

# PERSPECTIVES

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LEANER MEANER GREENER ■ SHOULDERING THE LOAD ■ DRIVING DOWN TRANSPORT COSTS

# “Could do better..”

It seems that almost every news item we read these days is about the drive for efficiency; providing more for less and giving better value for money. It's as though, as a nation, we have not been working at an optimum level; that what we've been doing is not good enough; that we could do better – a bit like a school report. In the current parlance, efficiency is a pejorative term; almost a dirty word. But it is actually a very positive word. The dictionary definition of efficiency is 'functioning or producing effectively with least waste of effort; competent'. No surprise then that the implication that we are not as efficient as we could be implies incompetence. If this was true it would be very depressing, but the reality is different.



At Mouchel we work with many local authorities in England and we have seen the tremendous progress that has been made over the years in becoming increasingly efficient – often under pressure to do so by Westminster, where relatively poorer progress seems to have been made in my view. But we also see some of the adverse influences on productivity and efficiency – political, economic, social, financial and environmental. The private sector is equally affected by some of these.

The progress that's been made by local authorities has come about because investment has been made; and changes have been introduced. We have always looked for a better way, sometimes through quite small changes and sometimes with staggering imagination and innovation. Mouchel has helped councils to introduce new ways of working, new systems and processes, new facilities and sometimes new approaches to work. We have helped to improve staff engagement and better communication. And we invariably help save significant amounts of public money. The result has been increased efficiency.

But this doesn't necessarily mean that organisations were inefficient before – the main difference between now and then being the amount of public spending and the way that efficiency is being packaged by Government

and the media as the main way to offset the impact of cuts.

When budgets are growing, the benefits from efficiencies are less visible. But when spending is reduced, efficiencies become essential if frontline services are not to be cut. The impact of these efficiencies (or lack of them) on services then becomes much more visible.

Without doubt, the drive for efficiency is about continuous improvement, about development and change. In fact, I wonder if 'efficiency' might just be becoming the new management buzz word – following 'total quality management', 'business process engineering', 'lean, systems thinking' and the like.

In this issue of *Perspectives* we discuss some examples of how we have brought change, innovation and improvement to our clients in the highways, environmental and health sectors. And do you know what? Although they weren't incompetent before, they've all become more efficient as a result. Enjoy!

*Richard Culbert*



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# Cuts, strikes and bleeding stumps



Attempts to restrain public spending in the UK are not new; the 'Geddes Axe' era of the 1920s saw cuts to public services on a scale close to what we are experiencing today. **Jonathan Freedland** takes a 'long view' of the Government's radical approach to driving down the national deficit and asks whether we can learn anything from history

If there's one word that journalists overuse, it's 'unprecedented' – overused because the word is warranted much less often than we think.

Take the Government's round of spending cuts aimed at slashing the deficit. It has become a truism that nothing like this has ever happened before, that Chancellor George Osborne is engaged in a wielding of the axe entirely novel in British politics.

It is certainly radical, even swingeing and severe. But unprecedented? Not quite. For at the outer limits of living memory, there is a precedent that chimes uncannily closely with present day events – one that should give our current masters pause for thought.

The year was 1921, when Britain was ruled by a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals. Then, as now, the Tories were the dominant partner even if, thanks to a quirk of circumstance, it was a Liberal who served as prime minister – the legendary David Lloyd-George.

The First World War had stretched the nation's finances to breaking point, leaving behind a heavy deficit. Technically that was more or less under control by 1921, but the shadow of 1914-18 still lingered in the form of high taxes. Once deemed necessary to fund the war effort, those taxes were now loathed – especially by those who believed their hard-earned cash was being wasted by government profligacy. If the coalition hadn't already got the message, they heard it loud and clear when they lost three by-elections to 'Anti-Waste' candidates.

Lloyd-George decided his top priority had to be the reduction of public spending. His motive may have been different from David Cameron's – aiming to reduce taxes rather than shrink the deficit – but the result was the same: a wholesale slashing of the budget.

In 1921, that meant finding £100m in projected savings – roughly one out of every five pounds spent. Today Cameron and Osborne are looking to save £60bn, which amounts to about one in every six pounds spent over the next five years. Those ratios are similar, but the relative pain is very different. After all, governments do much more now than they did 90 years ago: their presence is felt in more aspects of more lives. If they withdraw, the impact is that much greater.

Lloyd-George was acutely aware of the political sensitivity of the course of action he had chosen. He knew that not every reduction would be as popular as his early move to cut back on ministerial cars. (Interestingly, denying ministers use of the limo was one of the first moves announced by the Con-Lib Coalition of 2010 too.) To that end, he opted for the favoured course of all canny politicians: pass the buck.

He appointed Conservative minister Sir Eric Geddes to sit along with four leading businessmen in a special committee that would decide

where the axe should fall. In this way, Lloyd George gave himself what Cameron and Osborne have so far lacked: distance from decisions destined to be unpopular. Last autumn's spending review was not under John Browne, Richard Branson or some far-off tycoon: it was chaired by Osborne himself.

Then, as now, there were the usual dirty tricks and skullduggery as government departments fought to protect their budgets. Letters were leaked in what former Chancellor Nigel Lawson calls 'the bleeding stumps' manoeuvre – whereby ministries parade the suffering and harm that will result if they lose funding. It happened in 1921 and it happened in 2010: witness the leaked letter from Defence Secretary Liam Fox to the PM, detailing the threat to the nation's safety that would come from a shrunken budget.

Interestingly, what became known as the 'Geddes Axe' fell heaviest on defence and education – two departments that have been insulated from the worst of the spending cuts this time around. Other departments fought their corner more effectively, so that those planned savings of £100m never came about: in the end, Sir Eric could persuade Parliament to accept no more than £52m in cuts. Some similarly expect that today's Coalition won't, when it finally comes to it, ever cut as severely as we've been led to believe – and fear.

And what was the impact of those cuts? The economic historian and biographer of John Maynard Keynes, Robert Skidelsky, says that 'Britain staggered into the 1920s', dogged by 10 per cent unemployment throughout the decade. In his view, the Geddes spending cuts prevented a decent recovery, causing instead a long, stubborn spell of anaemic growth: without government spending, demand was just too low.

There were consequences for society too. The big social programmes were halted; there were none of the 'Homes for Heroes' Lloyd-George had promised to returning servicemen. There was unrest, culminating in the general strike of 1926. The lesson, says Skidelsky, is that key Keynesian paradox: when faced with debt, you need to spend not cut – otherwise the economy slows down and the national debt goes up not down.

Right now that's not a message the coalition wants to hear. But perhaps David Cameron and Nick Clegg should look back to the 1921 experience of their Con-Lib forebears. They might find there a warning from history.

*Jonathan Freedland is a columnist for the Guardian and the presenter of BBC Radio 4's contemporary history series, The Long View*

“ governments do much more now than they did 90 years ago: their presence is felt in more aspects of more lives ”

# Putting the customer first

Has 'efficiency' just become a euphemism for cutting costs? **Ian Henderson** argues that if an organisation engages its customers in its quest for efficiency then it can achieve more than this - relevant services delivered in a sustainable way

**T**his is the 'Era of Efficiency' but what do we mean by it and how do we implement it? Efficiency has become a new byword for savings, or cost cutting. It just sounds much better than the alternatives - a word that is easier to sell.

But if customers are going to buy 'efficiency' (and be happy with what they receive) then it should go beyond reducing operating, administration and overhead costs. We must improve service to the customer as well. This is particularly challenging at TfL where we are dealing with a steady increase in demand for our service.

Getting this right requires a different approach to traditional 'top-down' customer service design plus a willingness to innovate a way to an optimum solution. Top-down service design as part of a cost reduction or efficiency drive is an inward-focused activity. It takes historical data to identify the potential

for future savings. Efficiency drives invariably look to reduce resources but, in the main, leave an unchanged operational service. Targets for savings are also limiting factors, aiming for a fixed percentage saving as a target will not deliver any more than the target, usually significantly less. We need a different way of thinking to deliver sustainable efficiency.

'Co-creation' is a structured method used to engage the business and customer/stakeholder base early in the service redesign phase. It brings all requirements together and works through the approach from different perspectives. The essence of the co-creation approach is future-focused, to challenge and assess what matters and what customers value. This shapes innovative services and products and helps to identify new ways to deliver them (aligning business resources with the needs and expectations of the customer). This means that the quest for efficiency can effectively harness the creativity of an organisation towards the aspirations of customers in a way that derives benefits for both.

A key strategic objective therefore is to 'put the customer at the heart of our business'.

Adopting findings from a co-creation design effort has given TfL insight into a fresh way forward. For example to go beyond 'least cost' handling of customer contacts, to provide resolution at first point of contact - 'one and done'. This means recognising customer problems and in that first contact completely resolving them.

The result is an improvement in efficiency beyond any prescribed percentage-driven imperative. Innovation is at the centre, the broad steps leading to this goal are to:

- invest in technology to facilitate change in the business model to cope with demand growth, while reducing agent interventions;
- increase productivity through better use of resources;
- develop a high degree of staff accountability, ownership, teamwork and empowerment;
- facilitate a culture of 'one service' that seamlessly connects the front and back offices; and
- offer staff better job prospects through multi-skilled and multi-service development programmes.

All of these activities are supported by absolute transparency in communication between senior management and employees, and by an inclusive approach and a commitment to value staff views.

A final thought, none of my teenage children uses email ('Dad that's sooo yesterday!'); they use Facebook and social networking. How should we design new services around their behaviours? Can your company's services communicate with your children?

*Ian Henderson is Group Customer Services Director at Transport for London*



“Efficiency drives invariably look to reduce resources but, in the main, leave an unchanged operational service”

# Pulling together

Government plans to localise public services and to include the voluntary and community sectors in their delivery have been welcomed by local government organisations, but this will require a new more sustainable relationship between the citizen and the state, argues **Simon Parker**



**T**he UK is famously one of the most centralised countries in the world - on some measures, only the much smaller New Zealand has more central government spending. The

Government has promised to change this. David Cameron famously promised less money for more freedom. The hope is that if the cuts are devolved to local level and councils are given more freedom, they will find more effective and efficient ways to deliver services and therefore will be able to cushion the impact of the cuts.

This approach is promising. For decades the strength of central departments has ensured that public services are designed around Whitehall silos rather than the needs of citizens. The result is often massive waste. The Local Government Association has estimated that if all the money spent in a locality was pooled into an area-based budget and then spent in a more efficient way, the UK would save something like £4bn a year. More prosaically, the last government estimated that if local public buildings were managed in a cross-cutting way, the exchequer could save £20bn over 10 years.

For all of these new freedoms, the most likely short-term response to the cuts from many councils will be simple: cut discretionary services, make redundancies and bear down on costs. Traditional approaches to efficiency - which generally amount to doing roughly the same thing cheaper

- will matter a great deal in this first phase. Many councils will look for big savings in their back offices and a new generation of shared service solutions will probably take off. Many authorities will look again at their environmental services and try to push down costs there.

But while this approach will be enough in the short term, in the longer term many councils will start thinking much more radically. The truth is that the UK's public services settlement was coming under immense strain even before the recession, especially in areas such as social care, where costs will be driven up for a generation by the ageing population. The current cuts are therefore not just about reducing cost, but about ensuring sustainable public services for the long term.

Really radical changes to public services require councils to renegotiate the relationship between the citizen and the state, working with their communities to access their social capital and engage people as partners in delivering public services.

One promising avenue is to help people trade time and expertise with each other. An example is the School of Everything, an online social enterprise that links up people who have something to teach with people who want to learn. By teaching someone the guitar, I can earn credits that buy me cookery lessons from someone else. This kind of approach could help to link elderly people with volunteers who can support independent living.

Another interesting avenue to explore is preventative work. It is almost always cheaper to stop a social problem, such as teenage pregnancy, from happening in the first place than it is to try and address the problem once it has occurred. There are huge savings to be had, for instance, from cheap initiatives such as keep-fit clubs that keep people out of the doctor's surgery. Similarly, creating stronger social bonds in neighbourhoods tends to contribute to public wellbeing and appears to have the potential to reduce crime and increase educational attainment.

We can already see some councils trying to work out how they change their organisational form to adapt to new challenges posed by the

spending cuts. Lambeth is developing proposals to mutualise many of its services, Barnet is looking at charging extra for additional services and Suffolk is moving to a commissioning model which, it says, will draw on local community activism.

In most cases, these new models are not merely about more for less, but about accessing new kinds of social asset. Call it the big society, the good society, or anything else you like; the thrust of the idea is that public services are more effective and much more efficient when they are serving a strong and active society.

Can it be done? This is one of the biggest questions that the coalition government faces. There is not much of a science developed around how to shift the weight of government onto the shoulders of civil society, and while the UK does have hidden social assets, we remain a highly individualistic society. The shift to a more sustainable welfare state, rooted in a strong society, will take decades rather than years.

This poses a significant challenge for the public services industry. On the one hand, the public services market is probably going to move out of a phase of consolidation into a new phase of growth as councils go out to tender in a bid to secure short-term savings. But on the other, businesses will find themselves bidding for a bigger slice of a smaller pie. The most successful companies will be those that have at least one eye firmly on the future, developing innovative new ways to cut in the short term while laying the foundations for transformation in the long run.

*Simon Parker is director of the New Local Government Network (NLGN)*



Public services are more effective and much more efficient when they are serving a strong and active society

# A workforce to be reckoned with

Getting the right staff in the right place, at the right time, can be a challenge for any business. But when the business involves more than three million employees, many so highly skilled that they lead their field of expertise, it is particularly important to have effective workforce planning in place. **Rachel Joint** explains the rationale behind the Centre for Workforce Intelligence



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**T**he Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI), first announced by the Government in February 2009, is the new national authority on workforce planning and development for the NHS and social care system in England. Its aim is to help create a workforce which will meet future needs of patients and service users.

In doing so the team is making a vital contribution to ensure there is a high quality, productive workforce in place, making a positive difference to people's lives and whole communities in both the medium and long term.

The decisions made today about skills mix, training places and operational models in health and social care will have an impact on how well the changing needs of the future population are met. For example, we hear a lot about how the population is rapidly aging so we need to be making the right choices now about which staff will be required in 20 years' time when there will be 51 per cent more people over the age of 65.

The CfWI, based in London, Winchester and Leeds, is providing an easily accessible route to health and social care planners, clinicians and commissioners seeking workforce planning and development expertise. It is providing intelligence which will help commissioners to make informed decisions about the future shape of the workforce.

The CfWI has three key strategic areas of focus:

- Providing workforce intelligence to the health and social care system to enable it to make better decisions. This spans the 'here and now' to the shape of the workforce in 10-20 years' time.
- Working with senior leaders to improve workforce planning, so that they strengthen their influence with service and financial planning.
- Providing support, resources, tools, and best practice to improve the effectiveness of workforce planning at local, regional and national levels.

The team works closely with a governance board, operating at a policy level to provide strategic oversight of the Centre. This includes members from various sectors including: medicine, learning, nursing, clients, social care, foresight and knowledge management. There is also a board advisory panel and a group of paid professional advisors, who supplement the board expertise.

The chair of the governance board, Professor Dame Carol Black, explains the role the CfWI plays: 'The quality of healthcare and social care experienced by people who call on these services depends crucially on the professionalism of each member of the workforce and the ways in which they work together. By gathering and analysing intelligence on the personal qualities and skills needed, the Centre will be a prime source of knowledge and advice on how we can achieve the most effective health and social care workforce possible, now and in the future.'

To better understand how important it is to have robust and accurate information in the decision-making process, it is useful to look at some of the particular challenges of workforce planning in the health and social care system.

For a start, the number of employees involved is huge, compared to even the largest businesses. This means it is particularly important to plan effectively. It is tricky even to calculate how many employees are involved in delivering health and social care in England, with many working not just for the NHS and local authorities but also for private companies and the voluntary sector; some offering their services on a voluntary basis. To give you an idea of the scale, the NHS alone is reputed to be the fourth largest organisation in the world with about 1.2m employees. Only the Red Army, the Indian Railway and Walmart are said to be larger. On top of that, there are an estimated 1.75m paid jobs in adult social care in England.

The next big challenge is the range of highly skilled roles within the health and social care system. Many professions take years of training and experience to reach even a basic level of competency. For example, if it was decided that we were likely to need more plastic surgeons in a decade's time, workforce planners would need to be making decisions now to bring that about.

New medical technology has a big impact on both the need for certain services as well as the way services are delivered. Some procedures currently carried out in a hospital environment, such as mammograms, could eventually be delivered in a GP's surgery. This means that changes would need to be made to staffing arrangements for delivery of this service. Other services may not be needed at all and new diagnostic procedures and treatments currently being developed may well be available to large numbers of people.

Already the CfWI is involved in a wide project for the Department of Health on the shape of the NHS workforce, including a report on the number of doctors going into medical specialty training, published in September. It is also looking at the patient pathways relating to older people, and in particular the elderly frail.

The aim for the CfWI's first year is that it be firmly established within the health and social care workforce planning system. It will do this through a strong engagement with colleagues in all areas within the system, a shared understanding of best practice and an agreed competency framework for workforce planning.

Above all, the work of the CfWI will be strongly influenced by partners, service providers, patients and service users, so that it will contribute to the development of services which really will meet their needs and improve people's lives.

*Rachel Joint is Head of Communications at the CfWI*



“ the NHS alone is reputed to be the fourth largest organisation in the world with about 1.2m employees. Only the Red Army, the Indian Railway and Walmart are said to be larger ”

# Shouldering the load

Managed Motorways already offers a cheaper and more efficient alternative to road widening schemes. **Lucy Wickham** talks to *Perspectives* about how this approach has been further streamlined to deliver even better value for money

If there was ever a chance to show that significant efficiencies can be achieved by innovative thinking over traditional ways of providing extra transport capacity, the Managed Motorways project, currently active on the M42 and M6 motorways, would be it.

The concept, developed with the Highways Agency (HA), is inherently efficient as it seeks to use existing highway infrastructure, while enabling maximum use of the road during periods of peak demand. This is done by making the hard shoulder available to road users, coupled with information on overhead gantries indicating whether the hard shoulder is open and any applicable speed limits.

When compared with motorway widening, this approach delivers better value to the HA at a time of severe funding constraint. It makes for more carbon-efficient journeys as traffic becomes more evenly paced and the stop-start cycle is eliminated. There is also a saving in construction costs and disruption, as well as improved safety on the parts of the network that are subject to hard-shoulder running.

To support the HA's contribution to government spending efficiencies, Managed Motorways schemes are being optimised to deliver a further 20 per cent saving on scheme estimates. This is being achieved by using standard designs whenever possible, bulk purchasing, maximising use of each single piece of development, minimising construction periods and using 'value engineering' (an organised approach to providing necessary functions at the lowest cost) in all aspects of a scheme.

Lucy Wickham, Technical Director on the Managed Motorways project, explains: 'We look to deliver efficiencies during each stage of a Managed Motorways scheme, from procurement to optimisation.

'At the outset, Managed Motorways uses streamlined pre-qualification processes to help procurement and to keep costs down by reducing duplication within the HA. Once the contract is awarded, we carry out traffic modelling using a staged approach to identify and ameliorate risks within the programme.

'We have also developed reporting processes that reduce reporting duplication and increase consistency across projects – these have been successfully demonstrated during the design and implementation of

other Managed Motorway schemes since 2004. To cut down on the costs of equipment, we can use modelling to see what the driver sees and to ensure that the location of real-time driver information delivers maximum benefits.

'We place great emphasis on obtaining driver compliance with speed limits – the fewer driver information points needed to obtain compliance; the fewer gantries are needed, which keeps infrastructure costs down.'

Establishing the minimum amount of technology and other tools needed to deliver the service is an important benchmark and helps to achieve a balance of information, education, encouragement and enforcement.

The adoption of LEAN processes to eliminate waste in the procedures used by the HA, contractors and Mouchel has become a key feature of cost-saving measures. Considerable resource has gone into developing the expertise needed to implement the LEAN system.

Both consultants and contractors are being encouraged to consider environmental benefits, including the recycling of spoil material from new build and maintenance activities where possible to provide noise prevention measures such as bunds and banking. In this way, high disposal costs are avoided and residents living nearby experience less disturbance.

Lucy adds: 'It's not that savings require complex feats of engineering; often looking after the simple, common sense things can reap rewards. For example Managed Motorways used a specially developed testing regime called Soak, which tests new equipment before it is delivered to site and reduces its operational failure.

'Similarly, optimising the transport and storage of material has meant value for money, but also fewer breakages. Once the design and construction phase has been completed, improving operational performance is a priority. We work jointly with local authorities in our area, linking them with HA operations to share resources. This initiative also offers advantages by providing messages to the road user before entering the Managed Motorways section.

'The M42 Active Traffic Management Pilot is used as a test bed for future schemes due to the unique environment it provides to measure new regimes, new signing and signalling. We also believe that efficiencies can be delivered by revisiting the M42 pilot site with a view to removing some of the infrastructure to reduce maintenance and operational costs.

'It is clear to everyone involved that we must innovate to place monetary values on efficiency and opportunities if we are to succeed in the current economic conditions. Schemes such as the Managed Motorways projects look more and more as though they can deliver efficiencies over traditional road widening. Only by being at the forefront of efficient thinking and understanding client needs can we continue to be successful in this area.'

*Lucy Wickham is Technical Director in Mouchel's Technology team*

“ We place great emphasis on obtaining driver compliance with speed limits ”

Birmingham Box Managed Motorways  
(BMM12) project  
Phase 1 - Section 3 (M6 J4-5)

# ECONOMIC driving

One of the most obvious, but frequently overlooked, areas where we can all save money and help protect the environment, is in our driving behaviour. **Trevor Wedge** looks at some of the benefits of fuel-efficient driving

**T**ransport is an essential part of modern life but we cannot ignore its environmental consequences.

There's increasing public concern for the protection of our environment, with the result that many vehicle manufacturers are devoting time, effort and resources to the development of more environmentally-friendly vehicles.

The UK has challenging carbon reduction targets to meet, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 per cent by 2050.

Although the eco-safe guidance here refers to driving cars, eco-safe principles apply equally to riding motorcycles and driving larger vehicles such as buses, coaches and lorries.

We, as drivers, can help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our own vehicles. Now more than ever – as rising fuel costs are hitting everyone – changing driving habits and following a few basic tips will help motorists not only get more from their fuel tank but also lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as well. According to the Energy Saving Trust, drivers travelling around 12,000 miles a year can save up to £300 in fuel costs and reduce the wear and tear on their car by adopting eco-safe techniques. Alongside fuel savings, eco-safe driving also helps to develop the driver's awareness and planning skills, which deliver wider road safety benefits.

First, consider if it is possible to avoid your journey altogether. If not, ask yourself if your vehicle is the most appropriate way to travel. If you choose to use your vehicle, are you aware of its fuel efficiency and what the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are? You can find answers to these questions at: [www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk/information/tables.asp](http://www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk/information/tables.asp).

Learner drivers are encouraged to learn about eco-safe methods. The theory test includes eco-safe related questions and the subject was introduced into the practical tests in September 2008. The Driving Standards Agency sees this as a matter of public education.

There are a number of studies that explore how different sectors of society react to eco-issues. For example, the Department for Transport has recently issued a segmentation study, *Climate change and a transport choice* which tells us that driving, transport and lifestyle habits vary greatly between different groups, and they often conflict with the idea of eco-safe driving and changing driving behaviours. We now need to educate all drivers to understand that minor adjustments to driving practices will result in cost savings and other benefits.

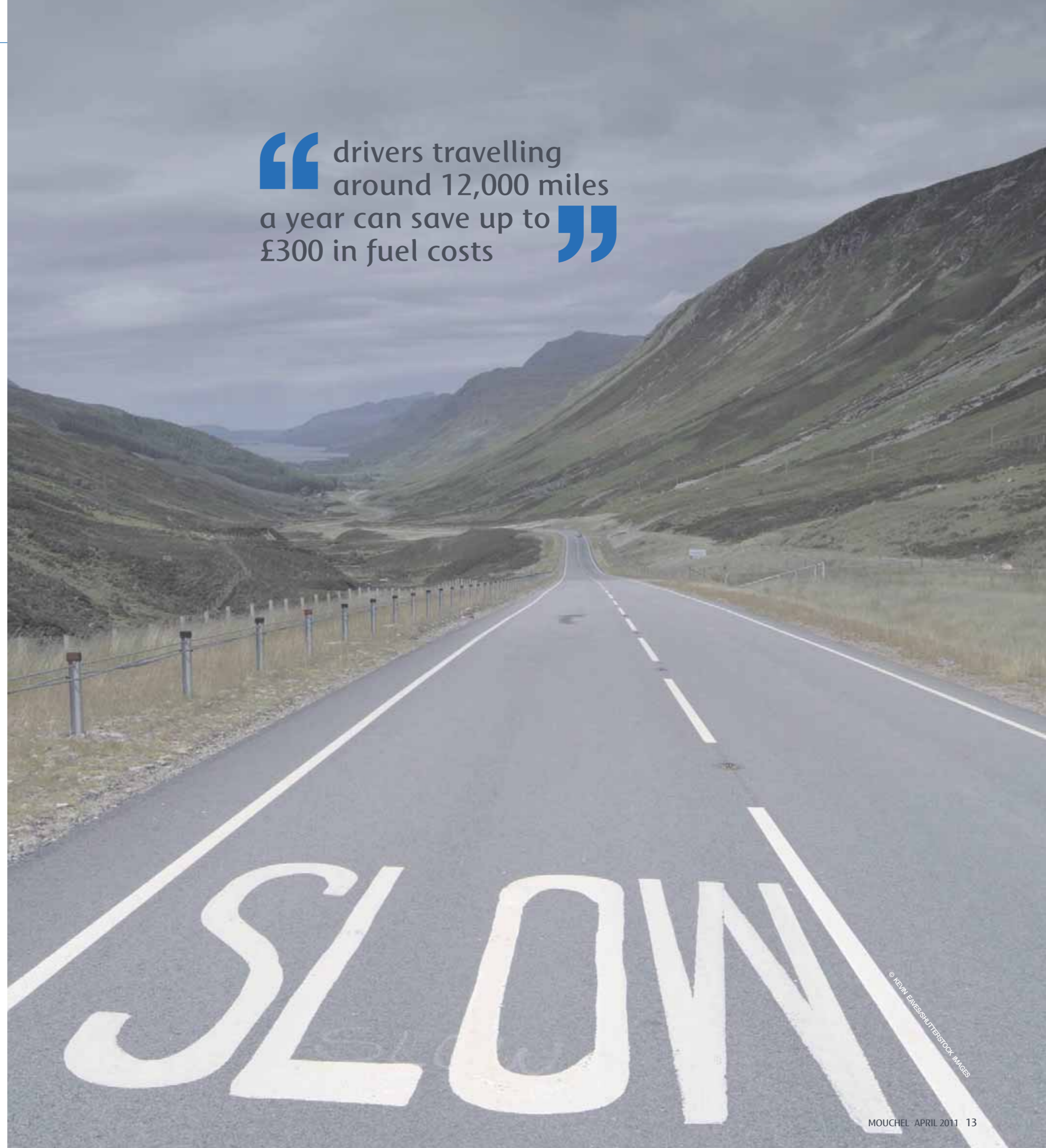
The principles of eco-safe driving are published at [www.direct.gov.uk/ecosafedriving](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ecosafedriving). They are quite straightforward: always try to use the controls as smoothly as possible and look well ahead so that you can anticipate and plan for approaching hazards, so helping to reduce wear and tear on your vehicle, saving fuel, improving safety and reducing CO<sub>2</sub>. But safety must be the number one priority while driving.

Top tips for eco-safe driving:

- Check the condition of your tyres regularly and keep them at the recommended pressure.
- Don't carry unnecessary weight.
- Remove roof rack or luggage boxes when not needed to reduce air resistance.
- Use the highest possible gear (without labouring the engine).
- Don't exceed speed limits, accelerate gently.
- Consider using cruise control where appropriate.
- Turn off your engine if you are likely to have a prolonged wait.
- Use air conditioning only when you need to.
- Plan your route to avoid known congestion points.
- Try to travel during off-peak times.

*Trevor Wedge is chief driving examiner for the Driving Standards Agency*

“ drivers travelling around 12,000 miles a year can save up to £300 in fuel costs ”



# Leaner, meaner, greener

Faced with rising raw material and energy prices, maximising use of resources can be one of the most effective ways for businesses to cut costs while reducing their impact on the environment. **Andy Sherlock** explains

**T**he link between being green and lean is not a new concept. Over the past 30 years, environmental regulation in the UK has helped drive business towards more efficient behaviour with the introduction of environmental 'efficiency' levies. These measures place a direct 'bottom line' cost on companies that are 'resource inefficient' and those that consume significant amounts of energy. The advent of the landfill tax in the 1990s, which sought to reduce the amount of waste companies sent directly to landfill, kick-started the development of recycling infrastructure in the UK, and encouraged businesses to find more efficient ways of eliminating waste. Similarly, a levy on the use of virgin aggregates for use in the construction market has made the specification of recycled materials more attractive; while the introduction of the Climate Change Levy – and more recently the Carbon Reduction Commitment – has promoted greater awareness of energy consumption by introducing a tax on carbon emissions associated with the use of electricity and gas.

At Mouchel, the desire to find quicker, cheaper and greener ways of delivering essential services is central to its offering, and for decades it has been helping clients meet tougher environmental and financial constraints. Under the UK water industry's 'efficiency framework', Mouchel is working with water companies to help cut domestic household water bills (see pages 16-17) – for example through the installation of 'smart' meters, which encourage consumers to use water more efficiently – while developing and delivering asset improvement and maintenance programmes that are reducing leakage from the distribution network.

On the highways, Mouchel is helping the Highways Agency and local authorities to bring down both the environmental and fiscal costs of maintaining and improving the UK's road networks. By introducing clients to new technologies such as LED lighting systems it is possible to provide street lighting that consumes less energy and requires lower maintenance due to the longer life of the lamps. Further benefits include reduced cost of end-of-life

disposal due to the use of less hazardous materials in their manufacture. In addition, the use of electric and hybrid maintenance vehicles also enables clients to meet Government carbon reduction targets while minimising the impact of rising fuel costs.

For head teachers and education authorities, Mouchel is designing low-carbon schools which cost less to heat and power by specifying renewable energy technologies such as ground-source heat pumps, solar shading and natural ventilation.

But it's not just for its clients that Mouchel is developing more cost effective and sustainable ways of working. In the last few years the company has made significant strides in tackling the eco-efficiency of its own operations.

Nowadays emissions of carbon are seen as a direct indicator of the efficiency with which individual organisations, and indeed the whole economy, use energy. Since it began monitoring carbon emissions in 2006, Mouchel has halved its carbon footprint by around 50 per cent (the equivalent of 21 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per million pounds of turnover).

A company-wide travel plan provides employees with a suite of tools – including a car-share scheme, interest-free public transport season tickets, and a tele/video/web conferencing system – offering an alternative to sole-occupancy car journeys. In 2010, employees spent 52,000 hours holding virtual meetings – saving an equivalent amount of time spent sitting in cars and on trains – thus improving overall staff productivity. For unavoidable journeys Mouchel has worked closely with its fleet providers to provide cars with class-leading fuel efficiencies – reducing both emissions and fuel charges.

In Mouchel's offices local environmental management plans are driving reductions in energy use and improving recycling rates with clear cost benefits. During the last four years, consumption of electricity and gas across the company's offices has fallen by half through a combination of an office rationalisation

programme, staff efforts to reduce consumption and the procurement of more energy efficient equipment such as eco-labelled IT assets and infrastructure.

Further efficiency savings have also been identified by reducing office waste and consumption of office supplies, such as printer paper. New 'intelligent' printer systems are being trialled across the company and have the potential to reduce paper wastage by around 30 per cent, resulting in additional 'bottom line' savings on paper supply costs and waste disposal charges. The Group is now also a signatory to the Government's Halving Waste to Landfill initiative – administered by its waste and resources action programme – and is committed to developing further processes to reduce waste over the coming year to enable its design teams and engineers to better identify eco-efficiency measures within the projects and services they deliver.

Despite the challenges the current economic climate presents, one thing remains certain; the importance of good environmental practice and its potential to deliver cost efficiencies will remain at the heart of Mouchel's sustainability strategy, and will undoubtedly contribute to the resilience of the business over the coming years. For further details of the Group's efficiency measures and approach to environmental management please visit its online sustainability reporting site at [www.mouchelreports.com](http://www.mouchelreports.com).

*Andy Sherlock is Mouchel's Group Environment and Corporate Responsibility Manager*

“ emissions of carbon are seen as a direct indicator of the efficiency with which individual organisations, and indeed the whole economy, use energy ”

“ Our water consumption now stands at about 150 litres per person per day ”

It's not just leaking water mains that are contributing to increasing water shortages, but also the habits of consumers. As awareness of the problem grows, a new service is making the whole experience of saving water a lot easier for customers of one water company. **Mark Wintringham** explains

**A** combination of climate change, increased demand and poor resource management has resulted in water shortages affecting more and more areas of the UK. As the problem grows, consumers are beginning to re-evaluate just how precious our water resources are and to adjust their habits accordingly.

Among the water companies that have already recognised this public shift is Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL). Last year, it awarded Mouchel's Engineering and Environment team a contract to help its domestic customers achieve greater efficiency – a move most have welcomed enthusiastically.

There is no malicious reason why UK householders waste clean water, instead, it is historic. In a country where, famously, it always rains, even queues at standpipes in the 'long hot summer of 1976' could not shake our conviction that it flows if we turn on the tap.

Our water consumption now stands at about 150 litres per person per day. Those 150 litres are used to drink, wash our bodies and clothes, prepare food and flush the toilet, and, to the average person, may not seem excessive. However, the work for NWL among its customers in the North East and South is saving on average 50 litres per property per day, without any loss to these services.

So how is that possible? The trick has been to treat each household individually.

Last October, when the service went 'live', 2,000 householders on Tyneside were contacted by letter and invited to join their local water saving project. Those interested were offered, free of charge, an appointment for an independent household water audit, which would include bespoke advice and assistance in order to help them improve their own water efficiency.

Householders were enthusiastic about the idea and hundreds of recipients were quick to book appointments through the dedicated call centre, set up in Mouchel's Haywards Heath office, or via the website. To date, thousands of householders have scheduled a visit from a member of the project's qualified team. These team members are all local plumbers, employed on a freelance basis but approved and contracted to visit and advise householders for the project. Their trade gives them the necessary skills to

undertake any tasks, while the project training has supplied them with the knowledge to provide the all-important water efficiency advice. There is an opportunity, for example, while he/she fixes a dripping tap, to inform the householder on the water-saving benefits of this action.

It is not just about leaky taps, of course. Among the host of water-saving devices already retrofitted in kitchens, gardens and bathrooms under the contract are: aerated-flow taps to save water at the sink; trigger hose guns; water butts; new shower heads; and, to cut toilet-flush wastage, cistern displacement or 'dual flush' devices.

But this project is not just bringing water efficiency to householders; it is increasing efficiency for all those involved. Adoption of new ways of working has saved everyone time and allowed more homes to be visited.

Mouchel has allocated each plumber a handheld digital unit (HDU) equipped with bespoke software. This easy-to-use management system for mobile workers is linked directly to the customer service team, who provide a list of jobs for the day – pre-arranged to minimise travel along with updates that ensure the best use of personnel.

The system removes duplication from the workload as each job needs only to be entered once and updated from site, which has improved database administration and client liaison too. HDUs also allow the customer services team to communicate with the workforce in the field, which helps to provide complete service satisfaction for householders.

By keeping consumers at the heart of the project, promoting value and bringing water saving measures to householders in a transparent way, NWL and Mouchel are taking a long-term view of sustainability to safeguard the future.

Six months into the project, customers report that they feel engaged and informed and the project is already making a big contribution to water efficiency for NWL's customers. And to paraphrase a well known supermarket, 'every litre helps'.

*Mark Wintringham is Service Delivery Manager (Southern Networks) at Mouchel*

# L'eau Usage

# Driving down transport costs

A recent report commissioned by the Passenger Transport Executive Group suggests that unprotected areas of the transport budget (such as local transport services outside London) could be facing dramatic cuts. **Andrew Cairns** looks at what can be done to make these services operate more efficiently

It is estimated that total annual spend on passenger transport services by UK local authorities exceeds £3.5bn. These services, many of which support important educational, social and community functions, vary from council to council but typically include:

- home to school/college transport;
- social care transport for children, adults and elderly clients;
- community transport schemes (such as Dial-a-Ride); and
- subsidised bus services.

Local authorities across the country employ thousands of staff in the planning, procurement and management of these services; yet despite the scale of these businesses (often running to millions of pounds), passenger transport departments are subject to few of the structures and controls that are commonplace in other sectors. As a result, services are often fragmented, with no performance management culture and only limited attempts at managing demand.

In order to provide these essential services within increasingly constrained finances, transport departments need to take a more business-minded approach to their activities; operating with the flexibility and efficiency to react to changing need, while demonstrating value for money, innovation and meeting (and exceeding) performance targets.

In response to fiscal pressures and the need to modernise services, Mouchel has established a team of passenger transport experts who are helping local authorities to deliver more customer-focused, efficient and cost-effective services.

In Oldham, Mouchel (via its local joint venture, Unity) has helped to reduce the Council's passenger transport bill by £500,000 a year.

The Council was spending £3.5m a year on its client transport function – an excessive figure considering that just 900 people were using the various services. Twenty per cent of the expenditure went towards the 11 full-time staff used to deliver the service – double the number usually expected for an authority of its size.

In addition to reducing the number of staff, it was proposed to introduce an integrated transport unit (ITU) to develop an overall vision for client transport in Oldham and to bring together the different strands of the service under one leadership. The ITU would drive an integrated and efficient way of working, reducing asset and service duplication and simplify service procurement and operation.

Once the ITU had been established (by drawing together existing functions and activities under a streamlined management structure), Mouchel then worked with Oldham's staff (managers, drivers and passenger assistants) to develop and implement the modernised service. This process included:

- new transport policies governing transport for vulnerable adults and children,
- new commissioning procedures and processes to streamline new user request and service management,
- an integrated management information system with service level agreements with Council departments, and
- a rescheduling exercise to optimise the use of Council fleet in order to realise significant cost savings.

Within 12 months, Mouchel had transformed Oldham's passenger service, cutting costs, ensuring that it offered the same level of service to users, and introducing rigorous procedures and checks within its systems.

In Middlesbrough, where Mouchel provides a comprehensive portfolio of services to the Council, it adopted a similar ITU approach and realised improved efficiencies and savings of around £400,000 a year, against an annual budget of £3.5m. The Council has now asked Mouchel to widen the review to other areas of transport within the Authority, such as the Council's own fleet and staff travel which will look to drive further efficiencies and improved ways of working.

Demographic trends (particularly in relation to an aging population), sustainable objectives and wider choice for service users suggest that

demand for local authority provided transport will increase. While demand increases there will continue to be substantial pressure on the very revenue budgets that provide these services. Without remedial action, the gap between demand and supply (governed by available funding) will widen. Therefore, integration of services and collaboration between neighbouring authorities and partner organisations, such as the health sector, will be key to ensuring that transport provided by councils continues to meet local needs but in a planned and sustained manner.

*Andrew Cairns is a Principal Consultant at Mouchel primarily working in the field of passenger transport*

“ The Council was spending £3.5m a year on its client transport function – an excessive figure considering that just 900 people were using the various services ”

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# Reforms and e-forms

An important factor in the recent negotiations between Mouchel and Middlesbrough Council for a five-year extension of their partnership agreement was the promise of a £4m saving through efficiency gains across the organisation. **Steve McCormack** talks to **Sarah Dobson** about the measures taken to deliver better ways of working

**M**ouchel's Public Private Partnership with Middlesbrough Council dates back to 2001, when the council signed a ten year contract with HBS, now part of the Mouchel Group, for back-office services. The Partnership, which employs around 1,000 staff, brings together the best of public and private sector skills and touches on virtually all aspects of the Council's remit, encompassing areas such as HR, finance, pensions, property, training, exchequer, customer services, valuation and estates, payroll services, and ICT.

This highly successful Partnership has seen the transformation of services in the region, with improvements not only to those areas handled by Mouchel, but to those retained by the Council as well. It has also seen the delivery of considerable investment in terms of infrastructure, public access, new working practices and service improvements. A number of programmes have been initiated, including the delivery of customer relationship management and enterprise resource planning systems, document management and the implementation of high-speed ICT networks. This has delivered a range of positive outcomes for local residents, staff and the organisation as a whole.

Under the terms of the original agreement, the Council this year exercised its option to extend the Partnership for another five years to June 2016 – although some financial services and property, valuations and estates functions are no longer included under the arrangement.

As part of the negotiations prior to this decision 90 projects were identified, many by Mouchel employees, which were aimed at developing alternative, efficient ways of delivering services and improving customer satisfaction. Although these projects were all relatively small in scale, together they will deliver the £4m required to meet the new contract extension price.

The projects have been amalgamated into an efficiency programme, which is due to be delivered by June 2011. However, since its formation, the programme scope has expanded and now incorporates other internal projects, which, it is hoped, will become part of a continuous drive to improve efficiency within the region. One example is a project which looks at home working. If successful, it will not only give greater work flexibility to staff and improve morale, but could substantially reduce the region's accommodation costs.

Many of the remaining projects aim to improve internal processes at Mouchel and, where appropriate, will produce benefits within the Council and even out into the public domain. An example is the implementation of e-forms – web-based application forms, which are used by the public for benefits claims and by Middlesbrough staff to book holidays, complete timesheets and other payroll-related activities.

Other key projects – such as those improving the way invoice processing is managed and the interaction with citizens through the contact centre – are modernising the services provided, eradicating waste and minimising errors.

'Looking at a number of processes end-to-end helps to improve service times to the Council and residents making services more user friendly and accessible, so that we are able to deal with problems faster and more effectively,' says Sarah Dobson, Programme Coordinator who was responsible for setting up and running the efficiency programme. Meanwhile, other projects are looking at alternative ways of working in line with more modern practices.

The impact of the current economic climate has only strengthened the need to deliver the efficiency gains highlighted, and has secured greater buy-in from those involved. However, the success of these projects depends not only on the cooperation of Mouchel's regional staff but also on working in partnership with external suppliers and with Council employees. As a consequence, the management structure set up to co-ordinate the programme has been crucial in winning the commitment of all parties.

This project governance process has been tailored to the needs of the programme and engages with each stakeholder where appropriate. It employs standardised methodology, based on the PRINCE 2 project management tool, enabling the effective oversight and management of each project from idea generation, through development, planning and on to implementation.

Central to the success of the programme has been meticulous planning. 'By knowing what, when, how and who, we have been able to bring all managers and external developers on board, reducing risks around projects. Spending time planning, means the projects run more smoothly as there is a greater awareness and understanding of what is expected of each stakeholder,' says Sarah.

'The main benefit of such governance is that information is more visible, structured and relevant to those who need it. Additionally, under one programme umbrella, it is easier to identify synergies across similar projects, allowing us to amalgamate them and increase the level of benefits. It has also made it easier to identify other efficiency projects that could improve processes not only within the Partnership but across Mouchel's government business services as a whole.'

*Steve McCormack is a freelance business writer*

*Sarah Dobson is People and Change Programme Manager at Mouchel*

“ Looking at a number of processes end-to-end helps to improve service times to the Council ”





Before treatment – heavy colonisation of the under-drain nozzles and stems with hydroid Cordylophora (and zebra mussels in some cases) had reduced the filters' capacity



After treatment, microscopy performed on the filter samples at Ashford showed that visible deposits had been removed and the media successfully restored to a near-new condition

Ashford Common treats water from the River Thames with a process that uses 24 rapid-gravity filters. Seven of these were a particular cause for concern as heavy colonisation of their under drain nozzles and stems with the hydroid Cordylophora (and zebra mussels too in some cases) had reduced capacity.

Mouchel and its partners went to work on these filters using the Floran chemical treatment. All seven filters were treated with the same dosage of the Floran filter treatment agent to break up the Cordylophora colonies and remove biological and inorganic fouling from the filter media.

On the first day, the filter was given a preliminary backwash and drained ready for the application of a mixture of Floran Biogrowth Remover and Floran Catalyst to the top of the media bed and left to soak. The work was carried out by two engineers with a bespoke application rig devised by Mouchel's innovations department. This streamlined and simplified the application process and ensured a precise dosage without manual handling risks.

Next day, the mixture was recirculated from the plenum chamber and reactivated with Floran Catalyst before, again, being left to soak overnight. On the third day, water was added slowly from the top followed by Media Master slurry and Floran Catalyst. Finally, after just a few hours, the filter was backwashed to the discharge tanks from where, once the pH is checked, it can be discharged to sewer. After treatment, microscopy performed on the filter samples at Ashford showed that visible deposits had been removed and the media successfully restored to a near-new condition. It removed the hydroid Cordylophora and zebra mussels, plus the biofoul, iron and manganese contamination. In addition, significant reduction in chlorine demand proved that the treatment had removed most of the chlorine-reactive material too.

# Coming out in the wash

'Efficiency' makes good business sense, so a process that maintains the efficient operation of water treatment filters but also saves time and costs in doing so has to be worth investigating. **Melanie Bright** explains

**A**nyone who has ever attempted to clear a blocked plughole will appreciate that it takes time and effort to do it properly. In the water industry, where the filtration units at treatment works are that much bigger, it's a task that typically takes weeks – but not any more.

Mouchel and its partners have perfected a new way to clean filter media and optimise efficient running at water treatment plants. The process was successfully trialled on a large scale last year at an Advanced Water Treatment Works (AWTW), where it not only reduced the downtime needed to clean the filter media, but also halved the cost.

All water companies have an ongoing commitment to cut wastage in order to meet the high expectations of the regulator and customers. To do this they need to maintain efficient treatment plants, with filter media kept free of biofoul and inorganic materials. This is achieved through scheduled backwashing (reversing water flow to flush out accumulated debris) and air scouring (injecting compressed air to increase water flow and loosen deposits), but also through the replacement of filter media. This overall process might typically take four weeks to complete, resulting in the loss of valuable filtration time. So for Mouchel, which works with these water companies, it was a logical step to partner Blue Earth Labs and Brenntag UK in order to develop a more efficient process.

This alliance led to a pilot of the flexible Floran filter treatment process at Thames Water's Ashford Common AWTW. There, instead of weeks, it took just three days for the cleaning process to produce quality results. This simple process (see box) has been perfected by Mouchel and its partners over the course of five years to create a precise dosage operation and one that conforms to all UK standards – for everything from its effects on the environment and infrastructure, through to its delivery and storage.

The process has proved to be effective and has delivered long lasting results, helping to maintain the efficient operation of the water filters. Just as importantly, though, the cost and time to maintain these filters have been cut significantly, minimising disruption to plant operations and delivering further efficiencies to water companies.

*Melanie Bright is Public Relations Manager at Mouchel*

# Knowing the ropes

Roof inspections require many of the skills that abseilers use; they also require similar safety regimes. Climber and engineer **Duncan Hassall** talks to **Paul Murrell** about the hazards of working at a height and new methods of monitoring listed structures using rope access equipment

**T**he Albert Dock is one of Liverpool's premier attractions. The home of Tate Liverpool, the Beatles' Story and the Merseyside Maritime Museum, it is a well-known tourist spot and the largest complex of Grade I listed buildings in the UK.

Duncan Hassall, Assistant Engineer at Mouchel, is part of the team that has been working on the Atlantic Pavilion (part of the Albert Dock complex) over the past six years, producing a 25-year maintenance plan, undertaking full inspections of the structure and carrying out 'authentic' repointing works that mimic the building's early appearance. Duncan and his team also undertake bimonthly roof inspections using rope access equipment similar to that used by abseilers and rock climbers.

'We inspect the whole structure externally and internally at appropriate intervals,' says Duncan, 'The inspections inform any specific detailed investigations or repairs that may need to be undertaken. The maintenance plan we've put together provides a basis from which we can consider the cost of maintaining this historic part of Liverpool.'

'Work finished on the Albert Dock in 1846,' explains Duncan. 'It was used heavily up until the 1920s, at which point the vessels in common use at that time had outgrown it. Gradually the dock fell into a state of disrepair. By the early 1970s it had filled up with silt and the Atlantic Pavilion was still suffering damage from a Second World War bomb. Because the buildings hadn't been watertight for around 50 or 60 years, the structures – made of reinforced brick – had sustained a lot of damage.'

Following the Toxteth riots in the mid 1980s there was a big injection of cash into Liverpool and the Albert Dock was one of the city's first major investments. 'Frankly,' says Duncan, 'the buildings were in a sorry state and close to being knocked down. So a decision had to be made whether it was worth the investment to refurbish the structures – or whether the cost was too great.'

Thankfully for the thousands of tourists that visit Liverpool every year, the Albert Dock was saved. The Merseyside Development Corporation was tasked with the redevelopment of the South Docks and engaged two companies, one of whom was Mouchel (or Parkman, which later merged with Mouchel) to undertake structural surveys and to commission repairs to the buildings to make them watertight.

'I joined Mouchel in May 2005,' says Duncan, 'when the company was working for English Partnerships (which subsequently became the Homes and Communities Agency) under a contract to administer maintenance for its portfolio of assets on Merseyside. Over the course of that process, Mouchel became involved with the Atlantic Pavilion, which was having problems with its roof. Appropriate refurbishment had not been

carried out, resulting in a number of problems with leaks and drainage – water pooling in flat areas. Our team came in and identified the problems. What came out of our examination was a long-term monitoring regime – which is where the rope access equipment comes in.'

From a health and safety point of view, working on the roof is high risk, so the correct safety equipment was of paramount importance. 'I helped to design a system to help us inspect the roof safely,' says Duncan. 'This involved putting in a number of "eye-bolts" in appropriate locations across the roof that we could then attach ourselves to using ropes. We designed the system in conjunction with a company called TAG Safety, which provided the equipment and necessary training, including how to perform a rescue.'

Duncan, a keen climber, also wrote a site induction detailing the hazards on the roof and looking at rope access equipment methods and how to undertake the regular inspections, and method statements for all possible rescue scenarios. 'Part of the reason I became involved was that I'd done a lot of climbing so I was able to identify a solution that allows us to inspect the roof safely.'

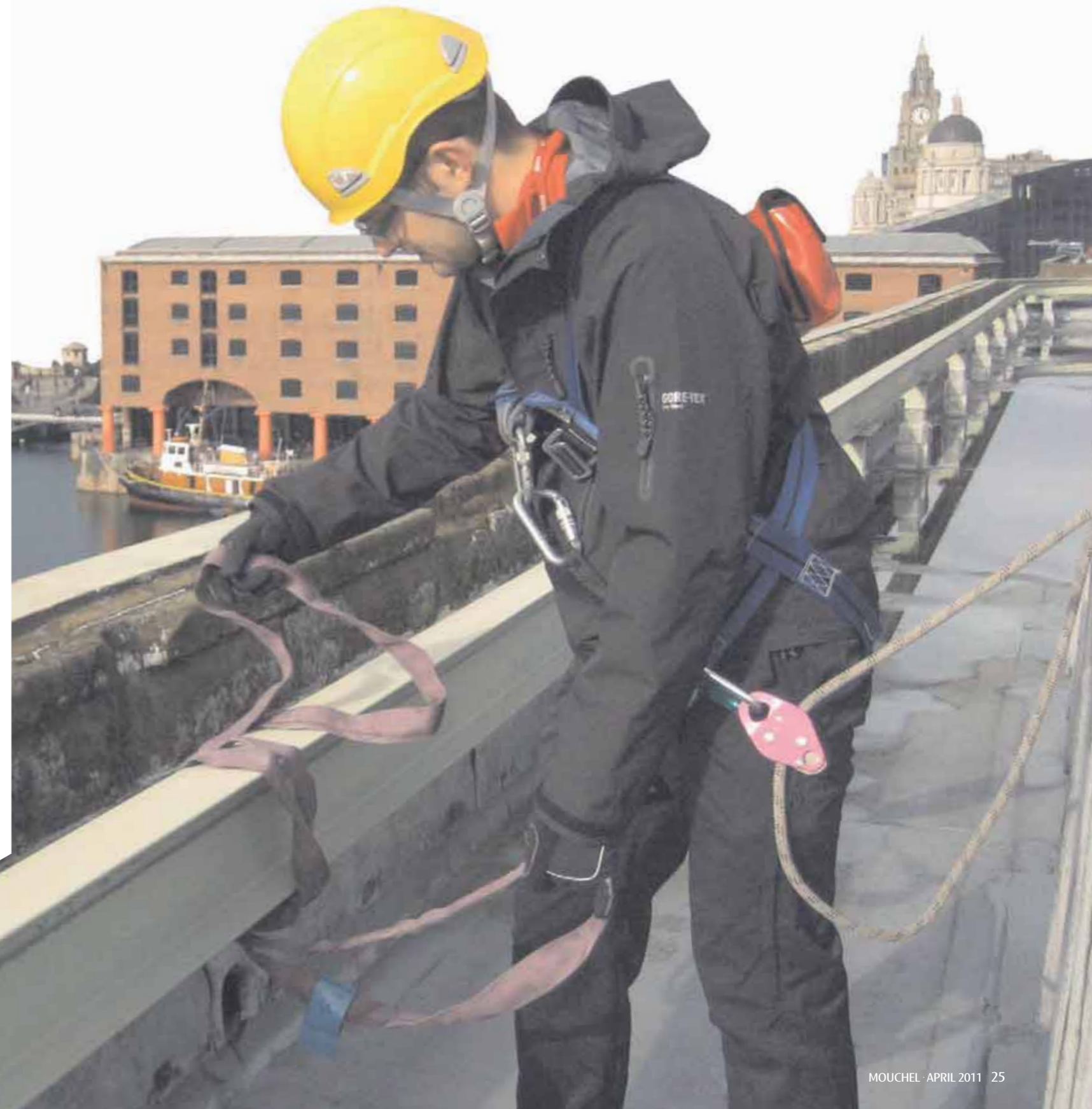
Following the white paper *Heritage Protection in the 21st Century (2007)* and the subsequent draft *Heritage Protection Bill (2008)*, Mouchel has helped to establish a forum for owners of other buildings in the Albert Dock. One of the objectives of the new legislation is to rationalise all of the various pieces of heritage legislation that have been introduced over time. 'We see the forum as an opportunity to develop conservation management plans, and to enable all parties to share best practice and improve the standard of works across the Albert Dock. We were often disheartened when we saw other jobs in the area that hadn't been carried out with the same attention to details that we pride ourselves on.'

'The legacy Mouchel has, and the relationships we've developed from working in, and around, Liverpool sets us apart. We've worked here since the mid 1980s; we've got archives full of the work we've carried out and that is one of the key reasons why we are able to perform sympathetic maintenance here. We understand how these buildings were constructed and can implement the appropriate maintenance in every case. That is our key differentiator. Anyone could, in theory, follow the same pattern that we do, but they just don't have the same experience.'

*Duncan Hassall is Assistant Engineer at Mouchel*

*Paul Murrell is Publications Advisor at Mouchel*

“ I'd done a lot of climbing so I was able to identify a solution that allows us to inspect the roof safely ”



# Make do and mend

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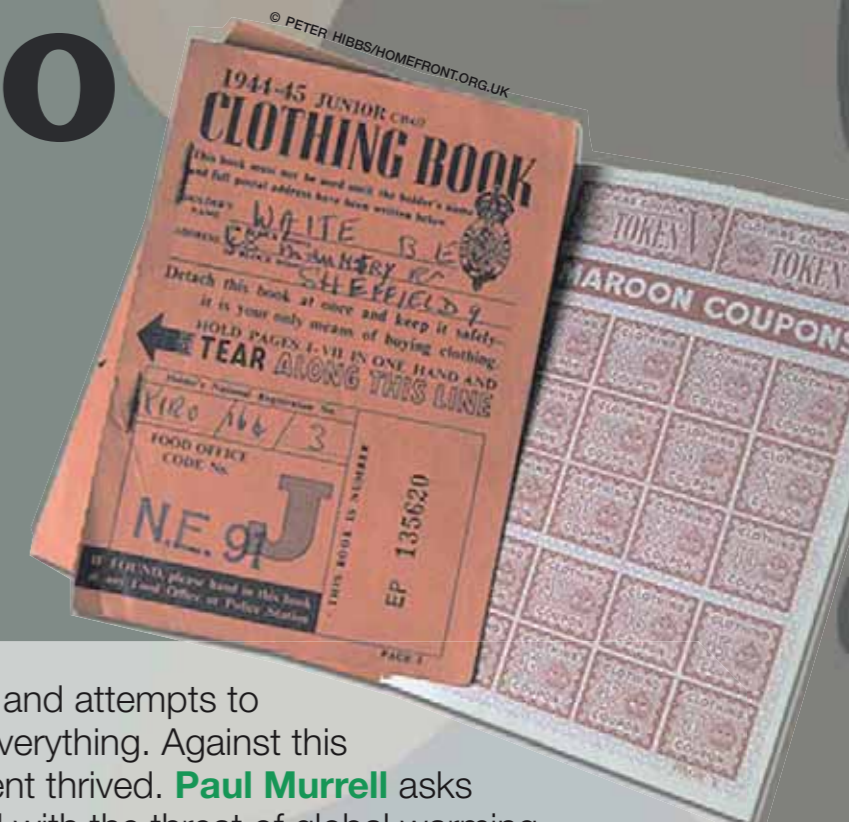
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IS YOUR JOURNEY REALLY NECESSARY?

TICKETS

RAILWAY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Wartime Britain was dominated by rationing and attempts to help the war effort by using a 'little less' of everything. Against this backdrop, the make-do-and-mend movement thrived. **Paul Murrell** asks whether in today's depressed economy, and with the threat of global warming, there isn't something that we can learn from housewives of the 1940s

In 1943, the government booklet *Make Do And Mend*, filled with tips on how to make the most out of everything from clothing to food, was being studied in homes across the UK. It promoted an approach to life that has been all but forgotten in our 24-hour consumerist culture. Resourceful wartime housewives were encouraged to dye their legs using gravy browning to give the illusion of hosiery rather than buy silk or nylon, to eat rabbit because other types of meat were scarce, to reuse old clothing, and to darn and mend.

Elsewhere on the home front, the Government was urging people to dig out unused or unnecessary saucepans and ironwork, with a view to turn the molten 'scrap' into armoury. Many were led to believe that their donated metal would soon be flying high in the sky, but in reality the pots, pans and other unwanted hardware gathered up by the authorities was collected purely as part of a propaganda drive to make the public feel that it was playing a vital part in the war effort.

In truth, much of the salvaged material was secretly dumped – there simply wasn't the means to turn a skip full of cooking pots into a Spitfire – but that's not to say that general morale wouldn't have been improved by the measures, and indeed some of what was collected may have been melted down and recycled (just not for weapons of war).

*Dig for Victory!* demanded another campaign at the time, which urged civilians to grow their own crops for sustenance. At Mouchel, we'd moved our operations out of London and into the suburbs in an attempt to escape what many thought was an imminent attack on the Capital. At a large Victorian house in Sutton, Surrey, Mouchel staff tended two greenhouses – growing vegetables that it shared with two elderly ladies who lived in the adjoining property.

Thankfully, we no longer need to paint a line round the bathtub to make sure we conserve water, or walk around in trousers that are too short for us due to rationing, but since the recession began to bite

in 2009, people are realising that there's much we could gain from implementing the make-do-and-mend philosophy in every area of our lives.

Many of the old skills, such as restyling old clothing and furniture, and growing your own fruit and veg are making a comeback, especially among those who need to save money or want to recycle as much as possible for the sake of the planet. There has been a return to do-it-yourself, make-it-yourself, and grow-it-yourself; to dressmaking and reusing; to being resourceful; and to darning and mending.

The department store John Lewis recently released an updated version of *Make Do And Mend*, which includes hints covering modern devices such as mobile phone chargers and how to make your central heating system as efficient as possible.

Mouchel is continuing the updated take on make-do-and-mend with Tarmac and the award-winning M25 resurfacing project. Approximately 700 tonnes (40 per cent) of the existing road surface between Junctions 7-6 was recycled and made into new – the highest amount ever on the national road network and a huge step forward for recycled roads in the UK.

The Group is also helping Northumbrian Water achieve its water efficiency targets by educating customers about how to avoid wastage and fitting devices that will save 50 litres of water per property per day. (See pages 16-17.)

With budgets tight both 'on the home front' and for public spending, never has there been a better time to adopt and adapt the make-do-and-mend philosophy to try and get a lot more for a lot less in every area of our lives. Mind you, perhaps it's better to leave the gravy browning on the shelf.

*Paul Murrell is Publications Advisor at Mouchel*

“ there simply wasn't the means to turn a skip full of cooking pots into a Spitfire ”

Market Harborough Pod at the Start Garden Party, Clarence House. Claire is pictured centre. And below, HRH the Prince of Wales making a Morsbag.



“ Some of the bags were made from curtains from Clarence House and Balmoral Castle and donated by the Prince himself ”

# The Bag Society

On January 1, Italy banned the use of plastic bags, reducing the annual consumption of bags in the country from 20bn (more than 300 per person) to zero. Among those supporting the ban is **Claire Glover**, a member of the 'Morsbag project'. Claire talks to **Karen Stevens** about the scheme

**M**ost shoppers nowadays are aware of the environmental problems caused by plastic carrier bags, and over the past couple of years, supermarkets have introduced various schemes to discourage their use – offering biodegradable and cloth alternatives and encouraging recycling. However, Claire Glover, Account Manager in Mouchel's Traffic Support Team, is doing more than using a 'bag for life' – she's making them – by the hundreds.

Claire is a member of the Morsbag project – a scheme set up four years ago by Claire Morsman (hence the name) to help eliminate the use of plastic bags.

Morsman, who lives on a boat on the Grand Union Canal in Ealing, West London, witnessed first hand the problems caused by discarded plastic bags ending up in the waterways, and was concerned about the effects on wildlife. She asked her mother to design a simple sewing pattern for a shopping bag and posted it on the Web.

And so 'Morsbags' was born and quickly grew into something much bigger than its founder ever imagined.

'There are Morsbags 'pods' all over the country; in fact all over the world,' says Claire, who helped to launch her local pod at Market Harborough in Leicestershire.

'We get together each month to make reusable shopping bags out of recycled fabric,' she explains. 'All kinds of materials are used – from curtains to boat sails – even the foil lining inside wine boxes has found a new lease of life in carrying shopping. The aim is to reduce the number of plastic bags that people use. In just four years, the Morsbags' tally is now more than 100,000 bags.'

Claire's pod, which has been running since last February, has already made 500 bags. 'It took me an hour to make my first bag, but now I can run one up in just 20 minutes,' says Claire. 'The hard part is sourcing the fabric. Donations are made largely as a result of word of mouth; and charity shops often give us scraps of material that they can't sell. It's amazing how much unwanted material there is about,' says Claire.

Bags are given away free, for example at farmers' markets, in shopping centres, or at other events such as craft fairs and village fêtes. The Morsbags slogan is 'sociable guerrilla bagging'. The pod meetings are the social part (cake, wine, and a chat), and guerrilla bagging is surprising people by giving them a free bag – most people assume that they have to pay.

Claire discovered Morsbags when searching online for a pattern for a bag, and was later 'bagged' at a shopping centre in Market Harborough. 'I went along to my 'pod's' inaugural meeting with offers to source and launder fabric and to sew bags. I wasn't keen on guerrilla bagging. Now



Vivienne Westwood with Claire's Morsbag

I work two days a week on the project and find that giving away the bags is fun too.

In September, Claire and other members of the project were invited to take part in the Start Garden Party at Clarence House in London – an initiative by the Prince of Wales to promote green projects.

'We exhibited for 12 days and visitors to our marquee made almost 500 bags,' says Claire. 'Some of the bags were made from curtains from Clarence House and Balmoral Castle and donated by the Prince himself. I also made a bag for Vivienne Westwood, who was one of the hosts of the event. Her bag featured a flower made from the lining of a skirt, buttons from a car-boot sale and a kilt pin from my old school uniform.'

Morsbags also runs community projects. For example, the Leicestershire Probation Service sends people on community payback programmes to the group to make Morsbags. 'Offenders who have never used a sewing machine before are surprised and pleased when they've made a bag themselves. They're allowed to take the bags home to give to friends or family members. The probation service has now made nearly 9,000 bags and some offenders have used their new sewing skills to help them to obtain employment.'

Morsbags are growing in popularity and pods are springing up all over the country – particularly in Leicestershire, Lancashire and Cornwall. 'They're a bit like knitting or quilting circles – a social event, which allows members to be creative,' says Claire. 'In November, we won a Green Apple Gold Award in the "community" category – a considerable achievement for a project with no funding.'

Claire is now helping to set up new pods across the county. 'Students at Leicester and De Montfort universities have recently set up their own pods, and we also have pods in schools, which are run as after-school or lunchtime clubs. One group of sixth formers at Leicester Girls High School recently created a black leather Morsbag for fashion guru Gok Wan – it was screen printed with silver skulls!'



Vivienne Westwood bag

Karen Stevens is Publications Team Leader at Mouchel

# Driving efficiency

**Jamie Woods**, Operating Group Director for Regulated Industries (Water, Energy, Environment and Engineering and Rail) explains how steps made to improve efficiency in his division are making it work even better

#### Why is the drive for greater efficiency so important?

Clients expect and need greater efficiency and look to Mouchel to meet their targets. Our shareholders need it as well – it's a competitive market, and we must strive to be efficient in how we do things in order to maintain and grow. Efficiency is also important to our staff. They sell their time in order to make the world a better place and it would be counterintuitive for them to be wasteful.

#### Is it easy to be efficient?

Efficiency is delivery of the required result at the minimum cost (where cost is an economic measure, time or environmental impact – or possibly all three). Naturally, there are challenges to that efficiency, such as the peak and trough nature of some framework contracts that makes it difficult to keep people and systems working. However, these challenges can be viewed as opportunities. They are a chance for us to stand out from the competition. There are things that can be done, and the partnerships we forge between customers and ourselves always make a great starting point for ideas and their application.

#### What is different about the efficiency needs of 'regulated' industries (RI)?

All regulated clients are under pressure to meet changes in legislation and standards, as well as climate change targets and so forth. We are dedicated to our clients and pride ourselves on our ability to help ease that pressure and to ensure compliance so that now, as the regulators drive for even greater efficiency, we will help clients meet this need too.

Efficiency is not new as a goal. In the water industry, for example, where we work with all the major supply companies, the efficiency demands get tighter every five years under the Asset Management Programme (AMP) cycle. Last year, under AMP5, Ofwat demanded a 10-15 per cent improvement from water companies and Scottish Water has a target for 11 per cent improvement in operations with 15 per cent in capital delivery.

To meet those targets, most of the water framework contracts have key performance indicators that include efficiency-based outputs such as reduced leakage, or reduced contamination incidents.

#### What options are there for longer-term efficiency, such as through asset management?

Investing to maintain assets is something businesses in the regulated sector understand well. They are already good at looking at the whole-life cost of the general asset.

It is essential to optimise whole-life costs and, for that to work, clients and contractors need longer-term alliances and relationships. However, the falling prices caused by the current economic climate can make this difficult.

#### How is RI embracing its own efficiency?

For us, efficiency is about the best use of resources, removal of duplication in the business stream and a focus on how we want the non-fee earning parts of the business to operate, such as health and safety, training and business development.

We have already reduced the division's overhead by a significant amount and have half the number of directors we had before without affecting clients or remaining staff. Now we are examining our systems and processes in order for them to operate even more efficiently. We have already begun to improve our knowledge management process and have recently made a modest IT investment to that end. It allows our streamlined teams to better share best practice across the different disciplines around the country.

#### Does that approach work better in some of the operational sectors than others?

RI is a diverse division. In 'water operations' there are three or four key clients, but in 'environment and engineering' there are 300 and they need different things. Nevertheless, through good communications and training it has been possible, and all members of staff are empowered to spot, and act on, opportunities for greater efficiency.

It is important to be clear about things. The RI leadership team strives, firstly for growth, secondly to engage with clients and thirdly to make sure we follow the appropriate governance that is required to run such a business. In fact, we have included these objectives in the appraisal process for all employees so that, in six months, we can measure the extent to which these objectives have been met. This provides a 'line of sight' between me and the talented people who work within RI.

#### Is there room for individual efficiency?

Of course. As well as empowering staff to introduce suitable measures, over the past 18 months most of our staff have made personal pledges to reduce their carbon footprint with behavioural changes such as teleconferencing and car sharing. These changes are not only more time efficient, but also help with regard to the company's bottom line.

#### Is there a limit to what you can achieve efficiently?

As with any solution, efficiency is about method. There is no limit because there is always room to improve. However, it is important to be aware of the law of diminishing returns, where to keep trying the same approach can be counter productive.

But in RI, our method is working well. We have reduced the number of directors, restructured and overhauled our overhead and agreed where our business development focus should be. We now have a clear vision for the next three years and have the right people in the right jobs. We are in much better shape than we were 12 months ago.

“efficiency demands get tighter every five years under AMP cycle”

## Building great relationships

Mouchel is the consulting and business services group that improves day-to-day life for millions of people by helping to transform essential public services and sustain vital infrastructure. We work throughout the UK and worldwide for clients in:

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UNDERGROUND

