

local government matters



Local Government Association

facts and figures about local councils 2004–2005



local government matters

Local government matters to local communities. Over 21,000 elected councillors serve on some 410 local authorities in England and Wales. Over two million people work in local councils, across a range of some 700 different services.

The Local Government Association (LGA) wants to raise public understanding and awareness about local councils and the work they do, and this 'snapshot' of just some of their activities has been prepared with this in mind.

We have set out a series of interesting facts and figures to try and reflect the size and scale of local government across the country and to demonstrate how local councils represent their communities. For further information on any of the statistics, you will find a comprehensive list of sources at the end of the publication.

You can find out more about your local council from its web site and more about the work of the LGA on www.lga.gov.uk or by phoning LGconnect on 020 7664 3131, email info@lga.gov.uk

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people and voting

Councillors who are responsible for making decisions about services, on behalf of the community, are elected by local people. In order to be eligible to vote in a local election, a person must be a British, Commonwealth or European Union citizen and aged 18 or over; and must be registered to vote.

- Voter turnout during the June 2004 local elections was 38 per cent. Where authorities required everyone to vote by post, the turnout increased to 43 per cent.¹
- 93 per cent of people in the UK say they are registered to vote and five per cent say they are not. Men, those aged 18–34, full-time workers, black and minority ethnic residents, private renters and those living in urban areas (especially London) are significantly less likely to be registered than their counterparts.²
- Currently, people in a household need to register to vote every year, even if the circumstances of people living in the household don't change. Just over half (53 per cent) of the UK population are aware of this, but 44 per cent think they do not have to re-register unless their circumstances change.²
- People are more likely to know about their local MP than their local councillors: 36 per cent of people know the name of their councillors compared with 42 per cent who can correctly name their MP. However, people know less about Westminster Parliament than their local council.³

PHOTO: EVENING CHRONICLE, NEWCASTLE



Newcastle upon Tyne postal voting campaign

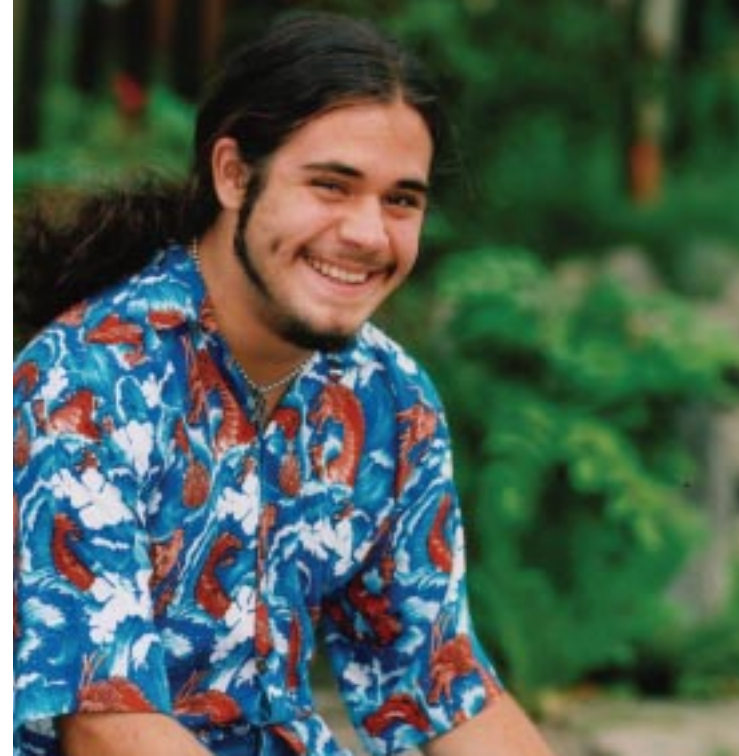
To raise awareness and encourage people to vote in the June 2004 elections, Newcastle City Council produced an eight page publication delivered to all homes using plain English, cartoons and diagrams. They also used regular news releases; adverts in newspapers, on buses and on a trailer; posters (including alternative language versions); website and information kiosks; and promotional staff in shopping areas.

Newcastle also co-ordinated a joint Tyne and Wear television, radio and transport advertising campaign. The turnout was 46 per cent.

councillors and communities

Councillors are responsible for making decisions on behalf of the local community about local services. They also agree the local authority budget and set the policy framework, as well as appointing chief officers and making constitutional decisions. Councillors are elected by local people for a four-year term.

- There are 21,268 councillors in England and Wales, representing local communities and local interests.⁴ This compares to 569 MPs that represent national interests in the House of Commons for England and Wales.⁵
- 57 per cent of people agree that councillors play an important role in representing the interests of local people and local communities.⁶
- 52 per cent of councillors are in work, and so carry out council duties alongside their jobs: 27 per cent are in full-time employment, nine per cent in part-time employment and 16 per cent are self-employed. The remaining 48 per cent of councillors are either retired or not currently working.⁴
- Many councillors also take on additional unpaid activities, such as school governorships (56 per cent), voluntary/charity work (54 per cent), and representation on public boards or joint committees (44 per cent).⁴
- Two-thirds (65 per cent) of the public think that local councillors have the most influence on the issues that affect people in their local area, compared to 14 per cent who think that national politicians do.⁷



Lewisham elects first young mayor

Lewisham London Borough Council achieved a 'first' in the capital when Young Mayor Emanuel Hawks was elected to office this year. The Young Mayor and his team have a budget of £25,000 to spend on addressing the needs of young people in the borough. Over 44 per cent of the borough's young people turned out to vote for one of the 36 candidates (all had to obtain 30 nominations each).

standards and improvement

Local councils are heavily scrutinised to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in their service provision. One of the ways this is achieved is through Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). This is carried out by the Audit Commission who measures the performance of local authorities in England helping them improve services for their communities. Councils are awarded one of the following ratings: excellent, good, fair, weak or poor, on the basis of their service performance.

- There are currently a total of 55 councils in the excellent category, 129 in good, 102 in fair, 38 in weak and 17 in poor. This means that 54 per cent of authorities are judged to be excellent or good; 30 per cent fair; and 16 per cent weak or poor.⁸
- Many councils have improved their CPA scores. Over a third of councils categorised as poor or weak in 2002 moved up a category in 2003 and 26 councils overall witnessed an improvement in their category rating.⁹
- Ten councils have an elected mayor. Public opinion polls carried out in the 1990s and in 2001 revealed about three-quarters of the population supported the idea of a directly elected leader or mayor.¹⁰
- Overall 55 per cent of the public are satisfied with their local authority in 2003, although satisfaction with individual services is often higher.¹¹



lights, camera, action in Blackburn with Darwen

After receiving its 'excellent' rating from the CPA, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council was approached by Granada TV to make a 'fly on the wall' documentary about the work of the council and how it delivered services.

The venture was a success for both Granada and the council, with viewing for the first series topping 500,000 at primetime (22 per cent of the regional audience). A second series has been equally successful.

The photo shows Foreign Secretary and Blackburn MP Jack Straw being filmed with Year 11 pupil Misbah Matloob from Newfield Special School.

taxing and spending

In order to provide local services, local government spends billions of pounds each year. This money comes from central government, from business rates, and from the council tax.

- Local government expenditure accounts for 26 per cent of all public expenditure in England.¹²
- It is estimated that local government will spend £73.4 billion on the day-to-day running of local services in 2004–2005.¹²
- Local councils spend the largest proportion of their budget on education services (42 per cent) and social services (19 per cent).¹²
- The money local government spends comes from three sources: government grant (55 per cent), non-domestic rates (19 per cent) and council tax (26 per cent).¹²
- It is estimated that, on top of the cost of running local services day-to-day, local councils will also spend £15.3 billion on capital projects. For example, on buildings, vehicles, investing in transport projects or in leisure projects.¹²
- Research shows that people believe council tax pays for between a quarter and three-quarters of council services. In fact, council tax accounts for only 26 per cent of all costs.¹³
- The average council tax in England in 2004–2005 was £967 per dwelling, compared to £908 in 2003–2004.¹²



savings on public services

Norfolk County Council is using the strength of its two wholly owned private limited companies – Norfolk County Services (NCS) Ltd and NPS Property Consultants Ltd – to benefit clients and council tax payers alike.

NPS's expertise is helping to restore a listed conservatory owned by Norfolk. NCS Ltd, which employs more than 4,500 staff in catering, ground maintenance, cleaning and other services, recently signed an agreement with Great Yarmouth Borough Council to provide refuse services. Savings are reinvested to help reduce the cost of public services.

jobs and careers in local government

Local authorities employ a significant number of people across a range of sectors and in a variety of roles. It is one of the largest employers in England and Wales. Education, leisure, and social services are just some of the areas to which people are employed within local authorities.

- Local government employs 2.1 million people in England and 162,000 in Wales, a total of 2.2 million jobs. Almost three-quarters of these jobs are held by women and a quarter by men.¹⁴
- There are around 600 occupations and thousands of different job titles in local government. For example, officers can work in environmental health, planning, surveying, legal work, accountancy, IT, personnel and policy and research.¹⁵
- 57 per cent of employee jobs in local government are in education (teachers and other employees), 21 per cent are in services direct to the public, 14 per cent in social services and eight per cent in corporate functions.¹⁴
- 78 per cent of male employees in local government work full-time, compared to 40 per cent of female workers.¹⁴
- Social service departments in England employ 277,000 staff. Of these, 81 per cent are female and 90 per cent are white.¹⁶
- In March 1995, 38 per cent of local authorities reported they were experiencing some recruitment and retention difficulties. By January 2003, this had increased to 94 per cent of authorities saying they have difficulties.¹⁷

PHOTO: WWW.THIRD-AVENUE.CO.UK



local government popular with graduates

The National Graduate Development Programme recruits some of the brightest and best young graduates to work in local government. Over 7,000 young people have applied for the 100+ places available so far.

Co-ordinated by the Employers' Organisation for Local Government, the scheme has been funded to recruit a further 150 trainees next year. The programme lasts two years and placements are in specific local authorities throughout England and Wales.

tackling disadvantage & rebuilding communities

Local authorities have a duty to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their local community. A number of policies have been put into place at a local level to deal with some of the main causes of social exclusion, such as unemployment and the high incidence of children growing up in workless and low-income households.

- Overall 22 per cent of the population live on a low income. But that proportion rises to: 30 per cent of children; 41 per cent of people where the head of the household is from an ethnic minority; and 29 per cent of people in a family with a disabled person.¹⁸
- Between 2001 and 2006, nearly £1.9 billion from the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is being given to the 88 most deprived local authority areas. This will enable the authorities, in collaboration with other local agencies, to improve services and narrow the gap between their deprived area and the rest of the country.¹⁹
- 63 per cent of local councils have a formal strategy to promote social inclusion and/or combat poverty and deprivation. A further fifth (17 per cent) have such a strategy planned.²⁰
- A total of 91 per cent of authorities have a cross-agency local strategic partnership in their area, which brings together a number of local organisations such as the council, the police and the health service, to improve the quality of life in their locality.²¹



local people have their say on street scene

When Southwark London Borough Council wanted to regenerate the Bellenden area of Peckham it invited local residents to discuss and plan their own renewal.

Some people wanted better lighting and pavements and others wanted art – what better opportunity than to combine the two. Around 40 different local artists, including Anthony Gormley, Tom Phillips and Zandra Rhodes were asked to create bollards, mosaics, pavements and shop fronts.

transport

Councils have a range of transport responsibilities within their local areas from traffic regulation and residential car parking, to road safety and the provision of concessionary bus passes. Local authorities are also involved in developing cycle ways and improving public footpaths and rights of way and work alongside bus and rail companies to improve their local public transport networks.

- 71 per cent of people in England travel to work by car, 11 per cent walk, eight per cent travel by bus or coach, and six per cent by train.²²
- Local government expenditure on transport rose from £3.3 billion in 1997/1998 to £5.5 billion in 2002/2003.²²
- An estimated 329,158 kilometres of road (excluding motorways) are maintained by councils in England and Wales.²²
- 94 per cent of local authorities offer a half-fare concessionary scheme for the elderly, 90 per cent offer them to people with mobility disabilities and 60 per cent offer such a scheme to people with sight impairments.²³
- Overall in England 81 per cent of passengers were satisfied with their bus service; 74 per cent satisfied were satisfied with the value for money of their bus service, and 66 per cent were satisfied with the reliability of their bus service.²⁴
- More than nine out of 10 local authorities with a responsibility for transport have developed or are in the process of developing 'safe routes to school' for pupils in their area, to allow them to walk or cycle to school safely.²⁵



slowing the pace saves lives

North East Lincolnshire Borough Council has signed up 980 drivers to its Community Pace Car Scheme and it has seen a 20 per cent reduction in serious injuries and deaths on the roads around Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham as a result.

Volunteers who join the scheme sign a pledge to keep to the speed limit whenever they drive within the borough and agree to display a 'Pace Car' sticker on the back of their vehicle. The car then effectively becomes a mobile traffic calming measure by slowing down speeding motorists. Several other authorities are thinking of adopting the scheme.

community safety and crime reduction

Councils work closely with the police to reduce levels of crime and disorder in their communities and enhance the local environment. They consider the crime and disorder implications of every policy and operational decision made by the authority. Many councils employ different types of community wardens to work alongside the police.

- Nine out of 10 local councils have community safety agreed as a corporate priority.²⁶
- Crime is tackled in local areas by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). There are 376 CDRPs across England and Wales, which combine local authorities, police and other organisations to tackle crime and disorder.²⁷
- During a one-day count of anti-social behaviour in September 2003, a total of 66,107 reports were counted, which equates to one every two seconds. The estimated daily cost to agencies of anti-social behaviour is £13.5 million.²⁸
- Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) aim to protect the public from activity that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress; an order placed on an offender will prohibit them from conducting specific anti-social acts or entering defined areas. Since introduction, 2455 ASBOs have been used by local authorities and the police to protect residents in their homes.²⁹
- There are 246 warden schemes in England and Wales, the majority of them run by local councils. Collectively, they provide 675 street wardens, 361 street crime wardens and 445 neighbourhood wardens.³⁰



evening ambassadors welcome visitors

To boost the evening economy of its city centre, making it feel safer and more welcoming, Coventry City Council took on CV One Ltd, to provide 'evening ambassadors'. The ambassadors work closely with the police and licensed premises' managers to provide a reassuring presence around the city centre.

The scheme is a big success and the council was runner-up in last year's 'Hospitality on the Street' award from the Association of Town Centre Management.

social services and health

Local authorities provide a range of care and support services to children, families and vulnerable adults in their local area. In particular they provide support for older people, adults with physical or learning disabilities or mental health needs and carers who look after a dependent adult. Councils also coordinate fostering and adoption services.

- In 2002–2003, councils in England spent £15.2 billion on social services, 12 per cent more than in the previous year.³¹
- An estimated 3.1 million hours of home care were provided to around 362,800 households (373,500 clients) in September 2003. Around a quarter of households received intensive home care support, which is an increase of seven per cent from 2002.³²
- 206,935 people aged over 65 were being supported by councils in residential and nursing care on 31 March 2002.³³
- In 2002/2003, expenditure on services for children and families accounted for 23 per cent of total gross current expenditure, whilst expenditure on services for older people accounted for 45 per cent.³¹
- An estimated 60,800 children are currently being looked after by local councils in England. Of these, 68 per cent are in foster placements, 13 per cent in children's homes and residential schools and 10 per cent placed with parents.³⁴
- Local councils in England provided a total of 22 million days of care to looked after children during the year ending 31 March 2003, 11 per cent more than in 1998/1999.³⁴

PHOTO: WWW.THIRD-AVENUE.CO.UK



new homes for older people

Innovation and partnership are driving an ambitious and ground breaking scheme in Hampshire to build 500 nursing home beds for older people. Hampshire County Council and NHS colleagues are working together to build 10 homes for vulnerable older people.

The homes, the first of which will be ready in 2005, will also reduce hospital bed blocking and waiting times. The £60 million scheme, believed to be the first of its kind in the country, will make use of cutting edge computer technology, and generate 500 jobs locally in the state-of-the-art homes.

education and lifelong learning

All county councils and unitary authorities have a major role to support school improvement and a responsibility for schools and education services in their areas. This can range from the provision of adult education services, to play-schemes, pupil referral centres and educational psychologists.

- 42 per cent of local council day to day spending is on education, which equates to £30.5 billion.³⁵
- Local authorities administer 23,294 schools in England: 92 per cent of pupils are taught in nursery, primary and secondary schools, or special schools and pupil referral units, which are administered by local authorities.³⁶
- There are currently 420,000 full-time equivalent teachers, and 225,000 full-time equivalent support staff (compared to 144,000 support staff in 1998) working in local authority-administered nursery, primary, secondary and special schools or pupil referral units in England.³⁶
- Nearly 7.8 million children attend schools administered by local authorities. A further 600,000 children attend independent schools.³⁶
- The average class size in local authority-administered primary schools is 26.3, and 21.8 in secondary schools.³⁷
- Nine out of ten authorities are assessed as achieving the top two scores for their education service.⁹

PHOTO: WWW.THIRD-AVENUE.CO.UK



a family learning journey

West Sussex County Council has an excellent track record for offering learning opportunities and young mum Rachael White has worked hard to take up these opportunities. Rachael did not find helping her sons with learning easy at home, so she signed up for a family literacy course, gained an Open College Network (OCN) accreditation and a national numeracy qualification.

The next step was a 'Helping in School' course, followed by yet another family course in IT. She is now working as a teaching assistant and her long-term aim is to train as a teacher. Nominated for a NIACE Family Learning Award, Rachael was selected as the national winner.

housing

Local authorities are expected to draw up strategies for all housing in their areas, based on proper assessments of the needs of their residents, including the needs of homeless people, and to make the best use of all the resources available in the light of local circumstances. They are responsible for monitoring the condition of all housing in their local area, including privately owned property; maintaining council housing; making grants available to older homes; and helping to adapt the homes of elderly and disabled people.

- There are 21,660,475 households in England and Wales, 30 per cent of these (6.5 million) consist of one-person households – an increase of just over a quarter since 1991.³⁸
- The 'Right to Buy' scheme was introduced in 1980, with the aim of enabling local authority tenants of two years to buy their homes at a discount price. By the end of March 2000 around 1.4 million houses had been sold, through this scheme, in England.³⁹
- A fifth of all households in England rent from the social sector. A total of 14 per cent rent property from the council, and six per cent from a registered social landlord or housing association.³⁸
- The percentage of all housing stock that belongs to local authorities has declined over the years. In 1979 nearly a third (29 per cent) of stock belonged to local councils, but this has decreased to 11 per cent in 2003.⁴⁰



letting people have more housing choice

Bradford Homehunter is a choice-based lettings scheme that is revolutionising access to social housing across Bradford. Run by Bradford Community Housing Trust for Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Homehunter provides greater choice for members, partnerships with other landlords, and tackles social exclusion.

Homes are marketed through a website www.bradfordhomehunter.co.uk, media adverts, roadshows and at housing offices. Black and minority ethnic tenancies are rising, and Homehunter is being bought by other landlords.

arts, sports and culture

Councils have a wide-ranging involvement in the cultural provision of their local communities. In particular, they are responsible for local libraries, the management of entertainment venues and the co-ordination and promotion of a variety of events and leisure activities in their local area.

- 60 per cent of the public hold a public library ticket, and 10 million visit a public library at least once a fortnight.⁴¹
- Each year local government spends over £800 million on public libraries.⁴²
- Local authorities in England operate over 3,000 central and branch libraries and over 500 mobile libraries⁴¹
- 7.7 million adults and 2.1 million children use parks for sporting activities each year. Local councils provide over 21,000 playgrounds and play areas.⁴³
- 75 per cent of the public are satisfied with the parks and open spaces provided by local authorities.¹¹
- 54 per cent of the public are satisfied with the sports and leisure facilities provided by local authorities.¹¹
- Local authorities work alongside other organisations to provide sports and arts activities for young people in deprived areas of the country. For example, in areas where the 'Summer Splash' scheme ran, the total crime rate fell by six per cent compared with a national rise of four per cent.⁴⁴

PHOTO: WWW.THIRD-AVENUE.CO.UK



healthy outlook for youngsters

Each week 230 Sunderland youngsters from the largest but also most deprived health area between Edinburgh and Leeds set an example to their peers and parents in 45-minute work-outs at their local state-of-the-art sports centre.

The children range in age from six to 16 and form the cutting edge of 'Kidzpower', getting fit in circuit training on the very latest in gym equipment.

This three-year fitness programme, sponsored by Sunderland City Council and funded by New Deal for Communities and the Raich Carter Sports Centre, was launched last December (2003).

environment

Local councils have a number of responsibilities surrounding the sustainability and improvement of their local environment. They oversee a range of activities such as street cleaning, household refuse collection, waste management and recycling schemes.

- The amount of municipal waste collected by local authorities in 2002/2003 was 29.3 million tonnes. This was an increase of 1.8 per cent from the 2001/2002 figure of 28.8 million tonnes.⁴⁵
- The proportion of household waste recycled has risen steadily in recent years, from seven per cent in 1996/1997 to 14.5 per cent in 2002/2003.⁴⁵
- The amount of recycled household material collected through kerbside schemes rose to 1.3 million tonnes in 2002/2003, an increase of 69 per cent from the previous year. The proportion of the households covered by kerbside schemes rose from 58 per cent in 2001/2002 to 67 per cent in 2002/2003.⁴⁵
- 84 per cent of the public are satisfied with the household waste collection carried out by local authorities.¹¹
- 68 per cent of the public are satisfied with the waste recycling facilities provided by local authorities.¹¹
- The number of abandoned vehicles reported to local authorities in England and Wales rose from 597,000 in 2000–2001 to 829,000 in 2002–2003 – an increase of 28 per cent.⁴⁶



flyposting in the past

The Borough of Oadby and Wigston is looking cleaner and smarter, thanks to a simple initiative that has had a dramatic impact on flyposting. The council puts 'Cancelled' notices across illegal posters, in very small print at the bottom of the sticker it says, 'This poster is cancelled by Oadby & Wigston Borough Council'.

The impact has been dramatic. Before the campaign, council officers were removing between 70 and 100 posters each week. Only eight weeks into the campaign, this was reduced to zero for the first time. Dozens of councils have been in touch to find out how they can copy this brilliant idea!

planning and regulation

Councils have different levels of planning responsibilities. They deal mainly with planning applications and enquiries, and will guide development in accordance with the local development plan. They receive a range of planning applications, from listed building and conservation area consents, to permissions to display advertisements. Councils also have regulatory responsibilities, such as trading standards and environmental health.

- In 2002/2003, district planning authorities in England received 634,000 planning applications and 586,000 were decided – the highest numbers in 13 years.⁴⁷
- 86 per cent of applications decided were granted, compared with 88 per cent the previous year; and 67 per cent of all planning decisions were made within eight weeks, two per cent higher than in 2001/2002.⁴⁷
- In 2003/2004, local authorities in England and Wales estimated they spent £587.8 million on planning and development activities; this was an increase of 14.7 per cent over the previous year.⁴⁸
- During the last year local authority environmental health officers carried out 544,000 inspection visits to food premises. Forty-five per cent of the businesses inspected were forced to take some sort of corrective action.⁴⁹
- More than 800,000 trading standards complaints from consumers were received by 200 authorities in 2002. In 2001 they carried out nearly 3,500 prosecutions.⁴⁹

PHOTO: WWW.THIRD-AVENUE.CO.UK



more funds for food safety initiative

The Food Standards Agency has awarded local authorities £800,000 to continue the work of last year's imported food sampling and surveillance initiative to help reduce the risks to consumers of imported food.

The funding will increase microbiological examinations and chemical analysis of imported food in over 140 authorities. Last year a total of 110 authorities participated: nearly 4,500 samples were submitted for analysis and more than 800 premises visited as part of the exercise. This work has helped increase knowledge of imported food and reduce further risks to consumers.

cities, seaside and countryside

Tourism can be a principal form of revenue for many local economies and an important factor in regenerating communities; councils consider this when developing their tourism strategies. Councils see the redevelopment and enhancement of their town centres, whether rural or urban, as important objectives. Most councils work closely with their business community.

- Local councils spend five per cent of their leisure and recreation budget specifically on 'tourism', equating to some £118 million.⁵⁰
- In 2003, UK residents made 151 million overnight trips within the UK, spending more than £26.4 billion; a further 24.7 million trips were made to the UK by overseas visitors, spending approximately £11.9 billion.⁵¹
- In the UK, 22 per cent of visitor attractions are owned by local authorities. Nearly a quarter of the visits made to attractions each year are to local authority-owned ones.⁵²
- Local councils provide and manage 84 per cent of tourism and information centres in England.⁵³
- An estimated 1.46 million conferences and meetings took place at UK venues during 2002, with an estimated value of £7.3 billion (excluding delegate and organiser expenditure outside the venue).⁵⁴
- There are an estimated 2.1 million jobs in tourism in the UK, some 7.4 per cent of all people in employment.⁵⁵

PHOTO: DAILY ECHO, BOURNEMOUTH



beach front access made easy

Bournemouth Borough Council has improved beach access for wheelchair users thanks to lottery funds. Its new beach-friendly wheelchairs have large, inflatable wheels and outrigger wheels to make the chair stable.

The new chairs are already proving to be very popular, and the council hopes to invest in more of them in the future.

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