

REPORTER

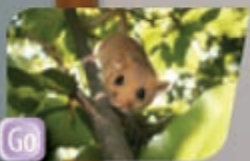
The electronic magazine of the United Kingdom ACE Association

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Sir Gus pulls no punches



WELCOME to the ACE Annual Conference



REPORTER

The electronic magazine of the United Kingdom ACE Association



Forecasting the floods



Three into one



Sir Gus pulls no punches

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Active in debates

Welcome to the first edition of ACE Reporter 2010! Whatever else may happen this year, we can be sure of a General Election, the football World Cup and intense interest in the future of public services in the UK. As policies are developed and refined, ACE members need to make sure that they have clear, flexible and well grounded business cases for 2010/11. But more than that, we need to make sure that we are actively engaged in the debates.

To that end, I am delighted we have the ACE workshops with HM Treasury in January on the subject of the Public Value Programme on Arm's Length Bodies. That we are engaged in the Corporate Governance Review and will be consulted in the work on the extension of the Capability Review concept to ALBs. More details to follow in Member Briefing emails.

Our guest speaker at the ACE Annual Dinner on Thursday 18 March is Sir Michael Bichard. He will be talking about the Total Place initiative which is taking a radically different approach to public spending. We will have more events building

on the themes covered at Conference and recapped in this edition of ACE Reporter, which also showcases the excellent work being done by so many ACE members – from flood forecasting to modernising ACAS. Now is the time to make sure that ACE success stories are heard.

Thank you for electing me as your Chairman for this year and for your support at Conference. The feedback from delegates was that the speakers were particularly relevant given the challenges ahead. Sir Gus certainly got the message that ACE members are ready to play their part in the changes to come but ask to be treated as adults with relevant expertise and experience to inform planning. I look forward to working with the Board to deliver a relevant and engaging programme for members through the year.



With all good wishes for 2010.
Guest Editor
ACE Chair Jane Platt
CEX NS&I

Forecasting the floods

The gales that battered north-west Britain for three days during the UK's wettest November on record proved a challenge for the new joint Met Office and Environment Agency Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC). But, says Rob Varley, Met Office Government Services Director, the united approach of the agencies involved made the flooding easier to deal with.

The most widespread impacts of November's serious flooding were in Cumbria where several bridges collapsed and others were closed. Tragically, a police officer died when a bridge collapsed in Workington. The worst affected town was Cockermouth where water levels reached 2.5 m. More than 1,300 homes were affected by the floods and many more left without power and water. There was severe travel disruption on both roads and railways.

Seathwaite in Cumbria endured 314.4 mm of rain in 24-hours – a new UK record for the wettest November day in a single location. Parts of Scotland were affected with some property flooding and there was travel disruption in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders. There was also some flooding in parts of north Wales, causing travel disruption.

The extreme weather was caused by an Atlantic weather front becoming almost stationary across Northern Ireland, Cumbria and south-west Scotland. South-westerly winds



Pic by Environment Agency

Under pressure: Flooding in Cockermouth

associated with the front drew warm, moist air northwards from the Azores region. The mountainous terrain of Cumbria and southwest Scotland intensified the rain.

A key recommendation of the Pitt review, after the floods of summer 2007, was that the Environment Agency and the Met Office should work together, through a joint centre, to improve the capability to forecast, model and warn against flooding.

Encouragingly, during the most recent floods, the FFC – established as a result of the Pitt review recommendation – was extremely successful in forecasting the rain and flooding.

Varley said: 'Although the FFC was tested through the summer with heavy rainfall, the floods in Cumbria were the first real high-

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improved the warnings, giving significant extra lead time. Improved flood forecasting guidance and alerts certainly helped to save lives, so it was a real highlight that the FFC's joined-up approach was so successful. Similarly, Met Office staff in Scotland worked closely with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

'Since the Civil Contingencies Act, the Met Office has a team of dedicated Public Weather Service (PWS) Advisors, who are not just available during emergency incidents, but also in planning phases. PWS Advisors were in

profile test of the FFC's effectiveness. So how did it stand up? People from across the Met Office were closely involved with different agencies throughout the period of severe weather. The way that different agencies worked together received widespread praise, particularly the work on the ground from the emergency services, but also the unified approach of the Operations Centre forecasters, Public Weather Advisors, the FFC and the Environment Agency.

'Rainfall estimates provided by the Met Office and interpretations of impact provided by the FFC – when, where, and to what extent, flooding would occur – were of the highest standard. A focus on early warnings was another recommendation from the Pitt Review and the integration of flood services from the Environment Agency and Met Office has clearly

Looking back on what was the wettest November in the UK in a series from 1914 there are bound to be lessons to be learned

close contact with emergency responders during and after the heavy rain, helping them to put procedures into place to prepare for and respond to the floods. During the floods they played a key role in command centres.

'Working as part of a multi-agency, emergency command structure (Gold, Silver and Bronze) made it possible to co-ordinate a managed response, working closely with a range of organisations. Key staff at Defra, the



Cabinet Office and senior government officials were all briefed. The Cabinet Office specifically praised and thanked the Operations Centre forecasters, PWS Advisors, as well as Met Office and Environment Agency staff at the FFC.

'Looking back on what was the wettest November in the UK in a series from 1914 there are bound to be lessons to be learned, but individual endeavour, strong teamwork, consistent messages and FFC procedures worked well. There are positive signs for the future, with potential for further integrating the science, technology, people and services of the FFC. Although the floods have now passed, the recovery will take time, and our thoughts are with all those who have been affected.'

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Ringling the changes

Massive change to the famous Acas Helpline – the first port of call for free, independent, impartial and confidential advice on employment relations issues – followed Michael Gibbons review of employment dispute resolution. Recommendations focused on easier access to advice and more widespread use of informal methods of dispute resolution. Crucial to the delivery of the Gibbons agenda was the modernisation and enhancement of the Acas Helpline.

National Helpline Director Nick Riddle said: 'From the outset it was recognised that a major change in Acas culture and systems was required. It would take a significant recruitment exercise, the extension of opening hours, better technology, a refined management structure, and a training programme spanning the entire Helpline to ensure the service focus remained firmly on the caller.'

An important aspect was the need to integrate referrals to a new Acas service – Pre-Claim Conciliation (PCC) that focuses on early resolution of potential employment tribunal claims – into the call handling structure.

What began, then, was the biggest programme of change the Helpline had ever seen, alongside a similarly seismic series of changes within the rest of Acas. The Helpline changes were managed as a project stream within that greater programme, sharing a

corporate governance structure with the other projects and streams – particularly, of fundamental importance to the success of the project, internal communications.

Riddle said: 'From day one it was clear that success or failure would hinge on getting the buy-in from every single Helpline Adviser, experienced and new. Staff engagement was key. A number of channels were opened up for communication to ensure staff were aware, and had a say in, what was going on and how it was to be achieved.'

As one Helpline Adviser in Nottingham said: 'Initially, there was some uncertainty of what was required of us. But once things were explained, and we had a chance to participate in training and consultation meetings, people were positive about the changes.'

A dedicated area on the staff intranet was set up, detailing the background to the changes and pointing interested staff to further information. Progress updates were posted regularly in the Chief Executive's bulletin and monthly staff magazine, and the project manager conducted a series of face-to-face road shows to all regional offices.

All this overt communications activity, however, represented just the surface of a vast flow of information and wider engagement activity. At every stage of the project, for example at the introduction of a new piece of

technology or training or new way of working, feedback was sought from those who would be using, receiving or implementing the change on the ground.

One Helpline Adviser in London said it was good to see feedback and comments taken into account.

At the beginning of the process Acas conducted an engagement survey. Riddle said: 'We asked staff how much they knew about the changes underway, how positive they felt about them, and how much they felt involved and able to influence them. By repeating the survey at intervals the team was able to use the answers to further shape their communications.'

'The whole project was driven by passion for what Acas does and its pride in doing it well, but it was enabled by a close relationship with our parent department. They worked closely with us, providing support wherever needed to ensure the smooth and timely completion of the project. Our jointly agreed Memorandum of Understanding set stringent post-enhancement targets for the Helpline's performance in such areas as call numbers, quality and waiting times.

'As a London Helpline Adviser said: *To me, the changes brought about by Gibbons have had the most impact on the Helpline. But these changes have got to take place. After all, we've got to move with the times.*

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A persuasive business case!

When the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was reviewing a range of options for the future delivery of official controls on meat hygiene in approved meat premises, including private sector alternatives, senior management in the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS), an executive agency of the FSA, determined official controls should continue to be delivered by a public service provider.

Led by CEX Steve McGrath, a strong team set about developing a persuasive business case that the MHS could best deliver the objective of the review. The case was accepted by the FSA Board in July 2007. Business case development immediately switched to implementation. A change programme was established to drive delivery across a wide range of work streams.

The transformation of MHS had begun! It included projects to reduce overall expenditure, maximise value for money, harness electronic technology to management systems, revise MHS charging policy, modernise stakeholder management, and reorganise tiers of management.

Transformation has included the closure of all five regional offices; awarding new contracts for veterinary and meat inspection services; enhancing IT infrastructure; and merging MHS and FSA corporate services. Transformation benefits include a reduction in

gross cost from £91.3m in 2006/07 to £77.9m in 2008/09, a figure of 20% that is likely to increase to 37% by 2010/11.

The programme was established for a three-year period ending 31 March 2010, but our journey isn't ending there. In July last year, the FSA announced the formal merger of FSA and MHS. The plan is to place the operational delivery expertise and drive of the MHS at the core of a new FSA Operations Group

The new operational structure and changes in resource deployment have together enabled a reduction in average headcount from 2,023 in 2006/07 to 1,595 in 2008/09 – a reduction in staff numbers of 428, 357 operational and 71 administrative. Staff

numbers projected for 2010/11 is 1,388, a total reduction of 31%.

McGrath said: 'The programme was established for a three-year period ending 31 March 2010, but our journey isn't ending there. In July last year, the FSA announced the formal merger of FSA and MHS. The plan is to place the operational delivery expertise and drive of the MHS at the core of a new FSA Operations Group.

'So what did we learn on the way? Above all else stakeholder engagement really was crucial in securing acceptance to the changes proposed. Secondly, delivering above and beyond the set targets strengthens credibility and trust and helps deflect the doubters. Lastly, do not underestimate the added dimension and work that devolution brings when implementing change.'

- For more information, please contact:
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New 'living' magazine

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) has launched a new magazine for more than 21,000 disabled people as part of its 21st anniversary celebrations. The new magazine, *Living – for independent people*, has been specially designed to be a practical and interesting lifestyle/feature-based publication



containing ILF news, information, inspiring user stories and practical advice.

ILF CEX Patrick Boyle, said: 'We pride ourselves on our ongoing relationships with our users through consultation, co-production and providing clear accessible information. *Living magazine* is another excellent tool to

help us do this. Our users have been involved in the creation of *Living* from the very start. It's a real example of our users' views informing what we do. We want ILF users to take ownership of *Living* and think it can help empower them to make the best possible use of the support that is available to live truly independent lives.'

Living was launched at the ILF annual conference at the end of last year, which was themed on 21 years of making choice real for disabled people. The first special edition features 21 voices of users, carers and ILF staff giving real life perspectives on the significant contribution the organisation has made over the last two decades.

- For more information about *Living* contact David Smith on 07779 083493.

Making ACE relevant

A series of new initiatives has been keeping the work of ACE focussed and relevant, ACE chair Jane Platt, CEX NS&I, told the AGM. A discussion forum with Sir Gus O'Donnell, the 'Dear Brian' letters, the



Platt: Re-elected ACE chair

workshop on corporate governance, the first regional networking event and the first membership survey had all been a great success.

She said: 'In all of these things the Board has tried to give Members as many opportunities as possible to come together to share experiences and thoughts, particularly in an environment that is changing so rapidly. We hope you will see that we have worked hard to make our events as focussed on the key topics as possible, to make them relevant and to provide a useful forum for sharing ideas and best practice.'

New Board members

ACE elections saw Jane Platt elected as chair, Paul Markwick, CEX Vehicle Licensing Authority, elected Vice Chair and four members elected to the Board.

Platt, who has chaired ACE since April 2009, when Andrew Hudson's move to the



Markwick: Re-elected ACE vice chair

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Treasury meant he could no longer be a member of ACE, said it had been a busy year.

She said: 'It has been an energising year. I want to continue the work to make our discussion fora and events as relevant as possible. We have just completed our first member survey and I look forward to building on that.'

Markwick, who has been an ACE board member for two years, said: 'It has been great. I would like to use my time as vice chair to get ACE out into the regions more.'

The four Board members elected are Stephen Speed, CEX Insolvency Service; Penny Ciniewicz, CEX Valuation Office Agency; Richard Judge, CEX Cefas (The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science); and Adrian Belton, CEX The Food

and Environment Research Agency.

They join existing Board members: Iain Greenway, chief survey officer, Land & Property Services NI; Alison Littley, CEX Buying Solutions; Simon Hodgson, CEX Forestry Commission; and Gareth Jones, CEX Companies House. Nicole Perry, Head of Public Affairs Ordnance Survey, is Board Secretary.

Alison Littley, Simon Hodgson and Gareth Jones all come to the end of their two-year board terms in 2010 when they will be eligible to stand for re-election. Iain Greenway has indicated that he wishes to step down from the position of Treasurer at the 2010 AGM. Any members interested in standing for this role should contact him or Jane Platt for further details.

ACE 2010 Diary Dates

- **Midlands Regional Networking**
Meeting in Birmingham, Thursday 7 January. Confirmed speaker is Andrew Saffron, Director Innermost Consulting, who will speak about leadership challenges in difficult economic times. Book places by emailing: james.jeynes@ace.gov.uk
- **Annual seminar and dinner** at Whitehall, London, Thursday 18 March. Confirmed speaker is Sir Michael Richard KCB, Executive Director of the Institute for Government. Book places online at: www.ace.gov.uk/dinner
- **Discussion forum** at Whitehall Place, London, Wednesday 15 September. Book places by emailing: james.jeynes@ace.gov.uk
- **Annual Conference** at Sunningdale Park, Ascot, Thursday 25-26 November. Book places online at www.ace.gov.uk/conference
Other events planned for 2010 include networking meetings in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

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The quiet conversations of policing

It's important to empower the frontline, says Sir Hugh Orde

The 2005 marching season in Northern Ireland saw more than 1,000 police officers deployed to control serious rioting. More than 1,000 soldiers were on standby to support the police; 200 officers were injured – five never returned to work. Some 150 live rounds were fired at police officers and police officers returned fire.

'It was a hugely complex situation,' said Sir Hugh Orde, President of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), who was until

recently Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

'The following year,' he said, 'the same march in the same location was policed by two officers in white shirts. They took a huge risk to do that. But there had been 364 days of hard work in the intervening period. They had the confidence to deliver it. They had built up relationships and they took a risk that could have gone horribly wrong. It didn't and we

moved on.'

Empowering the front line to be able to deliver effectively and flexibly was key to delivering successful change. Sir Hugh told Conference that in his seven years in Northern Ireland his biggest challenge was to give his front line operatives the power to deliver policing in a bespoke way against the very different worlds that made up Northern Ireland.



Driven by the blame game, when something goes wrong the knee-jerk reaction is a large public inquiry



He said: 'Policing in Cross McGlen will always be different to policing in Bangor or

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indeed Belfast. We had to create broad strategies at the centre that allowed our people at the frontline the freedom to succeed. I think in the public sector that is a huge challenge for all of us. We are very good at over complicating things!

He referred to a new policy on mental health currently being considered by ACPO. He said: 'It has 193 pages. We are expecting the front line to deliver against 193 pages. I have no intention of letting it go through like that. All we are doing is setting up people to fail against our own delivered benchmarks rather than allowing our officers to be able to interpret principles against which they could deliver with some degree of success. We need an overview but then we need to leave people to get on with the job.'

The public sector had become very risk averse. 'Driven by the blame game, when something goes wrong the knee-jerk reaction is a large public inquiry, some sort of reinvestigation with the 20:20 vision of hindsight,' he said. 'We need to give people the confidence to look forward. To do something that might not be chapter and verse but is suitable to where they are. We should give them that flexibility.'

He said it was essential, too, to understand firsthand what the public wanted. He said: 'In Northern Ireland my approach was



Quietly listening: Delegates at ACE conference

to talk. I would talk to anyone who wanted to talk about policing in a positive sense. It was the quiet conversations that really helped get a feeling for where policing was going.

'One particular meeting was organised by Healing Through Remembering, a very effective organisation. Sat at the table were UDA murderers, a hunger striker, community leaders, churches and police officers. One of the police officers was in the room with someone who had murdered two of his colleagues – and they had a conversation.

'The great thing about that story is that you should never underestimate what people are prepared to do. These police officers were absolutely up for change. They wanted their children to have a better life. There is huge value in actually listening. Sitting down and having a conversation about what we deliver and what we can do to make it more effective.'

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Make sure you understand each other, says Roy Wilsher

Confirm your understanding, don't try to manage the media, and accept that nobody is superhuman. These were some of the lessons that Chief Fire Officer Roy Wilsher, who led the Fire Service response to the Buncefield blaze, shared with Conference.

Buncefield was Europe's largest fire since World War Two. In the early hours of Sunday 11 December 2005 the oil storage depot, near Hemel Hempstead, that stored millions of litres of fuel, including oil, petrol and kerosene, experienced a series of explosions.

A large fire took hold, causing thick clouds of black smoke to cover large parts of southern England. Two thousand residents were evacuated, offices and warehouses on the site suffered major damage and there were reports of the explosions being heard in France and the Netherlands. Some 1,000 firefighters fought the blaze over a four day period.

The fire was finally brought under control with no loss of life or major injury. 'It was a complete miracle no one was killed,' Wilsher, chief fire officer at Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, told Conference. 'We had trained for an incident at Buncefield. But under national standards we had prepared for one or maybe two tanks to be alight at the same time. In the end we had 22 fuel tanks to deal with.'

The explosions took out all of the emergency provisions on site to deal with a fire



When someone from an oil company tells you not to worry about a fuel tank because it is practically empty, what they mean is there is still as much as a million litres of fuel in it!

including the mains and emergency water

supplies, onsite foam supplies and access to a control site where fuel movement could be controlled. It took about a day to get enough resources on site to start fighting the fire.

Among the difficulties of tackling a fire of such scale, delegates heard Wilsher advocate the need for confirmation. He said: 'A lesson we learnt is, what we call confirmation of understanding. For instance, when someone from an oil company tells you not to worry

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about a fuel tank because it is practically empty. What they mean is there is still as much as a million litres of fuel in it. To me that's still quite a big fire!

He also advised delegates not to try to manage the media. There was great media interest in the blaze, he said. 'Over the four days


we did 12 live press conferences and I did 33 individual interviews – anything from Vienna through to Sky TV. We made a conscious effort to work with the media.

'We used to teach managing the media when I was a young officer. We don't manage the media. We have to work with the media.

The media wants a story and if you don't help them get a story they will find their own.

'They need pictures, they need a story. If you work with them, you can do it in the right way. Don't try to manage them. Especially with 24-hour news and 15-minute rolling headlines. You won't be able to manage that.'

Making sure people got a break was important, too. Wilsher said: 'One of the things I teach my people is that no one is superhuman. I have heard people who have been involved in emergencies say they have been awake for 24 hours. What is the quality of their decision making process after 24 hours? For the first three days of Buncefield, I probably got about three hours sleep in my own bed but at least I was able to take a bit of a break. No one is superhuman.'



We don't
manage the media.
We have to **work with** the
media - *Wilsher*

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Operational clarity needed

Sir Gus O'Donnell KCB,
 Cabinet Secretary &
 Head of the Civil Service

Sir Gus pulled no punches in describing the challenges ahead and the need for innovative thinking right across the delivery of

public services. 'Why do we need 600 offices?' he asked. 'This is just mad. The really transformative bit about Total Place is when we start saying a citizen should engage with Government online or, if not, and there are things we have to do face to face, they should engage with Government in one place.' He said the public didn't care if it was a local authority issue, a central government issue, an HMRC issue or a DWP issue. They wanted to do it one place.... Another issue he said he could not explain, was the varied relationship between the central Civil Service and Agencies. Why did some Agencies have this degree of independence and some Agencies that degree? Responding to the view that Agencies were too often treated in a parent-child way by Whitehall, he said there was an opportunity for fruitful collaboration in meeting future challenges. ACE members had delivery expertise in particular and should be engaged as adults in the process of mapping out the future-state options.



Tough decisions ahead

- Ian Pearson MP,
 Economic Secretary to
 the Treasury.

The Minister started by thanking ACE members for their part in the delivery of Public Services. 'I could probably name check virtually

everybody in the room today. I want to emphasise the importance of arm's length bodies in helping to drive performance and the performance culture. Well-designed ALBs provide a number of advantages, including value for money and independence, often absolutely critical for Government, and technical expertise. Objective analysis will back up the business case for ALBs in a wide variety of circumstances.' Looking at whether we had the right ALBs, the right balance of central departments, agencies and NDPBs was an important job. He said: 'Any Government is going to look at the balance. There will be some tough decisions ahead for Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. We need to strive for structures that further our needs as efficiently as possible.'



Arm's length workshops

ACE members have been invited to feed into the review of arm's length bodies (ALBs). One of the key agreed actions from Conference is to hold some workshops with HM Treasury that will inform the Public Value

Programme review of ALBs, which is looking at the number, activity and efficiency of agencies and NDPBs. The workshops are scheduled for early January.

Andrew Hudson, Managing Director Public Services and Growth Directorate, HM Treasury, told Conference the aim of the review was to simplify the ALB landscape, to ensure ALBs were as efficient as possible and to provide a stronger governing framework overall. He said: 'I'm very keen that we join up better across the public services. I think that having a really customer-centric view is important to what we have to do.'

Conference soundbites



Why be led by me?

Roger Marsh,
senior partner
PricewaterhouseCoopers

Roger Marsh noted that ACE members would need exceptional leadership skills to keep focus on outcomes and delivery through a time of significant financial

uncertainty. He said: 'An interesting question raised in a Harvard Business Review article asks us to answer for ourselves: Why would anyone be led by me? I think it is really helpful to step back and say: Why would I take those people with me in the way that I want to go? We are going to have to prioritise, simplify, standardise and, in the buzz word of the moment, collaborate. How do we do that effectively and efficiently within the barriers of accountability and budgetary frameworks that prevail or do we need to change the frameworks first?'



Conservative victory is not guaranteed

Sir Jon Shortridge,
Former Permanent Secretary

Sir Jon cautioned Conference not to take the Election outcome for granted and to make sure their organisations

were well prepared for all the possible outcomes. He said: 'Because of the way the electoral system works the Conservatives will need 7% more votes than Labour to secure more seats than Labour. To command an overall majority they would need the second biggest swing in 60 years. The odds are looking more and more like a hung Parliament. The last time we had that was in 1974.'



A fantastic opportunity

Noel Shanahan,
CEX DVLA

Noel Shanahan outlined the opportunities that uncertainty offers. He said: 'The mantra of more for less is beating faster and getting louder. It is presenting us with a

fantastic opportunity to really transform our organisations... In a world where every person and every penny matters we will no longer be able to tip toe around performance management. Performance management will be the corner stone of more for less. We will have to have those difficult conversations and discussions.'

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Improving efficiency and building capacity matter but – in the end – Natural England will be judged on what it has delivered for the environment, says chief executive Dr Helen Phillips

Natural England is the Government's independent advisor on the natural environment. Established in October 2006 it brought together all aspects of the conservation, enhancement and management of the natural environment, which had previously been delivered by three organisations with three very different institutional cultures.

To succeed we needed to build one organisation with a single purpose. We did this through our transition programme. In the first two years we thoroughly reorganised our front and back-office teams, reducing our staffing levels by 12%. We also reduced our costs by 15% in real terms, freeing up £15.6 million for frontline delivery.

Our financial processes have been overhauled. We have implemented monthly monitoring and reduced reporting times from 14 days to five and, at the same time, achieved significant improvement in all compliance activities.

This reorganisation has enabled us to pay money to customers more quickly and more accurately – the 48,000 farmers in our green farming schemes are now paid more promptly than ever before, and our



Pic by Eliana Sevianu

Smile Please: 75% of priority wildlife species on track to recover

administration costs are just 4%. And we have invested those savings back into the natural environment – £2 million is already being used to create new wildlife habitats.

We have streamlined many of the services we offer to farmers and land managers: they now largely have single local advisers who can support them on nature conservation, access and other environmental issues.

To equip our advisers and other staff with the skills and confidence for their new roles we have invested extensively in our people development. A new performance

management system links the local day-to-day delivery work of our 2300 people with our corporate plan targets. We have a Balanced Scorecard that on one piece of paper (or screen!) explains all our organisational targets, from environmental outcomes to the capability we need, and headlines the behaviours we need to deliver them effectively.

Our advocacy training programme, which included 180 all-day workshops run by our leadership team in local offices around the

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country, was designed to better equip our people to take on wider responsibilities and increase everyone's understanding of the breadth of our business.

The programme recently won two prestigious awards, *PR Week's Internal Campaign of the Year* and the *International Association of Business Communicators' Golden Quill* award. The latest staff survey shows that 91% of our people know how their role contributes to the corporate strategy.

To maintain the momentum generated by formal training, we worked hard to make information flow freely through the organisation. Teams and local offices were trained to share information, expertise and local knowledge. We also introduced an entirely new IT system, an on-line Corporate Performance Management System, and a highly regarded intranet and internet site.

Most importantly, we listen to our people. We have instituted an annual staff survey, and a pulse survey every six months. We publish the results of these, even when – in the first year – they were very challenging. All surveys result in national and team action plans, which are closely monitored.

We also looked at our best practice. As an environmental leader we were committed from the beginning to walking the walk! To



To maintain the momentum generated by formal training, we worked hard to make information flow freely through the organisation

keep the Natural England network connected, reduce travel costs and reduce our organisational carbon footprint, we invested in teleconferencing and videoconferencing, including running an all-staff conference by videoconference technology linking seven regional conferences. We developed new tools to measure our carbon impact and publish all results.

Our own offices have had an even greater impact in delivering carbon savings. In the three years since we were formed, Natural England has reduced its office estate from 63 to

39. Through this restructuring, combined with a number of energy efficiency measures, we have reduced our carbon footprint by 25% and are well on the way to achieving our target of a 50% reduction by 2010.

Increasing efficiency and building capacity through our transition programme has paid dividends. We are now delivering more with less. In the end, however, we will be measured by what we have achieved for the natural environment. There's much, much more to do but our record is strong.

Some 89% of our best wildlife and geological sites are in target condition (up from 73% at the time Natural England was formed). Around 75% of priority wildlife species are on track to recovery through our targeted conservation work (up from just 50%), and 65% of England is now covered by environmentally-friendly farming schemes (up from just 45%).

Our transition journey has sometimes been difficult, always challenging, but ultimately it has delivered results. We are better placed than ever to deliver on our exciting remit and meet the tough challenges that lie ahead for the natural environment in England.

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Managing people, not process

A new development programme brings performance management to life

An attractive and successful new programme in leadership and developing management designed by The Planning Inspectorate aroused considerable interest when it was showcased at Civil Service Live.

As a result, the Department of Communities and Local Government introduced elements of the programme under its banner of 'Focusing on You' and several government departments and agencies in the South West aligned their activities to share resource, ideas, and best practice under the Civil Service South West initiative.

Katrine Sporle, CEX The Planning Inspectorate, said: 'Our Leadership and Management Development Programme has now been made available to all the government organisations in this programme. The development of our programme is ongoing and we will continue to make our interventions, our experience and our learnings available to others.'

She said the programme was about inculcating a coaching culture and bringing performance management to life. It gave managers the support they needed to be effective in their jobs, to coach and develop their people, to take ownership of their own careers, and to deliver the organisations aims

and objectives.

Looking back at the development of the programme, she said: 'We were lacking in skills required to effectively lead and manage people. We identified a need for improvement in taking responsibility for decisions that affect the performance of others, giving constructive feedback on performance, engaging staff and developing people.'

'Our new programme is creating a performance led organisation underpinned by a step change in management and leadership capability. Feedback so far shows it to have been extremely powerful in engaging managers and making them enthusiastic about their own development, their skills, and their capability as managers.'

Course appraisals included comments like: 'I believe I have started to move from being a manager of process to a manager of people'; 'I now have the tools I need to change the way things happen around here'; 'I have now learnt how to give constructive feedback on performance'; 'It really focussed us on performance and delivery.'

In the 'Outcomes in Mind' module, people learn about their own and others thinking preferences and practice skills in listening, questioning, influencing, coaching, and goal

setting. Sessions, which are highly interactive, are supported by performance coaches. Attendees are provided with a DVD of their own performance, personal feedback and a development plan.

All staff are invited to attend the monthly Bite-size Learning Masterclass. Each of these targeted two-hour sessions focuses on a specific people skill and up to 80 attendees practice skills in topics such as successful delegation, emotional intelligence, influencing, and conflict management.

Sporle said: 'Overall feedback has shown an unprecedented level of enthusiasm. The programme has created a common language around management and performance and paved the way for an environment of coaching, performance, and delivery.'

'We now have a powerful springboard from which to launch our future management effectiveness. Managers at all levels understand the strategic picture and are able to align their personal objectives with the corporate objectives and the delivery of the business plan.'

■ For further information please e-mail: john.hammond@pins.gsi.gov.uk

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Send us your views on ACE Reporter

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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:

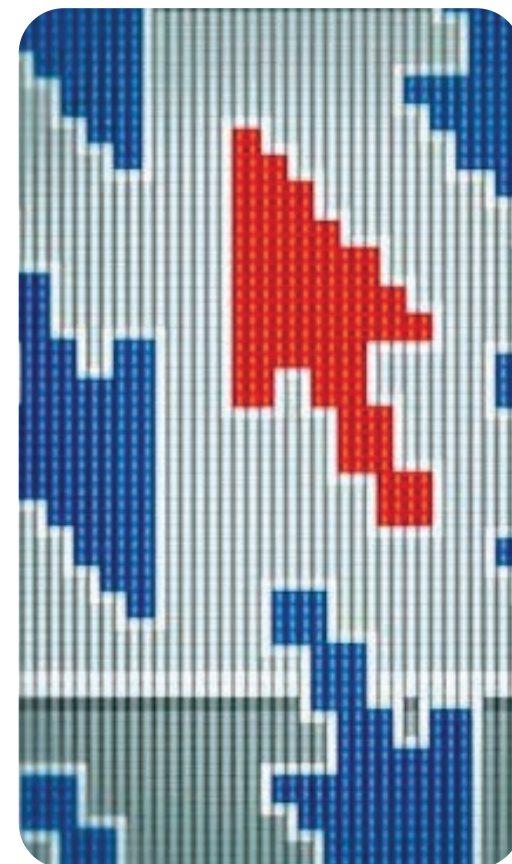
- Generate the opportunity for networking on the basis of an up-to-date database of contact details and specialisms
- Produce regular newsletters for the purpose of promoting and sharing good practice, experience and knowledge
- Organise an annual conference
- Organise two events which:
 - Highlight 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: http://www.solace.org.uk/contact_hope_house_map.asp



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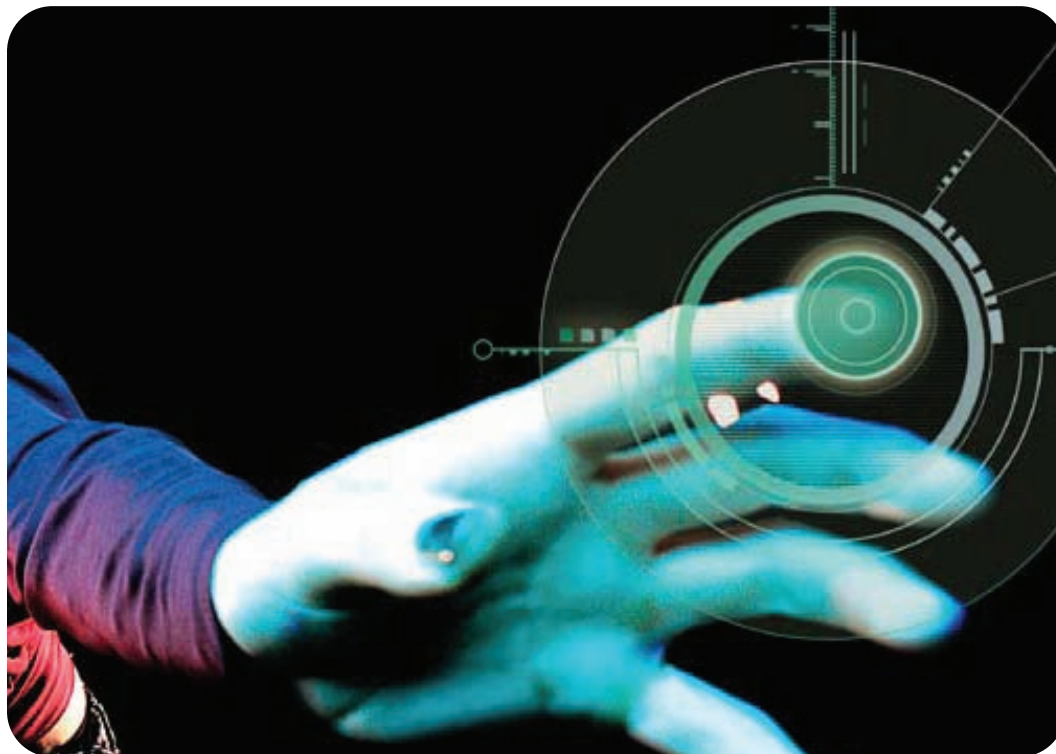
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