

District Councils' Network Annual Conference 2026

Thursday 19th to Friday 20th March

De Vere Beaumont Estate, Old Windsor



Welcome from the DCN Chair

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to DCN Annual Conference! The 2026 event will be our largest conference so far. The fact that so many people are coming together to share insight, expertise and solutions is testament to the power of our network.

This is my first conference as DCN Chair. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can – from all our political parties and whether councillor or officer – to get an even stronger appreciation of your views and the areas on which you'd most like DCN's support.

We have much to discuss at this year's event. Reorganisation and devolution will dominate much of our conversation. This is a time of huge challenge to us all. But I know our chances of getting the best outcomes for our communities are enhanced by working together.

We've built a conference programme we believe offers insight on the issues and opportunities that our member councils face. I very much hope that the event serves your needs. Please take the time to respond to our delegate surveys following the conference so we can understand how best our 2027 event can support you. I look forward to you, as a valued attendee, playing a full role in the conference. Please join the discussion, in plenary sessions, break-out sessions, breaks and the bar!

Thank you for everything you do in your local government position and for all that you do for the sector through DCN. Thanks also to our strategic partners and exhibitors who add so much to this event, and without whose support this event would not be possible.

I very much hope you enjoy this year's event.

Best wishes,



Cllr Richard Wright
Chair, District Councils' Network

About the District Councils' Network

District Councils' Network (DCN) is a cross-party network of 169 district and unitary councils. We are a special interest group of the Local Government Association, providing a single voice for all district services. DCN member councils deliver a wide range of local government services to over 21 million people – 37% of England's population. They cover 59% of the country by area. DCN councils are home to 39% of England's businesses and 32% of national Gross Domestic Product.

DCN councils play a unique role in shaping local places to make them more prosperous. They drive local economic growth and the resurgence of local pride that goes with it. They hold vital keys to improving health and wellbeing and reducing pressure on the NHS. They have an unparalleled ability to support the local residents who need it most and help prevent the social problems of tomorrow.

DCN Annual Conference: useful information

Accommodation and arrival

Accommodation for delegates with full conference tickets has been booked for Thursday 19th March at **De Vere Beaumont Estate, Burfield Road, Old Windsor, Windsor SL4 2JJ**.

On arrival, delegates should enter via main reception and leave luggage at reception for collection later. Staff will be available to tag luggage and store it in a cloakroom. Guests can collect room keys at registration desk at the end of the day. **Check-in is from 5.30pm**.

We will issue your conference pass when you arrive.

Parking and travel

The De Vere Beaumont Estate has over 500 free on-site parking places. There is no need to provide car registration details in advance.

The conference venue is located just 3 miles from Egham (EGH) train station. Windsor & Eton Riverside and Windsor & Eton Central are also a short taxi ride from the conference venue. You can find more detailed travel information [here](#).

De Vere Beaumont Estate emergency instructions

Action on hearing the fire alarm (a continuous bell ringing for more than 2 minutes):

- Please vacate the building via the nearest fire exit
- Proceed to the nearest assembly point which is located in the White House Front Lawn or Car Park 1
- Report to the organiser at the assembly point
- Do not use the lifts
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings
- Wait at the assembly point until given the all-clear to return to the building
- Staff will be on hand to assist where possible

Wireless network

There is complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the conference venue. The username is **De Vere Beaumont Estate** and there is no password

Strategic Partners



Conference Exhibitors



Conference Programme

Day 1: Thursday 19th March

11.30	Registration opens
11.45	Lunch, networking and exhibition
12.30	<p>Conference open and welcome</p> <p>Trevor Holden, Chair, DCN Chief Executive Group</p>
12.35	<p>Opening address</p> <p>Cllr Richard Wright, DCN Chair</p>
12.45	<p>In conversation with Hilary Cottam: a new vision for the future of work, local economies and communities</p> <p>Hilary Cottam OBE, social entrepreneur and author</p> <p><i>Chair: Jon McGinty, Managing Director, Gloucester City Council</i></p>
1.20	<p>Panel session: Rethinking local public services</p> <p>Helen Bailey, Chief Executive, London Borough of Sutton</p> <p>Rt Hon Professor John Denham, former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government</p> <p>Professor Sam Everington, President, Royal College of GPs</p> <p><i>Chair: Edd de Coverly, Chief Executive, Melton Borough Council</i></p>
2.05	<p>In conversation with Sam Freedman: what the changing political landscape means for local government</p> <p>Sam Freedman, Commentator and Senior Fellow, Institute for Government</p> <p><i>Chair: Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive of Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council</i></p>
2.40	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
3.05	<p>Breakout sessions</p> <p>Session 1: Tackling the affordable housing crisis: the human experience of homelessness (in partnership with Vistry Group) Main Conference Suite</p> <p>Session 2: Strengthening your cyber resilience while leading through Local Government Reorganisation (in partnership with Cyber Centre of Excellence) Windsor 3</p> <p>Session 3: What we can learn from the private sector about LGR and structural change (in partnership with Newtrality) Buckingham 4</p> <p>Session 4: Communicating with your communities through change (in partnership with Cratus Group) Beaumont Room</p>

3.55	<p>Panel session: How can we tackle the barriers to building 1.5 million homes?</p> <p>Anna Clarke, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, The Housing Forum Jo Nugent, Acting Executive Director, Market, Partners & Places, Homes England Mark Williets, Assistant Director of Planning, North Kesteven District Council Chair: Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council</p>
4.40	<p>Panel session: Leading people through change</p> <p>Lucy Adams, Chief Executive, Disruptive HR Faheem Khan, Chief Executive, Future Leaders UK Peter Fleming, former Leader of Sevenoaks District Council Chair: Maxine O'Mahony, Chief Executive of Breckland Council</p>
5.25	<p>Close of Day 1</p>
7:00	<p>Drinks Reception</p> <p>Sponsored by:</p> 
7.45	<p>Conference Dinner</p> <p>After-dinner speaker: Clive Myrie</p> <p>Sponsored by:</p> 

Day 2: Friday 20th March

8.30	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
8.50	<p>Closed political group meetings (for councillors only)</p> <p>Conservative Group Room: Windsor 3</p> <p>Independent Group Room: Buckingham 4B</p> <p>Labour Group Room: Buckingham 4A</p> <p>Liberal Democrat Group Room: Windsor 2</p>
8.50	<p>Closed chief executive session (for officers only)</p> <p>LGR and Beyond: Talent Talks and Walks! (in partnership with Penna)</p> <p>Main Conference Hall (Hanover Suite)</p>
9.40	<p>The view from the Opposition</p> <p>Zöe Franklin MP, Liberal Democrat Local Government Spokesperson</p> <p>David Simmonds CBE MP, Shadow Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government</p> <p>Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb</p> <p>Chair: Cllr Paul Harvey, Leader of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council</p>
10.25	<p>LGA Chair's address</p> <p>Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair, Local Government Association</p> <p>Chair: Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council</p>
10.40	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
11.05	<p>Breakout sessions</p> <p>Session 1: LGR – what can we learn from the Surrey journey so far? Main Conference Hall (Hanover Suite)</p> <p>Session 2: How to succeed as a political leader of a unitary council Windsor 2</p>
11.55	<p>Creating the councils of the future</p> <p>Lucy Batley, Chief Executive, Traction Industries</p> <p>Theo Blackwell MBE, Chief Digital Officer for London</p> <p>Chair: Dr Catherine Howe, Chief Executive of Dorset Council</p>
12.40	<p>Ministerial keynote speech</p> <p>Baroness Taylor of Stevenage</p> <p>Chair: Cllr Richard Wright, DCN Chair</p>
13.15	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Cllr Richard Wright, DCN Chair</p>
13.25	Lunch, networking and close of conference

Breakout Sessions

Day 1: Thursday 19th March, 3.05pm to 3.55pm

Session 1: Tackling the affordable housing crisis: the human experience of homelessness (in partnership with Vistry Group)

Speakers: **Francesca Albanese** - Executive Director of Policy & Social Change, Crisis; **Caroline Green** - Chief Executive, Oxford City Council; **Cllr Stephen Robinson** - Leader, Chelmsford City Council

Chair: **Andrew Taylor** - Group Planning and Sustainability Director, Vistry Group

Session summary: Many councils and communities across England are feeling the impact of acute homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures. At this session, we will hear from Crisis about the human impact of homelessness drawing on their extensive expertise and campaigning. Senior council leaders will share the solutions they are adopting locally to tackle the problem and focus more on prevention. This session will feature Q&A and will be a great opportunity to discuss fresh ideas about more holistic approaches to homelessness prevention, especially as we head into the new landscape of unitary councils.

Room: Main Conference Hall (Hanover Suite)

Session 2: How to strengthen your cyber resilience while leading through Local Government Reorganisation (in partnership with Cyber Centre of Excellence)

Speakers: **Irene Coyle** – Chief Operating Officer, OSP Cyber Academy

Session summary: The rapid development of new technology and global geopolitical change make the need for protection against cyber threats higher than ever. At the same time, councils and other public services are embarking on fundamental structural changes. Join this session with the Cyber Centre of Excellence for an interactive discussion about how to manage cyber risk during the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation and beyond, and how to use it as an opportunity to reset how councils think about cyber security. We will look beyond the technology itself and explore how leaders can create a strong culture of cyber security in their own organisations and with wider local partners.

Room: Windsor 3

Session 3: Facilitating systemwide collaboration on LGR (in partnership with Newtrality)

Speakers: **Mike Dearing** – Partner, Newtrality; **Pip Peel** – Partner, Newtrality

Session summary: As councils anticipate ministerial decisions on the footprints for new unitary councils, we turn our attention to the challenges of making LGR happen and what lessons might be learned from the private sector, where mergers and demergers are a “way of life” for some industries. This session will be led by Mike Dearing and Pip Peel, Partners from local government consultancy, Newtrality. Mike has cut his teeth leading local government change and developing public sector partnership programmes. Pip has managed some of the most high-profile mergers and de-mergers in the Financial Services and Retail sectors. Mike and Pip will be joined by a

panel of senior practitioners for an informative and lively exchange of ideas and experiences that will provoke your own thinking about the challenges and opportunities ahead for councils.

Room: Buckingham 4

Session 4: Communicating with your communities through change

Speakers: **Cllr Lisa Spivey** - Leader of Gloucestershire County Council; **Cllr Jeremy Newmark** - Leader of Hertsmere Borough Council; **John Richardson** - Chief Executive of Harborough District Council

Chairs: **Charlotte Platten** - Director of Local Government Engagement and Communications, Cratus Group **Sarah McKee** - Managing Director of Corporate Communications, Cratus Group

Session summary: Join the Cratus team and local government colleagues for a discussion on the challenges and opportunities arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), with a focus on communicating effectively with communities. Too often, community engagement is pushed to the bottom of the agenda or seen as simply too difficult when planning for and communicating about LGR. Yet our experience shows the opposite can be true. When done well, clear communication and meaningful engagement can build trust, reduce uncertainty and create better outcomes for everyone involved. This session will explore practical approaches, share lessons learned and open a conversation about how councils can place communities at the heart of change.

Room: Beaumont Room

Breakout Sessions

Day 2: Friday 20th March, 11.10am to 11.55am

Session 1: LGR – what can we learn from the Surrey journey so far?

Speakers: **Cllr Anne-Marie Barker** – Leader, Woking Borough Council; **Cllr Hannah Dalton** – Leader, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council; **Richard Carr** – Managing Director, Woking Borough Council.

Chair: **Mari Roberts-Wood** – Chief Executive, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Session summary: Surrey is at the front of the queue for Local Government Reorganisation with shadow elections for the new East and West Surrey Councils taking place in May. Join us to hear from our panel of Surrey district council leaders and chief executives about, how they're preparing to implement LGR successfully and what other areas can learn from Surrey's experience. We'll look at how district councils can maximise their influence through the implementation period, what the early stages of LGR transition are really like and how we can lead our organisations to make the most of the opportunity.

Room: Main Conference Hall (Hanover Suite)

Session 2: How to succeed as a political leader of a unitary council

Speakers: **Cllr Jonathan Brook** – Leader, Westmorland and Furness Council; **Cllr Richard Clewer** – Opposition Leader and former Leader, Wiltshire Council; **Cllr Vince Maple** – Leader, Medway Council

Chair: **Cllr Susan Brown** – Leader, Oxford City Council

Session summary: As LGR decisions and implementation approaches, many district councillors will be contemplating opportunities to represent their communities in the new unitary councils that emerge. At this session, we will hear from an excellent panel of experienced unitary council leaders about what it takes to lead a unitary council. We'll explore the differences between political leadership in district and unitary councils, how to make the transition, and the challenges and opportunities that come with being a leader or senior councillor in a unitary council.

Room: Windsor 2

Closed Chief Executive Session

Friday 20th March, 8.50am to 9.40am

Note: This session is open to council chief executives and senior officers only

Speakers: **Julie Tower** – Director, Penna; **Sarah Murphy-Brookman** - Corporate Director, Buckinghamshire Council; **Dr Catherine Howe** – Chief Executive, Dorset Council; **Max Wide** – Associate Director and Transformation Advisor, The Leadership Centre

Chair: **Trevor Holden** – DCN Lead National Chief Executive and Managing Director of Broadland and South Norfolk Councils

Session summary: As LGR approaches, many senior officers are considering how the new local government landscape will affect career and development opportunities for them and their leadership teams. This session will offer practical insights and ideas about the talent challenges and opportunities arising from LGR. Julie Towers will outline the data from Penna's recent review of talent data and career progression from district to unitary. Sarah Murphy-Brookman and Catherine Howe will share their recent experiences of senior leadership in a unitary council and their top tips for aspiring unitary leaders. Max Wide will bring insights from the Leadership Centre about LGR development needs.

Room: Main Conference Hall (Hanover Suite)

Closed Political Group Sessions

Friday 20th March, 8.50am to 9.40am

There will be parallel sessions for each DCN political group. These sessions are open to councillors only.

Conservative Group: Windsor 3 Room

Independent Group: Buckingham 4B Room

Labour Group: Buckingham 4A Room

Liberal Democrat Group: Windsor 2 Room

Our Strategic Partners



Birketts is a top 50 national law firm. As a full-service practice of over 1,200 people including more than 800 legal professionals, we have the scale, expertise and resilience to support local authorities with instructions of every size and complexity. Our public sector team comprises over 250

specialist lawyers, combining deep sector knowledge with hands on experience to deliver the full spectrum of legal services required by local government. We are recognised as a leading adviser and market leader on Local Government Reorganisation, supporting District, County, London Borough and Unitary Councils nationwide.

Our partnership with the DCN exemplifies our collaborative ethos and commitment to evolving with the sector amid a changing local government and legal landscape. We work as an extension of inhouse teams, providing a seamless, solutions focused service that consistently delivers maximum value. We understand the governance, operational and political challenges councils face, ensuring our advice is tailored to each authority's functions and priorities.

Many councils appoint Birketts as their trusted adviser due to our sector focused model, effective caseload management and strong track record of enabling authorities to deliver tangible benefits for their communities. Our team advises on major strategic projects, as well as day-to-day legal needs.

Website: www.birketts.co.uk

Email contact: ruth-neave@birketts.co.uk



GOOD INVESTMENT

CCLA is one of the leading investment managers for local authorities, charities and faith-based organisation in the UK.

We believe investment markets can only be as healthy as the communities and environment that support them. Our purpose is to help all our clients maximise their impact on society by harnessing the power of investment markets. For us and our clients, the value of our work runs deeper than solely financial returns. Good Investment at CCLA means using our voice to engage with companies and government policy makers on issues that matter.

CCLA is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Website: www.ccla.co.uk



**Cyber Centre of Excellence
for Local Public Services**

The Cyber Centre of Excellence (CCoE), established in 2023 by iESE CIC, has a core mission: to make the UK the safest place to live, work, and play online. It is committed to enhancing the cyber resilience of both businesses and public sector organisations. By rigorously testing and evaluating cutting-edge software and services, the CCoE offers a curated portfolio of premier, cost-effective cyber security solutions. Looking ahead, the CCoE is committed to growing its team and enhancing its services to stay ahead of the rapidly evolving cyber threat landscape.

Whether an organisation requires zero-trust cyber security solutions, expert training, dark web monitoring, or more, the Cyber Centre of Excellence stands ready to help fortify its defences. The Centre's team of experts works closely with clients to recommend the right tools that address specific vulnerabilities within their existing cyber infrastructure, eliminating unnecessary add-ons and providing clarity and confidence to maintain business operations securely. In just three years, the Centre has made significant progress - and this is only the beginning.

Website: www.ccoe.org.uk

Email: enquiries@ccoe.org.uk



The Council Housebuilding Support Service (CHoSS) is a national LGA programme for councils in England, funded by MHCLG, supporting delivery of more social and affordable homes. We offer free, tailored support across governance, finance, delivery approaches, land and skills. Come and speak to us at our stand or visit <https://www.local.gov.uk/choss> to learn more.

Website: <https://www.local.gov.uk/choss>

Contact: choss@local.gov.uk



Cratus Group is a UK-based strategic communications and public affairs consultancy that helps organisations navigate the political, regulatory, and community environments that shape major projects and public policy. Founded in 2009, we work with clients across sectors including the built environment, infrastructure, energy, technology, housing, and local government. Our core aim is

to help organisations manage reputation, influence decision-making, and deliver successful campaigns at both local and national levels.

We provide an integrated service spanning corporate communications, government relations, public affairs, planning communications, and community engagement. We support clients throughout the full lifecycle of projects – from shaping policy and stakeholder strategies to managing consultation processes and delivering campaigns that build public and political support.

A key strength is our expertise in local government and planning. Our team includes former political leaders, journalists, civil servants, and industry specialists who understand how decisions are made within councils and national government. This experience enables us to advise clients on political risk, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management.

Through strategic advice, research, and integrated communications campaigns, we help organisations build trust with communities, influence policy outcomes, and deliver projects that contribute to long-term economic and social development across the UK.

Website: www.cratus.co.uk



Local Partnerships is an in-house public sector delivery partner jointly owned by the LGA, HM Treasury and Welsh Government. We work solely for central government departments, the Welsh Government, councils and combined authorities.

Local Partnerships delivers value and efficacy for the public purse. As a key interface between local and central government, we provide expert advice and practical resources alongside project and programme delivery support, enabling public services to thrive.

Whether supporting and accelerating the delivery of major infrastructure, increasing sustainability through waste efficiency and renewable energy propositions through to wider place-making initiatives, we help transform services across the public sector ecosystem.

We recognise the unique set of responsibilities district councils hold as they deliver frontline services that communities rely on every day. Our support is designed to strengthen capacity and unlock delivery, whether that's navigating complex planning and regeneration challenges, improving contract management, accelerating housebuilding or undertaking large scale transformation programmes.

We bring technical expertise and additional capacity to help district councils deliver tangible improvements for residents. Working in partnership, we help districts meet their ambitions and deliver high quality and resilient services in the face of increasing financial and operational pressures.

Website: <https://localpartnerships.gov.uk/>

newtrality **Newtrality** is a public sector transformation consultancy working alongside councils and public sector organisations to design, deliver and embed meaningful, lasting change. We support organisations navigating complexity, from financial pressure and rising demand to structural reform, reorganisation and devolution, bringing calm, clarity and capability to complex programmes.

Our work spans service and operating model design, major programme delivery, local government reorganisation and leadership development. We take a structured but deeply human approach, combining insight, co-design and evidence-based decision making with hands-on delivery support. We work closely with organisations, building capability that remains long after programmes close.

Newtrality is passionate about inclusive, values-led leadership. Through our partnership on the Different programme, we help build confident, capable and diverse leaders who better reflect the communities they serve and are equipped to lead change in challenging political and organisational environments.

With unparalleled experience in public sector transformation, our consultants understand the realities of public service and focus relentlessly on outcomes that matter for people, places and communities. Clients value our collaborative style, practical insight and commitment to partnership working, ensuring change is achievable, sustainable and grounded in local context and lived experience.

Website: www.newtrality.co.uk

Email: hello@newtrality.co.uk



Norse Group – Improving People’s Lives

Norse Group is very different to most companies. Wholly owned by Norfolk County Council, it is the UK’s leading local authority trading company, with a forward order book of £2 billion. Its ownership means that, throughout the organisation,

there is a deep-rooted commitment to public service values, and profits are returned to the public purse.

Norse’s annual turnover of around £350 million and workforce of more than 9,000 people make it a major force in the delivery of outsourced services. The group comprises three primary companies:

- Norse Commercial Services - environmental, highways, transport, housing repairs and FM services
- Norse Consulting - architecture, design and building consultancy
- Norsecare - care homes in Norfolk

Norse began trading in 1988 in response to compulsory competitive tendering, initially as an arms-length company formed by the county council. In 2003 a sea change came with the formation of a joint venture with Great Yarmouth Borough Council – the first of many such partnerships.

The company re-branded as Norse and continued to grow. Further council joint ventures were formed: there are now fifteen across the UK. The partnership model, pioneered by Norse, is now well-established as an attractive alternative to insourcing and traditional outsourcing.

Website: www.norsegroup.co.uk

Email: Geoff.Tucker@norsegroup.co.uk



Penna

At **Penna** we're never happier than when we're helping clients to find, excite and secure the very best people for the public sector. We invest time in developing the next generation of talent and building the pipeline of future leaders through our support and development programmes.

We're the leading recruiter in local government and have dedicated specialist teams covering all areas of the leadership and management structure in local government.

Find out more about our work and how we can help you.

Website: www.penna.com; Email: julie.towers@penna.com

**Vistry
Group**

Vistry Group: We deliver thousands of homes annually for the open market and affordable housing sectors (2025 - 15,700). Working closely with Governmental bodies, housing associations and local authorities to meet housing need, as well as selling homes directly to customers through Bovis, Countryside and Linden Homes.

We are the UK's leading mixed-tenure developer, bringing together modern and efficient delivery methods, creating sustainable communities and places people love.

Our placemaking approach, not only builds high quality homes, but also thinks critically about the social and digital infrastructure, transport and green spaces needed to nurture a vibrant, connected, and healthy community.

All of us need a decent home – to be healthy and to thrive. Currently though, this basic human need isn't being met for many people.

Vistry is supporting Crisis as our charity partner 2026. Crisis work side by side with thousands of people each year as they find ways out of homelessness, providing practical support to help people access benefits, healthcare services and employment opportunities.

Crisis' main aim is to relieve the huge pressure of homelessness, by helping people find safe and affordable homes as quickly as possible. Campaigning on the political changes needed to end homelessness for good and conducting research to understand and highlight the scale, causes and consequences of homelessness.

Website: <https://www.vistrygroup.co.uk/>

Our Conference Exhibitors



Alliance Leisure is the UK's leading leisure development specialist, working in partnership with local authorities to develop engaging place-based active environments. Over the last 25 years, Alliance Leisure has delivered over 300 projects, ranging from new build or significant remodelling of leisure and cultural sites to outdoor spaces and 3G pitches.

Website: <https://allianceleisure.co.uk/>

Email: info@allianceleisure.co.uk



The Council Network is the ultimate digital platform enabling Local Authority Professionals to share knowledge and experience. Members can work together in a secure The Council Network environment designed exclusively for the sector. The Council

Network is completely free to join! Never has there been a more important time to share best practice and find solutions to the challenges we all face in Local Government.

Website: <https://thecouncilnetwork.org/>



HR doesn't need more process. It needs impact.

Disruptive HR helps HR teams rethink leadership and people practices. We share bold ideas, practical tools and real examples that challenge outdated thinking and help HR support leaders to build organisations where people perform, innovate and do their best work.

Website: www.disruptivehr.com

Email: hello@disruptivehr.com



Leisure Energy is an award-winning renewable technology company, energy consultancy and principal contractor, who specialise in identifying and delivering energy & sustainability solutions through to full

decarbonisation primarily to the public sector. Since 2014, we have been supporting and providing expertise to help make leisure, sport facilities and swimming pools more economically and environmentally sustainable – we were doing this when it was less cool!

- We have delivered over 400 Energy Surveys & Feasibility Reports identifying opportunities to become more economically and financially sustainable.

- We have delivered over 120 Capital Projects reducing carbon emissions by more than 30,000 tonnes of CO₂ p.a. or equivalent to taking around 56K cars off the road saving our partners £100,000's per year.
- We have written over 70 compliant Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme applications valued at over £100M for the leisure sector.
- We have delivered as principal designer and contractor 15 decarbonisation capital projects to date, with further in the design and build stage.
- We have developed a unique, innovative and highly efficient solution (SCoP 4.64 – 4.95) for the leisure sector to make decarbonisation more *affordable* through our Net Zero Pod® packaged plant room.

Website: <https://www.leisure-energy.com/>

Email: info@leisure-energy.com



Policy in Practice is a social policy, software and analytics company helping over 2 million people a year reduce financial vulnerability and safeguarding risk. As councils prepare for LGR, one in three use our technology to unite data across systems. We've helped them unlock £77m annually and identify £1.4 billion in unclaimed support.

Website: www.policyinpractice.co.uk

Email: hello@policyinpractice.co.uk

Phone: 0330 088 9242



SocietyWorks helps the public sector better serve citizens through interoperable, intuitive and responsible technology.

Building on 20+ years' experience, our solutions improve interactions with members of the public and aid digital transformation across multiple service areas, including environmental health, residential and commercial waste, FOI, environment fault reporting and more.

Website: www.societyworks.org

Hilary Cottam: Book Signing

We are delighted that Hilary Cottam OBE, DCN conference speaker, author and social activist, will be signing copies of her new book, *The Work We Need: a 21st Century Reimagining*, in the Hanover Lounge (near the main conference hall) from 3pm to 3.30pm on Thursday 19th March.

Hilary Cottam is an internationally acclaimed social activist whose work in Britain and with communities around the world has focused on collaborative and affordable solutions to some of the greatest social challenges of our time. Her first book *Radical Help* was hailed as 'mind-shifting' by David Brooks in the *New York Times* and has been translated internationally. Awarded an OBE in 2019 for services to the welfare state, Hilary has been recognised by Fast Company in the US for her pioneering creativity and by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader. Hilary's TED talk has had close to a million views.



In her new book, *The Work We Need*, Hilary Cottam turns to one of the most pressing and fascinating issues of our time: the future of work:

“Five years ago, I set out on a journey seeking the insights of everyday experts: those of us who work. I spent time too with business leaders, academic experts and policy makers. I asked a simple question, how could we re-design our working lives?”

“What I have heard in response are rich stories about possible futures. I have heard imaginings which are widely shared and largely hidden. I have learnt that we are exhausted with tips for life-work balance, conversations about whether we should return to the office, or whether the magical promises made about AI will be good or bad for workers. We are yearning instead for a very much bigger collective re-design of the values and assumptions that underpin work.”

For decades, work has been debated and discussed as a narrow economic category. Instead, Hilary Cottam identifies work as a cultural force and one at the heart of good lives, strong communities and nations that have a sense of a shared destiny. Crucially, in these dramatic times, she shows how we can shape this force to meet technological change, our ecological crisis, and the challenges of the world's deep injustices. We can create a work revolution.

Ambitious but rooted in the ideas of everyday experts, Hilary Cottam has crossed the UK and the USA. She has spent time in communities considered (by outsiders) as 'left behind' and in places at the centre of financial and technological power. Drawing on an inspiring range of sources including historians, trade unionists, business leaders, philosophers and most originally, on hours of her imaginative workshops with workers, she shows us how work could be re-imagined and in a way that benefits everyone

www.hilarycottam.com

@HilaryCottam

View Hilary's TedGlobal talk: bit.ly/2Crk8GO

Public Sector Challenge 2026



The banner features a blue background with a mountain range and a stream. A large white '2026' is written diagonally on the right side. The text is centered and reads: 'THE PUBLIC SECTOR CHALLENGE EARTH, MYND & SHIRE'. Below this, it says 'CHOOSE FROM FOUR ROUTES FROM 8.5 MILES UP TO 26 MILES'. The main sponsor is 'norse group'. Other sponsors include Cratus group, Socitm, solace, Local Government Association, and THE MJ. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner. The banner also mentions fundraising for Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation. At the bottom, it provides the date (11th September 2026), location (Shropshire), and website (publicsectorchallenge.co.uk).

2026

THE PUBLIC SECTOR
CHALLENGE
EARTH, MYND & SHIRE

CHOOSE FROM FOUR ROUTES
FROM 8.5 MILES UP TO 26 MILES

MAIN SPONSOR

norse
group

Cratus group Socitm solace Local Government Association THE MJ .CO.UK

READY TO TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE?

WE ARE FUNDRAISING IN AID OF:
CANCER RESEARCH UK British Heart Foundation

DATE: 11TH SEPTEMBER 2026 LOCATION: SHROPSHIRE PUBLICSECTORCHALLENGE.CO.UK

Customer response form

Your feedback is very important to us. After the event, you will receive an email from us inviting you to complete a brief online survey to let us know what you thought of the event. The survey can be accessed via a link at the end of the email and should take no more than a few minutes to complete. Alternatively, you can write to us with your feedback: dcn@local.gov.uk

List of local government delegates

Name	Job Title	Council
Dawn Hudd	Chief Executive	Arun District Council
Cllr Martin Lury	Leader	Arun District Council
Theresa Hodgkinson	Chief Executive	Ashfield District Council
Tracey Kerly	Chief Executive	Ashford Borough Council
Ben Lockwood	Deputy Chief Executive	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr Noel Ovenden	Leader	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr Deborah Saw	Deputy Leader	Babergh District Council
Cllr John Ward	Leader	Babergh District Council
Cllr Paul Harvey	Leader and DCN Vice Chair	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr Susan Findlay	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Community & Environmental Services	Blaby District Council
Louisa Horton	Executive Director, Communities	Blaby District Council
Julia Smith	Chief Executive	Blaby District Council
Karen Hanson	Chief Executive	Bolsover District Council
Cllr John Ritchie	Councillor	Bolsover District Council
Cllr Jane Yates	Leader	Bolsover District Council
Dan Gascoyne	Chief Executive	Braintree District Council
Charlotte Paine	Head of Operations	Braintree District Council
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Leader	Breckland Council
Cllr William Nunn	Leader	Breckland Council
Maxine O'Mahony	Chief Executive	Breckland Council
Cllr Sarah Suggitt	Deputy Leader	Breckland Council
Cllr Barry Aspinell	Leader	Brentwood Borough Council
Gareth Barrett	Deputy Leader	Brentwood Borough Council
Jonathan Stephenson	Chief Executive	Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council
Cllr Sue Holland	Leader	Broadland District Council
Cllr Sue Baxter	Deputy Leader	Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Karen May	Leader	Bromsgrove District Council
Sandra Beck	Director of Finance	Broxbourne Borough Council
Corina Gander	Leader	Broxbourne Borough Council
Cllr Jeff Stack	Chief Executive	Broxbourne Borough Council
Cllr Steve Thornley	Leader	Cannock Chase District Council
Peter Davies	Joint Chief Executive	Canterbury City Council
Suzi Wakeham	Joint Chief Executive	Canterbury City Council
Angela Hutchings	Chief Executive	Castle Point Borough Council
Cllr Jewel Miah	Leader	Charnwood Borough Council
Rob Mitchell	Chief Executive	Charnwood Borough Council
Cllr Stephen Robinson	Leader	Chelmsford City Council
Cllr Rowena Hay	Leader	Cheltenham Borough Council
Cllr David Hingley	Leader	Cherwell District Council
Gordon Stewart	Chief Executive	Cherwell District Council

Cllr Louise Gittins	Leader and LGA Chair	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr Tricia Gilby	Leader	Chesterfield Borough Council
Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Deputy Leader	Chesterfield Borough Council
Cllr Adrian Moss	Leader	Chichester District Council
Diane Shepherd	Chief Executive	Chichester District Council
John Ward	Chief Operating Officer	Chichester District Council
Pamela Donnelly	Chief Executive	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr David King	Leader	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Mike Evemy	Leader	Cotswold District Council
Jane Portman	Interim Chief Executive	Cotswold District Council
Ian Duke	Chief Executive	Crawley Borough Council
Michael Jones	Councillor	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr Simy Dhyani	Deputy Leader	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Angela Mitchell	Councillor	Dacorum Borough Council
Diane Southam	Strategic Director - Place	Dacorum Borough Council
Darren Welsh	Chief Executive	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Williams	Councillor	Dacorum Borough Council
Caroline Hicks	Director of Growth & Community	Dartford Borough Council
Sarah Martin	Chief Executive	Dartford Borough Council
Cllr Steve Flitter	Leader	Derbyshire Dales District Council
Paul Wilson	Chief Executive	Derbyshire Dales District Council
Dr Catherine Howe	Chief Executive	Dorset Council
Nadeem Aziz	Chief Executive	Dover District Council
Louise May	Deputy Chief Executive	Dover District Council
Cllr Paul Arnott	Leader	East Devon Borough Council
Tracy Hendren	Chief Executive	East Devon District Council
Cllr Ben Crystall	Leader	East Hertfordshire District Council
Helen Standen	Chief Executive	East Hertfordshire District Council
Benjamin Wood	Head of Comms, Strategy & Policy	East Hertfordshire District Council
Robert Barlow	Chief Executive	East Lindsey District Council
Cllr Craig Leyland	Leader	East Lindsey District Council
Chris Bally	Chief Executive	East Suffolk District Council
Cllr Caroline Topping	Leader	East Suffolk District Council
Adam Chalmers	Chief Executive	Elmbridge Borough Council
Dawn Crewe	Strategic Director for Services	Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Mike Rollings	Leader	Elmbridge Borough Council
Kim Tagliarini	Strategic Director - Place and Community	Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Simon Waugh	Deputy Leader	Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Hannah Dalton	Leader and LGA Independent Group Lead	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
Jackie King	Chief Executive	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
Cllr James Dawson	Leader	Erewash Borough Council
Gary Smith	Chief Executive	Erewash Borough Council
Cllr Kevin Bentley	Leader and LGA Conservative Group Lead	Essex County Council
Andrew Wannell	Chief Executive Officer	Fareham Borough Council

Loren Paine	Tenant Engagement Specialist	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Cllr Jim Martin	Leader	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Dr Susan Priest	Chief Executive	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Adrian Birch	Leader	Forest of Dean District Council
Nigel Brinn	Chief Executive	Forest of Dean District Council
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Leader	Gloucester City Council
Jon McGinty	Managing Director	Gloucester City Council
Cllr Joe Harris	Cabinet Member and LGA Liberal Democrat Group Lead	Gloucestershire County Council
Debbie Gore	Chief Executive	Gosport Borough Council
Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive	Gravesham Borough Council
Cllr John Burden	Leader	Gravesham Borough Council
Sheila Oxtoby	Chief Executive	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Cllr Carl Smith	Leader	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
David Atkinson	Director of Planning	Harborough District Council
Cllr Jim Knight	Councillor	Harborough District Council
Cllr Phil Knowles	Leader	Harborough District Council
John Richardson	Chief Executive	Harborough District Council
James Gardner	Managing Director	Harlow District Council
Cllr Dan Swords	Leader	Harlow District Council
Kirsty Jenkins	Executive Director - Community	Hart District Council
Cllr David Neighbour	Leader	Hart District Council
Daryl Phillips	Chief Executive	Hart District Council
Christine Tetlow	Strategic & Corporate Projects Manager	Hart District Council
Emily Dillon	Head of Housing	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr Jeremy Newmark	Leader	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr Anthony McKeown	Leader	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Mark Bools	Deputy Leader	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Cllr Stuart Bray	Leader	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Bill Cullen	Chief Executive	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Sharon Stacey	Deputy Chief Executive	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Cllr Martin Boffey	Leader	Horsham District Council
Jane Eaton	Chief Executive	Horsham District Council
Cllr Sarah Conboy	Leader	Huntingdonshire District Council
Anita O'Malley	Head of Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer	Huntingdonshire District Council
Michelle Sacks	Chief Executive	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr Alistair Beales	Leader	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
Kate Blakemore	Chief Executive	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
Kerry Dove	Chief Operating Officer	Lichfield District Council
Simon Fletcher	Chief Executive	Lichfield District Council
Cllr Douglas Pullen	Leader	Lichfield District Council
Alison Broom	Chief Executive	Maidstone Borough Council
Cllr Stuart Jeffery	Leader	Maidstone Borough Council
Cllr Richard Siddall	Leader	Maldon District Council

Doug Wilkinson	Chief Executive	Maldon District Council
Vic Allison	Chief Executive	Malvern Hills District Council
Cllr John Gallagher	Leader	Malvern Hills District Council
Cllr Jeremy Owenson	Deputy Leader	Malvern Hills District Council
Mayor Andy Abrahams	Elected Mayor	Mansfield District Council
James Biddlestone	Chief Executive	Mansfield District Council
Cllr Vince Maple	Leader	Medway Council
Cllr Pip Allnatt	Leader	Melton Borough Council
Edd de Coverly	Chief Executive	Melton Borough Council
Michelle Howard	Deputy Chief Executive	Melton Borough Council
Lydia Rusling	Director of Place and Prosperity	Melton Borough Council
Tom Barker	Chief Executive	Mid Suffolk District Council
Arthur Charvonia	Chief Executive	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Andrew Mellen	Leader	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Bridget Kendrick	Leader	Mole Valley District Council
Cllr Jill Cleary	Leader	New Forest District Council
Kate Ryan	Chief Executive	New Forest District Council
Cllr Daniel Allen	Executive Member for Governance	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Val Bryant	Leader	North Hertfordshire District Council
Steven Crowley	Service Director for Enterprise	North Hertfordshire District Council
Katherine Marriott	Chief Executive	North Kesteven District Council
Mark Williets	Assistant Director of Planning	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Richard Wright	Leader and DCN Chair	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Jill Boyle	Councillor	North Norfolk District Council
Don McCallum	Director for Resources & Finance	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Lucy Shires	Cabinet Member for Organisational Resources	North Norfolk District Council
Allison Thomas	Chief Executive	North West Leicestershire District Council
Louise Rawsthorne	Executive Director of Community Services	Norwich City Council
Cllr Mike Stonard	Leader	Norwich City Council
Cllr Susan Brown	Leader and DCN Vice Chair	Oxford City Council
Caroline Green	Chief Executive	Oxford City Council
Claire Felton	Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Bill Hartnett	Portfolio Holder for Housing	Redditch Borough Council
John Leach	Chief Executive	Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Jane Spilsbury	Deputy Leader	Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Richard Biggs	Leader	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Justine Chatfield	Head of Community Partnerships	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Laura McCartney	Head of Organisation & Transformation	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Lucinda Mould	Deputy Chief Executive	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Mari Roberts-Wood	Chief Executive	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Cllr Ben Taylor	Leader	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Cllr Danielle Belton	Leader	Rochford District Council
Fiona Duhamel	Strategic Director, Commercial and Regeneration	Rochford District Council
Cllr Daniel Efde	Councillor	Rochford District Council
Cllr Richard Linden	Councillor	Rochford District Council
Cllr Sarah Page	Councillor	Rochford District Council
Rob Huntington	Chief Executive	Rossendale Borough Council
Lorna Ford	Chief Executive	Rother District Council
Charlotte Spendley	Director of Resources	Rother District Council
Cllr Linda Gillham	Co-leader	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Robert King	Co-leader	Runnymede Borough Council
Andrew Pritchard	Chief Executive	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Steve Ringham	Co-Leader	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Don Whyte	Co-leader	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Neil Clarke	Leader	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Adam Hill	Chief Executive	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Cllr Peter McDonald	Councillor	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Brian Milnes	Councillor	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Bridget Smith	Leader and DCN Vice Chair	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Liz Watts	Chief Executive	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Angela Archer	Councillor	South Derbyshire District Council
Tracy Bingham	Deputy Chief Executive	South Derbyshire District Council
Dr Justin Ives	Chief Executive	South Derbyshire District Council
Cllr Stephen Taylor	Councillor	South Derbyshire District Council
Andy Bates	Chief Executive	South Hams District Council
Steve Mullineaux	Deputy Chief Executive	South Hams District Council
Cllr Dan Thomas	Leader	South Hams District Council
Cllr Nick Worth	Leader	South Holland District Council
Cllr Ashley Baxter	Leader	South Kesteven District Council
Karen Bradford	Chief Executive	South Kesteven District Council
Cllr Daniel Elmer	Leader	South Norfolk District Council
Trevor Holden	Managing Director	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Graham Minshull	Deputy Leader	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Leader	South Oxfordshire District Council
Simon Hewings	Section 151 Officer	South Oxfordshire District Council
Adrianna Partridge	Chief Executive	South Oxfordshire District Council
Dave Heywood	Chief Executive	South Staffordshire Council
Cllr Kathleen Perry	Leader	South Staffordshire Council
Thomas Reynolds	Performance & Customer Insight Officer	South Staffordshire Council
Amanda Foley	Chief Executive	St Albans District Council
Chris Traill	Strategic Director for Place	St Albans District Council
Tim Clegg	Chief Executive	Stafford Borough Council
Alex Yendole	Planning Policy Manager	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Richard Henry	Leader	Stevenage Borough Council
Tom Pike	Deputy Chief Executive	Stevenage Borough Council
Richard Protheroe	Strategic Director	Stevenage Borough Council

Cllr Abi Brown OBE	Councillor	Stoke on Trent City Council
Tony Perks	Deputy Chief Executive	Stratford-On-Avon District Council
Kathy O'Leary	Chief Executive	Stroud District Council
Cllr Chloe Turner	Leader	Stroud District Council
Cllr Tim Gibson	Leader	Swale Borough Council
Larissa Reed	Chief Executive	Swale Borough Council
Samantha Mowbray	Chief Executive	Swindon Council
Cllr Jim Robbins	Leader	Swindon Council
Cllr Carol Dean	Leader	Tamworth Borough Council
Stephen Gabriel	Chief Executive	Tamworth Borough Council
David Ford	Chief Executive	Tandridge District Council
Cllr Richard Keeling	Executive Member for Corporate Resources	Teignbridge District Council
Phil Shears	Managing Director	Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Giancarlo Guglielmi	Councillor	Tendring District Council
Gary Guiver	Corporate Director for Planning and Community	Tendring District Council
Lee Heley	Deputy Chief Executive	Tendring District Council
Cllr Ivan Henderson	Deputy Leader	Tendring District Council
Andy Ferrier	Chief Executive	Test Valley Borough Council
Salena Mulhere	Deputy Chief Executive	Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Phil North	Leader	Test Valley Borough Council
Alistair Cunningham OBE	Chief Executive	Tewkesbury Borough Council
Clare Evans	Director - Transformation	Tewkesbury Borough Council
Cllr Sarah Hands	Deputy Leader	Tewkesbury Borough Council
Cllr Richard Stanley	Leader	Tewkesbury Borough Council
Colin Carmichael	Chief Executive	Thanet District Council
Cllr Sarah Nelmes	Deputy Leader	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Matt Boughton	Leader	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Damian Roberts	Chief Executive	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Staci Dorey	Head of Legal and Governance	Torridge District Council
Cllr Claire Hodson	Deputy Leader	Torridge District Council
Cllr Ken James	Leader	Torridge District Council
Peter Holt	Chief Executive	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Petrina Lees	Leader	Uttlesford District Council
Semeta Bloomfield	Community Commissioning Lead	Watford Borough Council
Donna Nolan	Chief Executive	Watford Borough Council
Mayor Peter Taylor	Elected Mayor	Watford Borough Council
Cllr Rachel Millward	Deputy Leader	Wealden District Council
Cllr James Partridge	Leader	Wealden District Council
Trevor Scott	Chief Executive	Wealden District Council
Cllr Mandy Ewings	Leader	West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	Councillor	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Jackie Brockway	Leader	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Stephen Bunney	Councillor	West Lindsey District Council
Paul Burkinshaw	Chief Executive	West Lindsey District Council

Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director - People and Democratic Services	West Lindsey District Council
Cara Markham	Commercial Development Manager	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Andy Graham	Leader	West Oxfordshire District Council
Astrid Harvey	Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Manager	West Oxfordshire District Council
Phil Martin	Chief Executive	West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Peter Armitage	Councillor	West Suffolk District Council
Ian Gallin	Chief Executive	West Suffolk District Council
Beccy Hopfensperger	Councillor	West Suffolk District Council
Cllr Victor Lukaniuk	Deputy Leader	West Suffolk District Council
Cllr David Smith	Group Leader - Labour	West Suffolk District Council
Cllr David Taylor	Portfolio Holder for Operations	West Suffolk District Council
Cllr Jonathan Brook	Leader	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Richard Clewer	Opposition Leader	Wiltshire Council
Laura Taylor	Chief Executive	Winchester City Council
Cllr Martin Tod	Leader	Winchester City Council
Cllr Anne-Marie Barker	Leader	Woking Borough Council
Richard Carr	Managing Director	Woking Borough Council
Cllr Sophie Cox	Leader	Woking Borough Council
Cllr Mel Allcott	Co Group Leader	Worcester City Council
Lloyd Griffiths	Managing Director	Worcester City Council
Cllr Emma Kearsey	Deputy Leader	Wychavon District Council
Cllr Richard Morris	Leader	Wychavon District Council
Rebecca Huddleston	Chief Executive	Wyre Borough Council
Cllr Marcus Hart	Leader	Wyre Forest District Council
Ian Miller	Chief Executive	Wyre Forest District Council

Please note: delegate details are as entered on our conference database before 12th March 2026.

