



Looking to the Future

A focus on food and the rural economy

Question Time

Comparing recruitment schemes

London 2012

Examining the economic legacy of the Games

Across the Border

Learning about the Scottish Parliament



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Our 30th Anniversary year concluded with an exhibition of the IPT Fellows Cartoon Collection in Portcullis House and a reception for those who had bridged the divide over the years by undertaking a Fellowship or participating in one of our study programmes in the Palace of Westminster and the

European Parliament. The numbers that joined us for the evening certainly showed the wide reach the IPT has had over the years. For anyone that missed viewing the exhibition, it can be seen on the University of Kent website at <http://library.kent.ac.uk/cartoons/>

I urge those parliamentarians who have not yet participated in our unique Fellowship scheme to consider doing so. We offer a broad range of learning opportunities in a variety of industry sectors and can tailor the attachment to your specific interests.

Those in business might welcome the chance to update their knowledge and skills on legislative processes and related issues by undertaking an IPT study programme.

This issue of *The Bridge* focuses on food and the rural economy, both of which have been significantly affected by a variety of issues over the past few years. In order to remain in business, these industries have needed to respond to changing circumstances and public opinion. With so many conflicting issues, including increased globalisation, climate change and food safety, it is increasingly necessary to try and achieve a sustainable balance.

Best wishes for 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Muggeridge".

Sally Muggeridge
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Introducing...

The Rt Hon Baroness Boothroyd, OM PC, Joint Vice President 2007 -

We are pleased to announce that Baroness Boothroyd has agreed to become a Joint Vice President of the IPT alongside John Sacher CBE.

Baroness Boothroyd began her parliamentary career as Labour MP for West Bromwich in 1973 which she represented until her retirement as Speaker in 2000. During an active parliamentary career, she was appointed an Assistant Government Whip in 1974 and she was also an MEP from 1975-77. She was the first woman to be elected Speaker of the House of Commons in the 700 year history of Parliament. Her eight years in the Speaker's Chair made her one of the most admired figures in British public life and won her international acclaim.

A stern critic of Ministers and others who forgot their responsibilities to Parliament, she told MPs in her farewell address "Rejoice in your inheritance, defend your rights and remember always that the privileges the House enjoys were dearly won and must never be squandered."

Following her retirement from the Commons, she was raised to the peerage in 2001 where she sits as an independent Cross-Bencher.

Her position as Chancellor of the Open University, which she held from 1994-2006, demonstrates her support for continued education throughout adult life, an aim that the IPT contributes to in its education of parliamentarians and business people.

Baroness Boothroyd attended some of the IPT's 30th Anniversary celebratory events last year. On becoming Joint Vice President of the IPT, Baroness Boothroyd said "I have long admired the work of the IPT and am delighted to support its important charitable objectives in seeking to promote industry and commerce and the efficient and effective administration of government for public benefit.

The need for parliamentarians to expand their knowledge of industry and the impact of the legislation they make is as important now as it was when I first joined the House. Likewise, it is vital for business to understand the mechanics of Parliament both here and in Brussels, through the IPT's educational programmes, to fully engage with law makers. The UK economy can only benefit when those in our business community and our legislators open the channels of communication.

During my time as Speaker I took great pleasure in hosting the IPT's annual President's Dinner at my residence in the Palace of Westminster as I was keen to show visitors how Parliament worked. Continuing this theme, I look forward to my role as Vice President, allowing me the opportunity to encourage this process of mutual dialogue."



The Rt Hon Baroness Boothroyd, OM PC at the IPT's 30th Anniversary Dinner, April 2007

Looking to the

Over recent years the rural economy and, in particular, the agri-food industry has had to overcome significant setbacks. In addition, the relationship between farmers, food manufacturers, food retailers, and the consumer has been evolving in response to changing public opinion. In this edition of *The Bridge*, we analyse some of the issues encountered.



The health of the rural economy

Neil Ward is Professor of Rural and Regional Development and Director of the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University.

The problems of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Bluetongue in the summer of 2007 triggered renewed interest in the state of the rural economy. The outbreaks served as reminders of the extensive disruption of the 2001 FMD crisis, which was estimated to have cost £8bn and resulted in the slaughter of almost 6.5m farm animals.

Following the 2007 outbreaks, the Prime Minister initiated two reviews. First, he asked Stuart Burgess, the Government's Rural Advocate and Chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) to prepare a report on the ways in which the rural economy can be strengthened. Second, he appointed Liberal Democrat MP Matthew Taylor to carry out a review of how planning and land use can better support rural business and provision of affordable rural housing and report in July 2008. These two exercises coincide with the work of the Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee which is holding an inquiry into the Government's approach to economic development in rural areas. Together, these reviews and enquiries signal heightened interest and concern about the health of the rural economy, unprecedented since the last major FMD crisis.

Animal disease outbreaks are usually accompanied by media coverage of beleaguered farmers, with farming organisations complaining about economic hardship and calling for compensation. It is easy to slip into the view that rural economies are principally about farming, but this is less and less the case. Just under one fifth of England's population (9.5m) live in rural areas. The number of people working in agriculture fell by a third between 1990 and 2005, and farming shed almost half of its hired labour – the regular farm-workers – over the same period. Agriculture now employs less than 3% of the rural workforce. Most people in rural areas work in the service sector. Together, distribution, hotels and restaurants, public services and banking employ two-thirds of the rural workforce and a further 15% work in manufacturing. Indeed, the sectoral composition of the rural workforce does not differ much from urban areas.

On aggregate, England's rural economies have not been doing badly over the last decade either. In percentage terms, more jobs have been created in rural areas than in urban and business start up rates are also higher. Primary industries have continued to shed labour, but this has not generally undermined local employment prospects. Between 1998 and 2002, some 26,000 jobs were lost in agriculture and fishing. However, there were 230,000 net new jobs created in distribution, hotels and restaurants, and in banking and finance in these areas. Overall, the number of jobs in England's rural areas grew by 275,000 – a proportionately greater improvement over the five year period (5.3%) than for urban areas (4.7%).

Prevailing concerns about economic life in rural areas now centre on housing, services and climate change. The first of these is probably the most urgent. Although levels of employment in rural areas are relatively buoyant, incomes are

generally lower. When combined with the desirability of housing in these areas, this means young people on modest incomes are struggling to afford housing. Research for the Commission for Rural Communities has shown that only 55% of newly forming households projected over the next five years will be able to afford a house in their own ward. In the south east, south west and eastern regions, the proportions unable to access the housing market is expected to be nearer 70%. Average rural earnings of £17,400 would only be sufficient to fund the purchase of a home in 28% of rural wards. In certain rural areas, especially on the coast, the affordable rural housing crisis is exacerbated by the growth of second home-owning, which prices local people out of the market.

The Government established an Affordable Rural Housing Commission which reported in 2006 but we are yet to hear whether or how its recommendations for addressing the problem are to be adopted. Unfortunately, the new Regional Spatial Strategies in the English regions seem to be reducing the allocations for new housing in rural areas still further in the interests of urban regeneration and because of concerns about commuting by car. In rural Northumberland, for example, local authorities' annual allocations for new house-building are being pared back by as much as a third by 2020.

The economic vibrancy we have seen over the past decade in rural areas is threatened by the now acute problems of housing affordability. The risk is that rural areas become the exclusive preserve of only the most affluent households, as those younger people on less than average incomes find themselves forced to move to towns. Balanced communities, with a mix of different people, livelihoods and housing types look like an ever more distant goal.

Animal disease outbreaks flare up rapidly and cause great drama and concern in the media. Notwithstanding this, the real threat to the rural economy comes from the steady but relentless transformation of the countryside as a living-space for only the more wealthy.

At a glance...	
Percentage of total workforce in the agri-food sector (2006):	13.9%
Median age of the agricultural workforce:	52 years
Average Net Farm Income (2006-07):	£21,300
Contribution to the economy from agriculture (2006):	£5.6bn
Percentage of UK's total land area used for agriculture (2006):	71% (17.5m hectares)
Imports of food, feed and drink (2005):	£23.4bn, 8.6% of total UK imports
Exports of food, feed and drink (2005):	£9.9bn, 4.7% of total UK exports
UK Self-sufficiency of all food (2006):	58.1%
Percentage of total household final consumption expenditure spent on food and drink (2006):	20.5%

Figures supplied by DEFRA



What's on the menu? – the consumers' perspective

Barbara Saunders, Foodaware Consultant, explores the consumers' perspective of the food industry.

The past 10 years have seen a vast expansion in the range of foods available to customers in the UK. Thousands of new products are introduced each year; ready meals to suit every palate and occasion; and a year round supply of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy produce from every corner of the globe. With increasing emphasis on independent assurance and a vast array of quality marks, it could be said that consumers have never had it so good in the food sector.

During this time, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has become established as a trusted and reliable source of advice and guardian of food safety. Food safety is less of a concern for the public than in the days when BSE, Salmonella in eggs, and contaminants in fish made daily headlines. Yet there is no room for complacency.

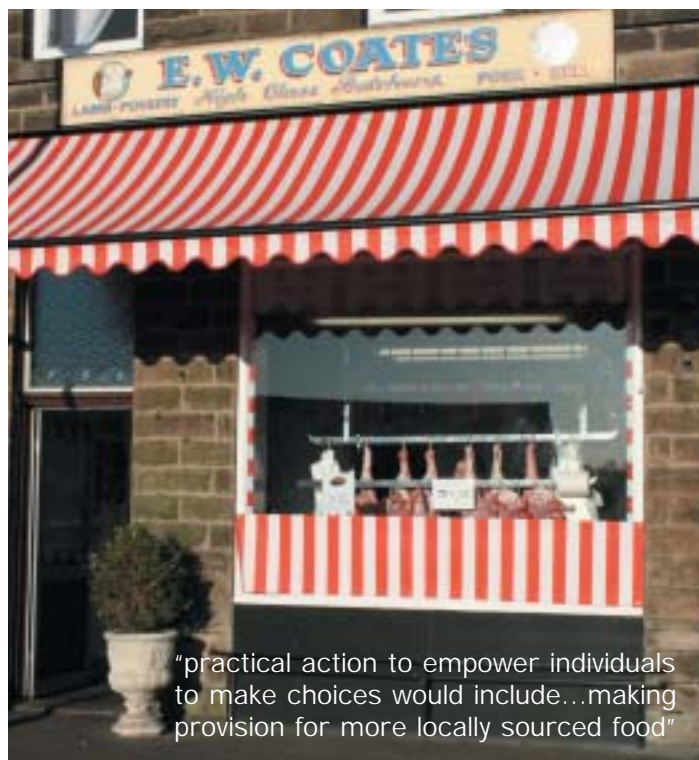
Foodaware, an independent voice for grassroots consumers, has seen a significant shift in the policy issues about which its members are concerned. Issues relating to diet and health, informative and reliable labelling, animal health and welfare, and sustainable food production and distribution are all firmly on the agenda.

Obesity, diet and health issues affect all age groups and sections of society. But while the FSA bus tours the country encouraging kids to cook, new standards introduced for school meals and healthy eating messages surround us, there is still a notable lack of emphasis on cooking skills, food hygiene and food science in the school curriculum.

A generation of people acknowledge that they don't cook for lack of time and/or skills and know little about food safety. Industry is keen to assure the food it produces where high standards and independent testing are essential features for assurance schemes which brand products with quality marks and which generally command a price premium. While this is vital so that the public's trust is not misplaced and any labelling claims for welfare-friendly schemes can be relied upon, high safety and quality standards must continue to be regulated at national and international level.

Today's headlines seem to suggest that we are all at risk from the sins of excess and the ills of modern society. Inevitably, the reality is more complex. We live in an increasingly diverse society and viewing consumers as a homogeneous group will lead to simplistic and potentially inappropriate regulatory solutions.

Some consumers, particularly the elderly and those who live alone, would like smaller portions when eating out as well as shopping. Different population groups are at risk from a shortage of particular nutrients; women of child-bearing age may be deficient in folic acid for example, while the elderly and house-bound may lack vitamin D, and recent cases of rickets have raised questions about the nutritional status of some low income and ethnic groups. Work is underway within the EU to set safety standards for vitamins and minerals. Whilst this approach has received broad support, the EU must ensure that the levels of safety are appropriate, only achieved through consultation with consumers.



Policy makers and industry must take account of the consumer's views before decisions are reached. This can be seen in the industry's response to the growing demand for organic foods that are now commanding a larger market share, reflecting consumers' concern for animal welfare, nutrition and use of pesticides.

Additionally, Foodaware members are increasingly concerned about the potential impact of climate change on many aspects of daily life. The issues and possible implications are complex and those who have been seeking to raise awareness about, for example, food miles and excessive food packaging should be commended. Identifying practical action to empower individuals to make choices would include providing reliable information about a product's origin and making provision for more locally sourced food. Emphasis in the forthcoming Climate Change Bill is understandably on the setting up of an Advisory Body and deciding targets for reducing carbon emissions. Much work still needs to be done within Government, European and International bodies to consider the implications for food supply and demand.

Our changing climate brings with it many unknowns including potential implications for the Common Agriculture Policy, putting pressure on the countryside and domestic food supply from increasing demand for bio-fuels, physical effects on crops and the usage of pesticides and herbicides. These and many more questions are in need of informed discussion so the consumer voice can be heard by policy makers and thereby help to influence the outcomes in the public interest.

For more information on Foodaware, go to www.foodaware.co.uk



The 'Farm to Fork' Fellowship

Jeremy Wright MP, Conservative Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, explains what he learnt on his IPT Fellowship.

Left: Jeremy Wright MP milking cows on his 'Farm to Fork' Fellowship

An IPT Fellowship is designed to give parliamentarians experience and better understanding of a business or industry of which they have little prior knowledge. This left me with a very wide range of possibilities, but I settled on exploring the potentially troubled relationship between those who produce our food and those who retail it. In the course of my 18 day Fellowship, I manhandled dead sheep, milked cows, and mountaineered inside a fish-smoking chimney – now that is work experience worthy of the name! My time was divided between supermarkets (Waitrose and the Co-operative) and agriculture, where I visited three farms, the National Farmers Union, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and Farmers Weekly magazine.

The perception of farmers among our increasingly urban population is mixed and mostly wrong. It comes from either Turner landscapes or the idea that farmers are fabulously wealthy landowners who observe their vast, underpaid workforces through the tinted windows of their Range Rovers. The farmers I know work long hours with little help, at the mercy of the elements and sometimes their customers, the supermarkets. It is common to hear stories of huge supermarket chains expecting farmers to bear the pain of special offers or lapses in consumer demand, whilst sharing little of their vast and growing profits with their suppliers. I wanted to explore this from both sides of the argument.

The farmers and other agricultural organisations I spent time with, told me and showed me, that farming life can be hard, but the supermarkets are not entirely to blame. Piles of paperwork, the management of disease by farmers and the Government and the challenge of recruiting the next generation of farmers all play their part. There are also the problems rural communities face more generally. Housing in the countryside is often well beyond the financial reach of those who have grown up there, public transport is sparse or non-existent and rural policing rarely receives the same priority as urban policing.

However, the farmer/supermarket relationship is hugely important. For many farmers, supermarkets are their biggest customers by far, without whose business they would not survive. Supermarkets therefore have immense market power and although, as the Competition Commission has recently concluded, they generally offer a good deal to the consumer, it is less clear they offer as good a deal to farmers. On this issue, it is quite possible I had picked the wrong supermarket companies to go and see. Most farmers would say that a contract to supply Waitrose is well worth having – higher prices are generally paid and more effort goes into building a long term relationship. If I wanted to see the farmer/supermarket relationship at its most dysfunctional, I had come to the wrong place.

What I did see though was good practice, which others are beginning to follow. Both Waitrose and the Co-op, with whom I also spent some time though their customer base is not the same, appeal to a niche market among food buyers. The good news for both is that their niche market is growing. The British consumer is becoming more interested in food, whether that interest manifests itself in more ambitious cooking urged on by a host of celebrity chefs, or in greater concern about what our children eat. As a

result, many of us are prepared to spend more of our disposable income on premium food products. Not all of us – this is a choice only the reasonably affluent can make – and not all the time, this remains a niche market, but more of us, more often. This is good news for Waitrose in particular, but it is worth noting the specific elements of this greater interest in food. The consumers I am describing are more interested now not just in the quality of the food they buy, but also in the ethical standards used to produce it and, crucially in this context, in its provenance. They wish to see food miles minimised and local or at least British farmers supported. Consumer driven supermarket buying strategies must respond and that is good news for the British farmer. Waitrose and the Co-op are in the vanguard of this trend.

There is another way in which Waitrose and the Co-op are distinctive. Perhaps fittingly for a Fellowship entitled 'From Farm to Fork', my programme developed organically and it was the exploration of the way these businesses are run, especially Waitrose as part of the John Lewis Partnership, which played a larger part than I had anticipated. This led me to also spend time with the Co-op.

I asked to be placed with Waitrose for local reasons. A Waitrose branch is under construction in my constituency and before any ground was broken, the announcement of its arrival had triggered new inward retail investment. I wanted to see what kind of company could achieve that. As I suspect is true of many people, I had a vague feeling that Waitrose was different in the way the company operated, but could not have been specific. Employees at Waitrose are 'partners' – they share in the profits of the business, which acts as a remarkable incentive to do well and encourage others. Partners and former partners are well looked after with benefits extending well into retirement. There are mechanisms to allow the views of every partner to reach management and elicit a substantive response. It was always made clear to me that this method of operating was not simply the legacy of a slightly eccentric founder or even a reflection of what management believed to be the right thing to do, but good business sense. The company is more productive as a result. These are lessons which I am convinced can have wider application.



Understand the Agri-food industry from farm to fork

The IPT facilitates Fellowships for parliamentarians to spend 18 days over 18 months in the Agri-food industry, experiencing a broad cross-section of businesses including large food retailers, independent farms and related organisations.

For more information on participating, please contact Rachel Shooter on 0207 839 9400 or email rachelshooter@ipt.org.uk



Global Effects on the UK Farming Industry

Professor John Moverley, Chief Executive of the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE), evaluates some of the global issues affecting the UK farming industry.

In recent years, the majority of newspaper reports on the agricultural industry have served to highlight yet another setback for farmers to overcome. Whilst a robust industry, to remain viable it must react to the significant structural changes faced. The industry must optimise the economic, social and environmental value of the land. Currently over 70% of the UK's total land area is used for agriculture and this needs to be used efficiently to maximise output coupled with policy reforms to our systems of planning, land use and agriculture.

There are key issues currently facing UK Agriculture. These include:

Population: The world's population is ever growing and in need of food. Over 800 million people in the world are malnourished and a third lack food security. A 40% increase in world food production is required by 2020 to meet these needs. From a national perspective, the UK population will rise by 17% to 71m within 25 years according to the Office for National Statistics. Consequently, the policies we adopt for rural land use cannot and must not ignore food production.

World Trade: Today, the UK provides around 60% of its own food. Despite this, the impact of global choice and competition means that self-sufficiency in the UK continues to decline. Food, particularly food from Britain, is often undervalued in our own society. Imports are increasing and the decreasing time in transit through improved transport infrastructure will lead to a greater need for farming in England to bring about comparative advantage. The importance of food miles and appropriate procurement and consumption is key to maintaining a sustainable balance between global trade and domestic production.

Climate Change: Although there are differences in scientific interpretation, the impact of climate change is critical; 10 years of delay will be too late. Whilst the majority of our land will remain farmland, the pressures to alter the environmental footprint will be immense. Increasing demands for farming methods to reduce water pollution and soil erosion will be coupled with the need to accommodate a significant increase in production. In addition to this, climate change may bring about shifting weather and temperature patterns resulting in reduced crop yields.

Fresh Water Supply: Will water be the new oil? Globally, great changes are taking place in the supply and availability of clean water and the intensification of farming will put more strain on this. The UK water distribution infrastructure is in need of major improvement to ensure supply meets demand. Industry will be required to use water more efficiently and water storage must become common-place. There are real dangers that we may run out of water. One expert has said that if we measure all the water flow in the world rivers, we have some 140 litres per head per day. A typical adult in the developed world can consume up to 200 litres daily in terms of what is needed to produce their food, clothes and consumer goods. The challenge is clear – water footprints will rank alongside carbon ones in importance.

The Food versus Fuel Debate: Achieving both energy and food security where land area is limited is both a challenge and an

opportunity. Agriculture must strike a balance between contributing to efforts to reduce the effects of climate change and achieving sustainability. The EU target for bio-fuel to meet 5.75% of its fuel needs by 2010 is testing. In the UK today, bio-fuel accounts for only 0.5% of fuel usage. Demand for bio-fuel is expected to have a major impact on the supply of food such as wheat. The USA has dramatically changed the world food market in recent years by moving to become energy secure. Large areas of wheat and other crops have become devoted to energy production (over 90 million acres) impacting substantially on grain prices. The paradox is that, even if the USA used all its available land for bio-fuel, it may still not be able to produce enough energy to meet its demand, at least using first generation methods¹, hence its move to second generation² and quickly. World grain reserves have fallen dramatically. The USA and Brazil produce 70% of the world's ethanol and a predicted dash towards the conversion of sugar to fuel across Latin America could see land taken out of grazing, impacting on meat export.

Producing food from fewer acres will require intensification and the UK must therefore tackle the debate on Genetic Modification. The question is whether GM would allow intensification without the risks associated with traditional intensive agriculture – such as extensive pesticides use and degradation of soil fertility.

We must recognise that these competing demands will create real pressures on current environmental priorities. We will need to argue fully the importance of land in terms of public good and how we can maintain livestock production in times of increasing grain price. The major supermarkets will play a key role, especially in their sustained response to local sourcing. The greatest challenges are how we achieve a sustainable, efficient and profitable food chain independent of product or price support, and how we safeguard the countryside whilst ensuring "One Planet Living". For our agriculture, food production remains a primary focus. Society cannot, however, continue to undervalue or trivialise its importance when we are required to make decisions now on how we utilise our land resource to meet future competing demands. Future economic success depends on investing in long-term strategies of sustainable farming.

The views expressed are in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect those of the RASE as a whole.

¹First generation fuels 'refer to biofuels made from sugar, starch, vegetable oil or animal fats using conventional technology' – UN Energy Report, 'Sustainable Bio-energy: A Framework for Decision Makers', p.6

²Second generation fuels 'are made from lignocellulosic biomass feedstock using advanced technical processes' – Ibid

Learn more about the rural economy

The IPT will be facilitating a tour for parliamentarians to visit the Royal Show in July 2008 at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. The RASE's show focuses on the Best of British agriculture, food and rural life.

If you have an interest in the rural economy or have an urban constituency and would like to learn more about this important economic contributor, do register your interest by emailing rachelshooter@ipt.org.uk





Farming at the Crossroads

James Cross farms in North Essex where he has a herd of 280 pedigree high-yielding Jerseys. The milk is sold to the co-operative Dairy Farmers of Britain, and James is Chair of their Channel Islands breeds group of producers. The combinable crops are grown in a joint venture on land in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. James is a Trustee of the Farmers Club Charitable Trust and is also on the Council of the RASE.

Last year was amazingly volatile for most sectors of the farming industry and the communities and businesses based on it. With headlines of dramatic weather, disease outbreaks and rises in world commodity markets well reported, their implications will echo on and could result in a very different agricultural industry in the future.

Recent years have seen producers in many sectors unable to cover the costs of production, and this is still true of several types of farming. Restructuring has been widespread and seems to have been continuous since I left College in 1989. For example, my own 900 acres of arable, which was then considered a good size unit, is now in a joint venture operated by a team who run over 3,000 acres in total. Recently these crops have seen significant price rises owing to worldwide shortages from reduced yields and quality due to the unseasonal weather. Many growers, however, sold early as the rate and scale of increase was unexpected. Even before utilisation of biofuel plants in the UK kicks in, these prices could be sustained as world stocks remain at low levels.

Dairying has had a hard eight years. From 1999 to 2006, average farmgate milk prices fell from 18.35 to 18.06 pence per litre, but costs of production were between 20 and 22 pence per litre! Consequently, over 11,000 dairy producers stopped milking, leaving only 19,000 in the UK – and another 1,100 have retired in England and Wales since 2006. As a result, the UK has not fulfilled its milk quota for the past three years and reinvestment is frequently deferred. As with cereals, milk prices have risen this summer, but the feed costs have almost matched them and the poor weather has resulted in lower availability and quality of forage. Retail prices do not yet reflect these rises or the world commodity situation, and the margin returned to retailer, processor and producer from milk and dairy products is still out of all sensible proportion.

Other sectors have also not received better prices (often the reverse) whilst facing other difficulties. For example, the movement bans due to Foot and Mouth resulted in more animals to feed for longer on the uplands, with income delayed and ultimately reduced when stock sales became concertinaed. Export bans also hit prices for pig meat. Beyond livestock, a lack of casual labour for fruit and vegetable work has left produce unharvested.

For all farms, the burden of paperwork grows weightier, whether these are statutory requirements or initiatives to improve returns that rapidly become minimum standards. Amongst the many that must be completed are: crop and dairy assurance schemes, animal movement and treatment records, details of waste disposal – with even an exemption to store rubble for track maintenance, surveys for labour and feed utilisation, plans and reviews for Herd Health, manure and soil management. Furthermore, the administration of the Rural Payments Agency still causes significant problems. The paperwork is a real challenge to operating a farm business and needs to be made more



straightforward: for example, I had hoped to further enhance the wildlife habitat on my farm by joining the Entry Level Scheme, but after correcting the Rural Land Register maps for the eighth time I had to set it aside for more urgent business priorities. The current review of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones could ratchet the issue of paperwork up to another level. Additionally, the review may signal the end for many more livestock units if applied with a heavy hand, due to the impact of the limits imposed. Compliance with each new regulation means that the farmer incurs significant extra costs.

The other considerable impending challenge that will need controlling with access to sufficient quantities of vaccine, is the Blue Tongue virus. In 2006, Germany had 45 infected holdings but this year there are over 12,600. Without action, animal welfare and thus farm productivity could be hit significantly with livestock numbers further reduced in parts of the country and subsequent changes in the landscape.

There are many challenges, but the priority must be for the guarantee of a reliable supply of safe food as worldwide demand poses greater pressure on a supply chain affected by seemingly greater weather fluctuations. There are, however, opportunities that farmers are keen to seize, whether in producing value added quality food, renewable energy or providing amenity attractions (to name but a few). To achieve this, the agricultural industry will need the constructive support of all stakeholders, but particularly in regulation and planning, to ensure that these opportunities are exploited across all farming and rural businesses.

A learning experience for Shaw

Chris Shaw, Deputy Principal Clerk in the Clerk's Department, House of Commons, gives an account on completing his IPT Fellowship.

There are many good reasons to undertake an IPT Fellowship. I was driven mainly by a feeling that after 17 years in the public sector and in a single department, it was time to dip a toe in what my friends call the "real world".

As Clerk of the Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, I was very pleased that the IPT managed to pair me, as requested, with two large companies at the forefront of technological development. I wanted to see how the Government's recent emphasis on the promotion of science was having an impact: when the policy levers are pulled in Whitehall, how does industry respond? I also wanted to test some of the views that the Committee had heard on a regular basis in evidence sessions. Why do companies increasingly conduct their R&D overseas? Do R&D tax credits have any impact? How well does collaboration with universities work?

I spent a few days with my first company TOTAL alongside a colleague from the House of Lords Library. We spent two days at their Exploration and Production subsidiary in Aberdeen seeing how new technology underpinned North Sea exploration enabling the extraction of oil from areas which had previously been uneconomic to pursue. The sheer scale, not to mention expense, of operations in such hostile territory is quite awesome: some oil fields are the size of London. Back in Hertfordshire we learnt at first-hand about the economics of the petrol station. The major role of non-oil based products in maintaining profitability was surprising and therefore required a response to each slight change in consumer demand.

I learnt as much about the management of organisations as about oil. What impressed me particularly about TOTAL was the assistance given to staff on career planning in quite a complex corporate structure and also the strong emphasis given to managing change.

After TOTAL, I enjoyed a second attachment with BAE Systems. They too put together a superb programme giving me a glimpse of many of their sites, from the design to the production stages. Early

one summer morning I joined the "commuter" flight from Farnborough to Warton in Lancashire, where Eurofighters are assembled. With wings constructed in Italy being bolted on to fuselages made in this country, the complexities of managing a four-country partnership were readily apparent, as was the commitment of all staff to make this huge project succeed.

I also saw their prototype Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), developed rapidly in response to a change in MoD requirements to compete with overseas suppliers. Videos of tests demonstrated how it could plan its route, take off and land entirely by itself. Some of the technology used was developed at BAE's centre in Loughborough where I watched a dozen self-driving robotic cars roaming around a small space, cleverly managing to avoid each other.

The biggest challenge for me was trying to find mutually convenient days on which to undertake the visits. I'm not saying that I took a long time to finish my IPT Fellowship, but by the time I had finished, I had moved from my job on the Science and Technology Committee and the Committee had been abolished!

That is not to say that my experiences were irrelevant. Apart from the industry-specific knowledge I acquired, I learnt a great deal from both companies about how organisations work and about how to respond flexibly to constantly evolving demands. The pressure – at all levels – to deliver to the customer and to reduce costs was of an intensity which is seldom found in my part of the House.

At present, some of the administrative departments of the House of Commons are being merged to improve the delivery of services for MPs and to foster a more corporate approach. My IPT attachments helped me to realise that the changes we are contemplating are really quite minor. If a corporate approach can overcome all manner of country and cultural barriers to deliver fast jet aircraft, it shouldn't be impossible for us to combine to achieve an equally good – if marginally less exciting – product for the MPs we work for.

A Fellowship Revisited

Austin Mitchell MP reports on his day spent with Tarmac.

I was delighted at the prospect of renewing my contact with Tarmac. It is 28 years since I was an IPT Fellow attached to Tarmac in 1978-9, a period which straddled the 1979 election and the change of Government. The attachment was particularly exciting because, as politicians, we tend to come into Parliament with almost no knowledge of business, its processes, and its imperatives and with little understanding of the tough world in which business operates.

So it was an education for me. Indeed I'm pretty sure I got more out of it than Tarmac. I well remember that when I tried to explain to managers our arcane procedures in Parliament and the slow processes of government decision-making, always buffeted one way or another by economic crisis, financial stringency and popular pressures, eyes would glaze over and mouths hang open in bafflement. It was as if I had come from another world, which, in a sense, I had. Westminster isn't the real world.

In the thirty years between my first contact with Tarmac and this, I have changed less than the company. It seems to have rejuvenated as I've aged. I've spent my time in Parliament on the Sisyphian task of rolling stones like electoral Reform, Euro-scepticism, the campaign for more public spending or faster economic growth, uphill, only to have them all slip back (as they did for Sisyphus) two steps for every three I moved them forward. Business isn't like that. It's a faster, crueller, game and sudden death can be the result of mistakes. Politics goes on forever because it's a process.

The contrast between Tarmac then and now is striking. The Tarmac I came to in 1978 was bigger, more sprawling, less focused, than the company I saw this year. I and the Tory Fellow with me (now sadly deceased) saw a very wide range of road-making and quarrying, plus industry, lots of house building, then big in Tarmac's portfolio, and lots of construction work here and in the Arab Emirates. I was particularly impressed by the Sharjah airport built, it seemed to me, because every Sheik had to have an international airport for his emirate. In Britain I spent a lot of time looking at the biggest holes in the ground I've ever seen (before I got to visit the Grand Canyon!) and also at the messy processes of steel making in Corby (since closed down) whose by-products were used for road building. Most of all we spent a lot of time at head office in Wolverhampton and probably more time than would be spent today on labour relations and human resources.

Today's company is more decentralised. It's slimmer, leaner and more focused with road stone and building much more central. Management seems younger and computer controls play a much more important part. Indeed I was impressed by the degree of mechanisation and the extent of computer control in the core business of quarrying. It looks much less labour intensive but much better organised, particularly in terms of loading and delivery, than I had thought possible. It's an education, and another to see how environmentally conscious diggers of huge holes can be.

I think the kind of updating I got is valuable. But it made me wish that I was beginning my Fellowship there all over again.





Is our view of the CAP still valid?

Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Commission, examines the modernisation of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome served as a reminder that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was part of the foundation on which the EU was constructed. Much has changed in Europe over those five decades and even if this message has yet to get through to everybody, the CAP too has changed almost beyond recognition. In 1957, the priority was to ensure sufficient supplies of affordable food and to guarantee a decent income to Europe's farmers. The food shortages suffered during the war years were still fresh in people's minds. The CAP aimed to ensure these would never happen again. This was achieved by setting high prices for farm commodities as an incentive for farmers to produce, erecting high tariff barriers against imports and subsidising the export of any products which could not be sold on the European market.

By the 1980s, the policy had become a victim of its own success. This was the era of the infamous grain and butter mountains which proved crippling expensive for the European budget. In the 1980s, initial steps to bring the situation under control were to introduce strict quotas for milk production and limit intervention buying. In 1992, we began to reform the CAP more fundamentally – a process which continues to this day.

The most recent set of reforms began in 2003, with the “decoupling” of direct farm support from production. Previously, farmers had received direct subsidies based on what they produced. The 2003 reforms broke that link between subsidy and production. This, along with further reductions in the guaranteed prices offered by the EU, removed the incentive to overproduce. Farmers were now free to make their decisions according to signals from the market, instead of simply looking for the biggest subsidy cheque from Brussels. We have extended this approach ever since, with reforms to the market regimes for “Mediterranean” products in 2004, sugar in 2005 and fruit and vegetables in 2007. We are now discussing reforms in the wine sector, which are proving difficult.

I am though convinced that my proposals will boost the competitiveness of the European wine sector and help us win back market share from the likes of Australia, South Africa and Chile, which are doing such a good job of capturing the British market! Regrettably, throughout the reform process, we have failed to communicate effectively enough about the enormous changes we have made to the CAP.

The British debate on agricultural policy is based all too often on the caricature of the CAP as it was 20 years ago, rather than the reality of 2008. For a start, I disagree with the idea that the CAP is

expensive. We spend less than half of one percent of EU GDP on a policy that gives taxpayers so much beyond simple food production and farm support is already on a downward trajectory. Farmers no longer have incentives to overproduce, surpluses are a thing of the past, we are well on the way to phasing out export subsidies and direct payments to our farmers are classified by the World Trade Organisation as, at worst, minimally trade-distorting. Our farmers now follow the market. They play a crucial role in caring for the land, in ensuring high levels of animal welfare and in guaranteeing high standards of food safety. If they do not meet the statutory standards, their payments can be cut. In this way, direct payments help to provide essential public goods which cannot be supplied by the market alone.

One aspect of the CAP which is not always understood in the UK is rural development policy. This seeks to bolster the economic, environmental and social well-being of the rural areas of the EU, which cover 90 percent of its territory.

Some of the rural development budget is spent on boosting the competitiveness of farming, since agriculture and related businesses are still the beating heart of the economy in much of Europe's countryside. The policy also operates well beyond the boundaries of farming – financing environmental projects, encouraging rural economies to branch out and raising general quality of life. It also has the advantage of being managed to a large extent at local and regional level, which ensures that support goes specifically to projects which are best able to bring results in the local context. Rural Development policy has grown in importance since the 2003 reforms and I want to continue this shift as a first step in the so-called ‘Health Check’ of the CAP in 2008. The Health Check will also be an opportunity to adjust other aspects of the CAP – to ensure that it is working as it should in an EU of 27 Member States, and in the world as it is now.

In conclusion, the CAP in 2008 is very different from the popular image it sometimes suffers from in the UK. I hope the positive effects of the reforms will be recognised when the time comes to look ahead to the period after 2013, when the next medium-term EU budget begins. Europe's agriculture and its rural areas will continue to face challenges and expectations after 2013. That is why I am convinced that we will continue to need a common policy well into the future. I look forward to a positive contribution from the UK to this debate!

The nuts and bolts of the European Parliament: The role of the political assistant

Louise Kennerley, Political Assistant to Giles Chichester
MEP, gives an insight into her working week.

The job of assistant to a Member of the European Parliament is so varied it is hard to encapsulate it into a classic job description. This is reflected in many ways, but firstly by the fact that all assistants have slightly different job titles ranging from Secretary to Parliamentary or Research Assistant to Policy Advisor. This demonstrates that each assistant plays a very different role. The role of an assistant is dictated purely by the way their Member chooses to organise their team of staff. Members are given an allowance to pay their staff but how they choose to use that, distributing it between employees in Brussels and their own Member State, is left up to them. Most Members will have one or two assistants in Brussels and at least one at home, plus full or part time press and political agents as required.

A single assistant in Brussels is expected to be a sort of “jack of all trades” as they will be dealing with all aspects of the daily running of the Member’s office, general administration, travel bookings and meeting organisation as well as policy, press and constituency work. In an office where there are two assistants, there will generally be one person to deal with the Member’s diary, administration and constituency work, whilst the other assistant is able to focus on policy matters. This type of assistant will often develop more into a policy advisor especially if they stay long enough to become knowledgeable in the work of the Committee on which their Member sits.

For many assistants, constituency work is a very important part of their job. We receive an ever increasing number of letters and emails from constituents on a huge range of topics. These range from mass mail outs of standard letters lobbying for a certain vote, to more individual queries, often relating to cross border issues in the EU or correct implementation of EU legislation by Member States or simply requests for information. Thorough responses to constituents are given great importance, whether we research the matter ourselves or contact the European Commission or other necessary bodies on their behalf. Many other nationalities however, do not have the concept of regional representation amongst their MEPs and therefore for a number of assistants, this aspect of the job does not exist.

Assistants also provide an important link between their Member and other interest groups, lobbyists and public relations officers from stakeholders who wish to present their



views to MEPs. Numerous meeting requests are sent to Members every day. These are of varying relevance to their work and the assistant must filter these depending on the field in which their Member specialises.

MEPs are all a full member of one of the standing committees in the European Parliament and also a substitute on one other. An assistant’s job varies hugely depending on which committee their Member sits and how much legislative work the committee is engaged in. For example, a committee such as the Industry, Research and Energy or Internal Market Committee deals with a huge amount of legislation spanning an extremely wide variety of areas. Working for a Member on one of these committees would be very different to working, for example, on the Culture and Education Committee which has a much more narrow remit.

The daily work load of an assistant varies according to the Parliament calendar which is divided into different weeks for Political Group meetings, Committee meetings, Mini-Plenary Sessions in Brussels, full Plenary Sessions in Strasbourg and constituency weeks set aside for Members to spend time in their own Member States.

In conclusion the role of assistant to an MEP is far more than that of just being a personal assistant and not simply that of a specialised political researcher. It is a combination of the two with many other added aspects requiring excellent time management skills to juggle competing tasks. Each day is different, making it an interesting and challenging role to be in.

IPT Event Planner

January 2008 – June 2008

Month	Date	Activity	Event details	Who should attend
January 2008	15	Data Protection: addressing the conflict between data sharing and data protection Business Education Briefing	This briefing will focus on a framework for deciding whether and how to share identifiable data, what can be done to preserve data privacy in data sharing and the implications when data sharing is abused. Speakers are anticipated from business and Government.	Open to all
	22	Company Seminar	This date is booked. Other dates are available for tailor-made seminars targeted at the interests of your business or sector.	Company representatives
	23	One-day seminar	This is a one-day seminar for civil servants on the role of Parliament.	Civil Servants
	30	Secrets of Marketing – week 5	A 6-week programme for parliamentarians to learn about the role of marketing in business.	Parliamentarians
February 2008	4 - 7	Parliamentary Study Programme for Industry (PSPI)	IPT's PSPI is an intensive, practical study programme to demonstrate Parliament as it really is, explore its connection with Government and show that industry can have constructive relationships with both Parliament and Government. This is a 4-day course in the Houses of Parliament.	Company and public sector representatives
	20	Secrets of Marketing – week 6	The final session of this 6-week pilot programme for parliamentarians to learn about the role of marketing in business.	Parliamentarians
	26	Company Seminar	Provisionally booked. Dates are available for tailor-made seminars targeted at the interests of your business or sector.	Company representatives
	27	One-day seminar	This seminar is part of the MEP Attachment Scheme for civil servants. Under the scheme, the IPT arranges for civil servants to shadow an MEP for 2-3 days.	Civil Servants
	27	"Businesslike Government – room for improvement?" Evening Briefing	Lembit Öpik MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Minister for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, will address guests at this briefing event.	Open to all
March 2008	4	Company Seminar	This date is booked. Other dates are available for tailor-made seminars targeted at the interests of your business or sector.	Company representatives
	4 - 5	Introduction to the EU – Financial Services Brussels	This course provides an introductory guide to the EU institutions, their role, how they are linked and how they differ in their approaches. This particular course will focus on the financial services industry. This is a 2-day course in Brussels.	Company and public sector representatives
	6	London 2012: Progress and Participation Emerging Issues	With the Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place in five years time, we are organising annual briefings to inform business, parliamentarians, civil servants and other interested parties on current progress. The second of five briefings will examine the culture of the Games and the progress made to date. Speakers will be from Parliament, business and associated organisations of the Olympics.	Open to all
	12	Kent County Council Seminar	A seminar on 'Understanding Parliament' for representatives of Local Government. This will provide an opportunity to hear about various parliamentary processes, as well as how local and central government interact.	Local Government Officers
	12	AGM	The IPT's Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 March in the Attlee Suite, House of Commons at 5pm.	Open to all



Month	Date	Activity	Event details	Who should attend
April 2008	1	One-day seminar	This is a one-day seminar for civil servants on the role of Parliament.	Civil Servants from the HSE
	2	One-day seminar	This is a one-day seminar for civil servants on the role of Parliament	Civil Servants from the HSE
	15	Company Seminar	This date is available for a tailor-made seminar targeted at the interests of your business or sector.	Company representatives
	21	Emerging Issues Seminar	These stand alone day seminars will focus on topical issues of the day for business. Subject to be confirmed. Look out for further details or email louise@ipt.org.uk .	Company representatives
	22	Emerging Issues Seminar	These stand alone day seminars will focus on topical issues of the day for business. Subject to be confirmed. Look out for further details or email louise@ipt.org.uk .	Company representatives
	22	Introducing the City – week 1	An 8-week course for parliamentarians to learn about the City of London, financial institutions, banking and the global economy.	Parliamentarians
	29	Reception	This lunch time reception is to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Civil Service MP Attachment Scheme.	Past participants of the MP Attachment Scheme
May 2008	7	Foreign ownership of UK businesses: what are the implications? Business Education Briefing	This briefing will focus on the impact on the UK economy, individual businesses and land/office ownership.	Open to all
	12 - 16	Business and Government learning together	These seminars give delegates the opportunity to learn together about Parliament, Government, the Civil Service and the European Union during short sessions to be held in the Houses of Parliament. These sessions are designed to give maximum information with minimum time away from the workplace. Taking place over a week, you are invited to select as many (or as few) as you need. Sessions include Engaging with Whitehall, Parliamentary Overview, Select Committees, Ministers, Legislation, Budgeting and EU in a morning.	Open to all
	14	Introducing the City – week 2	An 8-week course for parliamentarians to learn about the City of London, financial institutions, banking and the global economy.	Parliamentarians
	21	Introducing the City – week 3	An 8-week course for parliamentarians to learn about the City of London, financial institutions, banking and the global economy.	Parliamentarians
June 2008	4	Introducing the City – week 4	An 8-week course for parliamentarians to learn about the City of London, financial institutions, banking and the global economy.	Parliamentarians
	10	Company Seminar	This date is available for a tailor-made seminar targeted at the interests of your business or sector.	Company representatives
	11	Introducing the City – week 5	An 8-week course for parliamentarians to learn about the City of London, financial institutions, banking and the global economy.	Parliamentarians

All IPT events (except where stated) take place within the Houses of Parliament.

For more information, please visit www.ipt.org.uk or telephone **020 7839 9400**



The legacy of London 2012

Derek Wyatt MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Olympic and Paralympic Group, identifies the benefits of hosting the Games in 2012.

Dick Pound, a former long serving Vice President of the International Olympic Committee, was fond of saying about "bid books" from would-be Olympic cities, that they represented some of the most creative accounting he'd ever seen. I know this because I'm writing a book about the three London Olympic Games 1908, 1948 and 2012 and in my research, I too have noted how the bids for Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney, Athens and Beijing "changed" between them winning the bid and hosting the Games. As a rule of thumb, the costs double. But, so do the benefits.

Barcelona was a sleepy home to Gaudi's unfinished cathedral masterpiece and a football team that sometimes sparkled. Its old dock was in decay, its traffic horrendous, it was short on quality hotels and restaurants and it was off the beaten track. Fifteen years on it is a dreamy destination, always in the top three most visited European cities. Everything about it is classy.

Atlanta was a fluke. For the Centenary of the Games in 1996 the International Olympic Committee should have awarded them to Athens. In their collective wisdom they gave them to the Coca-Cola city. They were a disappointment. Atlanta did not match Los Angeles in 1984 or come close to Seoul in 1988 or Barcelona in 1992. These hiccups happen.

The pressure then was always on Sydney. The rivalry of Australia's major cities makes the country more like a collection of city states – Melbourne had the Games in 1956 while Perth and Brisbane had had the Commonwealth Games respectively in 1962 and 1982 but Sydney had missed out. She had a lot to prove; she rose to the challenge. By some way Sydney was the best Games ever. They regenerated a desperate up river area which would have fallen into further decay but for the catalytic impact of the Olympics. Sydney is now firmly established as one of the top five destination cities in the world. It continues to host world Championships, the Rugby World Cup 2003 and the Rugby League Cup 2008, and is easily the sports capital of the world.

Athens had a lot to prove to itself. Could its small population, more famous for its shipping and insurance oligarchs, manage to bring this constipated city out of the 19th and into the 21st century? Did the country have the leadership, the management ability and the political will? Could she set herself free from the historical chains of having given both the ancient and modern Games to the world? Much was at stake. At a minute to midnight the Athenians pulled it off. The Games were a sensation and turned the head of the then Prime Minister (Tony Blair). Our bid for Singapore in July 2005 properly took root in Athens.

Beijing, we know, will be a stunning success. It was as well she lost by one vote to Sydney for the Millennium Games as she would not have been ready. Today she is ready and the world will, for the first time, come to understand the Chinese miracle. Beijing will, like Barcelona, Sydney and Athens, become a serious destination city.

So why all this diet of bad news about London 2012? Well, of course, the media has won endless gold medals in cynicism, first applauding the bid, then supporting it and then fawning over it when it was won. Today you'd struggle to find a good news story about them but they are there by the dozen.

It is anticipated that there will be significant public benefit in the areas of culture, sport, business, volunteering and tourism resulting from the legacy of London 2012. This will provide opportunities, not only for London and the South East, but every region in the UK. In economic terms, like Barcelona, no regeneration of a very poor part of London would be taking place without them; worth £2 billion at least. This area will benefit from improved transport infrastructure, areas of urban parkland, the use of new facilities by local communities and a supply of new homes.

The creation of the Olympics Park will create a significant number of employment opportunities, both during the construction process and following 2012. This in turn will mean training courses become more available to meet this demand for skilled workers. Furthermore, the Games are reliant on the participation of up to 70,000 volunteers, revitalising the culture of volunteering and inspiring people to engage with this community.

There are opportunities for businesses, both large and small, to be involved, in terms of construction, service provisions, suppliers and sponsorship. We will be showcasing our brilliance and world leadership in – design, build, architecture, engineering, hospitality, the service and security industries which should result in billions of pounds of new orders for the UK economy during the next decade. This will stimulate competition and growth across our economy.

With a global focus on the UK during London 2012, this is our chance to show the world why London is the number one destination city in the world. This should also boost tourism in other regions of the UK, if these opportunities are maximised, where regional cities will host major sporting and cultural events in new facilities, encouraging people to visit.

In addition to these economic advantages, there are huge cultural legacy implications for the nation that will kick-start a decade of UK sport with the 20.20 finals in 2009, the Ryder Cups in 2010 and 2014, the Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth Games plus we've bids developing for the Rugby World Cup 2015 and Football World Cup 2018.

So, aside from being the first City to host the Games for a third time, let's use them to galvanise the nation and show the world who we are and what we are about. The City of London can demonstrate yet again why it leads the world and will emerge as the first global city. What a challenge.

GET INVOLVED!

London 2012: Progress and Participation

Thursday 6 March 2008
House of Commons

The second of five briefings will examine the culture of the Games and the progress made to date.

For more information, email Eunice Anthony at eunice@ipt.org.uk

Striking a balance - Regional Economic Development

Rob Smith CB, who retired from the Civil Service in 2005, gives an overview of Regional Economic Development in England.

The BBC recently reported that to truly decipher a Government's priorities you should have recourse to what are called 'Public Service Agreements' (PSAs). These receive little publicity but, as (notional) contracts between the Treasury and the respective spending department to achieve a target, they play a significant role in delivery. One of the most interesting and challenging aspects of my role as Director General for Regional Development was working towards a PSA (held jointly with the then DTI and the Treasury) to make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions by 2008 and to reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between them; in essence to tackle key aspects of the so-called "North-South divide".

Through factors such as health, qualifications and house prices, this phenomenon has important ramifications for the UK and the creation of Regional Ministers last year is no doubt partly a recognition of this. The chosen indicator for measuring progress is Gross Value Added per head and on this measure, output for London and for the South East respectively have consistently been about 50% higher than those for the Northern Regions (particularly the North East). The Government estimates that the output gap between the North of England and the rest of the UK is some £30bn.

One of the key issues is whether the large amounts of Government investment for development – at least £9bn annually – could be better targeted to boost economic performance. There is however a balance to uphold between stimulating regions with poor growth rates and the need to maintain the performance of the most globally competitive areas.

A more fundamental question is whether the state can effectively promote growth on a regional and sub-regional basis. Some commentators consider its role in such matters to be severely limited in comparison to business decision-making and market conditions. Businesses have tended to argue that for them, the key Government contribution was in terms of transport infrastructure, skills and the planning system.

On a general level the Government's approach has focused on creating an environment for private enterprises to propel growth in different regions. This was reflected in the Treasury model involving six linked drivers of economic growth: skills, innovation, investment, competition, enterprise and employment.

But the state itself has significant machinery which can be mobilised to target regional growth. Whitehall Departments, for instance, have been encouraged to think more geographically in terms of policy making and now seek to take account of regional and intra-regional differences in the way policies are crafted and implemented. In addition, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Government Offices have been strengthened and area-specific strategies for maximising investment have been created. If smaller and medium size businesses in locations outside of London and the South-East can become involved with this process it could be immensely empowering and beneficial for their prospects.

Another important way the state has tried to influence regional growth was the effort following Michael Lyons' review to move

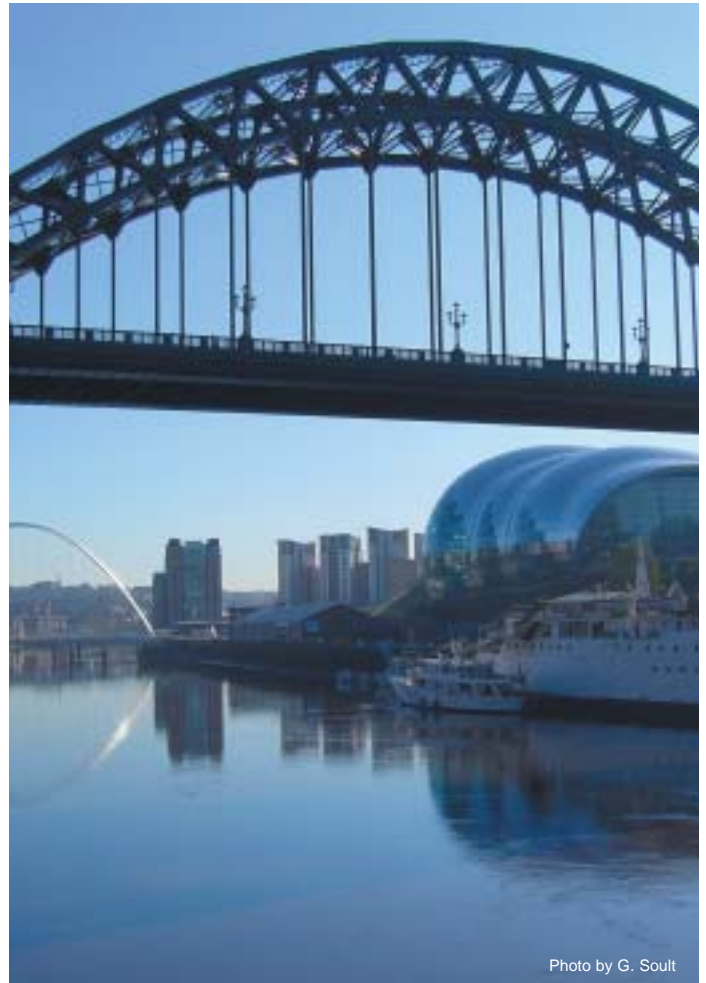


Photo by G. Sout

Newcastle Quayside has undergone a significant regeneration programme.

significant numbers of Civil Service posts out of London and the South East. A criticism of this has been that whilst this may be financially prudent for services, and whilst it may increase immediate income in the receiving areas, some of the relocation destinations are already over-reliant on the public sector. In the longer term this could inhibit private sector development. However, it is also true that the distinction between public and private enterprise is becoming less rigid and this factor may mitigate any disadvantages over time.

In recent years the current approach has been endorsed by figures showing signs of success. In the North and the Midlands, year on year, growth has been slightly higher than London and the South East. It remains to be seen if this trend will continue, but, in any case, I would expect the PSA to continue requiring significant Government action.

The author retired from the Civil Service at the end of 2005 and views and opinions expressed in this article are his own.



Across the border – The Scottish Parliament Programme

Devin Scobie was Interim Director of the SPBE until January 2008.

The Scottish Parliament and Business Exchange (SPBE) underwent something of a renaissance during 2007. An integral part of that process was establishing stronger cross-border links with its older cousin, the IPT, which culminated in the first inbound Scottish Parliament Programme in September 2007.

Quite apart from the benefits received directly by the participants, the logistics of pulling together a varied Programme helped establish a number of precedents that will assist future educational programmes. Establishing, for example, that an IPT-led Programme was a charitable cause and thereby eligible to book meeting rooms in the Parliament took some time but is now firmly in place.

From the Exchange's point of view, our mission was simple: we wanted to raise our awareness to a wider group of business contacts than we were reaching independently. The objective of the programme was to give representatives from business an insight into the workings of the Parliament and how legislative agendas are formed. This aimed to give delegates from UK companies a greater understanding of the effect such legislation has on their businesses, particularly those with sites or branches in Scotland.



Alex Fergusson, Presiding Officer and delegates on the Scottish Parliament Programme

The 'pilot' included sessions on the background to devolution and connections with Westminster, how the Parliament works as an organisation, the role of the media and how businesses can deal more effectively with the Parliament. The Exchange hopes to run a second Programme in the first half of 2008. Anyone interested in a future Programme or, indeed, any aspect of the SPBE is welcome to contact us through our website, www.spbe.org.uk.

Learning is fun in a happening Place

Jane McGirk, Head of External Communications at SELEX Sensors and Airborne Systems UK, describes her experience on the Scottish Parliament Programme.

As a former journalist now working in PR for a major high-tech company, I can't remember the last time I felt such a "buzz" at work but it is precisely how I would describe the recent course I attended with the IPT. Two full days geared on the inner workings of the Scottish Parliament with the sole aim of getting me up to speed with how it works and how I might help my company better engage with it – I felt privileged!

It is hard to put it into words but from the moment I stepped into the Holyrood Building I knew I was somewhere special – and it was nothing to do with the huge costs of the building itself nor indeed its unusual architecture by Enrique Morillas, and believe me some of it is pretty unusual to say the least. No, it was the atmosphere. I felt that I had arrived in a place where things were really happening, where decisions were being made, laws being set and news being broadcast. Who said learning isn't fun!

I observed Politicians, Civil Servants, local councillors, journalists and business folk, all getting down to the business of the day. I saw ordinary members of the public, school children on educational visits and people like me, eager to know what Parliament is all about, how it works, and interestingly who the people are that operate within it.

I spent a fascinating two days learning all about the background to devolution, a concept which I understand had been around for a century or more and became the primary catalyst in creating an ambitious new political system in Scotland. I was informed about the workings of the election system, the powers of the Scottish Parliament and the movers and shakers within it. I talked with journalists who described the dynamics of working in the Parliament and reporting the news live as it happens. I even got the opportunity to dine with MSPs providing a useful networking opportunity to begin the process of building relationships with them – all good stuff for someone in a role like mine. But the highlight for me was the visit to the debating Chamber where I sat through First

Ministers Questions to hear 'Scotland's Finest' tearing strips off one another – all in the interest of popular democracy of course!

But how do you translate that back into your working environment to ensure that there is some benefit for your organisation? This topic got a fair amount of air time as every one of my fellow delegates also wanted to understand this point clearly and to begin the process of putting it into practice back in the workplace.

I learned that companies need to appreciate that political decisions made at local, Scottish, UK and European level will affect them at some time or another and they need to be engaged in the process to influence it. Laws, regulations and policies, decisions about procurement, grants and aid, all shape the context within which our organisations operate. Sometimes this can be positive, as in a procurement decision that generates work for the company, or a decision to support R&D financially. At other times political decisions have the potential to adversely affect your company, as in the examples of tightening export licensing requirements, refusal of planning permission for new buildings or increased legislation regarding employment practices. I learned about the importance of becoming involved in the debate early enough to be able to make a difference and that, contrary to scepticism in some quarters, the people I met at the Parliament seemed genuinely interested to hear about what industry has to say.

Overall I would have to say that I really enjoyed the course and have been convinced of the value of engaging with Government. So much so that I have already signed up to attend the forthcoming Study Programmes for the UK and European Parliaments over the next few months. Westminster and Brussels have a hard act to follow and I look forward to seeing how well they compare...for now, Holyrood gets my vote!

The Scottish Parliament: Eight Years Young

Paul Anderson, Community Outreach Officer for the Scottish Parliament, explains the system North of the Border.

Formally reconvened in 1999 after almost 300 years, the Scottish Parliament was, as the late Donald Dewar proclaimed, “the settled will of the Scottish people”. A national referendum in 1979 resulted in 74% in favour of a devolved Parliament, with 64% supporting limited tax-varying powers.

In its short history, the Scottish Parliament has developed an enviable reputation for innovation, openness, transparency and accountability. Everything that the Parliament does – its debates, committee enquiries, legislation, citizenship programmes, etc - is underpinned by four founding principles: Equality, Participation & Access, Sharing of Power, and Accountability. With a range of innovative engagement mechanisms – including a world-leading e-petitions system, programmes of education and community outreach, and a text message enquiry service, for example - Scotland’s Parliament can justly be said to be taking itself to the people of Scotland.

The legal foundation stone of the Holyrood Parliament is the 1998 Scotland Act. The Act specifies those areas where Holyrood can enact legislation. These include major day-to-day areas such as education, health, transport and law and order though other areas are also covered where public awareness is less well developed such as environment, agriculture, fisheries and economic development.

The 1998 Act also specifies the reserved areas, where only Westminster may enact legislation including foreign policy, UK defence, national security, social security, asylum and immigration, energy and broadcasting. While MSPs can debate these issues, the Act prohibits Holyrood from enacting legislation on areas which are reserved to Westminster.

In order to encourage a more consensual approach to parliamentary debate and law-making, Holyrood’s chamber is designed to be less confrontational than the Westminster benches. This approach has been demonstrated in the first two parliamentary sessions within the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition. The current minority SNP Government has provided a different dimension to this idea of consensual politics as stated by the First Minister in his acceptance speech.

A mixed electoral system sees 129 MSPs sit at Holyrood: seventy-three constituency members (elected through traditional first-past-the-post) and fifty-six regional members (seven each from eight Scottish regions, elected through a system of proportional representation). The proportional representation vote, in particular, ensures that smaller parties, and even independents, have a better-than-Westminster chance of being elected. The first two parliamentary sessions saw several Green and Socialist MSPs, as well as a number of independent Members.

Other innovations in the Scottish Parliament include Member’s legislation: every MSP has the right to lodge two Member’s bills per parliamentary session. This is seen as far fairer and more equitable than the Private Member’s Bills system at Westminster. Several Members bills have been passed into law, demonstrating the viability of the Scottish system.

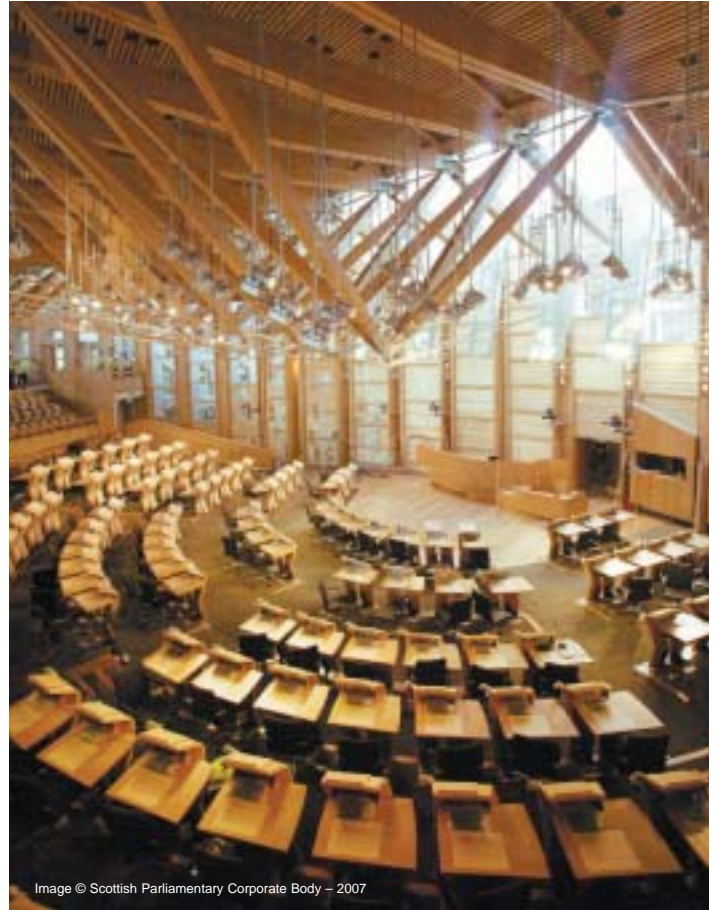


Image © Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body – 2007

With no second chamber, the legislative process in Scotland focuses on pre-legislative scrutiny. The Parliament’s committees (currently fifteen) are rightly regarded as the jewel in the crown of the Holyrood system. Since 1999 the Holyrood committees have attracted intense – not to mention envious – scrutiny from other parliaments, assemblies and legislatures worldwide.

Having passed 128 Acts since 1999, repeated social attitude surveys indicate that the Holyrood Parliament is seen increasingly by Scots as having more direct impact in their everyday lives than either Westminster or the EU. Whilst legislation which led to a ban on smoking in public places is high-impact and media friendly, other laws such as the Gaelic Language Act, speak more to indigenous cultural and heritage issues in Scotland.

If impersonation is the greatest form of flattery, then the Scottish Parliament has every right to blush: a network of 80 Partner Libraries across Scotland (offering focal points for parliamentary information in local communities) being replicated in Wales and Slovakia, for example; an e-petitions system duplicated at the Bundestag in Berlin; and a community and education outreach programme the envy of other legislatures internationally. Holyrood is rightly regarded as being a world leader in public engagement and participation. All this, remember, in a Parliament which came into being a mere eight years ago.



Question Time

Here we compare the experiences of three people recruited in to industry, the Civil Service and Parliament to see how the process and their expectations differ.



Rob Hatfield is currently undertaking the Customer Management Leadership Graduate Scheme with Rolls-Royce.

On the application process

I was aware of the Rolls-Royce brand and reputation, but my initial thoughts about pursuing a career with the company stemmed from the glowing recommendation of an existing Rolls-Royce employee. I navigated the Rolls-Royce careers website and was immediately drawn to the distinctiveness of the Customer Management Leadership Graduate Scheme. The scheme stood out due to the extent of customer focus, the chance to work across a broad spectrum of the business, the opportunity to experience the global nature of Rolls-Royce and most importantly, the immediate responsibility and potential for rapid career progression. So without hesitation I applied for the scheme online.

On the process of selection

The online application form, which asked for demonstrated examples of leadership skills and behaviours, was followed by a telephone interview with a senior manager at Rolls-Royce who explored my motivations for applying. Subsequently I was invited to attend one of the Rolls-Royce sites, providing the opportunity to meet some of the employees and get a real feel for the company, including whether it represented the right option for me. The final stage of the process was an assessment centre involving an evening meal and meet and greet, followed by aptitude tests, interviews and group exercises the next day. The personal approach to this process meant I already felt a bond with the organisation and the assessment centre was less tense than I expected. Within 24 hours I was offered a place and was delighted to accept the position just 3 months after my initial application.

On the skills needed for the job

I joined Rolls-Royce with two years work experience in another large organisation that provided me with some of the skills and knowledge required to start the scheme running. This included knowledge of how large organisations operate, experience of working within teams and senior management and some formal training in communication skills. The scheme is set up to maximise graduate development both in terms of the technical skills required within Customer Management and those required to become a

future business leader. You work closely with a dedicated career advisor to help map out a bespoke development plan that includes both formal and on the job training. In my case, this included training courses aimed at increasing my knowledge of jet engines and contracting, as well as courses to improve my negotiating, influence and communication skills.

On what you expect from your employer

With somebody at the beginning of their career, still new to the business world yet bursting with enthusiasm and ambition, the employer plays a critical role in ensuring all parties meet their expectations. As a young professional you need support to make a smooth transition in to the organisation as well as guidance to channel enthusiasm in the right direction. Of equal importance is the need for the employer to provide immediate responsibility and the opportunity to add value from the outset. Being trusted to deliver, having the freedom to make decisions and learn from mistakes and rewarding performance with career progression are all necessary if a graduate is to flourish.

On what you need to do to progress

The employer can only progress your career so far with the majority of the responsibility resting with the employee. To progress you need to be committed to hard work, open to new ideas, look to seize opportunities as they arise and try to think like a future business leader. This means making decisions that balance attention to detail with a more strategic and holistic perspective of the business, along with a constant commitment to Customer Focus. In a company like Rolls-Royce, attention must also be paid to the softer side of business including getting to know your colleagues and building long-term relationships that will remain with you throughout your career.

On a career for life with Rolls Royce

A huge benefit of working in a global company like Rolls-Royce is the diverse opportunities that are available to employees. A career with Rolls-Royce is likely to span across different market sectors, functions and locations, which is fully encouraged and supported by the organisation. In my short time with Rolls-Royce I have experienced three different roles, all in different locations and sectors of the business. My current role is based in Rotterdam for the Marine sector looking at a strategy for expanding our aftermarket services capability in the Mediterranean and West Africa.



Stefan Sanchez is based in the National Assembly for Wales and is part way through the Civil Service Fast Stream programme.

On the application process

I joined the Civil Service through the Health and Safety Executive as a trainee inspector – a relatively specialised job in Civil Service terms that caught my eye as I was leaving college. I did this for 6 years (including a promotion) gaining a good understanding of the challenges and pressures that businesses face. This was a good platform for an application to the Civil Service Fast Stream programme, which I was able to apply for internally. Although already an established civil servant, the Fast Stream programme offered the opportunity to do completely different work and broaden my experience.

On the process of selection

As an existing civil servant, the application process was slightly different to that for external candidates, albeit just as testing! My application took several months from start to finish.

The process consisted of 2 days of various tests including 3 interviews, several group exercises as well as a battery of written exercises. After the first couple of exercises you start to think you've blown it and relax because you've nothing to lose, but I'm sure that's how they want you to feel!

On the skills needed for the job

I found the skills I had developed in my inspector job formed essential foundations for what followed on the Fast Stream. In particular the ability to:

- analyse information, often in large quantities
- write clearly and succinctly – an important and valued skill in the Civil Service
- communicate effectively with people at all levels
- pick up and understand procedure quickly (but not be too constrained by it!)

“Yes, you do sometimes need to put in extra hours, but there is built in flexibility and understanding that when it has to, family comes first!”

I feel I am constantly improving these skills and learning new ones, but as the Fast Stream is all about finding the Civil Service leaders of the future, it is essential that applicants can effectively demonstrate evidence of them, or at least the potential to develop them. As I did a scientific degree, I was very comfortable with analysing information, but probably needed more development of writing and communication skills to secure a position on the Fast Stream which is where my previous experience helped.

On what you expect from your employer

The Civil Service is a great employer, but it's not for everyone. I really believe in the core Civil Service values of honesty, impartiality and integrity – and you have to if you really want to succeed and feel comfortable here. This doesn't mean you can't be ambitious and have a great career, but it does mean that in everything you do, you really have to weigh up the impact you will have on others, and always trying to do what is 'right' rather than 'easiest' or what best suits you. In return you can expect a varied and secure career with an employer that invests in your development (particularly on the Fast Stream).

On what you need to do to progress

There is a structured framework for development in the Civil Service that encourages you to get breadth of experience across 3 key areas – operational delivery, policy development and corporate services (HR, finance, central functions, etc.). However, managing your progression is up to you. The Fast Stream gives you the opportunity to change jobs every year or so to get the experience

in the above areas, but there is a large element of personal responsibility in finding a posting that suits you, and also in getting promoted – nothing is handed to you on a plate, but if you're willing to put in the effort, the opportunities are there.

On a career for life with the Civil Service

As an employer, I think of the Civil Service as a 'wrapper' that provides job security, entrenched values and a great pension. Having a young family, work-life balance is very important to me, and I have always managed to maintain it. Yes, you do sometimes need to put in extra hours, but there is built in flexibility and understanding that when it has to, family comes first!

Since joining the Civil Service in 1998, I have worked in a variety of areas. My next post will be a promotion off the Fast Stream working with the newly formed Assembly Commission as a committee clerk – this is an exciting new area of work as Wales have recently received the power to scrutinise Welsh legislation (previously done by Westminster). These are still new arrangements, so there will no doubt be significant change ahead as the system settles down – an exciting prospect as devolution evolves in Wales.

I think it's true to say you can pretty much do any job you like in the Civil Service, and I look forward to a varied and interesting career ahead of me. Who knows where it may take me, but increasing permeability across the public sector means I won't be ruling out local authorities, the NHS and the wide range of other public sector bodies that exist.



Emily Benn is the Labour Party Candidate for East Worthing and Shoreham and is currently completing her 'A' Levels.

On the application process

A friend of mine in the constituency let me know that the selection procedure was about to start, and that I should apply. I got the information from the Party Website and e-mailed the local party chair and secretary. Then, after I'd decided to try, I wrote my 'candidate CV', in which I had to outline my experience and why I should be considered. I sent it off, along with a 'nomination form'. I was nominated by the constituency youth group. I then had to wait to see if I would be invited to the short listing meeting.

On the process of selection

The first meeting at the local party hall was the short listing, where the six candidates that applied would be cut down to three. Not all of the candidates turned up, but we were all in contention as the panel could vote for any of the six. Each candidate had to undergo a round of questions from the panel (the same for each candidate), which were not known in advance. After a vote, I was short listed. Three weeks later the final selection conference took place. I gave a 15 minute speech, then the others did, and we were brought together for questions from the floor, some of which were very challenging. After that, we just had to wait for the result of the vote!

On the skills needed for the job

There is no set description of the experience necessary to be an MP. MPs come from such a wide variety of backgrounds and professions that each MP brings their own qualities and skills to the job. What I have definitely needed is the ability to communicate to a wide variety of people, and to empathise with their concerns and hopes. Being able to speak confidently in public, as I did to thousands at the Labour Party Conference, is also incredibly helpful. It's also important to develop working relationships with people across the political spectrum, as the main aim is to help people.

On what you need to do to progress

The key to this process is to show that we are willing to try as much as we can to help people in whatever way possible. I can never please all of the people all of the time, as people will always disagree but I can apply my own political principles to situations and issues to try and resolve them and do what I think is right. I have to be open, willing to try new things and fight for the people I hope to represent. At this stage, to 'progress' is to get elected, but what's even more crucial is to do justice to the community in the process.

On what you expect from your employer

At the moment, I have no 'employer' as such apart from the members of the local party who voted for me. They have been incredibly supportive and helpful, and I'm sure this will continue. Looking further ahead I will be campaigning to win the support of a majority of voters in the constituency on the basis of the Labour Party Manifesto at the election after which, if I am elected, every constituent will become my employer. They are the people with the power. As far as the people of East Worthing and Shoreham are concerned, whom I hope to represent, I expect them to be honest and engaged, and explain their experiences and views on a wide range of issues. What's important is that I (and the local party) listen and engage with the voters. I hope they are willing to talk to us. I want to ensure they know we are listening and that we care and I want to explain how Labour's policies can help them.

On being a career politician

At this stage I am not doing this to become a career politician as I have not decided on my career yet (though I can see it being in politics in one form or another). But I see no problem if people have only been involved in politics, with no 'outside' job, prior to becoming an MP; what matters is that they are passionate and good at their job, as many 'career' politicians are. I am doing this to raise issues in the local community and promote my political party's policies and standpoints. What happens later will happen, but what matters now is the current campaign.



A day in the life of an MP

Marie Craven, Communications and Policy Adviser in the Office of the Legal Services Complaints Commissioner, outlines her attachment day with **Anne Begg MP**.

I applied to participate in the IPT's MP attachment scheme to learn more about how Parliament works and how the contribution of MPs and civil servants fits into the parliamentary process. At the second IPT seminar I was informed that Anne Begg, Member for Aberdeen South, would be my assigned MP.

In April I arrived at Westminster and was introduced to Anne, who said she had some good news and some bad news. The bad news was that I would be unable to accompany her to her first meeting as it was private. The meeting was in her capacity as a senior member of the Select Committee for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The good news was that Anne had managed to get me a pass into Prime Minister's Questions.

With some time to fill before PMQs Andrew, Anne's researcher took me on a tour around Westminster Palace. I remember thinking what a privilege it must be to work there and wondered if anyone who does ever becomes blasé about it. Over coffee in Portcullis House I had a look at the order of business. Not spotting anything in my area of work I decided to sit in on the Science and Technology Select Committee hearing on space policy where the Minister for Science and Innovation and the Director General of the British National Space Centre were giving evidence. It was interesting to see at close quarters how civil and public servants are brought to account for their policies and actions. At times the Committee was very pointed in their remarks and questions and I was glad I was only a spectator!

I met up again with Andrew and we joined a long queue for the packed public gallery where we found a seat in time for PMQs. It was a very lively session with the usual quick-witted exchanges that are shown on TV but it was good to be there and see it live. I then joined Anne at a lunch meeting with someone who had been involved in an accident, resulting in him being a wheelchair user. His MP had asked Anne if she would share her experiences of being a parliamentary candidate in a wheelchair. Anne was full of praise for the facilities that had been provided for her in advance of her arriving in Westminster as a new MP in 1997.

Meanwhile, Andrew had kindly contacted my MP, Philip Davies who met Anne and I for coffee. We talked about my local area and some of the issues. When we returned to Anne's room the division bell rang and Anne rushed off to vote on the Pensions Bill, which had a running 3 line whip. The final meeting I attended with Anne was an all-party parliamentary group meeting on oil and gas, which was a presentation and discussion on health and safety within the industry. I headed back North having had a really enjoyable and interesting day.

In June I flew to Aberdeen to spend a day with Anne whilst she was undertaking constituency work. I was collected by Brenda, a constituency worker who took me to the office to meet Anne



and her team. There was lots of correspondence prepared for Anne's consideration and signature, which was cleared at various points throughout the day. Our first visit of the day was to the North East Scotland Credit Union where the staff gave an update on progress since its opening in 2004 that Anne had officially launched. Anne appeared heartened by the good things that had been achieved, one of which was the recent installation of a bank ATM machine that not only provided free cash withdrawals for local people but also generated revenue for the Credit Union from the bank for housing it within the building.

Anne asked for a list of some of the issues that were preventing further progress and promised to take these up on their behalf.

The next visit was to a local church to witness the launch of a mobile youth club, which was a converted double decker bus kitted out with the latest games and screens. The idea had come about as a result of the necessity for two youth centres in two geographical areas. Anne gave a radio interview at the launch praising the performance of the different organisations that had worked hard to advance the project from the ideas stage to a fully functional youth club.

We returned to the constituency office where, over lunch, Anne chatted to a student who wanted to work as a volunteer at her office. Afterwards there were two appointments for the surgery, though only one constituent turned up. It was a case of delay and poor customer service by a government department. Anne said she would write to the relevant Minister to chase the matter up and would let her constituent know the outcome. He was very grateful for her offer of intervention.

The final visit was a meeting at the Town House to which the Head of the Romanian Embassy had invited a cross-party group to discuss the restrictions on the numbers of Romanians allowed into Britain. The aim of the meeting was to ask those present to try to encourage greater numbers to be allowed to take up employment opportunities on offer.

As I headed off to the airport leaving Anne to another meeting, I considered how complex the job of an MP is, having seen Anne switch from one subject to another and making it look so easy. I also marvelled at how committed and passionate Anne is in her work. It was good to see her receive the respect that she rightly deserves and I am full of admiration for her.

I feel that the experience fulfilled the objectives I set out with as I am more aware of how Parliament works, about the role of MPs and the interaction between Parliament and the Civil Service. I also found it very interesting and informative from a personal perspective.

Business and Government learning together

George Oliver MBE, Chair of the Business and Government Seminars, recounts the programme.

My interest in Government and Parliament goes back to the early 1970s when I was appointed, in a very junior capacity, to the Parliamentary Clerk's Office at the then Department for Education and Science. It was then that I became involved in the fascinating world of Ministers, senior civil servants and clerks in Parliament.

Since leaving the Civil Service almost, 14 years ago, I have spent much of my time talking about Government and Parliament to a wide audience of schools, civil servants and the voluntary sector but came into contact with the world of business infrequently.

That changed when the late Lord Weatherill introduced me to the work of the IPT. I was very keen to see if a programme could be developed to bring together business, Parliament and Government so I applied for a post advertised in the House Magazine, and was delighted to be appointed to run the 'Business and Government learning together programme'.

The pilot programme (developed in conjunction with the IPT) took place during October 2007, the idea being to bring together representatives from business, Parliament, the Civil Service, staff of both Houses of Parliament and from the EU Institutions. The programme was organised into half day modules to give maximum information to delegates with the minimum amount of time away from the workplace.

It commenced with a 'Parliamentary Overview' explaining the work of the Commons and Lords. The second module on Select Committees drew out the differences in style between these committees in both Houses and included a session on presenting evidence.

Vernon Coaker MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, David Hanson MP, Minister for State, Ministry of Justice and Mark Hendrick MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Jack Straw gave a fascinating insight into the role of Ministers and prompted lively discussion, questions and answers during their sessions.

'Legislation' and 'the EU' – two of the most topical areas at the moment, particularly with the issues covered in Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech, which were trailed over the summer, and two EU Bills on the budget and Treaty, also prompted much discussion.

'Engaging with Whitehall' was organised and presented by the National School for Government in conjunction with Hugh Elliott, International Government Relations Manager, Anglo American plc. The sessions covered the constitutional framework, the role of central departments and their relationships with other departments, agencies and the wider public sector and gave an example of a high profile policy issue involving interaction between business and Government.

An impressive list of speakers, which in addition to current Ministers included, a member of a Select Committee, Clerks from both Houses of Parliament, Private Secretary to the Lord Speaker, a representative from the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office and a Principal Private Secretary to a former Cabinet Minister, ensured that the programme was very well received and the feedback has been very constructive and positive.

Our intention, however, that the more formal sessions should be supplemented with a tour of Parliament and visits to Select, General and Public Bill Committees was thwarted as Parliament was prorogued on the first day ensuring that no tours or visits to Committees could take place. In addition, Portcullis House had to be evacuated during the EU seminar. Both incidents gave, in their different ways, a flavour of the very real world of Parliament when things can change at a minutes notice! In planning the next series we will ensure that dates are arranged between recesses and nowhere near prorogation! Evacuations we have no control over!



Letters

To contribute a letter or comment, please write to Rachel Shooter, Industry and Parliament Trust, Suite 101, 3 Whitehall Court, London, SW1A 2EL or email rachelshooter@ipt.org.uk

Business and Government learning together

Readers of your magazine might be interested in my thoughts on two pilot courses I recently attended under the IPT umbrella, designed as an introduction to some important aspects of our parliamentary system.

There were about a dozen participants in the morning session, on the role of Ministers, and a similar number in the afternoon which covered the legislative process. Most of those attending were from the Civil Service, including several like me from the Health and Safety Executive, but there was a smattering of people from other departments and the private sector.

I need to mention the venue: Portcullis House, just opposite the Palace of Westminster, from where we had fine views of that venerable old building. It was immediately apparent that this was a high-tech office block: during the presentations there was the odd whirring and rumbling of machinery in the room as blinds closed automatically (as sunlight hit the window) and radiators tripped into action to keep the environmental conditions comfortable and constant. Good to know that our legislators have good, green credentials!

And to use an analogy to hand, the courses also ran like a high-tech machine, very smoothly and efficiently. Two Ministers spoke to us in the morning, Vernon Coker MP and David Hanson MP, after which we heard from a Parliamentary Private Secretary, Mark Hendrick MP. A colleague of mine said he was struck by the fact that they all came across as 'regular blokes', by which he meant that they were human, not so different from us mere mortals! However, I'm not sure how many of us would want to swap jobs with them: they seemed to be pulled in a dozen different directions, with Ministerial staff, pressure groups, the media, their constituents and their families, all competing for their attention.

The afternoon was similarly structured with expert speakers giving us an overview of the tortuous path that a Bill must take through the crocodile infested waters of the House of Commons and Lords before gaining Royal assent. David Kidney MP discussed the increasing use of delegated legislation over the past few decades – nowadays over 4,000 sets of regulations, orders etc are produced each year, each requiring careful scrutiny by his Statutory Instruments Select Committee. A mind-numbing task if ever I heard one!

Perhaps the most useful part of the sessions was the chance to quiz the experts: how do Ministers like their reports and letters drafted by their civil servants? (simply, honestly, correctly!); where does the expression 'three line whip' come from? (boringly it means there are three thick lines on the written instruction for MPs to vote); where do parliamentarians and Ministers get the time to fulfil all their functions (I can't remember the answer to this – I don't think there is one!)

All in all a very good Cook's tour of just two aspects of our parliamentary/legislative system. From now on I hope I'll be able to see these institutions as less arcane, complex and stuffy!

Geoff Baker
Head of Operations in the East
Health and Safety Executive

India Business Fellowship

The election that never was had many casualties, but the last-minute postponement of the IPT's China Business Fellowship to Shanghai was especially frustrating. The China fellowship is an excellent idea – politicians talk about the Chinese phenomenon a lot, but most of us know little of what it means in practice. The last edition of *The Bridge* helpfully focused on China, but there's no substitute for seeing things for yourself, and that's what the China Fellowship was intended to help us do.

The IPT had prepared the fortunate group of MPs with great care and I hope that the new dates will find the same enthusiastic team ready and able to take part. I also hope the unfortunate experience will not deter the IPT from widening its horizons and organising a similar Business Fellowship to India. Britain is uniquely well-placed to build a strong political, cultural and commercial relationship with India that could become as significant to us as our so-called "special relationship" with the States.

So thank you IPT for all the trouble you went to, to organise the Shanghai visit – good luck with the new dates – and how about starting to plan for India too?

Peter Luff MP

Our fundamental values are wrong – Energy, not time is "money"

I have just been sent a copy of *The Bridge*, to give me the format for letters for publication, that I may explain, in 200 words max, that the IPT has been cross-fertilising politicians, civil servants and businessmen with ill-conceived ideas for the past 30 years, maintaining an aura of concern and do-gooding while helping to block the transmission of the correct analysis of what's wrong with current business and Government policies.

The correct analysis remains my January 1973 Strategic Planning review for the Board, everybody, of the global business, Earth Enterprise. That introduces physical laws and limits into the assessment of the "profitability" by developing the excellent analogy between energy and the "finance" of business into a comprehensive model for analysis and consultation that gives politicians, at last, the possibility of coherently "joined-up thinking", and businessmen, at last, the certainties of physics as a foundation for forward planning.

Energy efficiency emerges, naturally, as the key common rule, and the "business model" forms the only valid means of assessing it.

Miss J M Pick
Croydon

Small Business Bursary Scheme in memory of Lord Weatherill

The IPT is appealing for donations to support its new Weatherill Bursary Scheme, established to enable small companies to attend its study programmes on the practice and process of government.

The Scheme is named in honour of the Rt Hon Lord Weatherill DL (1920-2007), the 154th Speaker of the House of Commons, who was instrumental in the founding of the IPT and served as Chairman, President and Vice-President.

As MP for Croydon North East, he specialised in problems facing small businesses and was well known for his enthusiastic support of them. He remained a Director of the Weatherill family firm of tailors for 40 years and was Managing

Director for 13 years, following an apprenticeship under his father. He always carried a thimble in his Speaker's waistcoat as a reminder of his craft.

Successful applicants will receive one place on either of the IPT's 4-day programmes: the PSPI (Parliamentary Study Programme for Industry) held in Westminster or the ESPI (European Study Programme for Industry) held in Brussels.

To find out more about donating to the Scheme, please visit the IPT's website: www.ipt.org.uk/weatherillbursaryscheme or telephone 0207 839 9400. 100% of all donations will be applied towards the bursaries. The IPT is a registered charity, number 287527.

New Member Companies

Since October's edition of *The Bridge*, six companies have had their membership applications approved by the Board of Trustees:

- Bayer Schering Pharma Ltd** – Pharmaceuticals
- Britvic plc** – Manufactures and sells branded soft drinks
- Chimento Consulting Group Ltd** – HR Consultancy
- Compass Group UK & Ireland Ltd** – Facilities Management (especially food services and hospitality)
- Gallaher Limited** – International Tobacco Company
- T-Mobile (UK) Ltd** – Mobile phone operator

IPT AGM

Wednesday 12 March 2008, 5.00pm, House of Commons

Please make a note of this date in your diary. Further details will be sent out in due course.

This year our Annual Report will be available to download from our website at <http://www.ipt.org.uk/AboutUs/AnnualReports.htm>. If you would prefer to receive a paper copy, please email maggiedeighton@ipt.org.uk.

Business Education Briefing

Data Protection: addressing the conflict between data sharing and data protection

Tuesday 15 January, House of Commons

Our speakers will focus on a framework for deciding whether and how to share identifiable data, what can be done to preserve data privacy in data sharing and the implications when data sharing is abused.

To reserve a place, email eunice@ipt.org.uk

IPT Trustee & Staff News

The IPT Board of Trustees and Secretariat pass on their best wishes to Sir Paul Hayter, KCB LVO who retired as Trustee to the IPT after four years.

After six months as the Personal Assistant to Sally Mugeridge, Rachel Shooter has been appointed Communications Executive and Managing Editor of *The Bridge*. Candice Monaghan has now taken on the role of Personal Assistant. Candice interned with two MPs following her graduation from the University of Westminster.

Following three years at the IPT, Emma Massey has moved on from her role as Events Manager and has joined Universal Events Limited.

November ESPI Programme



Duncan Egerton, DEFRA (centre) receiving his European Study Programme for Industry certificate, presented by Sally Mugeridge and Simon Stannard, UKREP. Delegates of the ESPI are elected Corporate Fellows of the IPT.



Baffled by legislation from Brussels?

Introduction to the EU - Financial Services

Understand the EU from a Financial Services perspective

Tuesday 4 - Wednesday 5 March 2008, Brussels

The *Introduction to the EU* offers just that, a brief glimpse at the way in which the main European Institutions work both in their own right and as a whole. It will demonstrate to those who have little or no understanding of the way in which the EU functions, the importance of engaging with the system and doing so early on.

The course aims to equip business representatives with a basic understanding of the EU network, as well as the people involved. In addition, delegates have the opportunity to discuss their own insights and experiences with other representatives from similar fields in both formal and informal settings. This particular course will focus on the Financial Services industry and will include speakers who have specific interest in that business sector.

In just two days you will discover:

- The consultation process
- How the UK is represented in Brussels
- A unique insight into policy issues
- The role of the European Commission
- The role of the Council of Ministers
- The role of the European Parliament
- The role of the DG Internal Markets.

Contact Karen Burt in our Brussels office at karenburt@ipt.org.uk or on 0032 2 282 0983 for more details

The Bridge In the next issue...

The April edition of *The Bridge* will focus on the City of London.

The IPT welcomes articles of an informative and educational nature from both companies and parliamentarians.

Articles can address topics ranging from commerce to culture, technology to science. If you have material that you think would be of interest to our readers from the worlds of business and politics, please send them to rachelshooter@ipt.org.uk or telephone **0207 839 9400** for more information.

Please note that any material should be non-party political and non-lobbying in line with the ethos of the IPT.