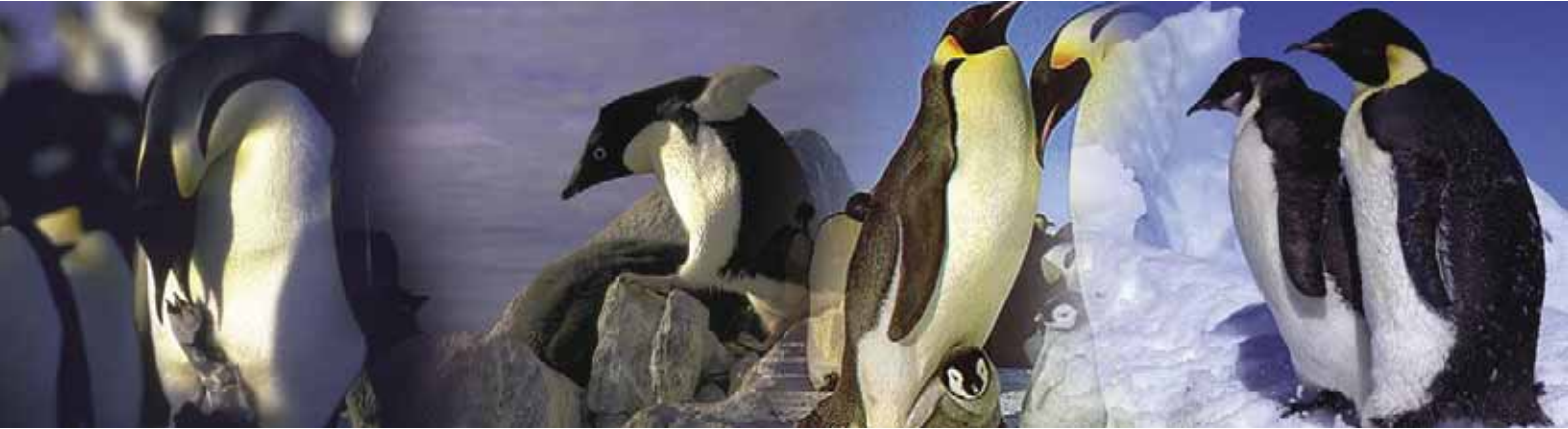


# ANNUAL REPORT

2004 / 2005

Covering the period July 2004 to June 2005



society of local authority chief executives  
and senior managers





# MEET THE PEOPLE



**CHERYL MILLER** PRESIDENT



**TIM BYLES** CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



**PAUL CROFT** PAST PRESIDENT JULY 2004 - DECEMBER 2004



**MIKE PITT** PAST PRESIDENT JANUARY 2005 - JUNE 2005



**BARRY QUIRK** SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT



**JOHN SCHULTZ** JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT



**RICHARD CUMMINS** SOCIETY TREASURER



**RUTH HYDE** SOCIETY SOLICITOR



**DAVID CLARK** DIRECTOR GENERAL

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# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Like Local Government itself SOLACE has gone from strength to strength this year. We are well on our way to achieving our vision of becoming a 21st century professional society. We have modernised our structures (and titles!); we are harnessing modern technology effectively through the weekly e-mailed newsletter, virtual networking groups and use of training CDs like Barry Quirk's one on "Public Service Efficiency" and we have established a clear, professional Code of Ethics ( my thanks go particularly to Ruth Hyde, the Society Solicitor, for her excellent work on this).

As a result of our more secure financial footing, generated partly through our developing relationships with our business partners ( and it has been good to welcome Ordnance Survey as a new Gold Partner) and the increasing success of SOLACE Enterprises Ltd., our professional standing and influence have been able to bloom. This can be seen not only in the impact we have had on national policy issues, such as the Children's Services Agenda and through such publications as the ACCE Branch's pamphlet "The 21st Century Council – The Strategy for Local Government", but our past endeavours are also yielding fruit, not least the establishment of the new Leadership Academy for Local Government. Moreover, through our increasing Senior Manager membership and initiatives such as the SOLACE Graduate Programme, we are now doing far more to capture the potential public service leaders of tomorrow.

From my personal point of view, as President, the three highlights of the year have been:

- i) the Annual Conference in Brighton, particularly the inspirational address from Professor Mark Moore of Harvard and Robin Cook's thought-provoking after dinner speech, (although it is probably James Strachan's, Chairman of the Audit Commission's, comment on the issue of 'Choice' – "Well Cheryl, it's like the Deputy Prime Minister says – "Choice is like sex, everyone wants it until they realise that they have to pay for it" that I will most remember!!);
- ii) the Annual Dinner at the Savoy, especially the entertaining after dinner speech from Andrew Rawnsley. ( I also failed to predict that David Blunkett and Robin Cook would be the sex gods of New Labour!); and
- iii) the work done by the Commission on this year's theme of "Managing in a Political Environment". This has clearly touched a topical and raw nerve and generated a massive amount of interest, including from the Government in its "Vibrant Local Leadership" document. I hope the product of our endeavours will prove useful and authoritative and I am grateful for all the help and comments I have received from colleagues.

Finally, can I say a huge thank you to my fellow Management Board Members, particularly Tim Byles, Chairman of the Board, who works tirelessly on behalf of SOLACE and to Richard Cummins, Society Treasurer, who, after steering the Society successfully through a challenging financial period, is now standing down from that role. My thanks also go to the ever ebullient David Clark and his wonderful team at SOLACE HQ for all their help and support. Most of all can I say thank you to you, the Society's Members, particularly those who lead the national and regional branches and specialist Panels who do so much to create a positive profile for Local Government Chief Executives and Senior Managers. It's a great family to belong to and to lead – thank you for entrusting me with the opportunity to do so.

**Cheryl Miller**

President



# REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

## **A clear vision for the 21st century**

The past three years have shown a leap forward in the progress of the Society, the clarity and extent of its purpose and objectives and its financial strength. On behalf of the Society, I would like to begin by acknowledging the considerable work that has gone into this year by the membership of the Society and its staff. I want to thank the National Council, Management Board, Panel chairs and Branch Officers for their commitment and support, and also the many individual members who have made contributions across the range of our work. I particularly want to note the contributions of David Clark, Mike Bennett and Kathryn Rossiter, who have together forged a very effective team at the heart of organisation. They have provided first class service to the Society and support to me in chairing the Management Board this year.

At a strategic level, we have moved forward on the work to establish SOLACE as an effective society in the 21st Century, with a clear vision and work programme as agreed by National Council.

We have extended our role in influencing central government across a wide range of issues including the development of Children's Services with Dfes, input on the Development of a Leadership Centre for local government with OPSR, Modernising Rural Delivery in DEFRA, the Efficiency Review with Treasury and Procurement with ODPM.

David Clark and his team have been extremely successful at attracting further business partnership support which has risen to £400,000.

Our subsidiary company, SOLACE Enterprises, has had a successful year both financially and operationally that has strengthened the Society's finances. We see a future of continued growth and development into new markets for SEL and expect the next few years to see a further strengthening of its position across a wider range of market opportunities.

Overall this means the Society is in a much more robust financial position to plan and deliver support for its members over the coming years, no longer being over-dependent on a single source of financial support. The three elements of member subscriptions, sponsorship and company dividend mean that we can plan with increased confidence for the medium term.

This has been a year that has seen record numbers of Chief Executives in challenging circumstances in their authorities. Our support to individuals has increased significantly this year. We are in discussion with ALACE about how better to coordinate our collective response to this worrying trend and the personal support of Chief Executives to colleagues in local areas will undoubtedly continue to be a vital role for the Society in the future.

Many more colleagues have moved into jobs in the civil service, government agencies and other organisations and have retained their membership of the Society. That carries its own message about the continued growth of influence of the Society and opens up further opportunities for the future.

Finally I would like to place on record my personal thanks for the contribution of David Clark who has led the Society's paid staff in delivering a very successful year.

## **Tim Byles**

Chairman of the Board





# DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

## **A year of records for SOLACE**

It has been a year of notable records for SOLACE. All organisations have their ups and downs but I am happy to report that this year SOLACE has seen mostly ups. We now have more active SOLACE members than ever before. A record number of people attended our annual conference and our Senior Managers event. So many people wanted to attend our annual dinner that we are now putting in place a quota system to allow us to achieve a balance of attendees, whilst maintaining the overall quality. The Graduate scheme has exceeded all expectations and membership continues to grow.

Our business partners have contributed record amounts to the Society and hopefully we are supporting them. In one area, the work shadowing programme, primarily with gold partners, the results have been very good and large numbers of colleagues have supported the scheme. The gold group of ORACLE, BT, Zurich Municipal and Ordnance Survey have continued to provide high quality support and events which have been used by large numbers of members.

Internally, SOLACE staff have spent a tough year ensuring that the business is on a sound footing. Financial management has been tightened and performance management has been developed. We have taken risk assessment very seriously and developed an approach to this vital area.

Our contact with Government(s) is at a record level and sets us a challenge, not just in England but also in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland. SOLACE needs to develop its own voice and a credible position stating what it is in favour of. Other organisations may simply be in favour of local government in its current institutional form. We need to develop our own agenda thoughtfully.

The developing political agenda, both nationally and in the local government political community, needs our practitioner advice more than ever as it attempts to square the circle between increasing demand expectations versus a finite tax yield. There is increasing evidence that SOLACE members are seen as a strong pool of talent that can offer constructive advice and a criticism where necessary. The signs for the year ahead are that SOLACE has a key role to play in developing the management of public services and their leadership. The organisation is fitter than ever to rise to this challenge.

## **David Clark**

Director General



# MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## SOLACE Enterprises Ltd

### Looking back – 2004/2005 highlights

- Financial performance – the company has had another successful year, continuing to increase turnover in an increasingly competitive market. 2004/5 was a year of significant investment, entering new markets, developing new products and services and creating the infrastructure and expertise necessary to sustain a growing company with a turnover currently exceeding £13m.
- Our ability to sustain the growth seen in previous years in our FR service against a background of aggressive competition and significant staff changes has been particularly encouraging. Against this background, we have also widened our market and are now providing FR services outside local authorities.
- The number of projects won in our organisation development work (82) and the range of projects paint a picture of a vibrant and effective portfolio. We also won the ODPM Framework Contract project on Organisation Development. This is a national project which we expect to be given very high profile.
- We have continued to win a wide range of projects in our People Development portfolio such as work with corporate management teams in unitary councils using bespoke 360° tools and coaching support. The development of a 'Council at its Best' process using Appreciative Inquiry techniques is one of our more innovative programmes and is proving to be very effective. We are increasingly involved in the delivery of member development programmes, including 360° feedback for elected members.
- A successful year for Recruitment and Selection with the business plan target comfortably exceeded and with 69 assignments completed. These included high profile assignments; the recruitment of Chief Executives for Plymouth, Darlington, Lincolnshire and Carlisle.
- An increase in the International portfolio gross profit from 2003 / 2004.
- Investment in new areas, Scotland and Health, where we are beginning to see activity in 2004/2005 translating into income in 2005/2006.
- Further investment in our premises, our new database (Cognito), our work processes and staff.
- Improving our marketing strategy has been a priority this year and we now have a dedicated website at [www.solaceenterprises.com](http://www.solaceenterprises.com) and a more coherent Company image.





# MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## SOLACE Enterprises Ltd

As Looking forward demonstrates, we are well placed to exploit the many opportunities open to us.

### Looking forward – 2005/2006

- We anticipate continued growth for our FR service as we increasingly provide change consultancy as well as the standard interim service.
- Building on the success of our peer challenge, we have developed a range of approaches to support councils during the CPA 2005 – 2008 programme. We are continuing to promote specialist peer challenge activity in particular a LSP Peer challenge in partnership with the IDeA and the Warwick Business School, CPA work with Fire and Rescue Services and with the National Parks.
- Marketing our Gershon Health Check for councils, or groups of councils, designed to help respond effectively to the opportunities the Gershon agenda opens up. We have also identified an expert group of Associates who we can offer to councils to help them tackle some of the key areas eg efficiency reviews, project management, asset management reviews, partnership working, back office re-engineering.
- On leadership we have a range of offerings: our Top Team offering (developed in partnership with Nicholson McBride and LGIU); a Collaborative Leadership Programme, our executive development packages and short course programmes. These will help us respond to the needs of councils and meet the expectations of the Local Government Leadership Centre.
- Developing our member development offering will also be a priority as we see increasing interest in member appraisal and the use of a bespoke e-enabled 360° tool for members. This work will be shaped by the requirements of councils and the findings of the SOLACE Commission.
- We will continue the work started last year to expand services into the Health sector focusing on the FR service. As part of this approach, and in other areas, we plan active marketing of associates with specialist expertise rather a marketing approach based on products.

We are delighted to be able to report another strong performance and to highlight our plans for continued success. We do not under-estimate the challenges of the public sector market or the activities of our competitors but we believe that we are well positioned to continue to offer services and support which will be of value to local government.

### Andrew Coleman

Managing Director

SOLACE Enterprises Ltd



# TREASURER'S REPORT

## **FINANCIAL OVERVIEW – YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2005**

The 2004/5 year saw further consolidation of the Society's successes in financial terms. Year on year the Society aims to break even financially while accumulating a prudent level of reserves.

Growth of activities both at parent SOLACE, and of wholly owned subsidiary SOLACE Enterprises Limited, has been impressive over the past 5 years. Membership subscriptions were held level for year from 1 October 2004, partner income was pleasingly buoyant and events were well supported by Members, guests and commercial partner organisations alike.

The provisional results for 2004/5 show an addition of £130,000 to reserves, a necessary figure given the society's increased employee resources base level. This brings reserves to £350,000 plus the value of wholly owned subsidiary SOLACE Enterprises Limited.

## **SOLACE Enterprises Limited**

The Company Board is receiving its figures subject to audit to 31 March 2005 at a Board meeting during the 2005 LGA Conference. I understand that another impressive year's trading will have resulted in another very good year for profits.

During 2004/5 the Company was able to pay SOLACE a final dividend for 2003/4 as well as an interim dividend for 2004/5, amounting to £250,000 overall.

In addition the company gift aided the Society's charitable arm, the SOLACE Foundation, a donation of £75,000. SOLACE has asked that a similar contribution should be made annually in future, provided projected profits each year are sufficient.

## **SOLACE Foundation**

The Foundation has benefited for 3 successive years now from significant donations from SOLACE Enterprises Limited. This has also been matched in the most recent year, 2004/5 by an increased activity rate in terms of expenditure, aided by some more active trustees. However, the governance aspect of the Foundation, as with the remainder of the SOLACE family, needs to be kept under review. SOLACE Members are busy people yet need at least once or twice a year, at minimum, to ensure a well attended and actively run meeting, not least with the significant sums of money involved in all 3 arms of SOLACE.





# TREASURER'S REPORT

## Membership Subscriptions – the Society – 2005/6

I have recommended to the Society's Management Board that subscriptions for the membership year starting 1 October 2005 should remain unchanged.

	<b>Proposed 2005/2006</b>
CE Local Authority Population below 40,000	280

<b>Population</b>	
40,000 – 99,999	305
100,000 – 249,000	325
250,000 and over	380

<b>Senior Managers</b>	
Past Service (semi retired) Former Chief	150
Executives	230
Former Senior Managers	120
Fully retired	50
International	120

### Recommendations:

That the AGM:-

- (1) Adjourn the meeting until a time and date during the October 2005 Conference, to be determined by the Management Board, once the remaining business on the agenda has been concluded, to enable the Accounts for the period to 31 March 2005 to be presented and formally adopted.
- (2) Approve the level of subscriptions proposed for the year commencing 1 October 2005 and
- (3) Approve the re-appointment of Messrs Seymour Taylor, Chartered Accountants, as Auditors for 2005/2006 and to authorise the Management Board to approve their remuneration.



# TREASURER'S REPORT

In accepting this recommendation the Board is minded to look for an October 2006 increase of the order of 5%, subject to confirmation at this time next year.

## **Transfer of Role of Society Treasurer**

After 10 years in the Honorary/Society Treasurer role, I shall be standing down at the AGM. David Clark, as Director General, is finalising arrangements for a smooth transition. My employer, Wycombe District Council, has been consistently supportive of the location of the small SOLACE finance function in the council offices and of my personal involvement, for which I am very grateful. The finance office will now be moving to Pontefract, co-located in SOLACE Enterprises Limited premises.

Thanks are due particularly to Heather Davis-Hall who has worked part time for SOLACE in the Wycombe offices for nearly 8 years in a Finance Assistant role. Heather's accumulated knowledge and her reliability will be missed. I would also like to thank two of my Wycombe colleagues, Janet Clements (Head of Administration) and Sylvia Brewer (until last year my P.A.) who have voluntarily taken on the roles of second and third signatories on SOLACE bank and investment accounts to ensure it has been 'business as normal' during my holiday periods.

The tasks involved over the past 10 years have, at times, been very challenging. The support of many SOLACE colleagues over this period has been much appreciated as we grappled with a range of change issues, and fortunately with a growing security of our financial base. The foresight of others in their determination to develop both the trading capacity of the Society and the accumulation of partnering funds has paid off well and I have learned a lot from working with these entrepreneurial spirits! I look forward to continuing to support the Society in its work when opportunities arise.

## **Richard Cummins**

Society Treasurer





# CORPORATE PARTNERS

## **The SOLACE Corporate Partner Programme**

### **Partners for progress**

2004/05 has seen the SOLACE Corporate Partner Programme go from strength to strength. There are now thirteen organisations, who work in the local government marketplace participating in the programme, five having joined in the last year.

Launched in 2001, the Corporate Partner Programme is an active public-private partnership between the corporate business community and SOLACE. The Programme represents an exciting opportunity for commercial sector business partners to work closely with local government, and is unique in that it strategically promotes and encourages the development and exchange of creative ideas, improved communications and innovative products and services. Partner working opens up important lines of communication and provides opportunities for the sharing of expertise, resources and best practice between professionals in the public and private sectors. We firmly believe that the business alliances we have built through the Programme are already making a significant contribution to our aim of providing modern local government and excellence in public service.

The main benefit of becoming a corporate partner is undoubtedly the opportunity to develop and strengthen relationships with the key decision makers of local government. Other benefits include niche marketing opportunities, a profile and presence at SOLACE events, product awareness, business planning advice and secondment and shadowing opportunities. Local government spends an average of £112 billion annually on delivering a wide range of services that impact daily on almost all citizens in the UK. This driving force alone makes the programme an attractive proposition for any organisation wishing to do business in the public sector.

For more detailed information about how the programme works in practice please go to Section 3 (page XXX). If you would like to subscribe to the programme as a business partner or support the programme as a SOLACE member, then contact Sonia Rheinlander, Business Relations Manager, on 0845 60210649 or [sonia.rheinlander@solace.org.uk](mailto:sonia.rheinlander@solace.org.uk)

## **Section 3 – Plans for 2005/06**

Excellence in Managing our relationships with Corporate Business Partners and First Class Communication and Brand Management with Corporate Business Partners Each partnership is bespoke Membership of



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

the Corporate Partner Programme is open to any company, organisation or business interested in keeping abreast of emerging local government trends, or who wishes to share ideas and management techniques with key local government decision makers. The Programme operates at three levels, bronze, silver and gold and the annual joining fee ranges from £10,000 - £70,000. We pride ourselves on having developed a bespoke relationship with each of our current business partners, at all levels of entry.

We agree a set of deliverables at the start of each relationship based upon our understanding of each other's business needs and how we these can add value to what SOLACE members do in their day-to-day roles. These are reviewed and developed continuously taking account of any new and influencing factors. Further on in this section you will find a snapshot of views from a selection of our business partners. These demonstrate what partnership working with SOLACE has meant to them and how they see relationships developing in the coming year.

The success of each relationship is entirely dependent on involvement and interaction with SOLACE members and we extend a huge thank you to all those members who have to date been willing to share their thinking and offer an understanding of the local government marketplace. Your expertise is the most valuable asset we have and we are keen to involve as many members as possible in working with our partners as the learning is a two-way process.

All partners have access to SOLACE events as delegates, receive regular member briefings and correspondence, contribute to SOLACE Focus and participate in research and development projects. There are opportunities for brand awareness and profile at events, the exclusive use of the SOLACE logo to endorse events and the opportunity to secure SOLACE members to speak at jointly branded events. In 2004 we embarked on the first of our mentoring and shadowing opportunities that have brought tangible benefits to both sides of the relationships. As we move into the 2005/06 period we will be concentrating on developing relationships at the silver level as well as deepening our relationships with existing partners at all levels.

## **Oracle: Benefits of partnership working**



Oracle Corporation UK Ltd is proud to be a founder Gold Partner of SOLACE.

Oracle - a company at the heart of the e-government revolution - has been working closely with local authorities across the country for a number of years. Oracle is

- the most widely used technology in local government with over 350 authorities using Oracle
- the most widely used financials application in county and unitary authorities





# CORPORATE PARTNERS

- the most widely used CRM system across local government, and pioneer of Multi-agency Working solutions
- the most widely used HR/Payroll system in the UK

Oracle has been very active over the last 12 months working with local authorities on the 'efficiency agenda' bringing to bear our own experience when over 20% of costs were taken out of the business in 2-3 years. We are finding that the practical knowledge we have, backing up the software products, makes for a compelling story for senior managers in local authorities.

Other topics of interest to both Oracle and the SOLACE membership include multi-agency, or partnership, working and the whole issue of security – of data of citizens and employees. Oracle's propositions in these areas have been tested informally thanks to chief executive meetings brokered by SOLACE. These meetings give us invaluable insight into how our customers think and the issues they face.

As with all true partnerships, the benefits are not one way. For example, Oracle is able to provide feedback to SOLACE on areas such as: a supplier's perspective on how local government is adopting e-government; obstacles to the delivery of the 2005 targets, implementation of CPA assessments; and early views of applied use of new technologies elsewhere in the world. More fundamentally, the better Oracle understands authorities' needs, the greater the chance of Oracle delivering products and services to meet those needs. And this in turn means authorities will be better placed to deliver services to their customers at a price that represents best value to taxpayers.

We look forward to continuing our relationship both with SOLACE and with individual Local Authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, as we become the natural partner for delivering efficient and responsive government.

<http://www.oracle.com>

## **Zurich Municipal: Developing solutions, sharing best practice**



The first step towards creating a solution to a problem is to understand the very nature of the problem. Risks can no longer be ignored. Disasters can no longer be brushed under the carpet. Catastrophes are demanding attention. Today the UK faces changing risks and threats. Life is changing for local authorities.

Zurich Municipal is not just about insurance. Our philosophy is not about creating a product that we think suits your needs.



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

Our top priority is partnership working – we need to understand the issues our public service customers face. But to get to the inside of the issue: we need close working relationships with local authorities.

Relationships built up by partnership arrangements, such as with SOLACE, are an essential part of thoroughly understanding our customers and the environments in which they work. Genuine opportunities are brought to light and through sharing experiences with our partners a clearer picture emerges of who our customers are, what they need and how Zurich Municipal can best support them. Our real objective is to get under the skin of local government and fully understand issues that affect you at strategic and operational levels. We need to get to grips with your motives and drivers.

Only then can we truly create lasting solutions, share best practice and ideas, and drive through improvements. Relationships and partnerships created by SOLACE are two-way; and that's the only way to make progress and deal with future risks, disasters and catastrophes. The real solution is about working together.

Zurich Municipal is the leading provider of risk and insurance solutions to Britain's local authorities. The company employs nearly 600 staff dedicated to providing expert advice and support to public service providers. For information visit <http://www.zurichmunicipal.com>

With a track record built over more than a century we have the expertise to contribute to the delivery of our customers' service.

Zurich Municipal is part of Zurich Financial Services, an insurance-based financial services provider with a global network that focuses its activities on its key markets in North America and Europe. Founded in 1872, Zurich is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. Zurich has offices in more than 50 countries and employs about 57,000 people.

Zurich is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

## **BT Education & Local Government:**

### **Partnerships are two-way**



BT is dedicated to providing innovative and practical information communication technology (ICT) solutions, enabling authorities to transform their business to better serve their citizens. As a consequence, BT regularly reviews its solutions to ensure that they continue to meet the needs and challenges facing local authorities.





# CORPORATE PARTNERS

To do this it is vital we keep abreast of the current issues that Local Authorities face and our partnership with SOLACE allows us to do this with a greater degree of accuracy and speed.

Over the past year BT has worked with SOLACE and a number of their members identifying core trends and issues in Local Government, which has assisted us in developing new propositions and has allowed us to prepare our 2005/06 business plan with a higher degree of focus.

Attending the many SOLACE events during the year we have been able to enhance our existing relationships with current customers and build new relationships with others. We also organised a number of job shadowing opportunities via the SOLACE network. This experience has been invaluable in developing BT's knowledge of the key issues facing local authorities and how ICT can be an enabler for change.

Partnerships are two-way and over the past year BT has offered, via SOLACE workshops, advice and guidance on how the use of ICT can benefit Local Authorities in achieving their vision. For instance, we ran a workshop at last year's SOLACE Annual Conference on Continual Professional Development and eLearning and hosted a joint BT/SOLACE lunch at the LGA Conference, that focused on transforming the workforce for the 21st Century. We are hoping to replicate these events during the coming year.

BT is very much looking forward to continuing our relationship with SOLACE this year, building on the successes of the last 12 months and ensuring a mutually beneficial partnership to both parties

<http://www.bt.com>

## **Ordnance Survey: Making joined-up government a reality**



Being a SOLACE gold partner has helped us strengthen our relationship with local government. It is an important relationship for us in that it enables us to emphasise the benefits of GI in boosting efficiency and cost control, improving public services and making joined-up government a reality.

Our data already has a wide range of uses within local government, including helping to process benefit claims and determining school catchments areas, emergency response and contingency planning, environmental services, and transport and road maintenance planning.

In many cases, different types of geographic data from different sources have been brought together to provide rapid analysis of complex issues, resulting in improved service delivery. Increasingly, local authorities are developing online services for the citizen and using the power of geography to meet e-government targets.

In addition, Ordnance Survey data is used extensively by other strategic partners such as utility companies - with which local authorities are strengthening links under new legislation - for critical asset management.



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

Other major users of our data include central government departments, public bodies and agencies, and many private sector companies.

The SOLACE relationship has enabled us to contribute regularly to member briefings, paving the way towards greater sharing of best practice in GI and the chance to make joined-up, online services a reality.

Our contributions to SOLACE Focus have included articles about the provision of emergency mapping following the Carlisle floods, the use of GI for civil contingency planning, and the benefits of integrated data to meet e-government targets. We have focused on practical case studies covering a range of local authorities including the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham and Hammersmith & Fulham, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Durham County Council, and Birmingham and Portsmouth city councils.

<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>

## **Fujitsu Services: Enhanced planning**

Fujitsu's business partnership with SOLACE has enabled us to develop our insight into the issues facing local authorities and their chief executives. The relationship has enhanced our strategic planning process as we are able to build on a platform of knowledge and empathy. We are able to recognise and respond to the leadership challenges in driving change for improved public service - SOLACE helps to share the vision.

<http://uk.fujitsu.com>

## **Energy Saving Trust: Sustainable strategies**

Local authority chief executives play a key role in the fight against climate change and developing sustainable energy strategies at a local level. Working with SOLACE offers us a wide range of benefits, such as the opportunity to network and engage with local authority senior managers at the annual dinner and talking to them through the regular newsletter. We look forward to continuing to build upon the successful relationship we have developed with SOLACE over the coming months.

<http://www.est.org.uk>





# CORPORATE PARTNERS

## **Public-i: Access to decision makers**

Public-i are the leading provider of web-based multimedia tools and services to the Public Sector in the UK. By focusing specifically on the Public Sector, Public-i has been able to develop a range of services that specifically assist Local Authorities to improve their transparency and communication, enabling increased interaction with a local community. Public-i is increasingly assisting CEOs and Senior Officers to communicate more effectively and efficiently both internally and externally. Public-i became corporate partners of SOLACE in 2003. Keith Young (CEO of Public-i) believes that 'the accessibility that SOLACE provides to key decision makers within local authorities has undoubtedly been critical in significantly increasing our sales over the last 12 months. This combined with the advice provided in the business planning sessions has enabled Public-i to ensure that our services continue to develop to match our market needs. We had no hesitation in renewing this corporate partnership for a further 12 months.'

<http://www.public-i.info>

## **The Insight Organisation: Validating solutions**

Insight's leading commercial thinking demands the direct understanding of sector needs and trends, something SOLACE partnership brings. Our transformational business redesign is driven by a progressive view of the needs of modern government at the local level.

Through direct contact with your key influencers, we understand your evolving strategic requirements and constraints, and validate our solutions. Unity, our recently announced partnership with Steria, has been formed as a direct response to Chief Executives' need for joined-up commercial and business change. Unity brings new ideas, learning, and expertise and delivers an independent and innovative vision for local government.

<http://www.insight-organisation.com>



# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

## **SOLACE Northern Ireland Branch Activity 2004 / 2005**

The Northern Ireland branch continues to gain in influence and is well placed to embrace the significant change agenda that is underway within the local government sector. The following headings highlight key areas of activity during the past 12 months and outline priorities for the year ahead.

### **Development Plan & Policy Officer**

In June 2004 the Northern Ireland branch of SOLACE, in an agreement with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, employed Stephen Finlay as a joint Policy Officer. This arrangement continued until December 2004 when the NI branch secured funding from the SOLACE Foundation to employ the Policy Officer on a full-time basis. Stephen subsequently moved from NILGA to become the first full-time Policy Officer for the NI branch.

Shortly after taking up his post the Policy Officer produced a Development Plan for the branch. This plan was adopted by the membership in January 2004 and provided the Office Bearers, Policy Officer and members with a challenging programme of aims and objectives. At the commencement of 2005 the branch has achieved - and in many cases surpassed - the majority of objectives specified in the 2004 plan.

### **Review of Public Administration**

The relationship between SOLACE NI and senior figures within the Northern Ireland Civil Service is now well established. As the re-organisation of the public service gathers pace such communication will be vital.

Members have contributed constructively to the RPA consultation process and have engaged both formally and informally with Greg McConnell and his team. The branch followed its original submission in February 2004 with a further paper in September 2004 setting out the key features and functions for a strong local government model for the Province. This paper was written by the Policy Officer and included the findings of study visits to English local authorities.





# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

## Integration with the SOLACE Family

The Policy Officer has established a close working relationship with SOLACE Headquarters as well as with colleagues in SOLACE Scotland and SOLACE Wales. In addition the Policy Officer helped to arrange and facilitate several visits by SOLACE staff to Northern Ireland including;

- Andrew Coleman on behalf of SOLACE Enterprises (February 2004). This visit culminated in the first 'Aiming to be a Chief Executive' course to be held in Northern Ireland. (October 2004)
- The Director General, Assistant Director General, Governance Manager and Executive Manager addressed the branch as part of their visitation to UK branches. (September 2004)

The Office Bearers and Policy Officer have attended the following events:

- SOLACE UK Annual Dinner (2004 & 2005) - the opportunity was also taken to meet LGA and SOLACE leaders at separate meetings in London.
- SOLACE Annual General Meeting in Bournemouth. (July 2004)
- SOLACE UK Conferences. (2003 & 2004)

## Corporate Partners Programme

During 2004 the Policy Officer developed a Corporate Partners Programme tailored to meet the requirements of the Northern Ireland branch. The programme was circulated to a number of prospective private sector companies with a view to securing a maximum of three partners. The Office Bearers and Policy Officer consequently met with representatives of several organisations. In September 2004 the branch secured its first gold partner in Northern Ireland based IT company, Consilium Technologies. The agreement with Consilium extends through to December 2005 and is worth a total of £10,666. Consilium was joined in January 2005 by a silver-level partner in employment and health & safety consultancy firm, Croner Consulting (Ireland). This agreement is worth a further 5K over a twelve month period.

A number of formal and informal corporate partner events have been planned for 2005. These include presentations to the branch and opportunities for social interaction between partner representatives and Chief Executives. The first such opportunity was arranged on 22nd January 2005 at a Johann Strauss Gala held at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. SOLACE sponsored a VIP reception which was attended by over 30 people and provided an opportunity for members, partner representatives, and government officials to network in an informal environment.



# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

## International Engagement

On the international scene, the Policy Officer received a SOLACE Foundation Bursary to attend the ICMA Conference in San Diego, California in October where he was joined at the conference by the 2004 branch Chairman, Wavell Moore. As a consequence of their attendance, links have been forged with the Minnesota City Managers' Association with a view to future cooperation and exchange.

## Administration

A SOLACE NI website was created in 2004 and this is regularly updated with key information on policy, partners, events and meetings. The Policy Officer continues to facilitate the monthly branch and executive meetings by preparing agendas and briefing papers, recording minutes, responding to consultations and dealing with items of correspondence. He sends members a weekly e-briefing on issues pertinent to the local scene and performs the important task of liaising with councils, civil servants, officer groups, stakeholders and with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

## Priorities for 2005

The branch has a number of key priorities for the period 2005 / 2006, including;

- The development of a branch response to the final RPA consultation published March 2005 on the future of public administration in Northern Ireland
- A two day SOLACE NI regional conference to be held in autumn 2005
- An increase in branch funding through event sponsorship
- The commencement of a process on an agreed policy agenda for local government with the DoE Local Government Division
- Further engagement with the local government officer groups and stakeholders.





# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

## The role of the SOLACE Wales Executive Officer

In recognition of the importance of making progress on developing a positive and constructive response to the devolved government arrangements in Wales, Solace UK has funded a full time Executive Officer to support the work of SOLACE (Wales). In November 2004 Gareth Newell was appointed as Executive Officer for SOLACE Wales on full time basis.

With the dynamic culture change in evidence in other SOLACE branches in the UK, it was important that the Welsh branch affect a step change in its activities in order to catch up with the good work already done by its sister branches in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

To achieve this Gareth has drafted a Development Plan for SOLACE Wales in consultation with the branch honorary officers which lays out the expansive and ambitious vision for the society in the Principality over the coming three years. The Development Plan was formally endorsed by the SOLACE Wales Chief Executive members at the inaugural National Council meeting on 18 February 2005.

## Current Activities

### Connections and Partnerships

- Links have been established with the Department of Local Government and Economic Development, including a meeting with the Head of Department.
- Links have been developed with WLGA Policy team. The Executive Officer works from their office 1 day a week. The Executive Officer also attends relevant policy events run by the WLGA, and recently represented SOLACE Wales at a Heads of Corporate Policy meeting.
- Links have been developed with the Audit Commission in Wales. The Executive Officer recently spent two days working with the Commission, meeting relevant officials and working with Auditors within a Local Authority.
- Links have been strengthened within SOLACE through maintaining regular contact and sharing information and best practice with Mike Bennett in London, Cara Urquhart in Scotland and Stephen Finlay in Northern Ireland. SOLACE Director General David Clark and Assistant Director General Mike Bennett have visited Cardiff to discuss the SOLACE Wales Development Plan with Gareth Newell and Byron Davies, Honorary Secretary for SOLACE Wales.
- Links have been strengthened within SOLACE (Wales) through meeting with Chief Executives on an individual basis.



# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

- In 2005 – 2006 the branch will be looking to develop links with European Organisations such as UDiTE with a view to feeding Wales specific issues directly into the European policy agenda.
- The SOLACE (Wales) website has been developed as a knowledge resource for branch members.

## Policy

- The Society has replied to the following National Assembly consultations documents:
  - Performance Management Framework
  - Making the Connections: Delivering a Better Public Service for Wales
  - Wales Transport Bill
  - Restrictions on Political Activity
  - Wales Spatial Plan
  - The Potential Capping of Local Authority Budgets
  - Providing Indemnities to Members and Officers
  - Supporting People – Announcement of Cuts
- The Society has also responded to consultations from the Audit Commission in Wales.
- As a consequence of the above responses the society office holders have been invited to meet the Minister for Local Government and Public Services and with Jeremy Coleman, Director of the newly established Wales Audit Office. Mr Coleman has also agreed to address the upcoming SOLACE Wales / WLGA meeting in June.

Copies of each consultation response can be found on the SOLACE (Wales) website.

- A draft portfolio system has been devised whereby each key policy area will be allocated a lead SOLACE member who will act as the SOLACE (Wales) representative.

## Organisational Development

- A Development Plan which lays out the vision for moving the society forward in Wales 2005 – 2008 has been drafted.
- A new financial basis has agreed to be established, whereby all transactions within the Society are transparent and auditable.
- In 2005 – 2006 the branch are looking forward to building a relationship with SOLACE Enterprises in Wales, with a view to having a Business Development Manager and a strategy in place by November 2005.





# REPORT FROM THE BRANCHES

## Events

- SOLACE Wales will hold a conference on Welsh Public Services in March 2006 to be attended by high-level representatives from across the public services in Wales.
- The inaugural SOLACE (Wales) National Council took place on 18 February 2005, followed by a meeting between SOLACE Wales and the WLGA
- A structure of 4 such annual meetings has been agreed with the WLGA in the 4 "regions" of Wales for 2005 – 2006.
- The branch will meet with Officers from the National Assembly for Wales for a one day seminar in November 2005.
- The Executive Officer has attended National SOLACE events including:
  - Annual SOLACE Conference and AGM
  - Houses of Parliament Reception
  - SOLACE UK Annual Dinner

## Membership & Marketing

- SOLACE Wales is involved with discussions with the National Assembly for Wales, the WLGA and Welsh Universities surrounding the development of an MPA in Public Service Management, with SOLACE Wales to act as the accrediting body. The branch hope to have this in place by early 2006.
- The Executive Officer is working collaboratively with The National Assembly for Wales Graduate Development Group to develop the SOLACE Graduate Scheme in the Welsh context.
- The Executive Officer has worked with branch honorary officers on the design and development of SOLACE (Wales) specific stationary and corporate id.

## Finance

- SOLACE Wales are currently in the process of attracting Corporate Partners. The branch Corporate Partners Programme was recently circulated to a number of prospective private sector companies with ties to Local Government in Wales. So far the response has been very positive, with the branch looking forward to developing productive partnerships with its Partners over the coming year.



## EVENTS 2004 / 2005

Networking opportunities are something that SOLACE does well. Its annual conference, annual dinner, annual House of Commons reception and annual senior managers conference are all firmly established in the SOLACE diary because of the networking opportunities they offer. This year has been no exception with numbers at all of the events up on previous years – almost as soon as the plates been cleared from the annual dinner at the Savoy, tables were already being booked for next year!

Confirmation that SOLACE is good at networking came in the Society's first Members Survey, presented to AGM, which found that half of the respondents who had joined SOLACE in the past five years had done so because of its networking opportunities for support and access to information. The survey found that networking was given as one of the main reasons for attending annual conference (91%), annual dinner (80%), House of Commons reception (84%) and senior managers conference (67%).

Interestingly, the main reason for attending the senior managers conference was relevant content/speakers (88%). The relevant speakers this year included Trish Haines, CEX Reading BC, and Helen Bailey, CEX Islington – then both just over a year into the job. Both spoke about what it was like to be a CEX, what they had found particularly challenging and advice and tips on how to cope. The 'new kids on the block' then handed over to two 'old timers' – Sir Bob Kerlake at Sheffield and Tim Byles at Norfolk, who spoke about how to transform organisations.

Sir Bob told conference never to forget the importance of communication. He said that communication doesn't happen in 'one go' it is a 'relentless and continuous' process. Byles urged delegates to take advantage of the support offered by SOLACE: 'Someone has always been in the situation you find yourself in. SOLACE creates great opportunities for peer support, advice and a sounding board for new ideas.'

New ideas were evident at annual conference in Bournemouth. Even the simple step of including the registration desk in the networking lounge appeared to create more of a buzz as did the more time allowed for questions. Delegates clearly approved of the more time allowed to challenge and share experiences with speakers who included MP Stephen Byers; Soham Inquiry chair Sir Michael Bichard; Local Government minister Nick Raynsford; Harvard professor Mark Moore; and 'efficiency champions' Barry Quirk and Tim Byles.

The chance to talk, debate and to share experiences will be extended even further at this year's conference with the introduction of 'speed dating' – where groups facing similar management challenges will gather at designated areas to discuss common problems. The booking form, too, will be trying to involve delegates more by asking them to provide two 'hot topics' for discussion.





## EVENTS 2004 / 2005

The hot topic at the annual House of Commons reception was the efficiency review. Tim Byles, SOLACE chair, challenged John Oughton, CEX at the Office of Government Commerce, to bring forward the scoring to this financial year. One of the 'inhibitors' to progress, said Byles, was that the clock officially started ticking in April 2005: 'People like me would like to see credit for local government for what is happening already. Local authorities are keen to get on with this agenda.'

SOLACE, too, has an agenda – to promote excellence in public service. And one of the ways it has moved further along that line is to launch the SOLACE graduate programme, designed to bring graduates new to the public sector together with each other and with SOLACE members. Members of recognised public sector graduate development programmes in the UK can join SOLACE at a nominal annual fee of £25.

SOLACE Director General David Clark said: 'It is absolutely right that SOLACE supports graduates new to the public sector. Our strength as a Society is our members and the knowledge we collectively hold. To widen our membership and opportunities to share and add to that knowledge can only strengthen the Society and support the potential public sector leaders of the future.'

Each year SOLACE will organise two one-day national events specifically for members of the scheme and operate a Graduate Focus Group through which members will be able to input to SOLACE debates. The Focus Group will report to the Society's Management Board. Watch this space, as they say!

- All these events and other Society news is reported regularly in the Society's e-newsletter, SOLACE Focus



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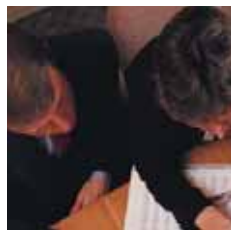
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