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July / August 2014

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Editorial

New York New York

Recent signs have been good that a new spirit of municipal entrepreneurship is starting to emerge amongst political leaders in local government.

Significant debate is taking place about devolution and the wider role local government should play in society. Whilst discussions centre around freedoms, funding and powers, it is important to also ask for what purpose? And what can councils actually deliver?

When discussing what can be achieved by entrepreneurial political leaders, most commentators would point to Joseph Chamberlain as a shining example. However, on a recent trip to New York I came across a plaque to one of that city's great leaders, which set me thinking about just what can be achieved if political vision, boldness and ambition can be channelled in the right direction.

The start of the 20th century saw George Brinton McClellan Jnr elected as 93rd Mayor of New York City. During his administration he acquired 277 acres of parkland, completed construction of the New York Public Library, built Grand Central Terminal, presided over the opening of the subway system, licensed the first taxi cab, opened the Queensboro and Manhattan bridges, installed the world's first high pressure water service to fight fires, replaced the gas street lamp system with electric, built 19 new fire houses, 110 school buildings, 11 new high schools, and constructed 35 miles of new wharfage, including 51 piers. These remarkable achievements were not made over a couple of decades but between 1904 and 1909. This period changed the city's landscape beyond recognition.

Whilst local government in the UK does not have responsibility for some of these services anymore and now more than ever has to collaborate with partners to achieve its goals, it is the scale of the ambition of the programme of works that is impressive in transforming a place for the public good.

My view is that the fact that George McClellan Jnr was a mayor is irrelevant; he could just as easily have been a council leader. What is important is to devolve enough power to local authorities to allow leaders to develop a vision for their area and create the capacity to set about transforming that place over the lifetime of an administration.

In the lead up to next year's General Election, it will be interesting to see if the political parties incorporate devolution into their manifestos in a meaningful way.

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive



Public parks under threat?

The State of UK Public Parks report and more news from the Heritage Lottery Fund



Since 1996 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been a major investor in the UK's public parks. Over £700million of Good Cause Lottery funding has been invested

in over 700 public parks to repair historic features, dredge lakes, replant Victorian shrubberies, enhance wildlife habitats, build new play areas, open cafes and to support people to take a more active role in caring and supporting their local park. Together with match funding from local authorities, funding raised by friends groups and an immense amount of officer and volunteer time, the UK's public parks have seen a renaissance in their condition over the last 20 years.

So all should be well with the UK's public parks. But research by APSE has shown that park maintenance budgets have declined and the closure of Greenspace England and Cabe Space has meant that our public parks are without a national champion.

In October 2012 HLF held a Public Parks Summit in London to look at the future of public parks and to help us establish how we might support those involved with parks over the difficult next few years ahead. Since then HLF has been working on a suite of new initiatives and ideas to help support park projects we have funded in the past as well as the parks and green space sector as a whole.

As HLF reaches the grand age of 20 years old this coming November we have been keen to see how our earliest investments are faring. Last year we appointed Shaun Kiddell, an experienced local authority park services manager, to review many of the projects we have funded in the past. Shaun has now visited his 100th park regeneration project and has been impressed by what

he has found. Our investment is standing up well with a very tiny number of sites needing additional support and encouragement. Shaun has been able to help share good practice exemplars from across the UK as well as reminding past grantees of their contractual duty to maintain public Lottery investment by keeping sites in good order. Our visits have been welcomed by park managers who are incredibly proud of their parks, their staff and volunteers whilst attention from HLF has helped convince decision makers of the need to sustain revenue and investment funding.

Whilst visiting so many varied projects Shaun has gathered together a wealth of examples of good management practice and small scale innovation that we are keen to share. Working with The Land Trust and Big Lottery Fund England, last year we launched a new website called www.ProsporousParks.com. The site is still growing but is a useful resource to explore how park management might be developed to generate new sources of income whilst flagging some of the issues this might raise and that may need to be overcome.

Last year we also launched a new one-off funding programme called Rethinking Parks. Led by innovation charity Nesta and funded by HLF and Big Lottery Fund England we have now awarded grants totalling £1million to 11 projects across the UK. Rethinking Parks aims to stimulate creative new ways of managing and financing public parks by rethinking how services could be delivered and funded. Whilst the 11 projects are only just beginning we hope that in 18 months time we will have a series of innovative new ideas that have been developed, tested and can be scaled-up to help other local authorities fund and manage parks and green spaces in future. All 11 projects are committed to sharing their ideas widely and Nesta will make sure all learning from the projects is available via their website. The 11 projects can be viewed at: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>.

Last month we released a new research report entitled the State of UK Public Parks focussed on providing evidence of the present and future condition of the UK's public parks. With local authorities reviewing funding for all services and especially those that are non-statutory now seemed the moment to establish a baseline for parks. The evidence for the report came from surveys of local authority park managers, friends and user groups and an Ipsos Mori public opinion poll. Our data was cross checked against previous surveys including those conducted by Groundwork and APSE which helped to reinforce our own conclusions. We are incredibly grateful to all those who took time to respond to our surveys and hope the report will be of use to you.

The research produced some startling statistics. The good news is that 2.6billion visits are made to the UK's parks each year with 70% of park managers recording increased visitor numbers to their principal parks and over £30million estimated to be raised by park friends and user groups to support their local parks each year. The bad news is that 86% of park managers report cuts to revenue budgets since 2010 and they expect the trend to continue for the next three years. In addition 45% of local authorities also report that they are considering either selling their parks and green spaces or transferring management to others.

Our concern is that after two decades of investment and improvement we appear to have reached a tipping point. Without adequate maintenance, parks become underused, neglected and vandalised but many appear oblivious to this impending crisis. The immense social and environmental value of public parks is quickly eroded if maintenance is reduced and they can become a costly liability for those that manage them. With an estimated 27,000 parks in the UK and Lottery investment having only been able to help improve around 3%, we are concerned about the future of all parks and green spaces across the UK. We hope our report

will provide the evidence needed to persuade decision makers that reducing investment in parks can be a false economy and that resources are needed to develop new ways to manage and finance parks and green spaces in future. Our report ends with our commitment to the future and most importantly a series of 'calls to action' for others. A short advocacy report, the full research report and our research data can all be downloaded at: <http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/howwe/Pages/StateofUKPublicParks.aspx>

HLF and Big Lottery Fund England are committed to supporting more park regeneration projects across the UK in future. Last month we announced another investment of £34.5million in 13 public parks across the UK. Whilst we appreciate that resources to develop applications are under immense pressure, we are still eager to see applications come forward under our Parks for People grant programme which offers grants of between £100,000 and £5million. If you think your local park could benefit from a Parks for People grant please take a look at our application guidance to see if your park might be eligible:-

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/ParksforPeople.aspx>

If you have any questions or would like a hard copy of State of UK Public Parks please get in touch with Drew Bennellick, Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage UK at the HLF at: drewb@hlf.org.uk.

Contact: Drew Bennellick is Head of Landscape & Natural Heritage at the Heritage Lottery Fund. Email drewb@hlf.org.uk



Chewing the Cud on Managing Country Parks

Martin Stanton, Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Havering Council explains their approach to managing biodiversity in country parks and the innovative use of expert grazers to help.

Like most local authorities Havering is continuously looking at innovative solutions and is mindful of its budget limitations. In the context of our Country Parks we want to secure their long-term biodiversity but equally balance the cost of hay and grass cuts in expansive areas of parkland. Having explored a range of options we decided to go for a new team of expert grazers to take over from current methods by introducing cattle. Of course we are not replacing our workforce with cows but we are freeing up resources to support services elsewhere within Havering's parks and open spaces. The scheme is estimated to save the Council around £300,000 over ten years in costs.

Whilst traditional hay or grass cutting involves a more even and tidy cut, cattle are able to choose where they graze. In the context of country parks this allows the

creation of patches within the meadows of varying height and density and reduces the build-up of old vegetation. This allows different grasses and wildflowers to flourish. Grazing is also more sensitive to other animals that live in the grassland such as mice, voles, amphibians and reptiles. In Bedfords Park, the first of our parks where we have introduced the cattle, it is home to many protected plant, insect and bird species, including wildflowers such as Lady's bedstraw, sneezewort, pepper saxifrage and pignut; so there is a natural best-fit between the use of the cattle and our desire to promote and protect biodiversity.

We had many things to consider before we introduced the cattle not least the breed we would use. We decided on a rare and traditional breed of Red Poll cattle, which is native to East Anglia, with some links to the local area. This particularly breed was not only

chosen for its heritage but also because it is one of the best grazing breeds for the types of meadows in Bedfords Park. Red Poll also have a gentle temperament and no horns making them ideal for places like public parks.

A further consideration was funding. Cattle and veterinary bills as well as suitable fencing would be prohibitively costly so our ambition was to resource the project without creating a surge in our costs. The grazing cattle have not been purchased but are in fact simply allowed to graze on the land and remain in the ownership of a local specialist grazier and wildlife consultant who retains responsibility for veterinary bills and the general care of the animals. For the council's part we have of course exercised sensible precautions to ensure they are not harmed.

We can move the cattle around the park once we have achieved the level of grazing in any particular area. This is facilitated by moderate fencing, with the inclusion of kissing gates to allow public access to the grazing areas. We have undertaken risk assessments but our approach has been one of sensible and proportionate risk management. The cost of the fencing and the project in general has been assisted by funding from English Nature, with a grant of ten years. In addition we have received funding from Veolia North Thames Trust. These funding streams allowed the council to develop the project with moderate match-funding, effectively allowing the project to take shape by off-setting upfront capital costs like the new fencing we needed.

Whilst Bedfords Park is our trail-blazer park for this new scheme we are keen to develop the model in other country parks, particularly in Havering Country Park and Dagnam Park in the near future. With half of our borough made up of parks and green spaces we are keen to embrace innovative ways in which we can improve our biodiversity and manage costs.

Implementing grazing is all part of our 10-year Higher Level Stewardship agreement which has been set up with Natural England, the government's advisor on the natural environment. The Higher Level Stewardship agreement provides a framework for carrying out long-term environmentally friendly land management backed up by financial incentives to help landowners manage their land in a way that's beneficial to wildlife and the landscape. Working with Natural England we have created a package of Stewardship options that will benefit our country parks and improve our

management of species rich grassland, woodlands, ponds and hedgerows. The approach is great for other wildlife too, including ponds with protected great crested newts, woodlands with trees such as wild service, oak and hornbeam and other species such as tawny owls, bats and barn owls.

It is not the first time that we in Havering have turned to animals for assistance. Last November, we brought in a Suffolk Punch heavy horse to help manage the borough's woodland. Working with the Forestry Commission, a new management regime was introduced to areas of derelict woodland in the borough, with the benefit of improving access and enhancing the diversity of wildlife. The creation of warm, sunny woodland clearings will, for example, attract more species of woodland butterflies such as Speckled Wood, Brimstone and Holly Blue.

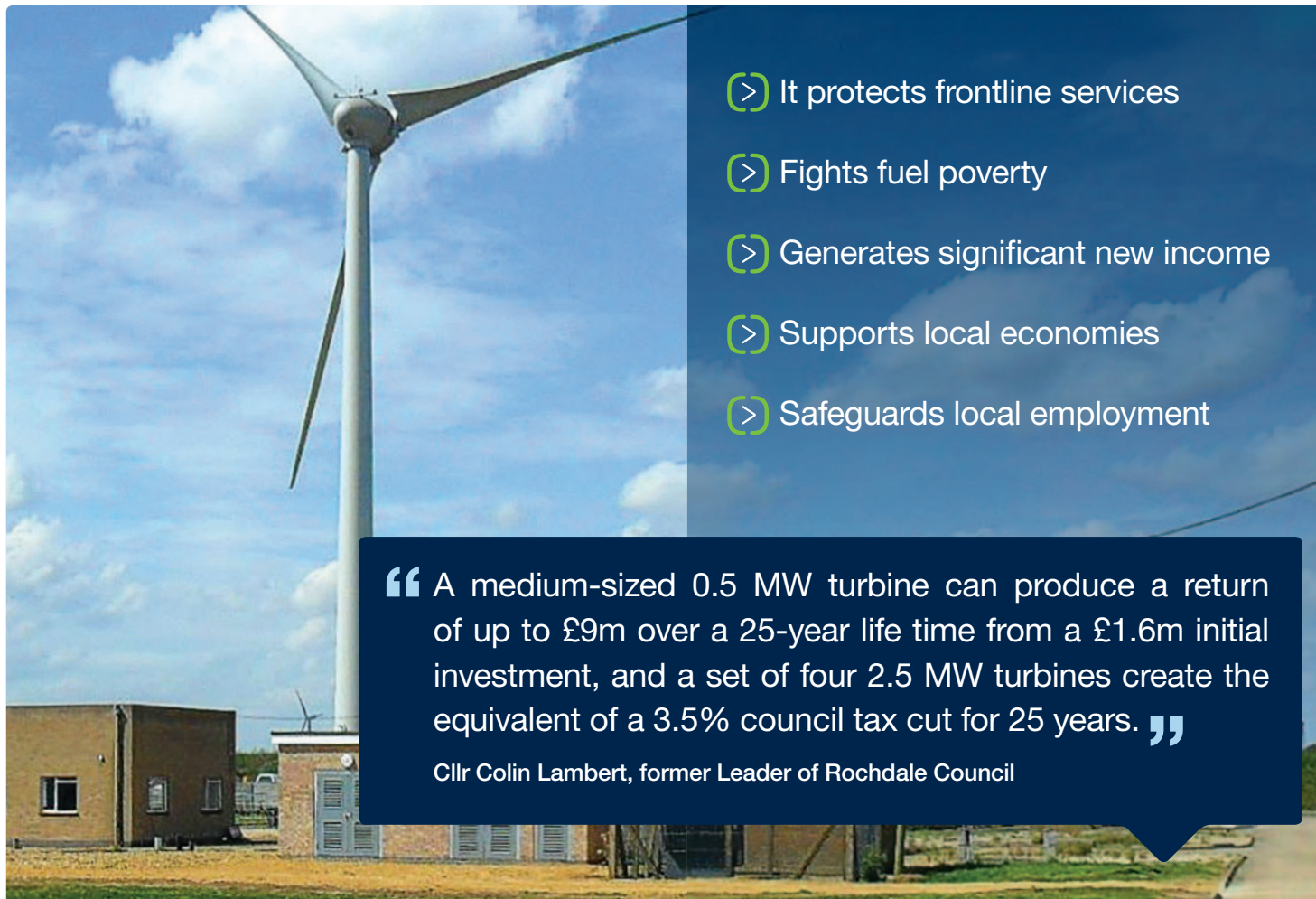
My message to other councils considering the innovative use of grazing cattle is to ensure that you consult with the public and have political support for the project. We have been overwhelmingly supported by our elected members and our communities but it is important to allay any fears or concerns and assure people that the project has been well-thought through. A further issue is landmass. The cattle need plenty of space and for projects such as the one at Bedfords Park you would need in excess of around 100 acres; and that is with just eleven cattle in our project. It is likely that similar projects would work well in larger country parks but not necessarily in all situations and would be dependent on local geography.

Finally there have been some added bonuses to the grazing cattle. The Red Poll breed is a particularly attractive heritage breed, and in the natural parkland setting, in long grassed areas it is aesthetically pleasing and many have commented on how this adds to the natural beauty of the parkland. It is also a great way for children and other park visitors to interact in a natural setting with the cattle; a rare opportunity in today's often sterile world.

*Contact: Martin Stanton, Parks and Open Spaces
Manager, Havering Council*

Email: martin.stanton@haverling.gov.uk

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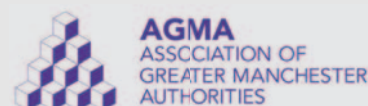


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Becoming a Good Food Nation

Recipe for Success, Scotland's first ever National Food and Drink Policy, was groundbreaking when it was launched in 2009 and there has been huge progress in the sector ever since.

The food and drink industry is a significant contributor to the Scottish economy accounting for a turnover of 14.4% between 2008 and 2011, the strongest growth of all growth sectors in Scotland. Targets on turnover and exports have been exceeded years early, with a 51% growth between 2007 and 2013 in the value of food and drink exports. Taken together with a 32% rise between 2007 and 2013 in retail sales of Scottish food and drink brands in Great Britain it is a Scottish success story.

And the public sector has had a significant role to play with a step change in collaborative working both within the food and drink industry and the public sector. There has been an explosion in the local food movement with 150 new local food initiatives.

Food education initiatives have also evolved with the 'Food for Thought' Education Fund reaching 333 schools and an increase in those taking school meals. This has helped address dietary issues and led to reformulation of some products including those with better nutritional value.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. These include:

- Amongst children and adults some of the highest levels of diet-related poor health in the world. Almost two thirds of adults are overweight in Scotland.
- Deep-seated attitudes to food leading to poor habits and low expectations.
- Serious threats to global food security due, in part, to population growth rates and climate change.
- Disengagement from where food comes from.
- A lack of diversity in exports and supply chains which lack resilience.

That is why the Scottish Government has launched a new consultation 'Becoming a good food nation' which reaffirms the Scottish Government's commitment to promoting the sustainable economic growth of the food and drink industry. But it also articulates a new aspiration, that Scotland should become a Good Food Nation, a Land of Food and Drink not only in what Scotland produces as a nation but

also in what we buy, serve and eat. The Scottish Government wants food to be a key part of what makes the people of Scotland proud of their country – food which is both tasty to eat and nutritious, fresh and environmentally sustainable.

This is a big undertaking. It will not happen overnight. So our consultation document sets out:-

- A proposed 2025 vision for what we, as a country, should be aiming to achieve.
- Plans for a Food Commission and local champions to drive change.
- Proposed priority areas such as food in the public sector, children's food and local food.
- A commitment to a variety of approaches.

But for Scotland to be a Good Food Nation there must be wholehearted participation from people in all walks of life, from throughout the country so we are asking APSE public sector contacts within Scotland for their views on the proposals and to help decide what it is that you can contribute to take us further on the journey towards being a Good Food Nation.

As Richard Lochhead MSP, Environment Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Drink said when launching the consultation document increasing access for everyone, to good quality food to improve Scotland's diet and food culture, will be one of the top priorities of the ambitious next phase of the Scottish Government's food and drink policy. This will involve proposed priority areas of work and recognise the need to move towards a healthier, resilient and sustainable food system.

To learn more and have your input into the consultation you can read the document online at the Scottish Government website for consultation at www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2014/06/1195

Views can also be emailed to goodfoodnation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk by 17 October 2014.

Contact: You can also send views to be coordinated through APSE to Louise McMillan email lmcmillan@apse.org.uk

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Commercial Trading in the Age of Austerity

Andy Mudd, Head of APSE Solutions and Joanne Warren, APSE Associate Consultant and Business Coach

Ten years ago APSE started running Master Classes on local authority trading and charging. Homing in on the new powers provided by the 2003 Local Government Act, we were keen to make sure that Councils were making the most of opportunities to offset the cost of services from external income streams. A decade later, after 4 years of unprecedented reductions in budgets and the prospect of more to come, the need to generate cash from trading activity has never been greater.

Very few Councils don't these days undertake some external trading but how many can say that they are making the most of what is now a highly permissive legal framework. In England, the Localism Act, with its power of general competence, effectively allows Councils to trade, not only in the things they normally do, but in any other lawful activity. This might mean extending into areas linked to the services they already provide – why not offer an undertaking service as well as cremation or burial for example? – but could also mean providing new services not normally associated with Councils. Doing so might mean that a company has to be set up to act as a trading vehicle but provided the activity is not unlawful and the Council continues to comply with its fiduciary duty and behaves reasonably, there is huge scope.

In fact, very few Councils have got involved in commercial activity outside of traditional functions. This might be viewed as sensible in that sticking to what you know is less likely to result in failure. On the other hand, Councils are multi-functional organisations which have much in common with big commercial corporations which often trade in diverse markets as a way of spreading risk. The key to this is more to do with transferable skill sets than with experience of particular products or services. Most service industries rely on key competencies such as management of staff, budgeting, logistics and customer services. These are the kind of skills that Local Authorities already possess and transfer across a complex mix of service areas on a daily basis. Even product based industries are these days more likely to be focused on supply chain management than manufacturing and which Council does not deal with a wide range of suppliers as a key part of the day job?

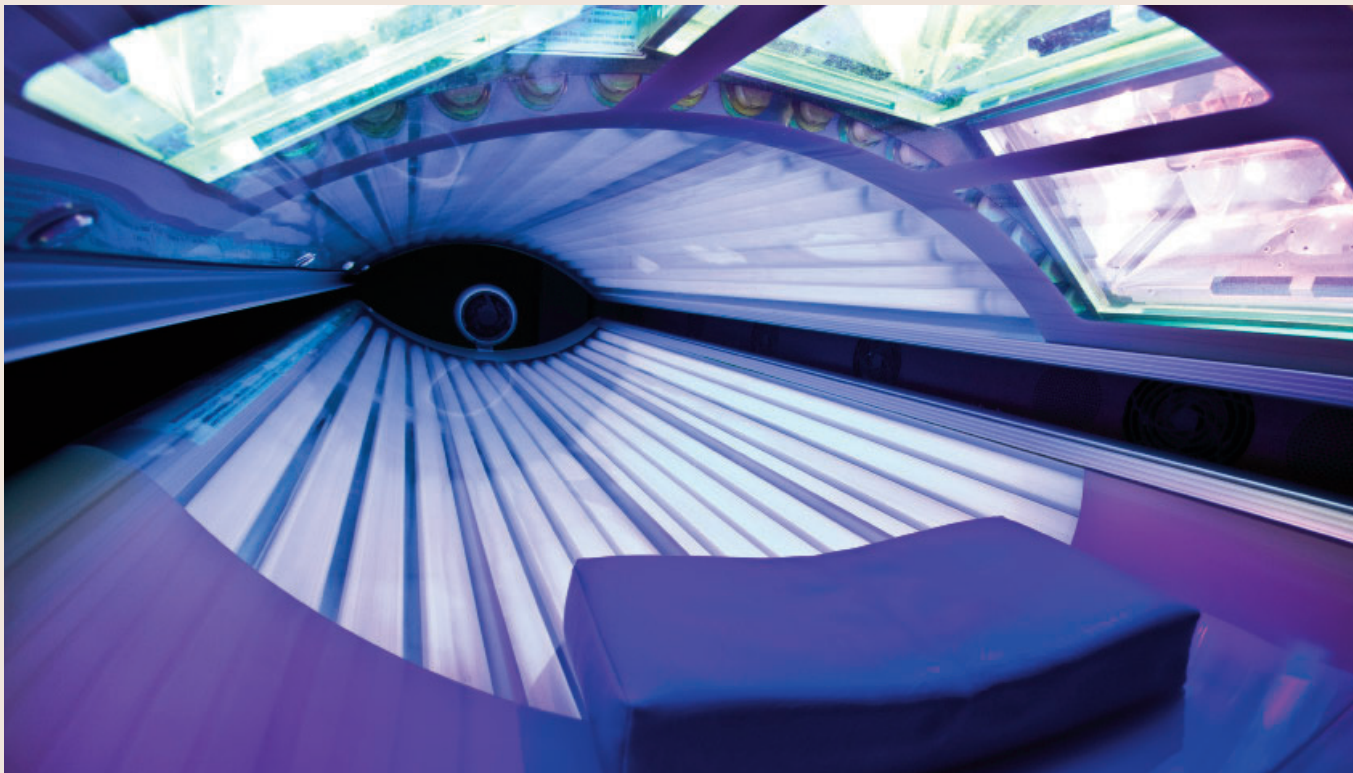
The range of skills required to provide services as diverse as environmental protection to care of the elderly, to maintenance of refuse collection vehicles is likely to be wide enough to cope with the requirements of most businesses. Councils are in fact well placed to do well in the commercial world – so what is holding them back? The answer is probably culture and the perception that public services

and commercial activity are somehow incompatible. The fear that commercial activity could interfere with the effective delivery of critical public functions – for example, by diverting resources from cutting grass at the park to mowing the pitch at the local professional football ground – acts as a brake on some front line service managers. But this misses the point that the surplus that maintaining professional sports pitches generates may make the difference between being able to carry on maintaining football pitches in parks or being forced into withdrawing from what is a highly valued public service.

APSE Solutions Associate Consultant and business coach Joanne Warren, who has experience of both the private and public sectors, identifies marketing as the area that Local Government most needs to improve on. Many Council managers will agree with this but the skills needed for effective marketing are very similar to those that Councils utilise already in consultation with residents about services. Once appropriate markets have been identified, it should not be difficult to develop an effective communication strategy to ensure commercial success.

The last few years have been very difficult for local government. Despite the cuts and maybe against the odds, services have been largely maintained. This in itself is testament to the high level of business skills endemic in the sector. A combination of increased efficiency and some service reduction has kept things going but the prospect of further cuts must threaten the continuation of many of the vital services Councils deliver. Efficiency by definition can only go so far. In these circumstances, it is essential that all possible sources of additional revenue are explored. The choice appears to be a stark one – start earning income in the commercial world or see services shrink to the bare minimum.

APSE Solutions, has worked with several UK councils on the development of commercial acumen. Joanne Warren has extensive experience as a business coach in the private sector and has also worked at a senior level in local government. She has now joined up with APSE Solutions and will be working as an Associate Consultant helping APSE member authorities in the development of commercial strategies. Contact Andy Mudd at APSE on 01617721810 or amudd@apse.org.uk



The look to die for....

Liverpool City Council is waging a war on sunbeds following a survey from Cancer Research UK which found that over 50% of Liverpool girls aged 15 – 17 years had used a sunbed. Cllr Roy Gladden explains why Liverpool has launched a hard hitting campaign to 'bin the beds'.

As we head towards Autumn, many of us, particularly those lucky enough to have caught a bit of sunshine over the summer months, may wistfully look at a fading tan and think well that's it for another year and creep back into long sleeve jumpers and our pale northern skins. However for many young people the allure of an all year round tan is glamorous and attractive, may be more so in the more northerly areas where a suntan can prove as elusive as the often promised, but rarely seen, glorious summers. Sunbeds are perceived as a route to that all year tan but they can be deadly and for young people the risks are even greater.

That is why in Liverpool we have decided enough is enough. We've had enough of the damage that sunbeds are doing to people in our city and now is the time we are going to do something about it. Sunbed salons are everywhere you look in Liverpool, and as a result and you could be forgiven for thinking that they're safe and legal, even for young people.

However since 2010 it's been illegal to allow anyone under the age of 18 to use a sunbed. And there's a good reason why it is illegal. The law is in place to protect young people from the huge health risks that sunbeds can cause. They expose the body to intense artificial UV radiation that can cause cancer and this risk is particularly high in young people who have delicate skin that can be easily damaged. In fact, using a sunbed for the first time before the age of 35 can increase the risk of skin cancer by 59%. Despite the new legislation we were aware from our work within the community that some salons were reportedly accepting letters of consent from parents to allow

youngsters to use sunbeds - the fact is that parental consent is irrelevant to this issue! Salons are still breaking the law if they allow anyone under 18 to use a sunbed.

That is why we want to battle against sunbeds and to give us more armour to fight skin cancer, the UK's fastest growing cancer amongst 18-35 year olds, we are calling on the Government to give every local authority in England the power to license and regulate sunbed businesses. Put simply, we want to ensure that every sunbed business:

- Is supervised by a properly trained member of staff.
- Displays and provides sunbed users with detailed information about how to use a sunbed and the associated health risks.
- Does not display or provide misleading information.
- Provides protective eyewear for users.
- Follows health and safety rules.

We're hoping, with support from the local NHS, Cancer Research UK and the people of Liverpool, that we can encourage the Government to introduce licensing to help protect everyone from the dangers of sunbeds. We propose that all premises offering the use of sunbeds will, by law, have to provide clear and correct information about the serious health dangers associated with their use.

Local authorities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales already have the power to ensure that businesses educate users about the risks of sunbed use. Isn't it time local authorities across England caught up?

Currently in England, only Nottinghamshire and London are able to license sunbed businesses and unfortunately cities like ours are unable to protect their people in the same way. This is something that has to change.

As a city, and a council, we have always understood the need to stand up and take action when something isn't right. We champion good causes and are proud to stick our neck out and lead the way on important health issues – we were the first city in the UK to introduce a private bill into Parliament so that we could introduce a public smoking ban; a move that helped lead to the national smoking ban and which has potentially saved lots of lives – something we're looking to repeat with this campaign.

With our powerful campaign 'The Look To Die For?' we are putting forward a strong case to the Secretary of State to grant local authorities the powers they need to protect their constituents. The link to skin cancer from sunbeds is well documented and we just want to ensure that everyone in England, no matter where you live, has the right to know the risks of using sunbeds so that they can make an informed choice about using them.

Cancer Research UK is also supporting our campaign. They have been of tremendous value to us in providing statistical evidence to support our campaign which is helping us to educate the public and young people in particular about the risks associated with sunbed use. Findings from a Cancer Research UK study in 2009, showed that over 50% of girls aged 15 – 17 years old in Liverpool had used a sunbed which is much higher than the national average of 11%.

But it's no good lecturing teenage girls without offering them an alternative because the prize of a golden tan is still there for the taking. So as part of our local health campaign we wanted to show girls how to get the look without the health risk. Our local campaign is being supported by fake-tan brand St. Moriz. A series of events in Liverpool City Centre is ongoing to show young Liverpoolian girls how to get the perfect fake-tan and educate them about the dangers of sunbed use. These events feature fake tan demonstrations, one-to-one consultations with tanning experts and much more. We hope this will be a great way to help teenage girls 'Bin the Beds' and start using fake tan to get the look without the health risk.

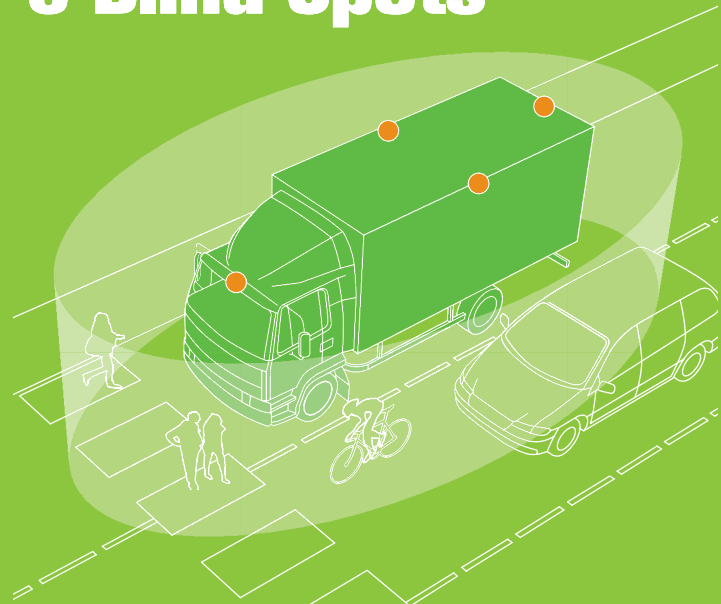
As part of our website campaign we are also launching a YouTube channel packed full of fake tan tutorials and a Facebook community so girls can join in with the campaign, and we are taking the campaign into schools and colleges across Liverpool.

Some might question why should a local authority concern itself with sunbeds? The answer is a simple one. We have responsibility for public health and the statistics speak for themselves. Just like smoking campaigns, drink-driving campaigns and seat-belt wearing campaigns where we know there is avoidable risk, we can help save lives if we commit ourselves to education campaigns that change public behaviour. Sunbeds are no different to that. If we can convince even a few young people to avoid sunbeds we are actively preventing future deadly cancers. We don't want our young people to have a look to die for.

Contact: Cllr Roy Gladden, is the Assistant Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health at Liverpool City Council

To support the lobbying campaign and view details of the activities go to www.thelooktodiefor.co.uk

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State of the Market : Street Lighting

Phil Brennan of APSE explores the findings of a recent survey on the 'state of the market' in Street Lighting and highlights the main findings for the sector.

Financial resources are a major issue for all council services and street lighting is no different. 21 of 46 respondents noted their budgets had decreased over the past 12 months with another 17 saying they remained static compared with the year before. When looking at budgets for the year to come 25 or 54% of those surveyed expected a decrease in budget allocation. The trend over the 5 years of data collection reflects higher percentages expecting a decrease with fewer expecting budgets to remain the same.

When looking at the percentage of maintenance to and investment in the asset that would be covered by the coming years' budget the answers were varied. 29% thought they would have enough funding to cover 100% of the maintenance and investment needs. A number of these are PFI contracts which are set in terms of service and cost for a number of years without the option of altering the services provided. The remainder, 32 of 45 respondents, thought that they would not have enough funding to cover all of the maintenance and investment

needs. 11 respondents thought they would have less than 50% of funding needed. Needless to say trying to deliver a service without the necessary resources is difficult. In this case it is likely to result in a deterioration of the condition of the stock, whilst repairs will take longer to be completed.

32 of 45 councils responding had seen their training budgets remain the same over the past 12 months whilst none had increased. The remaining 13 councils, or about 30%, have seen training budgets decrease over the period. Training budgets are often one of the first resources to be reduced in times of austerity and it appears that many local authorities have taken this option already. It may be surprising that 32 of the councils responding to this survey have not had training budgets cut over the last 12 months but they most likely fall into the category of having had them cut already. Apprenticeships schemes are only offered by 18 (39%) of the 46 councils who responded. Previous figures were 35%, 45% and 33% which appear to show that there are

a group of local authorities who understand the value of their apprenticeship schemes and view them as a priority. As a result, the schemes appear relatively safe from budget cuts.

The economic downturn undoubtedly saw fewer staff leaving local authority jobs voluntarily. In 2009 (when the survey included highways staff in addition to lighting staff), 37% of respondents said they had either not recruited anyone or had not experienced difficulty doing so. In 2014, this figure equivalent figure was 70%. Recruitment freezes remain an issue and will presumably continue for the foreseeable future although different regions fair differently.

76% of all respondents felt that absence levels within their council were acceptable. This is a steadily increasing figure up from 68% in 2011 and it is to be hoped that this trend continues. The issue of sickness amongst small numbers of staff and its impact on the service remains a problem for those with small teams or an ageing workforce. The average age of staff (from 34 responses) is 46 years old.

When asked whether councils currently sell their services to external organisations 22% replied that they do not trade and are not considering. Over the 5 years of the survey this has fluctuated between 45% and 22%. These organisations have presumably taken the decision to concentrate on their own local service users and ensure the service provided is top quality. A small number are considering it as an option whilst a small number of others are likely to start in the near future. This is line with current thinking on generating income from all sources where capacity allows it

Of the 45 respondents, 32 have dimmed some of their lights, 16 have reduced the hours they light and 9 of them have switched off some lights whilst the remaining 8 local authorities have not taken any of these measures.

The provision of a street lighting service remains one of the most basic council services providing light for vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement, helping to reduce the incidence and fear of crime as well as providing aesthetic quality to many public places. However the soaring cost of electricity, cuts to local government budgets and developments in lighting equipment and systems have all had an impact upon the way this service has been delivered in recent years. The responses to this survey go some way to backing up these trends

A report this year by MarketsandMarkets expects the worldwide smart lighting market to be worth \$56billion dollars by 2020 claiming that the market for lighting control systems is increasing dramatically due to government and stakeholders focusing on reducing energy use. Demand for further technical innovation in the market should be fuelled by the need to use less energy, reduce carbon emissions and yet address the fear of crime for an ageing population.

Contact: Phil Brennan on pbrennan@apse.org.uk



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Year 16 data collection: Deadlines for data templates

It's not too late to submit your performance networks data for Year 16! The next phase of the data validation process is to hold specific error checking meetings which commence on 15th September 2014, so if you haven't already done so, please try and send us your data by this date. We will be running a number of different checks on the data during this time and we will still have time to query data with you. If your data is received after this date, then we cannot guarantee that it will be fully error checked before it is included in the final reports. The final deadlines for the performance reports are as follows. However, the sooner we receive your submission, the more time we have to check it for any errors and query these with you.

Building cleaning	7 October
Building maintenance	10 October
Catering - education	6 October
Catering - other	7 October
Catering - welfare	7 October
Cemetery and crematorium	9 October
Civic, cultural & community venues	8 October
Highways and winter maintenance	14 October
Parks	10 October
Refuse collection	31 October
Sports and leisure	17 October
Street cleansing	15 October
Street lighting	14 October
Transport	16 October

Projects

Land Audit Management System (LAMS) for green spaces

LAMS has been used for a number of year by some authorities in Scotland as a means of measuring grounds maintenance standards in terms of quality and the purpose of this project is to roll this out to other authorities throughout UK. Following on from a successful training session in Knowsley, the pilot has now began with 8 local authorities participating in this. There are 3 inspection rounds (June, August and October), with the results being reported back to the pilot authorities after each inspection round. The findings from the pilot will be reported back to the Blackpool conference in December.

Environmental health benchmarking pilot

APSE performance networks has been working with a number of local authorities and the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SOCOEHS) in developing a pilot benchmarking model for Environmental Health Services. A new data collection template has been developed through a small officer working group and this has now been rolled out as a pilot data collection and benchmarking project for APSE performance networks members. The data templates have now been issued, a data validation meeting will be held in September and the full reports will be produced in November.

Sports and leisure workshops

APSE performance networks has carried out a review of the templates for Sports and Leisure facility management with the aim of ensuring that the benchmarking model remains relevant to a changing environment for local authorities and their leisure providers whether in-house, Trust or external contractors. A series of workshops for leisure clients and providers have now been delivered with over 60 delegates attending these. The workshops looked at some of the main changes to the sports and leisure facility management model, including a reduction in the data completion requirements, as well as how to use performance data to manage services in a challenging financial and commercial environment.

For more information on getting involved in the above projects or to receive more information on the changes to the sports and leisure model, please email performance.networks@apse.org.uk or telephone the performance networks team on 0161 772 1810.

Date for your diary!

Performance networks seminar

Hilton Hotel, Blackpool, 4-5 December 2014

Contact: performance.networks@apse.org.uk



Making the leadership leap

During my time in local government, I found increasing amounts of my capacity being taken up by an endless stream of meetings: meetings about meetings, side meetings, pre meetings, actual meetings; emails- hundreds a day in the end, and phone calls.

I recently met a senior manager who told me that her life was ruled by 30 minute slots with not enough time to move from one event to the next. Ironically, the more senior you become the less discretion you seem to have with your time.

Looking in from 'the outside' I've had the opportunity to work with leaders, many of whom have been carrying unrealistic diary schedules, with workload commitments to match. Without careful leadership, and an understanding of the culture and dynamics of an organisation it is easy to see how the capacity and capability of so many people is taken up 'feeding a beast'.

It is all too easy to talk about an organisation as if it has a life of it's own. The majority of the governance is drafted by specialists in: legal, finance, human resources, and policy who work for the organisation.

In the last few years I have also begun to experience a proliferation of programme, and project boards. And so, I feel bound to add Programme Management to the list of functions that create an ever-growing set of mechanistic constraints. These keep employees tied to templates, forms, and other documentation in the name of good governance, and contributing to making operational life overly complicated.

A client I recently worked with became so obsessed with the mechanisms of programmes, policy and governance that there was scarcely capacity to actually get on and do the work to make the programme happen. Only the people at the front line knew what was actually going on and were forced to locally fix 'work a rounds' within processes to make them work in practice and serve customers needs.

Achieving a shift in the culture within an organisation is key to delivering systemic change. The type of change required to enable the sector to meet the challenges thrown up by the economic, and demographic landscape means that leadership thinking about the design and management of work must change.

Defining the purpose and direction of the organisation is critical and must be understood in digestible terms by everyone. In my experience this is all too often tied up in overly complicated statements, priorities, and plans for the 'corporate organisation', but do not translate easily in to something tangible and meaningful to either the customers, or the front line workers.

The design of the organisation: it's values, culture, behaviours, policies and procedures, set the context and climate for operational life within the organisation, and will either make or break future success.

However, to 'insiders' the culture of an organisation is largely invisible. It's a known, taken for granted environment. A culture made up of a history of systems, rituals, language, metaphors, and the visible environment. It is physically represented in: structures, systems, processes and practices; in leadership style; and by methods of reward and recognition.

If culture is about the predominant way of thinking and behaving within the organisation it is vital that leaders pay attention to the nature of the current culture and its influence upon other people's actions.

Leaders influence organisational culture by their words, actions, and demonstrable behaviours.

Having an integrated approach to organisational purpose/vision seen through the eyes of the end user; organisation design; leadership style and behaviours; management practices; communications and stakeholder engagement is critical. Significantly all this must be supported by the right policies and practices to engender a sustainable shift in culture.

We are all creatures of habit and become accustomed to the prevailing culture within our environment. This is matched by our expectations of others. A decision to change how we behave has to be matched by the intention of others in the group to do the same. Such change needs to be nurtured and supported otherwise individuals who experiment with a different way of behaving will feel the force of the prevailing culture from within the group resulting in conflict, and a reluctance to engage further.

The purpose of leadership is to being clear in setting the intended direction and engaging key stakeholders to realise purpose, and then creating and sustaining an environment that makes it possible for everyone to work at their best more of the time.

Simple to say - a work of art to achieve. So, if what you are doing isn't working why not do something different!

Contact: Phil Badley has previously worked as a senior leader in a number of local authorities, and now works as a Leadership Coach, Organisation Development Consultant, and Interim Executive. He can be contacted at philip.badley@btinternet.com or on 07805 597716

APSE housing, construction and building maintenance
seminar 2014

Keeping your house in order: Learning from case studies

Bookings for this event are now being taken.
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A major two-day seminar at the Hilton Leeds City Hotel

Thursday 9 & Friday 10 October 2014

apse seminars

Report back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events on behalf of our members

July and August proved busy months for APSE with a range of conferences, meetings and advocacy activity on behalf of APSE members.

England

LGA forums

APSE held two important roundtable forums at the LGA conference in July. The Chief Executive of Lancaster City Council Mark Cullinan, spoke at the first one on his council's journey to becoming an Ensuring Council. The second forum featured a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of trading company models. Both were very well attended with several Chief Executives and Leaders of Councils present.

NLGN workshops

APSE and NLGN held workshops in Liverpool and London as part of an ongoing research on how local authorities can increase public value from the money they spend in local private sector markets. Both events were very well attended with lively inputs from participants.

Future of partnerships

De Montfort University hosted a workshop on how governance, scrutiny and accountability can be improved in strategic partnerships and what this will look like in coming years. This is part of an ongoing research project sponsored by AMEY.

Keeping your house in order

The Hilton Leeds City Hotel, will host the APSE Housing and Building Maintenance Seminar on 9 and 10 October 2014. Housing and building maintenance has steadily moved up the national agenda as the supply of homes becomes a major issue, the need to maintain existing properties continues and efficient local government services remain a priority for all working in the sector. The event will also cover day to day bread and butter issue for operational managers including right first time repairs, asset management, fire risk, health and safety and lift maintenance.

APSE Energy

APSE Energy continues to take forward the case for municipal energy and a number of meetings have taken place with Government Departments on 11 June with the Heat Networks Delivery Unit of DECC and on 18 June with the Head of Community Energy at DECC. Meetings have also taken place with civil servants from the Energy, Water and Flood division of the Welsh Government on 2 July and the Heat, Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Investment Team of the Scottish Government on 17 July.

APSE Energy also met with the shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Rt. Hon. Caroline Flint M.P. to discuss local authority involvement in civic energy schemes on 18 July.

Plug into the learning

APSE Energy has organised a number of learning events for its members and the wider APSE membership including a workshop on decentralised energy with OVO Energy in York on 26 June; a seminar on using former industrial land for renewable energy projects on 3 July at Derbyshire County Council; an energy efficiency workshop at Old Trafford on 7 July; and a workshop on proposed Government changes to solar subsidies in Oxford on 15 July. Further workshops and learning events are planned for the Autumn.

The Beautiful South

Following APSE's south and south west regions commitment to increase the number of events in the region APSE Principal Advisor Lorna Box has planned a full Autumn programme of events. For details view the APSE South and South West Pages on the APSE website or contact Lorna on lbox@apse.org.uk

And a special welcome to new member South Norfolk District Council who joined APSE in July 2014.



Philip Monaghan, Author of 'Local Water: The challenge and the prize for the ensuring council as a steward of water'

All washed up

The Flooding and Water Stewardship Seminar hosted in Oxford in July 2014 was a great success. Delegates from councils as far afield as Fife to Cornwall and Tendring to Swansea, gathered in Oxford to collaborate with cross-sector organisations to ensure a better planning and responses to future storms and floods. Key speakers included Dr Chris Huntingford from the Centre of Hydrology and Ecology, Paul Hendy, Operations Director at the Scottish Flood Forum and Heather Shepherd of the National Flood Forum. Cllr Van Coulter of Oxford City Council and David Steels of Tewkesbury Borough Council gave fascinating presentations on the impact of flooding in their local areas, sharing the strategic and operational work underway in their respective councils. At the event, APSE launched its report in

response to the flooding and storms of this winter, 'Local Water: The challenge and the prize for the ensuring council as a steward of water' which can be ordered from the APSE website. The seminar presentations can be also be downloaded online at www.apse.org.uk

Wales

Just Williams

The APSE Wales AGM and Seminar was held on 3 July 2014 and was addressed by Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Local Government and Government Business at the Welsh Government. Following on from the report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, known as the Williams Report, which included the proposed merger of local authorities into 10, 11 or 12 in total, rather than the current 22, the seminar focused on transformation and re-organisation in Wales and included speakers from WLGA and Unison Wales. It also featured a presentation from Telford and Wrekin Council on 'Managing the transition in an English Council', NILGA on 'Experiences of re-organisation in Northern Ireland' and innovation case studies from around the UK.

In defence of Localism

WLGA have published a paper called 'In Defence of Localism - Elected Government in Wales and the Impact of Austerity', which looks at new models for local government in Wales and draws on APSE's model of the Ensuring Council as being more akin to the tradition in Wales. On 8 July, the Welsh Government published 'Devolution, Democracy and Delivery White Paper - Reforming Local Government' and APSE is compiling a response to this consultation on behalf of its membership.

Renewing Wales

APSE Wales hosted its first renewables and energy efficiency advisory group in Llandrindod Wells on the 19 June which explored the issues of delivering energy efficiency in the public sector and maximising the use of renewable energy. The new group has been incorporated in Wales with the agreement of the APSE Wales AGM.

Scotland

The future role of elected members in Scotland

Following agreement at the Scottish AGM at the end of May, De Montfort University (in conjunction with the University of Edinburgh) will be producing a Scotland report based on the ongoing APSE work on the Future Role of Elected Members. A focus group of Scottish Elected Members are meeting next month to explore areas in more detail. The AGM also agreed that Sports and Leisure Advisory Group be merged with the current Parks, Grounds & Street services group due to similar cross cutting issues affecting all areas.

On behalf of APSE Members in Scotland...

APSE has held a series of meetings with key bodies and Scottish Government on behalf of our members in Scotland. A meeting

has taken place with members of the Heat, Energy Efficiency & Low Carbon Investment team of Scottish Government to discuss APSE Energy. Further meetings have taken place with the Scottish Improvement Service to discuss Performance Networks and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and there are positive discussions on going in these areas. Discussions have also taken place with the Scottish Government and Zerowaste Scotland on the impact of the introduction of the tax on plastic bags on school meals.

Building blocks to improved performance

The APSE Scotland Building and Housing Advisory Group has approved a working group to look into developing and enhancing the current Scotland Performance Networks report for building maintenance. The group have met in July and August and will be providing feedback to the full advisory group on progress to date at the next meeting taking place at the start of September.

Autumn advisory group rounds

The next round of advisory groups have already kicked off in Scotland with the Roads and Street Lighting group meeting in Perth, presentations were given by Robert Muir, Sales Director for one of APSEs Approved Partners, Nu-Phalt Group Ltd as well as Joe Smith, Senior Manager (Roads), North Ayrshire Council. Full details of all APSE Scotland advisory groups can be found our website www.apse.org.uk or email Lmcmillan@apse.org.uk

Northern Ireland

In the shadows

As the shadow councils move towards vesting day following reorganisation in Northern Ireland a lot of work is being undertaken within the existing and shadow councils by officers and members. APSE has been supporting this work and intends to continue doing so by holding a number of events in the coming months. Events will focus on topics which will help the sector move forward over the coming years and we are happy to hear about potential ideas for content for meetings. Please email Phil Brennan on pbrennan@apse.org.uk to contribute your ideas. APSE's Chief Executive continues to chair the local government reform joint forum.

Performance improvement

Performance improvement is an important element of the Local Government Act (see Part 12) and APSE has forwarded information to DoE about its benchmarking and performance management model, Performance Networks. This is an established model used by nearly 200 councils over a 15 year period covering service and corporate issues. It meets all of the criteria noted in the Act and is backed up by the regular APSE meetings held in Northern Ireland providing an opportunity for process benchmarking. The model can easily be adapted to meet specific circumstances in the region. For details contact Phil Brennan on pbrennan@apse.org.uk

Targeting your audience



Bear with me but there's a story about The Beatles that they only got big because they were really good at telling the world their story.

The tale goes that it's because of Brian Epstein that four lads got to shake the world. No Brian, no crowds at airports and no US TV appearance.

Imagine if they'd never left the Cavern Club and never sold a record. They'd have been big anyway, wouldn't they? Nope. You'd never have heard them.

The simple truth is whether you are Lennon and McCartney or running a library, transport team or looking after a local government service unless you communicate with people you're not going to do it as successfully as you could be. The days are long gone of just doing a good job. Today, you need to do a good job and tell people.

Of course, things were so much easier for Brian Epstein. There were a handful of music papers, a few radio stations and the whole family gathered to watch 'Ready, Steady Go' on a Friday night.

When I started my career in local government communications eight years ago there were five newspapers in the borough and 21 journalists, photographers and sub-editors. When I left this year to set-up comms2point0 to help advise on how to communicate better there wasn't a single newspaper left based in the borough and just 6.25 people dealing with news.

We can now talk to residents directly through Facebook and Twitter without having to go through the Priesthood of journalists. Social media? Ofcom tells us that 54 per cent of adults use it, 77 per cent of households have broadband and

66 per cent of 65 to 74-year-olds have internet access. Who plays the most games on social media? Amazingly, adults over 65. Almost a fifth of them are playing a game like Farmville.

The media landscape has never been more fragmented, terrifying and exciting all at the same time.

Today, the secret is understanding your audience and working out the content that will be most effective. A poster? Twitter? A radio interview?

Put simply, the earlier you involve a communications person in your planning, the greater chance of your project being a success. A good comms person can sit down with you and draw-up a communications plan. It's simple. You work out where you are, where you want to go and you agree an objective. Not a vague objective like 'more awareness' but something measurable, like recruiting 10 extra foster carers because each one will help save you £10k a year. Once you have this you can look at who you'd like to communicate with and the best way you can do it. Is a leaflet in plain English the best way to reach that group of senior citizens? Or maybe, LinkedIn if you want to reach business people?

Oh, and while you are planning, have a think about what resources you have to communicate what you want people to know. There's a story of a multi-million pound road scheme that got endless sea of traffic cones flak because of the disruption of it getting built. Nobody knew that it was going to help create 5,000 new jobs. Especially as the engineers wouldn't find £250 to pay for a freelance photographers to take images to celebrate it.

In a stand-out example, Staffordshire County Council did it brilliantly when their comms team worked with the fostering and adoption team. They worked together to ditch the old poster with a stock picture of a sad-looking child. They discovered the target audience they were hungry for were people in their 40s who were ex-police or ex-prison officers who could take on children who were tough to place. They changed what they did. They also worked to speed-up the process. The benefit? A frankly brilliant £1 million of savings.

It's day-to-day too where comms can work. Local government web body SOCITM put the cost of dealing with an issue through a phone call at £2.83 and £7.81 for a face-to-face transaction. Web is 15p. But unless you communicate the best way people can contact you they won't do it.

Isn't what you do a song worth singing?

Contact: Dan Slee is director of comms2point0 who help organisations in the public sector communicate better. You can reach him via dan@comms2point0, @danslee on Twitter and at <http://www.comms2point0.co.uk/>



Arran Outdoor Centre

There's a lot going on in Arran – and a lot to be said about Arran Outdoor Education Centre.

For starters, here's what two recent visitors posted on the world's largest online travel site:

- **Just finished a brilliant week at the centre which has excellent facilities and great food. Not easy pleasing youngsters but they did it! Five out of five.**
- **A wet and very,very windy day turned into the best part of our holiday. This place has a wealth of facilities and staff were very welcoming. Fantastic time.**

Arran Outdoor Education Centre is a superb all-round island adventure facility situated in North Ayrshire on the beautiful west coast of Scotland.

The £4.5m centre, which is operated by the local authority, has become the perfect base for schools, families and groups – in fact anyone who has a love of the great outdoors – since it was built in 2008.

North Ayrshire Council has recently launched an ambitious marketing plan for the purpose-built unit that can sleep up to 46 people. The aim is to reach out to a wider audience and take advantage of the tremendous growth in activity holidays around the UK.

Further potential has also been identified with the imminent introduction of lower ferry fares to Arran as part of a Scottish Government initiative to boost trade on the islands.

Arran itself is also taking off as a great place to visit for a short break or an extended holiday.

It is the seventh largest island in Scotland and the largest island in the Firth of Clyde.

Affectionately known as 'Scotland in miniature', this vibrant island is considered by many to possess the great qualities of Scotland in one handy-size package.

Many visitors make a regular pilgrimage to Arran because it is just an hour away from the mainland and

the short ferry trip is one of the highlights of the excursion.

Arran regularly astounds visitors with an incredible variety of scenery. Explore mountains, woodlands, beaches and outlying islands which offer many outdoor activity options and heritage sites.

The Arran Outdoor Education Centre is already popular among schools and youth organisations because of its high status among other outdoor facilities across the country.

A growing number of adults are choosing to stay there because of the range of courses and equipment on offer.

Those who take part in activities like kayaking, sailing, hillwalking, mountain biking, climbing, gorge walking and abseiling will be right at home at the centre which lies just four miles from the ferry terminal.

Situated in a picturesque corner of Lamlash, opposite Holy Isle, the complex has two lounges, a dining room and a conservatory complementing its assortment of en-suite bedrooms.

Conference facilities and a classroom are also available to bigger groups and business parties.

Simple family fun breaks, tailored group packages and daily activities can be organised to suit everyone's needs.

All specialised equipment and instruction can be included – along with transport to and from the ferry, if required.

The centre is fully accessible to clients with additional support needs.

Arran Outdoor Centre is the place to escape to when you want a break but are not quite ready to put your feet up.

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APSE briefings

14/30	Reducing Fire Risk at Waste Management Sites (Fire Control Guidance – Consultation Draft)	August 2014
14/29	Street lighting state of the market survey 2014	August 2014
14/28	NAO Report – Maintaining Strategic Infrastructure: Roads	August 2014
14/27	Building Cleaning: State of the Market Survey 2014	August 2014
14/26	Renewables and Climate change: State of the market	August 2014
14/25	Performance Networks Environmental Health Pilot	July 2014
14/24	Improving food choices in the school community	July 2014
14/23	Housing (Scotland) Bill	July 2014
14/22	'ALARM Survey 2014'	July 2014

APSE health and safety seminar 2014

Health and safety across the services



A major conference at Friends House, London
Thursday 25 September 2014

Meetings diary

September

5 September	Scottish Building & Housing Advisory Group	Cumbernauld
9–11 September	Annual Seminar	Nottingham
16 September	South/South West Highways and Street Lighting	Taunton
16 September	Scottish Soft FM Advisory Group	Hamilton
18 September	Transport Advisory group	Manchester
23 September	South/South West Sports and leisure advisory group	London
24 September	Scottish Renewables & Energy Efficiency Advisory Group	Motherwell
24 September	Parks & Grounds Maintenance Advisory	Manchester
25 September	Scottish Waste & Recycling Advisory Group	Hamilton
30 September	South and South West vehicle maintenance advisory group	Cambridge

October

1 October	Refuse & Street Cleansing Advisory Group	Manchester
7 October	South/South West Waste management and refuse advisory group	Cambridge
9-10 October	Housing and Building Maintenance Seminar	Leeds
16 October	Winter Maintenance Seminar	London
17 October	Catering advisory group	Manchester
21 October	Leisure advisory group	Manchester
23 October	Building Cleaning advisory group	Manchester
22 October	Scottish Transport & Mechanical Advisory Group	TBC

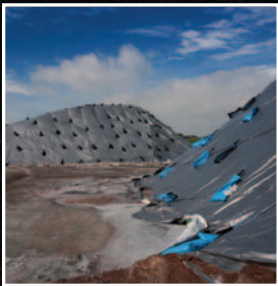
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