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The electronic magazine of the United Kingdom ACE Association

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Driving change

This is unusual for me. Taking on a new role as guest editor just as I retire. I suppose, whether you enjoy this issue or not, I will not be asked back. From a personal point of view it gives me the opportunity to be somewhat self indulgent.

I joined the DVLA and the Civil Service nearly seven years ago from the private sector and have watched both change significantly. As I leave, I am delighted to see Sir Gus O'Donnell driving through root and branch changes in the guise of Professional Skills for Government and the Capability Reviews while also being a supporter of ACE. I am constantly encouraged by the ability of ACE members to deliver.

This issue is crammed full of articles that show how much is being achieved. There are examples of how improved customer service and communication is being driven forward @ CPS, DVLA, Land & Property Services NI, COI and DSA. There are examples of how greater education, training and knowledge

management is raising the bar on Civil Service performance – Cabinet Office, Students Award Agency for Scotland, TDA and Acas are good examples. There is also an interesting article from VCA on how it is making a difference to the environment.

As usual there were too many articles to include but isn't it encouraging to see what is going on across the ACE community? So if you are not yet a member of ACE why not join at a reduced rate and come to conference – articles on both inside. I look forward to seeing many of you in November and to hearing more examples of the changing face of government services. I am also looking forward to my own next personal challenge, though not, I suspect, as an editor! Any polite suggestions?



Guest Editor
Clive Bennett CBE
CEX DVLA

Fast stream needs the frontline

Good quality operational delivery roles wanted. The Civil Service's highly successful Fast Stream graduate development programme needs to increase the number of opportunities available for its Fast Streamers in departments or agencies that deliver frontline services.

'The Fast Stream has traditionally been viewed as a development programme for policy analysts,' said Alison Bennett, Fast Stream Policy and Development Manager in the Cabinet Office, 'but with the introduction of Professional Skills for Government, Fast Streamers who want to reach the very top need to make sure they have a good understanding of operational work.

'In fact by 2012 all members of Senior Civil Service will need to show that they have experience of delivering frontline services. Every December the Cabinet Office asks departments and agencies to bid for new Fast Stream entrants but few can provide good quality operational delivery roles. This year we want to hear from departments and agencies in delivery areas that would like a Fast Streamer to join them.

'If your organisation is not big enough to offer



a whole career path, could it offer a placement or secondment opportunity to an existing Fast Streamer? The Fast Stream is a beneficial two-way process, as many in-service Fast Streamers – including existing civil servants who join the scheme – come from agencies and move over to departments to gain experience in policy or corporate services roles.'

Laura Jayawardene joined the Fast Stream at the Home Office after completing her degree in International Relations and History at the

London School of Economics. 'The best thing about being on the Fast Stream programme is that there is no such thing as an average day,' she said.

'At the Border and Immigration Agency I worked on an investigation into disturbances at two immigration detention centres and on improving the way foreign national prisoners were considered for deportation before their release. I've worked in Ministerial private offices, visited detention centres, talked to staff and detainees, briefed a Minister before he presented a Bill to Parliament and held meetings with a whole range of Home Office stakeholders. Each placement and project has offered me a real opportunity for personal development'.

● *If you are interested in offering a complete career path to a Fast Streamer or a shorter placement or secondment, speak to the Fast Stream Grade Manager in your sponsoring department. For more information visit www.faststream.gov.uk/ or contact Alison Bennett Tel: 020 7276 0221.*

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1 degree = 5 years work

Dental students in Scotland are being asked to work within NHS dentistry for up to five years after graduation to qualify for a new bursary. It is part of the Scottish Government's plan for improving oral health and modernising NHS dental services. The framework for how the bursary works was drawn up by the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) in co-operation with the Scottish Government Health Department (SGHD) and NHS Education for Scotland (NES).

'A number of complex issues arose,' said Carolyn Wilson, Operational Policy Manager of SAAS, 'particularly around eligibility and ensuring the package was available pro-rata to students in different years of study. We also had to devise recovery arrangements for graduates who did not fulfil their commitment to work in the NHS during the retention

period. This led us to include a legally binding contract that made clear the commitment the student was making.'

Once the design was agreed, a system was developed which formed a database containing all the application information and also links to monitoring during the retention period. A number of management information reports were designed by SAAS, and agreed with the other delivery partners.

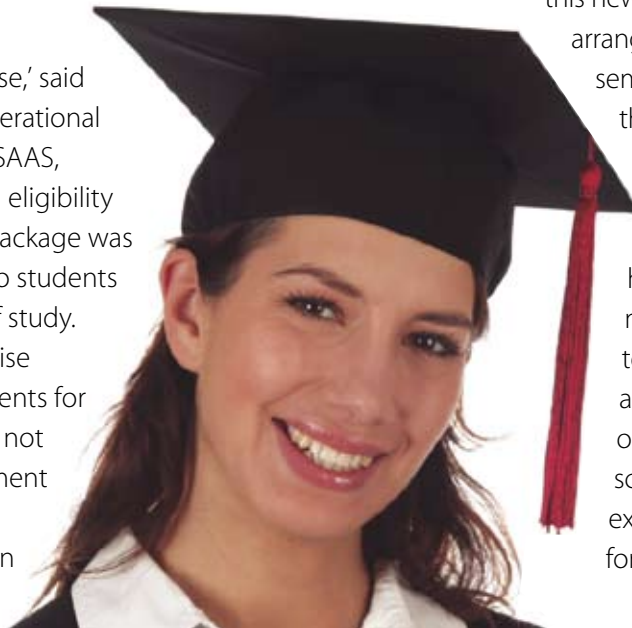
'To aid the smooth implementation of this new support, SAAS arranged separate seminar events with the two universities delivering dental degrees,' said Wilson. 'This helped get the message across to both students and administrators on the detail of the scheme and the expected timescale for applications and

'Take-up has been good and SAAS has been able to administer the scheme with only a minimal increase in staffing'

processing. We also added a section to our website, specific to this bursary, to highlight frequently asked questions and offer guidance to both new and potential applicants.'

SAAS is now advising NES on the design of a new Graduate Tracking System to monitor dental graduates completing their retention period. Wilson said: 'Take-up has been good and SAAS has been able to administer the scheme with only a minimal increase in staffing. We are now working with SEHD and NES colleagues on a further bursary scheme for Audiology and Biomedical Science students.'

● Find out more at www.saas.gov.uk



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Mapping a new way forward

Valuation, rating, mapping and land registration services in Northern Ireland are being merged into a new single government agency, Land & Property Services (LPS). John Wilkinson, new chief executive, believes the agency will provide key land and property services to the citizens and Government of Northern Ireland.

Success, he says, will depend on data being at the heart of the organisation. 'There are clear synergies to be found as we merge the core business of each organisation into LPS. I see mapping data underpinning all our work. Each address in Northern Ireland has a unique property reference number (UPRN). This reference number will be the foundation on which our data model will be built. What we hope to do is to attach title deeds, valuation and rating information to the UPRN, all geo-referenced on a map.'

LPS has been established on a phased basis, initially from the merger of the former Rate Collection Agency and the Valuation and Lands Agency. This will be followed by the addition of Land Registers of Northern Ireland and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland on 1 April 2008. It will provide a land and property hub that will provide

'The success of LPS depends on everyone's involvement and commitment'

access to information anywhere, anytime, said Wilkinson.

To help shape the LPS, Wilkinson and his senior team have been working with one of the world's leading consultants on developing forward strategies. He said: 'They have advised many leading organisations including the Bank of England, Mars, Belfast City Council and the Home Office. It is hoped that they will help us take our strategy to another level.'

Over the first six months in post, Wilkinson has concentrated on getting to know the organisation and its people. 'I have spent time with my colleagues in Rate Collection, Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland, Valuation and Lands and Land Registers of Northern Ireland to learn about their work. I have been on an extremely steep learning curve. Now I have completed the groundwork, I believe the next six months will

be about working with the senior management team to develop enabling processes to facilitate the merger,' he said.

'From an operational point of view, we have merged corporate services and are reviewing our IT strategy, customer services insight and addressing a number of legislative issues. It is important we establish financial benchmarks so the organisation's performance can be tracked. It is vital we convey to staff what our vision means in reality. The success of LPS depends on everyone's involvement and commitment.'

Wilkinson arrived in post at a challenging time. 'Valuation and Lands Agency, now part of LPS, delivered the first domestic revaluation for 30 years in Northern Ireland. Simultaneously the basis changed from rental to capital values and it was the first fully computer assisted mass appraisal in the UK. Amid all the pressure in dealing with reviews and appeals, I was delighted with the recent news that we have been awarded Property Tax Achievement Award by the International Association of Assessing Officers for our work on revaluation.'

● More information at www.lpsni.gov.uk

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Pushing the Boundaries

Public service delivery is evolving. Modern public services must deliver outcomes that matter and meet the needs of citizens and business. These are just some of the drivers pushing at the traditional

Conference will look at the critical issues of delivering quality public services

boundaries of public service delivery.

With a new prime minister and a newly reorganised Whitehall continuing the drive for innovation, the development of quality public services is increasingly critical. This is why this year's ACE Conference is focusing on Pushing the Boundaries.

There will be contributions from key figures across the public and private sector and an opportunity for delegates to debate and share practical ideas and reflections on achievements.

Following on from last year's successful

conference, Delivering in Partnership, this annual 28-hour conference will give ACE members an opportunity to examine how the delivery boundaries are being pushed even further.

ACE chair Vanessa Lawrence, Director General and CEO Ordnance Survey, said: 'Our conferences have always been a great success. The more opportunities we have to network and learn from each other, the greater the benefits for the citizens to whom we deliver products and services, especially as we learn from each other how to push the boundaries to delivery.'

The ACE Annual Conference and AGM will be held on the 22 & 23 November at the National School of Government, Sunningdale Park, Ascot.

- Find out more at: www.ace.gov.uk

Discount for senior managers

Roll up. Roll up. ACE is offering a reduced rate of £200 for senior manager members interested in joining the Association. Senior manager member Noel Shanahan, DMLA Customer Services Director, attended ACE conference last November. He said: 'It gave me an opportunity to meet a range of public sector CEOs and pick their brains on the challenges they face in their own organisations. What struck me was the similarity of issues and opportunities faced by, on the face of it, very different organisations.' Newer senior manager member Charles Lewis, Finance and Corporate Services Director Marine and Fisheries Agency, recently attended the annual ACE drinks reception. 'It was a really enjoyable evening because it gave people the chance to network and talk business in a social setting. So often across government and its agencies you find that the problems of senior managers are shared ones – whether that's head-counts or recruitment freezes. To talk them over is a real tonic.'

- Interested? Find out more at www.ace.gov.uk

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CPS crossed a boundary into the media glare when it took over responsibility for charging suspects

The public face of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been increasingly evident over the past 12 months as it has taken over responsibility from the police on whether or not to charge suspects.

The policy of bringing lawyers out of the back rooms took a major step forward last summer when CPS held its first joint press conference with the police to announce charges against 11 terrorist suspects in connection with an alleged plot to detonate explosives on board aircraft. The Times newspaper reported that Susan Hemming, head of the CPS counter terrorism division, made a full media statement at a press conference in a similar style to that of a US district attorney.

Peter Lewis, chief executive, said: 'Since that ground-breaking press conference, our prosecutors have announced charges at similar joint press conferences on several occasions, including the alleged Suffolk murders and the alleged Birmingham beheading plot. We also



continue to take part in many post-trial press conferences and interviews.

'In fact, we have been working to raise our public profile for some time but that joint press conference last summer was a major step

forward which reflects the fact that we, rather than the police, now make the decision to charge suspects in all but minor cases.

'In its early days, the CPS avoided direct

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contact with the public and didn't explain prosecution decisions properly. Now our lawyers are expected to explain their decisions to victims, both in letters written in plain English and, in certain circumstances, face to face. Our Press Office explains our decisions to the media in as much detail as possible.

'Nobody should underestimate the enormous importance of accurate media reporting and the power of the media to influence the public. The media are absolutely crucial to public confidence. We need them to come and ask us questions and to accurately report the answers.'

The new transparent approach is important to the CPS. Lewis said: 'We believe that, consistent with the principles of a fair trial, the public has a right to information. Research shows that, in general, the more people know about an organisation, the more confidence they have in it. And public confidence is key to creating a prosecuting authority that people respect.'

'It is untenable and corrosive of public confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole to have a prosecution service that the public does not respect, because the whole justice system depends on the

'It is untenable and corrosive of public confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole to have a prosecution service that the public does not respect'

willingness of people to report crime, make statements and attend court.

'One of the most significant developments in our engagement with the media since the CPS was established is the Protocol on the release of prosecution material to the media, which was agreed between the CPS, the Association of Chief Police Officers and media representatives. The Protocol governs the material that will normally be released to the media during the course of a trial or afterwards.

'Again, the principle behind it is the public's

right to know. The introduction states: Our overriding objective is to provide an open and accountable prosecution process, by ensuring the media have access to all relevant material wherever possible, and at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

'It means that the public can see for themselves what is shown in court and gives a much better understanding of our work. It has been universally welcomed in the media and we believe has made a huge and positive difference in the way some trials are reported.'

- Find out more at www.cps.gov.uk

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An 'unlikely solution' sees a vehicle agency deal with waste

Disposing of unwanted electrical household goods in an environmentally friendly way is always a problem. An effective, if unlikely, solution has been found in the expertise of the Vehicle Certificate Agency (VCA), an agency of the Department of Transport.

It has become part of VCA's role to make sure retailers and distributors of electrical equipment provide facilities for householders to dispose of their Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and make information available on the environmental benefits of doing so.

'It may seem like a strange choice,' said VCA CEO Paul Markwick. 'Our core activity is automotive certification and this will not change. But our technical expertise and experience of working within prescribed legislative frameworks has taken us into other areas, including enforcement.

'For a number of years now we have



been enforcing standards on noise emissions from equipment designed for use outdoors and our reputation in this area put us in a strong position to win the WEEE contract. This is new legislation which no doubt will present some

interesting challenges but VCA is well equipped to meet these.'

Retailers of electrical and electronic equipment have had to provide facilities for customers to return old electrical

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equipment free of charge when they buy a replacement item since the beginning of July. They can either join the Distributor Takeback Scheme (DTS) which supports a network of primarily local authority collection points where customers can return their waste electricals or allow customers to bring

'It may seem like a strange choice ... our core activity is automotive certification'

goods back to the store.

The ultimate aim is to ensure that equipment is recycled in a responsible way and does not find its way to a landfill site. Markwick said: 'It may surprise readers to know that last year, in the UK alone, two million tonnes of electrical waste – enough to fill the new Wembley Stadium six times – ended up in landfill.'



Science and Innovation Minister Malcolm Wicks, who appointed VCA to enforce the distributor take-back element, said: 'VCA has a key role to play in ensuring that distributors comply with their obligations under the WEEE Regulations. Free-riding will not be tolerated, and a robust process will be in place to serve notice and ultimately prosecute distributors who are unwilling to become compliant.'

In addition to the take-back requirements the legislation also requires equipment to display the appropriate

mark which indicates that the recycling option must be considered at the end of life. The mark consists of a wheelie bin with a cross through it.

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE Directive) aims to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic goods on the environment, by increasing re-use and recycling and reducing the amount of WEEE going to landfill. It seeks to achieve this by making producers responsible for financing the collection, treatment, and recovery of waste electrical equipment, and by obliging distributors to allow consumers to return their waste equipment free of charge.

- Find out more at www.vca.gov.uk

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More than just a fad!

As more organisations face both an ageing and increasingly mobile workforce, the need to retain their knowledge is becoming more important. Acas has pushed at the boundary of knowledge management

Is 'knowledge management' just the latest fad? A resounding 'No!' is the answer in an internal Acas report that faces the question squarely. When presented with a significant staff redundancy exodus, Acas's Knowledge Directorate formed a 'knowledge capture team' to try to retain the experience of people leaving.

The team aimed to dig beneath the surface to gather not just the sources of information used by staff but to find out about the skills and expertise they used to communicate that information both to colleagues and clients. The report explores the concept of knowledge management and looks at lessons learnt by the team.

Agreeing some call knowledge management 'the latest fad', the report states: 'Knowledge management in the modern organisation can be traced back to the 70s and the advent of large scale corporate computing and the



realisation that the post-industrial economy, based on information and creativity, created a new imperative to make the best use of the knowledge within organisations.'

Discussing definitions of words like knowledge, information and data, the report describes knowledge as information with a purpose or, as it says 'more eloquently' as: 'information combined with experience, context, interpretation and reflection'. 'Knowledge management,' it says, 'seeks to make the best use of knowledge that is available to an organisation, creating new

knowledge in the process.'

The report says knowledge management is a relatively new area for Acas and establishing the knowledge capture team was regarded as an exploratory exercise. The capture team, therefore, tried and tested a number of different methods of knowledge capture to see which best suited the organisation and which was most efficient.

Methods used were an initial questionnaire, online chat forum, written records, group exercises, individual interviews and participant observation (observing people carrying out their jobs). Interviews and group sessions were recorded. This fusion of methods resulted in a massive amount of text to be edited. The report says that, while recording sessions was effective in gathering knowledge from leavers, the editing of data was 'a very lengthy task'.

Among lessons learnt, the report identifies the ideal group as people with the same function. It says: 'During the process it also became apparent that having much more focused groups, or individual interviews, with a set topic order of open questions, produced

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a better outcome as the themes were grouped better and there was easier read-across from one exercise to the other.'

The report suggests larger groups are dominated by the more vocal and structure is lost, therefore the optimum group size should be three or four. For general themes, however, the report says mixed groups can work. And lessons learnt are not just relevant to Acas. It says: 'With many organisations having an ageing workforce approaching retirement the need for guidance on how to retain their knowledge will become increasingly important.'

The main objective of the exercise was to capture the job knowledge of the leavers but it was soon evident people wanted to make comments about the broader organisation, and it was agreed to capture this information, too. Results of the main research are detailed in a 'storybook' on the Acas intranet: All about Acas – What the Leavers Said. A second book on cultural issues and how people viewed the organisation has been sent to the Senior Management Team and HR for them to assess and take forward.

The capture team shows a positive response to 'negative' comments. The report says: 'There was

some cynicism during the project that anything negative raised would be ignored; it would be a shame for that to be the case. Many of the problems people raised seemed to be explained by gaps in knowledge which was down to a lack of communication between different levels of

'With many organisations having an ageing workforce the need to retain their knowledge will become increasingly important'

staff; this should also be addressed.'

The report expresses the hope that the knowledge captured in the research will provide the source material for 'functional communities of knowledge', allowing people doing similar work to tell their own stories, share experiences

and add their own procedures and practices. As the report says, 'This then becomes an updated living resource for training and development.'

Looking towards that future, the report says: 'We will now publicise the results of the project in the Chief Executive's Bulletin, our staff newsletter, Acas Active, and in staff meetings around the country as part of the launch of the new Acas Knowledge Strategy. We believe that by going back out to staff to engage them in what their colleagues thought about their jobs we will be taking the first step toward creating a culture of effective knowledge transfer and sharing.

'Finally, we will consider with colleagues how we can make use of the lessons we have learned to inform other organisations who may be facing a similar challenge. Knowledge Transfer is about people and their relationships with their colleagues and the organisation so it is very appropriate as a topic for Acas expertise.'

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Schools offer more than 3Rs

Schools are moving towards wraparound childcare

More than 7,000 schools in England are now delivering extended services to their local communities with support from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). Extended services, a key element of Government policy for the integration of children's services at local levels, has seen schools engage change teams, consult the community and work in partnership, to offer community access, parenting support, swift and easy referral to other services and wraparound childcare. The Government intends that all schools will offer such services by 2010.

Research has shown that attending extended schools boosts standards and improves pupils' educational attainment. The increase in pupil attainment in Extended Schools was around double the rate of the national average between 2005 and 2006. At Key Stage 4 (14-16 year-olds), the number of pupils



achieving 5 A*-C at GCSE increased by just over 5 percentage points, compared to a 2.5 percentage point increase in the national average over the same period.

Other positive results include: improved school performance, better engagement with learning, increased family stability, better relations with local communities for schools and an enhanced standing of the school in the area.

Many of the schools have adopted a change management process to meet the new demand for extended services. TDA chief executive Graham Holley said: 'More and more schools are realising that using an effective

change management process is the only sustainable way to redesign school teams and school services which meet the needs of children and help to drive up standards. Our field forces will continue to be on hand to help schools understand this process and get the support they need to use it fully.'

Many schools began engaging with change management as a result of the 2003 National Agreement with the unions Raising Standards and Tackling

'The increase in pupil attainment in Extended Schools was around double the national average'

Workload, which called for workforce 'remodelling' to free up more time for teachers to teach. Today 99.4%

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of schools in England have delegated routine administrative and clerical tasks away from teachers, introduced limits on cover for absent colleagues and made arrangements for teachers to spend 10% of their time on planning, preparation and assessment.

The Agreement also involved the creation of a change team, representative of all staff in the school. The team would go through five key stages. They were: mobilise (get together); discover (uncover what needs to be addressed); deepen (understand the issues); develop (create practical solutions); and deliver (deliver the changes).

The advantage of using this approach, said Holley, is that staff members become more involved in the running of their schools. 'Collaboration between staff – and between schools, organisations, stakeholders and agencies – is encouraged and improved. Schools that used the process not only met the requirements of the National Agreement, they also enjoyed increased focus and



purpose and greater staff motivation and retention.

All of these are essential capacity building elements that allow schools to raise standards. We know that schools that embraced remodelling in this way are now preparing themselves to be more adaptable and receptive to subsequent change.'

In Wigan, remodelling has led to increased involvement of other school staff working alongside teachers. Sharon Scull, Remodelling Adviser for Wigan's School Workforce Development Team, said: 'Teaching assistants are involved much more in lesson planning and

objective setting and are clearer about the support they provide for pupils.'

The TDA delivers support for the roll-out of extended services in partnership with ContinYou (www.continyou.org.uk), 4Children (www.4children.org.uk) and work with Together for Children, who manage the provision of Children's Centres (www.togetherforchildren.co.uk).

- Find out more about schools embracing new ways of working at www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling.aspx TDA was established under the Education Act 2005. Its principal aim is to secure an effective school workforce that improves children's life chances. See more at www.tda.gov.uk

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No need for paperwork

Online technology changes the challenges at licensing agency

New technology has been pushing the boundaries at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). More than one million customers a month – more than shop online at Tesco – now buy their tax disc online from the DVLA, making it one of the UK's biggest online retailers.

Since the launch of the electronic vehicle licensing service in 2004, more than 15 million vehicles have been taxed or declared off the road electronically. One of the more surprising results of the 24-hour service is that 2,199 customers relicenced their vehicles on Christmas Day. The busiest time was around lunchtime, before taking a dip during the Queen's Speech!

Many online shoppers are attracted by the 24-hour flexibility. About 40% of online transactions take place outside normal office hours, with two-thirds citing this as the reason they were attracted to the service. Newer research has identified another attraction. People who have taxed their vehicle online



or by phone, have collectively saved about 60 million miles in unnecessary car journeys.

One of the strengths of the electronic vehicle licensing is that customers no longer need to produce any paperwork to prove they have an up-to-date MOT or insurance. The automated links between DVLA and the database of MOT test results, owned by the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA), and the Motor Insurance Database (which holds details of all motor insurance policies in the UK), mean customers just need the reference number on

their reminder document or their log book, and a card to pay with.

Thanks to links between the DVLA and the Department for Work and Pensions and the Veteran's Agency the system can also allow customers entitled to exemptions from Vehicle Excise Duty to arrange for their new tax disc. See www.direct.gov.uk/taxdisc

Another project the DVLA is now driving ahead with is the introduction of an online driving licence scheme. The main objective is to allow

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applicants to apply for a driving licence without having to send additional documentation by post. It launched the first of its electronic driver transactions (First application for a provisional licence) in April 2006.

In June 2007 a further four transactions were made available via the Directgov website www.direct.gov.uk/drivinglicence They include: the replacement of a lost or stolen licence; change of address for an existing driving licence; exchange of an existing paper licence for a photocard style licence; and renewal of an existing licence at age 70 or over

The new online application service provides improved security with robust customer validation checks undertaken as part of the application. Access to data is restricted until a person's identity has been fully verified. To date, more than 276,000 applicants have used this service. Consideration is being given to a full ministerial/media launch in early 2008.

Secure online access to the new drivers database through the driver validation service is the focus of work DVLA is doing with its government partner organisations including Police Forces, Her Majesty's Court Service,

Driving Standards Agency, Vehicle Operator Services Agency and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

One of the main benefits of the driver validation service (DVS) is the ability for partners to access drivers' data via accredited mobile devices. North Wales Police are currently using DVS via a Blackberry mobile device for road policing purposes. A further three forces (Strathclyde, Staffordshire and Dyfed Powys) will achieve mobile access shortly.

DVLA is engaging with the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) to achieve deployment of DVS to all forces by the end of 2008. Currently all Scottish Police Forces have access to DVS via Scottish Police Services Authority and as of October 2007 all Welsh police forces will have access together with 12 English forces. More than 1300 Government users are accessing DVS and undertake more than 5000 enquiries per week.

DVLA is working with the private sector too. A commercial pilot of the new driver licence check service is scheduled for late 2007. Twelve companies will take part representing a range of current customers including car hire, insurance,

auto finance and employer organisations. Deployment is scheduled for early 2008.

New technology, too, has been behind the development of a new concept for the Department of Transport (DfT)—a shared services centre. The new centre in Swansea will be run by DVLA but will exist as an independent service provider, answerable to a customer board consisting of one director from each Agency within the DfT and the Shared Service Director.

The centre is ultimately expected to provide DfT and all of its Agencies with finance, procurement, HR and payroll services. The first tranche of these services became available to DVLA and the Driving Standards Agency in April 2007. Further service rollout is expected later in the year with rollout to the rest of DfT and its Agencies taking place over the next two years.

- Find out more at www.dvla.gov.uk

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From blame to trust

Two years ago the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) voluntarily surrendered its Charter Mark for customer service. CEO Rosemary Thew recalls how the agency pushed the boundaries to rebuild its reputation

As a Regulator, it is often difficult to walk the fine line between regulation and stakeholder engagement. When I took up the post of chief executive, two years ago, the industry was quick to criticise the Agency. I was struck by the negative view many within the industry had and the tendency to criticise and blame. There was much to be done to establish a relationship of trust and partnership and it needed to be done as a priority. At that time, DSA had voluntarily surrendered the Charter Mark for customer service, recognising that there was improvement to be made in service levels and in the perception of both our customers and our partners.

We set about addressing the situation in a number of ways. We entered into a spirit of open consultation with industry representative groups, representing a large body of driving



instructors (though less than half of those on the DSA Register of Approved Driving Instructors). We invited stakeholders to discuss the development of a new motorcycle test and introduction of a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence for bus and lorry drivers (both to be introduced in October 2008 as a result of EU legislation). We made sure that the views of participants were listened to and that feedback was given.

We began publishing regular articles in our own magazines aimed at the industry, updating them on changes and developments. We organised a series of business customer

conferences to engage with the industry face-to-face and we organised a series of bilateral meetings with representative groups, at which we invited them to raise any concerns. We made sure that all action points were followed up and feedback provided.

Having listened to what others had to say about DSA, we set about improving levels of customer service, both to the public and to the driving instruction industry. As a result, I am pleased to report we re-gained the Charter Mark earlier this year and achieved a candidate satisfaction level of 95% - exceeding our Secretary of State target. But, just as importantly, the previously cynical industry group representatives were willing for the first time to sit around a table together and listen to what we had to say. This was a real achievement.

Through these measures and from feedback from other stakeholders and partners, it became apparent there was widespread dissatisfaction not just with DSA, but more importantly with current training and testing processes: that there was doubt as to the fitness for purpose

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of the driving test. The industry wanted DSA to take more responsibility for ensuring that those on the Register were fit and proper to be providing driving instruction. It wanted to work in partnership with us to improve driving standards and road safety. There was a great appetite for change. But, alongside it, there was doubt that any meaningful change could be achieved.

This lack of confidence existed both within the industry and the Agency itself.

Following this, representations were made to our then Minister, Stephen Ladyman, who in early 2007 authorised us to carry out a root and branch review of the driver training and testing regime. We held a number of structured workshops with all kinds of stakeholders and our own staff to encourage debate and to bring together ideas and suggestions as to how things could be improved.

We were not alone in reaching the conclusion that it was time for change. Earlier in the year a Transport Select Committee Review on Novice Drivers was called at which Ministers, representatives from Department for Transport and its Agencies, including myself, and a large number of industry and stakeholder representatives, gave evidence.

The report, issued in July, made a number of recommendations for change and acknowledged the work DSA was already doing. It paved the way for a public consultation that will hopefully take place before Christmas.

It has been a challenging period. But what of our stakeholders? Well, recent feedback is

'When I took up the post of chief executive, two years ago, the industry was quick to criticise the Agency'

encouraging. The message is that the industry is starting to feel more as if we are working in partnership with them, that we listen to their views. We don't have all the answers and there is a lot more work to do, but we have learned an awful lot about stakeholder engagement, sharing knowledge and expertise, and building

relationships. And we will not stop here. We will continue to build on what we have achieved so far.

The feeling is growing that we are entering an era of opportunity and that for the first time government and the industry can work together to effect positive change. I believe that we have already gone some way to pushing the boundaries and that with a lot more hard work we can really make a difference to road safety. There is no turning back!

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The first cross-Government IT project is led by COI

The need for a more joined-up approach to stakeholder consultation and engagement across Government – identified in ‘numerous’ capability reviews – is the focus of the first-ever cross-Government IT project for the Central Office of Information (COI).

The COI, in partnership with a number of other Government departments, is developing a unique stakeholder mapping and management system to facilitate the sharing of up-to-date information on stakeholders and the better management of stakeholder contacts across Whitehall.

COI chief executive Alan Bishop said: ‘Existing processes are time-consuming and fragmented, so some stakeholders are inundated with requests for information and consultations from multiple departments. We hope the system will help bring an end to this. The software allows us to do robust scenario modelling, so we can start making judgements on the money and people needed to make stakeholder relationships more effective.

‘This isn’t just about creating new IT systems. It’s about innovating how we do things and how

we share information. Our aim is to bring a more joined-up approach to stakeholder consultation and engagement across government, something identified in numerous capability reviews recently.’

As the Government’s communications agency, the COI is at the forefront in developing innovative systems and services to make Government communications more effective and, importantly, ensure that COI – and the departments and agencies that it works with – achieve the best possible value for money.

‘COI is in a unique position to improve understanding of how communications work and must constantly push the boundaries of what is possible in this area to improve the service we provide to our clients and ultimately to the public at large,’ said Bishop.

COI Artemis, a web-enabled evaluation service, has been developed with that objective firmly in mind. The system can analyse response and conversion rates by audience group and compare the effectiveness of different media and creative approaches.

COI’s campaign tracking database has grown rapidly since its launch in 2006 and now holds information on 60 campaigns. The database

allows COI to compare levels of awareness, so departments can see how their campaigns measure up against each other, and whether they are getting good value for money.

COI now wants to link the two systems. ‘The ability to identify links between awareness and response by policy theme would be an invaluable aid in decision-making,’ he said.

As the UK’s third biggest spender in the advertising world, COI has developed a supplier assessment system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising agencies it employs. As an agency is briefed to work on a particular campaign, 18 criteria are set against which they will be measured.

For the number of campaigns and agencies monitored by the system, COI believes it is unrivalled in the industry. ‘Its reports provide a valuable record of campaigns. Since they can be sorted by audience group and campaign type it means they can be used by departments as examples for future planning.’

● More information at www.coi.gov.uk

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More about Ace

ACE is the UK ACE Association and is an inclusive organisation open to Chief Executives and senior managers who report to Chief Executives, working in central government Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Non-Ministerial Departments and Trading Funds. Other Chief Executives of public sector organisations are able to apply for membership, but approval of membership will be subject to the agreement of the Board. ACE promotes effective government and provides networking and learning opportunities for its members. ACE was formed in 2004 and exists to promote excellent working relationships throughout all aspects of government. It will seek, on an annual basis, to:

- Generate the opportunity for networking on the basis of an up-to-date database of contact details and specialisms.
- Produce regular newsletters for the purpose of promoting and sharing good practice, experience and knowledge.

- Organise an annual conference
- Organise two events which:
 - Highlight priority areas of action for government
 - Offer specific opportunities for networking across the public and private sector
 - Provide a point of contact between the Civil Service Steering Board (CSSB) and the Association and its members.

In undertaking the above, ACE will neither seek to involve itself in policy development nor representative lobbying. Neither will ACE have the power to make decisions that would bind one, any or all, of the members. ACE is funded from member subscriptions. The ACE London headquarters is located in the heart of Westminster and provides a range of facilities for members. This quiet and private location is ideal for relaxing, reading the current journals, meeting a colleague or simply having a cuppa. You can use the dedicated computer terminal to access the internet and read your emails

- For a location map click [here](#).

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Read something that interests you? Concerns you? Annoys you? Want a chance to put across your view? Want to find out more? Whatever your view, please share it with us.

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