



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH EAST

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A New Year message from Jonathan Blackie

Regional Director, Government Office for the North East



Jonathan Blackie Regional Director,
Government Office for the North East

2009 has been an important year for Government Office for the North East with our first Select and Grand Committees, support for the Regional Minister during a period of economic uncertainty, and working more closely than ever with our government departments.

Most recently our role working with One North East and the public and private sectors in the Tees Valley to help develop the economy following the Corus announcement, has been welcomed by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills.

Given this has been achieved against a backdrop of downsizing by almost 50 per cent makes our achievements even more remarkable.

What encourages us in the key work we do for the region, is knowing that our partners and stakeholders do value our role, as we value your support. Our last stakeholder survey, carried out by Ipsos MORI, said 81 per cent of you are satisfied or very satisfied with our performance (a 9 per cent increase since 2005). You have said that our strengths are our regional knowledge and understanding of local issues, one-to-one relationships with stakeholders and our helpful and enthusiastic staff.

And it is those skills which Government Office for the North East will take forward into the uncertainties of 2010. Not just a new year but a new decade and one which has its own immediate challenges with a General Election due in the first half of the year.

But throughout the challenges and opportunities ahead we look forward to continuing to work with you all as the face of central government in the region helping to transform lives and places through strong partnerships with people like yourselves.

Jonathan Blackie

PM praises Community Safety teams

Community Safety Teams across the country were praised by the Prime Minister for their work in making communities safer and reducing harm caused by alcohol and drugs.

This included Judith Million's team in Government Office for the North East (GONE). The team works with partnerships across the region to challenge and support them to improve outcomes for local people. This has involved a series of master classes on key areas of policy and delivery and a successful partnership with the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership to deliver bespoke training to over two hundred and fifty community safety

professionals.

Building public confidence is a particular focus for the team's work. GONE led a successful regional Confidence conference in October which brought together experts in the field with community safety practitioners to share effective practice.

Judith Million is clear that "Partnership is key to achievement. In the North East we have effective, efficient and highly motivated organisations and individuals working with us to make the North East a safer place to live and work. It is very heartening that the Prime Minister has acknowledged the work that we are all doing."

Projections in Practice week

A series of events, organised by Government Office for the North East, in conjunction with DEFRA and the UK Climates Impact Programme (UKCIP), helped organisations understand the implications of climate change and plan for the future.

With UK Climate Projections showing that we are already locked into 30 years of climate change because of past greenhouse gas emissions, the UK faces warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, with more drought, heat-waves, flooding and sea-level rise.

The Projections in Practice seminars, workshops and training sessions, held in November 2009, showcased new products which allow organisations to find out what the climate will be like in their area over the next few decades. Events were held in Government Office premises at Citygate in Newcastle as well as in Middlesbrough and a Natural Environment session was hosted by Natural England in their Newburn Riverside building. Events featured expert presentations, discussions and detailed training on how to manipulate the data behind the UK Climate Projections 09.

Feedback on the events has been positive with all respondents rating the events good or better and the key findings from the projections being particularly well received.

Understanding climate change is vital to business continuity as Jonathan Blackie, Regional Director at Government Office for the North East said:

"These seminars organised by my office helped organisations assess how their business might be affected by climate related issues. The challenge is for each organisation to put plans in place to make sure action is taken to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive impacts of climate change and be in a position to take advantage of some of the business opportunities that a changing climate may bring."

Further information on the projections is freely available on the UKCP09 website <http://ukclimateprojections.defra.gov.uk>

Information on the Government's Adapting to Climate Change Programme can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/adaptation

Dealing with Later Life

In 2007, for the first time, the number of people over 65 exceeded the number of children under 16.

In response to the needs of an older population Government Office has appointed Alan Gerono to lead on issues dealing with later life and specifically to promote the government's strategy for an ageing society "Building a Society for All Ages!"



Alan Gerono

Alan brings a wealth of experience to this area having previously been with Age Concern. He is working with a range of organisations across the private, public and third sector to look at how different services such as housing provision, transport access, health and information technology cater for and support older people.

Alan said "In my role at Government Office

I am listening to older people's views, assisting with older people involvement and encouraging public sector bodies to take a strong interest in later life issues.

"Older people's voices need to be heard – they have an untapped wealth of views and experience – and regional organisations need to consider what they can do for older people today and in the future."

As part of his role Alan produces regular Later Life Bulletins which are being sent to those working in, or interested in, this sector. These Later Life bulletins aim to provide up-to-date information to help partners plan for our ageing society. www.go-ne.gov.uk/gone/publications/

If you would like to receive regular copies then please email alan.gerono@gone.gsi.gov.uk

Severe Weather

The prolonged spell of exceptionally cold weather means that staff across a range of industries are working extremely hard to minimize the disruption caused by the snow.

Nick Brown, Minister for the North East, paid tribute to workers at the sharp end in maintaining front line services. Speaking at the Summit for North East Local Government in Gateshead, he highlighted the extremely hard work they were doing under difficult circumstances.

The regional resilience team at Government Office for the North East is monitoring the situation in the north east and collecting data on stocks of salt to inform discussions in the Salt Cell which the government established on 6 January. We are also participating in national telekits with the Department for Transport (DfT) and will ensure we reflect the regional situation

to them. In addition we are monitoring the wider impacts of the severe weather on services in the region and ensuring that colleagues in central departments are aware of them.

Government Office for the North East does not advise on where deliveries should be directed; this is the function of the Salt Cell.

Our staff have also been liaising with local authorities here in the North East making the most of strong partnerships to encourage mutual aid and find solutions when needed.

The Salt Cell, led by DfT, is a national advisory salt distribution system. This grouping includes representatives from Government departments, the devolved administrations and the Local Government Association.

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