

(Avie)more than a feeling

**What to expect from Scotland's biggest public sector
fleet, waste, and grounds seminar and exhibition**

Aviemore Preview '25

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Sustainable highways

Dr Helen Bailey

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Hackney's solar pilot

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Editorial



Mo Baines
Chief Executive,
APSE

Change always falls to the delivery of frontline services

Since the English Devolution White Paper, which surprised many in local government, there has been an array of opinions, from fulsome support for reorganisation and greater devolution, to those who insist the process will lead to chaos and lack of local accountability.

Wherever political parties and individuals sit in the debate it will undoubtedly be disruptive to organisational stability, political party machinery and of course residents. It is the continuation of service delivery where APSE is concentrating its efforts. From day one of any new council, residents will still expect potholes to be repaired, the parks maintained, and their bins emptied.

Whilst this may seem obvious enough there are a host of factors that will lead to that end delivery. Bringing together different service delivery models, maintenance regimes, bin rounds, fleets, and assets will require a determined pre-merger effort. Frontline service managers cannot be an afterthought in the reorganisation discussions.

Based on previous APSE experience this will mean setting up sub-groups from the merging authorities to

map current delivery, including operational and policy considerations, resources, both financial and human, and of course the relative needs of each locality to ensure delivery from day one. It may also mean revising some core elements of provisions; aligning recycling, and consistency of access to support, for example, assisted bin collections or subsidised pricing policy in leisure centres. The last thing any local councillor wants to see in their inbox is accusations of a postcode lottery in local services. Fairness will be an obvious concern for local residents.

Since the white paper, and learning from the experiences of unitarisation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland APSE has already run a series of webinars to kickstart understanding of the frontline service delivery issues. This has included topics as wide ranging as fleet and transport through to cemeteries and crematoria. A new LGR network is a free service to APSE members, and you can expect to join further webinars looking at workforce matters, organisational culture change, and factors that will support practical operational delivery in a new organisation.

Wherever you sit in the debate what matters to local residents will be the seamless provision of services.

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Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events

New starters

A warm welcome to our new members of staff! Joining the APSE family is Bonni Jee, Principal Advisor; Owen Baker, Business Support Apprentice, and Sophie Boyle, Research and Information Officer - you can find out more about them on page 12.

Championing diversity and inclusion

On Tuesday 13 May, APSE hosted an online Equality, Diversity and Inclusion seminar, looking at the role local government plays in navigating issues around inequality and diversity, as well as supporting marginalised communities. Speakers included Lutfur Ali, Senior Policy Advisor, CIPD; Cllr Alys Mumford, Green Party Lead on Feminist Planning; Mark Fosbrook, Disability Inclusion Manager, West Midlands Combined Authority; Emily Randall, Public Health Lead – Commissioning, East Riding of Yorkshire Council; and Rhys Ananicz, Ageing Well Partnership and Involvement Co-ordinator, Swansea Council. Presentations can be viewed on the APSE website.

Chartered Institution of Waste Management North West

Our new Principal Advisor, Bonni Jee, attended a CIWM North West event at the University of Central Lancashire on 25 April, providing an update on behalf of the CIWM Early Career Ambassador team, of which he is a member. The event also included presentations from Barry Smylie, Principal Lead Fire Engineer, Suez; Jenny Robinson, Zero Waste Scotland Recycling Partner; Gareth Moreton, Ecosurety and Ruairidh Hanna, Project Manager, Perth and Kinross Council.

Bringing energy policy into action

On Thursday 1 May, APSE Energy held an in-person event in Westminster - covering a range of topics across climate change and renewables, including how to ensure a just energy transition, retrofit strategies and innovative solar projects. Speakers included Steve Gummer, Partner and Head of Net Zero, Sharpe Pritchard; Jason Powell, Head of Operations, Hackney Light and Power; Isaac Sidney, Senior Policy Advisor, Office for Zero Emission Vehicles; Helen Burrigge, HCCSP Manager, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, and Sandra Bogelein, Lead Analyst, People and Net Zero, Climate Change Committee.

Manchester marathon

Our very own Adam Evans, Business Support Assistant, completed the Manchester Marathon on Sunday 27 April raising £300 for Activity Alliance, a charity that supports and advocates for disabled people in sport. Well done Adam!

All the world's a stage . . .

On Wednesday 9 April, APSE held a special seminar at Shakespeare Playhouse North in Prescott, looking at local regeneration and how councils can contribute to good economic growth. The event was opened by Knowsley Council leader Cllr Graham Morgan, and included presentations from Dale Milburn, Executive Director - Regeneration and Economic Development, Knowsley Council; Cllr Tony Brennan, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, Knowsley Council; Claire McGolgan, Director of Culture



[L-R] Ashley Smith, London Borough of Havering, receiving the APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award from Becky Ballinger, Managing Director, CDS Group.

at Liverpool City Council and the Associate Director of Culture for the Liverpool City Region; Anita Brown, APSE Northern Secretary; Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive; Andy Dunbobbin, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales and Chris Renahan, Assistant Director, Inclusive Growth and Development at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. Presentations can be viewed on the APSE website.

Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award 2025

On Thursday 1 May, APSE held a Cemeteries and Crematoria Seminar at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. As well as exploring the challenges and opportunities facing local authority bereavement services, the seminar also included APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award 2025 - kindly sponsored by the CDS Group - recognising the excellent work happening throughout the sector. The finalists were:

- Derby City Council - Improving the Customer Experience;
- Rushcliffe Borough Council - Sustainable memorialisations;
- Sefton Council - Sustainable and Supportive Network for the Bereaved;
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council - Transforming for the future

Winner: The London Borough of Havering - Upminster Cemetery Extension

[L-R] Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council, Andy Dunbobbin, North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, and Chris Renahan, Assistant Director, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.





[L-R] Matt Ellis, Principal Advisor; Cllr Terry Andrews, APSE Northern Ireland Chair; George Barton, Communications Officer.

Scotland

APSE Annual Seminar 2025

This year, our annual seminar will be taking place in Glasgow from Wednesday 10 September - Thursday 11 September - coinciding with the city's 850th birthday. The packed seminar programme will cover neighbourhood services, housing, industrial relations and much more! More details can be found on the APSE website.

Wales

Sustaining active lifestyles

On Tuesday 6 May, APSE Wales held an webinar exploring how councils are engaging people to stay active - including working with partner organisations and empowering local communities to secure better mental, physical and social outcomes. Speakers included Carl Daniels, Senior Sport and Leisure Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council; Rhys Thomas, Community Engagement Transformation Lead, Swansea Council, and Julia Goddard, Director, Alliance Leisure.

Northern Ireland

Local Government Awards 2025 - NI councils celebrate as overall winners announced

Councils from across Northern Ireland celebrated as the ten award winners of the 2025 Local Government Awards were announced at an event hosted by Barra Best at the Game of Thrones Studio in Banbridge on 27 March 2025.

Coordinated by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), the awards ceremony also marked the 10th anniversary of the newly established councils and the evolving role of councillors, who are vital in advocating and delivering for their communities and the wider region. This year's awards attracted 69 entries and were designed to celebrate the exceptional efforts of councils in their communities. They highlighted the innovative service provision, new initiatives, and the personal commitment of councillors, local government staff, and local government partners.

APSE was proud to sponsor the Service Innovation and Improvement Award, which was won by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Matt Ellis, Principal Advisor, Cllr Terry Andrews, APSE Northern Ireland Chair and George Barton, Communications Officer attended the event on behalf of APSE. You can view the full list of winners on the NILGA website.

Introducing APSE Synergy

APSE has launched a new wholly owned company APSE Synergy. The company will operate under APSE's ethical ethos and will be available to local council APSE members and others, continuing to provide the same high quality and cost-effective consultancy and interim management solutions.

APSE is the shareholder, and the Board of Directors is drawn from APSE's National Council and the Chief Executive.

Speaking about the new company, APSE Chief Executive Mo Baines said "We are delighted to announce this new company which offers a significant new approach to the delivery of APSE's valued services to our member local councils across the UK. APSE's size and reach has grown exponentially, and it is only right that like all other organisations, we reviewed our operating platforms. This approach secures APSE's services into the future".

APSE National Chair and Board member. Cllr Archie Dryburgh, MBE, said "The launch of APSE Synergy follows a comprehensive review of APSE, consultation with our National Council, our staff team within the APSE Secretariat and our member councils. I would like to thank everyone for their support during this period of transition. APSE itself remains as an association for our members working on their behalf however APSE Synergy reflects the next step in securing our organisational ethos and services in the years to come".

Sail away

And he's off! After 22 glorious years with APSE our very own Rob Bailey has retired! Throughout his time with us Rob has worked across our consultancy services as well as in our policy team with our Principal Advisors.

Rob was instrumental in setting up the APPG on school food, championing quality school meals for children, his engineering background has provided countless insights in Highways, Street Lighting and Fleet and Transport Services, and all those park runs made him a favourite in our leisure network!

Rob will still be around the sector as he continues to serve local government as a Councillor. He promises not to be a stranger to the APSE networks.

Your dedication to local council frontline services is a proud legacy. We will miss you Rob!





Annual Seminar and Service Awards 2025

10 -11 September

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Upcoming training sessions

- 03/06/25 - Introduction to Parks Management (CPD)
- 03/06/25 + 04/06/25 - Effective Social Media
- 03/06/25 (AM) + 04/06/25 (AM) - Health and Safety in Waste and Environmental Services
- 03/06/25 (PM) + 04/06/25 (PM) - Construction (Design and Management Regulations 2015, Refresher)
- 05/06/25 - Principles of Contract Management (CPD)
- 05/06/25 (AM) + 06/06/25 (AM) - The Bereavement Journey (ICCM)
- 10/06/25 (AM) + 11/06/26 (AM) - Advanced Parks Management: Sustainable Finance (CPD)
- 10/06/25 (PM) + 11/06/26 (PM) - Managing Allotments in Local Government
- 10/06/25 (PM) + 11/06/25 (PM) - Leading a Customer Focussed Culture in Local Authorities
- 11/06/25 + 12/06/25 - Train the Trainer (2-day Masterclass)
- 17/06/2025 - Developing and Delivering a Commercial Strategy (CPD)



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Transport Seminar 2025

Speakers include:

David Mullan, Traffic Commissioner for the Northwest

Phil Breen, Earned Recognition National Account Manager, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency

Tom Griffith, Manager – Member Advice Centre (MAC), Logistics UK

Louis Jones, EV and Connected Services Director, DAF Trucks Limited

Matt Macdonald, APSE Energy Associate

Terry Elvin and Josh Klein-Davies, Intelligent Finger printing

Jim Magner, Programme Development Manager, Driving for Better Business

Debbie Johns, Head of APSE Performance Networks



Thursday 19 June 2025

Crewe Hall

What's in store at Aviemore ?



APSE is delighted to be returning to Aviemore for this year's Scotland Fleet, Waste and Ground Seminar, a fixture in the Scottish local authority calendar. Louise Melville, APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland, looks ahead to the topics and themes of this year's edition...

Thanks to our sponsors...



Against the glorious backdrop of the Cairngorms, local government specialists in fleet, waste and grounds services will gather with the UK's leading suppliers to explore new and exciting innovations within the industry and debate the future of these vital services. With over 110 exhibition stands, this event features Scotland's largest trade exhibition of its kind - giving delegates the opportunity to view a huge range of products and services.

This year's event - kindly sponsored by ACL Hire - is taking place at the MacDonalnd Aviemore Resort from 20-23 May and gives local government colleagues across Scotland the chance to hear from a wide variety of expert speakers across the public and private sectors. Topics will range from developing street cleaning services, to understanding the impact of the emissions trading scheme expansion and implementing new drug and alcohol testing practices. Furthermore, as we edge closer to 2030, there will be ample opportunity to continue the discussion on Scotland's Circular Economy and Waste Route Map.

Parks, grounds, and streets services are also covered in abundance with a dedicated discussion forum and focused presentations looking at the use of AI to improve wildlife habitats and how to manage the pressures on allotment services.

Session One

The seminar's keynote session will be 'Waste and recycling services - The road ahead', reflecting the priority of the Circular Economy Bill and Waste Route Map across the local authority sector in Scotland. Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive will open the session by discussing the findings of APSE's latest State of the Market survey for waste and recycling. Following this will be a joint session from Hollie Whitfield, Senior Policy Manager - Recycling, Scottish Government and Charlie Devine, Service Manager - Waste Partnership, Dundee City Council looking at the co-design process for sustainable household recycling solutions. The session will close with a parks, streets and grounds discussion form, discussing the latest challenges and opportunities for the sector.

Session Two

After lunch and a exhibition viewing sponsored by Steril Koni Ltd, we will move onto session two: 'Strategies for improving street cleansing operations and litter reduction'. This will be opened by Heather McLaughlin, Campaigns and Social Innovation Manager, Keep Scotland Beautiful. Heather will present data from national



audits and public polling on roadside letter, as well as discussing her organisation's approach to public campaigning and messaging - she will also cover the outcomes of a recent intervention delivered along the A9 road with Perth and Kinross Council. Closing session two is a representative of Glasgow City Council, who will provide an overview of Glasgow's investment into street cleaning services, as well as communication and engagement with local residents.

Session Three

Following an opportunity for exhibition viewing - sponsored by Stertil Koni Ltd - is the last session of day one, 'transport responsibilities and compliance', with a keynote address on the responsibilities of fleet managers from Victoria Davies, Traffic Commissioner for Wales.

Next up is a DVSA and enforcement update from Gordon Thomson, Head of Vehicle Testing and Approvals Service/ Policy, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, also covering the latest service developments including technology and IT. The final presentation of the day is led by Phil Lloyd, Head of Engineering Policy at Logistics UK, who will be providing a guide to maintaining roadworthiness, future standards for MOTs and break testing, as addressing legal compliance issues. Rounding off a packed first day will be a litter managers network discussion forum, covering Scotland's national litter and flytipping strategy. In the evening, delegates are invited to a gala buffet dinner - kindly sponsored by Dennis Eagle UK and Terberg Matec UK.

Session Four

We kick off day two with session four: 'Greening the future - Climate-smart strategies for parks grounds and open spaces'. A representative from Space Intelligence / Scottish Wildlife Trust (inv) will open the session with a presentation on future proofing wildlife habitats through the use of AI. They will discuss the background of the project and the importance of data in decision making. Next up Fiona Sutton - Wilson, Head of APSE Training will give an overview of allotments duties under Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 - looking at the key issues effecting local authorities across Scotland and good practice for both urban and rural communities.

The Seminar will take place at the MacDonald Aviemore Highland Resort on Tuesday 20 to Friday 23 May 2025. It is an extremely valuable resource for local authorities and is not to be missed

The annual event features Scotland's largest trade exhibition of its kind with over 120 exhibition stands confirmed. Delegates have the unique opportunity to question suppliers about their latest products and pricing

Closing session four is the transport advisory discussion forum- Sponsored by Enterprise - focusing on fleet decarbonisation and the Public Sector Action Plan with a representative from Transport Scotland.

Session Five

Session five will be covering the important topic of navigating drug and alcohol policies, including understanding testing regimes and their impact. This will begin with Louise Melville, APSE Principal Advisor exploring a number of local authority case study scenarios - demonstrating the complexity of the policy landscape. Following on will be a representative from William Hamilton & Sons, looking at how to ensure driver wellbeing and safe operations.

Next up are Josh Klein-Davies, Field Sales Executive and Terry Elvin, Head of UK Sales, from Intelligent Fingerprinting, who will outline how councils can enhance workplace safety through robust drug and alcohol policies, as well as discussing the range of drug testing solutions available - including fingerprint testing. Session five will be concluded with a waste discussion forum - continuing the discussion on the circular economy and Waste Route Map for 2030.

Following lunch and an exhibition viewing - sponsored by DAF Trucks Ltd - we will go into the final session of the seminar, returning to the topic of waste and recycling. Louise Cowan, Strategy Director - Climate, Local Partnerships, will give a UK-wide perspective on future

Aviemore is far more than just an exhibition. The Seminar – kindly sponsored by ACL Hire – draws in a rich variety of highly influential and knowledgeable speakers; offering those in attendance a fantastic opportunity to network and bounce ideas around other members of local government

waste challenges, including future compositions and planning for change. A representative from Zero Waste Scotland will continue this theme with a presentation on how local authorities can tackle overconsumption and create a more sustainable future. David Robertson will finish the session with a discussion on the impact of the emissions trading scheme being extended to include thermal waste treatment and the impact this will have on local authorities.

On the evening of Thursday 22 May, APSE will be holding an evening reception - sponsored by Whale Tankers - followed by a charity dinner - sponsored by FAUN - Zoeller (UK) Limited. After dinner, we will be holding the APSE Striving for Excellence Awards - sponsored by Bucher Municipal and Econ Engineering Ltd, celebrating the hard work and success of local authority services in Scotland.

Besides providing ample opportunities for learning through our Seminar sessions, APSE Scotland's Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar is a key event for local government decision-makers and heads of service to come together and share best practice while providing the opportunity - via the largest Scottish trade exhibition of its kind - to get to terms with the latest technological developments in fleet, equipment and ancillary supplies; from salt spreaders to asset management software. It is a space in which new partnerships can be developed to transform and enhance local government frontline 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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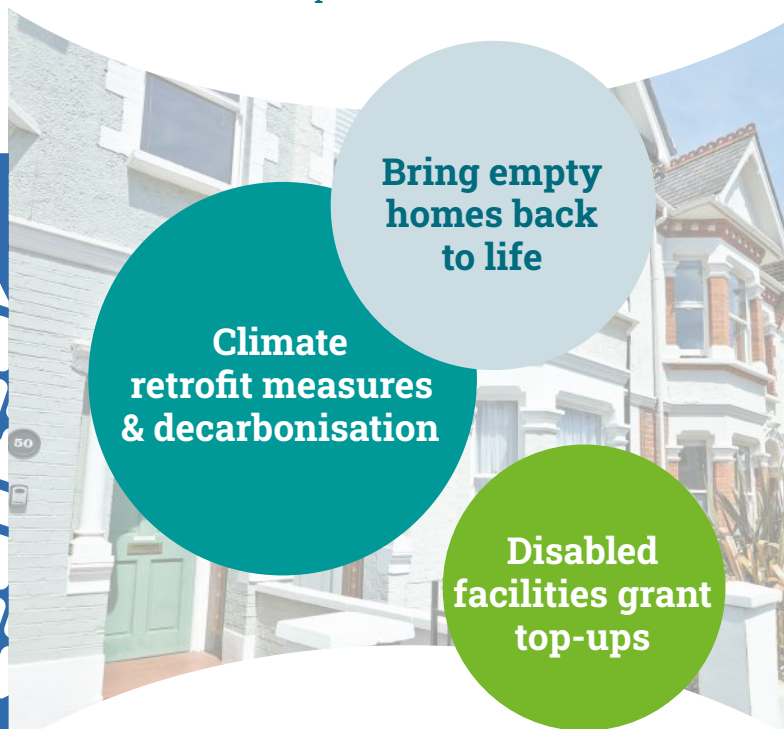
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Meet our new members of staff!

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



Sophie Boyle, Research and Information Officer

What is your background?

I am a recent graduate from the University of Glasgow with a degree in Politics and Central and Eastern European Studies. Throughout my academic and professional journey, I've developed a strong interest in grassroots politics and the role local government plays in delivering essential services. I've previously contributed to political writing, focusing on local democracy and policy-making. This experience deepened my passion for supporting the public sector and led me to seek a role where I could make a tangible difference.

What is your role at APSE?

I work as a Research and Information Officer. My responsibilities include writing policy briefings, supporting the delivery of seminars and events, and staying on top of key developments affecting local authorities. I also contribute to APSE's wider research output and help ensure our members have access to clear, evidence-based insights and examples of best practice.

What is your favourite thing about your role?

What I enjoy most about my role is the opportunity to engage with local authorities and help bridge the gap between policy and practice. Being part of that process, and seeing the real-world impact it can have, is what makes the role both meaningful and motivating.

Where can APSE members meet you?

You can find me at the APSE Scotland office, or contact me via email at sboyle@apse.org.uk or by phone on 01698 459 051. I'll also be attending a number of APSE events throughout the year and look forward to meeting more of our members.



Bonni Jee, Principal Advisor

What is your background?

I have a mixture of local authority and consultancy experience. I started at APSE in April 2025, after two years at Mott MacDonald, where I was a waste and resource management consultant advising clients including local authorities in the UK and abroad. My first job was as a Recycling Advisor at Kirklees Council, where I was on the frontline on the doorsteps advising residents on correct recycling! I then moved to the energy and climate change team there, where I worked on the council's climate change action plan amongst other things to help with their journey to net zero, which is where I first heard of APSE.

Before working, I studied Natural Sciences at the University of Nottingham, graduating in 2019, where I was the elected Environmental Officer at the Students' Union. I then completed a masters in Environmental Policy at Wolfson College, Cambridge the following year.

I am also an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM) and sit on its Early Careers Ambassador team, which aims to promote the sector to young professionals through outreach and engagement. I am therefore eager to get involved in the campaign to get more young people joining local government as a career.

What is your role at APSE?

I am a Principal Advisor with responsibility for the Central Region, which covers most of the Midlands. Though I am from and based in Manchester, I am very familiar with the region having studied in Nottingham and my previous work has taken me to Birmingham and the wider West Midlands. I can also often be found walking in the Peak District! The area has some great cities and some great scenery, but is not without its challenges and I look forward to helping our members with those.

I will also oversee the environmental services areas of waste and recycling, highways and transport. I have always been passionate about recycling and the circular economy, reducing our consumption and environmental impact. I also know it is something that affects everyone and gets everyone talking, not least our members!

What is your favourite thing about your role?

It is still early days but I have already helped a few of our members with network queries which is rewarding. Being able to help authorities and be called upon for advice which is genuinely appreciated and can make a real difference. This is an exciting time for local government with reorganisation in the pipeline and many legislative changes, for example in Simpler Recycling, so it is wonderful to be in a position to draw on best practice to help others on their journey to excellence.

Where can APSE members meet you?

I was born and raised in Manchester, and so it is a privilege to be able to stay in my home city where our headquarters are, overlooking Old Trafford, just minutes away from the city centre. We're also just round the corner from Trafford Town Hall where I can be found most lunchtimes in their café – further supporting local government where I can!

You can contact me via email at bjee@apse.org.uk or by phone on 0161 772 1810.



Owen Baker, Business Support Apprentice

What is your background?

Before APSE, I was still in my final year of high school studying and this is where I developed a strong foundation in business and admin skills. I wanted to make the leap from school life to work life, so I knew an

apprenticeship was the path I wanted to go down. When I saw this role, I knew it was a great way for me to start building experience and learn more 'hands-on'. Before this role, I was involved in my family's small business where I improved my communication and customer service skills. Within my school, I also volunteered within the Additional Supports Needs Provision where I took full responsibility for promoting equality, dignity and respect. I hope to bring all the qualities, skills and attributes I've gained throughout my school years to APSE.

What is your role at APSE?

My role within APSE is Business Support Apprentice. I am responsible for filing, organising and managing databases and spreadsheets as well as providing customer service by answering phone calls or emails, dealing with queries and helping clients. Dealing with these has helped me get comfortable in a professional environment and understand how different parts of APSE work together.

What is your favourite thing about your role?

My favourite thing about this role at APSE is doing work that has an impact, even though I'm still early in my career, I can see how the work I do really makes a difference which feels rewarding to contribute and be trusted with real tasks that matter.

Where can APSE members meet you?

I can be found at the Scotland office and contacted via email at Obaker@apse.org.uk or by phone at 01698459051, I may also be in attendance at some APSE events.



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Incorporating APSE Northern Ireland's AGM

Agenda includes:

From ambition to action: Derry City and Strabane's Sustainability and Climate Commission

Michele Murphy, Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Officer, Derry City and Strabane District Council

Plant One Million Trees

Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Our 10-year journey to becoming a sustainable, decarbonising and protected environment

Connor O'Dornan, Net Zero and Innovations Delivery Manager, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

How councils are engaging with the climate change and energy agenda

James Jefferson, Principal Advisor - APSE Energy



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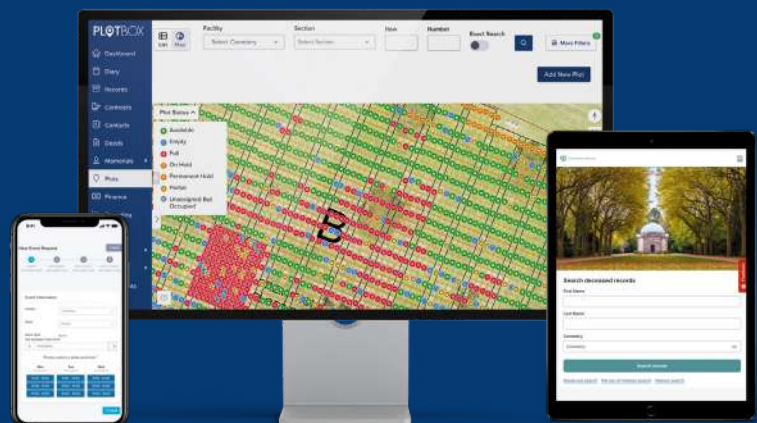
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Working with the construction industry to deliver cleaner air

Jason Andrews, EH Pollution Manager and Andrew Gordon, Project Manager, London Borough of Merton, detail their work to reduce air pollution caused by the construction industry through a collaborative approach.

The traditional view that construction, by its very nature is an industry that pollutes local air, needs revision. Innovations over the last decade have been profound, with many steps taken toward decarbonisation and the reduction of toxic emissions. Merton's air quality team have a long history of working with the industry to deliver the best outcomes for air pollution across London.

The team lead the industry in promoting the use of new technologies, introducing power management expertise and encouraging retro-fit. They have for many years produced the London Code of Practice for Construction which guides developers on the ever-changing world of best practice. It serves as a simple easy-to-follow guidance that can be referenced in planning conditions, enabling a succinct planning condition to deep-dive into detailed guidance.

One project we are particularly proud of is the Cleaner Construction for London Project, which in simple terms is an ultra-low emission zone for the construction industry. Over the last decade, this project has been quietly ensuring that construction and demolition is using the cleanest equipment possible. We have seen the project cut toxic emissions from the London construction fleet by nearly a half.

Way back in 2015, as the sources of air pollution were mapped in London, it was clear that the engines used on sites were a considerable source of both PM2.5 and NO2 and on a practical level, had been unregulated for years. There was simply no incentive to ensure that the cleanest kit was being used. With competition in tendering always in the mix, the lack of a consistent set of expectations for emissions in London, meant that well-meaning environmental managers had a tough time promoting their agenda.

Emissions mapping is often modelled around the road-side monitoring networks. However, we also need to understand that some larger sites and regeneration areas sit close to sensitive receptors such as schools and homes. These activities can last for many years, significantly impacting health.

The Mayor of London decided that this was an area that needed to be addressed and offered to work with Local Authorities to introduce into the planning agenda conditions to ensure that sites operate the cleanest non-road mobile machinery (NRMM) as possible at that point in time. The expectations were escalating over forthcoming year.

Merton picked up the challenge and initially operated the scheme throughout South London and since 2019 has been operating the scheme across London on behalf of the GLA and in partnership with boroughs and the industry.

What we've achieved is a new approach to delivering a world first, redefining the way industry and boroughs deliver real change.

The programme developed protocols for proactive site inspections that assess the kit on site and ensures that the contractors are using the right equipment, and that sites are hitting the standards specified in their planning documentation. Where findings indicated shortcomings, rather than 'throwing the book' and embarking on escalating enforcement, instead guidance was given, and thus a collaborative approach was forged. This on the ground engagement was vital to ensure the policy is delivered as intended, and remains our principal tool for educating sites in innovation and reducing emissions.

This is not a static process but remains one of continuing improvement as we move towards tighter air-quality restrictions and net-zero in London.

The response from the industry has been overwhelmingly positive. The industry has changed, and they care more than ever about their environmental credentials. Rather than an anticipated push-back, contractors welcomed the level playing field established across London.

London can now boast the cleanest construction fleet in the world, with associated carbon savings that are as significant as those of toxic emissions.



The job's not done, we need to do more. Most equipment in London is now compliant, exposing the most significant issue of off-grid electrical supply, by which we mean, traditionally, diesel generators. With new innovative solutions available, Power Management on sites has become the number one issue. If we want to further reduce the impact of construction onto neighbourhoods, attention to education and cultural change in this area is where we must be focussed.

London has a working proven model that can be adopted in any part of the world and the team are always happy to provide help and guidance. Ask yourself, if a complex city like London can deliver this why can't you?

Jason and Andrew presented at the APSE Air Quality and Climate Change online seminar on 27 March.





A call for systems thinking in sustainable highways

Dr Helen Bailey, Asphalt Programme Lead, University of Derby and Vice President of the Institute of Asphalt Technology, looks at the challenges facing highways maintenance in era of the climate emergency, and charts a progressive roadmap for sustainable, resilient highways.

As local government leaders and service providers navigate an era defined by climate emergency declarations and heightened accountability, the future of frontline services demands a new, integrated approach. Highways maintenance — a vital frontline service — stands at the forefront of this transformation.

Responding to the Climate Emergency

Almost all local authorities have declared a climate emergency, embedding carbon measurement, benchmarking, and reduction into their operational ethos. Yet, this is no longer enough. Public scrutiny around environmental claims is intensifying, demanding robust evidence to back up green credentials. For frontline services, this means adopting a more forensic approach to materials use, carbon accounting, and life-cycle thinking.

The push towards offsetting residual emissions is acknowledged, but it's clear that offsetting should only apply to the final 10% of unavoidable emissions. The bulk of decarbonisation must

come from fundamental changes to design, procurement, and maintenance practices. Local authorities must therefore harness climate contracting tools, like, for example the Chancery Lane Project (TCLP), to embed climate responsibility deep into supply chains.

Crucially, the workforce delivering these services — from contract managers to site operatives — need enhanced carbon literacy. Embedding this awareness will shift hearts and minds, ensuring that sustainability becomes instinctive rather than an afterthought.

The Industry at a Crossroads

The asphalt sector, pivotal to road construction and maintenance. National Highways is investing £27.4 billion into the Strategic Road Network, while local roads command £1.67 billion — covering an overwhelming 84% of the UK's network. Yet, with around 28 million tonnes of asphalt produced in Great Britain in 2022 alone, the environmental impact is undeniable.

“The bulk of decarbonisation must come from fundamental changes to design, procurement, and maintenance practices.”

To address this, the industry is pivoting towards circular economy principles, with major players aligning to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Recycled asphalt (RA), improved materials handling, advanced processing technologies, and enhanced design optimisation are all part of this drive for sustainability.

Frontline services must capitalise on these advancements. Local authorities are uniquely positioned to drive demand for secondary materials and innovative solutions. By doing so, they not only reduce environmental impact but also create more durable and resilient road networks that offer long-term value to the public.

Building for Future Generations

One of the most compelling themes from the presentation was the need to think beyond immediate project lifespans and adopt a generational perspective. Designing roads and infrastructure as 'material banks' — assets rich with recyclable resources — challenges traditional views of construction as linear and consumptive.

For councils, this means reimagining assets not simply by their form or function but by the value of their constituent materials. An accurate understanding of inventory, alongside a willingness to specify reused and remanufactured materials, can transform roads into repositories of future value rather than liabilities.

Live Labs 2, funded by the Department for Transport, is an example of this systems approach in action. Its interconnected themes and projects demonstrate how collaboration across authorities and industry can yield scalable solutions.

People and Data at the Heart of Change

At the core of sustainable transformation lies the interplay between people and data. Measuring and benchmarking carbon impacts are just the beginning. True progress demands integration of sustainability into everyday practice, making friends with procurement teams, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and embracing flexible, visionary models — such as treating infrastructure provision as a service.

Equally, public engagement remains crucial. Understanding how individual choices and behaviours influence outcomes ensures that change is not just top-down but lived and experienced across communities. For frontline services, this translates into deeper community engagement, transparent communication about decisions, and a focus on co-designing solutions that resonate locally.

“Understanding how individual choices and behaviours influence outcomes ensures that change is not just top-down but lived and experienced across communities.”



Digital tools play a critical role here. From advanced asset management systems to predictive maintenance powered by data analytics, technology enables smarter decision-making and supports the move to Sustainability 3.0 — where services are proactive, adaptive, and human-centred.

A Systems Approach for Resilient Communities

The takeaway for APSE members is clear: it's time to adopt a systems view. Frontline services, particularly highways, are not isolated functions but integral parts of wider social, environmental, and economic systems. By embracing whole-life thinking, prioritising material preservation, and fostering bold collaborations, local authorities can reshape their services for lasting impact.

As my final message emphasised: design for the future, embrace technology, sustain precious resources, rethink entrenched processes, and use waste as a resource — all while keeping future generations in sharp focus. Prioritise purpose, elevate consciousness, and above all, work together.

For local government leaders and practitioners, this is both a challenge and an invitation: to move beyond incremental change and seize the opportunity for scalable transformative action. The future of frontline services depends on it.

Helen Bailey presented at the APSE Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar on Thursday 20 March 2025 - as a dual professional in both the academic and private sectors, all views presented are her own.

APSE's Highways and Street Lighting Network provides support for local authorities on operational challenges, including renewing and repairing highways, road openings, grittings and service improvements. You can find out more on the APSE website.

“Frontline services, particularly highways, are not isolated functions but integral parts of wider social, environmental, and economic systems”

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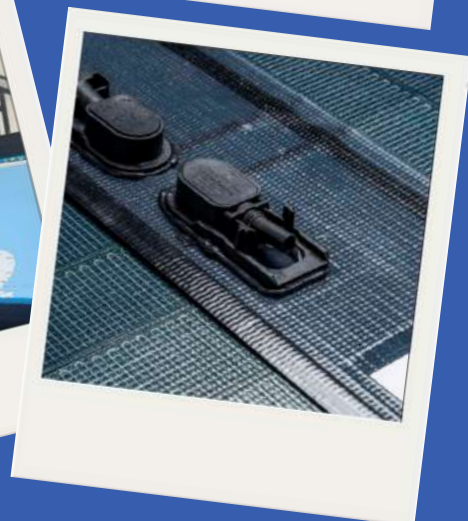


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The retrofit agenda: carbon, cost or quality?

Ed Green and Simon Lannon, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University, explore how to tackle high energy bills and carbon emissions through a smarter approach to retrofit in UK homes.

Recent changes to the cost of energy in the UK have dramatically increased fuel bills for everyone; NEA estimate that 45% of Welsh households are now in fuel poverty (2023). Meanwhile, housing produces 20% of UK carbon emissions (ONS, 2024). The Climate Change Committee have stated that the UK will not meet international, legally binding emissions targets “without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock” (Rowe and Rankl, 2024). And the social housing sector is expected to lead the way - but cost, complexity and risk all discourage retrofit, particularly for older, ‘hard to treat’ homes. How do we take advantage of the opportunities that retrofit on this scale presents, and improve a housing stock routinely described as the “worst value for money of any advanced economy”? (Guardian, 2024)

Retrofit for carbon

Decarbonising dwellings in the UK typically involves replacing a fossil fuel heat source such as a gas-fired boiler with an electric heat source. Standing charges are now a considerable portion of energy costs, so moving to a single energy source saves the billpayer money, incentivising decarbonisation. But retrofit that focuses solely on decarbonisation is likely to increase fuel bills overall, because heat from mains gas is considerably cheaper than heat from electricity. Early research highlighted this tension. In response, Welsh Government’s decarbonisation policy requires that retrofit balances these two concerns: carbon and cost.

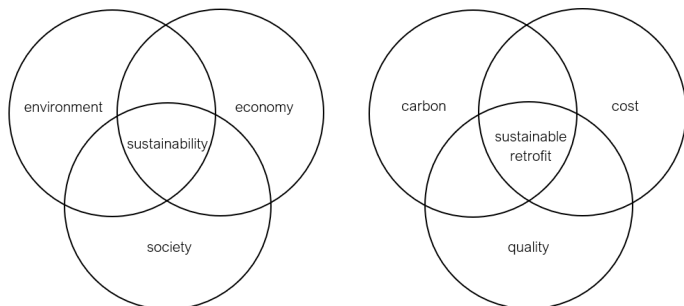
Retrofit for carbon and cost

Deep (fabric first) retrofit enables decarbonisation without increasing fuel costs. However the sequence of works must be planned carefully, or the transition to electric heat will still be seen as an increase in fuel bills. Deep retrofit that includes renewables can dramatically reduce fuel bills, keeping households out of fuel poverty as energy costs continue to rise (reflecting the cost of decarbonising the energy supply network). If renewables are combined with energy storage (typically PV with batteries), fuel bills are even lower, and retrofit can bridge the performance gap between newly built and older homes. Battery storage also reduces pressure on energy infrastructure, which will be increasingly important as the scale of decarbonisation increases. Retrofit for carbon, cost and quality

Some homes and neighbourhoods are compromised by issues that will not be resolved by a retrofit focussed on reducing fuel

bills and decarbonisation. The directive to decarbonise can (if not managed carefully) override other concerns which are sometimes more important. Retrofit that goes beyond improving technical performance may fundamentally improve the quality (and value) of a home, whether that quality be spatial, functional, cultural or experiential.

Three long-serving ‘pillars’ of sustainability (diagram below) can be adapted to describe sustainable retrofit. The Venn diagram reflects the importance of a balanced and holistic approach to “carbon”, “cost” and “quality”, despite the fact that carbon and cost are easy to measure, whereas quality is much more difficult to quantify, and tends to be forgotten.



Making retrofit happen

The British Standard for Retrofitting Dwellings (PAS2035) is a method for making retrofit happen. A retrofit specification and the Retrofit Coordinator role are outlined. However a systematic ‘tick-box’ retrofit approach may miss project-specific opportunities to improve quality. Improvement of quality and value are key catalysts for retrofit in the private sector. For this to happen, retrofit that improves quality must be linked to retrofit that decarbonises and improves energy efficiency.

For many homes, retrofit options are constrained (typically by the planning system), limiting opportunities to improve quality. In more constrained situations, recognising and realising opportunities to improve quality requires specialist expertise. Homeowners and landlords also have difficulty comparing the relative merits of different retrofit options, as there are many complex and interconnected factors to consider. (For example, analysis of embodied carbon, which is in its infancy, is likely to discourage demolition and encourage retrofit). Tools must be developed that encourage better decision-making. Support must be provided so that hard-to-treat properties are improved, not neglected or offloaded onto the private sector. Identifying opportunities to improve the quality and long term value of our homes is an important part of successfully decarbonising the whole housing stock.

Retrofit and governance

Governance could create a context for more, better retrofit. Centrally provided guidance for homeowners and landlords would increase the amount and quality of retrofit, particularly in an economic climate where fewer people are moving home. Advice should come from a reputable public body without commercial bias. It should outline a streamlined retrofit process, and describe benefits and challenges clearly so that retrofit is undertaken in an informed way.

The planning process presents a major obstacle for retrofit, particularly if the aim is to increase property value. Permitted development rights enable some work, but the extent can be unclear. Currently it is difficult to obtain meaningful advice on planning matters, partly because every retrofit is different. Local Authorities could reduce risk and uncertainty by providing affordable, accessible advice, project by project. However this would require considerable investment.

Understanding the impact of retrofit on energy performance is essential, and could be a real incentive in the private sector as fuel bills continue to rise. Presently, energy modelling tends to happen too late to inform the scope of work. A coordinated energy efficiency advisory service, aligned with funding for energy efficiency measures, could pump-prime retrofit. This service could deliver best practice advice through exemplar case studies and useful, project-specific guidance at the right points in the retrofit process. This would increase confidence in retrofit, diminishing risk and reducing the likelihood of project failure.

Finally, central government, local authorities or professional accreditation bodies could make retrofit more attractive and cost-effective by incentivising collaboration between retrofit designers and constructors. If design and construction services were offered in a joined up way, either through a one-stop-shop or a partnering approach, there would be less abortive work, shorter retrofit timelines, and better decision making throughout the process.

“Homes of Today for Tomorrow” is a series of four research projects undertaken on behalf of Welsh Government (2017-2024). The Stage 4 report is available here: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-03/homes-of-today-for-tomorrow-decarbonising-welsh-housing-between-2020-2050.pdf>

Ed Green presented at the APSE Online Social Housing Seminar on Thursday 20 March, his presentation can be viewed on the APSE website.

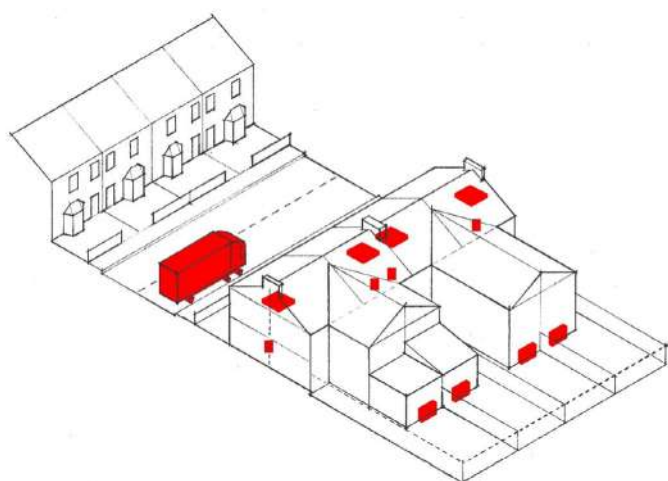
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Action plan needed to protect England's most important trees – like Sycamore Gap – new report reveals

A “robust and effective system” of protections should be developed as part of an action plan to secure the future of some of England's most important trees, according to a new report from The Tree Council and Forest Research.

The Tree Council, the national charity that brings everyone together for the love of trees, and Forest Research, assessed the existing protections and systems in place to secure the future of some of the country's most important trees – those deemed “irreplaceable”, and providing exceptionally high social, cultural and environmental value.

The subsequent report, *Protecting trees of high social, cultural and environmental value*, reveals they are only indirectly protected, with some “significant legal gaps”, and recommends the development of a “robust and effective system” to ensure they are safeguarded.

Report co-author, Jess Allan is The Tree Council's Science and Action Research Manager. She said: “The outpouring of emotion and anger at the felling of the Sycamore Gap tree, in October 2023, shows how valued these socially, culturally and environmentally important trees are.

“But, unlike in other countries such as Italy and Poland, we found there are currently no specific legal protections in place in England.”

The Defra funded report makes a series of recommendations, following a review of existing legislation, and consultation with experts from nearly 50 different organisations, including NGOs, government agencies, landowners, industry bodies, tree volunteers and arboricultural professionals.

It recommends:

- Engaging key stakeholders to better protect important trees, within 12 months
- Developing an ‘action plan’ for important trees
- Improving legal protections
- Developing a public and private funding framework to support owners and managers
- Enhancing data on current and future important trees
- Appointing a “Special Representative” for important trees at political level
- Leading positive engagement and exploring international knowledge exchange

- Improving skills and capacity for management and protection of important trees

The report reveals that trees in this category face a range of threats; from environmental factors, like soil compaction from footfall near the base, and climate change; to biological, such as pests and diseases; and human behaviour, such as vandalism; as well as legislation and enforcement weaknesses, inconsistent management practices and resource pressures.

Report co-author, Forest Research Senior Social Scientist, Dr Beth Brockett said: “Research tells us that people build relationships with, and care for, individual trees. Different trees are important to different people for different reasons.

“This report outlines the range of threats to our nationally important trees and identifies possible mitigations so we can continue to protect them for generations to come.”

Examples of socially, culturally and environmentally important trees lost in the last few years, include; the 300 year old Hunningham Oak, near Leamington, felled to make way for infrastructure projects in 2020; Hackney's Happy Man Tree, felled in 2021 to make way for a housing development, despite being named Tree of the Year in 2020; and 16 ancient lime trees on The Walks in Wellingham, Northamptonshire, which were felled in favour of a dual carriageway in 2023. Following protests, a High Court judge ruled the latter should not have taken place.



The review of existing protections assessed a range of regulatory mechanisms, such as Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), felling licensing and Conservation Area designations but found that these provide only “incidental, rather than intentional” protections.

The Tree Council's Jess Allan added: “The recommendations in this report offer Government a timely opportunity to drive vital and positive change in a collaborative way. Without this action, we risk losing more of our cherished ‘important trees’.

“Together, we can preserve these national treasures, ensuring they continue to enrich the lives of both current and future generations of people and wildlife.”

*To read the full report, *Protecting trees of high social, cultural and environmental value* by The Tree Council and Forest Research, please visit [The Tree Council website](https://www.thetreecouncil.org).*





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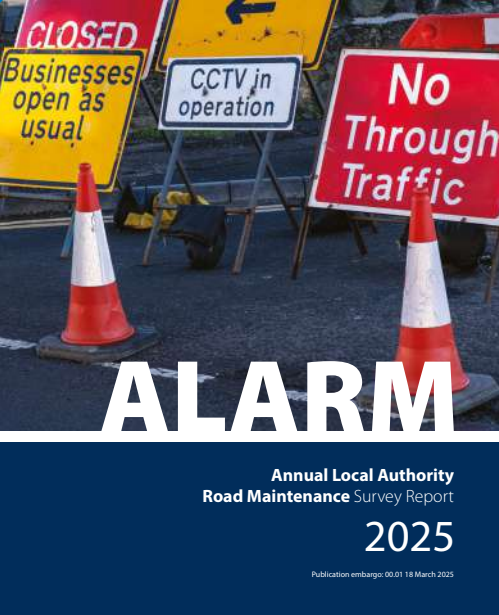
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'Pothole plagued' local roads require long term funding commitment, reports ALARM survey

This year's Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) spell more misery for road users, with the backlog of carriage having reached £17 billion - with roads are only resurfaced, on average, once every 93 years.

The survey, published on 18 March by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA), reports that local authorities face a combined carriage maintenance budget shortfall of £1.25 billion - an increase of 58% on the figure reported 10 years ago - with a total of £16.81 billion of repairs now needed.

Despite the average percentage of highway maintenance budgets spent on the carriage increasing slightly - it remains at 53%, the same as last year. Furthermore, when accounting for inflation, local authority budgets for all highway maintenance activity in England has seen a real-term drop of 5.5% - equivalent to £218.9 million less being allocated to local roads in England.

David Giles, AIA Chair, said: "Over £20 billion has been spent on carriageway maintenance in England and Wales over the last decade. However, due to the short-term allocation of this funding, it has resulted in no quantifiable uplift in the condition and resilience of the network.

"In fact almost all (94%) local authority highway teams reported that, in their opinion, there has been no improvement to their local network over the last year: a view no doubt shared by the majority of road users."

This year's ALARM survey, the 30th, received a record 78% response rate from local authorities in England and Wales. It reports local road funding and conditions based on information provided directly by those responsible for its maintenance. The findings of ALARM 2025, which relate to the 2024/2025 financial year, show that in England and Wales:

- Local roads are worth in excess of £400 billion, but only around 1% of this value is spent on their annual maintenance.
- The average percentage of highway maintenance budget spent on the carriageway is up slightly but is still just 53%. This means the average carriageway maintenance budget remained in line with last year at £14.2 million per authority.
- Less than half (48%) of the local road network is reported to be in good structural condition, with the remaining 52% stated to have less than 15 years' structural life remaining.
- 1.9 million potholes have been filled at a cost of £137.4 million - the rate of pothole repairs is equivalent to one filled every 18 seconds.

David Giles added: "This year authorities actually reported a drop in their total highway maintenance budgets. However, they have spent a higher percentage on the carriageway itself in an effort to sustain increasingly necessary carriageway maintenance. The result is that more than half of the network is reported to still have less than 15 years' structural life remaining - with 34,600 miles of these in poor condition - while 4,100 miles have also deteriorated into lower condition classifications.

"In fact, some local authorities have told us that they need their budgets to more than double for the next five to 10 years if they are going to be able to make any lasting improvements to the condition and resilience of the network.

"There needs to be a complete change in mindset away from short-term to long-term funding commitments. Local authorities need a minimum five year funding horizon and there needs to be a substantial, sustained increase in investment with budgets ring-fenced specifically for local roads maintenance. Investing to save in local roads - which support communities and enable connectivity - will allow local authorities to plan and provide better value for money while helping kickstart the Government's stated economic growth plans."

The full ALARM 2025 survey report can be viewed on the AIA's website at: <https://www.asphaltuk.org/>

Tackling air pollution in Richmond

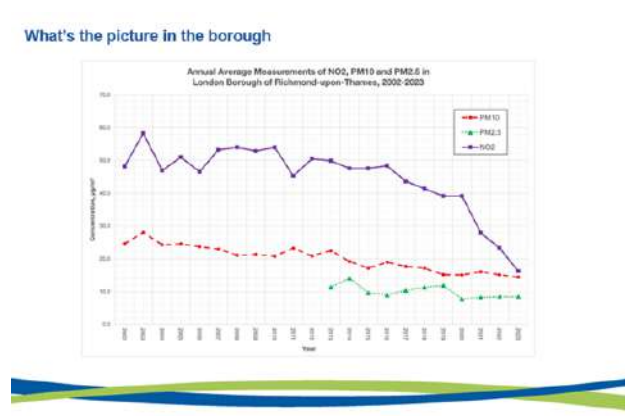
Cllr Alexander Ehmann, Chair of the Transport and Air Quality Services Committee at LB Richmond upon Thames, gives an overview of the efforts in his borough to improve air quality and health outcomes.

Richmond upon Thames is a wonderful place to live – known for our beautiful green spaces, historic town centre and of course, being home to the world-famous Kew Gardens. It's a borough I call home and live here with my young family and care deeply about health of our residents and the environment we all share.

Even in a green borough like ours, air pollution remains a serious challenge. Although we're fortunate to have such beautiful surroundings, like all London boroughs, we are affected by air pollution. It is the single biggest environmental risk to human health, contributing to conditions such as asthma, COPD, and even neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. That's why tackling poor air quality has been a priority for us as a council.

Since 2019, Richmond upon Thames has seen significant reductions in air pollution, particularly nitrogen dioxide. While we can't take full credit (improvements such as cleaner buses, more electric vehicles, and the expanded ULEZ have all helped) we've played a leading local role in making our borough cleaner and healthier.

When we were elected, we committed to meaningful action. We established a new Transport and Air Quality Committee to improve coordination and accountability. We worked closely with passionate local campaigners, community groups, and health experts to shape our direction. This collaboration, alongside national developments like the tragic case of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah – the first recorded death directly linked to air pollution – made clear that the time to act, and act boldly, was now.



We've introduced a boroughwide 20mph speed limit to make streets safer for walking and cycling — backed by air quality assessments showing no adverse impact. We also championed London's first wave of low-cost monitoring with Breathe London and continue to maintain one of the most robust air quality monitoring networks in the capital.

We've targeted pollution hotspots, using data to guide our actions. We've supported active travel with high-quality cycle routes in Kew, Barnes and Strawberry Vale, and now have the highest number of EV charge points per capita in outer London.

Our School Streets programme has expanded to 19 schools, backed by best-in-class signage and camera enforcement. Where physical school streets aren't possible, our air quality team runs a schools assessment programme to monitor pollution and deliver on-site solutions, such as green screens and filtration systems. We also launched the Good Move scheme to help residents transition from non-ULEZ-compliant vehicles by offering incentives to join car clubs, use public transport or cycle instead. It's now available to all residents and is helping to support cleaner travel choices across the borough.

One of the things I'm most proud of is our new Air Quality Action Plan – brought forward a year ahead of schedule and developed in partnership with our community. Residents were invited to challenge and shape the plan through workshops, surveys, drop-ins and school sessions. It's bold, realistic, and tailored to our borough's needs. We're delighted to see it recently awarded Air Quality Strategy of the Year at the Fleet Vision International Awards.



And we're not stopping there. We've committed to the UK's strictest (yet achievable) local air quality standards. We're preparing to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to tackle engine idling. We're also leading in areas many councils overlook, such as indoor air quality — piloting home assessments and collaborating with healthcare professionals to support those most at risk.

All of this shows that local action matters. With commitment and collaboration, we can make a real difference – and we will continue to do so for the health of our borough, now and for future generations.

Cllr Ehmann presented at the APSE Air Quality and Climate Change Online Seminar on Thursday 27 March. His presentation can be viewed on the APSE website.

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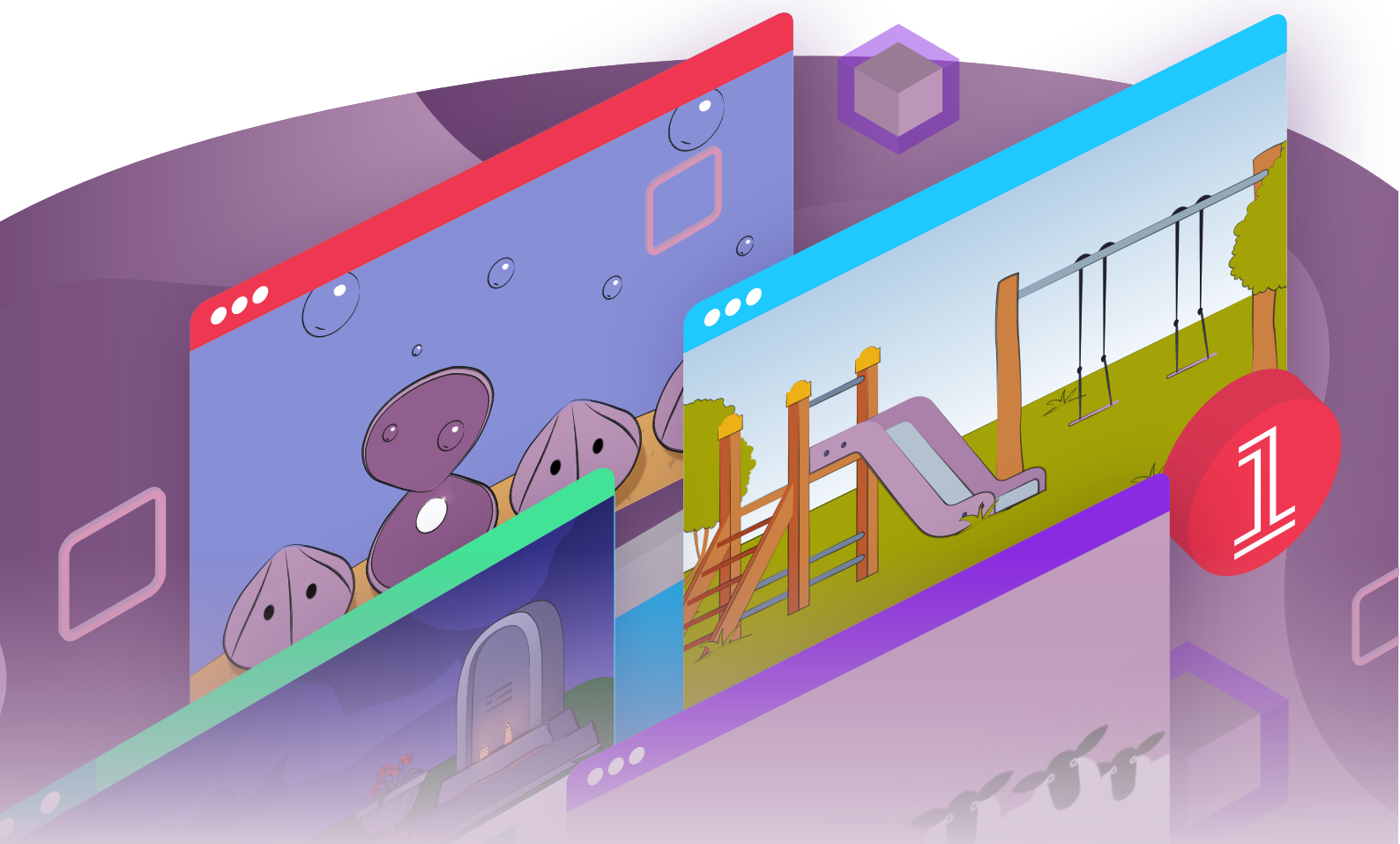
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Co-creating a regional approach to domestic retrofit

Helen Burridge, HCCSP Manager, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, provides an overview of the local authority retrofit accelerator pilot.

We all know we need to retrofit more homes. We also know it's complex, expensive and hard to communicate – yet essential for the health, wealth and wellbeing of our residents. So, what needs to happen to scale it up? And what's the role of local authorities?

The challenge demands a systems-based approach – one that boosts local capacity and resilience. Hertfordshire's authorities recognised this and welcomed the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) to help coordinate a response that addresses climate, fuel poverty and public health together.

We may know what needs to be done. But simply hoping for behaviour change won't shift the system. That's why LARA has focused on building a collaborative, holistic approach – working with the MCS Foundation and others to bring the whole retrofit ecosystem to the table.

A county-wide challenge

Hertfordshire faces common pressures: the climate emergency, rising living costs, and a stock of ageing, inefficient homes. With two garden cities and many listed buildings, heritage considerations add complexity and nuance.

Retrofit activity was already underway across councils – but it risked being fragmented. The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), made up of 11 local authorities and Hertfordshire Futures, worked to align efforts and build a more confident, joined-up system.

Ahead of the pilot, HCCSP ran a county-wide Retrofit Survey, adapted from Hampshire County Council. Promoted on social media, it attracted over 1,260 homeowner responses. While only 2% considered their homes energy efficient, 78% said they could self-fund improvements – they just didn't know where to start.

Top motivators were:

- Lower energy bills
- Warmer, more comfortable homes
- Reduced carbon emissions

Crucially, over 80% said they'd feel more confident if advice and services were backed by their local council. Access to trusted contractors, clear guidance, and affordable finance were seen as essential.

This told us that awareness alone isn't enough. Even among engaged homeowners, we saw hesitation and mistrust. The solution needed trusted intermediaries, visible leadership and simpler systems. We used resources developed from Cambridge City Council to create a Retrofit Guide for Residents which has

“We may know what needs to be done. But simply hoping for behaviour change won't shift the system.”

been lauded in The Times as ‘factually brilliant’ and ‘just the sort of information everyone should be aware of’: and we still wanted to go further. LARA has subsequently been exploring how local government can help create the conditions in which retrofit can thrive as a ‘no regret’ solution.

Designing retrofit for behaviour change

Behaviour change must run through the entire retrofit journey – from strategy and comms to resident support and supply chain development.

The LARA pilot, funded by the MCS Foundation and supported by UKGBC, GSENGH and local partners, provided a structure to co-create a county-wide Local Retrofit Strategy.

This included:

- Three participatory workshops with councils, landlords, contractors, training providers and NGOs.
- Iterative development of a shared vision, goals and actions.
- Mapping responsibilities and identifying pilot opportunities.

Rather than drafting a strategy and asking others to endorse it, we built relationships first – allowing a shared mandate to emerge from those we’re planning to serve.

Together, we created a clear vision: “Every home is fit for now and for our future.” Four strategic goals underpin our approach:

1. Increase demand and delivery – across tenures, backed by advice and guidance.
2. Maximise local benefits – economic, health and environmental.



3. Build supply chain capacity – investing in training, SMEs and standards.
4. Create a supportive environment – through governance, data and partnerships.

Next steps include a simple governance structure designed to tolerate local government reform, and starting pilots to test scalable models of advice, assessment and finance.

We’re exploring a Retrofit Facilitation Service – a “one stop shop” connecting residents and businesses to trusted contractors, underpinned by public-private investment. We expected this to be the main (and possibly only) outcome of the project but LARA showed this isn’t the only path. Other impactful, lower-resource interventions include:

- Aligning training providers with local employers.
- Sharing procurement best practice.
- Building networks of installers, landlords and housing providers.

- Coordinating public communications.

These smaller steps can drive systemic change while national policy evolves.

Lessons for other authorities

LARA has shown that:

- Investing time in relationships pays off.
- A strategy is more than a document – it’s a shift in how partners work.
- Personal, participatory engagement beats transactional approaches.

Most of all, behaviour change isn’t just for residents. It happens at every level – among contractors, council officers, and decision-makers. LARA created space to reflect, challenge and collaborate – developing relationships that allow a strategy to evolve, rather than asking stakeholders to endorse a finished plan they didn’t help shape.



Retrofitting the homes of our residents is one of the biggest challenges councils face on the road to net zero. But it’s not just a technical task – it’s relational. We need systems that residents can trust, that supply chains can grow into, and that councils can coordinate with confidence.

We haven’t solved everything in Hertfordshire. But we’ve laid foundations for long-term action. For others looking to do the same, the LARA model – based in trust, participation and behaviour change – may be a good place to start.

Huge thanks to the MCS Foundation and everyone who supported and participated in the process.

Helen presented at the APSE Energy policy event in Westminster on Thursday 1 May. Her and other’s presentations are available on the APSE website.





Strategic Feasibility
0



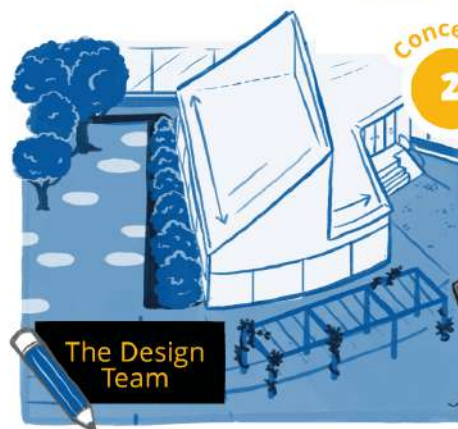
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Preparation & Briefing
1



Submission of pre-application



Concept Design
2

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3



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many more
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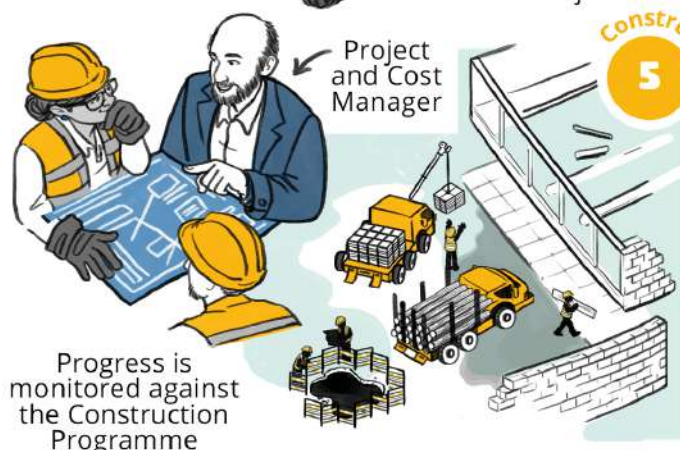


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the Construction
Programme

Handover
6



Contract
concluded

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Use
7



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- 5 Construction**
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Tempting training to tame your troubles and tantalise your talents: from climate chaos to bringing back the wild

By Fiona Sutton - Wilson, Head of APSE Training

Climate change... what's new?

Local government colleagues, across the UK, have been grappling with the most effective ways to prevent and adapt to climate change for years. It's a thread that runs through most (if not all) of APSE's training. As one of the early advocates of Carbon Literacy, it is gratifying to see how this concept has shaped thinking and resonated with operational staff and decision-makers alike – arguably providing the leverage other climate related strategies have failed to achieve in the past. However, as anyone with a few years under their belt in local government will know, it is a dynamic environment in which constant change is inevitable. It is no surprise then, that as the Carbon Literate alumni in local government expands, we have started to see a shift in need. Three key issues have been emerging from our training interactions:

1. What specific decarbonisation action can be taken in each service sector (beyond the low hanging fruit)?
2. What are the most (cost and outcome) effective strategies to mitigate extreme global climate chaos at a local level?
3. How can local authorities manage the changes required and embed new behaviours to create a cultural norm?

During 2025, APSE's open and bespoke in-house courses will be dedicated to answering these (and many other) challenges of the day. The training-related articles below will highlight some of the ways in which we are doing this. Every day is a school day and the team are ready to meet your changing needs: contact training@apse.org.uk or visit www.apse.org.uk/training to find out how we can help.



Managing your Fleet in a Rapidly Changing Environment

By Peter Hollinshead and Alan Green, APSE Associates

According to the Association of Fleet Professionals, fleet management professionals report the biggest challenges they are currently facing are cost control, introducing electrification/alternative fuels, managing the risks of new suppliers and skills shortages across the board.

The significant increase in the purchase costs of electric vehicles is putting huge pressure on finance which requires an alternative approach to budgeting, with a different type of overview required to evaluate whole life costs. Additionally, the take up of electric commercial vehicles has been slow due to concerns over range and payload as well as infrastructure. This will require consideration of how vehicles are used to maximise their efficiency. Will "rapidly charging" technologies meet the needs of the rapidly changing environment?

Certainly, the emergence of new vehicle suppliers offering bespoke build options, which are largely unproven, means that they will require careful risk management, to ensure customers are not left with a lack of (or confusing) after sales support. Navigating this will require knowledge and skills.

As retirement looms for many experienced fleet managers, there is a need to train and retain younger fleet managers and technicians, who are familiar with the new technologies and the demands that these create. This is increasingly difficult to achieve, particularly given the need to compete with commercial remuneration packages to attract and retain staff, so how can we make the local government environment more attractive?

APSE can assist with navigating through these issues because we have a diverse resource of experienced fleet management trainers, who have the knowledge to be able to work through these challenges with a logical and thorough methodology.

Both Peter and Alan are delivering APSE's new course: *Principles of Fleet Management*. This course will dig down into the detail of decarbonising fleet and the growing challenges outlined above. Contact training@apse.org.uk for further information



Bringing back the wild

By Amy Caldow, APSE Senior Training Officer

How can APSE Training help prepare local authorities for the challenges of nature restoration?

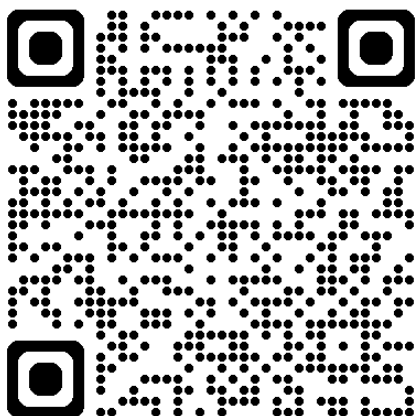
It is now well documented that global biodiversity is declining at alarming rates, far beyond anything we have seen in human history, as nature and climate crises continue to threaten the prosperity of future generations.

The Living Planet Report (2024) highlights that 'the average size of global wildlife populations has fallen by a staggering 73%' between 1970 and 2020.

In Scotland, the State of Nature Report (2023) reveals a '15% decline in average species abundance since 1994,' with key drivers of this loss ranging from land-use change to invasive species and climate change.

Local councils play a critical role in nature restoration at a regional and local level, from delivering statutory targets, to following regulations and conducting environmental impact assessments. APSE believes training is a powerful tool to protect and restore nature. By building the knowledge, skills and confidence across all areas of local government, we can empower people to take meaningful action. Everyone has a role to play - from planning and housing to transport and community services - and with the right support local teams can lead the way in creating a greener, healthier approved partners to successfully implement some of these objectives, APSE delivers courses which develop the knowledge, skills and capacity to move this essential work forward.

Follow the QR code to find out more or book your place on APSE's many outstanding courses.



Keeping Scotland's "best laid schemes" on track

By Wayne Priestley, APSE Associate

Scottish legislation regarding climate change, biodiversity and environmental sustainability includes several Acts, strategies, and guidance notes, which include:

- Climate Change (Scotland) Act, 2009
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act, 2004
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, 2011
- Community Empowerment Scotland Act, 2015
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, 2013 and 2024
- Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan, 2024-2030
- The Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, 2025

You may be aware, these Acts, along with subsequent amendments and policies, set targets on which Scottish authorities are required to report. These include emissions reduction, how biodiversity conservation duties for public bodies are being met, food growing/ allotments, National Parks and wildlife management. Importantly, documents associated with the legislation also provide advice on how to develop strategies and targets for addressing both the climate and nature emergencies we now face.

APSE is acutely aware that local authorities have a myriad of duties, responsibilities, and priorities which they need to meet, and elected members and officers alike sometimes need help and advice in delivering these.

As APSE's Head of Training points out, "Robbie Burns made a good point in his poem, To a Mouse, 'I'm truly sorry Man's dominion, Has broken Nature's social union.' By working together, we can address the damage caused by human activity and its impact on nature." In the same poem, Burns goes on to say, in his well-versed lines, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men, Gang aft agley." In other words, our best laid plans can sometimes get off track. To prevent this from happening, APSE has developed several new training courses providing critical learning opportunities and "must attend" events for those involved in the management of greenspaces as well as those who are concerned with these assets, such as elected members, planners, parks professionals, tree officers, ecology and biodiversity officers, climate change officers, economic development officers and front line staff such as gardeners.

Many of our courses are based on APSE's research and are created in direct response to the issues raised by our member councils. If you would like to discuss ways in which we can help you achieve your goals, please don't hesitate to get in touch: training@apse.org.uk.

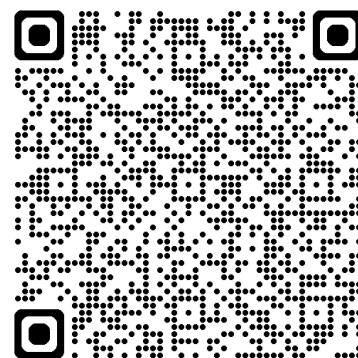
Wildflower meadows and grassland management for local authorities

By Wayne Priestley, APSE Associate

How many years does it take for a tree to reach its full carbon sequestration potential?

Short answer: more than we would like! Recently, the task of increasing carbon storage through tree planting has become very popular. However, trees take many years to reach their full carbon sequestration potential and are susceptible to pests and diseases, such as Ash Dieback. So why not explore the use of species rich grasslands to sequester carbon emissions?

Add a sprinkle of wildflower planting, both within the grasslands and as features in themselves, and you have a recipe which helps to increase biodiversity. APSE's new course, Wildflower Meadows and Grassland Management for Local Authorities, explores the evolution of grasslands, the multiple environmental benefits they bring and the practicalities of creating species rich grasslands and wildflower stands. UK wide case studies provide examples, so that attendees gain a full understanding of the value of species rich grasslands and wildflowers, both to helping address climate change and providing increased opportunities for biodiversity, in addition the wider ecosystem services such as flood alleviation, improving air quality and preventing soil erosion. Follow the QR code for more information, dates and to book your place.



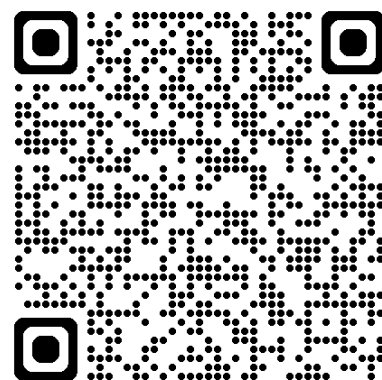
Plant biosecurity for local authorities

By Wayne Priestley, APSE Associate

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, when considering any works on greenspaces, such as planting or general care of plants and trees, we must consider the origin and health of new and existing plants to help prevent threats from pests, diseases or invasive species. The global trade in plants has meant a huge increase in such occurrences and as such APSE and its partners, including The Animal and Plant Health Agency and DEFRA, has developed a course on the principles and practical actions relating to implementing necessary plant biosecurity measures.

As well as an introduction to the many pests, diseases and invasive species local authority land managers are currently having to deal with, the course also looks at some of the future threats and how we can avoid them and how government agencies are working to support local authorities.

If you want to understand the topic of plant biosecurity, its importance, and how to ensure plant biosecurity is addressed, across your authority, partners and other stakeholders, in order protect the future security and sustainability of plants, trees and wider greenspaces, this course is for you.



What is the Food Standards Agency doing about allergen management?

Sadia Khan, Policy Advisor - Food Hypersensitivity, Food Policy Directorate, Food Standards Agency, provides an outline of the work being done to protect people with food allergies

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is actively engaged in enhancing allergen management to safeguard consumers with food allergies. Our efforts encompass several key initiatives aimed at improving allergen information and reducing cross-contamination risks in food businesses. Through these initiatives, the FSA is committed to promoting safer food practices and protecting individuals with food allergies.

Ensuring people with food hypersensitivities (food allergy, intolerance or coeliac disease) have access to clear and accurate information is a priority for the FSA and our work supports consumers and people with food hypersensitivities. We aim to create an environment which enables choice and allows people with food hypersensitivities to participate in food culture.

The FSA carried out significant work to support businesses in the lead up to legislation on Prepacked Direct Sales (PPDS), commonly known as Natasha's Law, coming into force in October 2021. This legislation changed the way in which allergen information has to be provided for foods which are prepacked for direct sale on site, such as sandwiches. Food businesses who sell PPDS foods are required by legislation to label the food with the name of the food, a full list of ingredients and to emphasise the 14 regulated allergens within it.

More recently, the FSA has embarked on a programme of work to improve the way allergen information is provided for non-prepacked foods, such as in cafés and restaurants. We have recently published updated best practice guidance to help food businesses follow allergen labelling requirements and we now recommend that food businesses provide allergen information for dishes in writing where possible and encourage a conversation between consumers and food businesses to ensure the safest experience possible.

A significant amount of work was undertaken in advance of publishing new guidance, including holding workshops with many local authorities and food businesses, as well as allergy charities and trade associations. This was to ensure that as many views as possible were represented, with the result being a flexible piece of guidance that suits both consumers, people with food hypersensitivities and food businesses.

In addition, the FSA has also updated its technical guidance on food allergen labelling and information requirements. This guidance provides comprehensive instructions for food businesses on how to comply with regulatory requirements and best practices for allergen labelling. It includes detailed examples and best practice boxes to help businesses understand and implement effective allergen management strategies.

We have also recently updated our Safer Food Better Business guide which now offers practical advice and checklists for managers, kitchen staff, and front-of-house servers on providing accurate allergen information and avoiding cross-contamination. It emphasises the importance of clear procedures, dedicated personnel, and regular training to ensure staff are well-equipped to handle allergen-related inquiries and emergencies.

We work internationally with colleagues in the food allergy space through the Codex Alimentarius, a set of food standards developed by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The FSA is committed to making lives better for the 2.4 million people living with a food allergy. More information on the research we carry out can found here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-hypersensitivity>

Sadia presented at the APSE online roundtable on Allergens and Allergen Management on Tuesday 4 March. APSE members benefit from a range of free roundtables, covering topics across the local government sector. You can find out more on the APSE website.



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Warrington - 'Action and innovation to meet net zero'

Agenda includes:

Embedding a low carbon culture

Bryan Lipscombe, Climate Change and Sustainability Manager and Robyn Lees, Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Officer, Warrington Borough Council

Electrifying bus travel in Warrington

Stephen Hunter, Transport for Warrington Service Manager, Warrington Borough Council

Innovation in managing the Warmer Homes Programme

Emma-Kate Moraitis, Warmer Homes Programme Manager, Northumberland County Council

Explaining biochar and its impacts

Debbie King, Head of Environment and Climate, Lancashire County Council

Putting your LAEP in place

Susanna Dart, Climate Change Policy Officer, Lancaster City Council

Decarbonising a heritage building

Wouter Thijssen, Commercial Director, Kensa



Wednesday 28 May 2025

Walton Hall, Warrington

Sports and leisure services seminar

Agenda includes:

The challenges of providing sports and leisure services in the face of local government reorganisation

Peter Appleton, APSE Associate

Getting Maldon moving more: Beat the street - increasing physical activity

Alexandra Card, Senior Wellbeing and Public Health Officer, Mid Essex Alliance, Essex County Council

Active menopause programme

Emma Knight, North West Leicestershire District Council

Developing new sporting opportunities for young women and girls

TBC, Street Games

With more speakers to be confirmed!



Thursday 5 June 2025

Madejski Stadium, Reading



From rooftops to residents – Hackney's 1 MW solar microgrid pilot

Jason Powell, Head of Operations, Hackney Light and Power, outlines the UK's first rooftop solar scheme to use microgrid technology - helping to reduce energy bills for council flat residents.

Hackney's Climate Action Plan commits the borough to net-zero by 2040. One practical step is to harness the opportunity presented by the roofs on its housing blocks. After a detailed review in 2021, the Council concluded that conventional landlord-supplied solar delivered too little value to tenants and offered no reliable route

to repay the capital costs of installation. An independent market assessment pointed to a workable alternative, Emergent Energy's private-wire microgrid model that provides income to repay the Council's investment fully.

Turning an idea into an investment

An £80,000 grant from the Greater London Authority's Local Energy Accelerator funded the initial business case and scoping. Hackney's Cabinet then approved a £1.96 million budget in January 2024, drawing on the Council's Carbon Offset Fund, a Hackney Green Investment opportunity issued through Abundance Investment, giving local residents a chance to back the scheme for a modest return, and some capital investment.

While Carbon Offset funds derisk the initial pilot, the project is a major breakthrough in providing a 100% commercial funding model for solar PV on blocks of flats at scale.

Delivery is set up in two parts:

- A works contract to design, supply, and install around 2,000 solar panels and associated equipment across 28 blocks in Frampton Park, Whiston and Wren's Park estates.
- A concession agreement for a seven-year licence with an optional three-year extension, for Emergent Energy to operate the microgrids while the Council retains ownership of the assets.

“Hackney's pilot shows that rooftop solar on blocks of flats can be financially viable, socially fair and technically robust.”

Energy-sector legal specialists Bevan Brittan assisted with drafting both contracts, ensuring compliance with procurement law and safeguarding customer interests.

How the microgrid works

Instead of only exporting power to the national grid and powering communal areas, each rooftop array feeds Emergent's private network, which routes electricity into individual flats, too. Residents who opt in buy power at a discount while surplus energy tops up lifts, lighting and other communal services. Because income from sales flows back to the Council, the model generates a commercial return to repay the investment and direct savings for households.

Engineering the rooftops of the future

Detailed structural surveys confirmed load capacity and warranty requirements before installation partner Carbon3 began work. The one-megawatt portfolio should generate about 875 MWh a year, enough to meet up to 40 per cent of demand from participating households and avoid roughly 180 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

“Because income from sales flows back to the Council, the model generates a commercial return to repay the investment and direct savings for households.”



Skills, jobs and social value

From the outset, the Council formed a cross-departmental working group spanning housing, finance, legal, procurement and skills to develop the scheme and ensure it provided the best value for residents. Objectives go beyond carbon:

- The concession guarantees solar apprenticeships and accredited training.
- A Hackney Living Wage requirement keeps more project spend in the borough.
- Estate meetings, drop-in surgeries and co-designed literature ensure residents are kept updated from the outset and understand how the system works.

Why it matters

Hackney's pilot shows that rooftop solar on blocks of flats can be financially viable, socially fair and technically robust. By combining council ownership, Emergent Energy's pioneering business model, rigorous legal structuring from Bevan Brittan and community investment through Abundance, the scheme turns the split-incentive problem into shared value. The result is greener electricity, lower bills and local jobs delivered from unused space on Council-owned buildings.

As GB Energy develops and councils across the UK look for practical routes to clean, affordable power, the lessons from Hackney's microgrid pilot are ready to be scaled far beyond the borough's boundaries.

Jason presented at the APSE Energy London event in Westminster on Thursday 1 May 2025, his presentation can be viewed on the APSE website.



Introducing 'Terrific Tuesday' tutorials . . .

This new series of free interactive online sessions aims to assist APSE Energy members in the practicalities of delivering a range of renewable energy and climate change projects - offering an introduction to the topic from experts and allowing attendees to discuss approaches, ask questions, and learn from the experiences of other local authorities.

The first tutorial will take place on **Tuesday 3 June 2025**. It will look at the step-by-step process for the delivery of energy projects and will cover:

- The project journey
- Contract considerations
- Efficient routes to market
- Meeting deadlines
- Asset data and plans
- Installation and project management

The second tutorial will take place on **Tuesday 24 June 2025** and will concentrate on decarbonising heritage buildings.

Book your place on the APSE Energy events page here: <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/local-authority-energy-collaboration/apse-energy-events/>



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How to build a strong foundation for asset investment planning



Nick Vague, Senior Solutions Consultant, details Brightly's asset management offering for local authorities.

Asset investment planning (AIP) is more than a buzzword. It's an approach that empowers local authorities to transition from reactive to proactive asset management. Why is this important?

As it stands, UK councils face the complex challenge of managing a diverse range of assets within their boroughs and counties, in order to keep their communities safe. This multitude of assets can range from roads, drains and bridges, to parks, street lighting and waste facilities and even, in some cases, cemeteries. However, managing these assets effectively presents a significant challenge, especially when facing budgetary constraints and aging infrastructure.

Many local authorities today find themselves in a cycle of reactive maintenance, addressing issues as they arise with little to no planning. While this approach serves sufficiently as a temporary solution, it often results in increased costs, unplanned downtime and decreased asset reliability.

At Brightly Software, we're striving to help local authorities establish a foundational understanding of their infrastructure. To do this, we offer intelligent solutions that provide a structured alternative to the cycle of reactive maintenance; instead, they enable local authorities to build a foundation for proactive, efficient and sustainable asset management.

So, what are the steps councils need to take to obtain a foundational understanding of their infrastructure? How can they achieve and implement a proactive asset management strategy?

1. Create an asset register

This will enable local authorities to move beyond fragmented asset management processes and start tracking all of their assets with a single system. This clarity will not only facilitate smarter, data-driven decision making, it can also help to highlight redundant or underutilised assets, save time and free up valuable resources.

2: Identify the condition of assets

This is essential for prioritising maintenance activities and ensuring assets' longevity. With this level of visibility, councils can better prioritise which assets require the most attention, allowing maintenance efforts to be targeted to where they will have the most impact.

"As it stands, UK councils face the complex challenge of managing a diverse range of assets within their boroughs and counties, in order to keep their communities safe."

3: Understand asset valuation

Accurate asset valuation can help local authorities to carry out financial reporting and obtain clarity on each assets' depreciation, thereby allowing for informed decision-making. By understanding the lifecycle of each asset, councils can allocate funds more strategically and avoid overspending.

We, the Brightly team, are able to customise a digital asset management solution that fits your local authority's needs. To learn more, visit: www.brightlysoftware.com/en-gb/industries/government

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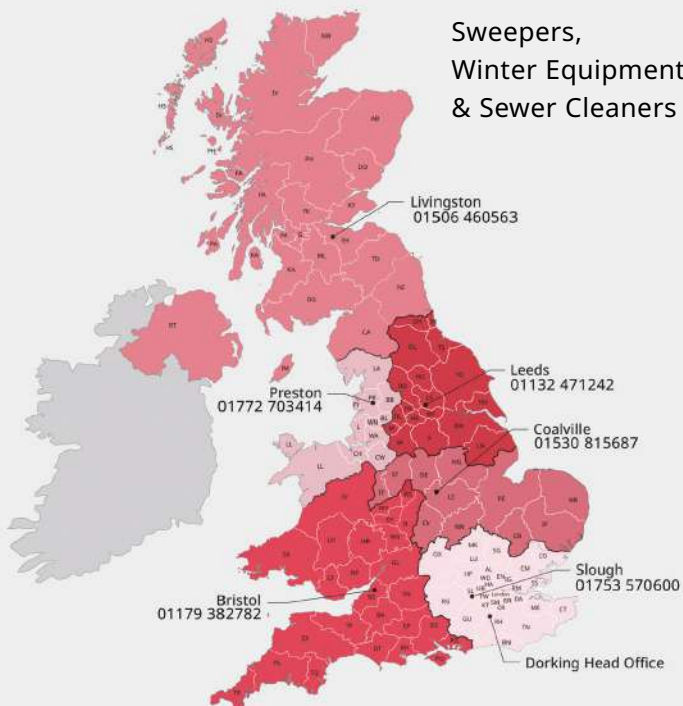
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