ensure they are hygienic, conveniently located and clearly marked. We aspire to get Southwark residents and visitors into the habit of having a bottle of water to hand and looking out for water when they take advantage of deals in local businesses.

Good health can be a shared experience

Most importantly, we are actively encouraging behavioural change so that water is the most important drink children consume during the day and the benefits of feeling healthier will lessen the temptation to ask parents and carers for soft drinks, sweetened juice or energy drinks.

Once water is part of lunchtime and after school routines, the aim is for healthy children to act as role models among their friends. When something is good for us, the motivation to share the experience can be hard to resist. •



Full throttle to a low carbon future



As the impact of climate change becomes ever more acute, the need to decarbonise our transport systems, buildings and economies is becoming more urgent. Michael Figures, Business Development Projects Officer, Perth and Kinross Council, spoke to APSE Direct about how his Council's Low Carbon Transport and Smart Energy Network has the potential to reduce total energy costs, carbon emissions and generate income for the authority.

Over the last few years the effects of climate change have become ever more apparent as the calls to do something about it become louder and more urgent. We are seeing the acceleration of severe weather events around the world as global temperatures continue to rise.

In Britain, to help tackle climate change, the UK Government has announced its intention to prohibit all new combustion engine vehicles by 2035, with the Scottish Government setting a target date of 2032 to phase out the need for new combustion engine vehicles. These ambitious targets have made the need to increase the provision of low carbon infrastructure and facilitate the up-take of low carbon vehicles more urgent. To give context, at present there are approximately 15,000 electric vehicles (EV's) currently operating on Scottish roads and millions of combustion engine vehicles. Within 15 to 20 years that equation needs to be reversed. To have the best chance of meeting these low carbon targets, the up-take of electric vehicles should be promoted and provisioned with easily accessible supporting low carbon refuelling infrastructure.

However, there is a need to support the provision of low carbon transport infrastructure by sustainable means. If all energy required to support an expanding Electric Vehicle market is to come from the national grid, the cost of grid re-enforcement work to accommodate this expansion would be significant. Estimates for this work in Scotland alone are in excess of £500m. It is therefore important that EV charging provision is met in a sustainable way. Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) has developed a project with the support of the European Regional Development Fund and Tay Cities Deal to do just this.

The Broxden Low Carbon Transport Hub project at the Broxden Park and Ride site on the western edge of Perth aims to create an innovative, low carbon transport hub at a key central node on the Scottish motorway network. It would be the first building block of the Perth Innovation Highway linking Perth West developments, the hub site and Perth City Centre. The intention of the project is to broaden the range of refuelling facilities and transport modes available and to provide

sustainable travel options to local residents, businesses and visitors to the city and region. The aim is to combine on-site generation of renewable energy and a battery storage system with an energy management platform, to sustainably support and efficiently manage the energy flows required to support the expansion of EV charging points.

PKC will be deploying an additional 28 EV charging points at Broxden to bring the EV charging provision at the site to 40 EV charging spaces. These will accommodate a range of EV charging speeds to meet the needs of a variety of EV usage patterns. From the relatively quick Rapid EV chargers as well as long-stay 7kW chargers to encourage users to leave their vehicles outside the city and use active travel options or public transport to complete their journeys.

Solar carports will be added to generate on-site renewable energy, which will be held in a battery storage unit, with future plans to include a wind turbine to give better all-year coverage of generation of renewable energy. This renewable energy generation and its storage will be managed by an energy management platform that will efficiently manage the energy inputs and outputs to sustainably support the EV chargers.

The renewable energy generation and battery systems to be installed at Broxden would also provide energy assets that could be incorporated into a smart energy system. PKC is currently working on the development of smart energy systems as part of a Can Do Innovation Challenge Fund / Innovate UK funded project, the Perth-SEN (Smart Energy Network) project. This has the aim of reducing the Council's energy costs, reducing the council's carbon footprint and developing income streams from the utilisation of battery storage assets.

All large public sector bodies such as councils, NHS, Police, MOD and Water Authorities have a similar set up. They all manage a diverse portfolio of land and properties dispersed over a geographic area. The aim of the Perth-SEN project is to manage the flows of energy within the PKC estate in which renewable energy production, energy storage and consumption are integrated and coordinated to optimise the usage of electricity and

maximise its value. The smart energy system would have the ability to generate, store, use and trade energy at distance, between unconnected council sites within the PKC estate.

The Broxden-Low Carbon Transport Hub project and the Perth-SEN project have the potential to provide a model of sustainable EV charging hubs and an energy management system that can sustainably support EV charging infrastructure and reduce total energy costs, carbon emissions and develop a new income stream for public organisations.

Both the Scottish and UK Governments have acknowledged the increasing strain on our existing energy infrastructure from our growing demand for energy. As well as the need to decarbonise our economy to help tackle climate change, both Governments and Ofgem have stated their commitment and support for the development of smart, flexible energy systems to help address these issues. The expansion of the low carbon transport market (primarily from electric vehicles) will continue to push up the demand for energy for many years to come. Projects such as this can help increase energy generation from local renewable sources, decrease energy demand from the grid, help decarbonise transportation and buildings and have the potential to relieve some of the financial pressures on hard-pressed public bodies.

We face a difficult future requiring radical change in how we generate and use energy. We still have much work to do to reduce the effects of climate change and will probably have to do much more than we currently envisage if we want to achieve our Perth and Kinross NetZero ambitions. •

Michael gave a presentation on this topic at the APSE Scotland Renewables and Energy Efficiency Advisory Group on 27 August 2019. The presentation is available to download from the APSE website.

For further information about how your council can become more energy efficient, please visit the APSE Energy web hub - the unrivalled online resource for all things municipal energy-related.



The 4 Key Questions

1

Do you know how your surplus vehicles and equipment are disposed of?

2

Do you know what your vehicles and equipment are really worth?

3

Are you getting the best possible returns for the taxpayer?

4

When did you last test the market?

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Boost your budget with a little innovation

New crematorium opens its doors in West Lindsey

West Lindsey District Council has invested more than £6 million into the development of Lea Fields Crematorium. The Crematorium is a state of the art facility and the first to be built in the district.



Fifteen months ago work started on building a much-needed crematorium to serve the people of West Lindsey and beyond.

Lea Fields Crematorium is the first facility to be built in the district and means local residents will have much shorter journeys, where previously they have had to travel significant distances to facilities outside the district.

Set in parkland near the village of Lea, just outside of Gainsborough the design of the site and materials used have been chosen to reflect the rural nature of the site and make the best use of the natural boundaries.

The geometric building has a beautiful double height spacious chapel which gives a sense of occasion and celebration, without a specific religious bias. This creates a flexible high performing space.

The spacious chapel seats 120 people with additional standing room both in the chapel and in the foyer. As well as a large Porte-Cochère (canopy) providing a generous covered area creating a focal point for visitors on arrival, Lea Fields has a covered walk way on exit leading to a covered area for viewing floral tributes essential for the British inclement weather. Lea Fields Crematorium offers different types of service and lengths to meet the differing needs of individuals.

West Lindsey District Council is the operator of the new facility and has invested more than £6 million into the development of this flagship building. Designing, developing and operating a crematorium is all quite new to the Authority. The Council appointed Deborah Balsdon as Crematorium Manager, who has more than 10 years' experience working at crematoriums in Lincolnshire. Deborah has worked closely with the ICCM and a number of ICCM members who have been invaluable in offering support and guidance throughout the process.

Marian Webb, ICCM Deputy President was able to join us on the day of the official opening. She said: "It is a wonderful, serene and open chapel. I was really impressed by the design and the detailing in the roof. Lea Fields Crematorium is set in such beautiful surroundings that any family who comes will be comforted by the serenity of the setting."

The building has been fitted with the latest filtration system, so there will be no smoke or odour

Deborah is responsible for the day to day running of the facility along with her experienced team and has been busy showing funeral directors, officiants and families around the new building. She said: "It's a privilege to be given the opportunity to work in such an amazing place. Lea Fields Crematorium is in such a lovely setting and provides a special place for relatives to say goodbye to their loved ones."

The new facility was officially opened by the Chairman of West Lindsey District Council, Cllr Steve England, who was joined by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Giles McNeill and the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Council, Ian Knowles and Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, John Burke.

Gainsborough MP, Sir Edward Leigh attended the event. He said: "It is a very impressive site and when all the landscaping has matured it will be a nice peaceful setting. Having a facility in West Lindsey will be welcomed by local people."

Cllr McNeill said: "The new building has been designed both internally and externally in such a way as to enhance the overall feeling of tranquillity and peace. The building has been fitted with the latest filtration system, so there will be no smoke or odour."

"I am particularly pleased that our facility has been delivered on time and on budget. It's been finished to a high standard by our building contractors Willmott Dixon. We are now able to start offering the much needed service to bereaved families both in and around West Lindsey."

The crematorium is getting excellent feedback from funeral directors who recently visited the site.

Stuart Kerr, director at Willmott Dixon, said: "I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to take part in creating this much-needed special place for people in and around Gainsborough."

"The scheme has positively impacted local communities during the build through our community engagement initiatives. Over the course of the project we have invested time, to the monetary equivalent of around £450k, in working with local schools and providing work experience to local people."



Pictured left to right: Marian Webb, ICCM Deputy President; Deborah Balsdon Crematorium Manager; John Burke, Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire; Chief Executive of West Lindsey District Council, Ian Knowles; Leader of West Lindsey District Council, Cllr Giles McNeill; Chairman of the Council, Cllr Steve England; Gainsborough MP, Sir Edward Leigh; Ward member for Lea, Cllr Jessie Milne.



"The facility boasts a modern design and has that little something special, in the form of a geometric Armstrong ceiling, which is the first of its kind in the UK."

Cllr Jessie Milne, ward member for Lea and a member of the Working Group for the project.

She said: "I am delighted that at long last we have a crematorium in West Lindsey and we can do so much more to help the people in their saddest of times. We are looking after the people that elected us to serve them. To see it complete today is absolutely beautiful. It is so peaceful, tranquil and open, and the sun is virtually in the building all day. Looking across at the fields it is relaxing and you feel a sense of calm. It is a great credit to everyone who has worked on this."

- *To find out more about the crematorium you can email: crematorium@west-lindsey.gov.uk or visit: leafieldscrematorium.co.uk or call: 01427 676500*

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Making the circular economy a reality in Wales



The Welsh Government has launched a consultation on its plans to make Wales the world's top recycling nation; helping it become a "truly circular economy". APSE Wales Principal Advisor Rob Bailey provides an overview of the consultation.

The stated aim of the Welsh Government is to become zero waste with net zero emissions. The consultation focuses on six core themes which are designed to underpin existing work within Wales on the circular economy.

In 2018-19, Wales had a household recycling rate reported to be 60.7% with a municipal waste recycling rate of 62.8%, the fourth highest rate in the world behind Germany, Austria and South Korea. This seems to support the Welsh Government's Collections Blueprint, and, not unexpectedly, the plan now is to build upon and maximise recycling outcomes. Of particular concern is food waste where there is a commitment to maximising food waste collections. Alongside this sits an aim to require recycling in all non-domestic settings to be separated in the way that households already do. There is also a commitment to develop infrastructure to transform the recycling of commercial, industrial and construction waste, as well as develop additional infrastructure to treat materials currently not widely treated such as nappies and mattresses. To achieve this the plan is to put in further minimum statutory recycling targets for local authorities beyond 2025 and improve recycling consistency.

There is also a commitment to bolster prevention and re-use; switching discarded materials thought of as waste to be considered a resource. This includes use of new technologies – for example apps to minimise food waste – and the discouragement of unnecessary consumption in the first place. Where goods are purchased there is a commitment to both prioritise the donation of public sector goods at their end of life to other countries that cannot access equipment, and where the public sector is the purchaser of goods that they are sustainably sourced. In particular, public sector construction projects ought to produce less waste during construction, during any change of use and at the end of the project/life.

Decarbonising supply chains is a key area of the consultation with a commitment to materials innovation; including the full environmental and social impacts of raw materials mined and processed in other parts of the world. This includes the energy and greenhouse gas emissions used to extract, process and transport them. The paper recommits to working across all governments to address marine environment issues such as litter and micro-plastics, and a ban on single-use plastics. However, it does recognise some uses of plastic, such as in medical settings, will remain important. There is also a commitment to develop more recycling infrastructure in Wales and develop markets for recycled plastics.

Recognising the impact of government intervention levers such as funding, legislation, taxation and procurement are all suggested as a means to maximise effect for the strategy; specifically, reference is made to the effectiveness of the carrier bag charge and ban on microbeads as examples of where interventions have worked. Newly gained fiscal responsibility for measures such as the Landfill Disposals 'The Better Jobs Closer to Home' projects in paper recycling and re-manufactured paint are also cited as examples.

Reflecting proposals in Zero Waste Scotland and the Resource and Waste Strategy, there is a proposal to develop an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging and to develop an EPR approach for additional products such as tyres, textiles, bulky wastes (for example furniture, mattresses and carpets) and products used in construction. A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers is also cited – this has already formed a major part of the proposals in Scotland and in England. APSE would argue that such schemes need cross-boundary consistency to work to best effect. There is also a proposal to produce a Litter Prevention Plan for Wales, and continue to deliver the Flytipping Strategy "A Fly-tipping Free Wales".

In terms of enabling communities and businesses, the suggestion is that Wales can build on the considerable momentum already in place to encourage more communities and businesses to take positive action around resource efficiency, waste prevention, re-use and recycling, including the eco-schools programme. There is also a clear reference to behaviour change by consumers - with information being a key issue - to ensure consumers can buy green and a commitment to support manufacturers, particularly the food and drink industry, to plan for forthcoming reforms to packaging and producer responsibility changes.

Finally there is a commitment to investing in infrastructure with continued investment to ensure that Wales is ready for the transition to a zero-waste, resource efficient, low carbon nation. This includes additional waste management infrastructure to ensure a maximisation of the returns from additional collected materials. This will include plans to modernise the way collections operate; reducing transport related carbon emissions, improving air quality by introducing zero emission vehicles and investing in the infrastructure to renewably charge and power these vehicles.

- APSE will be coordinating a response to the consultation. To get involved email Rob Bailey on rbailey@apse.org.uk

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