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Association for Public Service Excellence

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Loch ahead to Aviemore

**A look at our Scotland Fleet, Waste and
Grounds Seminar 2026**

**Shaping the Future of Fleet,
Waste and Grounds Services in
Scotland**

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**30 Years of NRG Riverside: From
Fleet Provider to Operational
Backbone**

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**Simpler Recycling – What are
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Editorial



Mo Baines
APSE Chief Executive

Geo-Politics: Local Impacts

Whilst international issues have on occasions permeated local council politics – think boycotts and declarations of support for various causes – rarely in recent decades have we experienced such significant shocks in global terms with the frequency we have experienced in the 2020s.

The decade began with impact of COVID 19 a pandemic that tested the very core of public service delivery. The war in Ukraine followed with shocks to markets and disruption to energy supply lines, and local councils dealing with Homes for Ukraine and local placements.

Global unrest and poverty have also seen the continuing rise of unplanned immigration, with ensuing hostilities playing out at a hyperlocal level as council's have battled limited resources to support

both adults and unaccompanied children, whilst sensitively tackling issues of community cohesion.

The inflationary issues we now see as a result of the US conflict with Iran remain exceptional. The conflict threatens the long-term plans for growth but creates immediate issues for local councils.

From supporting residents with the cost-of-living, whilst facing their own raising costs of fuel and energy to keep services running, alongside the disruption to supply chains impacting on services as diverse as school meals through to construction, transport and fleet, it is a rocky road ahead for our APSE member councils!

Looking for support? Visit our website to explore our free webinars and roundtables.

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Report Back

A round-up of APSE advocacy and events



APSE Associates attending a presentation by Head of APSE Training, Fiona Sutton-Wilson at the Associates Annual Away Day.

APSE Associates Unite for Two Days of Learning and Collaboration

We welcomed our fantastic network of APSE associates to our Annual Away Day in Ashton-Under-Lyme for two days of networking, APSE updates and knowledge sharing.

Our associates are carefully selected for their skills and expertise, and over the two days, to enhance their support to our member councils they discussed developments in APSE's interim management and consultancy services now delivered through APSE Synergy, our wholly owned ethical company, the growth in support to member councils through APSE Energy concentrating on energy efficiency support and cost-savings, the insights available exclusive to our associates through APSE Performance Networks and the bespoke training solutions, often introduced by our associates to support local councils on an improvement journey. Day two focused on corporate issues with presentations on organisational matters including value for money for member councils and the exciting new developments enabling members easier access to all of the association's services.

Councils Come Together to Discuss the Future of Parks and Greenspaces

On Thursday 12 March, we welcomed local councils and industry leaders from across the parks, nature and environment sector to the APSE Parks Seminar 2026. This year's event, held at Old Trafford Football Stadium in Manchester, focused on working together to deliver greener,

Delegates at the Midlands Waste Forum: Countdown to Simpler Recycling and LGR at Chester House in North Northamptonshire.



APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines, APSE Principal Advisor, Bonnie Jee, Cllr Dr Juna Sathian and Cllr Simon Letts at the Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar.

healthier and more resilient places for people and nature. Chaired by Cllr Sam Lux, Nottingham City Council Cabinet Member for Climate and Nature, the Seminar explored the national, local and frontline landscape of the parks service, with expert insights from Natural England, the Office for Environmental Protection, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest Research, Forestry Commission, APSE and Denbighshire County Council.

Exploring the Changing Landscape of Waste and Recycling

On Thursday 5 May, elected members and local authority officers came together for a discussion into the changing landscape of waste and recycling. The forum explored the challenges of Local Government Reorganisation, the introduction of the Simpler Recycling Legislation and the current policy landscape of the service.

APSE Principal Advisor, Bonni Jee, shared best practice approaches for local authorities to take to deal with fly-tipping, as well as outlining the current waste policy landscape. North Northamptonshire Council and South Kesteven District Council shared case studies of the work they have carried out to transform and enhance their waste and recycling services.

Exploring Innovations in Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance

On Thursday 19 March, we welcomed local councils and industry leaders from the transport, highways and street lighting sector to our 2026 Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar. This year's event, held at St James' Park Football Stadium in Newcastle, focused on the challenges of delivering a high-quality service against a backdrop of local government reorganisation and decarbonisation.

Chaired by Cllr Simon Letts, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at Southampton City Council, the Seminar was opened with a key note address from Cllr Dr Juna Sathian, cabinet member for Climate Change and Transport at Newcastle City Council, with speakers exploring the current landscape of the service, with expert insights from local authorities, as well as the Road Surface Treatments Association, Universal Matter, NY Highways, KaarbonTech and the Institute of Highway Engineers.

AI Readiness, Risk and Governance in UK Local Government

On Tuesday 24 March, we were joined by Daniel Shorr of GoLLM, Dr Luciana Blaha of Heriot-Watt University and Yasmine Hajji of Socitm for an insightful discussion into the practical and ethical use of AI in local authorities. The webinar drew on the insights of the *AI Readiness of UK Local Authorities 2025* report which collated findings from 208 councils from across the UK.



Delegates at the Let it Bee: Nature Recovery in Practice Parks Seminar at Old Trafford Football Stadium in Manchester

The timely session focused on the crucial considerations councils should take surrounding artificial intelligence, including governance, risk, accountability, data infrastructure and organisational culture. It was a fascinating conversation which prepared councils with the tools to effectively adopt AI responsibly and strategically.

State of the Market Parks and Greenspaces Report Featured in HortWeek

We were thrilled to see that our 2026 State of the Market Parks and Greenspaces report was featured in HortWeek's piece on the challenges facing local authority parks services.

The report outlined the growing importance of parks and greenspaces in addressing biodiversity, climate change and conservation challenges. The report also highlighted the pressures facing the sector, including projected funding decreases, uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation and the need to secure dual buy-in from senior leaders and residents.

Local Energy, Local Climate, Local Action

On Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th March, we welcomed industry leaders and local government experts working across energy, environment and sustainability to our BIG Energy Summit in Glasgow. Titled 'Local energy, local climate, local action', the event focused on the global environmental issues impacting local decision making.

The Seminar, supported by DESNZ, drew on expert insights from local authorities across the UK, as well as Great British Energy, regional Net Zero Hubs, Equity Energies, Dynamon, the Climate Change Committee, YES Energy Solutions and LASER. The first day of the Summit concluded with the BIG APSE Energy Awards which celebrated the outstanding leadership, collaboration and practical delivery of local authority energy teams.

Delegates attending the BIG Energy Summit 2026 at the Birmingham Conference and Events Centre.



The finalists of the National Apprentice Awards held at the Housing and Building Seminar in Glasgow.

Scotland

Tackling Today's Housing Challenges at the Glasgow Housing and Building Seminar

On Thursday 5th and Friday 6th March, industry experts and local authority teams came together at our Housing and Building Seminar in Glasgow to discuss the critical issues facing the sector. From social housing regulations and decarbonisation to homelessness and recruitment challenges, the Seminar provided a valuable platform for fascinating discussions, networking and collaboration. The first day of the seminar concluded with the National Apprentice of the Year Awards which celebrated the fantastic achievements of apprentices and councils across Scottish local authorities.

Wales

Discussing the Future of Local Government in Wales

APSE Wales welcomed Andy Mudd, APSE Associate, and Darron Dupre, Head of Local Government at UNISON Cymru, to a discussion exploring the changing landscape of local government in Wales. Drawing on the findings of UNISON Cymru's latest report on the challenges and choices facing the sector, the meeting explored funding pressures, workforce challenges and the rising demand on council services.

Northern Ireland

Creating Healthier Communities in Northern Ireland

APSE Northern Ireland hosted a free online meeting which discussed how local councils can encourage and sustain recreational activity in communities across Northern Ireland. John Boyle of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mafalda Brennan of Space and Place explored the redevelopment of the Fermanagh Lakeland Forum, highlighting the health and inclusion benefits of the transformation. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council discussed their Causeway Healthy Kids initiative which promotes healthy lifestyles for primary school children through physical activity sessions and nutrition information. Deaglan O'Hara of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council shared the results of the transformation of leisure centres across the borough, including increased visitor numbers, customer satisfaction and membership sign ups. The discussion highlighted the value of local leisure centres in encouraging healthy lifestyles and community engagement.



Shaping the Future of Fleet, Waste and Grounds Services in Scotland

APSE Scotland Principal Advisor, Louise Melville, provides a preview of this year's programme of fascinating speakers, leading exhibitors and networking opportunities at the Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar.

We are excited to welcome local councils, industry specialists and leading exhibitors to our Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar at the MacDonal Aviemore Resort from 19 – 22 May.

Set against the scenic backdrop of the Cairngorms, the event offers local government specialists in fleet, waste and grounds services the chance to explore new and exciting innovations within the industry and debate the future of these vital services.

With over 110 exhibition stands from the UK's leading suppliers, this event features Scotland's largest trade exhibition of its kind and provides delegates with the opportunity to view a huge range of products and services. This year's event is kindly sponsored by McNicoll (vehicle hire powered by the AVIS network).

Expert Insight, Best Practice and Sector Collaboration

Local government colleagues from across Scotland will have the opportunity to hear from a wide range of expert speakers representing both the public and private sectors.

Sessions will cover topics including collaborative waste co-design initiatives between the Scottish Government and local authorities, the use of digital technologies to deliver high-quality, high-performing kerbside collections, and the implementation of drug and alcohol policies, including managing prescribed medications.

Discussions will also explore associated risks and impacts on fleet compliance, regulation, and fleet decarbonisation. Delegates will have

the opportunity to share best practice from across the sectors on materials including flexible plastics, food waste and ETS and pEPR.

Parks, grounds and streets services are also strongly represented, with a dedicated discussion forum and a programme of focused presentations. These include insights from East Lothian Council on their recently published Open Space Strategy, alongside discussion of the increasingly important topic of biodiversity net gain.

Mapping the Future

The seminar's keynote session, 'Mapping the future: Scotland's path to 2030 (Part 1)', will explore the Circular Economy Bill and Waste Route Map, a growing priority for the local authority sector in Scotland.

The session will also include insights and reflections from across the UK, including from Dan Cooke, Director of Policy, Communications and External Affairs for CIWM. Dan will provide insights into the UK trends and policy developments, as well as reflections on the Scotland route map.

Following this will be a joint session from Scottish Government and a Scottish local authority, looking at the co-design process for sustainable household recycling solutions. The session will close with a presentation from John Arthur, Recycling Consultant for Zero Waste Scotland, who will be exploring digital technologies for high quality and high performing kerbside collections.

For parks and grounds colleagues, there will be a Parks and Grounds Discussion Forum running concurrently which will debate the latest challenges and opportunities for the sector.



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Driving Cleaner Streets and Smarter Fleets

Our second session, 'From challenge to change: Delivering effective street cleansing and litter reduction', will examine the current challenges, emerging trends, and the strategic decisions shaping cleaner, more sustainable public spaces.

This will include a presentation from Frankie O'Rourke, Head of Service Parks and Streetscene at Glasgow City Council.

Our Transport Advisory Discussion Forum will be discussing current issues and challenges surrounding fleet maintenance, with a case study from Dundee City Council on their coordinated EV charging council wide developments.

Reducing Risk Through Policy and Practice

Delegates are invited to explore our exhibition space and enjoy a refreshment break, kindly sponsored by Stertil Koni Ltd, before attending our final session of the day, 'Driving safely: managing risk through drug and alcohol policies.'

The session will include a presentation from Ruth Kydd, Insurance Manager at City of Edinburgh Council, who will discuss managing risks associated with prescribed medication, drugs and legal highs. Fraser Crichton, Corporate Fleet Manager at Dundee City Council, will share insights into how they are driving change through their Alcolock system.

Sector Challenges, National Strategy and Networking

The final discussion forum of the day will provide an opportunity for street cleansing and Streetscene colleagues to discuss Scotland's National Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy.

The forum will discuss the progression of actions from the strategy, with representation from the Strategic Delivery Partners. To conclude the first day of the seminar, delegates are invited to a 'dine around', kindly sponsored by FAUN Zoeller.

Strategic Approaches to Open Spaces and Biodiversity

The second day of the Seminar will open with our 'Designing for nature' session, with insights from Jennifer Lothian, Strategy, Policy and Development Manager at East Lothian Council and Fiona Sutton Wilson, Head of Training at APSE.

Jennifer will provide an overview of the Council's latest Open Space Strategy, outlining the national and local policy context and exploring their strategic vision for community and nature. Fiona will explore Biodiversity Net Gain for parks and greenspaces and its relevance to parks and green spaces, as well as highlight new areas of focus and development.



Transport Compliance, Technology and Decarbonisation

Session five, 'Transport responsibilities and compliance', will explore emerging technologies and fleet decarbonisation, with insights from the DVSA and Transport Scotland.

Gordon Thomson, Head of Service Group Development, and Neil Barlow, Head of Vehicle Policy and Engineering at the DVSA, will provide an overview of upcoming changes in technology, testing and enforcement, as well as considering the direction of travel for the sector.

The session will also cover fleet decarbonisation, a growing priority for local authority fleet teams working towards net-zero. A representative from Transport Scotland's HGV team will provide the latest updates on the key challenges, funding opportunities and delivery pathways facing local authorities.

Waste and recycling colleagues are invited to our Waste Discussion Forum, running concurrently to session five. Led by Kat Laasko, Recycling Partner at Zero Waste Scotland, the forum will explore the work being carried out by Zero Waste Scotland surrounding ETS and plastics.





Policy, Pilots and Practice

Delegates are invited to view our exhibition space before attending the final session of the seminar, 'Mapping the future: Scotland's path to 2030 (Part 2)'.

David Goodenough, Service Manager at Cireco, will share their experience of capturing and processing film and flexible plastics, including insights into the current policy context.

Paul Dougall, Co-ordinator – Neighbourhood Services at South Ayrshire Council, will be discussing South Ayrshire's food waste recycling trial, including their three food waste interventions and the results of the trial.

Sandy Anderson, Service Manager – Waste Operations, and Janet Mackenzie, Strategy Officer at Fife Council, will provide an overview of the pERP Improvement Action Process (IAP) pilot, sharing lessons from Fife's waste services, including why Fife was chosen, what the pilot involved, and what was achieved.

Our Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar not only provides opportunities for collaborative learning and insightful discussions but also offers local government decision-makers and heads of service the opportunity to come together and share best practice.

Celebrating Excellence and Collaboration

To conclude three days of insightful discussions and productive collaboration, APSE will be holding an evening reception on Thursday 21st May, kindly sponsored by Caledonian Enforcement Limited.

This will be followed by our charity dinner, sponsored by Dennis Eagle and Terbeg Matec, and our APSE Striving for Excellence Awards. The Awards, sponsored by Econ Engineering Ltd and Hillend Engineering, will celebrate the fantastic hard work and success of local authority services in Scotland.

By hosting the largest Scottish trade exhibition of its kind, we provide local government specialists with a valuable opportunity to network and engage with the latest technological advancements in fleet, equipment and ancillary supplies, from salt spreaders to asset management software. The exhibition also creates a dedicated space for developing new partnerships that can help transform and enhance frontline local government services.

To learn more about the APSE Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar, please visit the APSE website or contact Louise Melville on 01698 459051

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30 Years of NRG Riverside: From Fleet Provider to Operational Backbone



Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar exhibitor, NRG Riverside, reflects on 30 years of service in the fleet industry.

Thirty years ago, the vehicle hire sector looked very different. Fleet was simpler. Regulations were lighter. Data was limited. And for many operators, hiring vehicles was exactly that, a transaction.

Three decades on, the sector has been fundamentally reshaped. Today, for organisations running specialist and municipal fleets, vehicle hire sits much closer to the heart of operations. That shift is central to NRG Riverside's 30-year story.

Now managing more than 2,600 vehicles across a 17-depot network, the business has grown alongside the industries it serves. But scale alone does not define its position today. Instead, it reflects how the role of a hire provider has evolved.

"Our customers don't just need trucks," says CEO Darren Powell. "They need a partner who understands the operational reality they're working in and can help them navigate it. That's where we see our role."

Investment Before Everything Else

Long before customers see service improvements, they are shaped by decisions made behind the scenes.

Over the past five years, NRG Riverside has invested more than £300 million in fleet, alongside a £455 million refinancing completed in 2025. That level of commitment reflects a deliberate strategy: build capability ahead of demand.

"Our financial resilience is a key enabler of our strategy," says Chief Financial Officer Fran Reed.

"It allows us to take a long-term view, investing in fleet, infrastructure, and technology in a way that supports sustainable growth."

"It is about ensuring we are ready for where the market is going," he adds. In a sector defined by regulatory change and rising expectations, that forward planning is becoming essential rather than optional.

A More Technical Fleet, A More Complex Job

Long before customers see service improvements, they are shaped by decisions made behind the scenes.

"The vehicles we operate today are very different from those even ten years ago," says Fleet and Asset Director Chris Snelson. "Technology is embedded in every aspect of fleet performance, from safety to efficiency to compliance."

As a result, managing fleet is no longer just mechanical, it is analytical.

"This is not just about maintaining vehicles anymore," Chris adds. "It's about understanding the data they generate and using that to improve performance."

That evolution is quietly redefining the skillset required across the sector.

Where Data Starts to Matter

Only after investment and capability are in place does visibility come into play.

"For customers, access to data is essential, not just for reporting, but for operational decisions," says Chief Revenue Officer Amber Greenhalgh. "They want to understand how vehicles are performing, how they are used, and where they can improve efficiency."

This is where fleet becomes something more than physical infrastructure.

"Our role is to help customers make sense of that data," she continues. "It's not just about providing information; it's about turning it into decisions they can act on, for example the transition to electric HGVs."

Even incremental changes, like live camera access or digital rental agreements, are shifting expectations.

"These might seem like small changes, but they make a big difference to how easy it is for customers to manage fleets day to day," Amber adds.

The Reality on the Ground

All of this ultimately plays out in environments where there is very little room for error.

Across the sectors NRG Riverside supports, fleet performance is directly tied to essential services. Missed collections, delayed works, or non-compliance quickly become visible.

"Location matters," says Chief Operating Officer Gary Wilson. "When you are supporting essential services, downtime is not an option. Having the right infrastructure in the right places is critical to maintaining uptime and service continuity."

That reality shapes how the network is built and how it operates day to day.

With a 97% MOT pass rate and IRTE-accredited workshops, the focus is not just on availability, but dependability.

"Our focus is always on reliability, compliance and uptime," Gary adds. "Technology gives us the visibility to be proactive rather than reactive."

Consistency at Scale

As the business has expanded, one challenge has become more pronounced: delivering the same standard everywhere.

"Our customers expect the same level of service wherever they operate," Gary says. "Scaling the network is one thing, maintaining standards across it is where the real challenge lies."

This is where process, training, and infrastructure all intersect, ensuring that growth does not dilute performance.

Relationships That Go Beyond Contracts

What sits behind that consistency is something less visible, but just as important: longevity.

"Many of our customer relationships span decades," says Chief Commercial Officer Russell Markstein. "That longevity comes from the fact that we are solving problems together. We are part of how their operations function."

That level of integration reflects a broader shift in the sector, from supplier relationships to operational partnerships.

The Constant in a Changing Industry

Amid changing technology, regulation, and scale, one factor has remained consistent.

"As we grow, maintaining our culture is critical," says Chief People Officer Jenny Cook. "We want people to build long-term careers and continue developing their skills."

With more than 350 employees, the business continues to invest in both experienced talent and future capability.

"Our people deliver the service every day," Darren says. "Their expertise, commitment, and understanding of our customers' operations are what set us apart."

Looking Forward From 30 Years

What 30 years ultimately represents is not just growth, but adaptation. The focus now is on expanding fleet, strengthening infrastructure, and continuing to build out digital capability.

"Our ambition is to grow the fleet while continuing to enhance the service around it," Amber explains. "That combination of scale and expertise creates the greatest value for customers."

The Next Phase

"The industry is changing, and we are evolving with it," Darren concludes. "The last 30 years built the foundation, the next 30 will be about how far we can take it."

And that is the real story behind the milestone. Not just how NRG Riverside has grown, but how it has repositioned itself within a sector that now demands far more than vehicles alone.



Trialling Recycling Interventions to Increase Food Waste Collections

Zero Waste Scotland has produced a suite of reports on the impacts of different interventions on increasing participation in food waste recycling.

'Trialling Recycling Interventions to Increase Food Waste Collections' is a suite of three reports based on the results of trial undertaken in partnership with South Ayrshire Council to test the impact of different interventions on increasing participation in food waste recycling.

The trial tested three interventions:

- Adding 'No Food Waste' stickers to residual bins
- Providing free caddy liners
- A mixture of communications methods

The trial found that all three methods were successful in increasing participation from householders and increasing the yield of food waste collection.

The stickers in particular had a notable impact, increasing participation by 7.7% and the amount of food waste collected by 42%, for a relatively low cost.

The caddy liners led to a 9% increase in participation, and a 14.4% increase in food waste collected.

The communications led to a 4.7% increase in participation, and a 10.4% increase in food waste collected.



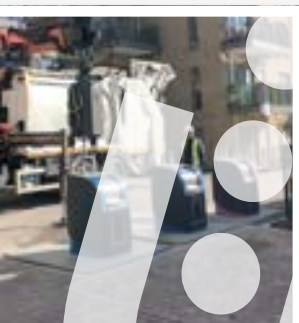
Join us at our **Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar** in Aviemore on Tuesday 19 - Thursday 22 May to hear from John Arthur, Recycling Consultant at **Zero Waste Scotland**.



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Simpler Recycling – What are the implications for health and safety?

Toni Robinson, Chair of WISH, examines the health and safety challenges of Simpler Recycling.

With the 31st March now behind us, it's encouraging to recognise one of Simpler Recycling's most tangible early wins with weekly food waste collections being in place within most areas.

Many councils have understandably focused their efforts on getting these new services up and running at pace, but has there been enough time to fully consider the safety implications? New vehicles, redesigned routes, and unfamiliar handling processes have all been introduced in quick succession, each bringing its own set of safety considerations.

One reason some councils haven't been able to launch their food waste collections is simply the shortage of specialist vehicles. With everyone trying to buy the same kit at the same time, choices have been limited and many teams have had to make quick procurement decisions, sometimes with compromises. That's exactly why it's so important to take a step back and make sure every safety feature has been properly assessed, so that the frontline crews have the protection they need throughout the day.

All vehicles and their lifting equipment must meet the requirements of EN 1501-1/5, which provides a robust baseline for safety. However, compliance alone to this standard doesn't address every operational risk. As more councils adopt top-loader food waste vehicles (essentially a large skip that material is tipped into), new questions naturally arise. For example, has the hopper been designed to prevent leaks, and how easy is it to clean out safely at the end of a round? These are the kinds of details that make a real difference once the vehicle is in daily use



We're also seeing more vehicles fitted with wander leads, remote or tethered controls that let operators manage the lift from outside the cab. They can be great for visibility and ergonomics, but they also introduce new risks if the engineering isn't spot-on. Operators need a clearly marked safety zone, full visibility of the working area, and systems that only allow one control to operate at a time. A dead-man's switch is essential to prevent unintended movement.

Route planning is another area that needs fresh attention. Food waste rounds aren't just a variation of general or recycling routes, they come with their own set of risks. WISH's Safe Waste and Recycling Collection Services guidance (WASTE 23) sets out what needs to be considered, but in practice it means taking a fresh look at every street, every stop, and every interaction.

Food waste collections also change the way crews work. Instead of emptying bins directly, food waste is usually transferred from household caddies into a larger transfer bin, which is then pushed from property to property. This brings new challenges: workers spend more time on foot, increasing their exposure to traffic, and manual handling demands rise sharply as crews lift caddies, empty them, manoeuvre the transfer bin and repeat that cycle hundreds of times a day. These are entirely new pressures created by the collection model required under Simpler Recycling.

Health risks also need to be front of mind. Food waste isn't always fresh, and in warmer months it can break down quickly, increasing the chance of exposure to biological hazards. Crews need proper hygiene training and easy access to hand-cleaning facilities before eating or taking breaks. Householders can help by bagging or wrapping their food waste, which reduces direct contact. WISH's Health and Hazardous Substances guidance (WASTE 27) provides further information and sets out controls that should be in place.

These additional hazards must also be reflected in occupational health surveillance. Potential exposure to biological hazards, including bioaerosols, means respiratory health testing will be required. Crews should have a baseline assessment when they start, followed by regular monitoring to ensure no adverse impact over time.





As WISH, our role is to develop, promote and maintain guidance to help you navigate the challenges highlighted above.

As the regulatory landscape continues to evolve and more waste streams are collected separately, new risks will keep emerging.

Our website hosts a wide range of guidance and practical advice. While it wasn't written specifically for Simpler Recycling, it gives clear direction on how to build safe systems of work and put the right controls in place.

The key message is simple: every new activity needs a proper risk assessment, supported by robust method statements and safe working procedures before the first collection even begins and these need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to remain fit for purpose.



apse seminars

Want to learn more about recycling? Join us!



Simpler Recycling and Beyond: Recycling, Waste and Circular Economy Seminar 2026

Thursday 18 June
Sheffield Town Hall



Highland Council Recognised at National APSE Energy Awards

Success for Highland Council's Climate and Energy Team

Highland Council's Climate and Energy Team has received national recognition at the APSE Energy Awards 2026, highlighting its leadership in delivering climate ready infrastructure and long-term energy investment across the region.

The awards held on 24 February 2026 in Birmingham, as part of the APSE Big Energy Summit 2026, showcase the critical role local authorities play in driving the UK's energy transition. Highland Council was shortlisted in four award categories - Accessing and Managing Finance, Collaborative Working, Decarbonising Transport, and Supporting Innovation - and was named winner of the Supporting Innovation Award, sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

In announcing the award, APSE recognised the Council's "pioneering, place-based model for public sector decarbonisation and energy investment combining large-scale renewable generation, energy efficiency, and grid innovation" particular recognition was given to the emerging Clean Highland Fund which brings together public, private and community investment to deliver long-term value that is retained within the region.

The national recognition comes as members of the Highland Council have now formally approved the strategic direction set out in the March report 'Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience'.

The report establishes a clear shift from fragmented, project-led activity to a coordinated programme-led approach, bringing together climate adaptation, energy transition, infrastructure investment and community resilience into a single, place-based delivery model.

The approved recommendations commit the Council to:

- Developing coordinated investment pipelines across energy, infrastructure, housing and resilience
- Strengthening engagement with government, regulators and investors
- Embedding climate and energy considerations across all Council services
- Advancing a long-term, sustainable delivery model for net zero and resilience

Neil Osborne, Highland Council's Climate Change & Energy Manager, said:

"Being recognised across all four categories demonstrates the strength of our overall strategic direction. Whether it is finance, collaboration, transport or innovation, the common thread is our move towards a coordinated, place-based approach to delivery."

"With Council now formally endorsing our strategic framework, we are moving at pace from ambition to implementation. This is about creating a long-term, investable pipeline that brings together infrastructure, energy and community resilience in a way that works for the Highlands.

"By taking a programme-led approach, we are not only accelerating progress towards net zero, but ensuring that the economic and social value of the energy transition is captured and retained locally."

A key theme from the summit was the growing importance of portfolio-based approaches to delivering net zero at scale - enabling councils to unlock investment, reduce delivery risk and transition from individual projects to long-term infrastructure programmes.

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Unlocking Highgate Cemetery: Conserving a Historic Landscape for the Future

Kate White, Project Director at Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, outlines the transformative work being carried out to preserve and protect the historic burial ground.

Highgate Cemetery is a living landscape shaped by people, nature and time.

Highgate Cemetery is one of the world's finest examples of the picturesque garden cemetery. Opened in 1839 on what were then the semi-rural outskirts of London, it was designed as a landscape to be experienced.

Visitors walking its sinuous paths encounter a carefully composed sequence of views where monuments emerge through trees, architectural set-pieces are revealed gradually, and longer vistas open out towards the city beyond.

Before the creation of municipal public parks, it offered one of the few opportunities for people to walk in a designed landscape of this kind.

Today, Highgate Cemetery is internationally recognised as both a heritage site and visitor destination. Yet it remains, fundamentally, a working cemetery.

More than 170,000 people are buried here across over 53,000 graves, and it continues to be a much sought-after place of burial.

Figures such as Michael Faraday, George Eliot, Karl Marx and George Michael are among those commemorated, but the Cemetery also represents the wider social and cultural history of London.

A Landscape Shaped by Change

Over time, the Cemetery has evolved in response to changing social and economic conditions. Periods of high demand for burial space were followed by declining revenues as attitudes to burial practices changed. With limited resources, maintenance became increasingly difficult, and vegetation growth was largely unchecked.

By the 1970s, the Cemetery had fallen into serious decline before being rescued in 1975 by the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, the charity that manages the site today. Unlike many comparable heritage sites, Highgate Cemetery operates without public funding. Its future depends on a careful balance between conservation, visitor income and its continued role as an active burial ground.

A 25-Year Conservation Masterplan

The Trust is now embarking on an ambitious 25-year conservation masterplan 'Unlocking Highgate Cemetery', which sets out a clear framework for the site's future.

The aim is not to restore the Cemetery to a single moment in time, but to care for it as a living landscape that continues to evolve while retaining its historic character and significance.

The masterplan is designed around three core priorities: heritage, nature and community.

It seeks to conserve the Cemetery's most significant monuments and buildings, improve the resilience of its landscape and ecology, and expand the ways in which people can access and engage with the site. The approach is conservation-led, focusing on repair and stewardship rather than wholesale restoration.

Over the coming decades, this approach will sustain the Grade I registered landscape, conserve its listed structures, improve access and learning opportunities, and provide the facilities needed to support visitors, staff and volunteers.

In later phases, the masterplan will also deliver a series of new and improved buildings and landscape interventions to support the continued operation of the Cemetery. These include new visitor, operational, community and education facilities, improvements to the public realm, and the sensitive restoration and reinstatement of historic architectural elements.

Designed to be both contemporary and in keeping with their surroundings, these interventions will put the Cemetery on a stronger footing for the future while respecting its historic character.

Phase 1: Stabilising and Opening Up the Site

The first phase of this programme, a £19.5m investment, focuses on the most urgent priorities. It brings together landscape recovery, targeted conservation and improved access in a coherent set of works designed to stabilise the site and address long-standing issues.

This includes repairing and upgrading paths and drainage systems, replanting with climate-resilient species to restore the historic landscape character, and conserving key listed structures such as the Egyptian Avenue, Circle of Lebanon and Terrace Catacombs.

These interventions are designed to build resilience, addressing the impacts of climate change, including increased rainfall, erosion and tree loss, while ensuring the Cemetery can be managed sustainably.

Access, Engagement and Wellbeing

Improving access is a central part of this phase. The project will make it easier for a wider range of people to visit and experience the Cemetery, through improved paths, step-free routes and better facilities.



Alongside this, an expanded programme of interpretation, learning and community engagement will improve ways for people to connect with the site, whether through heritage, nature, or its role as a place of reflection and wellbeing.

Highgate offers something increasingly rare in a city: space for reflection, connection and understanding.

Crucially, all of this is being delivered while balancing its historic significance with its ongoing purpose as a place of burial, remembrance and public benefit.

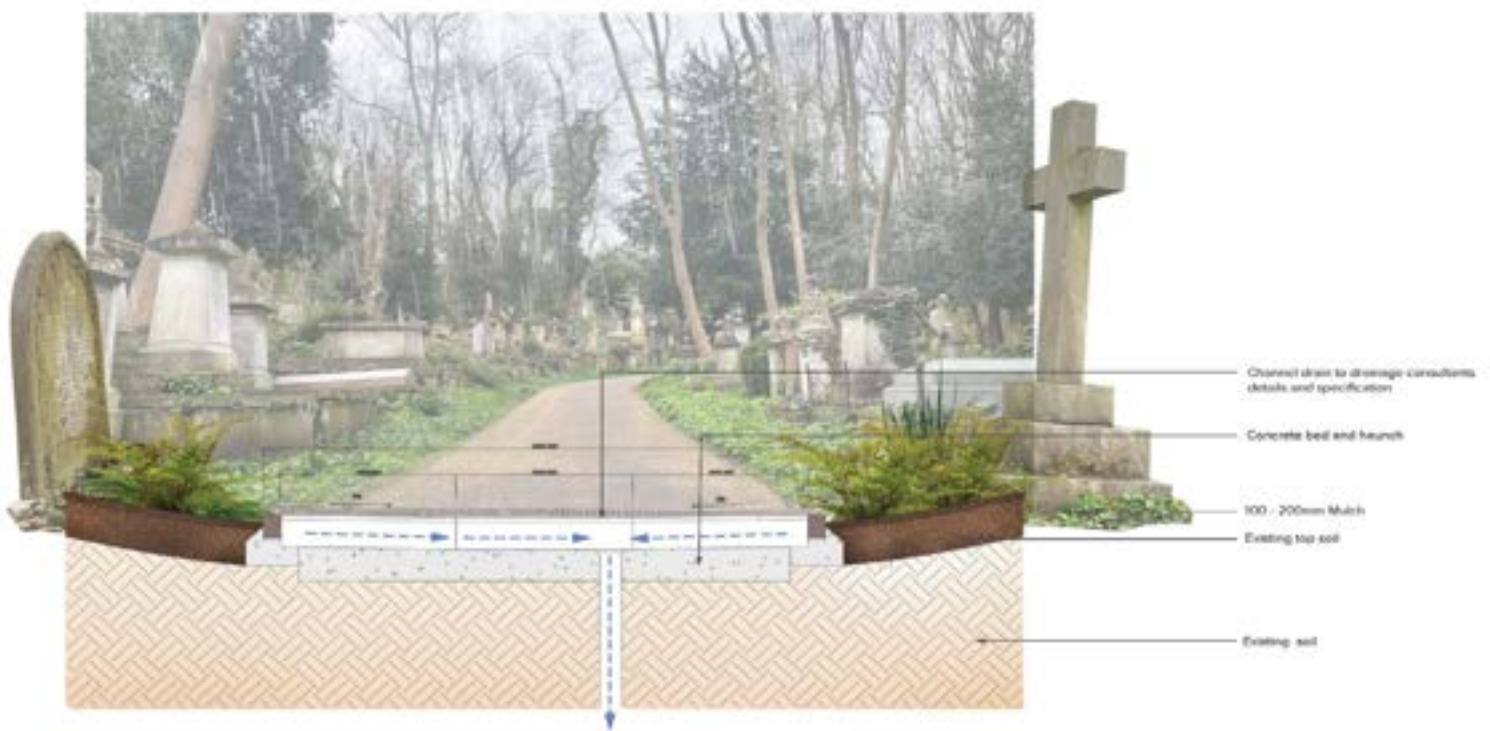
Alongside landscape and conservation works, Phase 1 introduces targeted improvements to visitor facilities, including new public WCs, with more substantial upgrades to staff and volunteer facilities to follow in later phases.

Looking Ahead

The distinction between the long-term masterplan and the immediate Phase 1 works is important. The masterplan sets the direction for how the Cemetery will be cared for and sustained over the coming decades, while Phase 1 addresses the most pressing risks and establishes the basis for subsequent phases.

This approach marks a shift from reactive maintenance to a planned, sustainable model for managing both landscape and built heritage.

But beyond the works and the investment, what is being secured is something harder to quantify: a place where history is present all around, and where, among the monuments and the trees, there is still room to think. Highgate Cemetery has survived neglect, near-abandonment and the pressures of a changing city. This is how we ensure it survives the next century and beyond.





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- 5 Construction**
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Glasgow launches battery recycling campaign to protect waste services from fire risk

Glasgow is being urged to recycle batteries and vapes properly following a series of fires in city refuse vehicles.

Take Charge Glasgow, a new campaign backed by Glasgow City Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue, says residents should never bin batteries or vapes in standard bins found at home or in the street. Instead, the campaign calls for people to dispose of their batteries and vapes, as well as other small electrical devices, in the dedicated recycling points found in shops that sell batteries, electrical stores and the council's household waste and recycling centres.

Batteries, vapes and electrical devices are believed to be behind an estimated 1200 fire-related incidents within refuse vehicles and other waste infrastructure across the UK. Lithium-ion batteries, found in a range of common electrical devices such as mobile phones, games controllers, laptops, Bluetooth headphones and vapes, have been highlighted as a particular issue.

Last year council waste vehicles were struck by a series of fires that led to burning waste being dumped on the road so it could be extinguished by the Fire Service. One incident led to the closure of the M80 motorway while fire fighters dealt with tonnes of smouldering rubbish.

With concern growing across the UK waste industry about the impact of battery and vape fires, Take Charge Glasgow is raising the red flag on the issue to protect the city's refuse workers and public property.

Councillor Laura Doherty, City Convener for Neighbourhood Services and Assets, said: "We have seen at close hand in Glasgow the dangers posed by disposing of batteries and vapes, in ordinary bins.

"We have a responsibility to speak up and warn against failing to recycle batteries properly. Our staff, vehicles and depots can be put at enormous risk by one careless action. Lithium-ion batteries are a particular danger if they are crushed within a refuse vehicle or other waste processing equipment. I am extremely grateful for the backing we have received from Scottish Fire and Rescue for the Take Charge Glasgow campaign. The Fire Service clearly recognises the gravity of this issue, and I hope creating this united front has an impact on how people dispose of their batteries, vapes and electrical devices.



Image courtesy of Glasgow City Council

The message of the Take Charge Glasgow campaign is very simple. Never bin your batteries or vapes, always recycle at a dedicated recycling point.

Area Commander Andrew Kenna, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Local Senior Officer for the City of Glasgow, said: "Lithium-ion batteries are increasingly common in everyday rechargeable electrical items. These batteries can pose a fire risk if disposed of incorrectly. If placed in a general household bin, they can be damaged or crushed during waste removal process, potentially igniting fires in bins, refuse vehicles, or waste management facilities.

"The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service supports the 'Take Charge Glasgow' campaign because safe disposal is a simple step that prevents fires before they start. Lithium-ion batteries, vapes and non-rechargeable batteries such as AA or AAA must always be recycled at dedicated points across the city and never placed in household waste. Additionally, we urge the public to always buy products from reputable retailers and to follow the manufacturer's guidance for safe charging storage and maintenance. Never charge devices when you're sleeping and keep escape routes clear in case there's a fire."

Adverts for the campaign - 'Take Charge Glasgow' - will be shown on television, radio, bus shelters, subway posters and on the side panels of some of the council's refuse collection fleet. Campaign materials will also be shared on the council's social media channels and resources will be sent to the city's housing associations for inclusion in their resident newsletters.

More information on the campaign and where to recycle batteries, vapes and other small electrical devices can be found at www.glasgow.gov.uk/batteries



Join us at our **Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar** in Aviemore on Tuesday 19 - Thursday 22 May to hear from Frankie O'Rourke, Head of Service Parks and Streetscene, Glasgow City Council.

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Shaping the future of our greenspace at APSE's Parks Seminar 2026

This year's event, held at Old Trafford Football Stadium in Manchester, focused on working together to deliver greener, healthier and more resilient places for people and nature.

Local authorities from across the UK were represented at the event, with delegates coming together to collaborate, share insights and discuss the future of the parks service.

Chaired by Cllr Sam Lux, Nottingham City Council Cabinet Member for Climate and Nature, the Seminar explored the national, local and frontline landscape of the parks service, with expert insights from Natural England, the Office for Environmental Protection, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest Research, Forestry Commission, APSE and Denbighshire County Council.

The role of greenspaces in Natural England's strategy

Oliver Harmar, Chief Officer of Strategy at Natural England, opened the Seminar with an exploration of the role of greenspaces in Natural England's New Corporate Strategy. Oliver examined the impact of greenspaces on society and their potential to build cross-community relationships, improve health and wellbeing and mitigate against environmental hazards.

OEP's role in environmental protection and nature recovery

Helen Venn, Chief Regulatory Officer at the Office for Environmental Protection, discussed OEP's role in protecting the environment, examined the government's progress against the Environmental Improvement Plan and outlined recommendations to drive nature recovery.

State of the Market: Parks and Greenspaces – Key Finding

APSE Principal Advisor, Matt Ellis, presented the findings of the latest State of the Market: Parks and Greenspaces report and highlighted the pressures facing local authority parks services. The full report is available to download from the APSE website.



Matt outlined the growing number of councils prioritising biodiversity, the continued financial pressures facing the sector and the importance of engaging with the community and local leadership for long-term sustainability.

Transforming urban landscapes with wildflower initiatives

Helen McNally, Head of Commercial Landscapes at Pictorial Meadows, shared the transformative work they are doing to regenerate urban landscapes through wildflower planting initiatives. Helen highlighted case studies from across the UK, including the Parkhill Flats in Sheffield and Holbeck in Leeds, where wildflowers had transformed the local environment.

Local nature recovery strategies in Greater Manchester

Dr Rachel Morrison, Senior Policy and Partnerships Officer – Environment at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, discussed Local Nature Recovery Strategies and their role in driving nature recovery on a local level. Rachel presented Greater Manchester's Nature for All strategy and outlined their targets to protect wildlife-rich spaces, connect people with greenspaces and build a more resilient environment.



Emerging tree health risks and biosecurity workshop

Dr Caroline Gorton, Tree Health Pathologist at Forest Research and Dr Emma Aspin, Biosecurity Officer at the Forestry Commission, led an interactive workshop into emerging pests and diseases, biosecurity risks and practical approaches to protecting urban trees. Delegates from local authority environment and nature teams worked together to discuss a series of real-world scenarios, identifying potential risks, solutions and 'quick wins'.

Grasslands, wildflowers and carbon sequestration workshop

Wayne Priestley discussed the evolution of grasslands, the current carbon landscape and the potential for wildflowers and grasslands to support carbon sequestration. Wayne outlined the steps to creating grassland and wildflower strategies and highlighted the importance of community support and transparent communication to gain buy-in from the local community.

APSE will continue to be an advocate for the UK's public parks and open spaces by promoting their value at every opportunity. Through our training suite, advisory groups, research programmes and benchmarking service, membership of APSE can bring significant benefits to those who work in local government – from officers to directors to elected members to chief executives – by helping them comprehensively get to grips with the latest policy and technological developments.

All APSE members can sign up to **APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network**, which is an online network providing at least four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. By signing up to the network you will be informed of future parks seminars if you missed out on this one!

Protecting dark skies and reducing light pollution in Wales

David Shiel, Area Manager at Denbighshire County Council, presented the vital work being carried out across Wales to safeguard their dark skies, reduce light pollution and protect the local wildlife. David shared the Wales National Good Practice Guidance and outlined the importance of considering light pollution when planning strategies and producing development proposals.

Impact of local government reorganisation on parks services

Mo Baines, Chief Executive at APSE, discussed the potential impact of local government reorganisation on parks services in England and the need to be resilient ahead of the change, emphasising strong governance, forward planning and workforce stability as critical factors. Mo also highlighted the need to consider the opportunities to look at insourcing Parks services to generate efficiencies and synergy across new unitary authorities.



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Regenerating Swansea for Wellbeing and Wildlife

Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales have published their Green Infrastructure Strategy, designed to bring more nature into the Swansea Central Area.

Green Infrastructure - commonly referred to as GI - is the term used to describe all the green space, soil, vegetation and water that provide the ecosystem services that make places more liveable. This includes, for example, streets trees, green roofs and walls, natural play spaces, wildlife / nature gardens, pollinator corridors, landscaping, drainage and air quality management solutions.

A city with high quality multifunctional green infrastructure, which delivers resilience, prosperity, nature, health, wellbeing and happiness to the citizens and visitors of Swansea.

The 5 Principles of Green Infrastructure to be applied to achieve this vision:

1. Multifunctional - making sure that all GI in the city centre provides as many benefits as possible. For example, it may reduce pollution and/or flooding, offer shelter and/or food for native animals (birds, insects and/or small mammals), provide shade during hot summer days, and create attractive pleasant and/or calming spaces for people to meet, relax and play.
2. Adapted for climate change - absorbing water to reduce flooding, providing summer cooling and accommodating wildlife. GI also helps mitigate climate change by capturing and locking up carbon.
3. Healthy - helping our physical and mental health by absorbing pollution, providing clean air, clean water, food and space to exercise, socialise and play and space to have contact with nature.
4. Biodiverse - supporting a wide variety of native species providing shelter and food and creating green corridors across the city centre linking to existing strategic wildlife corridors.
5. Smart and Sustainable - providing solutions, techniques and technologies that are low maintenance and reduce pollution and waste and maximise the use of recycled or sustainably sourced materials.

The strategy is designed to support the Local Development Plan and the application of the Statutory SuDS Standard 2019.

It also delivers the council's duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Environment (Wales) Act 2016 through the Council's Well-being Objective: Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity and, the Swansea Public Service Board's Working with Nature Objective.



Cyngor Abertawe
Swansea Council



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Case Study: Fleet Decarbonisation at Salford City Council

Hayley Nixon, Strategic Lead at Salford City Council, outlines how the organisation is reshaping its fleet strategy to drive decarbonisation, support innovation, and deliver long term benefits.



Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to present at the APSE Transport Online Network, an inspiring event that brought together local authorities, fleet managers, and sustainability leads to explore the evolving landscape of low carbon mobility.

Driving Innovation Through the Fleet Transformation Programme

At Salford City Council, our Fleet Decarbonisation Programme forms part of a broader ambition to modernise operational services and embed sustainability into everyday decision making.

Funded through a combination of capital investment and operational savings generated by electric vehicles, the programme enables us to trial emerging technologies and identify scalable, practical solutions across service areas.

Our approach is structured around six key elements:

- 1. Advice** - Visiting other councils and organisations already operating electric fleets has allowed us to learn valuable lessons, understand real world performance, and inform our own transition plan.
- 2. Trial** - We actively seek opportunities to trial a wide range of electric vehicle (EV) types—from vans to specialist vehicles—to ensure they meet operational requirements before progressing to procurement. This allows our operatives to feedback on performance and get their buy in.
- 3. Business Cases** - Robust business cases are developed for each vehicle type. These assess whole life costs, demonstrating where EVs provide financial and operational benefits over diesel equivalents, and supporting investment decisions.



- 4. Long Term Planning** - We analysed future fleet requirements, depot capacity, and available electricity supply to ensure our infrastructure can support long term demand.
- 5. Site Preparation** - We are undertaking phased installation of EV chargers, expanding Solar PV capacity, and improving data collection to build a strong foundation for future adoption.
- 6. Strategic Alignment** - Trials, procurement, and infrastructure installation are aligned with the natural renewal cycle of the fleet—maximising value and minimising disruption.

This structured, evidence driven approach allows us to understand real world performance, operational constraints, and workforce feedback, ensuring decisions are rooted in practicality.

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Rethinking Traditional Fleet Models

Diesel has been the default for many decades, but this is increasingly unsustainable it is:

- Carbon intensive, contributing significantly to organisational emission
- Costly, particularly as fuel prices fluctuate, including alternative fuels such as HVO
- Operationally restrictive, with tightening environmental standards and air quality obligations

Fleet decarbonisation is not simply an environmental ambition, it is fundamental to delivering resilient, affordable, and future proof public services.

Supporting Communities and Enabling Wider Benefits

The benefits of fleet decarbonisation extend far beyond emissions reduction. Across Salford, our transition is already contributing to:

- Improved air quality
- Reduced noise pollution - with EVs operating far more quietly during early morning collections
- Improved working conditions for operatives
- Enhanced public confidence - demonstrating visible leadership on climate action
- Workforce development - as teams gain experience with new technologies, systems, and operational practices

These wider social and environmental benefits strengthen our case for continued investment and support Salford City Council's sustainability ambitions.

Looking Ahead

To date, we have installed over 20 EV chargers across four sites and deployed 29 electric vehicles—representing 17% of our total fleet. This includes car derived and panel vans, a sweeper, a tipper, and a refuse collection vehicle.

Looking forward, we plan to purchase an additional 16 EVs in 2026/27, taking our electric fleet to over 26%, alongside continued expansion of our charging infrastructure.

Decarbonising our fleet is a long term journey requiring collaboration, innovation, and continual learning.



By partnering with APSE, sharing lessons learned with others, and taking a proactive approach, we are building a fleet that is not only cleaner—but smarter, more efficient, and more resilient for the future.







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Member Spotlight: Tim Lewis, Head of Client Services, Wychavon District Council

We sat down with APSE member, Tim Lewis, Head of Client Services at Wychavon District Council, to discuss his role and experience with APSE.



Who are you and what is your role?

Tim Lewis and my official title is "Head of Client Services" at Wychavon District Council. Basically, I oversee and manage all contracts relating to waste, recycling, street cleansing, environmental crime, parks, open spaces and public toilets, as well as anything that doesn't fit into anyone else's remit!

What attracted you to work in local government?

When I started as a Data and Systems Officer in the Environmental Services Team at Malvern Hills District Council following redundancy, it didn't start as a wish to work in local government, I just wanted to get straight back in to work! But once I started working at MHDC, it seemed to be the job I had always been looking for.

Working at a waste and recycling depot, albeit with its own very unique challenges, was a breath of fresh air from previous working environments. As time went on, my "empire" expanded to waste collections, launching the new Commercial Recycling service and managing the introduction of alternate weekly collections with a move from black sacks to wheeled bins and all the challenges that comes with.

The variety is what I love most about local government as well as the feeling of making a genuine difference. I am also incredibly fortunate to work for such a progressive council at MHDC and Wychavon who have supported initiatives I have wanted to introduce such as free period products in our public toilets and improvements to our (already award-winning) parks and open spaces.

What attracted you to work in local government?

The round table sessions at APSE events have proven to be the most valuable things I have experienced since being a member of APSE.

Talking and listening to the people "on the ground" feels so much more beneficial than being presented to.

What do you value most about APSE membership/events/services?

The round table sessions at APSE events have proven to be the most valuable things I have experienced since being a member of APSE. Talking and listening to the people "on the ground" feels so much more beneficial than being presented to.

Learning best practices (as well as what has gone wrong!) from other authorities has been invaluable. So often, you get stuck in a silo believing that your way is best, but when you talk to others and how they operate, you either validate that belief or you realise there are better and smarter ways of working.

Share something you like about living/working in your local council area.

I love the beauty of my district. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by areas of outstanding beauty, not only within our own area but across Worcestershire.

It never feels like you're more than 10 minutes away from stunning scenery. Very easy to take it for granted when you live here but it never gets old for me!



Do you want to share your experience as an APSE member? Get in touch with our Communications Team! Email Hannah Cocker at hcocker@apse.org.uk

Food for thought



Food for thought: How Cornwall Council is taking a carrot-not-stick approach to reducing household food waste

Genevra Fletcher, Marketing and Campaigns Officer at Cornwall Council, explains how they are empowering people to make big savings at the checkout with small changes in the kitchen – changes that happen to cut food waste, too.

Cornwall households have put out over 31,000 tonnes of leftovers, carrot tops and teabags since we first started collecting their food waste for recycling three years ago.

But we know it's better for everyone, financially and environmentally, if we can help households reduce food waste in the first place.

Why Cornwall needed a different kind of food waste campaign

Household food waste isn't just a climate and waste management issue - it's a cost-of-living issue as too. WRAP has done some useful maths for its Love Food Hate Waste campaign and worked out that food waste costs the average UK family of four £1,000 a year.

Preventing food waste takes some time and skill, as well as confidence that the effort you put in is making a difference.

Research by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) tells us people tend to waste food not because they don't care about the environment, but because they have busy, pressured lives.

Some lives are more pressured than others. There are people in Cornwall facing significant barriers to health and to financial and social wellbeing related to low wages, high housing costs and rural isolation.

Less food waste in the bin means more money left in the household and Council budgets for other, unavoidable expenses.

Food for thought draws on WRAP audience insights and behaviour change frameworks like EAST (easy, attractive, social and timely), including: telling people they should reduce food waste isn't effective; people respond better to clear incentives, well-timed prompts, and small, do-able actions and money-saving messages cut through far more effectively than environmental appeals alone.

Cornwall therefore needed a friendly, practical offer that would feel easy and helpful during a challenging economic period.

A bite-sized behaviour change journey

Food for thought draws on the advice of WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste campaign and its audience insight. It takes its shape, messaging and tone from behaviour change frameworks like EAST (Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely), nudge theory and habit stacking.

Instead of overwhelming residents with lots of actions in no particular order, Food for thought breaks behaviour change into eight weekly email tips.

Each email invites people to make one small change to the way they shop, cook or store food and includes: a single tip like meal and portion planning; a tool such as a shopping list template or freezer label; a 'why it works' explainer grounded in WRAP research and a short survey link, so residents can rate each tip and suggest improvements.

The content is delivered as an automated email journey, which makes the campaign more responsive and measurable than a static web page.

We can monitor and iterate the content based on: the number of people opening each email; which links or tools they click; whether people progress through all eight tips or stop part way; which messages or incentives perform best and how different groups behave, as the audience can be segmented and the content tailored based on household or shopping habits

Most importantly, the email journey allows two-way interaction. Every tip includes a quick survey link so people can tell us how useful it was and suggest improvements, which means: live feedback from real households; ability to spot quickly if something isn't working and ability to compare which tips get the strongest responses and which need revising

Together, the eight changes could help residents save up to £83 a month - a compelling motivator reflected throughout the campaign's creative assets.

Engagement, media interest and community conversation

Early response has shown public appetite. A single story in our Stay in Touch resident email newsletter generated almost 1,000 sign-ups during Food Waste Action Week, showing that the message resonates when framed through savings and simple changes.

The campaign has also attracted external attention. BBC Radio Cornwall

approached Cornwall Council for a positive feature after a producer signed up and liked the approach. This illustrates the campaign's ability to connect with the public conversation around rising food costs, household budgets and practical environmental actions.

Building a long-term movement, not a one-off message

Food for thought is designed to grow over time. The eight-week email journey provides a foundation for future content. Planned developments includes digital advertising, community engagement pilots and collaboration with Healthy Cornwall on an Eat Well, Spend Less Guide.

We also want to build stronger feedback loops through signup monitoring, conversion tracking and potential doorstep pilots ensuring the campaign continues to evolve based on real resident experience.

A supportive approach

With Food for thought, we're aiming for a win-win: the immediate benefit for householders of helping them save money, and the longer-term benefit for Cornwall of reducing waste and supporting climate goals.

Sign up at cornwall.gov.uk/foodforthought

Dumfries and Galloway Council Invests in New Specialist Fleet to Boost Roads Maintenance Capacity

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Roads Service has strengthened its operational fleet with the purchase of two gully cleaning units and four street sweepers, delivering a significant upgrade in capability across the region.

The investment responds directly to feedback from Roads Service teams, who identified new gully-cleaning and road-sweeping equipment as one of the top priorities needed to improve day-to-day operations and support the ongoing maintenance of the region's 7,000 km road network.

This fleet investment strengthens the council's ability to clear gullies more frequently and reduce surface-water and flooding issues; improve road sweeping coverage in towns, villages and high-use routes and reduce downtime and improve reliability through more modern, durable equipment.

The two gully cleaning units are engineered for efficient roadside operation, combining a corrosion-resistant tank, a powerful hydraulic-driven vacuum system, and a flexible boom that allows operatives to reach gullies safely from the carriageway. Their high-capacity jetting systems are designed to clear blockages more effectively, particularly in rural areas where clogged gullies can significantly increase flood risk.

The four new street sweepers bring a step-change in cleansing performance, offering a larger hopper capacity, improved suction, reduced fuel use, and durable low-wear components that help cut maintenance costs. Water-saving technology reduces consumption by up to 20%, supporting both environmental and operational efficiency. Their robust design makes them well-suited to the region's mix of urban and rural routes.

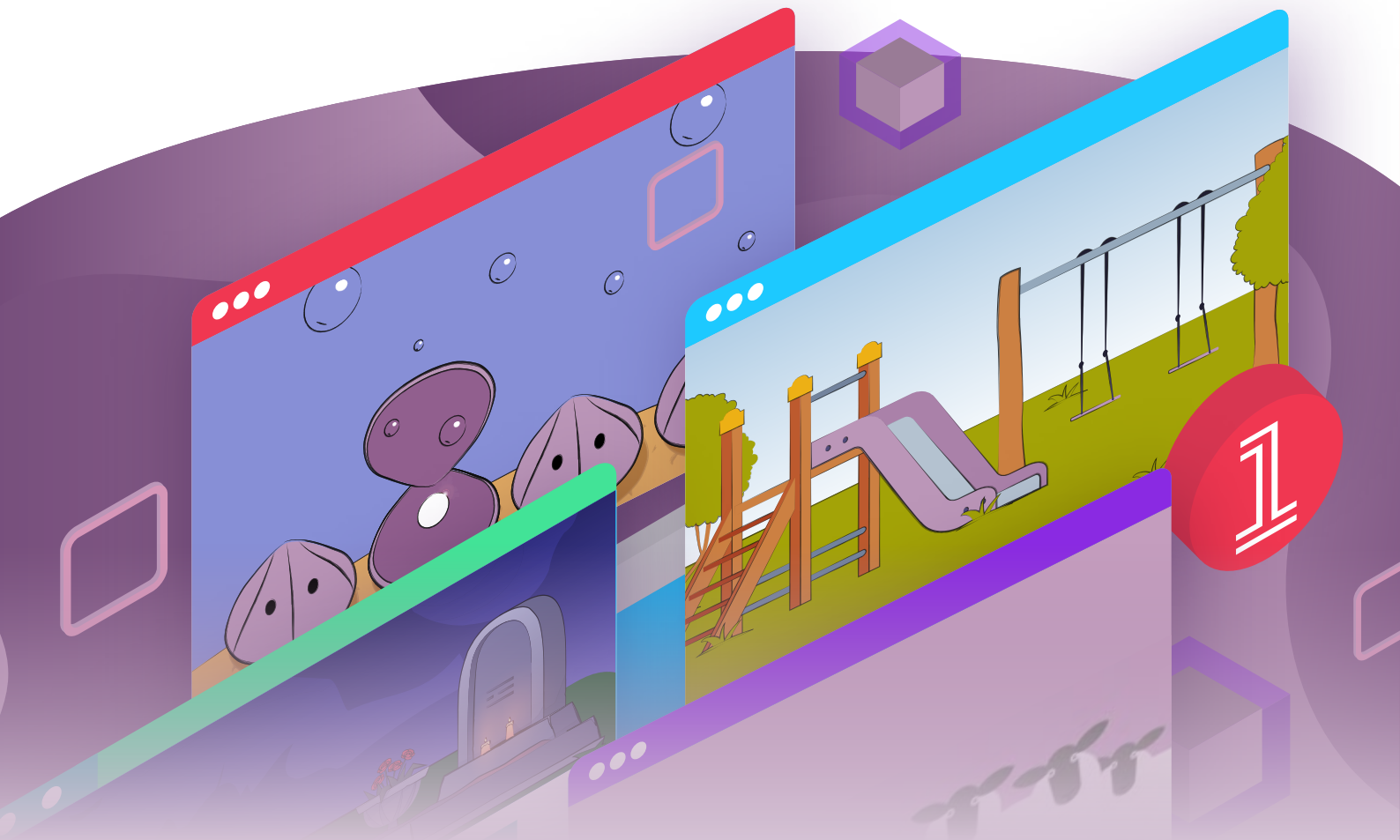
Training for Roads Service staff on the new vehicles is underway, with deployment scheduled to begin the week commencing 23 March.

Cllr Andy Ferguson, Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee, said:

"Our Roads Service teams work tirelessly to maintain one of the largest road networks in Scotland, and they told us clearly that upgraded vehicles were one of the top things that would help them make a real difference. I'm delighted that we've been able to invest in this new equipment, which will strengthen our ability to keep routes clear, safe and well maintained all year round."

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- » **MIST – Memorial Inspection Safety Too**

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Digital transformation for a smarter, more connected Powys

Powys County Council has approved its Digital Strategy 2026-2030, outlining how it will deliver faster, simpler and more sustainable services for the people of Powys.

Building on the success of the previous strategy, the updated plan keeps pace with digital change, supports the needs of residents while supporting a Stronger, Fairer and Greener Powys.

CLr Raiff Devlin, Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital and Community Services, said: "Digital is central to how we deliver modern, sustainable services. This strategy puts our communities at the centre of transformation, focusing on making services more accessible and user-focused. It sets out a clear, corporate approach to digital transformation, led across the organisation, helping us deliver better outcomes for residents and prepare for the future."

The Digital Strategy set's out five core themes that will support digital transformation over the next four years:

Digital Anytime: Expand our self-service digital tools so residents can find information, submit requests and complete tasks online 24/7.

Innovative Technology: Continuously explore AI capabilities to enhance services and lead the way in digital innovation for future

generations.

Data and Insights: Use data to design services and make informed decisions based on evidence to see what's happening in communities, spot trends and plan services proactively.

Digital Infrastructure and Cyber Security: Ensure systems are modern, secure, reliable and able to support safe innovation across the council.

Digital Futures: Help residents, staff, businesses and community organisations build the digital skills they need to thrive and reduce digital exclusion, so no one is left behind.



Mid Ulster Council retains top recycling spot

Mid Ulster Council continues to lead the way in terms of recycling, having again secured the position at the top of the recycling table for the period July – September 2025.

Official Quarter 2 (July – September 2025) recycling rates just released show that Mid Ulster achieved the highest household recycling rate of all 11 councils here with 63.2%, up a full 1% compared to the same quarter last year (July - September 2024).

These latest impressive results follow on from our announcement in January that Mid Ulster also achieved the highest annual household recycling rate of all 11 councils here with 59.3% for 2024/25.

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council's Environment Committee, Councillor Christine McFlynn, applauded these results saying:



We are absolutely delighted that Mid Ulster has once again achieved the highest household recycling rate of all 11 councils in Northern Ireland for the second quarter of 2025.

This is a fantastic achievement and reflects the continued commitment of our residents to doing the right thing for the environment.

What makes this result even more encouraging is that it follows the announcement earlier this year that Mid Ulster also recorded the highest annual household recycling rate across all councils for 2024/2025.

Maintaining that top position shows that recycling has become firmly embedded in the everyday habits of households right across the district. I want to sincerely thank our residents for their efforts and for continuing to separate and present their waste correctly.

Their participation plays a vital role in helping us reduce landfill, protect our environment, and move towards a more sustainable future for Mid Ulster. recycling rate of all 11 councils here with 59.3% for 2024/25.



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council



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Newcastle-under-Lyme's Grassland Management Strategy: A Smarter, Sustainable Approach

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council outlines how they are protecting the local natural environment through their Grassland Management Strategy and Plan

The Grassland Management Strategy & Plan aims to increase local biodiversity and societal mental health and wellbeing through the recovery of natural habitats like grasslands, whilst also allowing us to focus on priority developments around the borough. By growing long meadows in green spaces around the borough we can increase:

- wildlife and pollinator species
- social wellbeing and natural awareness
- the borough's resilience against climate change
- the sequestration (removal or separation) and storage of carbon

Grasslands and their potential benefits

An assessment of the first 60 hectares of long meadows across 18 sites in the Borough showed positive outcomes, including significant carbon sequestration (3,000 tCO₂e), high levels of resident and visitor engagement (over 90% positive feedback), and improved Council capacity, with savings of several thousand pounds redirected to other priority services.

Since the adoption of Phase 2 by the Council in January 2025, phase 3 has been continued with a couple hundred of hectares of long meadows being facilitated throughout the Borough (Since April 2025). Many of these sites are parks or small green spaces, however, the Council also identified sites of bereavement as a significant opportunity for long grass as well.

Working in Collaboration

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Keele University came together to study the natural impacts of long grassland on 11 sites of bereavement including cemeteries and churchyards. The Council also ran a social survey to study and understand the perceptions of grasslands on bereavement sites from visitors.

Data collection by Keele University began during the growing season in May, concluding in June and conducting their analysis into early 2026.

Overall, reduced mowing on the 11 sites of bereavement studied enhanced pollinator communities by increasing abundance and, in most cases, richness. It is important to note that pollinator responses vary by taxonomic group with Bees, Hoverflies, and Lepidoptera generally benefitting, and Beetles and Wasps showing mixed/contrasting responses.

The data helps to show that longer intervals between mowing and higher floral richness improve pollinator diversity and abundance.

Alongside the Keele University Research Study, NuLBC conducted an online survey to understand visitor perceptions of long grass on sites of bereavement.

Not only did the survey find mostly positive engagements on these meadows in bereavement sites, but also found positive perceptions of the change in maintenance for the local environment.

It was found that visitors to sites of bereavement in Newcastle-under-Lyme:

- Valued natural beauty, bird songs and maintained graves the most.
- Mostly found long grass as a positive for these sites.
- Cared greatly for the local wildlife of these sites.





Transforming Waste and Recycling at South Kesteven District Council

Kayleigh Boasman, Head of Service (Waste and Markets) at South Kesteven District Council, shares how they have leveraged data to transform their waste and recycling service delivery.



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

The Waste and Recycling team at South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) has undergone a period of rapid change since the winter of 2024. Alongside implementing the Simpler Recycling changes, the team has also reflected inwardly and worked incredibly hard to improve their overall performance. This article briefly outlines how the team at SKDC improved their services and achieved the Best Service Team of the Year: Waste, Recycling and Streetscene at the 2025 APSE Service Awards.

Back in January 2024 the team were faced with a new management structure and the imminent rollout of two new collection services – paper and card (as part of a twin stream collection) and batteries. Contamination levels had been rising and peaked at 30% and the service needed a shake up if the new waste stream collections were to be successfully rolled out.

The state of the service was highlighted by a failed rollout of the twin stream recycling service, which was designed to split paper and card from the comingled dry mixed recycling (DMR) and reduce contamination in the DMR bin. Although residents responded well to the new paper and card collections, the contamination reduction campaign fell short of residents expectations and despite a rigorous communication campaign the number of rejected contaminated bins was so high that we were forced to abandon the plan after only two days.

In the moment, this abandonment felt like a huge failure for the team who had worked so hard to deliver a plan which, in the end, just wasn't quite right for SKDC's residents. However, it gave the team the opportunity to regroup and think about how we could get the plan back on track. Within days of the abandonment, an improved plan was formulated which focussed on the needs of our residents and used data to target resources and maximise efficiency.

Both data collected through our in-cab system and a rigorous and targeted communication plan played key roles in the new plan. By the summer of 2024, the 'new' plan had been fully delivered, and contamination had dropped to 7.5% in August 2024 and then to 5.25% by December.

This project and the lessons learned from it shaped the way SKDC's Waste and Recycling team went on to deliver future service changes including kerbside battery collections and now food waste collections.

The team have learned that effective communication is data driven and that our residents need bespoke project plans, which reflect the needs of our communities.

Looking ahead, with LGR looming for Lincolnshire, the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP) is assessing how we can continue to deliver services which are bespoke to local needs but also consistent across borders ready for any potential changes that may come with LGR.

For example, in our food waste rollout the LWP members jointly procured caddies thus benefitting from economies of scale. Additionally, we have a shared Communications Officer who works with each of the Lincolnshire Districts and Boroughs to ensure consistent messaging which meets the needs of local communities. This methodology, supported by the lessons learned from SKDC's challenges in 2024, has been a great success and as food waste collections settle we look forward to getting our teeth into our next Simpler Recycling challenge...plastic bags and wrappings.



Exploring the future of our roads at APSE's Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar 2026

On Thursday 19 March, we welcomed local councils and industry leaders from the transport, highways and street lighting sector to our 2026 Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar.



This year's event, held at St James' Park Football Stadium in Newcastle, focused on the challenges of delivering a high-quality service against a backdrop of local government reorganisation and decarbonisation.

Chaired by Cllr Simon Letts, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at Southampton City Council, the Seminar explored the current landscape of the service, with expert insights from local authorities, as well as the Road Surface Treatments Association, Universal Matter, NY Highways, KaarbonTech and the Institute of Highway Engineers.

Newcastle's Transport Transformation

Cllr Dr Juna Sathian, Cabinet Member for Climate and Transport at Newcastle City Council, opened the Seminar with an exploration into Newcastle's transport transformation journey, from public consultation to project delivery.

Cllr Dr Sathian shared the results of the Movement Strategy Public Consultation, including the public's desire for better public transport, safer roads and better access for people with a disability. Cllr Sathian also highlighted the transport projects taking place across the city, from the restoration of the Tyne Bridge and the introduction of the Clean Air Zone to School Neighbourhoods and the £50m Highway Investment.

Decarbonising Highways

Mike Hansford, Chief Executive of the Road Surface Treatments Association, examined the role of surface treatments in decarbonising highways, the lifecycle of asphalt road surfaces and the methods available for maintaining roads.

As well as exploring the findings of the Department of Transport's 2026 Road Safety Strategy, including the potential for High Friction Surfacing to reduce road collisions, Mike also examined the financial impacts of the US-Iran conflict on surface treatment implementation.

Challenges and Innovation in Street Lighting

Rob Baines, Electrical Assets Commissioner at Derbyshire County Council, outlined the current challenges facing the street lighting sector, including funding, skills and experience, and local policy.

Rob highlighted the innovative work taking place across Derbyshire and shared insights into their implementation of the ADEPT Live Labs 2 decarbonisation project.

Adapting Winter Service Delivery

Carl Gillyon, Head of Highway Network Management, and Ben Towse, Senior Engineer at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, highlighted the importance of innovation and adapting winter service delivery in line with climate change. They explored innovative techniques such as pre-wetting and brine production which improved resilience and service delivery.

The authority has won several industry awards for their highways and climate resilience service, and was recognised at the APSE Performance Networks Awards held in Blackpool in December last year for the Most Improved Performer in Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance.

Innovative Collaboration with ADEPT Live Labs 2

Elaine Nicol, Road Maintenance Manager at North Lanarkshire Council, presented their work on the Live Labs 2 project, including pothole repair, surface treatment, road marking and resurfacing trials.

Elaine shared North Lanarkshire Council's Knowledge Bank project, produced in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Decarbonising Roads. The digital platform gives local authorities access to carbon data and acts as an evidence base for local authority innovation and excellence across the UK.

UK-First Innovation in Pavement Technology

Andrew Curry, Universal Matter, shared their innovative approach to decarbonising highways and outlined the UK-first implementation of their pioneering product, Genable Pavement, in partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Council.

Andrew discussed the various field trials carried out across the UK and USA, including at the National Centre for Asphalt Technology test track, and highlighted the potential of the product to increase pavement lifespan by up to 40%.

Delivering Through Teckal Partnerships

Martin Duffy, Chair, and Jamie Crumlish, Managing Director of NY Highways, explored the journey towards their Teckal partnership with North Yorkshire Council and how the structure enables them to deliver innovative road solutions to the region.

They discussed the scale of supporting road maintenance across North Yorkshire, covering 92,000km of network and 50,000 streetlights, as well as the success they have had in improving efficiency and supporting local economic development.

Reorganising Road Service

Kris Westerby, Northumberland County Council, explored the impact of local government reorganisation on Northumberland's roads, maintenance and service delivery, including the operational benefits of transitioning from a two-tier to a unitary structure, back in 2009.

Kris highlighted the positive impact of unitarisation, from workforce integration and policy standardisation to asset consolidation and long-term infrastructure planning.

Examining the State of the Market

Bonni Jee, APSE Principal Advisor, examined the results of the latest Highways State of the Market report which explored budget challenges, recruitment and retention issues and energy saving. Bonni outlined the sustainable techniques being implemented by councils across the UK, including low carbon construction materials, Integrated Highways Asset Management systems and AI for highways inspections.

Data-Driven Resilience

Graeme Forward, Managing Director at KaarbonTech and our event sponsors for the day, outlined the importance of resilient leadership and the need to take a collaborative approach to tackle the challenges of climate change.

Graeme highlighted the need for councils to transition from a reactive model to an intelligence-led model, harnessing their existing data to proactively manage drainage issues.

Lessons in Leadership with John Mundell, OBE

Delegates enjoyed a thought-provoking keynote address provided by APSE Associate, John Mundell, OBE, reflecting on his time as an operational and strategic lead in Highways, and having worked through Scottish Local Government including the approaches developed in response to compulsory competitive tendering and successfully transforming organisational culture, improving governance, financial management and driving efficiency, across three Scottish unitary Councils.

When asked during a 'fire side' chat session with APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines, on the secrets of his successful delivery of change John highlighted the importance of honest working relationships, and his empathetic leadership style, alongside his commitment to mentoring.

Preserving, Preventing and Protecting

Richard Hayes, APSE Associate and Principal Consultant to Institute of Highway Engineers, led an engaging health and safety clinic, exploring local authority funding challenges, the risks of inadequate cleansing and the benefits of preservation techniques.

Richard also highlighted the importance of preventative maintenance such as slurry sealing, micro asphalt and carriageway sealing, as well as the importance of protective measures, such as improved drainage design, damage inspections from heavy rain and specialised waterproofing materials.

Navigating Flood Risk

Laura Morrison, Flood Risk Engineer at Wigan Council, highlighted the inevitability of floods and the increasingly common risks associated with climate change and extreme weather events. Laura examined the disruptive impact of flooding on our roads, and the innovative steps Wigan Council had taken to combat this, including the introduction of their 'Hello Lamppost' flood reporting initiative.

Through our training suite, advisory groups, research programmes and benchmarking service, membership of APSE can bring significant benefits to those who work in local government – from officers to directors to elected members to chief executives – by helping them comprehensively get to grips with the latest policy and technological developments.



Right Thing, Right Bin: Driving Behaviour Change Across Lincolnshire

Emma Staff, Strategic Communications Lead - Waste Services at Lincolnshire County Council, explores how Lincolnshire have successfully changed recycling behaviour through creative and strategic communications.



Lincolnshire has taken a distinctly county-wide, partnership-led approach to recycling — recognising that consistent services and consistent communications are both essential to driving meaningful behaviour change.

Historically, the system faced significant challenges. A fully co-mingled recycling model, combined with increasing material quality requirements, led to high contamination rates — reaching over 28%. Alongside this, residents were often unclear about what could and could not be recycled, with differences across districts compounding confusion.

In response, the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP) made a strategic shift. Rather than treating recycling as a series of district-level services, partners committed to a unified, county-wide approach — aligning both operational changes and communications activity.

A key milestone came in 2022 with the introduction of separate paper and card collections. Crucially, this was not delivered as a standalone service change.

Instead, it was supported by a coordinated communications campaign — Right Thing, Right Bin — designed to simplify messaging and support residents through the transition.

The campaign focused on behaviour change rather than awareness alone. Messaging was intentionally simple, consistent, and repeatable across all districts, ensuring residents received the same guidance regardless of where they lived.

Communications were also carefully phased to align with the operational rollout, reinforcing key messages at the right time. This partnership-first approach delivered tangible results. Contamination rates fell dramatically — from 28.1% to 8.9% — resulting in cleaner material streams, improved resident understanding, and a more cost-effective system.

Building on this success, Lincolnshire has continued to strengthen its model in preparation for national policy changes, including Simpler Recycling and the introduction of food waste collections. A significant development has been the agreement to establish a single communications lead across the partnership — ensuring one trusted voice and avoiding fragmented messaging.

This governance shift reflects a growing recognition that communications must be embedded at the heart of service design and delivery. In Lincolnshire, communications are no longer an add-on; they are integrated into decision-making processes and aligned closely with operational planning.

The rollout of food waste collections demonstrates this approach in practice. A unified communications framework has been developed, including shared key messages, myth-busting content, and a phased delivery plan linked directly to service implementation. Close coordination between county and district teams ensures consistency while allowing for local nuance.

Importantly, communications are delivered alongside operations — not after them. This ensures residents are informed, prepared, and supported throughout periods of change, reducing confusion and increasing participation.

At the heart of Lincolnshire's approach are several core principles: partnership working, a focus on behaviour change, consistency of messaging, and the use of data to evidence impact. These principles have enabled the partnership to move from a fragmented system under pressure to a more coherent, resilient model.

Lincolnshire's experience highlights the value of strong partnership working across all authorities, with county and district councils playing complementary roles in delivering effective recycling services. By aligning services and communications across the area, the partnership has created a clearer, simpler system for residents while retaining the local knowledge and connection that districts bring.



Making Better Use of Council Fleets: Changeable Vehicle Messaging from Roadvert



As a long-established partner to Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and local authorities across the UK, Roadvert supports councils in delivering clear, targeted public messaging through a practical use of existing fleet assets.

Local authority vehicles operate daily within defined communities, following consistent routes and schedules. This makes them a reliable and highly visible communication channel, one that reaches residents repeatedly without reliance on third-party platforms, changing algorithms, or external media placement.

Messages delivered through fleet vehicles are seen in real-world environments, embedded within the communities they serve.

Importantly, communications are delivered alongside operations — not after them. This ensures residents are informed, prepared, and supported throughout periods of change, reducing confusion and increasing participation

A Practical Communication Channel for Public Services

Council fleets are uniquely positioned to act as mobile information platforms. From refuse collection vehicles to highways and environmental services fleets, these assets provide repeated exposure to key messages across neighbourhoods.

Roadvert's changeable and reusable vehicle banner system enables councils to update messaging quickly and cost-effectively, supporting a wide range of campaigns, including:

- Waste and recycling initiatives
- Fly-tipping and waste crime enforcement
- Commercial and bulky waste services
- Fire prevention (e.g. battery and vape disposal)
- Public health messaging
- Service updates and seasonal changes
- Community engagement, recruitment, and local elections and conducting their analysis into early 2026.

There is also potential for collaborative campaigns with partner organisations such as NHS trusts and Fire & Rescue Services, enabling shared messaging and cost efficiencies.

Frameless, Flexible, and Operationally Efficient

At the core of Roadvert's approach is its frameless, changeable graphic system, designed to minimise operational disruption.

Unlike traditional vehicle wraps, which can require vehicles to be taken out of service for installation or replacement, Roadvert's system allows graphics to be updated quickly with minimal downtime. This ensures fleets remain operational while messaging stays current and relevant.

The reusable nature of the banners also supports long-term value. Campaigns can be rotated and reused—for example,

seasonal initiatives such as garden waste collections, reducing the need for repeated production and installation costs.

Cost Control and Asset Longevity

For fleet and waste managers working within constrained budgets, the system offers a practical alternative to full vehicle wraps. Key considerations include:

- Reduced vehicle downtime during installation and updates
- Lower lifecycle costs through reusable materials
- Flexibility to refresh messaging without committing to long-term branding
- Avoidance of dated or worn graphics over the lifespan of the vehicle

This approach aligns with broader local authority priorities around efficiency, sustainability, and asset optimisation.

Revenue Generation Opportunities

In addition to supporting council-led campaigns, fleets can also be used to generate income.

Roadvert offers a managed service where part of the fleet can be allocated to third-party messaging, creating a potential revenue stream.

This model operates at no cost to the council, with Roadvert managing delivery and campaign coordination. Many UK authorities are already using this approach to offset operational costs while maintaining



Supporting Campaign Delivery

Roadvert also provides optional creative support to help councils develop clear, effective messaging tailored to local priorities. This ensures campaigns are not only visible, but also understandable and actionable for residents.

Availability

Roadvert's current "Switch & Save" offers are available to UK local authorities and public sector organisations, supporting the transition from traditional vehicle graphics to reusable banner systems in a structured and budget-conscious way.

A background image showing a fleet of white trucks parked in a row. In the top left corner, there is a logo for 'apse energy' with 'apse' in white on a pink oval and 'energy' in green. In the top right corner, there is a QR code and the text 'Interested in learning about fleet decarbonisation? Join us!'. The main text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

Interested in learning about fleet decarbonisation? Join us!

Developing a Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy Post Local Government Reorganisation

APSE Energy Webinar

Tuesday 9 June, 10:00 - 11:00

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Bedford Borough's recipe for the introduction of food waste collections: Engaging our community through Simpler Recycling communications

Ben Woodfine, Simpler Recycling Communications Project Manager at Bedford Borough Council, shares how they have leveraged creative social media content to inspire and inform residents.

When we began preparing for the roll-out of weekly food waste collections, we knew it was about more than new bins and collection days. It was about helping residents make a meaningful change to how they manage waste, and inspiring them to see that small actions can make a big difference.

Our goal went beyond increasing recycling rates. We also wanted to raise awareness of how to reduce food waste in the first place and show residents the real-life benefits of doing so. Some of the strongest traction points in our messaging focused on saving money, protecting the environment, and building the sense that recycling food waste is simply the new norm.

We also wanted to communicate that, in the longer term, reducing food waste can help save costs for the council, ultimately benefiting all residents of doing so. Some of the strongest traction points in our messaging focused on saving money, protecting the environment, and building the sense that recycling food waste is simply the new norm.

We also wanted to communicate that, in the longer term, reducing food waste can help save costs for the council, ultimately benefiting all residents.

To cut through the noise, we took a multi-channel approach, using social media, email bulletins, printed leaflets, posters, and community outreach to ensure the message reached people wherever they were.

Understanding our audience

Food waste is fundamentally a behavioural issue. Residents understood food waste was a problem but didn't always connect it to their own habits. We built our messaging on these insights, tailoring it to different motivations, for example, showing families how reducing waste saves money on the weekly shop, or highlighting environmental benefits for those motivated by sustainability.

We also built our content around moments that were already in the public eye. We aligned with Love Food Hate Waste's national Food Action Week, tapping into their established themes and amplifying them with local stories and voices. This gave us extra momentum and a ready-made conversation to join.

Making it real on social media

Social media became one of our most powerful tools for sparking interest and starting conversations. We created a series of short, visual campaigns across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and X, sharing practical tips, "did you know?" facts, and visuals that reminded people food recycling could be easy and worthwhile. We engaged when people commented and built conversations.

We also used Reels to make more personal and engaging interactions. One featured a local councillor demonstrating how easy it is to use the caddy at home, while another included my two young sons helping in the kitchen, showing that food waste recycling is an easy family-friendly habit.

Another particularly effective Reel followed our Portfolio Holder on a visit to the local food waste processing facility, showing exactly what happens once food waste is collected. This behind-the-scenes look helped to tackle misinformation and raise awareness of the process beyond the home.

Find some of our work on the Bedford Borough Facebook and Instagram pages.

Planning for meaningful engagement

We knew conversations around new services could move quickly online, so we planned carefully from the start. Before launching the campaign, we drafted and internally approved responses to the common questions and comments we could expect.

Having these ready meant we could respond to residents straight away when posts gained traction, keeping discussions accurate, friendly, and informative. This quick and confident engagement helped reduce the spread of misinformation and supported food recycling becoming the community norm.

When residents saw consistent, factual responses and positive public conversations, it encouraged others to take part too.

Reaching beyond digital

To complement our online activity, we backed up messaging through physical materials that reached every household. part too. Information leaflets were distributed alongside all new caddies, clearly explaining how to use the service and what could be recycled.

This campaign reaffirmed the value of pairing human storytelling with data-informed strategy. Whether it's showing where food waste goes, featuring local families, or tying into national campaigns like Food Action Week, authenticity builds trust and normalises change. By preparing responses in advance, using clear and consistent messaging, and connecting food recycling to real community benefits - financial, environmental, and social - we created a campaign that didn't just inform residents but aimed to inspire pride in taking part.

The results

Our multi-channel campaign delivered strong digital performance and soon we hope to be able to demonstrate tangible real-world results. Social posts achieved engagement rates over twice our usual recycling content, and we look forward to monitoring collection tonnage data to demonstrate take up of the new service from residents.

Equally important, resident feedback reflected a genuine shift in attitude. Many told us they felt more informed and motivated to take part.

Lessons we learned

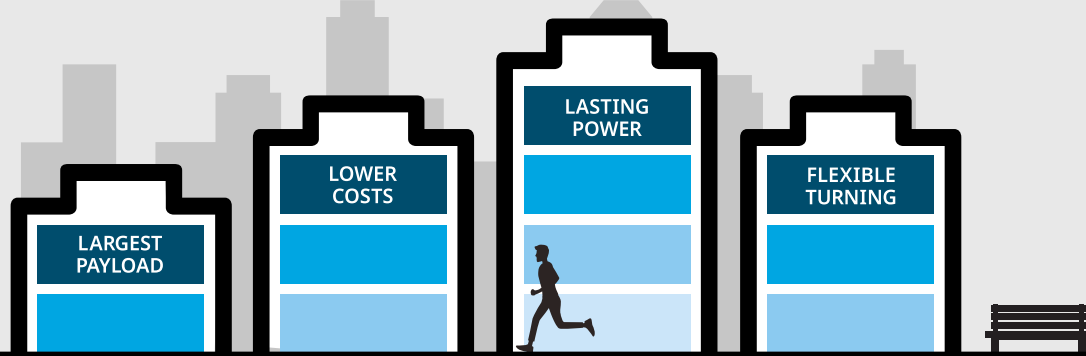
Inside, we included simple guidance and links to subscribe to our recycling email bulletin, helping to grow our audience of subscribers for future direct messaging. This approach allowed us to not only engage residents at the launch stage but also build an ongoing communication route to support long-term behaviour change without algorithms impacting on our reach.

Posters and displays in libraries and community buildings reinforced the same look and tone across channels, ensuring a consistent campaign identity.



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