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How new approaches to people and tech are transforming construction



LYNDA RAWSTHORNE FRICS
DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT HEAD OF PROPERTY PROFESSION



SUNNY-THOMAS OBASUYI MRICS
SENIOR SURVEYOR, HARTDIXON



GRAHAM JONES FRICS
DIRECTOR, TURNER & TOWNSEND REAL ESTATE

The next generation

Lynda: I'm proud of the steps we're taking to open doors for the next generation of surveyors, particularly those from underrepresented and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

We've created a final selection process that focuses on motivation and potential rather than existing property qualifications, making our Fast Stream scheme truly open to all. This inclusive approach has seen applications increase by 37% this year alone. We're especially focused on reaching candidates who might not have considered a surveying career before.

Our Fast Stream is open to non-property degree graduates and existing civil servants without a degree, and the vast majority of our current candidates come from non-property backgrounds. We've recruited across all four nations of the UK, welcoming career-changers, career-returners following maternity leave, and two new mums already on the scheme.

We've established a Recruitment and Resourcing Centre of Excellence, offering tools and guidance to support departments in attracting and retaining top talent. And we're investing in our people through training in sustainability, data and leadership.

The Fast Stream scheme is now majority female, with representation across disabled, minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities in line with the wider UK population. With a 96% accreditation success rate, our first cohort is now stepping into senior G7 roles.

We're building a profession that reflects the communities we serve, where everyone can thrive.

Embracing neurodiversity in surveying

Sunny: As a Governing Council member from a small to medium sized enterprise, I've seen how neurodiversity enriches our profession. Approximately 15-20% of the UK population is neurodivergent, including those with dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and other cognitive differences.

Yet many firms lack the awareness needed to fully support and get the most from these talented people. Neurodivergent professionals bring exceptional strengths to surveying. Those with autism often demonstrate remarkable attention to detail and pattern recognition. Colleagues with ADHD frequently excel at innovative problem-solving and creative thinking, while those with dyslexia often demonstrate superior spatial reasoning abilities, making them invaluable for visualisation and design.

My current company, HartDixon, has implemented adjustments such as flexible working arrangements, Access to Work support, technology-assisted software and quiet spaces. These have significantly improved retention and productivity for the whole team.

Governing Council is committed to enhancing awareness and developing industry-wide neurodiversity guidelines. We are working with educational institutions to ensure that APC pathways accommodate different learning styles and collaborating with firms to establish best practices for inclusive recruitment and workplace support.

By actively embracing neurodiversity, we strengthen our profession through cognitive diversity and unlocking previously untapped potential.

Digital transformation and innovation in construction

Graham: Digital transformation in construction and property services is no longer about stand-alone technological solutions, but about creating integrated ecosystems that drive performance across complex programmes and portfolios. At Turner & Townsend, our experience with major projects is demonstrating just how fundamental integration is to delivery.

Any project environment needs to shift toward the development of a robust digital framework that connects disparate systems, tools and stakeholders.

Three key priorities are emerging. Firstly, the adoption of Information Management (IM) to streamline capital projects and support whole-life operations. The Grenfell Tower tragedy exposed failures in IM within property services, highlighting the need for accurate, accessible and transparent information to ensure accountability and protect lives.

Secondly, the development of advanced system integration architectures that will enable interoperability between varied design, construction and operational platforms. This will enable the third priority, the leveraging of AI and automation in the transformation of workflow efficiency.

Digital Transformation isn't just about technology, it's about creating collaborative frameworks that enhance productivity, reduce risk and unlock value.

By treating integration as a strategic capability, we can transform how complex programmes are conceived, delivered and managed. The future of property services will be defined by our ability to create intelligent, interconnected digital ecosystems that respond directly to evolving client needs.

All together now



The pandemic made working from home a sensible default but getting employees back to the office has proved a challenge. Why does management want workers to return - and what's in it for them?

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEA CRESPO

As COVID-19 has become a memory, pressure has built for those who have been able to work from home (WFH) since the start of the pandemic to return to the office on an increased or full-time basis.

Pre-COVID-19, there was an impression that, generally, office workers spent their contracted hours in their company offices. A 2024 report titled *Return to the Office* by the UK-based Centre for Cities (CFC) compared central London with five roughly analogous competitor cities: the CBDs of Paris, New York, Toronto, Singapore and Sydney. All six cities have a high-skills, high-knowledge workforce based in their centres and CFC's research found that pre-pandemic, on average, workers were in the office slightly fewer than four days a week – and only three in Singapore (although this may be explained by Singapore already being in partial lockdown when the data was gathered).

The rate at which workers have remained WFH has varied across the six cities. London and Toronto workers have the fewest days in the office at 2.7 each, while Parisian workers have returned 3.5 days a week and Singapore staff have increased their pre-COVID-19 attendance from three to 3.2 days

The report argues that London is disadvantaged by clinging onto WFH long after it ceased to be a necessity. While staff may prefer WFH, areas such as the City and Canary Wharf rely on agglomeration, concentrating their skilled workers together and creating what the authors term "knowledge spillovers" – a culture of absorbing and developing skills by being surrounded by expertise.

If that is the case, a weekly survey conducted by Remit Consulting LLP makes for worrying reading. It records the number of keycard swipes made into offices in several UK cities as a means of measuring occupancy in leased spaces. The average for high-end central London in the week ending 24 January was 44.5% (albeit up from 37.3% in January 2024).

"Central London has a very interesting mix of people and different businesses working together, and that's what allows it to thrive," says Roddy Houston MRICS, a commercial property consultant and chair of the RICS Commercial Property Professional Group Panel. "In my view, what has happened in the office market replicates what has happened to retail ▸



over the past 20 years. People have gone online and there's no longer as much need to have shop premises. COVID-19 has accelerated it, but offices are going the same way. The decline is much quicker, there's less demand generally."

One of the reasons many companies want their workers in the office carries little personal benefit: they have leased, and are stuck with, large premises that they do not wish to keep empty. About a third of the 900 respondents to a survey by resume.org have leases that run until 2028 and cite this as a reason for their return-to-office policy (a substantial proportion – more than 40% – said they would reduce the days required in office when they were able to lease smaller spaces).

Managers enforcing office attendance because they have an office premises to fill – to the possible detriment of their most valuable employees' loyalty – seems a high-risk strategy. But a thriving commercial quarter feeds into a local – and often a national – sense of prosperity as well as creating beneficial interdependent business networks and helping to establish the knowledge spillovers noted above.

In London, where so many employees choose to be in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, many workplaces can feel lonely on a Friday. CFC found only 40% of workers worked from their office on Fridays during 2024 and data from Remit's survey suggests that the figures for Friday office attendance hovers around just 20%.



Such was the level of alarm that the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, experimented with lower public transport fares on Fridays, a measure that was not wholly successful as so few people were aware of it. Lower fares may, however, partly explain Parisians' enthusiasm for the office – not only are they much cheaper in Paris, but companies are also legally obliged to reimburse staff's commuting costs by 50%.

"The thing that prevents workers returning to the office which really stood out was transport costs," says Oscar Selby, co-author of *Return to the Office*. "It's no coincidence that when you look at the city which has the highest in-office rate, it's Paris."

Conversely, in Singapore, where a 50-plus-hour working week is not unusual, Bill Jones FRICS says the return to the office has been relatively relaxed, in part because of the increasingly crowded train network. "It's about a work-life balance and pressure on public transport. The government here has brought in new laws that mean people have the right to request flexi-working."

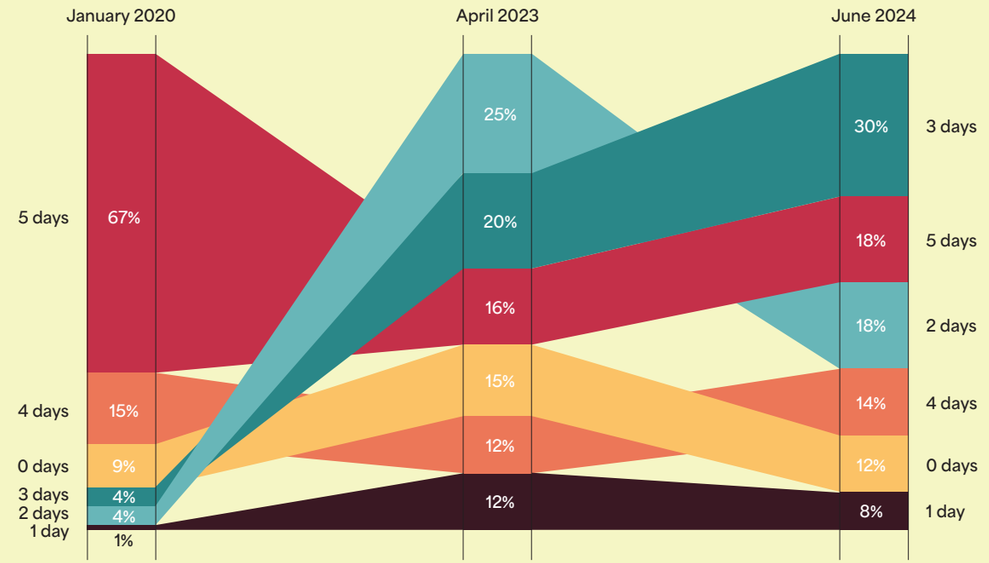
The proportion of vacant offices in the CFC's *Return to the Office* report show that all six cities have had an increase in vacancies – and at an alarming rate for Sydney and Toronto. While there has been a glut of office completions after the pandemic, WFH definitely takes a share of the blame for this. Not only directly – fewer people in the office means companies that can be flexible need less space – but indirectly: some companies are relocating from older buildings to better-serviced, better-located premises.

Houston says that this is a trend in central London as well – "Canary Wharf isn't so good" – and that the asset owners that are really succeeding offer a great product. "Those that are building very close to transport hubs and providing very good quality office spaces on all types of different terms are in demand."

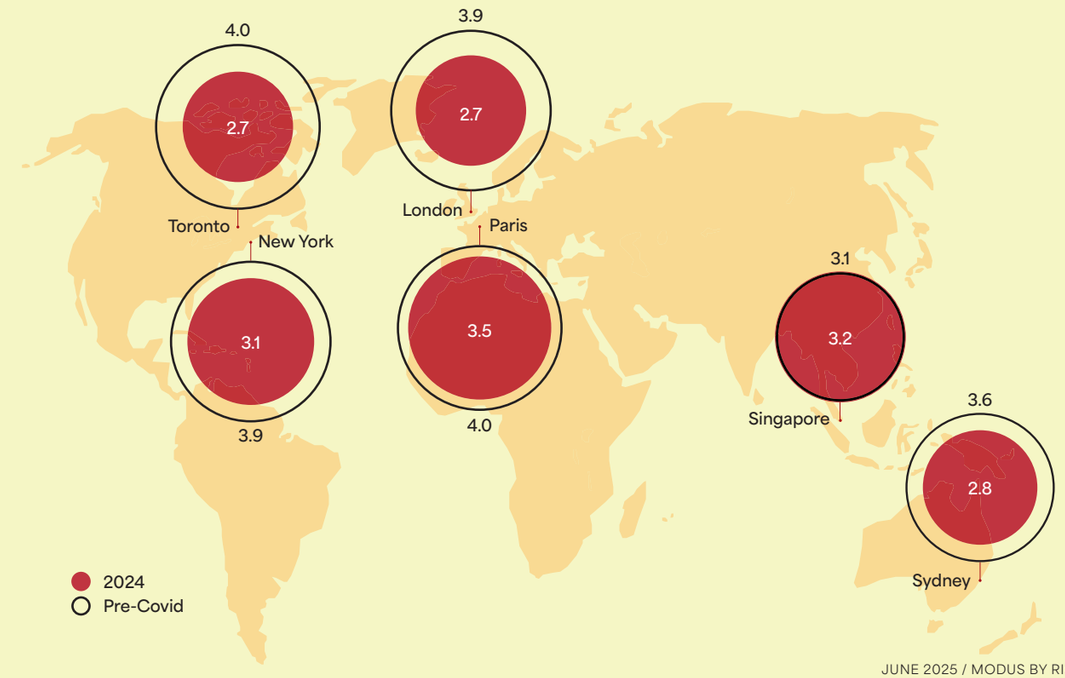
Using the carrot instead of the stick, they have figured that a more inviting work environment might help to entice employees back to their desks more often. Workers have made an investment in their home offices in recent years, the thinking goes, and they expect their employers to take similar consideration with their corporate workplaces.

Consequently, some businesses are trying to tempt them back, according to a January 2025 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, by snapping up premises that offer restaurants and gyms, and are convenient to travel to. In a JLL report about incentivising workers back to the office, a spokesman suggested, "Part of the answer lies in making sure the corporate workplace provides similar utility as their homes in terms of the quality of life." ▸

MOST COMMON NUMBER OF DAYS SPENT IN THE OFFICE, FULL-TIME CENTRAL LONDON OFFICE WORKERS

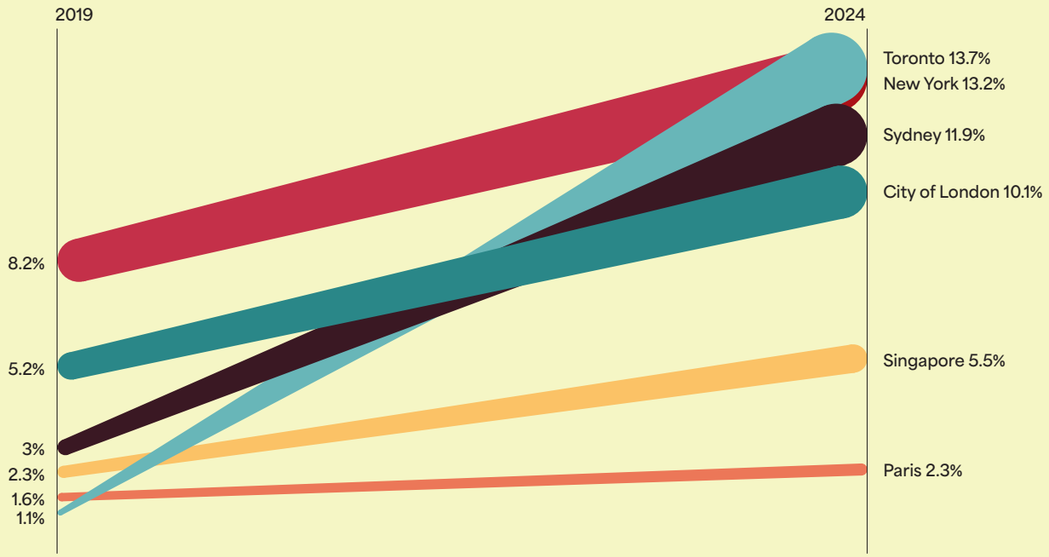


AVERAGE DAYS IN THE OFFICE PER WEEK AND CHANGES SINCE COVID-19, FULL-TIME CITY WORKERS

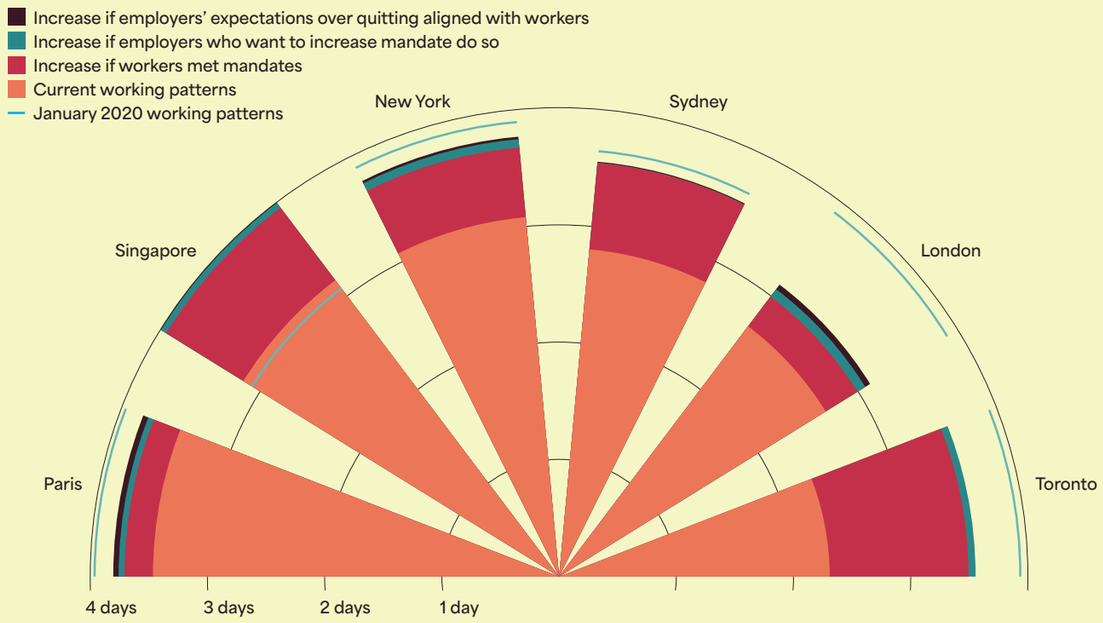


SOURCE: *CENTRE FOR CITIES 2024*

OFFICE VACANCY RATES IN SIX CBDs



ESTIMATING FUTURE RETURNS TO THE OFFICE



SOURCE: CENTRE FOR CITIES 2024 AND KNIGHT FRANK/BNP PARIBAS, MOODY'S, SAVILLS, COLLIERS, JLL/CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD, CBRE



"The thing that prevents workers returning to the office which really stood out was transport costs. It's no coincidence the highest in-office rate is in Paris."

OSCAR SELBY
CENTRE FOR CITIES RESEARCHER

Selby is less convinced. "You hear about workplaces being retrofitted with gyms and beanbags but our survey suggests the biggest factor is the commute."

He says that, of the six cities in the report, London is the one least likely to reach a target of 90% office attendance of January 2020 levels, putting it at a disadvantage. This, the report suggests, is because London has accepted current working patterns as the new normal, rather than a staging post in the return to a (perceived) full five days in the office. Employers are unwilling to enforce mandates and there are plenty of good reasons for employees to want to WFH (in particular, the dead time of the commute and the cost of childcare – the 35-44-year-old cohort is keenest to WFH, typically an age when workers have young children).

This has led to concerns about efficiency. The British businessman and Conservative peer, Stuart Rose, claimed that WFH is "not proper work ... We have regressed in this country in terms of working practices, productivity and in terms of the country's wellbeing, I think, by 20 years in the last four".

There have been pleas from business organisations to increase office mandates amid fears of hollowed out areas such as the City of London and Canary Wharf, devoid not just of office workers, but also the armies of staff that service them – security, retail, transport and hospitality workers. Meanwhile, a culture war around the return to office has arisen, aligning it with a quasi-patriotic duty. Civil servants who were resistant to the idea of three days in the office were publicly ridiculed.

According to the Office for National Statistics, productivity in the public sector is about 8.5% below its pre-pandemic levels, although it is unclear if this is a result of WFH.

Jones is suspicious of the commercial imperative to get people back into the office on a full-time basis: "There's pressure to reduce the size of premises and [asset managers] are constantly pushing the return to the office model because there's a fear their jobs will disappear. They don't want to be turkeys voting for Christmas."

Nevertheless, there are conspicuous advantages, too, for workers in spending some of their time in the office: better collaboration; better opportunities to benefit from the knowledge of others; more networking opportunities; better training and development of soft skills. This is supported by findings that younger people in London are much keener to work in the office than their older co-workers (but is not replicated in the other five cities). This could also be attributed to a lack of space for remote working in their homes and – the commute again – generally living closer to the city centre than their older, suburb-dwelling colleagues.

Although no one likes to admit to it, there is a clear advantage to presenteeism for its own sake, too. Being seen to be working could be at least as valuable as the work you do: a 2023 survey by KPMG reported that 87% of CEOs would favour in-office workers with promotion, pay rises and better assignments. This figure is exactly matched by the number of employees who were found, by McKinsey, to want to WFH at least some of the time.

Yet, the high-profile return-to-office mandates persist; firms such as Goldman Sachs ruled that its workers must be at their desks five days a week as far back as March 2022 and were followed by UPS, Boeing and Boots. Last autumn, Amazon instructed its office staff that they must return full time by January 2025 – later revised to May due to lack of useable office space.

Amazon's CEO, Matt Garman, was quoted as saying that employees who didn't like the mandate could find jobs elsewhere and many observers have speculated that wholesale return-to-office rulings might be a covert way of cutting numbers. This suspicion was supported by a survey from BambooHR, which found 25% of executives hoped that return-to-office mandates would lead to voluntary resignations. As if to underline this, ▸

in November, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, co-heads of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency, wrote – not so covertly – in a *Wall Street Journal* column: "Requiring federal employees to come to the office five days a week would result in a wave of voluntary terminations that we welcome."

It's a very blunt tool with which to reduce staff as it disproportionately risks losing talented, highly skilled workers who are more likely to find another job with ease, as well as indirectly discriminating against women and disabled workers who have benefited from remote working opportunities. Stanford professor of economics, Nicholas Bloom, has called these blanket mandates a foolhardy move and claims that companies demanding in-office attendance will revise or rescind their policy within a few months.

Losing good staff is a legitimate fear for businesses – personnel organisations estimate that replacing a highly skilled professional can equate to more than a year of their salary in recruitment costs, lost productivity and training a replacement.

But one of the findings of *Return to the Office* was that, while a fear of losing valuable workers is one of the reasons that businesses are reluctant to increase days at the office (37% in London and 79% in Toronto cite it as a reason not to demand workers come in), the reality can be less alarming. Only 9% of London and Toronto workers said that they would look for another job if forced to return fully to the office.



However, a survey by Canadian research firm Pollara found 42% of employees would leave in similar circumstances, albeit with only 5% quitting immediately while the other 37% waited until the right opportunity at a different company arose. Strength of feeling on the subject is clearly high in Canada at the moment: one union is currently suing the government over attempts to make its civil service members increase their days in the office.

A significant negative commercial outcome of this is that companies dictating a full return to the office have been shown to have slower workforce growth than their more flexible counterparts. In November 2024, the University of Pittsburgh published an analysis of 3m tech and finance workers' LinkedIn profiles and found firms that had issued return-to-office mandates grew at only 1% compared to 1.6% for firms that accommodate some WFH. The researchers also noted that it took longer for office-based firms to recruit and that they lost more senior and diverse staff, concluding, "Our study highlights brain drain as a significant cost of return-to-office mandates."

Depending on its success, Amazon's mandate may encourage other smaller companies to direct their staff back to the office full-time. But, for many companies, despite the perceived tension between the bosses and workers, there is an acceptance that hybrid working is best for both classes and CFC concludes that it is unlikely any of its six cities will reach their pre-pandemic levels of office activity. It is achieving the correct balance that seems to be sticky. Employees find travelling in a hassle and, sad to say, the BambooHR survey found that the main reason employers wanted them back was so that they could track them more effectively.

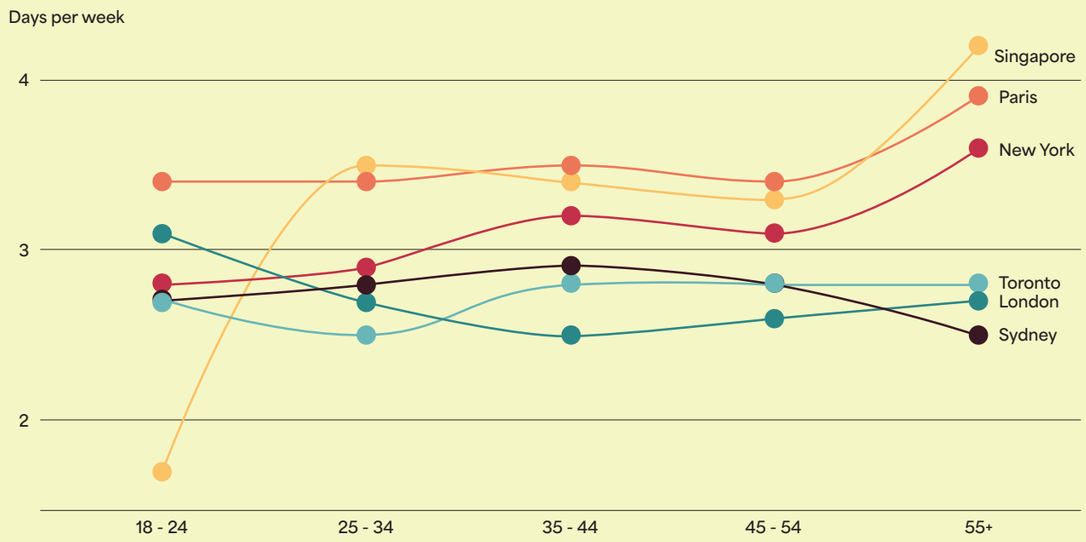
Ultimately, Houston thinks we should ask ourselves to consider exactly what the office is for. "How do we create a business in which people do what they need to do and it doesn't matter when or where they do it? How do we manage people in a different way?" ■

"How do we create a business in which people do what they need to do and it doesn't matter when or where they do it?"

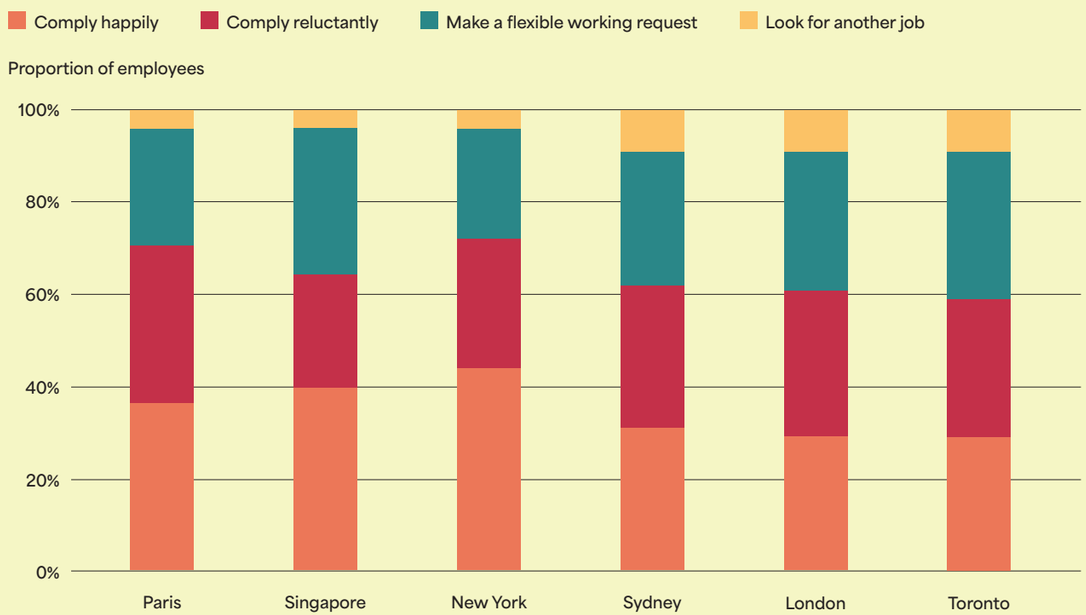
RODDY HOUSTON MRICS
CHAIR OF THE RICS COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PROFESSIONAL GROUP PANEL



AVERAGE DAYS IN THE OFFICE PER WEEK BY AGE



HOW EMPLOYEES WOULD REACT IF MANDATE INCREASED



SOURCE: *CENTRE FOR CITIES 2024*

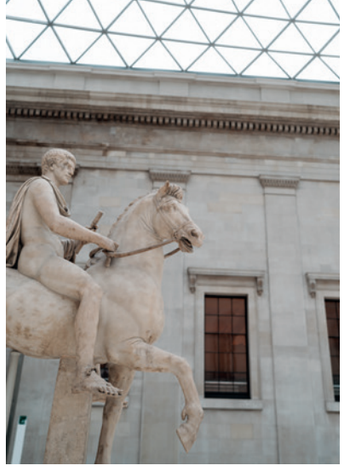
Katharine Cary MRICS

‘What better career *is* there?’

Having worked on high-profile projects including a COVID-19 memorial and Buckingham Palace, her new challenge is the British Museum’s 10-year masterplan

BY KAREN DAY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORNA MILBURN



Katharine Cary MRICS gets goosebumps recalling her last day as project manager of the now award-winning COVID-19 memorial at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

It was 2022, and as she was finishing work she caught the eye of a mother and daughter who had been peering in. The memorial hadn't opened yet, but something about them touched her, so she let them enter.

It was then that they told her their story about the devastating loss of a father and a husband to COVID-19 and his painful online funeral. "[The mother] told me that, for them, this was the funeral, visiting this memorial was part of her goodbye. So, I stood inside this structure with two people I'd never met before who were crying, and I was crying, too."

Cary says this was a poignant moment that she'll never forget, and a reminder of the rewards of working in construction. "To be able to be part of that as a process and a journey, I mean, what better career is there, really?"

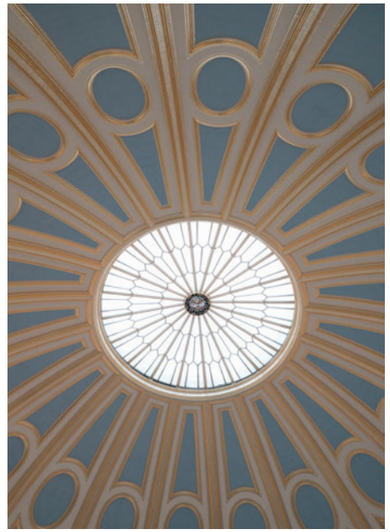
Fast-forward two years and projects like the Remember Me memorial have given Cary an impressive set of calling cards in the world of heritage surveying. So much so, she's now immersed in a new role as head of capital development at the British Museum in London, a 272-year-old cultural institution housing the world's largest collection of historical objects.

The British Museum's masterplan

Cary joined in December 2023, just as the museum announced the next phase of its 10-year masterplan, which she describes as "an ambitious, once-in-a-lifetime redevelopment opportunity". The Estates and Capital Projects team will oversee the reported £1bn construction programme, which includes working on the Western Range redevelopment – redesigning 80,729 ft² (7,500 m²) or around a third of the museum's gallery space on its Bloomsbury site in London. Then there is the creation of a new Energy Centre to transition the museum's estate to low-carbon technologies, and a project to create a visitor welcome pavilion in the museum forecourt.

It was this programme of works that prompted Cary to apply for the role, but while it's a huge part of her team's agenda, she also looks after the museum's critical infrastructure projects. Together they add up to more than 40 live projects, managed within a "business-as-usual model", meaning the museum must remain open to visitors.

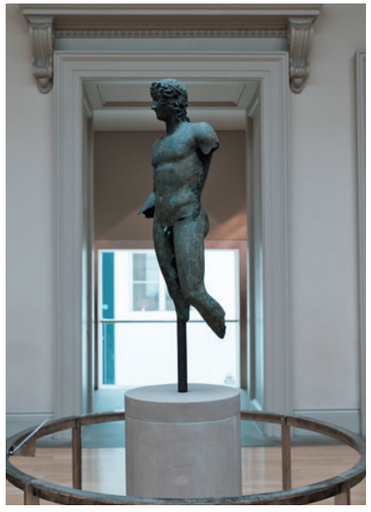
It is hardly surprising, then, that Cary says there isn't a typical or average day at the museum. "Not one project is the same," she says. "It could be re-roofing, gallery refurbishments or new facilities for the catering staff. But our whole portfolio must be carefully coordinated for around 6m visitors a year. Construction projects usually generate dust and noise – things visitors don't enjoy."











Cary must also be mindful of the museum's collection – more than 8m objects spanning 2m years of history – that are "super sensitive to dust and vibration". Staging all these streams of work without major disruption, she says, will take "careful, methodical planning". And at the top of her list of priorities is safety. "It is going to be incredibly busy; we're going to have a lot of contractors on site. So, we must maintain the right culture and manage risk early."

Juggling complex logistics, managing the needs of multiple stakeholders, and the public scrutiny around much-loved historical buildings are all familiar terrain for Cary. Her career has taken her from the Royal Household, including Buckingham Palace, via historic royal estates such as Hampton Court Palace, to restoring British cultural icon Elizabeth Tower (which houses Big Ben), re-servicing the foreign secretary's country estate, Chevening House, and into St Paul's Cathedral.

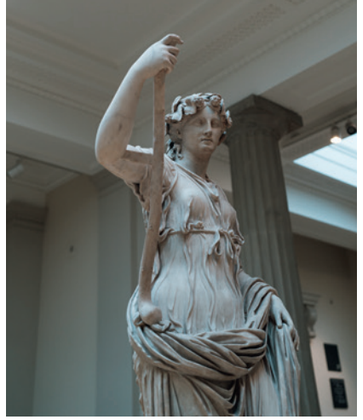
"It's the same challenges that come up time and time again," she says. But for Cary, the scale and complexity of the programmes at the British Museum are on a whole new level, and she has a much larger incumbent team of around 20 to manage. She says the key to this role will be collaborating in a true sense on a single point of focus for the team, namely delivering the masterplan while keeping critical infrastructure projects on track. "I think the old-fashioned saying 'every day is a school day' is fitting," she laughs. "It is going to be exciting though."

"These objects will outlive us, so engaging people in the process is important"

Collaborative leadership

Cary's desire to collaborate is, she says, intrinsic to her leadership style and means she doesn't feel the pressure of public scrutiny during high-profile projects. Rather, engagement is a vital part of any heritage development. "I always love the idea of opening up construction sites for people to come and see what we're up to," she says. "I think it's great that people have a fascination with what we're doing. We are building pieces of history. These are objects, layers of construction that will outlive us, so engaging people in the process is really important."

She turns to the COVID-19 memorial and her brush with the grief-stricken mother and daughter as an example of this, and says the project remains her "proudest to date". The publicly funded memorial – the first modern intervention in the cathedral for 150 years – was designed by architect Oliver Caroe, who had lost his own mother to COVID-19. Its development, while the cathedral remained open, was watched closely by the press, public and politicians. "It had such emotive significance," Cary recalls. "We had a tiny team, but everyone was incredibly invested in the mission." ▸





“There’s something so special about creating that next layer of history”

Preserving heritage buildings is the single theme that runs throughout her career. But this fascination started as a child growing up in Warwickshire, where she says she would pester her parents to take her to National Trust and English Heritage properties. By her late teens Cary was taking two buses to volunteer at National Trust estate Charlecote Park, where she later worked in its visitor services and ran its children’s summer school. She says that exploring all these different types of roles helped her decide on the path she wanted to take – restoring historic buildings.

In 2010, she moved to London to study historic building conservation at Kingston University, which was followed by an MSc in building surveying to enable her to go for RICS accreditation. “That really gave me the technical knowledge on how to create new buildings, but more importantly how to manage our existing ones better,” she says. From there onwards, Cary knew what she wanted to do and where she wanted to be.

She joined Historic Royal Palaces in 2013 as an assistant building surveyor, working between Hampton Court and Kensington palaces. Two years later she joined commercial firm Faithful+Gould to complete her APC. In 2017, she joined the Royal Household, this time as a project manager working across Buckingham Palace and St James’s Palace.

In 2019 she decided to take a different career path, joining contractor Sir Robert McAlpine. “By then I wanted to go and build the project. For me it was a step forward and I could spend time learning how to build.”

Her first role was as a section engineer on the restoration of Elizabeth Tower and Big Ben at the Houses of Parliament, the most complex restoration and modernisation in its history. She describes this – along with the COVID-19 memorial and her current role at the British Museum – as projects that, once complete, will stand the test of time for another few generations. It’s the impact of these projects, she says, that keeps drawing her in. “There’s something so special about creating that next layer of history that you know so many people are going to get enjoyment from. I have that real fascination with our built environment, and I see how it can positively impact people’s lives.”

Cary concedes that construction and property projects can be “incredibly stressful” at times. And she’s recently moved out of London into the countryside to indulge her love of horse riding and to walk her cocker spaniel puppy. “I love being in the peace and quiet of the countryside and to be able to step away from London life,” she says.

Her country life and new job seem to herald a new era for Cary. She says she’s now at the point in her career where she can enjoy the moment. “I think there is so much to be involved in. It’s certainly going to keep me busy for the next few years. I hope to stay here and really make a positive impact.” ■



↓ MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION

“I am setting up a RICS mentoring programme at the British Museum. It will provide aspiring professionals with the knowledge, skills and support they need to develop their careers and reach their full potential.

“The programme will offer a structured training programme, with monthly continuing professional development (CPD) workshops on key industry competencies.

“My goal is to create an environment where we can foster talent, encourage personal growth and ensure that we continue to bring out the best in our people. I’m excited about the positive impact it will have on the museum and the wider industry.”

Training insight

Essential skills for the homes we need to build



“For some professionals the opportunity to grow into the digital arena is exciting”

JANE GODDARD
DEPUTY CEO, BRE

The UK government has set a target of building 1.5m new homes in the next five years. This is a stretching target that will require the construction industry to adopt innovative practices – many of them digital. While there are certainly challenges attracting young people into construction and a lack of traditional tradespeople, some of our existing technical professionals face challenges adapting to the new digital opportunities.

A digital revolution is underway.

- BIM, robotics, AI, simulation tools and 3D printing are making construction quicker, cheaper, more accurate and less wasteful.
- Technologies enabling us to gather, capture and share vast amounts of data are helping us better understand issues, make more informed decisions, learn and move forward, so we can design out risks.
- Simulation tools and modelling are developing at pace, bringing a gamification-style approach to creating virtual assets. Such tools can accurately predict how buildings will be affected by environmental changes and occupational patterns.
- In the future, building management systems will accurately manage operational systems and maintenance schedules, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of people in the buildings.

The new digital approach is creating a pathway to sustainable construction, engineering out errors and inefficiencies.

The government has estimated the UK needs an extra 60,000 construction workers by 2029 to meet the demand for building new housing, roads, rail and energy infrastructure. To enable this, the government has announced £600m worth of investment to train these new entrants. But this investment is focused on traditional trades such as bricklayers or electricians, and seems to miss the need for training technical professionals and managers in digital skills.

For some professionals the opportunity to grow into the digital arena is exciting, but for many there can be concern and reluctance as they struggle to grasp the changing technologies including coding, programming and familiarisation with digital platforms. It can be daunting trying to keep track of the ‘now’, let alone planning what’s needed in the future.

Professionals need support to embrace the opportunities, grow with the technologies and contribute their vast knowledge and experience. We should create training that supports and upskills our existing talent and help people build on their skills, plus encourage digitally confident team members to guide their more experienced colleagues. Reverse mentoring arrangements are successfully used to enable intergenerational learning in areas like social media, technology, and diversity and inclusion.

We need training and upskilling programmes that are:

- relevant to industry needs; it is important we follow the guidance in the Competency Frameworks.
- focused on key knowledge, skills and behavioural needs, and delivered in a consistent way to ensure proficiency is achieved across the industry.
- delivered in a variety of ways that allow access to materials at a time and location that suits busy schedules.
- an investment opportunity that helps to retain existing talent by facilitating skilled professionals to achieve more from the digital advances and enjoy a more rewarding career path.

The skills gap provides an opportunity to embrace the challenges, and through focused, accessible upskilling and mentoring programmes we can develop a resilient and forward-thinking workforce that will deliver the results we need.

Data skills for the modern surveyor

A shortage of digital skills in the built environment has prompted RLB and Gleeds to create data academies that will prepare their employees for a new era in surveying

WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY THOMAS HEDGER



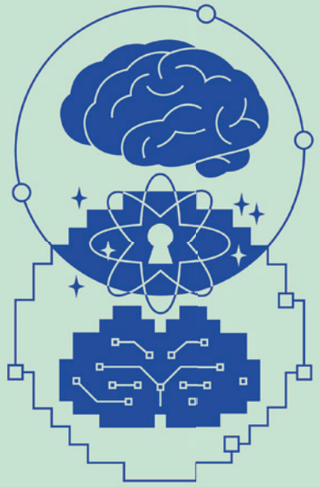
When you think about everything that needs to be managed on a successful construction project, traditional elements such as planning, financing or procurement spring immediately to mind.

But in 2025, who is managing and taking advantage of the vast amount of data created by the built environment? As more processes are digitised, more data can be gathered for use on current and future projects. Therefore, the industry needs more highly skilled data and artificial intelligence (AI) professionals.

This need has led to the creation of RLB's Data and AI Transformation Academy and Gleeds' Data Academy. It's two major construction consultancies both recognising the same problem: there is a shortage of built environment professionals equipped with the tools and knowledge to make the most of big data and AI.

These academies aim to create a new generation of AI and data-savvy surveyors, although some of these skills aren't as new as you might think. "Chartered surveyors all generate, analyse and interpret data," says Marie Leaphard FRICS, partner at RLB and chair of the RICS south-east regional board. "In many ways, surveyors have been data scientists since the institution was founded in 1868. After all, the RICS motto is *est modus in rebus* (there is measure in all things), and all that measurement generates data. What has changed is the volume that we produce, particularly in the built environment."

> "In many ways, surveyors have been data scientists since the institution was founded in 1868"
>
> **MARIE LEAPHARD FRICS**
> RLB



Matt Sharp, chief digital officer at RLB, says the academy will revolutionise the service they can offer clients. "As our industry undergoes significant digital and data transformation, it is crucial that we equip our people with the necessary skills," he says. "We have been generating more data as an industry without the skills to keep up with the volume of data, let alone the quality of the data or the recognition that the data has a value."

There are plenty of sector-wide problems that AI can help to solve, explains James Garner MRICS, head of data, insights and analytics at Gleeds. "The construction industry has long been plagued by inefficiencies, cost overruns, and data silos that hinder decision making," he says. "AI and data analytics offer solutions to these persistent challenges, enabling businesses to work smarter and more efficiently. For example, AI tools can be used as part of cost estimation, budgeting and scheduling – reducing errors and ensuring more accurate financial planning."

Intelligent use of AI can also help with what are known as wicked problems – complex and multifaceted challenges that are difficult to solve or even define. It can also be used to design agentic workflows, where a series of autonomous AI agents work together to achieve a specific task, such as managing material procurement or dealing with large volumes of customer enquiries.

Skills for the future

Gleeds' Upskill Programme aims to put 100 employees through CITB apprenticeships in 2025, teaching them a range of practical data and AI-literacy skills. "By providing structured training in [Microsoft] Power BI, automation, generative AI and data analysis, professionals can use AI tools for enhanced decision-making," says Garner.

Leaphard says there are plenty of data-enthusiasts in the industry who have been developing their own skills, but more consistency and structure is needed. "We need to raise skills at all levels," she says. "Some people need general awareness and others deep skills and learning that may see their entire role specialise in data and AI.

"We must also recognise that some parts of the built environment that we interact with are using decades-old ways of working."

As with any training undertaken, the crucial question is: what tasks can someone do after attending one of these data academies that they couldn't before?

"Some of the skills that our people are learning include analysing the processes and systems that we use," says Sharp. "That business analysis is required to harvest data in a more efficient and effective way. Our people will also be better equipped to articulate the benefits of data and AI to our clients."

What they'll learn is a mix of data and information management, as well as AI fluency, says Leaphard. "There is a lot of hype around AI and our profession is trusted to ground its advice in simple truth that goes beyond the hype."

Garner gives a few more examples of the practical skills Gleeds employees will take away from the Data Academy, including advanced dashboarding and data visualisation (eg creating interactive dashboards in Power BI, replacing time-consuming manual reports), process automation, AI-assisted cost management, and using generative AI effectively (eg understanding and applying AI prompts to improve work processes).

A competitive advantage

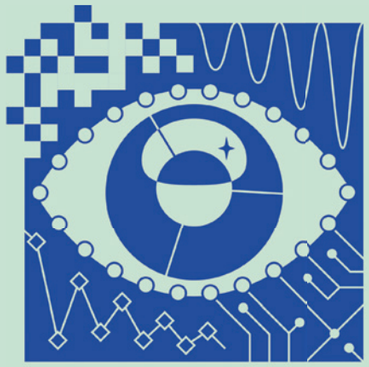
It's not just the big beasts such as Gleeds or RLB that stand to benefit from greater AI-literacy. SMEs, which are often able to adopt new practices more quickly than their larger counterparts, can gain a competitive advantage by being ahead of the curve.

"There are challenges for SMEs in that there may not be the capacity for so much specialism in the organisation," says Sharp. But there is no reason why SMEs cannot capitalise on the benefits, it may just be about multiskilling employees. Tools and products are available that are capable of being implemented off the shelf, with minimal development or customisation. The smaller teams in SMEs may also result in easier adoption and people and process change management.

> "The construction industry has long been plagued by inefficiencies, cost overruns, and data silos that hinder decision making"
>
> **JAMES GARNER MRICS**
> GLEEDS

"On the flip side, the SMEs are likely to have smaller data sets and less frequency of high-volume repeatable processes," says Sharp. "It is perhaps not so much whether the adoption is easier, but recognising that the approach would be different for different types of business."

Garner agrees that the benefits of AI adoption don't directly correlate to the size of a company: "By investing in training and technology, both SMEs and large firms can future-proof their workforce and be part of industry-wide transformation." ■



How Grimsby is winning the

REGENERATION GAME

Decades of economic decline are now being reversed in the coastal town, with an ambitious programme of investment in the built environment alongside community events

WORDS BY KAREN DAY



SHUTTERSTOCK



ALAMY

Corporation Bridge at Alexandra Dock is part of Grimsby's industrial history

In Grimsby we have stuck with the plan through some quite difficult times – COVID-19 being one, major inflation another – and we are now seeing a number of schemes either complete or go forward.

"It's testament to how much resilience it takes to stick with it and keep going," says Damien Jaines-White MRICS, assistant director of regeneration at North East Lincolnshire Council. He is describing the "hard grind" of regenerating the port town of Grimsby, which lies on the mouth of the Humber Estuary on the east coast of England. Once celebrated as the world's largest fishing port, Grimsby has suffered the same fate as many of the UK's former industrial towns: economic decline.

Over the past few decades, it's become the go-to town for grim media portrayals of dilapidated, run-down places dogged by social and economic hardship. Parts of Grimsby are among England's most deprived – it has a startlingly high crime rate (nearly 90% higher than the average in England) and low educational attainment, with 12% of its 90,000 population without any qualifications. But that's not the whole story.

It's also a place that has ambition. Grimsby is not only home to the UK's largest seafood processing centre, but it's also a world leader in offshore wind technology. It hosts Danish company Ørsted's £14m operations and maintenance centre, servicing Grimsby's six offshore wind farms (including the world's largest, Hornsea) and powering 3.2m homes with green energy. "Because of our location and because of who we've attracted here, we've got a new idea of a future," says Mark Webb, managing director of Grimsby business support organisation, E-Factor. "Grimsby has something to pin its aspirations to and I can't tell you what a difference that makes."

For Grimsby, a key part of realising these aspirations is regenerating the town centre and creating a place that is capable of capitalising on its economic opportunity. It's four years into its reported £100m regeneration programme and the physical signs are springing up around the town, with most of its projects set to complete next year. But the question is, can it join places like Margate, Hull and Sheffield in regenerating its fortunes? And does it have the magic ingredients to really make a difference?

Creating a sense of place

Rewind a few years and like many places in the UK, Grimsby was grappling with how to create a 21st-century town – one that was sustainable, adaptable and could serve multiple uses. Its primary focus was a shopping destination, but its high street was visibly suffering from changing consumer retail habits. Its commercial property vacancy rates were consistently higher than the national average, and between 2011 and 2021 town-centre footfall had dropped by 65%.

It was geographically disjointed with parts of the town, particularly its waterside, which was poorly connected. Its population was in dire need of improved employment, education and skills opportunities. Grimsby lacked a sense of place, said its council. But by 2020 it had both a masterplan and town investment plan, and more crucially, the ear of a government with money to spend.

> **"Grimsby has something to pin its aspirations to, it makes a difference"**
>
> **MARK WEBB**
> MANAGING DIRECTOR

The UK government had launched its £3.6bn Towns Fund to kick-start regeneration across 100 places in England. Grimsby became its regeneration darling, attracting more than £64m – £20m through the Towns Fund and the rest through other government funds. "We had unashamed ambition," recalls Jaines-White. "We were not afraid to go down and knock on the doors of senior civil servants and ministers. We also articulated a very clear ambition for our place, focusing on what is possible."

Since then, it's made steady progress on its regeneration projects, all of which are built to sustainable standards as part of its economic link to the renewables industry. A new public outdoor ▸



Horizon Youth Zone
The West Haven Maltings building is being redeveloped to create leisure and education opportunities for young people



Freshney Place
This artist's sketch shows the plans to rejuvenate the town's shopping centre, which will include health and leisure services

Projekt Renewable
An educational, cultural and community hub, the centre - supported by The Crown Estate - focuses on the environment and sustainability, and the positive impact of the renewables industry on Grimsby and its residents





"We articulated a very clear ambition, focusing on what is possible"

DAMIEN JAINES-WHITE MRICS
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

event space at Riverhead Square, close to the River Freshney, is complete. On Alexandra Dock, Projekt Renewable was opened last year. Made from shipping containers, it's designed as the bridge between the renewables industry and the local community, providing educational and cultural events.

The town's Grade II listed West Haven Maltings building is being redeveloped into the Horizon Youth Zone, which will offer education, sports and leisure for eight-to-19-year-olds. Next to the Youth Zone, developer Keepmoat is working with the council to develop a 6.25 acre brownfield site to create a 130-home waterfront community for the town centre. And adjacent to the town's shopping centre, Freshney Place, land has been earmarked for a five-screen cinema, leisure and entertainment centre, which is expected to be completed by 2026.

But inevitably in a period marred by a global pandemic and an economic downturn, there have been a few bumps along the way. Jaines-White says these prompted "brave decisions", most notably buying Freshney Place, the largest shopping centre in Lincolnshire, for a reported £25m after it went into administration in early 2022. He says this opened up more redevelopment opportunities. But it also enabled them to locate an NHS community diagnostic centre in Freshney Place, adding a further use as a community hub. "I'm really proud of that one," says Jaines-White, "We've put health in a location accessible to all and it will increase footfall – it's a win-win."

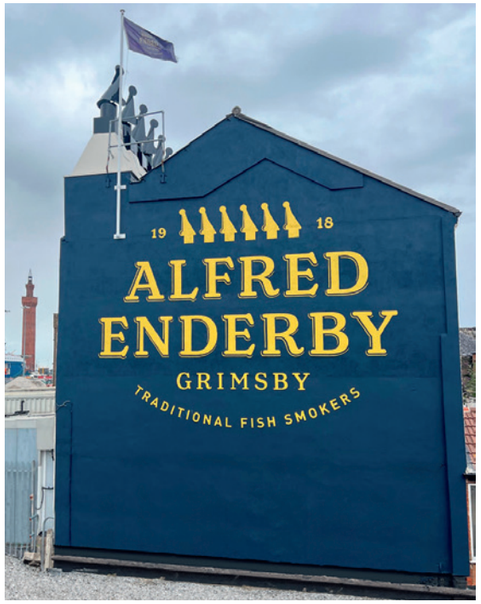
Sandy Forsyth, lead researcher at think tank Localis and author of regeneration report *Design For Life*, says there needs to be a recognition that urban areas can be very flexible, and community-driven healthcare should be at the heart of any programme. "Town centres especially can have multiple opportunities grow from them."

She points to a similar scheme, the Dorset Health Village located inside Beales department store in Poole, and says the footfall of patients going into the clinic is also "rejuvenating the commercial premises in the department store and creating economic growth for the town".

Working with businesses

While Grimsby's injection of government funding was a game changer, many see its approach to partnerships as one of its magic ingredients. E-Factor's Webb says early on there was an acknowledgment that no one organisation, notably the council, could do the regeneration alone. The business community set up its own on-the-ground support organisation, the 2025 Group. "Most of the public didn't believe it was going to happen," ▸





A Harriet The Haddock mural in Town Hall Street and the Alfred Enderby smokehouse are emblems of Grimsby's proud fishing heritage

Webb recalls. He says it was important to create a "sense of trust" and a momentum within the town. "We decided to bring every part of our network and influence to bear but only ever talk about what was actually going to happen," he explains. "And that's what we continue to do."

These connections have also enabled many business owners to directly invest in Grimsby's regeneration, including Webb and Ørsted, which put £1m into the Horizon Youth Zone. Webb worked in partnership with the council to apply for £1.5m government funding and matched the rest to buy St James' House, a vacant building on St James' Square. Work is already underway to create a business hub for the town called The Hive, which will include 20 offices, a rooftop garden and mixed-use space on the ground floor.

Webb says that while this will create vital new space for local businesses, it will also bring people to what had become a forgotten part of the town. "We're going to bring that green back to life and make a space that is useful," he says. "And that's going to be key, there's no use in investing in lovely buildings that are going to be empty 90% of the time. That does nothing for your regeneration."

Interestingly, the town hasn't just focused on the physical aspects of regeneration. Over the past four years it has held a number of community and cultural events, such as Edible Grimsby and a viking parade – part of creating a sense of town pride and identity. "We've overlaid this with a much stronger focus on culture and heritage," says Jaines-White. "We've really celebrated what's happening in the town centre and that's integral to it all." Webb agrees: "Regeneration can't just be about having buildings. Events make people engage in the town where they might not have done before. That took no buildings, just some people with imagination."

Jaines-White says Grimsby is now on the cusp of its regeneration jigsaw coming together, and while the town has looked at what others have achieved, most notably in Sheffield, Barnsley and Stockton-on-Tees, it will always plough its own furrow. He expects the town to achieve its diversification, but the ultimate test will be whether people make an active lifestyle choice to live in Grimsby town centre.

He concludes: "We want to capitalise on our uniqueness. We want to celebrate the heritage that we have in our ports and seafood and we want to celebrate the future around the low-carbon environment and offshore wind." ■

"We want to capitalise on our uniqueness and celebrate our heritage"

DAMIEN JAINES-WHITE MRICS
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

ECONOMIC INSIGHT

Can the government hit its ambitious housing targets?



"Tackling the housing crisis was always going to be something that spanned more than one parliament"

SIMON RUBINSOHN
CHIEF ECONOMIST, RICS

Despite the distractions of geopolitics and challenges around the fragile public finances, Kier Starmer's government has remained focused on its housing agenda during the first year in office.

In the face of several opportunities to row back on its ambitious plan to deliver 1.5m homes over the lifetime of this parliament, it has instead doubled down on the big number and the timeline.

To help facilitate an increase in development, a number of policy levers have either been pulled or are in the process of being executed. Changes to the National Policy Planning Framework is one such example, with its restoration of mandatory housing targets for local authorities. And the introduction of a new category of land (grey belt) where the usual obstacles to progressing development (in what is designated green belt) will be significantly less onerous.

This has been followed by the Planning and Infrastructure Bill with its focus on streamlining planning decisions, reforming the compulsory purchase process and a reversion to a more strategic approach. Meanwhile, the New Towns Taskforce has been hard at work, publishing its interim update and providing more clarity on the favoured approaches to this project with more than 100 candidate sites in the mix.

A challenging target

A lot is going on in terms of trying to move the needle on this vexed issue. Yet there are very few who believe the government will be able to meet its high-profile target, however sympathetic they are to the initiatives being introduced.

That isn't to say that there won't be a sharp increase in development over the coming years. But simple arithmetic makes it difficult to get to that 1.5m number given the low base level that was inherited; the most complete measure of supply slipped to just 221,070 in the year ending March 2024. This was the lowest figure, bar the COVID-19 depressed year of 2020-21, since the middle of the previous decade.

It would be shortsighted to get overly exercised by the 1.5m target. This on its own is not going to resolve the broader affordability issue, including the lack of stock in the market and sub-market rental tenures. Tackling the housing crisis was always going to span more than one parliament, which is recognised in the government's focus on building a generation of new towns. Yet there is concern as to whether the panoply of measures introduced are bold enough.

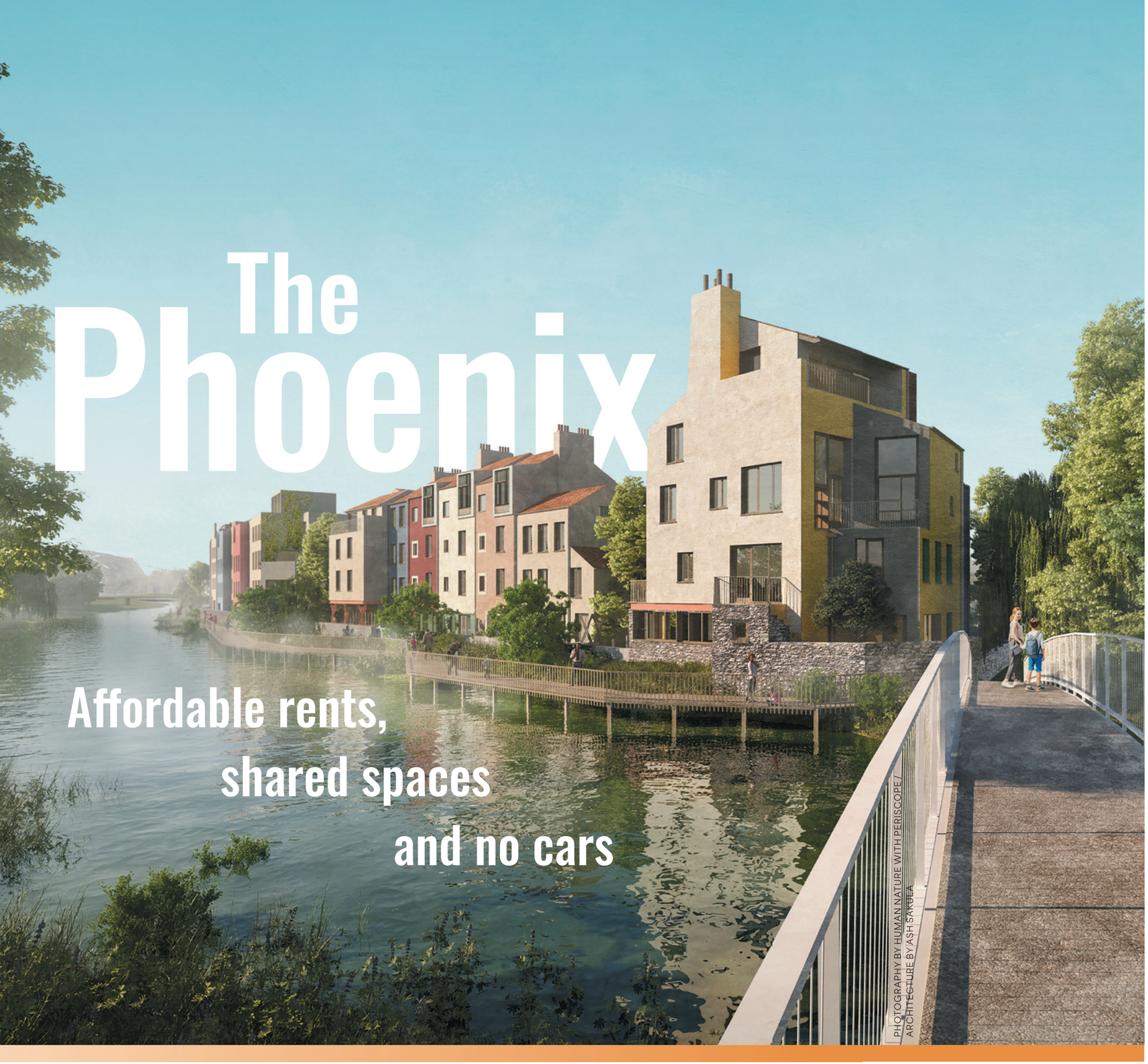
More certainty with a zoning system

One issue raised by those focused on delivering a supply revolution is the need to move away from trying to flex the existing framework and on to a fully fledged zoning system. A report from Centre for Cities acknowledged nimbyism wouldn't disappear under that model but says it would provide more certainty.

For the time being, the government has also held off from reintroducing any form of demand incentive for homebuyers. Despite the fact that the Help to Buy scheme was associated with some uplift in house building, I admit to being pretty sceptical about the overall benefit of such schemes, even if concentrated on new entrants to the market.

A year on from the general election, there is a lot to like about the speed with which the government has implemented initiatives aimed at boosting supply. Whether they are sufficient to enable it to meet its five-year target, let alone tackle the affordability crisis, remains to be seen.

The Phoenix



Affordable rents, shared spaces and no cars

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUMAN NATURE WITH PERISCOPE / ARCHITECTURE BY ASH SAKULA

On a former industrial estate in the south of England, an ambitious new housing project is aiming to set new standards in low-carbon living

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI

The walking route from Lewes train station to Virginia Woolf's country retreat, Monk's House, is an undeniably lovely stroll through the South Downs Way, with only one blot on an otherwise idyllic landscape.

A large, partly disused industrial estate sprawls across almost 8ha, dominating about 600m of the riverbank.

It is the sort of place visitors to Lewes, a market town in south-east England, hasten past in pursuit of more appealing views and artisanal baked goods. Local residents have grown, perhaps, a little blind to its ugliness and partial decay.

But, despite the defects of the site – and there are many – the campaigning development company, Human Nature (HN), has devised a plan that might transform this uninspiring corner of land and make it a beacon of sustainability across the UK and beyond.

Known as the Phoenix Industrial Estate (after the Phoenix Ironworks whose foundry was on the site), the regenerated Phoenix neighbourhood should, the company hopes, offer solutions for tackling the climate crisis as well as the UK's social and housing challenges.

HN bought the land in 2019 from another development company, which had managed to secure consent for 415 homes on the site. Many locals were fiercely opposed to these plans and HN viewed the scheme as financially unviable and disastrously unsustainable. It instead created a masterplan for 685 homes alongside commercial spaces, a medical centre and the preservation of the existing fire station.

Welcomed by locals

Given the opposition to the initial scheme, you might expect this more intensive proposal to have been even more controversial. This is a defiantly urban project in a historic town within a national park, after all. But, in fact, it has been largely welcomed by locals, some of whom had wooed HN in the first place.

"Solving the relationship between people and places is the key to everything," says Jeremy Walker, head of design at HN and one of the architects steering the massive project. "This is a really important site, which could revitalise Lewes as well as rebalance the community's housing needs and boost the local economy. Many of the people who have invested in the project are local."

What they will get is a range of apartment blocks, designed by different practices to break up their uniformity, each four storeys high – skyscrapers by Lewes's standards. The decision to build mostly flats rather than houses feeds into HN's fundamental mission: by making the accommodation denser, the properties can be more affordable. And they will also meet the needs of local people who are ▸

woefully underserved in terms of smaller homes – a problem for first-timer buyers and downsizers.

"Low density often makes things unsustainable, not just financially but a project needs enough people to make it viable to have, say, a nursery or a new bus service," says Walker. "It's the rainforest effect: the rich ecology allows so much more to flourish."

About 30% of the homes will be affordable. Often in England, 'affordable housing' is calculated as 85% of the market price, which still leaves it unaffordable for many people. But here, rents for 92 of the 154 rental flats will be set at the amount that would be achievable when calculated on the local average wage.

Most importantly, unlike many conventional developments, the apartments do not need to be entirely stand-alone. To create a neighbourhood, HN are engineering a series of shared spaces. First there will be 10 courtyards, pivotal to its vision and influenced by complexes in Denmark and Germany, which often have communal areas where residents can gather. There will also be facilities such as a laundrette, co-working spaces and a community kitchen and dining facility, in Walker's vision, to "encourage interaction, fun and conviviality".

"People don't need vast areas of unused space; we see every nook and cranny as interesting and useful," says Walker. "They should promote interaction and better quality of life for everyone. It's not about giving things up but sharing in ways that help create a better life." That might mean sacrificing a dedicated office in your home but having access to a co-working space instead.

No cars needed

Crucially, the Phoenix will be – uniquely outside major cities – almost entirely car-free in its mission to "prioritise people". There will be no parking within the complex (except for disabled badge holders), meaning the only traffic will be for deliveries.

There will be a car-sharing company at the edge of the site for residents who do need an occasional vehicle, but, in general, residents will walk and cycle. With very low motor traffic and few private gardens, the courtyards will be safe and peaceful and, once English sensitivities about personal space are worn down, alive with neighbours of all ages enjoying them together.

It is all based on the HN model of "exponential sustainability", a set of 12 values ranging from sustainable mobility to "catalytic conversations" (engaging in idea sharing to create new strategies) and enterprise and creativity.

These are not the usual concerns of housebuilders and a commitment to biodiversity can sometimes be a tick-box affair. Here it is one of HN's tenets, which means, for example, that the public areas will be heavily planted with fruit and vegetables for use in the community kitchen. Unlike many paved plazas in the public realm, these courtyards will also serve as rain gardens, soaking up the run-off and acting as one of a series of defences when the River Ouse reaches capacity. (During the disastrous floods of 2000, some parts of the site were a metre under water.)

Surprisingly, perhaps, given HN's mission of sustainability (two of its founders are ex-directors of Greenpeace), the Phoenix will not be carbon neutral in terms of energy production. Walker says that focusing on this is only one approach to mitigating emissions and the Phoenix's density means that there's not enough roof space for the amount of solar panels necessary to self-sustain. Plans to harness the river flow proved unviable.

The Phoenix aims to dramatically reduce the embedded carbon on site. Through a series of micro-calculations, HN has managed to slash the amount of carbon the site will use in its building phase and during its lifetime. Part of this was achieved by choosing to build the apartment blocks from timber and insulate with hemp. Materials will also be sourced locally and local workers employed to cut down on transport miles.

The prohibition on cars, once the development is complete, will radically reduce the site's carbon footprint and there has been some imaginative work around re-use. A new footbridge across the river will be built from the steel salvaged from the demolished industrial buildings, much of which was forged on site during the Phoenix's foundry days.

A food composting company operating on the site will continue to process organic waste, which HN can use to establish a tree nursery whose saplings will eventually be dotted across the public realm.

Challenging conventional housebuilding

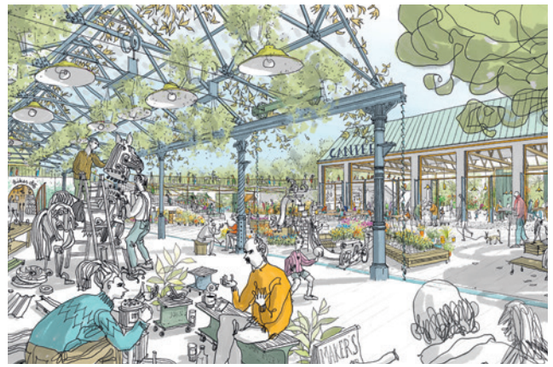
If this all sounds a challenge too far for volume builders, HN has a secondary mission: to inspire other developers to do better.

"The Phoenix may be our flagship, but our aim has always been to scale and challenge the dominant type of development in the country," says Jonathan Wyatt MRICS, Human Nature's development director. "We have several projects in the pipeline, including a large site in the east of England, where we aim to create a place of circularity, nature restoration and affordable, sustainable living as an alternative to the volume housebuilder model."

Its designers are also scratching their heads as they work out ways to reduce carbon on a heavily car-dependent rural parcel of land HN has acquired in East Sussex. But viewing their developments as places rather than simple sites means that they take a holistic approach to any plan, and if the commitment to sustainable mobility is dicey, then they can work harder on the other 11 tenets to promote sustainability. Several local authorities, meanwhile, think that HN's brand of regeneration can work in their areas and have approached the team about building.

The Phoenix is undoubtedly an ambitious and exciting project, but it has yet to break ground at Lewes. Work will begin later this year with flood defences but, until those are built, not a single building in the £300m project will be started. So, what's the hurry to acquire other sites and partner with regional planners?

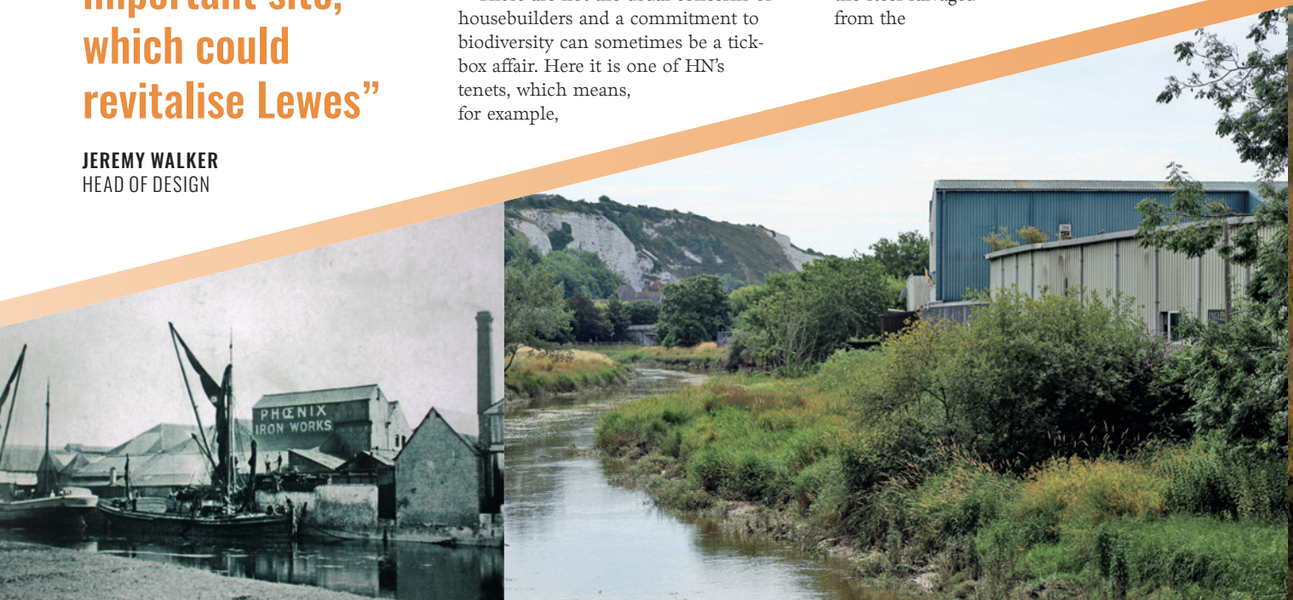
"The government has pledged to build 1.5m new homes," explains Walker. "I'm not sure they will be able to do that but, if they're going to try, we want to promote a model of best practice. We want to show what can be achieved." ■

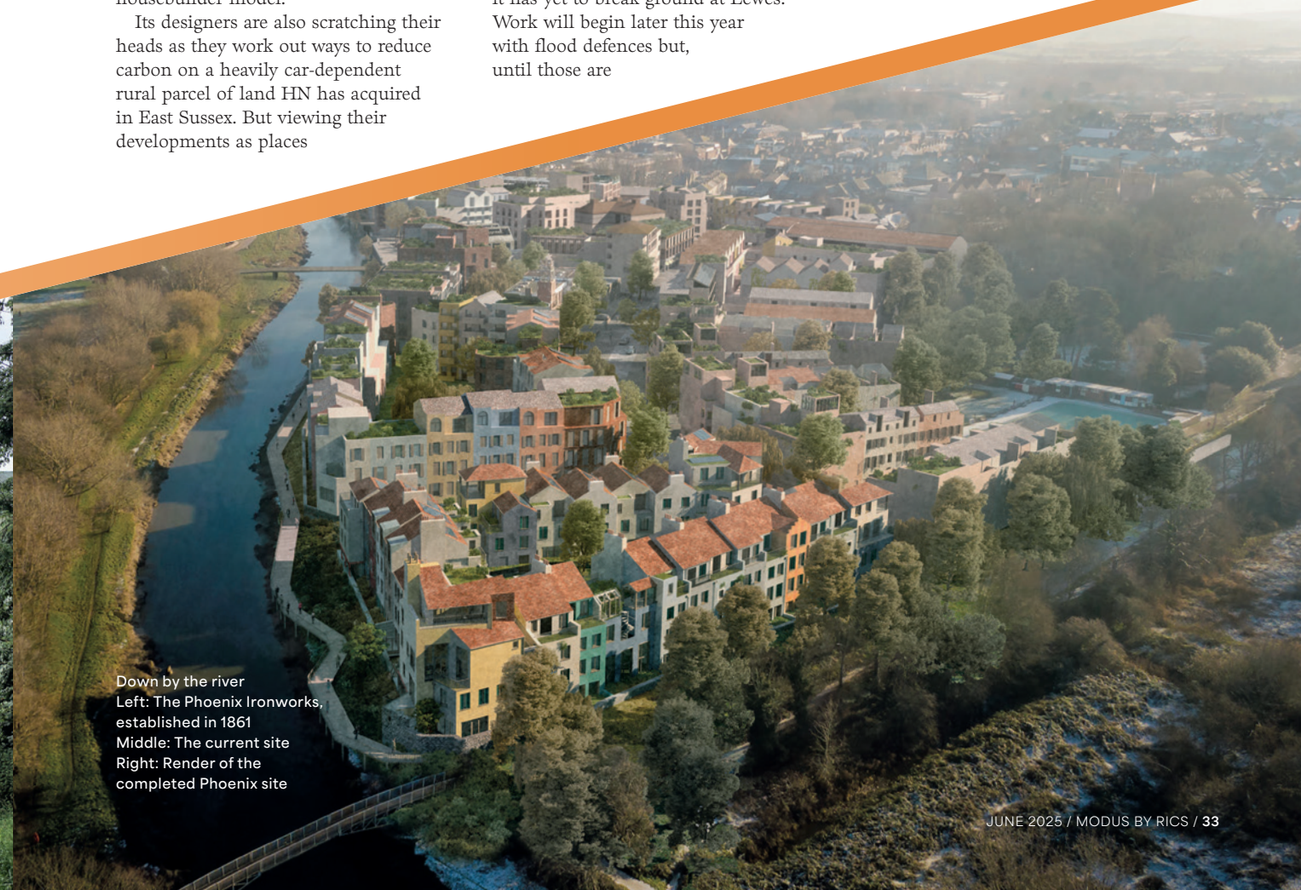


Shared outdoor spaces filled with plants and providing dining options will help to create a sense of community and wellbeing for residents at the Phoenix

"This is a really important site, which could revitalise Lewes"

JEREMY WALKER
HEAD OF DESIGN





Down by the river
Left: The Phoenix Ironworks, established in 1861
Middle: The current site
Right: Render of the completed Phoenix site

How Shravan Joshi turned gridlock into green growth

A fatal road accident prompted calls for changes to the Square Mile's congested network of streets. This was the catalyst for more modern, social and sustainable urban design

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL LECKIE

Heading towards the Bank of England, in the heart of the City of London, there is something unfamiliar about King William Street.

There's still plenty of bustle on the pavements, and the whine of drills around every corner. But the highway itself is strangely empty. Reach the octopus-like junction outside the Bank and the silence is noticeable: an electric bus purrs by, gliding past a gaggle of cyclists. But there is no honking of horns, no revving of engines.

It is so quiet that birdsong can be heard. It may be the shrieking of seagulls rather than the warble of a song thrush but, still, nature is present and breathing air that is no longer thick with exhaust fumes. It's remarkable in this packed district, which once seemed to define both business and busy-ness.

On a wintry Tuesday morning, London's financial quarter seems to be inching its way – with all its 'active travel' and pale-wood coffee shops – towards a Scandinavian level of laid-back.

Welcome to the new iteration of the City, London's banking square mile, which hosts some of the most expensive office space in the world. For years it seethed with energy, its choked streets and barely suppressed road rage emblematic of its working culture. But, post-pandemic, there has been a fightback: not only are its workers not chained to their desks to the same extent, the traffic that once clogged its roads and side-streets is in short supply.

One man who can take the credit for this feat is Shravan Joshi. Joshi was elected the member for Bishopsgate within the City of London Corporation (the City's local authority) in 2018 and now chairs its Planning and Transportation Committee. His offices are in the Guildhall, the Corporation's town hall. He is friendly while giving the impression of having a very busy diary. However, his immersion in traffic restrictions was mostly accidental.

"When I was elected, I took over a vacant seat as well as my predecessor's place on the Traffic and Planning Committee. They were in the process of formulating a 25-year transport strategy," he says. "Emissions and air quality were huge issues, and there had also been a fatality at Bank junction that meant we wanted a change. We thought about what vehicles actually needed to be in the City. We've done a lot of work monitoring entries and exits and we want to stop drivers transiting across."

The Corporation had committed to reducing vehicle journeys by 25% in the City by 2030 and 50% by 2040. A combination of congestion charging (it now costs £15 to drive into or through the City during extended office hours) and the introduction of the ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ) had discouraged casual car use in central London.

But the committee decided to supercharge this, with COVID-19 giving them a golden opportunity to introduce their measures: pavements were widened (so the highway was narrowed); there was cycle lane expansion; and areas that were trialled for closure, including Bank junction, were permanently closed to private traffic, choking off many through journeys and changing the character of the centre of the City.

A web of streets

Despite its vertical cliffs of plate glass and steel, the City's roads still follow medieval patterns, creating a web of streets that converge at certain significant junctions. Block off one area and the whole system backs up, making a car journey somewhere between a logistical challenge and an act of foolhardiness.

Not that Joshi is keen to be the face of traffic restrictions. When he mentions cities that have influenced his policies, he avoids Paris where the mayor, Anne Hidalgo, has waged war on drivers. He cites Lower Manhattan for its vibrancy and says "it's brilliant how they've recovered from lockdown", and Malmö for its district heating system, which the Corporation wishes to emulate, creating a network of 300 buildings extended from its current 30.

Although 97% of workers use public or active travel to reach the City, the restrictions have not been universally popular. Black cab drivers have mounted a campaign to regain the right to drive across the City and were allowed to on a trial basis as of April.

In fact, the only private vehicles in evidence on the City's streets these days are lorries and small delivery vans, and those are being eyed: "There's a sharper focus around what is needed to service this area," says Joshi. "We've pushed building servicing into the evenings and nighttime. We're looking quite hard at supply chain consolidation – instead of hundreds of deliveries, they may only have tens during a day."

Working with the constant background beat of heavy plant machinery must be a nightmare though – is all this building work completely necessary? "If there were no construction in the City, I'd be worried," he says. The Planning Committee has just given the nod to two vast new towers, 1 Undershaft (74 storeys) and 99 Bishopsgate (54 storeys).

Creating green space

Despite these mega-projects, the thing that Joshi is most proud of is the City's tiny areas of green space. A new public area, Greyfriars Square close to St Paul's Cathedral, is about to be opened. "It's ▸


CITY OF LONDON

a landmark project. You'll be able to draw a line from Tate Modern [on the Thames' South Bank] to Greyfriars Square to the Museum of London and it's all walkable. It will have parkland and a play area."

The Corporation is keen to make the City a destination rather than just a workplace, but dealing with all the stakeholders in this extremely expensive district can be tough. Why build a park, when a new office block would be more profitable? "It is critical that we get buy-in from different groups," Joshi says. "We do negotiate with a lot of different stakeholders."

Making a business case takes work. The Corporation is unusual among local authorities in having a very low residential population, about 8,600 in its 2.9km^2 area. Compare this to the neighbouring boroughs of Islington – about five times the size of the City but with 216,000 residents – or Tower Hamlets, which is 19.8km^2 but has 326,000 residents.

With so few residents, City businesses nominate someone on their staff to vote on their behalf. Unlike other local authorities, the Corporation's councillors rarely have party political affiliations, brandishing instead their business credentials: Joshi spent many years in finance before moving to the energy sector.

The next big public project for the Corporation could be a new 3km-long, £4.5m cycle route that is being proposed from Aldgate, at the eastern edge of the City, to Blackfriars in the west. It would take years to build and, undoubtedly, affect traffic flow. But Joshi isn't worried. "We don't just say, 'Sorry. It's closed.' We explain why. The public understands."

The days when heads of banking departments arrived in sports cars seem a distant memory. Public policy and culture have changed and, in this super-competitive environment, it is Strava standings rather than engine size that are now the marker of success. ■

A CHANGING CITY

Q&A with Tony Mulhall MRICS, Senior Specialist, Land And Resources, at RICS

What improvements have been made to the City of London in recent years?
For some time, there has been an intention to make the City more attractive to visitors and to encourage residential development, although at a relatively low level bearing in mind the primary financial function of the district.

The arrival of One New Change, a £500m shopping centre, 15 years ago at the rear of St Paul's Cathedral marked a significant change from its traditional financial function. More recently, the conversion of the former Midland Bank, originally designed by Sir Edward Lutyens, to a complex of restaurants, bars and a hotel called The Ned extended the nighttime offering.

Is a greener City more likely to attract commercial tenants?
With competition for quality staff increasingly intense, companies are seeking to distinguish themselves by demonstrating that their workspaces and where they are located fit in with climate change mitigation objectives.

What one change would you roll out across all UK cities that would improve the lives of everyone?
This is not a quick fix; it is not a cheap one and it will require strategic long-term commitment in terms of policy and investment. Policy makers, professionals and the general public talk about the 15-minute city but these discussions are totally impracticable without high-quality public transport. By that I mean an effective alternative to the private car for someone needing to get to work in a reasonable time or for a parent with small children to be able to move about conveniently and safely.

Journals

RICS Journals provide insights from experts across key industry issues in the built environment, construction, property and land surveying sectors

For more essential surveying insights, visit *ww3.rics.org/journals*



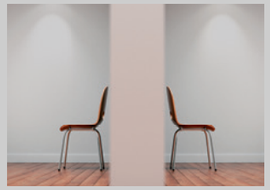
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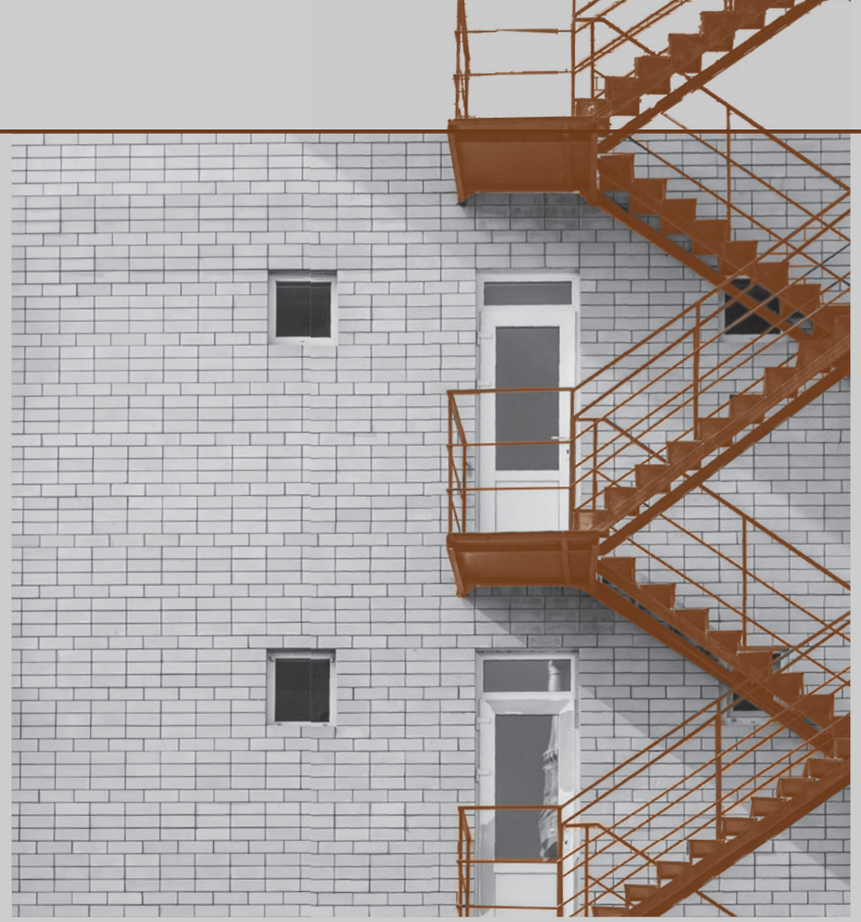
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Building safety culture needs regulatory support

Opinion After the publication of the *Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report*, the need for a culture shift in construction and clearer Approved Documents is more apparent than ever, maintains the former chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council

WORDS BY MARK HARDINGHAM



GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT'S ambition to accelerate housebuilding is welcome, this objective must not come at the expense of safety – which needs to be central to design, construction, remediation and conversion.

However, the publication of the *Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report* last September (*bit.ly/4hZTUvZ*) serves as a stark reminder of the catastrophic consequences of letting safety take a back seat.

One of the crucial reforms that the Hackitt review of Building Regulations and fire safety had called for was culture change in the construction industry. At the heart of this change is ensuring honesty and integrity. Individuals and organisations need to make the right decisions, act ethically and do their duty, without exploiting opportunities to benefit from unclear lines of responsibility.

Only with such change and better regulation will building safety be improved. In terms of culture, it must be at the forefront of developers' minds, for instance, that these buildings will become homes where families will reside, and do so assuming they are safe. But it is equally important to consider whether the statutory guidance underpinning the Building Regulations is fit for purpose.

Guidance at odds with legislation

In 2019, the previous government had committed to a full technical review of *Fire safety: Approved Document B* within five years; this review is still ongoing, though, and some areas are still to be started. The *Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report* reiterated that the Approved Documents needed reviewing 'as a matter of urgency', and cited Approved Document B in particular.

At the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), we have long been concerned about this guidance and its treatment by the industry. As we see it, the Labour government has inherited a Building Regulations regime that has been amended but not fixed.

For example, Approved Document B was updated in March 2024 to require secondary stairs in residential buildings of 18m and above from September 2026. However, the changes did not extend to making provision for those occupants who are less mobile. Neither did the changes reflect the need to meet the functional requirements, which are the foundation for whether or not a building is compliant.

The guidance is, in NFCC's view, not capable of enabling compliance with the regulations. Even if one follows Approved Document B or other guidance, this doesn't ensure compliance; however, people still often assume that it does. This only serves to create the level of ambiguity that is heavily criticised by the phase 2 report. NFCC firmly believes that the regulations cannot be separated from, or less than, the principles of the functional requirements themselves.

The Building Safety Act 2022 recognised the intrinsic relationship between construction and occupation. This is emphasised by the requirement it introduced at gateway two of the regulatory process, which a project must pass if construction is to proceed: namely, to identify the measures, strategies and policies that ensure anyone in the building can evacuate safely in an emergency.

However, the failure of the revised Approved Document B to include requirements for lifts to enable such evacuation by everyone means that the guidance is seemingly at odds with the legislation.

The phase 2 report also criticised the lack of fire safety consideration in the planning process, and the need for competent fire engineering advice not only to be sought but to be heeded as well.

Support on access and egress lacking

The inadequacy of the Building Regulations is further exposed in relation to accessibility. Although *Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M* covers this, there is no provision yet for ensuring the equivalent level of so-called egressibility; that is, making a means of evacuation accessible.

When it comes to the construction of buildings, the industry must address any implicit bias in terms of ableism, especially given that the Grenfell Tower fire drew attention to the need to accommodate those with limits to their mobility.

When it comes to the construction of buildings, the industry must address any implicit bias in terms of ableism



Construction needs to ensure the safety of firefighters who are responding to incidents in high-rise buildings as well. Many of the features that provide safe egress and refuge for those evacuating are also vital to support the efforts of emergency services. Unfortunately, we have learned since the Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent reviews that a number of buildings have not been built or refurbished to appropriate standards.

NFCC does not believe that the principle of installing high levels of compartmentation, which by default supports stay-put strategies, should obviate the need for measures that enable people to leave a building safely should they wish to.

The current law requires that all residents and lawful visitors are able to evacuate to a safe place outside the building without needing external assistance. There should always be a plan B to enable evacuation in an emergency, and paramount in doing so is providing a safe means of escape for people with disabilities.

Although Approved Document B does not make provision for evacuation lifts, this is a requirement in the London Plan 2021, while there will be local plans in other places enforcing similar requirements for the safe egress of those with mobility limitations. However, some people living elsewhere in the country will have no such protection, in effect creating a safety lottery.

The Building Regulations require that 'All people can escape to a place of safety without external assistance'. 'All people' includes people with disabilities, so the fact that Approved Document B does not include specific guidance in that regard reflects that many of the assumptions are still based on pre-war research on evacuation times, and other historical studies that considered only able-bodied participants.

Home Office guidance published in February 2024 (*bit.ly/3DgMm8i*) considered international research that found evacuation lifts can be used effectively during an emergency, reducing the overall time taken to escape high-rise buildings and enabling egress by residents such as wheelchair users with severe movement impairments who might otherwise have to remain in the building.

Safety must be built into process

Ultimately, whatever the type of building, safety must not take a back seat as it has done, but instead be built into the process.

A lack of research, standards, regulations or benchmarks for competence may threaten the safety of building occupants – or require the industry to provide costly mitigation – something that is set out so clearly in the Hackitt review.

The government and industry must have serious intent to learn lessons, which is why NFCC welcomes the phase 2 report's finding that the implementation of the Hackitt review's formal recommendations should be tracked and monitored.

These are the challenges the government must address to meet its housing targets, and also to ensure buildings are designed and constructed to be suitable for those who will call them home.

Mark Hardingham is former chair of NFCC
chair@nfcc.org.uk

Related competencies include:
Ethics, Rules of Conduct and professionalism, Fire safety, Legal/regulatory compliance

Study asks professionals to reflect on their education

With the view persisting that modern building surveying graduates lack practical skills, one practitioner and educator has looked into professionals' academic experience and attainment

WORDS BY PROF. ADRIAN TAGG MRICS

WHILE MOST ORGANISATIONS benefit from building surveying graduates complementing degree apprentices, some still consider that modern graduates are in general substandard and lack the experience necessary to practise (*bit.ly/CMIworkready*).

Given that I have educated many such students myself, the persistence of this view prompted me to research chartered surveyors who had graduated from UK universities over the past 35 years, to establish:

- how they entered higher education and their degree outcomes
- their experience of APC postgraduate training, and of achieving professional membership of RICS
- their subsequent career progression as well as their job satisfaction.

I set up an online survey to which 65 chartered building surveyors responded – and while this number is quite small, there are still identifiable trends in the data.

Fees up though applicant quality rises

Those who graduated during the 1990s had seen higher education open up when many of the polytechnics that had taught practical subjects, such as building surveying, were granted university status in 1992. Students' fees for most of the decade were typically paid by local education authorities, with many even getting maintenance grants.

The late 1990s and early 2000s, however, saw students having to pay fees themselves for the first time, although these started relatively low at £1,000 per year and only rose to £3,000 in 2006. It was the 2010s that saw the biggest increase, to £9,000, with this figure remaining largely static in the decade since then despite a significant rise in inflation.

Some respondents entered university with vocational BTEC qualifications while others came with A levels, though both routes are used to calculate the number of UCAS points to determine students' eligibility for courses. There is a drop-off in the numbers entering full-time degrees with BTECs from the 1990s, at 56%, to the present, at 20%.

The average number of chartered respondents having done A levels is 74% compared to 26% with BTECs. Those who have completed a degree apprenticeship amount to 6% of those surveyed but the numbers are low, representing a total of only four respondents. Overall, though, there has been a notable increase in average UCAS points across the 35-year dataset for all entrants to building surveying courses.

1 in 3

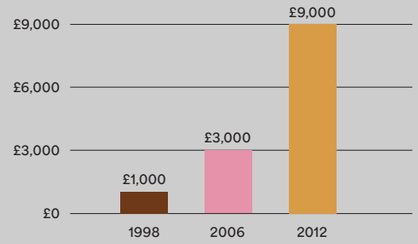
trainees switch employers during their APC, with 66% of these saying their work does not provide the diversity of experience they need

The research data – which will be published later this year – also shows that women enrolling on UK building surveying courses accounted for 12% of cohorts in the 1990s, rising to around 20% presently. Furthermore, the survey across the whole 35-year period identified that female applicants had 21% higher UCAS points than men on average, which is equivalent at A level to the difference between obtaining an A and a B grade. This aligns with Chartered Management Institute data (*bit.ly/CMIworkready*), which shows that boys tend to lag behind girls throughout primary and secondary education.

However, the gap does narrow across a three- or four-year building surveying degree programme, with women gaining 12% more first-class awards than men according to my survey findings. The survey also showed that current graduates have the highest level of first-class attainment, with 60% obtaining such classifications after 2020 compared to 20% in the 1990s.

This figure is significantly more than the 29.6% of first-class awards in higher education – as reported by the Office for Students in 2024 (*bit.ly/OfS-topgrades*) – but still reflects the upward trend in first-class attainment across the sector.

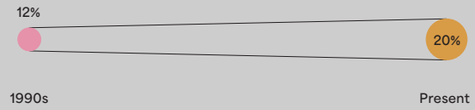
Rising university fees since 1990s



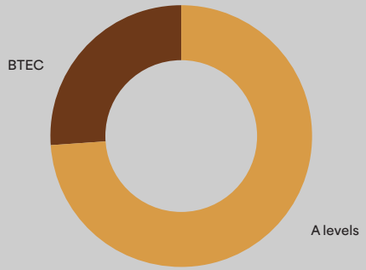
Number entering full-time degrees with BTECs



Women enrolling on UK building surveying courses



Secondary-level qualifications of chartered surveyors



Source: Prof. Adrian Tagg

Women achieve higher UCAS points tally than men



21% Across the whole 35-year period covered, the survey identified that female applicants had 21% higher UCAS points than men on average, which is equivalent at A level to the difference between obtaining an A and a B grade.

Industry experience considered crucial

The notion that modern graduates are less equipped for the workplace than degree apprentices may be linked to the fact that, since the 1990s, decreasing numbers of respondents had been taught by academic staff who themselves had industry experience or a practice interest.

There are some exceptions, with a minority of institutions still having industry-focused teaching staff; but on the whole, building surveying degrees are being taught by those with a largely academic background.

A similar downward trend was observed in those completing sandwich degrees, in which students spend their third of four years working before returning to the classroom. One respondent noted: 'The year out in industry was the best part of my degree, and I could not wait to get my final year over to get back into the working environment.'

This preference for practical experience influences another finding from my survey. Considering that degree apprenticeships are a recent form of academic study, when asked hypothetically whether they would have considered taking this route rather than a full-time degree, on average 39% of respondents said they would. However, the reasons for doing so vary.

For earlier graduates, who were exempt from paying or only paid minimal fees – especially those who graduated before the year 2000 – the opportunity for more experiential learning was the main reason for preferring a degree apprenticeship over a full-time degree. However, those who graduated more recently – and who have thus faced £9,000 tuition fees, feeling a greater burden of student debt – cited cost as outweighing experience as their motivation.

As one respondent observed: 'I would have considered the [degree apprenticeship] route as I believe it provides more exposure to the industry. However, like many, university provided me with a wider network of people, [which] will likely outweigh the short-term lack of experience.'

This is perhaps where the fundamental difference between full-time education and degree apprenticeships lies. If building surveying is a profession that can largely be taught through work-based learning, my research asked whether it is actually necessary to have an accredited degree. Two-thirds of respondents agreed, which affirms the narrative that while a degree is necessary, it is important to recognise that there are different ways to obtain such a qualification.

Candidates feel need to move jobs

All respondents were chartered building surveyors who had studied for a building surveying degree and then took the APC. ▸

While current student cohorts attain more first-class degrees than their predecessors, they are still short of industry exposure. Nevertheless, the data indicates that generation on generation are also passing their APC more quickly, with a marginally higher success rate at the first attempt. The average time taken to obtain professional membership has dropped from 36 months in the 1990s to 28 months since 2020.

Furthermore, the difference between women's and men's attainment generally narrows to a negligible percentage as they become chartered, all of which points towards the success of structured graduate schemes and APC support. This was something reflected in the survey comments, with one respondent saying: 'The industry has changed since my APC training, and my current company now invests time and money in supporting candidates.'

However, the responses also indicate that about one in three trainees switch employer during their APC, with 66% of these saying their work does not provide the diversity of experience they need to pass. The research data also identified that even degree apprenticeship candidates switch employers during their training. Although there were only four respondents in this category one had switched employer, citing a lack of work variety as their motivation for doing so.

As another respondent remarked, the APC 'needs a dedicated individual or individuals in management [or] leadership roles to help form the training experience. There needs to be fluidity in an apprentice's development, and businesses need to ensure apprentices are not sat in a team that may focus on [only] one workstream. This limits their experience.'

Women must wait longer for senior role

With women's representation averaging 17% across the 35 years of data, it is refreshing to note this proportion remains the same for those in senior roles, from associate director to partner.

However, the well-documented gender gap in business as a whole is evident in the time that it takes for female surveyors to achieve promotions to this level. Allowing for the fact that fewer respondents to the survey were in senior roles, which could skew the findings, women take between 30% and 75% longer to achieve promotion to such positions than their male counterparts.

There are no doubt a number of reasons for this; however, this was not a focus of my research. Similarly, although few who graduated in or after 2020 are in senior roles, there is little evidence to suggest that they achieve promotion quicker than their predecessors.

While an overall average of 89% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their careers, an examination of the data in greater detail suggests that more newly qualified surveyors are less satisfied. This appears to indicate that, irrespective of the degree format and APC training, a surveying career is intense and challenging at the start but gets more fulfilling with time.

Survey attests value of full-time degree

In conclusion – and observed by those in higher education – although enrolment on full-time building surveying degree programmes may be falling, with a rapid rise in degree apprenticeships, both routes aim for candidates to sit their APC and become chartered five years after commencement of their programme.

However, the two modes of study are completely different and cannot be truly compared. A full-time degree is still an immersive experience in which students are in or around a campus environment several days a week, whereas degree apprenticeships tend to offer only one full day of structured learning.

This immersion comes at a cost, but although some students lament taking on a high level of debt, when I asked those in my class who are now coming towards the end of their studies how they felt, they did not share this opinion.

The suspicion that modern graduates are not up to the required standard is dispelled by my research findings, although they may have had less exposure to industry and therefore be less practice-ready. However, despite the need for significant on-the-job training for graduates and degree apprentices alike, most practising professionals agree that the degree is still paramount.

My research also identifies the importance of structured training on both degree pathways for subsequent APC success. As one respondent said, all those enrolled on the APC need to recognise that it is 'their' APC, and that sense of ownership is paramount to success. Accordingly, successful outcomes depend both on the candidate's commitment and on the quality of the training programme.



GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

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Asbestos removal case highlights business responsibilities

Last year's conviction of a company and its directors for exposing workers to asbestos underscores the importance of using licensed, competent contractors to remove hazardous materials

WORDS BY JEFFREY TRIBICH MRICS

IN MARCH 2024, Southampton Crown Court sentenced the director of Cavendish Winchester Ltd, Stephen Davies, to eight months in jail for having failed to protect workers at a construction project from exposure to asbestos.

Davies' fellow director Neil Bolton was convicted as well, and given a four-month custodial sentence, suspended for 12 months. The company itself was also prosecuted, and fined £30,000. All three of the defendants pleaded guilty.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed that around ten tonnes of asbestos insulating board (AIB) were removed during the refurbishment of a commercial unit in Winnall Close, Winchester, in 2019–20, which was to be used as rental accommodation for students.

The workers who stripped out the dangerous materials were unqualified to do so and unaware of the health risks. It was clear, however, that the directors knew what the material was, and its extent, because they had previously sought a quote for its removal by a competent contractor.

The HSE thought that this made the case particularly serious. After the hearing, the executive's principal inspector Steve Hull said the directors 'put profit before the health of those they employed', noting they 'tried to cover their tracks by legitimising the removal of a small amount of residual asbestos-containing materials, after illegally stripping out the majority, by obtaining a new quote for legal removal of that ... remaining portion.

'Higher-risk asbestos removal, such as the removal of AIB, can only legally be carried

The workers who stripped out the dangerous materials were unqualified and unaware of the risks

out by licensed asbestos removal contractors who have the knowledge and equipment to prevent the spread of fibres and properly protect the workers.'

HSE's investigation did not ascertain where all the asbestos-containing material removed had ended up, so many more were likely to have been exposed – while others may yet be.

Case flags up 1974 Act duties

The case was brought against the company by HSE enforcement lawyer Kate Harney under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (*bit.ly/HSWA1974*), subsection 4(2) of which requires that those in control of certain premises take reasonable and practicable measures to ensure such premises are safe and without risks to health.

The directors were in turn prosecuted under subsection 37(1), which states that if a company commits a health and safety offence then its directors or senior managers can be prosecuted for that breach if the offence was due to their consent or connivance or attributable to their neglect.

The case remains an important reminder for chartered surveyors responsible for the management of premises – and others with the same or similar legal duties – to manage asbestos diligently in accordance with the law.

For more must-read articles, visit *ww3.rics.org/built-environment-journal*

Jeffrey Tribich MRICS is the founder of Jeffrey Tribich Consulting and a member of the RICS Asbestos Working Group and RICS Health and Safety Advisory Group. He would like to thank Michael Appleby, a partner at Fisher Scoggins Waters, for his legal advice
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Related competencies include:
Health and safety, Inspection, Legal/regulatory compliance

For further key sector insights, visit *ww3.rics.org/built-environment-journal*



Building surveying and building control standards and guidance

Recently published

***Domestic air source heat pumps* consumer guide**
Householders can make their homes more energy-efficient and reduce their carbon footprint by replacing gas boilers with heat pumps, and this RICS consumer guide offers advice on how to go about it.
To read this and other guides, visit *rics.org/consumer-guides*

Forthcoming publications

***Sustainability* practice information, global, 1st edition**
The document aims to ensure that all surveying disciplines have a base level of knowledge in sustainability that they can apply throughout the property life cycle. It will contain:
- a glossary of terms
- an overview of a property project life cycle, and the points at which RICS members are involved
- reference to external resources that provide additional guidance.

The glossary in particular will help avoid misuse of language in the profession. For instance, the terms energy efficiency and retrofit are often misused: whereas the former covers everything one could do to improve a building's energy performance, including retrofitting, retrofit itself only relates to adding features to a building that it did not have when it was constructed.

***Design and specification* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
An update to the 2013 edition, this standard will take into account recent regulatory and legislative changes, updating best-practice guidance relevant to design and specification for small to medium-sized construction projects.

***Subsidence in relation to insurance claims* practice information, UK, 2nd edition**
This document will update the 2011 first edition guidance note on subsidence, covering new case law, protocols and processes developed over recent years.

The summer of 2022, one of the driest on record, resulted in a surge in subsidence claims, particularly in residential properties in the South East of England, but also other areas where there are shrinkable subsoils.

The new edition therefore aims to ensure that our members remain up to date with current best practice, and to offer a source of information for others who may inspect properties and need to recognise subsidence and how it should be dealt with.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Certificate in principal designer (Building Regulations)

RICS has launched online training to enable learners to fulfil the role of principal designer on construction projects. The course is specifically designed for building surveyors and building control surveyors who undertake this role under the Building Regulations, or building surveyors who work in multidisciplinary teams with a principal designer.

Certificate in building surveying practice

This course equips students with essential knowledge in construction technology, contract administration, building pathology and regulatory compliance, preparing them for key responsibilities in this field.

To find out more about these and other courses, please visit *rics.org/training-events*

Conferences

Global building conservation conference, autumn 2025

UK fire safety conference, October 2025

To find out more about these and other events, please visit *rics.org/conferences*



SHUTTERSTOCK

PGP interim chair message

Skills gap remains panel priority



INTERIM PANEL CHAIR HELEN MCKEOWN MRICS

One topic that repeatedly features in the work of the building surveying and building control professional group panel (PGP) has been how to address the sector-wide skills shortage and the significant challenges we face in both attracting and retaining talent.

In the first quarter of the year, the PGP has been actively working on several recruitment-related initiatives. Panel members continue to be incredibly hard-working in contributing to these efforts, sharing their experience, expertise and thought leadership – and I extend my sincerest thanks to them.

Without these dedicated and passionate volunteers, there would be no formal bridge between RICS and its members, building the foundations for a modern and reinvigorated professional body that will be prepared for the challenges of the next 100 years.

Along with the skills shortage and entrance to the profession, we also continue to review what updates are required to RICS professional standards to support the work of building and building control surveyors.

It is encouraging to have witnessed a renewed focus by RICS recently on addressing the skills gap, recruitment shortfalls and attrition levels. As RICS CEO Justin Young said in his March all-profession update: 'Recruiting surveyors is an ongoing cause of concern for many of our members. The skills shortage in our profession and the wider built environment is a barrier to project progress, a key contributor to the housing crisis, and a threat to the everyday operations of countless firms. It's imperative that we attract new talent to our profession.'

It is encouraging to have witnessed a renewed focus by RICS recently on addressing the skills gap, recruitment shortfalls and attrition

As always, your continued feedback to the PGP is crucial as we strive to build a profession that is resilient, inclusive and future-proof. Together, we can ensure that the building surveying and building control sectors continue to thrive and make a positive impact on the built environment for generations to come.

NEWS IN BRIEF

RICS backs fire inquiry response

The UK government published its statement on the *Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report* in February, and RICS welcomes the proposed introduction of a new, dedicated construction sector regulator and chief construction adviser.

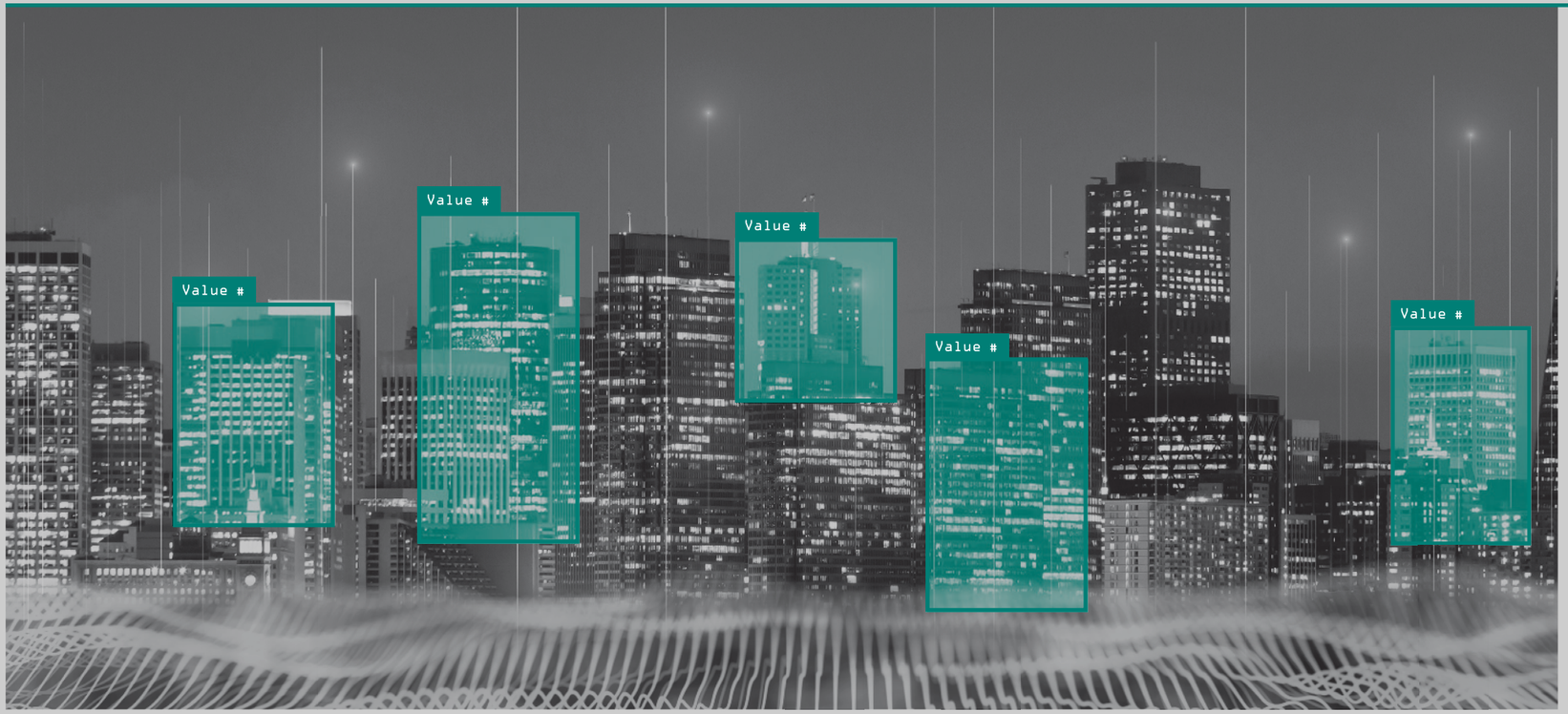
The organisation also endorses the planned new rules on product safety, which should raise manufacturing and usage standards, while new laws empowering social housing tenants will help protect some of the most vulnerable. The government aims to provide updates every quarter, and RICS will continue to support the implementation of its reforms.

RICS hosted a free-to-access webinar on the government's response in March. This looked at the implications for members and the wider fire safety and construction industry, as well as how RICS will support the government to ensure safe, high-quality buildings for all; a recording of this is now available in the RICS Online Academy (*ola.rics.org*). The organisation also hosted an event with journalist Peter Apps at its London HQ in April, with a recording likewise online.

IPA issues asset playbook

The UK Infrastructure and Projects Authority published the *PFI Asset condition playbook* (*bit.ly/PFIplaybk*) in March, setting out an assessment framework for buildings as Private Finance Initiative contracts expire. All UK chartered building surveyors should make themselves aware of the document, as it will be key area in which their expertise will be required over the coming years.





Valuers still required as AI adoption accelerates

As property professions look increasingly to automate parts of the valuation process, we must remain aware of the limitations of AI – and the importance of valuers' ability to scrutinise data

WORDS BY PAUL AYLOTT MRICS

THE VALUATION PROFESSION has in the past been slow to adopt new technologies; perhaps with good reason. This may have been because of a lack of client confidence in outputs without a human sense-check, as well as the valuation profession needing to understand the risks and limitations of technology in a litigious sector.

But the pace of change is accelerating, with firms looking for efficient ways to produce valuation reports that are accurate, provided to clients quickly, and compliant with RICS professional standards.

Managing data needs careful balance

Valuation reporting has evolved over the past 20 years, with registered valuers having to take account of a far greater number of datasets than previously, which they feed into an assessment of value, and identifying areas of risk and opportunity for clients.

Valuers benefit from much better availability and transparency of comparable transaction evidence than ever before, with the growth of data companies such as CoStar, EIG, Rightmove Plus and LonRes. However, the data now available needs to be balanced with information sourced from local or specialist professional contacts, who retain valuable, confidential market intelligence.

Valuation firms have therefore been challenged to establish where automation using artificial intelligence (AI) can help their work, without affecting the quality and rigour of the conclusions given to the client.

How can the automation of some parts of the process release the valuer to focus on the core aspects of their work? Do we need valuers to analyse comparable evidence, assess the property's positives and negatives, understand the market and arrive at a rationale for the valuation with well thought-through conclusions if machine learning (ML) will soon be able to do so?

Automation won't meet all client needs

Although RICS published an insight paper on automated valuation models (AVMs) in 2022 (*rics.org/avm*), there has been a rapid increase in the amount of data collected by automated methods even in the past three years. This has prompted the valuation profession to make greater use of service providers such as Valos and Edozo, which automate the sourcing of property-related data to include in report templates.

SHUTTERSTOCK

A valuer's ability to interrogate and corroborate data, including comparable evidence, remains key

Doing so allows valuers to devote more time to clients' increasing expectations for a comprehensive picture of the asset – including potential risks or opportunities such as energy performance certificates (EPCs) and lease events – as well as fulfilling the core role of advising on value after analysis of relevant comparable evidence and market trends.

Some may argue that this analysis to arrive at logical conclusions is what AI and in particular ML is made for. For the simplest of asset types, I would agree that AVMs can provide what a client may need; but their suitability and robustness depends on the number of variables that affect a particular asset, the client's attitude to risk, and the tolerance they can accept when acting on a valuation conclusion.

The suitability and robustness of AVMs is also affected by the quality of the data that is being analysed, including its integrity, accuracy and standardisation. For example, a building might be known as 1 High Street but also as High Street House, so when you look at the business rates list, planning and EPCs, the same property can be referred to in several different ways.

Data quality varies greatly from one provider to another, including central and local government and quasi-governmental bodies, as well as publicly available and subscription data services.

Scrutiny and networks remain critical

A valuer's ability to interrogate and corroborate data, including comparable evidence, remains key to the integrity of valuation conclusions and advice for clients. Layering comparable data with information from interactions with other property professionals, who may have dealt directly with a significant transaction, isn't possible with AI data collation alone.

Similarly, a valuer's input in checking the veracity of the information AI has sourced is essential to the integrity of the outcome. There are frequently scenarios where legal titles aren't clear, property addresses aren't consistent, publicly recorded planning information is not correct or complete, and recorded EPCs aren't current, for example.

These simple instances of possible data inaccuracy or inconsistency can materially affect the valuation advice provided and, with the quality of available data, a valuer's due diligence is essential to the process.

Although the availability of data has improved considerably, its integrity and quality remains a weak point when using AI in all but the simplest and lowest-risk valuation projects, and I don't see this changing in the short term.

A valuer's network of experienced property professionals is another essential and valuable resource, and something that is developed over time. So much information can only be secured by speaking to your peers in the market, and there is a risk that such relationships, which are important in sharing information, won't be available in an AI-dominated profession.

We need to educate the next generation of valuation professionals so they do not become solely reliant on AI, but see it as a tool to make the process more efficient, supplementing their analytical and personal skills.

AI can help with administration

Despite these issues, the increased use of technology and introduction of some AI functions into the valuation process is happening. Most prudent firms are identifying areas that can be improved, and adopting approaches that couple the best of technology with the valuer knowledge and integrity that RICS showcases.

Reducing repetitive administration functions, minimising rekeying of information and standardising report production should enable the valuer to provide the robustness needed in the valuation process that ensures public confidence.

As AI in property valuation continues to develop, we need to consider how we refer to data sources, the extent to which the technology is used in the production of a valuation report and how the vendor ensures quality in any system that uses AI.

This should not currently require regulation: it is for the valuer and the valuation firm themselves to make their processes transparent for clients, while adhering to RICS professional standards. However, as AI use expands the organisation is due to publish a new professional standard, *Responsible use of artificial intelligence*, later this year.

The increased use of technology, and AI in particular, means that valuation is now less an art and more a science. While this promotes integrity and trust in the valuation profession, we need to be sure that the valuer can still paint a clear picture for the client.

AI is there to help the valuer, but in the vast majority of valuations does not offer a viable replacement for a human professional – and is unlikely to do so for some time to come.

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Related competencies include:
Data management, Valuation

Mediation offers effective way to end lease disputes

With lease-related disputes being a major cause of tribunal hearings, mediation can offer a collaborative and effective - not to say cheaper - alternative, a residential property expert explains

WORDS BY ANTONY PARKINSON MRICS



GETTY

SERVICE CHARGE AND lease extension premiums are two of the most common reasons for leasehold dispute and prompt a significant number of applications to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber), the FTT.

However, where the FTT has authority to act, applicants are currently offered a half-day of mediation as an alternative to a hearing, at no cost. If an agreement is not reached at mediation, though, then the claim will proceed to a hearing.

Informality and flexibility aid dialogue

Mediation offers an informal way to encourage open and constructive dialogue between the parties. The expert mediator can help them to evaluate their positions, interests and needs in working towards a settlement that will satisfy everyone.

The informality creates a less intimidating atmosphere, promoting communication and collaboration. As such, parties are more likely to participate in discussions focused on finding common ground and working towards a settlement. Unlike legal proceedings, mediation also allows for flexible and customised outcomes. Parties are encouraged to explore a wide range of options without the constraints of court and tribunal jurisdictions.

For example, a leaseholder may be unhappy with the level of service charge costs for grounds maintenance, and the specification and the working days or hours in the relevant contract. In this case, the FTT would have jurisdiction under section 27A of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to determine the reasonableness and payability of service charges, but no power to decide the specification or working days or hours.

In mediation, however, jurisdictional barriers do not apply, so the parties would be able to reach an agreement on the specification, working hours or anything else at issue. This can result in creative resolutions that suit the parties' specific needs and circumstances, leading to more satisfaction with the terms of the settlement agreement and a greater likelihood that both will honour them. By contrast, in adversarial dispute resolution procedures such as litigation, one party wins and the other loses.

Mediation instead results in a negotiated settlement facilitated by a mediator. The mediator does not decide the dispute; rather, they help the parties to reach their own agreement and think about settlement terms they had not previously contemplated.

Collaboration seeks common ground

Another significant advantage of mediation is the emphasis that the process places on maintaining relationships.

Positive long-term relationships can be irrevocably damaged during a tribunal hearing thanks to claims, criticisms and accusations. Mediation on the other hand encourages landlords and tenants to find common ground. This collaborative approach often results in a more respectful resolution, helping reduce the risk of future conflicts.

The process also means both parties are able to influence the outcome, keeping decisions in their hands rather than those of a judge or third party, with the mediator guiding discussions and helping parties evaluate their options. By contrast, the decision of a court or tribunal may suit neither party.

The confidentiality of mediation may put parties at ease and encourage them to speak openly about their concerns and interests. This enables them to explore potential resolutions and make offers, safe in the knowledge that these cannot be used against them in any proceedings should those arise.

Furthermore, resolving residential leasehold disputes through litigation can be time-consuming and expensive. Court or tribunal proceedings may take months or even years, with significant disruption to landlords and tenants alike.

Conversely, mediation offers a quicker, more streamlined and cost-effective option. Sessions can often be scheduled much more efficiently than court or tribunal hearings, providing a quicker resolution.

Challenges outweighed by positives

However, mediation is not without potential challenges. For instance, there can be a perceived or actual power imbalance between leaseholders and freeholders, or managing agents or lawyers representing the latter. Such representation may be sought because leases can be highly complex, containing legal jargon and technicalities.

When disputes do arise, they can be emotionally charged and highly stressful. Anger, frustration and mistrust can hamper productive communication during sessions, which means that reaching viable resolutions becomes more difficult.

To overcome some of these challenges, it is important to ensure all parties have access to suitable representation, or professional advisers such as a lawyer, surveyor or valuer as appropriate, as well as a fair and impartial mediator. While this will cost, it will not come to nearly as much as paying for litigation.

Despite the drawbacks, the positives of mediation outweigh the negatives, and there are plenty of opportunities to ensure it is a viable alternative to litigation.

It is important to ensure all parties have access to suitable representation or professional advisers, as well as a fair and impartial mediator

While mediation is voluntary for FTT claims, there is significant potential for mandatory mediation following the Court of Appeal decision in *Churchill v Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council* [2023] EWCA Civ 1416 (*bit.ly/ChlvMTCBC23*). This landmark decision effectively empowered, and even encouraged, judges to stop litigation and order parties to mediate where they felt it was appropriate to do so.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has also been looking at making mediation integral to civil justice. In May 2023, it became mandatory in all small claims actions in England and Wales, and the ministry is now looking at making forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) – including mediation – compulsory throughout the civil justice system.

Moreover, RICS' own Dispute Resolution Service (*rics.org/drs*) is working with the MoJ and like-minded bodies such as the Civil Mediation Council and Chartered Institute of Arbitrators on ways that this could be achieved, in addition to relevant logistics and governance, as well as standards for the mediators themselves.

Overall, mediation can be a valuable tool – particularly in resolving leasehold disputes – because it provides a more efficient, collaborative and satisfactory outcome for all parties.

Antony Parkinson MRICS is an RICS-accredited mediator and head of residential block management at JLL
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Related competencies include: Conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures

Fixed-charge recovery supports lenders and receivers

With economic woes leading to a rapid rise in receiverships, a scheme co-founded by RICS can assure borrowers and lenders of accredited professionals' competency to carry out this vital work

WORDS BY JOHN WILLS MRICS



SHUTTERSTOCK

THIS YEAR MARKS the centenary of the Law of Property Act 1925 (*bit.ly/LPA1925*), which has certainly improved lenders' ability to recover fixed-charge loans. Section 101 of the act allows a lender to appoint a receiver to sell an asset or collect rent in order to repay a debt under a fixed charge.

In a free, open and sophisticated economy with a range of lending and borrowing methods, the ability to recover debts in such a way is still as pertinent today as it was 100 years ago.

Downturns and recessions – such as those arising from the global financial crisis of 2008, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and recent inflation and associated interest rate hikes – typically lead to an increased number of receiverships as loans default and lenders seek to recover their money.

Act enables simpler recovery

A lender – whether a global merchant bank, one of the top five UK high-street lenders or an individual – will typically secure a loan by way of legal charge, which is a legal document or contract that sets out the terms of the loan.

This includes, for instance, the amount, length of the loan, interest to be charged, property or asset it is secured against and other requirements. The charge is typically split into two types:

- **fixed charge:** a charge that is fixed against a physical, tangible asset such as property, land, plant and machinery, or fine art
- **floating charge:** a charge that can change over time as the needs of a business alter and assets move; for example stock, debtors or cash.

Where a borrower breaches or defaults on the terms of the charge, a lender can recover assets, most commonly using one of the two following methods.

- **Administration:** without a borrower's, director's or shareholder's consent, a qualifying lender would need to make an application to court to put a debtor into administration. This is a costly and time-consuming exercise, though, with the administrators being appointed over all assets and debts rather than just the lender's specific debt.
- **A Law of Property Act (LPA) receiver:** this is a simpler and more cost-effective approach, which allows the qualifying fixed-charge lender to appoint a receiver. This can be done for various reasons, as set out in the definition of the legal charge. The lender would then serve a demand and, if the loan is not fully repaid as required, could appoint a receiver by way of a simple deed signed and witnessed by the lender itself.

An LPA receiver can be appointed under a fixed charge only and not a floating charge, where a lender would instead have to appoint an administrator.

It is important to note that the appointment of a receiver is not an act of insolvency, and that the breach that prompts it can be for non-monetary reasons such as not reaching certain milestones in a development or exceeding a required loan-to-value ratio. The appointment simply concerns assets under the fixed charge, and the fixed-charge lender making the appointment has priority over the repayment monies net of receivership fees and costs.

With regard to terminology, you will often hear 'LPA receiver' or 'fixed-charge receiver' being used. In essence, the roles are similar. However, the act is very restrictive, meaning that a receiver appointed is limited to insuring the asset under section 101(1)(ii) and collecting rent on it under section 101(1)(iii). That said, section 101(3) allows these powers to be modified and extended to enable marketing and selling an asset, obtaining possession, applying for planning consent, agreeing a lease and borrowing money.

Given their personal responsibility, receivers must be aware of their obligation to comply with relevant legislation and regulations

Receivers take personal responsibility

A receiver is appointed as an individual and is thus personally responsible, typically taking on cases where commercial relationships have broken down and the only information available is incomplete. This means that they must be careful about how best to proceed.

The 1925 Act helps in this regard, in that the receiver's primary duty of care is to the lender. If the debtor is not bankrupt or in liquidation then the receiver enjoys agency status where they act on behalf of the borrower, and can enter into agreements and sell on their behalf.

Once appointed, a receiver will need to undertake their own due diligence, unearth any hidden problems, understand fully why a breach has happened, and develop and implement a strategy to sell the asset and repay the lender.

Because of the nature of receivership cases, there are a large number of potential pitfalls, though. This does also mean that there is plenty of legal case history to consult for guidance. For instance, *Silven Properties v Royal Bank of Scotland plc* [2003] EWCA Civ 1409 (*bit.ly/SilvenvRBS2003*) sets out that the primary duty of care is for the mortgagee to assist receivers with their duties.

Given their personal responsibility, receivers also need to be fully aware of their obligation to comply with relevant statute, such as the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to name but two, to carry out a thorough health and safety audit, and to appoint experts who can undertake any investigations that are necessary, including fire risk assessment or asbestos reports.

As such, the variety of cases, the need to solve problems, the range of assets involved and the requirement to provide realistic strategic advice have made my 20 years working in property loan restructuring and recovery extremely interesting and rewarding.

RICS collaborates on registration

Although no professional qualification is required, chartered surveyors are well placed to be LPA receivers thanks to their expert knowledge of the property and land sectors as well as their understanding of valuation and markets in England and Wales.

RICS and the Insolvency Practitioners Association launched the Registered Property Receivers Scheme in 1999 (*rics.org/rprs*), and in 2017 they both entered into an agreement to include the Association of Property and Fixed Charge Receivers (NARA) as well.

The scheme's sole objective is to accredit professionals who carry out fixed-charge and LPA receivership work, and thus offer reassurance on the standard of that work to those making such appointments as well as to creditors and the wider public.

Currently, more than 100 registered property receivers are part of the scheme, which is voluntary. Members must prove that they have the required skills, knowledge and experience to provide focused services before, during and after a receivership. Moreover, all registrants must belong to a relevant professional body such as RICS. The scheme has proved a success, with a number of leading banks deciding, when appointing receivers, to choose only those prepared to be regulated by their peers through the scheme.

Overall, no matter what direction the economy and property market go in, wherever there is lending there will always be a need for recovery and LPA receivers.

For more must-read articles, visit *ww3.rics.org/property-journal*

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Related competencies include:
Data management, Measurement, Property management

For more sector insights, visit *ww3.rics.org/property-journal*

Commercial property standards and guidance

Recently published

***Service charges in commercial property* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
Aimed at commercial property managers and occupiers, this updated edition promotes best practice, uniformity, fairness and transparency in the management of service charges in commercial property.

***Digital risks in buildings* practice information, global, 1st edition**
The use of data and technology offers many benefits for businesses and society, as well as buildings themselves. However, there are potential, previously unseen risks, from hardware failure to cyber security and data privacy. The document aims to inform property professionals about these risks, why they matter and how to mitigate them.
To read these, visit *rics.org/standards*

Forthcoming publication

***Code for leasing business premises* professional standard, England and Wales, 2nd edition**
The new edition of the code aims to improve the quality and fairness of negotiations on lease terms and promote comprehensive heads of terms that should make the legal drafting process more efficient. By identifying the terms that are usually important and encouraging both parties to obtain advice from property professionals, the standard will enable each to make an informed decision about whether and how to proceed on the terms that they negotiate.

The standard and accompanying template and checklist should be used by RICS members as a reminder for negotiations before the granting of a new lease or at renewal, to ensure that the landlords, tenants and guarantors they are advising understand clearly the commitments they are entering into.

Forthcoming consultation

***Code of measuring practice* professional standard, UK, 7th edition**
This standard applies to all building classes except offices and residential. Ahead of consultation, the author and expert group will consider whether this revised edition should include specific comment on vertical measurement, as well as ensuring that it reflects the evolution of measurement practice since the previous edition.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Business tenancies input offered

Parliament is currently considering the Law Commission's review of Part 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, which governs business tenancies in England and Wales. RICS has actively engaged with members in responding to the report, and briefed policymakers to help shape the work.
For more news and insights, see *rics.org/news-insights*

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Commercial real estate technical competency toolkit

The e-learning is designed to help APC candidates adapt their study to their specific needs and schedules.

Webinars

Global asset repurposing and reconfiguring for mixed use

Global future-proofing facilities with AI-driven operations

Learn more at *rics.org/training-events*

PGP chair's message

PGP responds to sector challenges



PANEL CHAIR RODDY HOUSTON MRICS

The UK commercial real-estate sector faces declining demand, regulatory reforms and sustainability challenges. The government's proposal that all commercial properties achieve an energy performance certificate rating of A or B by 2030, for instance, could render more than 80% of current stock unlettable without major investment – and this is before we consider the skills and resources needed to carry out the upgrades required.

Adapting to these shifts is crucial for landlords, investors and occupiers. Engaging with legislative changes and upgrading properties to meet energy standards will be key to maintain asset value and ensure long-term resilience.

In this context, the commercial property professional group panel (PGP) remains highly conscious of the need to engage with the government, the sector and RICS members. The panel has therefore been:

- informing RICS' responses to government consultation on the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 review (see News in brief, above)
- attending subgroups discussing issues such as standards, sustainability, CPD and AI
- reviewing and offering input on RICS publications
- analysing feedback from recent conferences, with a view to making future events even better.

Residential property standards and guidance

Recently published

***Retrofitting and improving the energy efficiency of your home* consumer guide**
This guide aims to advise homeowners and tenants considering domestic retrofits or improvements. It will be particularly useful for homeowners looking to improve energy efficiency before they sell, or renters wanting to benefit from reduced consumption. The guide also signposts other sources of advice and financial support for such upgrades.
To read, visit *rics.org/consumer-guides*

Forthcoming publications

***Home survey standard* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
As the residential sector evolves, RICS aims to revise this important standard. To support the updated edition, the organisation surveyed members and homeowners to gather their views, and is now analysing feedback from 325 professionals and more than 1,400 consumers. The results from these surveys as well as a subsequent public consultation will inform how the standard can be improved.

***Residential stock condition surveys* professional standard, UK, 1st edition**
This new document is designed to provide a framework that can be used across social housing to ensure that stock condition surveys meet an agreed standard, and that the highest levels of professionalism and integrity are applied.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

UK home surveys in practice: three-part series

These web classes provide an opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and ensure compliance, offering the latest guidance and best practice for home surveys.

Other available courses

Certificate in residential real estate

Global assessing sustainability risks in residential surveying webinar

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PGP chair's message

Profession critical to housing ambition



PANEL CHAIR EMMA FLETCHER MRICS

Surveyors will be essential in the next five years to meet the UK government's target for 1.5m new sustainable homes, and to ensure the £1.92bn it has allocated to retrofit existing affordable housing is spent effectively, given the increased political attention on achieving net-zero carbon.

In support of this, the past year has seen RICS' *Residential retrofit standard* take effect, the government's announcement of its Remediation Acceleration Plan (*bit.ly/rem-acc-plan*) and the publication of further details on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. Debate within RICS also continues over a new sustainability pathway for APC, and the way we value sustainable homes.

Members of the residential property professional group panel (PGP) have helped as well by informing the recent and forthcoming publications listed left, and also feature on the excellent RICS Podcast series in episodes covering the value of sustainable housing, residential property, and retrofitting and future-proofing (*rics.org/podcast*).

Meanwhile, the annual residential property conference will be hosted by PGP member Prof. Richard Fitton at the University of Salford in July, including a tour of the cutting-edge Energy House 2.0. I hope to see you there!
For more information on the residential property PGP, please visit *rics.org/grouppanels*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Survey keeps stakeholders briefed

A monthly RICS survey of the UK residential market is used by the government, the Bank of England and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund as an indicator of current and future conditions in residential sales and lettings. UK-based surveyors are welcome to contribute and will be accredited for doing so.
For more, see *rics.org/respondtosurveys*

Commonhold to become default

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has announced plans to reinvigorate commonhold and make it the default tenure for new-build flats, banning leasehold in the future. These proposals have been set out in a white paper that includes rules enabling the tenure to work for all types of development, including mixed-use buildings (*bit.ly/CholdWP*).

RICS informs housing policy

Housing policy reform and provision of 1.5m new homes remain UK government priorities. With this in mind, RICS gave evidence to MPs on the Environmental Audit Committee earlier this year about housing's impact on sustainability, and also discussed town centre densification.
For more news and insights, see *rics.org/news-insights*

Valuation standards and guidance

Recently published

***Valuation of licensed leisure property (including public houses, bars, nightclubs and restaurants)* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
The UK licensed leisure sector has seen substantial changes in recent years and this updated standard was prompted by the need to reflect market, practice and regulatory changes since the 2010 edition, as well as the new *RICS Valuation - Global Standards* (Red Book Global Standards).

***Valuation of medical centres and surgery premises* professional standard, UK, 3rd edition**
Health is a vital public interest issue, not to mention a large and growing sector of the economy. This update to the 2010 guidance note details common approaches and benchmarks across the sector, to help RICS valuation professionals provide sound advice and develop consistent, efficient practice in valuing such premises.

Forthcoming publications

***Secured lending valuation of properties in multi-storey, multi-occupancy residential buildings with cladding* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
To support valuations of flats for secured lending purposes, this update aims to ensure proportionate criteria are used when an external wall safety (EWS1) form is needed for blocks of four storeys or fewer.

***Residential property valuation for owner occupation* professional standard, UK, 1st edition**
The intention of this standard is to establish for the first time clear, dedicated guidance on the valuation of residential property in the UK, building on the principles set out in *RICS Valuation - Global Standards: UK national supplement 2023*.

Forthcoming consultations

***Bank lending valuations and mortgage lending value* professional standard, global, 2nd edition**
The objective for this update is to ensure that the standard reflects current best practice, and provides RICS members with clear, high-level principles for long-term prudent valuation approaches.
It will include an updated appendix focusing on the concept of prudent value and how it applies in different global jurisdictions, including Europe, considering recent legislative changes following the implementation of the Basel 3.1 framework of bank capital requirements.

NEWS IN BRIEF

EWS1 failures stall transactions

RICS is continuing to support consumers where firm Tri Fire provided EWS1 forms.
For more, see ***rics.org/ewsfaqs***

Red Book aligns with ESG agenda

The updated *RICS Valuation - Global Standards* (Red Book Global Standards) mandate consideration of ESG factors.
For more, see ***rics.org/news-insights***

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Red Book workshops

The workshops will help you comply with the RICS Rules of Conduct and *RICS Valuation - Global Standards* (Red Book Global Standards).

Other available courses

Global case study on valuing artistic elements in historic buildings

Valuation technical competency toolkit e-learning

Learn more at
rics.org/training-events

PGP chair's message

Members helping developers meet energy targets



PANEL CHAIR NICK KNIGHT MRICS

The UK valuation sector is evolving through collaboration between the government and RICS.
The government's Future Homes Standard for instance mandates a 75–80% reduction in carbon emissions for new homes, while planned policies for commercial real estate are pushing for improved energy efficiency and sustainability reporting. Consequently, developers are reviewing price margins to enable them to meet new standards.
Likewise, with the government extending the Decent Homes Standard to apply to the private rented sector as well as public housing, and potential reforms to the tax regime for second homes, we could see values get squeezed in parts of the market.
The valuation professional group panel (PGP) has been working closely with RICS on these and other issues. Our work includes episodes of the RICS podcast (*rics.org/podcast*) on valuers' contributions to the economy and the art trade, contributions to the recent and forthcoming standards listed above, and shaping the programme for April's UK and Ireland valuation conference, at which our members chaired and participated in discussions.
For more information on the valuation PGP, see ***rics.org/grouppanels***

FROM THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Sharing expertise can help ensure future of profession



"Best practice is at the heart of RICS' purpose as an organisation"

SIMON RAWLINSON MRICS
CHAIR OF RICS' KPC

I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to *Modus by RICS* now it is established in its new format and being distributed to members who have requested a copy.
When I participated in the Shaping the Future events last year, it was clear to me that this publication would be an important project for RICS. It strengthens the relationship between the organisation and its members, emphasising the importance of shared knowledge of our markets and the developments that are affecting them.
As chair of RICS' Knowledge and Practice Committee (KPC) I'm passionate about the knowledge agenda, which ranges from best-practice guidance to CPD requirements. In this role, I also get to see just how much colleagues and members do, whether in terms of training and events, publications, podcasts or standards.
Best practice is at the heart of RICS' purpose as a professional organisation, distilling the knowledge and experience of members so as to assure and regulate our professionalism and promote the public good through the fair and efficient operation of markets and transactions.
Given the sheer variety of members' work, the relationship between specialist practitioners and RICS' executive teams is particularly important. Whether directly contributing to expert working groups or participating in consultations, RICS members play a key role in ensuring our work remains relevant to customer needs and competitive in fast-changing markets.

Members encouraged to get involved

There are many ways you can become involved. By following RICS and sharing relevant posts on LinkedIn you support the profession; by reading *Modus by RICS* you keep up to date with the latest knowledge and events; and by using the myRICS community (*community.rics.org*) you can connect with other professionals.
Podcasts (*rics.org/podcast*) and events (*rics.org/training-events*) are also great ways of developing new insights and expertise while meeting your CPD requirements. Looking ahead, *rics.org* is set to become an even more important portal for RICS knowledge, insight and expertise as we bring this all together in one place over the course of the year.
There are also many opportunities to contribute directly to the development of best practice. Many RICS members choose to support the organisation at the regional level, fostering the professional networks that are so important.
However, there are also opportunities to share and develop expertise, whether by contributing to an expert working group or the professional group panels (PGPs). These groups are open to all. If you would like to help shape the future of the profession, you can join a board, committee or engagement group (*rics.org/contribute*) or contact *pgp@rics.org* to express your interest.
I have been heartened by the excellent response to a recent recruitment campaign for the commercial property PGP, and am pleased to see these groups have developed their mission and outputs since being established in early 2024.
RICS plays a vital role in developing and promoting best practice across the built environment, construction, land and property. Across all regions, these markets are seeing rapid changes in client requirements as well as economic growth, regulation and decarbonisation.
We will remain relevant and valuable by applying our professionalism to solve today's problems. Your expertise means that you can contribute to this future – and your membership of RICS means you can put that expertise to work.

Simon Rawlinson MRICS is chair of RICS' KPC
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Integration of datasets informs natural capital interventions

A project in the Cairngorms is building on geospatial data and mapping tools along with expertise from landowners, land managers and consultants to improve its natural capital

WORDS BY DOUGLAS MCNEIL

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND the natural capital for which they are responsible, landowners in the South Deeside–North Angus deer management group (DMG) and the Cairngorms National Park Authority began in 2022 to collaborate with a consortium of consultancies led by Caorann to carry out a landscape-scale analysis.

By applying modern geospatial sciences, the consortium – comprising EOLAS Insight, Landfor, Caledonian Climate and Omanos Analytics – identified significant opportunities for improvement by taking a holistic, data-driven approach.

Such sciences allow for real-time data collection and analysis to provide more comprehensive insights, especially at this scale. The integration of AI, predictive modelling and advanced geographical information systems (GIS), together with on-the-ground efforts and clear communication with local communities, enhances decision-making, leading to more effective and efficient natural resource management.

The consortium assessed more than 65,000ha – or 14% of the national park's area – to give the DMG and the park authority a better understanding of existing natural capital and opportunities to enhance it, as well as some of the risks in doing so.

The project aimed to consolidate the efforts of proactive landowners, giving them all the available information before they made any major decisions, such as which areas to prioritise for restoration works. Critical considerations for the consortium included the following.

- **Wildlife management:** deer are crucial to Scotland's ecological balance, and effective deer management offers benefits such as preserving environmental health, bolstering the economic stability of rural areas, promoting human well-being, and ensuring the welfare of the animals themselves. Moreover, venison offers a natural, sustainably reared and nutritious food source. In the five years to 2022, the DMG had reduced deer numbers from 13.7 to 9.7 deer per square kilometre, decreasing grazing pressures, damage to young trees and crops, and soil erosion.
- **Peatland restoration:** detailed analysis of peatland conditions across the South Deeside–North Angus area identified 8,829ha of eroded or drained peat. If this were restored, it could reduce emissions by 20,000–30,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year.
- **Woodland creation:** in line with the goal of reaching 21% woodland cover across Scotland by 2032, restoration and creation projects in South Deeside–North Angus promise benefits such as carbon sequestration, timber production, recreation, biodiversity enhancement, improved water quality and flood risk mitigation.
- **Habitat creation and biodiversity improvement:** enhancing ecological habitat networks, especially for fragmented native woodlands, offers numerous benefits. For instance, increasing riparian woodlands can significantly promote biodiversity, supporting threatened species such as Atlantic salmon by providing shaded, cooler watercourses and more stable riverbanks, and leaving fallen trees in the water to protect juvenile fish from predators.



Glen Lee, Scotland

PHOTO © CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY/ALASKA STIKOVA

Collaboration must cross boundaries

The initial stage of the project involved sourcing geospatial data and engaging closely with estates. It quickly revealed significant variations in the data available, influenced by multiple factors such as changes to funding regimes and reporting requirements over time.

This therefore emphasised the necessity of cross-boundary collaboration, which is particularly valuable for understanding wildlife movement. It is beneficial, for instance, to use tools such as the blanket bog user guide consistently to monitor what effects animals have on a landscape. Historic and current herbivore impacts affect bog structure and species composition. For example, gamekeepers or ecologists observe trampling, browsing or grazing effects on ground cover and plant indicators, gauging impact levels from 'no impact' to 'very high'. These results help predict future changes in blanket bogs and inform management decisions to meet natural capital objectives.

As the method had not been standardised in the South Deeside–North Angus area yet, the consortium realised a national-level dataset would be preferable to a localised one. Merging larger-scale datasets produced a more robust geospatial model, drawing attention to intricate interactions such as those between deer populations and restoration efforts.

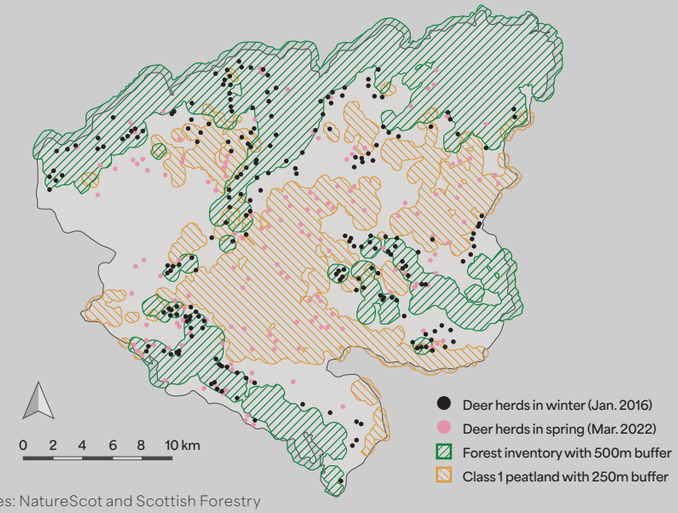
All outputs for the project served two purposes. First, they enabled quantification of existing stock along with recording landscape conditions; and second, they allowed the consortium to create opportunity maps that identify areas suitable for restoration and regeneration, emphasising the potential to increase riparian woodland, and ensure healthy peatlands and higher biodiversity.

As well as taking herbivore impact into account for restoration works, research shows that deer and other herbivores do not graze evenly across landscapes. Their distribution is influenced by shelter, access to water, the quality of vegetation, human activity, livestock grazing and habitat exclusions. Count data reveals that deer gather in lowland areas with shelter during winter, and in upland areas, especially peatland, during spring, as shown in Figure 1.

Merging diverse open datasets from government, research institutions and academic sources offered a holistic perspective on natural processes for the region. A cohort of land managers added invaluable input and guidance to this to deal with on-the-ground issues, exposing several areas where policy is unclear, data is incomplete and information is not available to support effective decision-making.

Notably, the gap between national datasets and ground surveys – particularly in data about soil types – was a challenge, as existing soil research lacks the granularity essential for estate-level decisions. Once a site has been chosen for a new natural asset, therefore, a more precise ground survey can be conducted.

Figure 1: Comparison of winter and spring deer behaviours in South Deeside-North Angus and their impact on potential types of restoration work



Sources: NatureScot and Scottish Forestry

The commercial side of restoration work was also considered. Certain sites posed financial and contract challenges when indicative woodland and peatland project costs were compared with current carbon credit values. These challenges included the cost of site access, the requirement for interventions such as fencing, the monitoring necessary for restoration works and the long-term nature of current carbon credit contracts.

While potential financial justification may improve as carbon markets mature, additional support is currently imperative. The emergence of carbon credit schemes that offer green finance is welcome, but more immediate innovations may be required to improve and protect our natural assets. Effective management of natural assets such as riparian woodlands is critical not only for maximising the financial viability of restoration projects but also for wider ecological health.

Blending metrics and maps with context on the ground is pivotal in ensuring geospatial information has a practical impact. While several tools in development – such as the NatureScot landscape-scale natural capital tool (*bit.ly/NatScotNctool*) – may help planning for this, such tools are based on datasets that do not always best represent ground conditions. Understanding the limitations and clearly communicating them to decision-makers is fundamental to project success.

Through the South Deeside–North Angus working group meetings, the main lesson learned was that, for any landscape-scale natural capital project, the most important requirement is a functional team who understand the variety of challenges faced by other groups and who are open to collaboration. In this way, decision-makers can be supported to make the most effective choices about land.

Making good decisions depends on having all the available information, representing many viewpoints and considering our landscape holistically. Although the results of the actions taken subsequently will not be felt for hundreds of years, working together offers the best chance of ensuring a positive outcome in the long term.

Douglas McNeil is managing director at EOLAS Insight
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Related competencies include:
Data management, GIS (geographical information systems)

Partners take landscape view of trees to manage flooding

To reduce flooding risk and increase resilience to climate change in West Yorkshire, the National Trust has partnered with Yorkshire Water on the tree-planting and damming project Landscapes for Water

WORDS BY CATRIONA CORMACK, KATE DIVEY-MATTHEWS, MADDI NAISH MRICS, CAROL PRENTON MRICS, SARAH WARWICK AND JESS YORKE



PHOTO © NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES

AS THE CLIMATE CHANGES, one of the challenges for those involved in land management is how to engineer the natural environment to make it more resilient to drier summers, wetter winters and an increasing number of storms.

In West Yorkshire, the National Trust and Yorkshire Water have – with the help of government agencies and NGOs – embarked on a plan to restore woodlands, install natural flood management and boost biodiversity across 5,500ha.

Over the next three years, the Landscapes for Water partnership hopes to plant an estimated 200,000 trees, comprising a mixture of broadleaf native species, including oak, rowan, birch and hawthorn. As well as providing habitat for wildlife, storing carbon and preventing peat erosion, these will reduce the likelihood of downstream flooding. They will form part of the White Rose Forest, the community forest for North and West Yorkshire, and have been funded by the Trees for Climate grant programme, part of the government's Nature for Climate Fund.

The Landscapes for Water project will also install 3,500 leaky dams, funded by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Leaky dams are a deliberate strategy to help reduce the risk of flooding by slowing water down: these will comprise a mixture of stone, willow and turf dams, which will slow the flow of water through the River Colne and Calder catchments and manage downstream flooding in a natural way.

Scheme evolves through collaboration

The project is an offshoot of National Trust and Yorkshire Water's Common Cause partnership, set up in 2018 to increase climate change resilience across both landholdings.

The first project under the Common Cause banner, Growing Resilience, installed 435 leaky dams to slow down water and reduce flooding, and planted 120,000 trees across 184ha at Gorpley reservoir in 2019 and 2020.

White Rose Forest, which is under Kirklees Council's jurisdiction, approached utility company Yorkshire Water in 2015 to discuss two separate areas of tree planting at Gorpley in Calderdale and Butterly in Kirklees. This evolved into a project with other partners including the Woodland Trust and National Trust, which had contiguous holdings next to Wessenden and land close to Gorpley.

External consultants carried out bird surveys, and there were many discussions between other stakeholders including Calderdale Council, the RSPB – due to the presence of *Linaria flavirostris* or twite, which is on the Red List in the UK – and the Environment Agency.

The National Trust was given a short-term licence to occupy the land and install natural flood management measures, for which it had secured investment from the local growth fund. The Woodland Trust was granted a 25-year lease over the area for planting and management of trees.

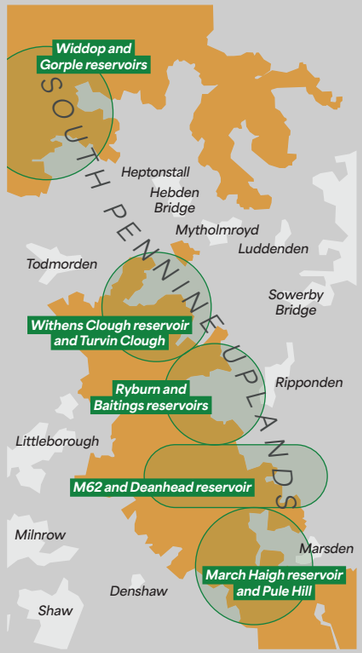
Before the first of these were planted in 2017, the land at Gorpley had become vacant and so it was not subject to any tenancy or third-party rights; neither was it in a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) or a special protection area. This meant there were fewer hoops to jump through to start planting. Relevant permissions were obtained by the Woodland Trust and the work funded by the White Rose Forest.

Partners aim to build on initial success

Aiming to expand on the effectiveness of this joint project, Yorkshire Water and the National Trust committed to a formal partnership and drew up a draft agreement for the Landscapes for Water proposal the following year. The initial plan was to install 7,000 leaky dams and plant 950ha of trees, from Heptonstall Moor in the north down to Marsden Moor in the south, as seen in Figure 1.

Yorkshire Water had already been in touch with some of its tenants in these areas to discuss possible tree planting, and consulted them again about this specific programme of work and the area that had been tentatively mapped for woodland.

Figure 1: Moorland restoration covers 5,500ha shown by the shaded shapes



Due to the size of the area, the project was broken into five phases to make it easier to consult the tenants or stakeholders in turn. Surveys for peat, vegetation and birds were carried out by different external consultants at each site, and survey data was considered for fish and other wildlife as well, which again helped to inform mapping.

Land that had been classed as containing deep peat, sensitive vegetation – namely grassland fungi – or rare bird habitat had to be discounted. The woodland design was thus informed by surveys of each of these, as well as by the initial assessment of impact report and landscape character assessment.

The first two areas of focus were Baitings – the land around Ryburn and Baitings reservoirs – owned by Yorkshire Water, and March Haigh and Pule Hill, owned by the National Trust. The project was scheduled to start in 2021/22, but first there were a number of challenges to overcome.

Land user feedback influences plans

The Landscapes for Water project area includes land under either farming tenancies or grazing commoners. Consultation with tenants and commoners has been essential throughout the design and development process, and has significantly shaped the overall plans.

Consultation has been essential throughout the design and development process, and has significantly shaped the overall plans

As well as permission for tree planting, the need for fencing also had to be negotiated and agreed with tenants, along with any gates or stiles that were required. Where fencing was necessary on the common, consent was also required from the secretary of state for the environment, food and rural affairs before carrying out the work.

While we found that most tenants and commoners were happy to consider tree planting in some form, their feedback was essential when it came to designing a scheme that worked for everyone and allowed them to continue sustainable farming. In some cases, this involved removing land parcels from the scheme, creating gaps at key access points, or changing the shape of parcels to help stock gathering.

After the surveys were carried out, we consulted again with tenants and commoners, and remapped land parcels on the Rural Land Register because fencing had been erected and land use was changing.

To avoid double funding, land that was subject to tree planting had to be removed from existing or new agri-environment schemes. Support for these pockets of land had to be guaranteed through the Trees for Climate funding so that the tenants were sure that they wouldn't be financially disadvantaged by switching to planting.

Tenants have been wary of removing land from existing schemes, however, because it isn't certain whether the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) will try to claw back previous payments. This is because Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) obligations – from which such land currently gains funding – would no longer be met. ▸

Funding complicates tenant agreement

At Baitings, negotiations were led by a chartered surveyor for Yorkshire Water who contacted every tenant farmer in the first instance. All of the proposed land was tenanted, but there were no sporting tenancies or third-party shooting rights, and no commons in the first phase.

The area included four tenants. Some have more than one tenancy, and one was not keen on tree planting initially but gradually became more interested. However, when the final mapping was presented, the proposed planting areas could not be agreed and therefore this area was removed from the scheme.

A second tenant had been willing from the outset and readily agreed to all the mapping changes. Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty that would result from removing the parcels from the HLS, the planting in this area is on hold at the time of writing, but will continue when we are clear that the stewardship funding will not be jeopardised.

A third tenant had also extended the period of their HLS scheme, but they were confident that removing these parcels from stewardship would not have a detrimental effect on this. The fourth tenant in this area had decided not to extend their HLS and started looking into Countryside Stewardship (CS) options instead. This meant that splitting the land parcels was relatively straightforward.

An understanding agent acted on behalf of the last two tenants, liaising closely between them and the RPA, while our project landscape architect sorted out the mapping.

The tenant agent managed to split all the proposed tree planting parcels, including all the new fencing, with the RPA. These areas were remapped so that some of the original parcels stayed as they were and the rest were put into the planting scheme. This enabled the woodland application for this area of 21ha and 31,000 trees to progress. Planting has been carried out in two phases: the first was in spring last year while the second was planted this spring.



Community tree planting as part of Landscapes for Water project

Because these land parcels were split for tree planting, the tenant could not enter the areas into a new CS, thus missing out on future payments. To ensure that tenants are not penalised for tree planting, forgone income was roughly calculated from 15 years' worth of CS payments, covering the agreed maintenance period in the woodland schemes. This avoids double funding, but means that tenants nevertheless receive income on this land from Landscapes for Water, using funding from the White Rose Forest grants.

The tree-funding schemes have a built-in element of natural capital contributions that have been used as part of the forgone income. However, these initial two areas would not have been satisfactorily compensated, so Yorkshire Water made up the shortfall.

In all, the process of getting tenants' agreement just for this one area has taken five years. Most have chosen to have the planting area as part of their tenancy, meaning this and all future responsibilities for it will revert to them at the end of the 15-year maintenance period.

Works at Baitings

7ha

7ha of trees planted and 39 dams installed at time of writing at Ryburn and Baitings reservoirs, extending existing woodland edges around these and new habitats on the moorland edge

250

250 leaky dams for natural flood management in a variety of constructions, including turf or peat, willow and stone, planned by end of this year

4.5ha

Additional 4.5ha of woodland planting on tenanted land under an HLS agreement is on hold due to uncertainties around RPA clawback

Professionals support commoner body

The Marsden Moor Estate, which is owned by National Trust but is also common land, is a 2,300ha SSSI and a special protection area, as well as a special area of conservation due to the ground-nesting bird population and blanket bog habitat.

The active commoners' association comprises around 15 members, six of whom currently exercise their grazing rights. March Haigh and Pule Hill fall into the same common, CL39, with different commons graziers involved in each, and the Landscape for Water partnership has planted 63ha of trees there. All graziers were consulted as the plans were developed, and their feedback on the woodland design was taken into account.

The land was under two HLS agreements that came to an end in 2023. The RPA offered the option to extend the agreement for a further five years to the Marsden Moor Commoners' Association. However, the inability to remove areas from the scheme at the point of extension would have meant that the tree planting could not go ahead.

The National Trust's rural surveyor and farm adviser were key to dealing with this challenge, and helped to identify a way forward. Working with Natural England, they realised that a new CS scheme would be more lucrative for the commoners' association, and this would allow the remapping of parcels and the removal of tree-planting areas from the stewardship scheme so the woodland creation could proceed. The White Rose Forest provided an element of income-forgone funding through the planting scheme, to ensure that the association didn't lose out because the planted areas would not be part of the CS scheme.

The project also wanted to avoid fencing as much as possible; however, a small amount was necessary to prevent sheep entering the planted parcel on Pule Hill. This required a further consultation process and an application to the secretary of state for the environment, food and rural affairs for consent to fence on the common.

For the main area of planting, the decision was made to work with the cattle grazier to use NoFence collars to keep livestock out of planting areas, rather than put up fencing. This is expected to benefit the land, by directing cattle to graze target areas, as well as the grazier, because the NoFence system also means that they can monitor the animals more closely.

PHOTOS © NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES



Community tree planting near Ryburn reservoir

Works at March Haigh and Pule Hill

63ha

63ha of trees planted in cloughs around moorland edge and western flank of Pule Hill

1,200

1,200 leaky dams planned by the end of this year for natural flood management, using turf or peat, willow and stone among other material; 328 dams installed at the time of writing

Bracken growth monitored in first year to target treatment of problem areas the next, reducing chemical use as much as possible; contractors and volunteers to carry out further cutting and bashing of bracken to deplete the rhizome store until trees are established

Pragmatism and engagement fostered

Working together can take special effort, overcoming differences of culture and managing joint resources; over four years, though, we have learned to play to our strengths.

We now know that it's important to aim high in terms of scope, as land parcels are apt to be curtailed over time when survey results identify areas in need of protection, or plans change to accommodate the needs of farmers and graziers.

For instance, while the first Landscapes for Water proposal covered 7,000 leaky dams and 950ha of tree planting, the final proposition has been scaled down to provide 3,500 leaky dams and 350ha of trees.

Early communication with tenants has been vital, as they can have many and complex reasons for wanting to steer planners towards certain land parcels for planting. Complicated calculations are also often necessary before they can approve the work in principle.

Tenants are paid directly by the RPA, which will only deal with them as they are the agreement holders. This means that, if a tenant has to amend land parcels, they have to pay a rural surveyor; but then there may be an agreement for the costs to be covered from the project.

If you are considering a similar programme where there are many tenancies, remember payment schemes are a big part of tenant agreements: will proposed work affect current arrangements? Can tenants transfer to another scheme? If forfeited income is more than the scheme offers – or there is a gap between schemes – who will make up the shortfall?

Make sure you engage key statutory bodies early too, as their support is vital in completing paperwork and gaining permissions. Not all individuals interpret the legislation in the same way, and building relationships is important so applications aren't held up or denied.

Large-scale work such as this project is vital to protect the unique habitats, wildlife and communities of the South Pennines. Yorkshire Water and the National Trust are among the county's largest landowners, and have a responsibility to restore our uplands while helping tenants use the land sustainably.

For more must-read articles, visit *ww3.rics.org/land-journal*

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For further key sector insights, visit *ww3.rics.org/land-journal*

Land and natural resources standards and guidance

Recently published

***Land agreements for development purposes* professional standard, UK, 1st edition**
Landowners, prospective purchasers, developers and land promoters often enter into agreements for the right to promote or the option to purchase or develop land long before planning permission is granted. However, these agreements are complex and have significant implications for land prices, requiring surveyors to provide extensive, up-to-date advice.

This standard therefore aims to ensure RICS members offer the best guidance on the available agreement types in this evolving and often opaque area of practice.

***Surveyors acting in respect of compulsory purchase and statutory compensation* professional standard, UK, 2nd edition**
This important update contains 21 mandatory expectations for professional behaviour and competence, to ensure fairness for all parties involved in this complex and emotive issue.

***Impact of carbon markets on the rural economy* practice information, UK, 1st edition**
This document provides a comprehensive overview of the way global carbon markets create new opportunities and challenges for British agriculture, forestry and the valuation profession. It aims to raise awareness of diverse soil carbon sequestration projects (SCSPs) and their potential to give landowners incentives to engage.

By examining ways to connect SCSPs with finance and exploring stakeholders' perspectives, the practice information outlines potential valuation methods for rural assets with carbon projects. Including examples such as the UK Woodland Carbon Code, it highlights the complexities of such markets and encourages a collaborative approach to valuing natural resources.

Forthcoming publications

***RICS International Land Performance Framework* practice information, global, 1st edition**
The framework will focus on holistic land performance measurement, drawing on the International Land Measurement Standard and the International Building Operation Standard and aiming to support development of metrics to assess performance in land use.

***Affordable housing developments – valuation considerations* professional standard, UK, 1st edition**
With this area of practice being highly regulated and subject to changes in policy as well as support from housing associations and others, the standard aims to help those who are valuing land for affordable housing.

***Party wall legislation and procedure* professional standard, England and Wales, 8th edition**
The new edition will include several important case law outcomes and enhanced appendices, revised letters of appointment and terms and conditions, as well as an updated template award. It will also address fee-related regulatory and conduct issues, the use of the third surveyor in dispute resolution, and best-practice examples for serving notices.

***Flooding and its implications for the built and natural environment* practice information, global, 1st edition**
Severe weather events, including floods, are becoming more frequent. As risks evolve, so too do public perception and market implications. RICS is committed to keeping members up to date on climate resilience and serving the public interest, and this document will give them a detailed framework for understanding and addressing flooding throughout the property life cycle.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

UK & Ireland compulsory purchase and compensation competence module

RICS has updated this introductory training package to incorporate the second edition of *Surveyors advising in respect of compulsory purchase and statutory compensation* professional standard, along with a new module focusing on the soft skills required to ensure professionalism in this complex area of practice.

To find out more about this and other courses, please visit *rics.org/training-events*

Conferences

Scottish rural conference, October 2025

Planning and development conference, October 2025

Global land and property conference (online only), November 2025

Telecoms conference, November 2025

Dates are provisional, please check *rics.org/conferences* for updates.



SHUTTERSTOCK

PGP chair's message

We must raise profile to attract specialist talent



PANEL CHAIR DAVID SANDBROOK FRICS

The meetings of the land and natural resources professional group panel (PGP) have emphasised the broad range of technical skills and markets served by our part of the profession. Even within our small group, there has been a growing appreciation of the diversity of what we do.

However, this raises the important question of how we recruit into our specialist areas if we are not broadcasting what we do, showcasing successful role models and highlighting the qualification pathways.

Despite the variety of jobs in the sector – which range from boundary disputes to Ordnance Survey mapping, from arable farms to solar farms, from environmental audits to development appraisals, from high-speed railways to quarries – the common denominator is the need for us to attract new talent into the profession.

As such, we have started collating data on current numbers of RICS members who are working in land and natural resources, as well as the accredited courses available for each qualification pathway. We will then benchmark membership levels and address gaps in the course offering.

We need to broadcast what we do and showcase successful role models to recruit into our specialisms

Recognising the need to raise awareness of our profession to appeal to new talent, I was delighted that RICS' early engagement team recently visited a working quarry in Staffordshire operated by Holcim. They discussed with chartered mineral surveyors their roles in acquiring land and resources, securing planning permission, managing restoration and engaging with stakeholders such as regulators, technical consultants, NGOs and local residents.

We then visited the stunning National Memorial Arboretum nearby, which was once a Tarmac quarry and has now been restored into this landmark centre of remembrance (see left). The team left with a greater appreciation of the roles and opportunities for members in the minerals sector.

This all goes to show that RICS has a major role to play in recognising the ongoing contribution of members – and attracting fresh talent into this part of our profession.



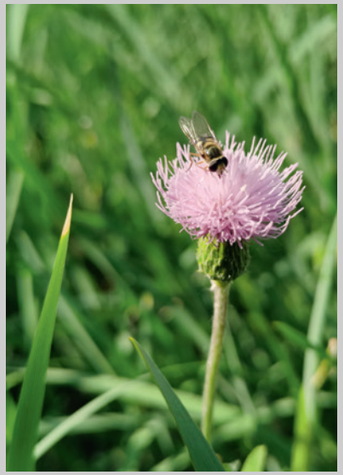
RICS' early engagement team recently visited the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, a restored sand and gravel quarry

NEWS IN BRIEF

Code supports power installations

RICS is proud to endorse the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers' new cross-industry code of practice *Rights over land for electricity infrastructure*. This aims to provide best-practice guidance to balance the rights and interests of the licence-holders who install and operate such infrastructure and the landowners who are affected by such equipment.

The code aligns with the UK government's objectives of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and ensuring energy security through cleaner, cheaper power generation.
rics.org/land



RICS offers policy input

RICS has responded to a range of government and policy consultations this year, on subjects such as planning reform, brownfield passports and the so-called grey belt. Other topics include undersea cable security, new towns and compulsory purchase.

We also continue to engage with members, policymakers and other industry bodies across our sectors on issues related to biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality.

Court uses discretion on ADR clause

While recent litigation demonstrates that courts are willing to support contracted dispute resolution provisions, one case shows they can still exercise discretion in enforcing such clauses

WORDS BY CORINNA WHITTLE



GETTY

AS PARTIES LOOK to the end of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements, with the 25–30-year terms coming to an end, we are seeing an increase in disputes over the project agreements and related contracts.

With many parties being involved in some projects, proceedings can be complicated – and this can be made more complex by the operation of potentially different alternative dispute resolution (ADR) clauses in the various contracts.

Clause's enforceability scrutinised

Construction contracts often contain provisions requiring the parties to follow ADR processes before either of them can commence proceedings relating to a dispute, whether that is litigation or arbitration. These ADR clauses might oblige parties to complete a single process, such as mediation, or a series of escalating measures.

The Technology and Construction Court (TCC) once again had to consider the principles relevant to determining the enforceability of an ADR clause, and whether it should in fact be enforced, in *Lancashire Schools SPC Phase 2 Ltd v Lendlease Construction (Europe) Ltd and Others* [2024] EWHC 37 (TCC) (*bit.ly/LancsLend2024*).

In making its decision, the court exercised its discretion, and had to balance the public policy interest in upholding the parties' commercial agreement and the overriding objective of assisting the parties to resolve their dispute, dealing with the case justly and at a proportionate cost.

PFI company issues claims

The claimant, the Lancashire Schools PFI company, entered into a project agreement with the local authority to design, build and maintain a school. This project agreement was for phase 2, but there were similar agreements in place for other phases.

The PFI company entered into a building contract with the first defendant, building contractor Lendlease Construction (Europe) Limited, and a facilities management (FM) contract with the third defendant, Equans Buildings Limited. Both contracts were interlinked, with the rights and obligations arising under the project agreement.

The building contractor's parent company, Lendlease Construction Holdings (Europe) Limited, is the second defendant, and the local authority, Lancashire County Council, is the fourth; the latter had complained of alleged defects in the school, and notified the PFI company that it intended to make deductions from the payments that were due under the project agreement.

The PFI company brought proceedings against the building contractor, its parent company and the FM contractor for breach of contract. It subsequently amended its claim to include the local authority as the fourth defendant, seeking a declaration that if there were no breach of contract by either of the contractors then there was no defect, and thus that the council could make no deductions. As the TCC stated, 'the claim against the [local authority] is an attempt by [the claimant] to position itself so that no ultimate liability sits with it'.

Before the main proceedings, the local authority made an application to set aside service of the claim form against it under Civil Procedure Rules (CPR) 11(1)(b) and 11(6)(b); or, alternatively, for the claim against it to be struck out pursuant to CPR 3.4(2)(a). Therefore, the local authority was the applicant in this instance, and the claimant, the PFI company, was the respondent.

Essentially, the local authority contended that the court should decline to exercise any jurisdiction over the claim, or instead strike it out, on the grounds that it was brought in breach of a contractual requirement that all disputes would first have to be determined by means of adjudication.

Judgments consulted on granting stay

The TCC first considered the legal authorities on ADR provisions in some detail, concluding that it would follow the combined effect of the judgments in *Ohpen Operations UK Ltd v Invesco Fund Managers Ltd* [2019] EWHC 2246 (TCC) (*bit.ly/OhpenInves2019*) and *Kajima Construction Europe (UK) Ltd v Children's Ark Partnership Ltd* [2023] EWCA Civ 292 (*bit.ly/KajArk2023*).

In short, if the court were to grant a stay the following principles would have to be met.

- The agreement must create an enforceable obligation requiring parties engage in ADR.
- The ADR process to be followed need not be formal, but must be sufficiently clear and certain by reference to objective criteria.
- The court has discretion to stay proceedings commenced in breach of an enforceable ADR procedure or agreement, having regard to both the public policy interest in upholding commercial agreements and furthering the overriding objective to help parties resolve their disputes.

The TCC agreed that, as concluded in *Kajima*, an ADR provision did not need to be a condition precedent; it was sufficient if it were mandatory and enforceable. However, if it were found to be a condition precedent then this would satisfy the requirement, and would therefore still be an appropriate issue for the court to consider.

The legal authorities on the court's discretion were next considered, with the TCC concluding that it was not bound to grant a stay even where there were a mandatory ADR provision, with each case depending on its own facts.

The court had discretion to order a stay of the proceedings pending adjudication, or to grant other relief. The utility, or practical value, of the requirement to follow the dispute resolution process should be considered.

Adjudication held condition precedent

After the legal authorities had been considered, the following questions fell to be decided by the court.

- Does the completion of an adjudication constitute a condition precedent to the right to pursue legal proceedings? If not, is the requirement to adjudicate at least mandatory and enforceable?
- How should the court exercise its discretion in relation to its jurisdiction, under CPR 11, and should the court strike out the proceedings, under CPR 3.4?
- What orders should be made?

A condition precedent is a requirement or event that must occur before a subsequent event or situation can happen. In simple terms a party agrees to do X, subject to the other party doing Y. In this case, the alleged condition precedent was that the right to litigate was conditional on an adjudication having already taken place.

The TCC concluded that it was 'wholly satisfied that adjudication is a condition ▸

precedent to litigation … before one party may start legal proceedings against the other, it must first have adjudicated the dispute'. The court relied on the use of 'shall' in the ADR provision and the fact that the court's jurisdiction was 'subject to' this provision.

In any event, even if the judge were wrong about it being a condition precedent, the requirement to adjudicate first was mandatory and the process itself clear and certain, and therefore enforceable.

Discretion used to let claim proceed

The main point of interest from *Lancashire Schools* was whether the court should exercise its discretion to proceed with the claim, regardless of the mandatory provision in the project agreement.

Perhaps surprisingly – at least to many practitioners – the TCC considered it inappropriate to make an order staying or striking out the proceedings, choosing to exercise its discretion to proceed with the claim.

In summarising its reasons for declining to enforce the ADR provision, the court acknowledged the burden should be on the party that was not following the provision to show why it was not doing so.

The court's principal reasons for declining to enforce the provision can be summarised as follows.

- This is essentially a multi-party dispute, and it was 'very doubtful' that a bilateral adjudication between the local authority and the PFI company would satisfactorily resolve matters. Although the ADR provision allowed for other parties to make submissions, this might be difficult to apply and could lead to procedural complications. There was a significant risk that adjudication would 'achieve little' and that any decision would be challenged.
- A stay for adjudication would be likely to delay the progress of the phase 2 litigation, and potentially affect litigation related to other phases as well. The ultimate disposal of the proceedings would in turn probably be delayed, contrary to the overriding objective. None of the other parties had insisted on an adjudication.
- The consequences of the court refusing a stay are less significant than they might first appear; if the present application were dismissed, the local authority would still be free to begin its own adjudication, now or in the future.
- Ordering a stay could have a negative impact on the ongoing multi-party mediation, by 'sending the dispute between the [PFI company] and the [local authority] down a different track'. All parties should be participating in the mediation for it to have a chance at succeeding.

In addition, the TCC held that it was not an abuse of process for the PFI company to have commenced proceedings against the local authority before referring the dispute to adjudication. If it were, the court would still not strike out the claim, having regard to the overriding objective of dealing with a case justly and at proportionate cost, and given the reasons already mentioned.

The court dismissed the application for a stay – which would pause the proceedings and allow the process in the ADR clause to be followed, keeping the claim alive – or to strike it out, which would essentially end the claim, despite the proceedings being brought in breach of a condition precedent. Having done so, the court made no orders.

Contract clarity key despite outcome

It is perhaps surprising that the court decided not to give effect to an ADR provision that was found to be both mandatory and sufficiently certain to be enforceable, as well as being a condition precedent. However, this decision clearly turned on the specific facts of the case itself, in particular the practical value in enforcing the ADR provision – or the lack thereof.

We can expect the courts to continue enforcing commercial agreements in the form of ADR clauses freely entered into

We can expect the courts to continue enforcing commercial agreements in the form of ADR clauses that have been freely entered into, unless there are compelling reasons not to; the circumstances in which a court declines to enforce an ADR clause of this type will continue to be limited.

Parties should follow the ADR provision in their contracts unless there is good reason not to do so, such as a limitation period being close to expiring. Those who choose not to adhere to the contractual provision still run the risk of a court ordering a stay – or, worse, striking out the claim.

The court, again, emphasised the need for clarity in the wording of ADR provisions, to ensure that they are deemed mandatory and enforceable, even if not a condition precedent. Failure to implement a dispute process correctly, although unlikely to be the end of a claim, could lead to a dispute in itself – involving additional time and money for those concerned, as seen in this case.

Therefore, when entering into a contract, ensure that any clauses are clearly drafted and then follow the procedure to the letter. If you are unable to do so, be prepared to justify that decision to save your claim.

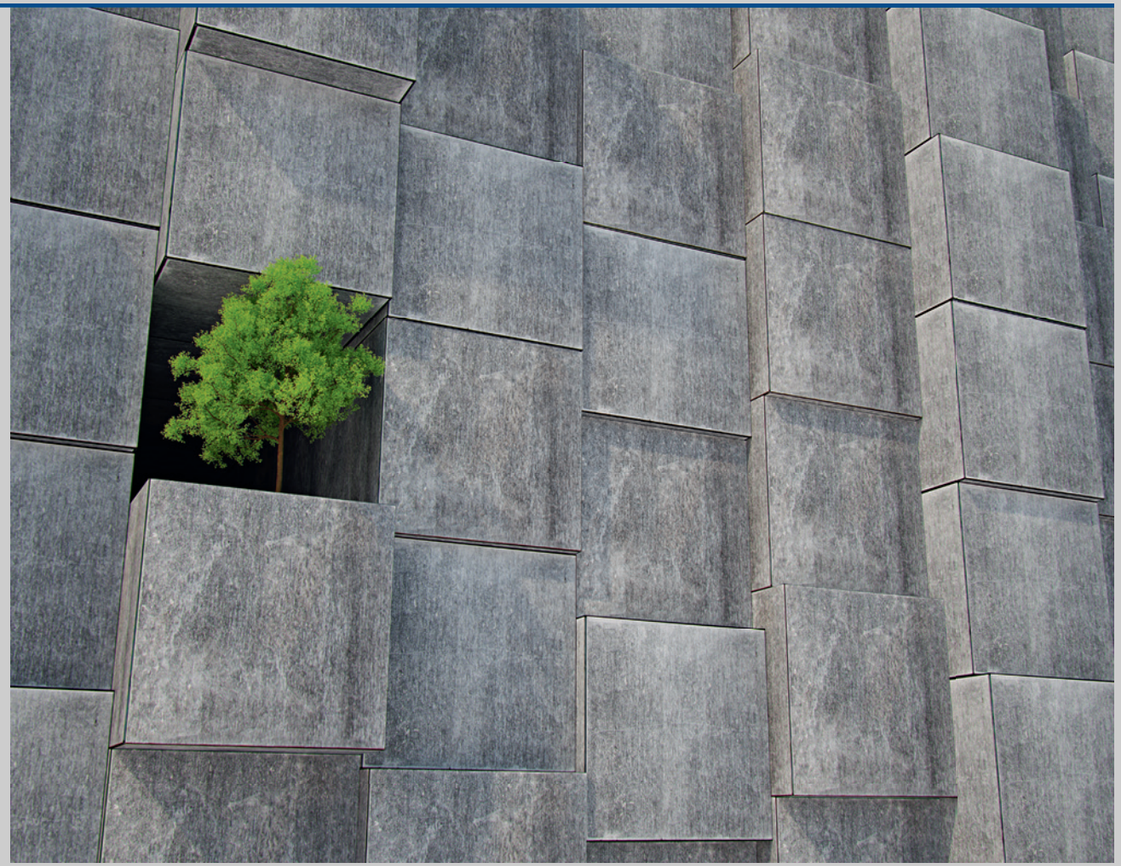
While in this case the court agreed with the claimant and exercised its discretion in dismissing the local authority's application, it was influenced by the specific facts of the case; in other circumstances, a court might nevertheless order a stay.

Corinna Whittle is a construction knowledge lawyer at TLT
corinna.whittle@tlt.com

Related competencies include:
Conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures, Contract practice, Legal/regulatory compliance

Case offers lessons for ADR clauses

- Wording of ADR provisions, including the deadline, requirements and consequences, must be clear.
- Parties should follow any such provisions in their contract.
- A valid condition precedent will usually be enforced by the court.
- The court might exercise its discretion and disregard a condition precedent if there is good reason to do so, in particular to further the overriding objective and help parties resolve disputes.



GETTY

Repeat assessment informs whole-life carbon reduction

The adoption of a flagship RICS standard is enabling carbon to be tracked throughout the construction process - and across the industry

WORDS BY RACHEL THOMPSON MRICS

INCREASINGLY RECOGNISED AS the authoritative document for calculating, reducing and reporting carbon in construction and infrastructure, RICS' *Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment* (WLCA) professional standard (*rics.org/wlca*) is the most prescriptive and robust methodology for carbon calculations available.

It includes practices and behaviours intended to protect clients and other stakeholders, as well as ensuring that their reasonable expectations of ethics, integrity, technical competence and diligence are all met. Indeed, when I tell our clients at RPS that we run calculations using RICS' WLCA standard I can see their confidence grow, as they know that our figures are grounded in a respected framework.

Repeat assessment ensures rigour

One key feature of the standard is its emphasis on repetition. Whereas many carbon ▸

assessments treat each project as unique, the RICS standard recognises the value of learning from repeated action.

The process lets us make informed decisions, helping to refine carbon reduction targets, design selection, construction methods, financial impacts and project management. With clear and accurate insights into a building's carbon hotspots, we can identify where we can make reductions and where they will have the greatest impact.

The RICS framework is modular, allowing for in-depth analysis of results under separate, easily identifiable sections. Module A looks at upfront embodied carbon, B focuses on operations, repair and maintenance, C is centred on waste and end-of-life scenarios, and finally module D looks to encompass aspects that formally fall outside a project scope, such as exported energy.

By repeatedly applying the various modules of the standard across different project stages and types, we can collect meaningful data that influences market choices, manufacturing practices, project costs and programmes. The assessment data already feeds into a number of databases, such as the Built Environment Carbon Database (*becd.co.uk*).

By identifying hotspots early, we can make informed design decisions to reduce carbon impact

Another example of collaboration can be seen in the pilot UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard (*nzcbuildings.co.uk*), which was published in October. Supported by industry stakeholders including RICS, this operational, performance-based standard emphasises the need for a whole-life carbon assessor before net-zero status can be claimed, which makes understanding of the assessment process even more relevant.

Embodied carbon gauged at concept

We begin at the concept-stage design, focusing on the building's appearance, orientation, size, ground conditions and basic materials – for instance, steel or concrete frames, and composite or built-up facade systems.

At this early stage, details such as the main contractor, material suppliers and exact quantities are often unknown, requiring us to make educated guesses. This uncertainty is an accepted part of the process, which is why RICS' standard provides baseline information to use for this stage.

These specifications cover carbon associated with commonly used materials, transportation distances, waste metrics and material lifespans, enabling design consultants to make informed assumptions about the project's carbon footprint even in the absence of detailed designs.

This early concept assessment is crucial for identifying potential carbon quantities in the design. It provides a robust baseline and framework, allowing us to advise clients on the financial impacts or benefits that may arise from a lower-carbon building. By identifying hotspots early, we can make informed design decisions to reduce carbon impact.

This process allows us to test various design options and materials over a 60- or 120-year time frame, depending on the project type. In this context, it is vital to consider material lifespans using reference study periods (RSPs).

For instance, when working on distribution centres we typically design industrial hardstandings that have a lifespan of 30 years. However, when we evaluate this design over a 60-year RSP instead, we realise that we may need to replace a significant portion of the yard during the building's life cycle, which would incur additional carbon costs in terms of materials and labour.

Conversely, designing for a lifespan of 60 years from the outset – typically requiring a 20–30% increase in pavement thickness – can eliminate the need for such replacement, leading to substantial carbon reductions over the building life cycle, despite a higher initial embodied carbon score.

Contractors collaborate throughout

This brings us to the technical-stage assessment in the standard, at which point we update our reports and showcase to our clients and other stakeholders the design choices that we have made to reduce carbon.

By this time, intricate design details have been finalised and a main contractor has usually been appointed. This stage is critical for discussing strategies to keep carbon low and focus on the supply chain. Specifying materials with excellent carbon scores is futile if these are not readily available from manufacturers or come without environmental product declarations (EPDs).

Once we complete the technical-stage assessment, we can compare it with the concept stage. This comparison reveals whether our design choices have been successfully implemented, how much carbon we have saved and, most importantly, why these changes occurred.

We collaborate with the main contractor and supply chain throughout the construction stage, maintaining ongoing discussions about carbon impacts. However, challenges inevitably arise on construction projects: supply chains may falter or material prices may fluctuate, for instance.

Sometimes value engineering may also have been carried out, proposing a change in product, manufacturer or material quantities without anyone checking whether this results in a higher or lower carbon output – or indeed checking whether an EPD exists for the new product. There can also be unforeseen issues such as inclement weather, which can cause delays or additional carbon costs.

On a more positive note, innovation at technical and construction stages can lead to new products or methods being used on site, and the main contractor may do everything possible to reduce the carbon associated with running a project.

Comparisons can benefit all projects

The most accurate estimate of the overall whole-life carbon for a project is only possible on completion, which is where the construction-stage assessment comes into play.

At this point, we have robust figures for the quantities of everything purchased, the amounts of carbon required to run the project, supplier details and material travel distances. We can directly compare this with the technical-stage assessment, identifying where design and contractor choices have succeeded or failed, and understanding the reasons why.

Repetition is not just limited to the project; it is ongoing across every WLCA carried out. This enables understanding of carbon impacts not only at design stages but also at a company level, and it in turn feeds into larger databases such as BECD. As a national source of information this can then be used to benchmark other, future projects, leading to carbon savings and reductions across the UK.

This is the most useful aspect of the WLCA, and it's only through repeat application at different stages that we can achieve these insights. Understanding why something has happened enables us to identify and address problems effectively, allowing us to pinpoint issues with and implement meaningful changes on a project.

Therefore, while completing a WLCA is a great start, one assessment is not enough. Without assessments at each of the stages mentioned above, accurate claims of a reduction in carbon cannot be made. This is particularly critical when the only assessment is made at the construction stage. Where this is the case, the opportunity to make meaningful changes and reductions has by this point been missed.

WLCA is not just a tool; it's a vital framework for understanding and reducing carbon in our projects. By embracing repetition and collaboration, we can make informed decisions that help us to create a lower-carbon built environment.

For more must-read articles, visit *ww3.rics.org/construction-journal*



GETTY

Rachel Thompson MRICS is a sustainability consultant at RPS, a Tetra Tech company
rpsgroup.com/about-us/contacts/rachel-thompson

Related competencies include: Sustainability



Construction standards and guidance

Forthcoming consultation

Global construction standards

We are preparing an update to the body of knowledge for quantity surveyors and project managers and would value feedback on the draft document during our consultation this summer - please look out for details of this launching.

While we are not consulting on the associated practice information, this guidance material will still form part of the overall publication later this year. We will be arranging a series of webinars and podcasts to support implementation of the changes.

This update will also be of interest to those preparing for their APC in quantity surveying, who will need to demonstrate their competency in the subject areas covered.

For further key sector insights, visit ***ww3.rics.org/construction-journal***

NEWS IN BRIEF

Webinar looks at skills gap

With a growing number of insolvencies in the construction industry, surveyors need to be aware of the risks involved. A May webinar brought together experts to explore measures that are proving effective in managing construction projects and skills in the face of ongoing challenges. The panel also assessed what could be done to support the pipeline of labour and skills.
To listen to a recording of the event, please visit ***rics.org/training-events***

Industry use of AI discussed

AI is becoming increasingly relevant to quantity surveying and cost management, and a recent tech partner video explored the issues. To watch the interview with Dr Bola Abisogun and Patrick King from AI-QS please visit *rics.org/news-insights*. Other tech partner programme materials are available at *rics.org/techpartner*.

WLCA adoptions on the rise

The second edition of RICS' *Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment* (WLCA) professional standard is receiving considerable attention globally, with a number of organisations and bodies adopting it for their projects and programmes (see also pp.67-69). The standard and supporting resources are available at *rics.org/wlca*.



SHUTTERSTOCK

PGP chair's message



Surveyors will support UK energy transition

PANEL CHAIR ROGER ESSON MRICS

When people think of the built environment, they often picture residential or commercial construction. Having worked in engineering construction for most of my career, though, I see it as far more expansive: it includes large-scale infrastructure such as nuclear, oil and gas, renewable energy and carbon capture, for instance. Surveying professionals are integral to all this.

I was therefore delighted to join the Net Zero, Energy & Sustainability Forum, an initiative launched last year by RICS Scotland and chaired by Prof. Norman McLennan. This brings together surveying professionals with a shared interest in sustainability and energy transition across Scotland and beyond.

The recent announcement that the head office of Great British Energy – the government's new clean energy company – will be based in Aberdeen is a significant recognition of the expertise built up in more than 50 years in the city dubbed 'the energy capital of Europe'. The workforce who has powered the UK has quietly contributed to major infrastructure in roles such as project management, cost engineering, contracts management, procurement and others. These same skills will be vital in shaping our energy future.

In the oil and gas sector, we categorise activities as upstream, midstream and downstream operations, which relate respectively to exploration and production of energy, transportation and storage, and readying for consumption. Increasingly, I see the same structure applying to renewable energy, where surveyors and other professionals will be essential to multi-billion-pound projects.

- **Upstream:** the government estimates that energy generation from wind turbines, wave and tidal energy, solar farms and geothermal sites will require more than £50bn in capital investment by 2030.
- **Midstream:** energy transmission and storage, including batteries and grid infrastructure, will need direct investments of £58bn in electricity networks, according to the National Energy System Operator.
- **Downstream:** with a view to enhancing domestic energy efficiency, the cost of installing low-carbon heating in homes will be £162bn by 2050, the National Audit Office estimates.

Looking back at the last major energy transition, before which 80% of homes relied on coal-fuelled open fires, more than 40,000 engineers were employed to convert 13m appliances to run on gas in 14m homes over a decade. Yet in September 2024, only 38,000 renewable heating systems had been installed over the previous 12 months. The scale of change required is immense.

As the UK advances in its energy transition, oil and gas will still remain a key part of the mix for decades. Firms represented by the UK Offshore Energies Association are spending many billions in capital and operations, and this stresses the need to balance domestic production with expansion of renewables.

Government action is critical to support this – clear policies, stable investment frameworks and strategic reskilling of the workforce must be prioritised. The expertise developed in oil and gas will be invaluable in building the infrastructure needed for renewables, and surveying professionals will help ensure the UK builds a resilient, secure and sustainable energy system fit for the future.



PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Conferences

Global construction and infrastructure conference - June 2025
This one-day event, themed around sustainable construction and infrastructure in a changing world, is free to attend for RICS members as part of their CPD support pack.

To find out more about this and other events, please visit ***rics.org/conferences***

Training course

Certificate in whole-life carbon assessment
This course will enable you to understand RICS' *Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment* (WLCA) professional standard, and ensure an assessment complies with it.

To find out more about this and other training courses, please visit ***rics.org/training-events***

Member services

RICS membership brings industry recognition and enhanced professional opportunities. It also gives you access to a wide range of services and benefits, offering support throughout your career

Transformed member space

The transformation of the dedicated members' space in the London office reflects our commitment to being an experience-led organisation, with spaces that inspire collaboration, connectivity and wellbeing for colleagues, members and visitors to our headquarters.

The new spaces are free to visit without pre-booking – members should simply register with reception on arrival.

Located on the second floor, the new member lounge includes a variety of facilities tailored to meet diverse needs:

- collaboration zones: open spaces designed for networking
- private booths: suitable for confidential conversations and focused work
- quiet areas: dedicated spaces for concentration and focus



- enhanced meeting spaces: more dedicated rooms equipped for hybrid collaboration
- modern video conferencing: all meeting rooms have Microsoft Teams video conferencing capabilities
- complimentary refreshments: free tea and coffee available
- contemplation room: a space for reflection and relaxation.





KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Did you know that when you visit the London HQ or Birmingham and connect to the wifi you will have full access to Property Week, Building and RICS isurv content? This is a great perk that will allow you to try these resources out, catch up on some CPD or research a particular topic that is relevant to the area in which you practice.

If you have a particular legal point you are researching then Fiona Fogden, the Knowledge and Information Services Manager, may be able to help you. Our licence to Westlaw UK may not be directly available to you but we have terms that allow us to search it on your behalf and send extracts to you. More about legal resources is available at rics.org/legalresources

SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST

LionHeart: no problem faced alone

Surveyors are people, not just professionals doing a job, and they are not immune to any of life's challenges, from ill health and job loss to financial hardship, bereavement or mental health crises.

LionHeart's mission is a commitment that no RICS professional should face a problem alone. With demand for help up by 100% in the past five years, we're more grateful than ever for the support of the surveying community, whose generous donations mean we can keep meeting that demand.

Help us support fellow surveyors with a donation through your RICS subs or on the LionHeart website

Find out more about LionHeart's support at **lionheart.org.uk**

CPD Support

The free CPD Support Pack is an online resource, which gives access to the content you need to remain compliant with all the key standards and guidance.

Available to RICS members and APC candidates, the pack offers essential local content, with opportunities for global and local networking with extra resources for supporting you throughout your career.

We'd love your feedback on our latest issue of print Modus by RICS via a short survey: Scan to take the survey or go to: surveymonkey.com/r/vlmpylz

James Kavanagh pays personal tribute to former RICS Honorary Secretary Rob Mahoney



The UK geospatial and surveying professions were saddened to learn of the death of Rob Mahoney FRICS FBCartS on 17 January at the age of 74 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Rob seemed to fill every day of his life with activity, and reached out to others – myself included – to offer support and mentoring in the profession. His term as RICS Honorary Secretary from 2010 to 2016 – the last before the organisation's restructure in 2016 – and as a member of Governing Council demonstrated this commitment. As Honorary Secretary, he was in many ways a direct line between RICS and our entire membership, and had the special kind of personality required to fulfil all the responsibilities of the role.

He was perpetually kind and understanding, and – given his experience at the sharp end of a rugby scrum – very robust when he needed to be. There was a steel to Rob that underpinned his willingness to listen to all opinions, along with an innate diplomacy that would prove valuable to RICS and the growth of the geospatial profession. One of a cohort of innovators who entered the discipline just as it witnessed the advent of geographical information systems (GIS), Rob was at the forefront of the technology's integration into a wide range of utility and government applications in the early 1990s.

His language and technical skills – Rob was a fluent French speaker – sparked ongoing international interest in land administration and cadastre, and he worked with Prof. Peter Dale and Dr Robin McLaren to support the transition from state control to a private market for land in Hungary in the mid-1990s. He was also involved with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), becoming a central part of RICS' delegation and contributing to the work of FIG's commission on spatial information management in particular.

> "Rob had the special kind of personality required for the role"

Rob was also a great supporter of RICS' relationship with the Council of European Geodetic Surveyors (CLGE), and was our representative at numerous CLGE general assemblies over the years. I know that our CLGE colleagues remember Rob with fondness, his diplomacy and love for European culture and languages helping keep the relationship between our organisations strong – along with his taste for fine food and wine.

As chair of the RICS Geomatics Faculty Board from 2002 to 2004, Rob chaired multiple conferences and evening lectures, and was the author and co-author of several RICS and FIG publications and journal articles.

After retirement in 2016, Rob maintained his engagement with the profession by chairing the International Land Measurement Standard (ILMS) Coalition, and my last official engagement with him was the launch of the ILMS Turkish edition at CLGE Istanbul 2019. As always, Rob was an excellent presenter.

I was lucky to know Rob both as a professional mentor and as a friend. Outside work he was involved in his local community in Lewes and a keen morris dancer, among other things. We also shared a love of the sea, and he would often take the opportunity to swim when we attended international events – a dip in an icy Baltic during a Helsinki conference sticks in my memory – and he was a keen kayaker until his final months.

RICS sends our sincere condolences to Rob's widow Jean, his children and grandchildren. The profession has lost a great surveyor; but we were lucky to have him in the first place.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam (may he rest in peace).

James Kavanagh is head of professional practice, land and resources at RICS

Member obituaries

Member obituaries are published on the RICS website, you can find them at **rics.org/obituaries**

If you are facing hardship after the loss of a family member, or are considering leaving a legacy, please contact LionHeart, the charity for RICS members and their families. There is further information at **lionheart.org.uk**

Tribunals

Covering October 2024 - February 2025

For full details of all the published regulatory decisions, see rics.org/regulatoryoutcomes

Member name and number	Date	Type of hearing	Details	Outcome
Robert Heald [0060676]	11.10.24	Disciplinary Panel Hearing	Failure to comply with Rule 1,3 & 4, of the Rules of Conduct for Members	Expulsion
Alan Chapman [6631459]	23.10.24	Single Member Decision	Breach of RICS Bye-law 5.2.2 (d)	Expulsion
David Gowland [0097421]	04.12.24	Disciplinary Panel Hearing	Failure to comply with Rule 1,3 & 4, of the RICS Rules of Conduct 2021	Expulsion
Elliot Kersh [1124274]	06.12.24	Single Member Decision	Breach of RICS Bye-law 5.2.2 (d)	Reprimand and Fine
Daniel Smith [1173413]	10.12.24	Registration Panel Hearing	Application for readmission to membership	Granted
Dabasia Dhiraj [1227581]	14.01.25	Registration Panel Hearing	Application for readmission to membership	Not Granted
Vilas Zende [6601424]	13.02.25	Single Member Decision	Failure to comply with CPD requirements	Expulsion
Moath Maqbol [6546947]	13.02.25	Single Member Decision	Failure to comply with CPD requirements	Expulsion
Nicholas Prinse [5040203]	18.02.25	Appeal Panel Hearing	Appeal of Disciplinary Panel decision dated September 2024	Dismissed
Jimmy-Rade Boskovic [1254617]	18.02.25	Single Member Decision	Failure to comply with CPD requirements	Expulsion
Peter Hensby [1170330]	20.02.25	Single Member Decision	Failure to comply with CPD requirements	Expulsion

The Regulatory Tribunal determines regulatory and disciplinary cases against RICS Members, which includes the most serious matters referred to the Disciplinary Panel (or Single Members) following a detailed investigation. The Registration Panel reviews registration decisions and determines re-admission applications, and the Appeal Panel considers appeals against Disciplinary and Registration Panel decisions.

The Tribunal is formed of independent (non-RICS) and RICS members and is led by an independent Presiding Chair. The Tribunal is held at 'arm's length' and is overseen by the Standards and Regulation Board. For more information about Tribunal and the full decisions, please see the rics.org website.



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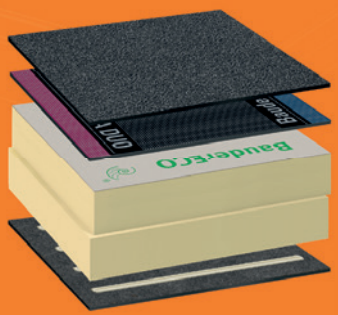
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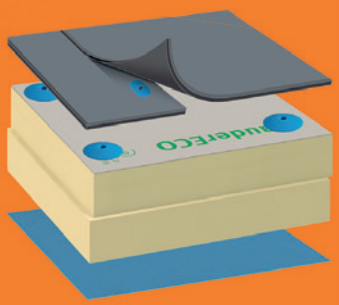
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