

apse

# Showcasing excellence in Belfast

A roundup of  
#APSE23

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Cllr Jacqui Burnett

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# A message from APSE National Chair 2023/2024

Cllr Jacqui Burnett

Colleagues, I am absolutely honoured to be entrusted by you to be the APSE National Chair for this coming year. I have been involved with APSE on many levels over many years. It is an organisation that is very close to my heart.

Before I set out my own vision for the coming year I must, however, pay tribute to my predecessor Alderman Beth Adger. Beth leaves her term of office having overseen some big changes in APSE, with the appointment of a new Chief Executive, a new establishment structure and the development of APSE's first ever ESG strategy that will remain at the heart of our approach for many years to come.

So, thank you Beth and thank you also to Ellen Cavanagh - our National Secretary for the past year - for her wisdom and support to this great organisation. I also want to say thank you to Colin Rowland for agreeing to act as my National Secretary.

I want to take this opportunity to set out my vision for the coming year, and my personal commitments to drive APSE forward, on behalf of our member councils across the UK.

In recent years we have become accustomed to the language of levelling up - but this will not happen if we fail to address the abject poverty that some in our communities' face. Inadequate funding means that local services will not be able to address the basic needs of those that use them.

I am sure that every councillor reading this, regardless of your political persuasion, will understand that when we are out campaigning, the questions on the doorstep are not about how local government finance works, but about bins, fly-tipping, potholes and street cleansing. The public rarely see the connection between our funding and what happens on the ground when they open their front door. That needs to change.

As an organisation dedicated to the frontline, I want my term of office to mark a campaigning year in which we can make the connection between the money that local councils need and what happens to those

potholes, bin collections, parks and leisure centres. Because these services matter.

I am old enough to remember the days of municipal pride, when councils were proud to invest in local community assets. It was not a matter of weighing up every pound spent but looking at the community benefits that such investments brought about.

Cutting funding to community assets such as leisure centres, which play an important role in the health and wellbeing of entire communities, is short-termism and simply wrong. The combination of austerity and the Covid-19 pandemic had led some councils to be cautious, to sell off assets and put off or deny new investment.

I disagree with this.

Firstly, we must refocus our energy on frontline services. It is our USP. Local government finance has hollowed out many of these valuable services, which sadly lack resilience. I want the APSE secretariat to redouble its efforts on research, briefings and support to our frontline services across all areas, from waste, parks, school meals, highways, transport and leisure. They all matter.

Secondly, I want to ensure that our approach to campaigning on local government finance tells some home truths. The way in which we fund our local councils is unfair, unjust and in need of reform. If needs-based budgeting is good enough for the NHS, then why not us? We should never accept that our services fall below acceptable levels, we need funding that guarantees a basic level of service wherever you are in the UK.

Thirdly - following on from that issue of finance - we know that in recent years, central governments across the UK have tried to face both ways on commercialisation. On the one hand, pulling back from proper funding of local councils, and on the other changing direction on commercialisation, suggesting that councils should withdraw.

We can still have sensible and measured approaches to investments, trading and

charging in local government services. It is something that has always been there, and if such approaches help in the regeneration of our town centres and high streets, we need to grasp the opportunities because there are few alternatives left if councils themselves step away.

Finally, I want to see an ambitious approach to investing in legacy assets so that we can secure them for future generations. Of course, the obvious asset class is more social housing. Without decent, affordable homes we are letting down generations to come. But beyond that are our community centres, leisure centres, and our transport hubs. These are all assets that will support local people and the social fabric of local communities.

I want my term of office to be recognised as one which places municipal assets and municipal pride at the heart of our approach to supporting future generations. Because if we don't do this as local councils then who will?

**“We should never accept that our services fall below acceptable levels, we need funding that guarantees a basic level of service wherever you are in the UK.”**



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# Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events

## Cllr Jacqui Burnett Elected as APSE National Chair 2023-2024

Cllr Jacqui Burnett of Luton Council has been elected as APSE's National Chair for 2023-2024.

Cllr Burnett takes over the Chair's role from Alderman Beth Adger MBE of Mid and East Antrim Council. Cllr Burnett said: "I am absolutely honoured to be entrusted by you to be the APSE National Chair for this coming year."

Cllr Burnett will be supported in her year of office by Colin Rowland, Corporate Director Communities, Isle of Wight Council, who was elected as APSE's National Secretary for 2022-2023.

You can hear more about Cllr Burnett's vision for APSE on page 3.

## Wayne Wonder : A (semi)farewell to APSE's Wayne Priestley

A well deserved 'almost' retirement awaits APSE's Wayne Priestley.

Wayne has been APSE's lead on our environmental portfolio since January 2015, having joined APSE following a local government career at Salford City Council. When Wayne first arrived at APSE, his obvious knowledge and enthusiasm for all things in the local environment shone across our organisation, reinvigorating our member colleagues in Parks, Streetscene and Waste Services with his infectious 'can do' attitude. Always quick to point out the impact of funding decisions on frontline services his message has not been one of despair but one of extolling the virtues and value of the local environment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic Wayne championed the role of local parks; the saviour, as he put it, of our local communities, with parks providing a place to walk and enjoy nature or to exercise or spend time with family and friends when regulations allowed. However, Wayne was also quick to point out that parks do not run themselves, pressing the case with Government departments, whenever he had the opportunity, to remind them of the need for revenue and not just capital 'vanity' projects to keep local municipal parks functioning.

It is fair to say that Wayne also had one or two faults, namely when it came to IT! It is no secret that our IT support costs seemed to go on a bit of an upward trajectory... it appears that to Wayne a mouse would fall into only one of two categories: Dormouse and Harvest Mouse. But never anything remotely related to a computer! Luckily, such was the affection for Wayne that our much more IT literate younger cohort of staff were happy to hover and help!

Wayne leaves APSE with a tremendous legacy of campaigning on local environmental matters, not least his passion for biodiversity and ecological awareness. Through Wayne, APSE has led on responses to the crisis that we face in terms of species losses, with unsympathetic developments and habitat destruction, for plant and animal life. His campaigns on allotments and access to local food growing have featured regularly on the BBC and in the national press including the Times and the Guardian newspapers. Whilst Wayne has promised his family a few weeks of rest we are delighted that Wayne will still remain



Wayne Priestley bids farewell to the APSE team in Manchester.

involved with APSE in the near future, with a return to his original career in teaching Wayne will be joining Fiona Sutton-Wilson and the APSE Training Team, tutoring on exciting new courses on biodiversity, rewilding and other environmental training sessions.

So good luck in your retirement Wayne and we are glad it is not so much goodbye as a 'see you later'.

## BICs and the city

Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor, attended the British Institute of Cleaning Science Conference and Awards in Birmingham on Thursday 21 September 2023.

The Conference featured presentations from suppliers and leading industry experts, including the Chair of the British Cleaning Council (BCC), Delia Cannings who provided an industry update, reviewed the work of the BCC, and set the scene for next steps and new projects. The awards celebrated the cleaning industry's best individuals and companies.

## Sticking our NACC out

APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines, addressed the NACC (National Association of Care Caterers) annual training and development event on local government finance. Mo highlighted that, with a reported £13 Billion deficit in Social Care funding, the provision of 'Meals on Wheels' services to older people and vulnerable residents has been subjected to year on year reductions as councils grapple to provide statutory social care services, at the expense of a prevention service in the form of welfare catering.



Delia Cannings, BCC Chair, gives the conference an update on recent developments within her organisation.



## APSE gives evidence at Holyrood

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive and Cllr Lynne Short, APSE Scotland Chair, were invited to give evidence to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee of the Scottish Parliament

The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee of the Scottish Parliament invited APSE to provide oral evidence to its pre-budget scrutiny on workforce planning issues. APSE Scotland Chair, Cllr Lynne Short, and APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines, attended to present findings to the committee, which was held on the 19 September at Holyrood, based on APSE's survey and research work on the local government workforce.

Key statistics, reported to the panel of MSPs, included: 76% of local government employers in Scotland believe pay in the private sector is the main reason people leave the employment of the local council, comparing that to 82% on a UK wide basis; 45% of Scotland's local authorities have already upskilled or multi-skilled staff with a further 25% considering this approach. The UK wide figure is 61%. However, severe shortages remain in areas like HGV drivers, with just under 50% of respondent councils reporting this to be an area of severe pressure.

The Committee also heard APSE call for a General Power of Competence for Scottish local councils to end decades of uncertainty on trading and charging powers. This APSE argued, would align Scotland with their counterparts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who all have a General Power of Competence.

## APSE Building and Housing Apprentice Awards 2023

APSE is delighted to announce the winners of our Building and Housing Apprentice Awards 2023. The Awards took place during the APSE Building Maintenance Seminar at Oulton Hall in Leeds on Thursday 5 October 2023. Congratulations to this year's winners:

- Todd Arthur, Fife Council (Building Skills)
- Charlie White, South Ayrshire (Mechanical and Electrical)
- Scott Loosemore, Fife Council (Professional Services)

For the full list of the speakers, finalists and photographs, visit the APSE website.

## Scotland

### APSE in Aberdeen for the SNP Conference

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

[L to R] Cllr Jacqui Burnett, APSE National Chair; Lindsay Airey, APSE Head of Business Resources; and Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor, fly the flag for local government outside the APSE stand at the Labour Conference in Liverpool.

### We're back in Liverpool

On 1-4 October at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, APSE hosted a strategic forum – chaired by Cllr Jacqui Burnett, APSE National Chair and addressed by Chief Executive Mo Baines – focusing on the impact of hollowed out councils which face the prospect of having to provide statutory only services because of S.114 notices. The discussion focused on what the future holds for local government finance and what local councils would wish to see from a new government.

Those in attendance included: Cllr Rob Stewart, Leader of Swansea Council; Cllr Anthony Hunt, Leader of Torfan Council, Cllr Huw David, Leader of Bridgend Council; Cllr Baggy Shanker, Leader of Derby City Council; Cllr Mark Pengelly, APSE Central Region Chair; Cllr Jacqui Burnett, APSE National Chair and Cllr Andrea Lewis, Deputy Leader of Swansea and APSE Wales Chair.



Cllr Lynne Short, APSE Scotland Chair and Louise Melville, Principal Advisor at COSLA.  
Cllr Short and Cllr Katie Hagmann, Dumfries and Galloway, COSLA Resources Spokesperson at the SNP Party Conference.



[L to R] Alderman Beth Ager MBE, Tommy Nicholl MBE, APSE Chief Executive Mo Baines

## APSE at COSLA

On 28 and 29 September, APSE exhibited at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Conference (COSLA) in Edinburgh. APSE Scotland's Chair, Cllr Lynne Short and Louise Melville, Principal Advisor for Scotland, were on hand throughout the conference to showcase APSE's range of services and advocacy.

## Summit special in Glasgow

Over 3-4 October 2023, APSE held its annual Scottish Energy Summit in the city of Glasgow. A crucial date in the calendar for officers and councillors keen to keep abreast of a vast and innovative agenda – the energy team covered a range of topics through presentations, workshops and panel discussions. The summit gave a chance for delegates from across the UK to share important insights and best practice from their respective areas, supporting everyone on the path to achieving net zero.

Presentations are now available to download from the APSE website.

## Wales

### APSE Gower Power: Swansea

On 5 September, APSE Energy held an event in the beautiful coastal city of Swansea, free for APSE Energy members. With a range of speakers from across Wales and a particular focus on the work being done in the host city to reduce carbon emissions and reach net zero, delegates received valuable information and best practice examples. Speakers included: Steve Robinson, Head of Commissioning and Procurement at Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan Councils; Simon Brennan, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Chris Cutforth, Swansea City Council, Matt Zealey, Regional Sales Manager, Kensa Engineering and Jo Patterson, Director of Research, Welsh School of Architecture.

## Northern Ireland

### Special Award for Tommy Nicholl MBE

At the APSE Service Awards ceremony in Titanic Belfast on 14 September, Tommy was awarded the APSE Lifetime Achievement Special Recognition Award 2023. First elected in May 1981, Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE served as Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council for two terms, during 2000/01 and 2005/06. He was elected as the National Chair of APSE for 2022-2023.

After receiving the Award, Tommy said: "I've enjoyed every moment of my time in local government and working with APSE. My goal has always been to secure a prosperous and sustainable future for all citizens and I'm proud of the accomplishments made over the years by those I've worked alongside and I know that the future of local government is in safe hands."

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## APSE Southern Region Parks and Open Spaces Seminar 2023

Bees, Trees & Communities



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# Winning in Wigan!

After their triumph at the APSE Service Awards 2023, we pull back the curtain to reveal how Wigan became Overall Council of the Year.

Across Wigan Council – from town halls to libraries, depots to leisure centres – the #TeamWigan ethos is the golden thread that inspires our service delivery.

It's the foundation of the workforce culture, built up over the past decade, helping staff to try new ways of working for the benefit of our residents.

Inspired by an asset-based approach, it helps the workforce to be an active part of their community.

Staff feel empowered to go beyond just identifying a problem or deficit and simply fixing it, instead they are encouraged to connect residents to their interests and things that make them happy.

It's an approach that shines through the New Ways of Working for Howe Bridge Leisure Centre project that secured the Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative category, and likewise across the other shortlisted nominations.

For Howe Bridge, the idea of a 'traditional' sports/leisure centre was reimagined, catering for a wider scope of services and, ultimately, increasing its impact on community health and wellbeing.

It could not have been achieved without the help of the borough's community and volunteer-based partner organisations, which is another key feature of the #TeamWigan approach; the entire borough, its people, organisations, groups and clubs are part of the team, not just the local authority.

To help promote and embed the principles of #TeamWigan across all council staff and partner organisations the local authority hosts '#TeamWigan Experience' days with the third iteration opening later this year.

Likewise, within the organisation all staff have regular Listening Into Action (LIA) sessions with the leader of the council and chief executive, meanwhile, managers across our services are encouraged to structure their one-to-one development meetings with colleagues around the #TeamWigan principles.

Leader of Wigan Council, Councillor David Molyneux MBE, said: "To be shortlisted in a handful of awards and able to win two, including the overall Council of the Year title, is something that we certainly do not take for granted, especially given the competition at the APSE awards.

"We are all aware that we are going through challenging times for local government and our service delivery has been impacted by not only the ongoing repercussions of budgetary cuts, but with the Covid-19 pandemic followed by the cost-of-living crisis.

"I believe this recognition for our approach speaks volumes about the attitude of our frontline staff and how we have been able to prioritise the outstanding services to residents through embracing different approaches.

"We are able to work with our partners and communities to deliver on what we know is important to our residents, through recognising the importance of happiness, of feeling connected and being valued.

"Myself and Alison (Mckenzie-Folan, chief executive) look forward to our regular LIA sessions as they're a perfect forum to have ongoing conversations with our teams, to find out what matters to them and to share best practice.

"This is reflected in how our services then interact with our communities. Our frontline staff are the eyes and ears of the organisation and the feedback helps us shape our approach.

"Despite being among the worst hit financially by austerity measures, we have not cut frontline services and through our innovative approaches we have been able to invest in transformation to constantly improve our services."

Of course, winning the APSE Council of the Year title is a source of pride for the council, having been nominated in previous years.

But it's important to highlight the dedication of our frontline teams who were shortlisted this year, such as our Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting service and Waste Management and Recycling service, in the Frontline Services Teams of the Year category, and the Digital Integration Flats Audit project in the Best Workforce Initiative category.



*Pictured: David Molyneux MBE, Council Leader*

We believe our record at the APSE Awards in recent years shows a level of consistency to also be proud of, but given the challenges facing local government, we're certainly not resting on our laurels.

Some of you will be aware of The Deal approach we have had here in Wigan Borough over the last decade.

Our next step is to build on The Deal's legacy and redefine a New Era for Wigan Borough, something that we have been extensively consulting on with our communities over recent months.

It will help the council consider how we can embed our behaviours and principles even further and focus even more intently on tackling inequality and poverty through a community wealth building programme.

We have recently announced an exciting education and skills partnership with Edge Hill University and local colleges to create a health and care academy, which is already transforming the opportunities and careers available for young people in our borough. Edge Hill has recently been confirmed as the Civic University of Wigan Borough.

And in the health sector, we have new responsibilities through an integrated care partnership – and we are committed in moving that system to a more preventative model that will improve public health and help individuals and communities achieve their full economic and social potential as well as reduce demand on acute settings.

Several of our town centres are embarking on exciting regeneration schemes, we're embracing digital transformation, utilising smart technology more so than ever before and our climate agenda – the council has set a target to become carbon neutral by 2038 – remains at the forefront of our policies.

There are exciting times ahead for the council, partners and communities across Wigan Borough and we appreciate our support from fellow authorities and APSE.

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# Diagnosing the future at East Riding of Yorkshire Council

*Brightly's Managed Services help ERYC unlock new opportunities to streamline processes and maximise operational efficiencies*

## Challenges:

- Migrating the Council's use of Confirm™ Enterprise Asset Management Solution from a hosted to cloud-based platform.

## Results:

- Unburdening the Council's IT system
- A more efficient cloud-based solution, enabling streamlined management of ERYC's public assets across all its operational departments.

## Vitals:

- Population: 343,200
- Roads: 3,533km
- Other assets: 40,000 – streetlights, parks, trees, hedges, verges

When East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) took the decision to migrate to Brightly Confirm™ Enterprise Asset Management Solution from a hosted to cloud-based platform, little did they know that it would have such a positive and powerful impact, opening up new opportunities for further improving operations and introducing best practice processes throughout many of the Council's departments. The new Confirm OnDemand solution allowed Brightly to undertake a full diagnostic review of Council usage and support their internal teams to achieve even greater efficiencies across the organisation.

Brightly Confirm is an enterprise asset management solution specifically designed to offer a smart, cost-effective way to manage public infrastructure assets, by giving organisations instant data insight to make informed decisions on repair, maintenance, and investment for critical assets against tightly constrained budgets and timescales all within one secure repository.

Situated on the East coast in the North of England, East Riding of Yorkshire covers an area of approximately 930 sq. miles and is home to a population of over 343,200 people spread across 26 wards and 171 parishes. As well as supporting its local residents and business community, the Council is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of 3,533km of roads and related roadside assets including gullies, nearly 40,000 streetlights, parks, trees, hedges and verges.

A long-term user of Confirm, ERYC has been using the digital asset management software in its highways, forestry, and civil engineering departments for over 20 years to keep track of its range of public

assets, capturing and storing detailed records of their location, physical condition, valuation, and operational requirements.

At East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Confirm was historically hosted by the Council's own IT team, with each department using the software in different ways and to differing degrees. Around two years ago, the Council took the decision to upgrade the software and migrate the solution to the 'OnDemand' cloud-based version. This move was primarily to ease the burden on the Council's IT department of maintaining the system by making use of the automated update facilities, thereby freeing up its technical team to concentrate on other projects.

As part of the migration project to the cloud-based solution, with the Council's permission, Brightly was able to access the Council's data, and undertake a free and comprehensive diagnostic review of how it was using the software. This included examining legacy processes and operational procedures, such as how data was captured, utilised, processed and stored across all its operational departments.

Daniel Mills, Account Director at Brightly Software explains, "Given the scale of the task, the review took several weeks for us to process all the data and examine how the Council had been using Confirm over the years, before presenting our findings back to the Council. We were then in a position to highlight a wide range of under-exploited opportunities that would enable the Council to streamline existing procedures, introduce new enhanced 'best practices', and ultimately, help them unlock greater value from its technology investment."

As a result of the review findings, ERYC engaged Brightly's Managed Services, giving it access to the company's experienced consultants, with both remote and onsite support to help the council's own team implement an agreed list of initiatives. These include process change, system auditing, review business processes, introducing 'best practices', improving user experience and system knowledge through training and encourage greater update of under-utilised facilities. In addition, to ensure projects keep moving ahead and remain on track, a service progress report is published, updated, and reviewed by both parties at regular meetings.

Martin Langler, IT Administrator, Digital, Change & Technology at ERYC, who has worked with the Confirm solution for many years and is currently working with its Managed Services consultants, is particularly enthusiastic about the expert support and new opportunities available to the Council.

Says Martin, "The in-depth review undertaken by Brightly, the new opportunities it has uncovered, and taking on the Managed Services contract which gives us the onsite support we need to help us achieve these opportunities is most beneficial thing we've ever done. Prior to signing up to the Managed Services programme,

had to be directed to a remote helpdesk. Now, we have access to the best advice pretty much on tap. Our Brightly consultants understand our system, know exactly what we want to achieve and how best we can achieve this, and by working onsite together as part of a cohesive team, we can cover so much ground and get so much work done."

Jordan Cross, Systems Engineer at ERYC's Highways Technical Services plays a key role in working with Brightly's Managed Services team on implementation and delivery and has witnessed first-hand the many benefits it is bringing to the Council and his own staff members. "Over the many years we have been using Confirm, inevitably a mismatch had developed in the way different users and different departments were using the solution, so there was definitely room for improvement," says Cross. "Our asset management solution offers huge potential, so it's about looking at what we are doing and what we can do better. Now, with our Managed Services contract in place, we have the expert resources to hand, allowing us to tap into their wide-ranging experience to help us deliver improvements and ensure all of our 400 plus users can really maximise use of the technology."

Jordan is also delighted with the positive impact working alongside such experience and knowledge has had on his own young team. "Not only have they helped us implement so many process improvements, but they have also played a significant role in the overall upskilling and motivation of my team. This is so valuable – not just for the Council but for the team members' own personal development."

Ivan McMaster, Highways Technical Services Manager is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Confirm's Managed Services at ERYC. And while he is delighted with the procedural upgrades, and improvements that are being made, he is also aware of the importance of managing change internally and bringing the Council's employees with him to truly make the most of what the solution has to offer.

"The team at Brightly is helping us identify and implement best practices, closed-loop circular systems and new approaches to working that ultimately delivers efficiencies in our ways of working. We now have the live tools and working models we need to demonstrate to all Confirm users in the Council, the power of having access to meaningful data and the benefit it brings in helping them make more informed strategic planning and budgeting decisions going forward – which is essential when responsible for both public resources and funding."

### **About Brightly Software**

Brightly, a Siemens company, is the global leader in intelligent asset management solutions, enabling organisations to transform the performance of their assets. Brightly's sophisticated cloud-based platform leverages more than 20 years of data to deliver predictive insights that help users through the key phases of the entire asset lifecycle. More than 12,000 clients of every size worldwide depend on Brightly's complete suite of intuitive software – including CMMS, EAM, Strategic Asset Management, IoT Remote Monitoring, Sustainability and Community Engagement. Paired with award-winning training, support and consulting services, Brightly helps light the way to a bright future with smarter assets and sustainable communities. For more information, visit [www.brightlysoftware.com](http://www.brightlysoftware.com).

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## New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome **Jaama**



Jaama, in partnership with its vehicle and asset fleet customers, is focused on promoting best practice, raising industry standards and providing practical solutions to ensure fleet operators meet their health and safety responsibilities under compliance regulations.

Jaama has become an APSE Approved Partner as it continues to develop closer relationships with local authorities and utility companies to help them manage their cars, commercial vehicles, and plant more efficiently.

APSE works with over 300 UK councils and Jaama has received partner status because of being 'synonymous with excellence' in local frontline services.

It comes as Jaama celebrates the on-boarding of its 50th local authority onto its Key2 asset management platform.

Jaama's Key2 software helps councils and utilities optimise safety and compliance levels for both vehicles and drivers whilst optimising fleet performance, maximising efficiencies, controlling costs, and reducing risks.

Vehicle reliability is a key focus for these organisations as they keep their specialist vehicle fleet on the road to ensure continuity of key public services. Regular vehicle maintenance lies at the heart of vehicle reliability and Jaama's new Key2 Maintenance Exchange platform has been developed with this in mind. It revolutionises the exchange of information between fleet management companies, maintenance providers and fleet operators.

The 'end to end' system allows seamless booking, authorisation, invoicing, and auditing of vehicle maintenance work, whilst ensuring all documentation is stored and managed electronically within the platform.

It streamlines the maintenance management function including related documentation – typically MoT certifications, vehicle inspection sheets, servicing, and routine maintenance documents.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, said: "I am very pleased to welcome Jaama to the APSE family. In a time of real strain on local authority finances, the services provided by Jaama that help councils to maximise value for money and efficiency are crucial to helping deliver for local areas."










Find out more on how Key2 manages fleets including Anglian Water, John Lewis Partnership, Essex County Council, Mitie, Falkirk Council, Rochdale Borough Council, Stirling Council and Skanska [www.jaama.com/case-studies/](http://www.jaama.com/case-studies/)



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# From data to service improvement

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# Annual Seminar 2023

## Report back

*A quick look at this year's excellent speakers*

## Service Awards

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

A big thank you to our overall sponsor:



**Commercial  
Services Group**

# Annual Seminar Report Back

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



The Assembly Building, Belfast

The warm and welcoming city of Belfast – currently undergoing a significant city centre and waterfront regeneration development – was the location of this year's APSE Annual Seminar.

Hosted in the historic Assembly Building, which was built in 1905 in the style of a Scottish Baronial Castle, over 500 delegates, exhibitors and speakers from across the UK made the journey to Northern Ireland, hearing from a range of experts on the opportunities and challenges currently facing the local government sector.

## Opening Symposium: Across the UK – How Councils Deliver

The first day was opened by outgoing APSE National Chair, Alderman Beth Adger MBE, twice Deputy Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council from 2019-2020 and 2022-2023. Cllr Adger wished delegates a happy and productive conference.

Alison Allen, Chief Executive of NILGA, opened the first session looking at the future role of local government in Northern Ireland, emphasising the need for sustainable local government funding and meaningful devolution of powers.

Sharon Davies, Head of Education at the WLGA, followed with a detailed look at the interventions being made by Welsh local government to achieve net zero targets. She stressed the importance of training to build the knowledge and expertise needed to meet the aim of decarbonisation.

Next up was Jane O'Donnell, Chief Executive of COSLA, who presented the organisation's plan for local government – which included the strengthening of local democracy, securing sustainable sources of funding, improving the wellbeing of local communities, and enhancing education and support for children. Jane also touched on the importance of a just transition to a net zero economy; ensuring that support for the most vulnerable in our society is entrenched in policy.

The final speaker of Session One was Cllr Abi Brown, the Improvement and Innovation Board Chair at the LGA, who joined virtually to discuss the challenges of finances and resources with the panel. Cllr Brown reflected on the challenge of rising demands for local government and a lack of solid commitment across the parties to

provide additional funding. However, looking to the future, she saw potential for greater agency from the levelling up agenda and an unprecedented chance to ensure local governments are recognised as “not just the agents of Westminster”.

**“The trials and tribulations of the last few years show that local government is more than ever the backbone of communities and places.”**

*Councillor Abi Brown*

## The vision for the future of frontline services

Session Two began with Mo Baines, Chief Executive of APSE, presenting the association's vision for the future of local government. She shared a passionate call to action on strengthening the role of councils as 'stewards of place', facilitating developments and narrowing inequalities in our communities. Mo reflected on the 'unequal misery' caused by funding inequalities and emphasised the need for a total reboot of local government finance.

Our next speaker, Andrew Donaldson, the Executive Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods for Knowsley Council, discussed his authority's ambitions for 2030. Detailing some of the fantastic work already carried out in Knowsley – such as the development of run-down greenspaces into those that are vibrant and well used – Andrew shared his attitude of 'deprivation as a factor, not an excuse' in local government decision making.

## Future Communities

Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive of the Centre for Local Economics Strategies (CLES), kicked off Session Three with a discussion on a new toolkit designed by APSE and CLES to help councils maximise the socioeconomic impact of the levelling up fund. As well as providing an analysis of the funding streams and timelines for their distribution, the toolkit includes practical action on how local economies can be better served by approaches which place social value principles at the heart of levelling up developments. The toolkit is available to download for



[L-R] Alison Allen, Chief Executive of NILGA; Sharon Davies, Head of Education at WLGA, Jane O'Donnell, Chief Executive of COSLA; Mo Baines, Chief Executive of APSE.

free from the APSE website.

Up next, we heard from Mike Greene, Chief Executive of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, who spoke on the timely issue of town centre regeneration and transformation. He emphasised the importance of understanding the 'fabric' of the local area when making decisions, as well as focusing on the needs of young people and making best use of partnerships.

Closing day one, Grainia Long, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, talked sustainable housing development strategies. She detailed the Executive's ongoing future-proof housing retrofit, that seeks to reduce fuel poverty and deliver net zero through a 'fabric first' approach. Speaking passionately about the case for educational empowerment, Grainia explained the Executive's project to help householders take full advantage of new sustainable technologies and solutions.

## Strategic forums - Future proofing the frontline

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

Forum 1: Refuse, recycling and street scene

Forum 2: Leisure, health and wellbeing.  
*Kindly sponsored by Alliance Leisure*

Forum 3: Parks, horticulture, cemeteries and crematoria  
*Kindly sponsored by Obitus/Vivedia*

Forum 4: Technical services – Highways, transport and fleet

Forum 5: Climate change and renewables  
*Kindly sponsored by Dynamon*

## Climate Change and the Ecological Emergency

Opening the Day Two, John Walsh, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, showcased examples of regeneration projects across the city and how they are helping to cement Belfast's place as a city of the future. He illustrated the city's ongoing and future development plans, such as strong public, private and community partnerships, regeneration of the Belfast waterfront and major city centre building projects.

**"Net zero and sustainability need to be at the heart of our city planning."** *John Walsh, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council*



*Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, discusses levelling up in Session Three, Day Two.*



*[L-R] John Walsh, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council; Patrick Allcorn, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Durham County Council; Natasha Dix, Strategic Manager for the Environment - Isle of Wight Council and Councillor Jacqui Burnett, APSE National Chair.*

After John, we were joined by Patrick Allcorn, Head of Local Net Zero at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, where he provided an overview from a UK Government policy perspective and considered how local authorities could facilitate energy efficiency more effectively.

Continuing the theme of local energy plans, Andrew Frew, Technical Innovation Manager at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, detailed his organisation's efforts to implement low carbon heating systems in its housing stock. Andrew explained how sustainably fuelled heating systems were becoming cheaper and more viable, as investment in insulation and renewable energy sources gathers pace.

Closing Day Two's first session was Natasha Dix, the Strategic Manager for the Environment for Isle of Wight Council, who discussed the impressive steps her council has made in turning household waste into electricity and heat. For Natasha, using energy from waste is key to confronting the challenges and supporting the opportunities of a net-zero future. She said that by viewing our rubbish differently, the plan could provide a comprehensive waste management solution whilst also creating a brighter, cleaner future.

## A Frontline Fit for the Future

Future-proofing the capabilities, effectiveness and workforce of local government was the focus of our final seminar session.

Charlene Stoops, Deputy Chief Executive at Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Council, opened with an examination of the importance of data in improving frontline service delivery. She emphasised the importance of continuous improvement through performance monitoring, drawing a strong connection between effective decision making and the availability of quality data.

Following this, a fascinating discussion on instilling flexibility within the public sector workforce and ensuring that future education programmes adequately prepare workers for the reality of public sector management was led by Shailen Papat, Assistant Professor in Public Policy and Management at the University of Birmingham. He gave an insight into the science behind behaviour change and learning techniques, as well as looking at how syllabuses could be altered to improve resilience in the workplace.

Steve Wilson, from event sponsor Commercial Services Group, closed the final session with a presentation on the importance of an Employer Value Proposition in tackling the local government workforce crisis. He drew attention to APSE research which found that during the years of austerity, councils lost around 25% of their overall workforce. Steve stressed the lessons learnt from the pandemic, seeing emotional intelligence, flexibility and making use of new technology as ways to improve the workforce outlook.

## The Keynote Address

Our final session - the Keynote Address - was delivered by Lord Gary Porter CBE, who was the Leader of South Holland District Council for 20 years and was elevated to the House of Lords in 2015. Lord Porter, drawing on his years of experience, spoke on the challenges ahead for local government, particularly regarding housing provision, and how regardless of any potential outcome at the next general election, councils will have to continue to share innovation and best practice with each other to ensure they are ready to meet demands head-on.

If you would like to view any of the speakers' presentations, please visit the APSE website. Alternatively, email Megan Butterworth on [mbutterworth@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbutterworth@apse.org.uk)



Lord Gary Porter CBE delivers the keynote address.



Cllr Richard Wright, Leader of North Kesteven.



Outgoing APSE National Chair, Alderman Beth Adger MBE.



Nick Bridle, Customer Success Manager, Dynamon.



[L-R] Adrian Philips, Chief Executive, Preston City Council and Colin Rowland, Corporate Director, Communities, Isle of Wight Council



Natasha Dix, Service Director Waste Environment and Planning, Isle of Wight Council



[L-R] Charlene Stoops, Deputy Chief Executive, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Shailen Popat, Director of the MSc in Public Management; Steve Wilson, Commercial Director, Commercial Services Group and Cllr Lynne Short, APSE Scotland Chair.

# Annual Service Awards 2023

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Celebrating outstanding achievement and innovation  
within local government service delivery



## Best Workforce Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Unison



### Workforce Refresh Program

Inverclyde Council's 'Workforce Refresh Programme' tackled the dual issue of an aging workforce and low youth employment. The programme allowed employees that had attained the age of 55 to leave the Council's employment with early access to their pension. This then

### Finalists

East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Fife Council  
Inverclyde Council  
Neath Port Talbot Council  
South Ayrshire Council  
Wigan Council

### Winner: Inverclyde Council

produced vacant internal opportunities allowing existing employees to advance, whilst creating vacant entry level posts aimed at bringing younger people into the workforce. This programme saw positive internal progression and an increase in young workers employed by the Council.

## Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Lendology CIC



### Energy Efficiency Improvements in council housing stock

With a little under 6,000 social homes under its direct control, Gravesham BC faces a unique challenge in meeting its net zero target of 2030. These can only be met through innovative solutions, and the Council's Housing Energy and Sustainability team has excelled in identifying a range of

### Finalists

Aberdeen City Council  
Breckland Council  
Cambridge City Council  
Gravesham Borough Council  
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership  
Wrexham County Borough Council

### Winner: Gravesham Borough Council

energy efficiency measures and sourcing funding to implement them. These sector-leading projects are driving carbon reduction and saving tenants money at a time when the cost of living crisis is biting hard.

## Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Univrse



### Ask Tom – embracing AI to transform customer services

Telford and Wrekin Council strives to match the best organisations when it comes to customer services, this has led to us embracing digital technology to improve interaction with residents.

Our work around artificial intelligence has brought about a change in

### Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Ashfield District Council  
Belfast City Council  
South Ayrshire Council  
Telford and Wrekin Council  
Tewkesbury Borough Council  
Walsall Council

### Winner: Telford and Wrekin Council

customer service. Ask Tom, our chatbot, has opened the door to a 24/7 service; proving a hit with residents –scoring satisfaction scores above 99%, delivering savings and freeing capacity.

## Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by Unison



### The Wellbeing Weight Management Project

Wirral suffers from exceptional levels of obesity, particularly in its most deprived wards. To combat this, Wirral Council delivered an incredibly successful weight management programme. The programme achieved nationally significant success outcomes, 2-4 times those seen across the

### Finalists

Cheshire East Council and Ansa Environmental Services  
 London Borough of Redbridge  
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
 Oxford City Council in partnership with Active Oxfordshire, Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District Councils and West Oxfordshire District Council  
 Swansea Council  
 Wirral Council

### Winner: Wirral Council

country, with the vast majority of participants being from the borough's most deprived wards. Wirral intends to use this model to continue to deliver high impact weight management and improve resident quality of life through partnership work with Liverpool John Moore's University.

## Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by the Toltec



### Hydrogen Training Academy

The Hydrogen Training Academy (HTA) is a first-of-its-kind skills development project, led by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) in collaboration with academia and industry partners. The project supports development of the hydrogen economy and aligns

### Finalists

Aberdeen City Council  
 Brentwood Borough Council  
 Bristol City Council  
 Greater Manchester Combined Authority  
 Lendology  
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
 Stevenage Borough Council  
 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

### Winner: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

with government's Net Zero ambitions by delivering essential hydrogen training for industries utilising bespoke practical training labs. The HTA helps cement NI as a leader in the green energy sector through the development of new skills to meet industry and market demand.

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

Kindly sponsored by PSTAX



### Notts Green Rewards

Green Rewards is an online platform using gamification to incentivise, encourage and inspire residents to undertake positive environmental behaviour change. Gedling Borough Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, both Nottingham University's and platform creator Jump, joined together to create the trailblazing partnership. Nottinghamshire is the first County in the country to see

### Finalists

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council  
 Cambridge City Council  
 Derby City Council  
 Gedling Borough Council  
 KCS Procurement Services (Kent County Council)  
 Lendology  
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
 Middlesbrough Council  
 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

### Winner: Gedling Borough Council

all its local authority and education partners collaborate on a climate change reduction project in this way.

## Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Commercial Services Group



### A partnership approach to the Council's SLA business

Durham County Council has been providing SLAs to over 600 organisations for over 30 years. The Council has proactively responded to changing market demands and developed a refreshed approach to SLA income retention and growth. Operating under the brand 'Commercial Services', the Council has worked collaboratively to refocus its approach

### Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Durham County Council  
Fife Council  
Juniper Ventures Limited  
Oxford Direct Services  
Plymouth City Council

### Winner: Durham County Council

to customer engagement, brand awareness and generate additional income.

The Council has made significant progress and remains committed to providing outstanding support services to customers across the region.

## Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by Enterprise Rent-a-Car



### New ways of working for Howe Bridge Leisure Centre

Wigan Council has developed and launched an innovative new Howe Bridge Leisure Centre is ensuring that the local community is an essential player in its 'Pivot to Wellness' journey. A traditional leisure building, 20+ stakeholders have combined to develop new approaches to community

### Finalists

Gravesham Borough Council  
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
Newark and Sherwood District Council  
Newham Council  
Rugby Borough Council  
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Wigan Council

### Winner: Wigan Council

health building. The result is increased participation particularly amongst target groups including disadvantaged communities (Holiday Activity and Food Programme), SEND participants (Active Inclusive), Young Carers and Looked After Children, Women and Girls (Well Women) and those with life limiting health conditions (Health Checks).

## Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Socitm



### A digital approach to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of litter management within Derby

Derby City Council has implemented digital technology to manage litter more efficiently across its streets and green open spaces. The initiative has resulted in significant improvements within the council's street cleaning and grounds maintenance teams. The technology helps to

### Finalists

Cheshire West and Chester Council  
Derby City Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Enfield Council  
Kirklees Council  
Leeds City Council  
Plymouth City Council

### Winner: Derby City Council

prioritise litter removal tasks based on their urgency, reducing response times and improving the quality of service to residents and visitors. Streamlining these processes has freed up resources to focus on other tasks, resulting in better utilisation of public spending.

## Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by *Staffordshire University*



### Energy Insights Tool and Energy Flexibility

Project LEO (Local Energy Oxfordshire) the ambitious, wide reaching, collaborative energy demonstrator project has succeeded in providing a blueprint for the energy system of the future, a greener, more flexible, and fair electricity system where everyone benefits.

### Finalists

- Dorset Council
- Durham County Council
- Exeter City Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council - Energy Insights Tool and Energy Flexibility
- Oxfordshire County Council - Oxford Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ)
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Tewkesbury Borough Council

### Winner: Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council have played a key role in this successful collaboration. The work we have delivered around energy mapping and energy flexibility has demonstrated the crucial role local authorities can perform in the transition to a low carbon energy system.

## Best Service Team: Construction and Building Service

Kindly sponsored by *TCPA*



### Building On Foundations For Future

Strong staff development and award-winning apprentice recruitment (271 over 20 consecutive years) placed Swansea Council's Building Services in an excellent position, when faced with the service areas' robust commissioning review. APSE winner best employee initiative 2009 & 2018. Following 6th month review, outcome of transformed in-

### Finalists

- East Ayrshire Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Essex County Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Swansea Council

### Winner: Swansea Council

house delivery approved, with a clear objective, building skills to deliver the Authorities "More Homes" strategy, supporting and tackling climate change, helping eradicate fuel poverty and boost energy efficiency measures in social housing, was implemented.

## Best Service Team: Catering Service

Kindly sponsored by *Assist*



### Food to Fuel – Providing energy for learning, healthy living and wellbeing food to fuel

The key to Stockton's success is creating bespoke packages to schools as we believe one size does not fit all! A huge focus on special needs catering delivery and working on well established relationships. The Council's staff are its best asset and have embraced the food recycling

### Finalists

- Powys County Council
- Shetland Islands Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

### Winner: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

project. A productive year with increasing meal numbers, engaging with parents, helping with cost of living issues and ideas for good food on a budget.

## Best Service Team: Facilities Management and Building Cleaning Service

Kindly sponsored by British Cleaning Council



A School Cleaning Service Second to none – focused on people in the here and now as well as future generations

Torfaen Council have taken action in three key areas. Action taken to “Go Green” for future generations, action taken to support staff into employment – collaborative working at its best, enabling refugees to overcome barriers to join the team, action taken to support staff once in

### Finalists

Breckland Council  
Dumfries and Galloway Council  
East Ayrshire Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Highland Council  
Neath Port Talbot Council  
Torfaen County Borough Council

Winner: Torfaen County Borough Council

employment – going the extra mile for staff in the team when needed the most, the personal touch.

## Best Service Team: Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service

Kindly sponsored by Tarmac



Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service

The team’s ethos is evolutionary, with deliverability at the heart. Providing a quality service which demonstrates value for money. The service continues to develop and evolve to meet the environmental, innervational and economic opportunities presented. The Council’s

### Finalists

Cheshire East Highways  
Derby City Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Reading Borough Council  
Wakefield Council  
Wigan Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

outstanding in-house delivery and design teams constantly deliver results on long-standing highway problems and prove why this team is so highly valued.

## Best Service Team: Transport and Fleet Maintenance Service

Kindly sponsored by QRoutes



Service Transformation

The daily task of managing home to school transport for 90,000 pupils daily across all of Northern Ireland is administrated and delivered by the Education Authority. The EA has experienced significant financial and other pressures; including annual increases in the numbers of children

### Finalists

East Lothian Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Education Authority Northern Ireland

Winner: Education Authority Northern Ireland

with special educational needs. EA Transport has driven a programme of transformation to achieve improved efficiency and to enhance user experience. Key achievements include pioneering digital platforms to improve customer experience and £36m investment in new buses.

## Best Service Team: Waste Management and Recycling Service

Kindly sponsored by RSK IWS



**A New Company, A New Waste Strategy, an approach to partnership working in Waste Management and Recycling**

Cheshire West Recycling was established in October 2019, following the Council's waste collection provider, deciding to exit the waste industry. The vision was to build a Company with cooperative principles that embrace a collaborative approach.

### Finalists

- Aberdeen City Council
- Cherwell District Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- East Lothian Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Envenco NW Environmental Services, (wholly owned by Blackpool Council)
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
- Wigan Council

**Winner: Cheshire West and Chester Council**

Whilst not only establishing a new Waste Company, Cheshire West and Chester was also in the process of developing a new waste strategy that both partners would deliver together, which include a significant roll out and cultural change for residents.

## Best Service Team: Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service (Public Realm)

Kindly sponsored by Future Street



**Streetscene**

South Staffordshire Council's Streetscene team has undergone both revolution and evolution since 2017. This involved in sourcing services, taking responsibility for the delivery of other Council functions, exploiting synergies for efficiency and effectiveness and also embarking on commercially led opportunities to maximise income. Today, the Street

### Finalists

- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- City of Doncaster Council
- Colchester City Council
- Hackney Council
- Ipswich Borough Council
- South Staffordshire Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

**Winner: South Staffordshire Council**

Scene team are responsible not just for the District's street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations, but also for management of two cemeteries, environment crime, management of the Council's tree stock and a commercial arboricultural function.

## Best Service Team: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service

Kindly sponsored by Luar Furniture



**Plymouth Meadows – Plymouth City Council Environmental Operations and Planning**

Plymouth City Council's Plymouth Meadows campaign has achieved a switch in its grassland management across the city to a 60:40 split of amenity grassland to meadow grassland. The campaign was widespread and involved partnership work with operations teams, developing

### Finalists

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Greenspace 360, Lampton Services (wholly owned by London Borough of Hounslow)
- Nottingham City Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Watford Borough Council in partnership with Veolia

**Winner: Plymouth City Council**

precise and widespread datasets, utilised new digital platforms and tools, new management approaches and training for staff and stakeholder engagement and communications campaigns.

## Best Service Team: Cemetery and Crematorium Service

Kindly sponsored by Plotbox



### Finalists

- Cardiff Council
- Lambeth Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Mold Town Council
- St Helens Borough Council

Winner: Lambeth Council

### Achieving Environmental and Financial Sustainability

Lambeth's Bereavement Services team is very conscious of dwindling burial space and funeral poverty in our Inner London borough. The Council have developed a wide range of initiatives, founded on the need to extend, and sustain burial choices and offer more

environmentally friendly options. In 2022 the team were proud to have achieved double Gold under the ICCM Charter, and to be one of the first local authorities to install an electric cremator, increasing options for families and reducing carbon emissions.

## Best Service Team Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service

Kindly sponsored by Alliance Leisure



### Finalists

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Oxford City Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council

Winner: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough

### Sports, Leisure & Cultural service

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) Leisure team, are striving to make a difference to the lives of citizens. ANBC are the current holders of the UK Active Regional Centre of the year, have a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 63% and have all six Leisure centres Quest Plus accredited.

The team has transformed its operating model to alleviate barriers to its community being physically active; optimising participation through effective programming and have achieved a positive impact on health within the Borough.



# Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by Dynamon



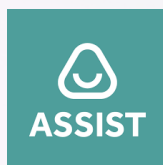
Winner:

**Wigan Council**

Finalists:

- Cambridge City Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Derby City Council
- Inverclyde Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Wigan Council

APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the Service Awards 2023 for their support



# Meet our new members of staff!

APSE is delighted to welcome four new members to the team. We caught up with them to hear a little bit about who they are and their new roles.



**Robbie Edwards, Executive Support and Governance Officer**

*What is your professional background?*

I am a recent graduate from the University of Liverpool where I studied Business Economics, so APSE is only my second role out of university. My first role was as a PHP recruitment consultant for a tech recruitment firm in Manchester. This position involved coordinating multiple placements to find the role best suited to each candidate. I decided to join APSE as I wanted to work for an organisation with a positive social impact.

*What is your role at APSE?*

My role at APSE is an Executive Support and Governance Officer. This involves providing support to the Chief Executive and the Head of Business Resources on a variety of items including the preparation of documents for meetings, assisting with writing reports, supporting the organisation of travel and administration requirements for National Council. I am also involved in APSE's recruitment, mostly writing job specifications and advertising positions.

*What is your favourite thing about your role?*

My favourite thing about my role is working in tandem with the CEO and Head of Business Resources as it gives me a great perspective on the inner workings of APSE and what it takes to run an organisation effectively. I've also enjoyed learning about the structure of local government and how local authorities help the community at every level.

*Where can APSE members meet you?*

I will mainly be based in the APSE Manchester office, so you can contact me by emailing [redwards@apse.org.uk](mailto:redwards@apse.org.uk) or 0161 772 1810. I may also be attending selected APSE events so hopefully see you there!



**Olivia Wright, Business Support Assistant**

*What is your professional background?*

Before joining APSE, I worked as a manager at the IADPA Book and Nutrition Centre in Jamaica. During my time there, I managed client accounts, oversaw daily sales proceedings, and supervised a small team. Prior to my role at IADPA, I was a sales executive at BPP University in Manchester. While at BPP University, I was responsible for managing client accounts for those who recruited apprentices through the University. Additionally, I assisted students with the onboarding and enrolment process for the various accounting courses on offer at BPP.

*What is your role at APSE?*

My role at APSE is Business Support Assistant. I provide administrative support by managing calendars, coordinating meetings and events, and responding to emails. I also manage databases and information systems, as well as collate reports. Additionally, I provide occasional design assistance for the company's diverse range of tasks.

*What's your favourite thing about your role?*

My favourite thing about my role at APSE is supporting the development of local government through networking and information sharing. It creates a strong sense of togetherness and a shared mission that extends throughout the entire office culture. The positive and collaborative work environment at APSE is something I truly appreciate.

*Where can APSE members meet you?*

I can be found at the Manchester office and contacted via email at [owright@apse.org.uk](mailto:owright@apse.org.uk) or by phone on 0161 772 1810. Additionally, it is possible that I may attend events occasionally, giving us the opportunity to meet in person.



**George Barton, Communications Officer**

*What is your professional background?*

I recently graduated from the University of Sheffield, where I achieved a bachelor's degree in history and politics and a master's in journalism. My previous roles have included working as a local news reporter, a magazine contributor and in audience development for a film distribution company. Having covered a lot of stories related to local government in the past – many of which were about underfunding – I wanted a role where I would be best placed to make a positive impact.

*What is your role at APSE?*

My role within APSE is as its Communications Officer. I am responsible for our press relations and social media presence, as well as managing our website and producing content for it. I also serve as the editor for our magazine APSE Direct, over which I have responsibility writing pieces for, sourcing articles and designing the layout.

*What's your favourite thing about the role?*

My favourite thing about my role at APSE is the varied and dynamic nature of the job. I have a wide range of responsibilities and am always working on different things. I have developed a lot of different skills through my past roles, so being able to draw on all my experience to use in this new position is really fulfilling.

*Where can APSE members meet you?*

You can find me at our Manchester office, reach me via email at [GBarton@apse.org.uk](mailto:GBarton@apse.org.uk) or by phone at 0161 772 1810. I will also be in attendance at some of APSE's events.





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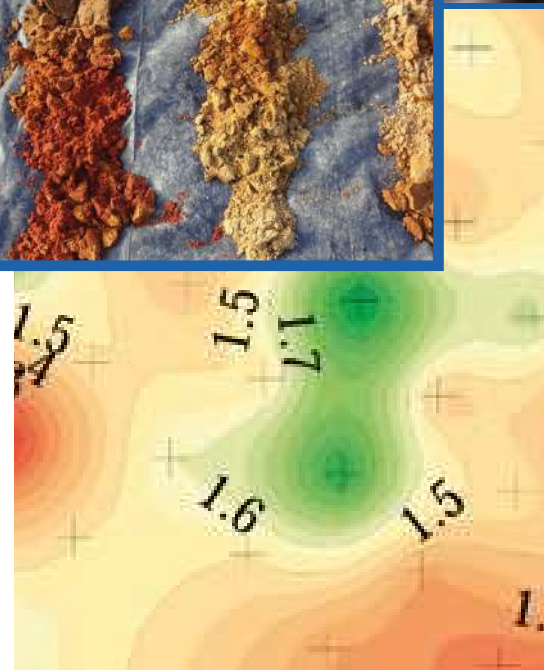
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# Lelley Fields Crematorium: Traditional setting / modern facility



The APSE Solutions team recently visited Lelley Fields Crematorium in Holderness. Directly

run by East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the site is the first crematorium to open in the region for 25 years. Emma Taylor, APSE Senior Consultant, provides an overview of the visit.



**“This will clearly be a welcome asset to the local community, offering a warm and meaningful send off for loved ones.”**



On 28 September 2023, myself and Andy Mudd, Head of APSE Solutions, made the journey to East Riding. On arrival we entered the site via the one-way system. With ample parking spaces available, The car park and areas immediately surrounding the building were well manicured whilst the wider site appeared to be maintained with a more natural appearance.

Christine, the Crematorium Manager, conducted our tour of the facility. Both Oak and Birch Halls have independent waiting areas, which have heated seating for guests. The two halls were light and airy, with tranquil views across the landscape through well designed large wall length windows. The natural wood furnishing was a naturally beautiful finish, very calming and warming. The combination of lighting ensured this space felt relaxing and comforting.

The halls are fitted with the Obitus media system which provides families with access to millions of music tracks and offers the opportunity to have photo's and home videos shown. It also allows the service to be recorded and/or streamed live to the internet if that is what the family require.

The crematorium offers a range of services including a delivery only service, a 'Goodbye' service which is a fifteen-minute slot with a fifteen-minute buffer, and a 'Full' service which is a one-hour slot with a thirty-minute buffer to ensure that families do not feel as though they are on a conveyor belt. Evening and weekend services are also available on request, subject to staff availability.

We discussed how the service might develop over time and were told there were several potential plans which may be implemented over the coming decade. These include the opportunity to introduce a wake area and permanent weekend service provision.

The crematorium has a viewing room which can be used by families wishing to see the coffin being placed in the cremator. This may fulfil religious needs and cultural or personal wants. The room is multi-purpose and can be used as an intimately sized service hall if needed.

The crematory has been fitted with state-of-the-art equipment including a refrigeration facility for any overnight storage. This can also be used to assist the community where necessary without incurring additional charges from funeral providers. Other equipment includes large capacity cremators and trolleys which can accommodate large deceased.

Christine explained that all cremations produce some metal residues and that all families using the crematorium are asked to give permission for these to be recycled. Where permission is given, the metals are collected and sent to R. S. Bruce in Sheffield for recycling. Any proceeds generated by this activity will be split with part being used at the crematorium to benefit all visitors – for example a sculpture. However, the bulk of the proceeds will be distributed to local charities to benefit the community.

All ashes which are scattered at Lelley Fields are combined with 'Return to Nature' – a 'supercharged' soil compound which neutralises the high sodium and calcium in ashes to ensure they have less effect on the environment.

The grounds cover over 4 hectares allowing expansive views of the surrounding farmland; making for a stunning final resting place. The grounds have been landscaped to provide a variety of new habitats to encourage wildlife to use the site.

The crematorium has recently worked with a local farmer and local sheep sanctuary to mow the meadows and the hay is used at the sheep sanctuary as feed and bedding.

The majority of the site is made up of flower and grass meadows. However, hedgerows have been reinstated, shrub beds and nature ponds installed and over 300 trees have been planted at the site too. Some of these trees form the basis of a memorial arboretum which allows families the opportunity to dedicate a tree in the memory of their loved one.

There are kerb side memorial plaques, elegantly designed and presented along the footpath that lead to the memorial trees. The trees are large Corten steel constructions, and the protective rust coatings tied all the natural colours and elements in perfectly.



The large tree holds 640 leaves when it is full.

There is another smaller tree nearby which has beautiful multi-coloured leaves. This is dedicated to all children under 18 years of age. There is also a small park style area with hand carved woodland animals and benches with woven living willow tunnels for play, which are sure to bring an element of distraction and smiles to any small child.

The grounds and memorials are not just for those who were cremated there, local families are welcomed to add plaques in memory of their lost loved ones should they wish, as it is recognised this is a beautiful and heartwarming place that locals can visit irrespective of whether their loved ones are buried or scattered.

The crematorium plans to continue working with local schools - bringing them back to nature and encouraging student development through environmental school trips. There are plans to expand the hand carved wooden animal sculptures across the whole of the site, potentially paving educational walkways for children.

Lelley Fields Crematorium are working with the local Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages who hold appointments at the site every Friday. Although this is currently one day per week, they aim to provide a community hub for local residents to be able to access this service three days per week.

This will clearly be a welcome asset to the local community, offering a warm and meaningful send off for loved ones. No detail has been forgotten, there are blankets in waiting areas for the young and elderly for colder months. Books and toys to keep younger children occupied through difficult times and a coffee and biscuit is always on hand for members of the community, if they just want to visit or walk the grounds in memory of loved ones. Dogs are also welcomed at Lelley Fields Crematorium.

I think a lot of this excellent work can be associated with Christine and her staff here at Lelley Fields Crematorium. We look forward to seeing how they thrive and grow in the future.

• To find out how APSE can help your cemetery and crematorium services, please contact emma taylor at [etaylor@apse.org.uk](mailto:etaylor@apse.org.uk)

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## Cemeteries and Crematoria Online Seminar



**Thursday 16 November 2023**  
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# A fresh approach to solving workforce issues

## A closer look at Inverclyde Council's, Service Award Winning Workforce Refresh Programme

In November 2020, like many other local government authorities, Inverclyde Council was facing a significant budget gap, anticipated at that time to be £10.5 million over the course of 2021-2023. Not only this, but the Council also had to deal with the impact of a Covid-19 lockdown whilst trying to tackle rising unemployment, with the overall claimant count increasing by just over 46% and youth numbers increasing by 111.7% in July of the 2020. Scottish Government analysis at the time indicated unemployment levels across the country could average around 10%, whereas modelling suggested that Inverclyde's level could reach 11%.

Inverclyde had a lot on their plate.

Like most local authority areas, the Council already had a range of existing employment programmes and new initiatives supported by the UK Government to promote positive activity within the labour market. However, due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place, the capacity of host organisations became a limiting factor in the effectiveness of these programmes.

Yet despite facing a multitude of challenges, Inverclyde Council managed to make a real impact.

Mindful of its ageing workforce - with 29% of its employees aged over 50 compared to just 5% for under 25-year-olds - the Council saw a chance to create employment opportunities for local people by allowing employees to leave, with early access to their pension and with up to three compensatory added years. The initiative was named the Workforce Refresh Programme and sought to create a range of new employment opportunities throughout Inverclyde Council.

At the time, Council Leader Stephen McCabe said: "We're in an economic and employment crisis and we have to act now to support our community and the best way to do that just now is jobs.

"A lot are permanent posts and some are temporary, but when people get into temporary work that allows them to increase and improve their skillset, making them more employable and opening up doors for future permanent roles."

A targeted voluntary severance trawl was undertaken, aimed at those employees who were members of the pension scheme and between the ages of 55 and 65. They also had to be in a post at Grade 5 or below, which included positions like clerical roles, pupil support and catering. These were deemed to be the most suitable employment opportunities for local people with varying qualifications and experience, who would need a reasonable period of support.

The financial package on offer to eligible interested employees was early access to their pension and up to three compensatory added years. To account for service delivery and workforce planning implications, employee releases under the Workforce Refresh Programme were phased over an 18-month period. This also allowed for human resources and local employability groups to prepare people for their new jobs.

As the programme began, Council Leader Stephen McCabe said: "There will be quite a number of staff who will feel they have served the council well, done their bit and would welcome the opportunity to gain more free time by leaving early while at the same time helping young people into employment."



Representative from Inverclyde Council receiving the award for Best Workforce Initiative at the APSE Service Awards 2023.

There were some hiccups along the way. For example, the Council was required to advertise vacancies on myjobscotland.gov.uk, which are often picked up by online job boards like S1jobs. Because the aim of the programme was to specifically get local people into the roles, the Council was able to arrange an alternative URL that took candidates to a hidden section of the myjobscotland.gov.uk website.

This became an issue; job seekers were so used to accessing the full website that the specific URL caused confusion. No matter how much effort was put into advertising the Workforce Refresh Programme link, they continued to access the full website, meaning they could not access the Inverclyde Council roles. Via feedback from trade union colleagues, recruiting managers and registered clients with our partner organisations, it became clear that the special URL was causing too much confusion. In response, the Council removed the URL and continued to develop strong links with employability partners, which greatly enhanced the visibility and awareness of the job opportunities.

Overall, the Workforce Refresh Programme has resulted in benefits for Inverclyde local residents, employability partners and the Council. Employees who were active members of the pension scheme and eligible for compensatory added years got their wish to be released without any detriment to their financial package. Employability partners developed a strong partnership with the Council (who are also the largest employer in the area) that help get their clients into employment, and local job seekers enhanced their chances of gaining employment.

As a result of the programme, applications increased by 496 for under 30s, resulting in an extra 94 young workers employed between 2020/21 and 2021/22. Of the vacancies created by the programme, 100% went to Inverclyde residents, with 15% going to people aged 16-29 and there was an 8% increase in the number of Modern Apprentices securing employment with the Council, which is expected to increase year on year.

Cllr McCabe praised the success of the programme, saying: "For a council the size of Inverclyde, this is a huge package of investment supporting people into work. Day in, day out officers at Inverclyde Council are doing their best to support the people of this area and I want to thank them for all their hard work."

Inverclyde  
council

## **New information hub launched to help the sport, recreation and physical activity sector reduce its environmental impact**

The Sport Environment and Climate Coalition (SECC) has created a 'one-stop shop' for key resources on sports sustainability.

A group of leading organisations in the sport, recreation and physical activity sector have launched a new collaborative resources hub aimed at supporting the sector to reduce its environmental impact and improve sustainability. SECC works to harness the sector's collective resources to help reduce the environmental impact of sport, recreation and physical activity and contribute to the UK's transition to net zero.

The SECC Resource Hub serves as a one-stop shop for the most relevant resources on sustainability and sport. This carefully selected set of resources has been brought together to assist those who want to take positive action, regardless of where they are on their sustainability journey. From clubs to venues, anyone involved with sport can engage with sustainability issues and make meaningful change.

A spokesperson for SECC said, "The climate and biodiversity crisis requires every part of our society to understand their environmental impacts, including sport. The effects of climate change are having increasing levels of disruption at both the professional and grassroots level. The launch of this resource hub demonstrates the sector's continuing dedication to positive climate action and the safeguarding of our planet for future generations."

Mo Baines, the Chief Executive of APSE, said, "As a provider of carbon literacy training, APSE recognises the importance of high-quality resources in the collective effort to reduce carbon emissions. We are proud to be part of a collaboration that understands the significant role local-level organisations will play in the mission to decarbonise. Innovation and tenacity are required if we are to create a society that we will be proud to leave to future generations, and SECC will provide enormous help to the sports sector as we seek to achieving this. We look forward to promoting this fantastic collaboration at future APSE events."

Start exploring the resource hub now!

SECC's membership is UK-wide and includes: Active Partnerships; Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), Sport and Recreation Alliance; UK Active; British Association for Sustainable Sport (BASIS); Sport England; Sport Northern Ireland; Sport Scotland; Sport Wales; and UK Sport.



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# Keeping Local Authorities on the right track this winter

***Andrew Manson, UK Sales Manager (Winter) at Bucher Municipal discusses how simplifying route planning can help Local Authorities work smarter.***

According to the Local Government Association's annual weather resilience survey (2022), almost two thirds of councils said they were finding it, or expected to find it, difficult to recruit and train HGV drivers for "winter resilience activities" such as driving gritters. The challenge is twofold with driver shortages and a deskilled workforce creating a headache for local authorities. Private companies incentivising HGV drivers with higher pay is further exacerbating the problem for local authorities as they are finding it increasingly difficult to retain drivers amid a wider HGV driver shortage.

To address these issues, fleet and winter managers are seeking innovative ways to improve efficiency to get the most from the drivers they have and attract new recruits to a more streamlined operation. For too long gritter drivers have had to simultaneously drive the truck, know their routes (often using written instructions), and adjust the spreader or snowplough. Considering gritter operators are also navigating dark and dangerous conditions this is no mean feat!

Winter route programming is increasing in popularity as a budget-sensitive but effective solution enabling councils to store, manage and edit routes. Bucher Municipal's Assist platform provides different levels of 'assistance' depending on budget, but the route mapping solution alone is ground-breaking, as it allows fleet managers to place a driver behind the wheel and the spreader to issue navigation commands and treat appropriately.

Bucher Assist offers intelligent fleet management with accurate planning and real time GPS location, meaning routes can be followed easily. If a driver gets lost while gritting new areas, or road closures occur, the Assist technology will get them back on track to the original route. This route planning platform also analyses normal salt usage on each mission, giving fleet managers a more accurate idea of how much salt is used for each area, so they will know how much daily salt to load, leading to less wastage and cost savings. This in turn supports salt stock management at the depot, with Assist automatically alerting when salt stocks need to be replenished.

The Bucher Assist navigation system guides the driver round the route, allowing any driver to drive any route with no prior knowledge. As well as assisting the driver, Bucher Assist revolutionises fleet management by simplifying mission planning, providing real-time tracking and mission data archive and analysis. With the current challenges that fleet managers are facing, this gives them the confidence that they are giving drivers the support needed to help them to focus on the job at hand.

- [Get in touch with the Bucher team to find out how we can 'Assist' your fleet management this winter. Call 01306 884 722 or email enquiries.uk@buchermunicipal.com](mailto:enquiries.uk@buchermunicipal.com)

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**Supporting life's true champions**



## Lioness Ellen White joins 150 Civil Servants and Public Sector Workers at UK's First Public Sector Wide Women's Football Tournament

**150 female civil servants and public sector workers from across the UK battled it out in the 5-a-side tournament with The Royal Navy crowned winners of the CSSC Duchess of Gloucester Trophy. The CSSC organised event was held at the FA's state of the art St George's Park National Football Centre on Saturday 16 September. HRH The Duchess of Gloucester was also in attendance**

Lionesses' record goal scorer, Ellen White, joined 18 women's 5-a-side teams from across the Civil Service and Public Sector at the FA's St. George's Park National Football Centre over the weekend, for the inaugural CSSC Duchess of Gloucester Trophy to crown the best public sector side.

Organised by CSSC and named in honour of their patron, the Duchess of Gloucester, the women's football tournament was created to build on an incredible summer for women's football and help drive participation amongst civil service and public sector workers. Established in 1921 to support the civil service and public sector, CSSC is an exclusive not-for-profit membership organisation inspiring over 130,000 members to explore new ways to be active and healthy.

Teams from the NHS, Dept of Education, police, NHS, all branches of the armed forces, and more took to the pitch showcasing the high level of footballing talent from across all corners of the public sector. White, who was on hand to provide teams with tactical tips and joined the Duchess of Gloucester on stage during the prize giving ceremony, said: "It's been amazing being here at the Duchess of Gloucester trophy and watching such a high level of competition.

"I'm hugely passionate about growing the women's game and event like this one, that allow women to bring together a team and just play football, are so important. It's been great to see over 150 women take to the pitch and the atmosphere has been electric all day. I can't wait to see how this competition grows in the years to come with CSSC's support."

The Royal Navy Women were trophy winners on the day. The team hailing from bases from across the UK came together to defeat a

Goals Aloud, a team from Newcastle made up of teachers and NHS from the area, in a fiery final. West Midlands Police were winners in the plate competition overcoming the more experienced RAF Women's Vets side.

CSSC CEO, Matt Bazeley OBE, said: "The success of the Lionesses at last summer's EUROs and the recent FIFA Women's World Cup, has shown us the incredible potential and passion that exists within the women's game. We are delighted to be able to invest in our women's football and offer for our members and their colleagues and provides the chance for them to take up and continue playing the game with tournaments like today's.

"Thanks to the Duchess of Gloucester and Ellen for joining us, and congratulations to The Royal Navy on being crowd champions. There were some incredible skills on show and we're looking forward to growing the tournament in the years to come."



*Pictured: Lioness Ellen White with tournament winners from the Royal Navy*

Specifically designed for civil servants and public sector workers, CSSC inspires members to explore new ways to be active and healthy through - offers to get active, exciting things to do and numerous ways to save money. From helping you reach your fitness goals to maximising your leisure time, CSSC members have access to over 4,000 ways to save.

To find out more about CSSC and whether you are eligible for a membership, please visit: <https://bit.ly/45Vux7Q>

For more information contact Ewan MacGill of Frame PR: [ewan.macgill@framecreates.co.uk](mailto:ewan.macgill@framecreates.co.uk) / 07880 385 654



# More councils plan to increase the number of allotments as demand remains high

APSE's latest 'State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotments' finds a large increase in local authorities halving standard sized allotment plots to address this demand, Matt Ellis reports.

The survey found that 54% of respondents stated that their council plans to increase the number of allotments, up 12% from last year's survey (42%).

With regards to average waiting time for an allotment plot, over 69% stated that over 18 months was the average, which is an increase of 11% on 2022 when the figure was 58%.

## Other key findings

Of the local authorities surveyed:

- 96% of respondents answered that they have council owned allotments within their authority, showing that local authorities still see the provision of allotments as a role they wish to support.
- 22% of local authority respondents, who do not currently manage sites, had received requests for new allotment provision.
- 49% of respondents stated that they have an allotments strategy, a 7% increase on 2022, and of the 51% that haven't currently got a strategy in place, almost half stated that the council is planning to develop one within the next 2 years.
- 50% of respondents now include allotments into their Local Plans and 61% have the value of allotments recognised within their health and wellbeing strategies.
- 44% stated that they cultivate plots organically and some allotment sites have begun to use solar power instead of mains power.

## 54% of respondents stated that their council plans to increase the number of allotments as opposed to 42% in 2022



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

"Some of the key findings in this year's State of the Market is that demand for allotment plots is continuing to remain high and this is reflected by the large increase in those local authorities who are halving standard sized allotment plots to address this demand.

"Interestingly, local authorities are reporting that despite offering reduced size plots they are receiving little negative feedback as most people are seemingly happy to work smaller plots, stating that they are more manageable and result in less waste of overproducing crops beyond the needs of the plot holder. This approach also hopes to reduce waiting lists.

"However, from comments received it does appear that many are still seeing long waiting lists and lengthy waiting times to receive a plot. This constant and, in some areas, growing demand, shows the importance of allotments to reconnect with nature, as well as the health and wellbeing gains tending such spaces brings. It may also reflect the renewed interest in the public being more self-sustainable, using allotments to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

"More recently the impact of the cost-of-living crisis may also be driving people to use their allotments more to reduce the cost of their food needs.

"The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan has highlighted the need to use resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently and ensure that food production is sustainable. Although perhaps looking more at agricultural practices, it can be argued that allotments can help to meet some of the aims of this objective when used to their full potential.

"As well as providing environmental benefits, allotments are also seen as having considerable social cohesion benefits, where all sectors of the local community can engage in a common interest where skills and knowledge can be exchanged, and friendships forged."

*A full analysis of APSE's State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotment Services 2023 can be viewed online. •*

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