ACES Terrier

The Association of Chief Estates Surveyors & Property Managers in the Public Sector

Volume 31 Issue 2 Summer 2026

ACES NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 24 SEPTEMBER, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

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VOLUME 31 - ISSUE 2 - Summer 2026

ACES TERRIER

The Journal of ACES - The Association of Chief Estates Surveyors & Property Managers in the Public Sector

EDITORIAL

Betty Albon editor@aces.org.uk

Welcome to the 2026 Summer Terrier.

Another issue hot off the press – 'hot' being an appropriate term, although of course it might not be by the time you read this. On the positive side, I won't have to be spending all my time watering flagging plants!

I'm pleased to report that this issue includes more than a few articles which have arisen from presentations made to branches. I always encourage branch secretaries to ask their speakers at events if they would like to write for ACES Terrier. You know what is of interest to your colleagues, so the topics are very likely to be of value to the wider membership. And it introduces new contributors, so my thanks go to you all for cajoling presenters. As a consequence, there are a raft of professional topics. I won't list them all here – take a dip into the contents.

The splendid cover shows one of the venues for ACES National Conference, to be held in sunny Southend-on-Sea in September 2026. An outline of the one-day conference can be found in the flyer inside, with full details on ACES website. The President, Alan Richards, and his team are working very hard to put together a full programme, and Marcus Perry has organised what looks to be a fantastic social programme for partners and retired members (and the Editor?).

Again, there are a few pieces which I hope are of interest to ACES' growing cohort of FACES members.

Minutes of ACES Council meetings can now be found in the Members Only area of ACES website.

Please share ACES' Terrier with colleagues - in hard copy and online https://aces.org.uk/terrier-archives . Please also explore the developing ACES' Terrier website which can be found at https://www.acesterrier.org.uk/ .

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Cover photo: Roslin Beach Hotel, venue for the pre-conference networking meal, supplied by Alan Richards

ACES MEMBERSHIP

Trevor Bishop MRICS, ACES Secretary

I list below the changes in membership between 1 April 2026 and 30 June 2026

One member transferred to retired membership.

First Name	Surname	Branch Ref
Alan	Wharton	London

18 memberships ended during the period either through retirement, resignation or expulsion for persistent non-payment of membership subscriptions.

It is also with great sadness that we report the passing of Mike Robbins, formerly of Northumberland County Council and Honorary Member Barry Searle.

The summary of current membership at 30 June 2026.

Membership

Summary of current membership at 31 December 2025

Total Membership	Number
Full (237)	230
Additional (108)	106
Honorary (36)	35
Associate (15)	15
Retired (37)	38
Total (433)	**424**

Trends

This quarter sees a further decrease in the total number of members. This arises from the usual loss of members following the issuing of subscription invoices for the year and, notably, the implementation of the Arrears Policy where the Secretary has expelled a number of members due to persistent failure to pay off arrears. The full impact on membership of the major re-organisation of local government is yet to be determined.

OBITUARY BARRY SEARLE

It is with sadness to report the death of Barry Searle. He was an Honorary Member and a well-respected colleague in ACES London Branch during the 1980s.

Barry was in line to become National President in 1990/91. However, he was head-hunted by one of the main London surveying firms while he was Junior Vice President. This led to the escalation of another member of London Branch, Roy Gregory, stepping up to fill Barry's vacancy.

After a few years in the private sector, Barry then worked for the RICS. He came to speak to London Branch in his new role.

OBITUARY MIKE ROBBINS

It is with great sadness that we share the news that Mike Robbins, Northumberland County Council's Strategic Estates Manager for over 20 years, died peacefully on 13 April.

Mike had bravely undergone cancer treatment twice over the last few years, but had been very much back at work last year. Indeed, Mike was in work with us at the beginning of this year, which makes his loss all the harder to comprehend.

Mike's contribution to Northumberland over many years has been characterised by his kind and gentle nature, and an always willing to help approach. He was a lovely man with a dry sense of humour; his legacy is significant.

Mike leaves behind his wife Rachel and boys Tom and Sam.

Alan is Executive Director for Environment and Place, Southend-on-Sea City Council and ACES President.

ACES MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2026 Listening, learning and evolving our organisation

Alan Richards President@aces.org.uk

Alan here presents the high level results of the ACES Membership Survey conducted earlier this year. "For me, the most important takeaway from this work is that ACES is in a strong position. Members value what we do, and there is a clear sense of shared purpose. There is also a clear expectation that we continue to adapt."

It has been a real priority for me this year to hear directly from our membership about where our members feel ACES is now, what it should be in the future, and where we need to focus to remain relevant, inclusive and effective.

Our 2026 membership survey, the first comprehensive survey we have undertaken for nearly a decade, has been an important part of that. I would like to thank all of you who took the time to respond and share your views. The strength of engagement and the quality of feedback have been extremely valuable.

By some very strange coincidence, the last survey in 2017 received 137 responses – precisely the same number that we received this time. We received responses from all branches, sectors and career stages, and also collected demographic information on our membership for the first time. This survey therefore gives us one of the clearest pictures we have had of our membership for many years. It also sends a very clear message.

A strong and valued professional community

At its heart, ACES is valued because of what it has always been: a trusted professional community.

Members consistently describe the Association as a space where they can have open, honest conversations, share experience, and draw on the knowledge of others facing similar challenges. In a sector where many colleagues work in small teams, or even as sole practitioners, that sense of peer connection is particularly important.

There is strong consistency in what members value most. The excellent value and variety of CPD that ACES provides for its members is absolutely central, particularly where it is practical and grounded in public sector experience. Branch meetings remain important to members, not just for formal agendas but for peer exchange and support. ACES Terrier itself is regularly highlighted as an important source of insight and professional continuity.

Engagement – appetite is strong, barriers are practical

The survey shows that members want to engage with ACES, particularly at a branch level, but that participation is often constrained by practical factors rather than willingness.

Workload and time pressures are significant, alongside travel time, cost and varying levels of employer support. In that context, it is encouraging that members are broadly positive about hybrid and online formats, provided they are well designed and managed. In the follow-up sessions, one of the key takeaways was the need to design hybrid meetings deliberately, to ensure those on the screen are just as involved as those in the room.

The direction of travel is clear. If we want to sustain and increase engagement, we need to focus on accessibility and flexibility, ensuring that participation is realistic alongside demanding day to day roles.

CPD – a core strength to build on

CPD remains one of the strongest drivers of ACES membership. Members value the breadth of learning available, from technical surveying skills to wider place-based, public sector leadership, governance and sector insight.

There is also a clear opportunity to go further. Feedback highlights the potential to strengthen coordination, broaden the range of topics, and better share learning across branches, including through recorded content available via the ACES website, and more consistent approaches.

This is an area where ACES is already strong, but where we can do more to maximise the value we provide to members.

Inclusion and the 'gap in the middle'

Overall, ACES is seen as a welcoming and supportive organisation. However, the survey does highlight some important areas to address.

For newer or quieter members, larger meetings can sometimes feel difficult to engage with. There is also a consistent theme around the "gap in the middle", where mid career professionals do not always feel that ACES is clearly aligned with their needs.

The organisation has always held senior estates surveyors at its core; the work over recent years to support and engage APC candidates, and those at the early years of their careers, has been inspiring. This does leave potential members in limbo for that period of their career between qualifying and perhaps stepping into the senior ranks.

If we are serious about supporting the next generation of leaders, we need to ensure that ACES works for members at every stage of their career, not just at the start or the most senior levels. Never has this been more important than in the context of changes to local government.

A changing context – Local Government Reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation is clearly front of mind for many members. There is uncertainty about how it will affect roles, structures and, potentially, membership numbers. Similarly, our health, fire and police and central government colleagues are also experiencing periods of significant change.

There is an expectation that ACES will play an important role in supporting members through this period of change, providing stability and support at a time when the ability to share lived experience, learn from others, and maintain a strong professional network will be more important than ever.

A strong foundation for the future

One of the most encouraging aspects of the survey is the level of confidence in ACES. Members report strong value for money and a high willingness to recommend the Association to colleagues.

Taken together, the findings do not suggest a need for wholesale change. Rather, they point to a need for careful and considered evolution.

We need to protect what makes ACES distinctive, its peer led ethos, strong CPD offer and trusted professional network, while improving accessibility, strengthening inclusion, and ensuring we remain relevant in a changing public sector landscape.

What happens next

Since the survey closed, we have held a focused session with members to explore some of these themes in more detail. This is already helping to shape our thinking on areas such as CPD development, participation models, and how we support members through change.

The findings of the survey were reported to ACES Council in April and the feedback from the follow up session has been shared. The results are now informing how we approach new initiatives and importantly, are feeding into the governance review works, which is considering proposals on how we evolve our offer and strengthen engagement across the membership.

Members who would like to explore the findings in more detail can access the full survey analysis via the ACES members' area on the Council website, within the papers presented to April 2026 Council (https://aces.org.uk/members/council-meetings).

Conclusion

For me, the most important takeaway from this work is that ACES is in a strong position. Members value what we do, and there is a clear sense of shared purpose.

There is also a clear expectation that we continue to adapt. We need to make it easier for colleagues to participate, ensure members at all stages of their careers feel part of ACES, and support the profession through a period of significant change.

As President, my focus is on working with Council and with our branches to turn these insights into practical improvements, while protecting what makes ACES special.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed, and please continue to engage with us as we take this work forward.

PUBLIC SECTOR CHALLENGE London Bridges Walk

Daniella Barrow Daniella.barrow@norsegroup.co.uk

On Saturday 17 January 2026, a number of ACES members, colleagues and family took part in the London Bridges Walk, a 25 km challenge organised as part of the Public Sector Challenge series. The event brings together the public sector community to raise funds for charities including Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation, while offering a rare opportunity to experience London's infrastructure in a more direct and human way.

The route began at Furnival Gardens in Hammersmith, heading east along the Thames Path and crossing a sequence of London's bridges before finishing at Tower Bridge. It combined a physical challenge with something particularly compelling for surveyors: the chance to see how historic and modern infrastructure continues to perform, adapt and shape the city.

Conditions were typically January cool, crisp and occasionally overcast, but dry enough to make steady progress. We set off from Furnival Gardens with coffee in hand as Jenny Clack from SOLACE sounded the start with her klaxon.

West London: quieter infrastructure, strong foundations

The opening stretch across Hammersmith and Putney Bridges offered a very different Thames to the one many of us know further downstream. There was a quieter, almost residential feel to this part of the walk, with rowing crews out on the water and far less of the intensity associated with central London.

Hammersmith Bridge, with its wrought iron suspension structure, immediately highlights the challenge of maintaining historic assets in a modern context. Its current restriction to pedestrians and cyclists is a very visible example of how infrastructure has to adapt over time, while still serving a vital function.

Putney Bridge, with its long association with the Boat Race, added a sense of continuity and tradition. Watching crews practising as we crossed reinforced how these structures are not just transport links, but part of the cultural and social fabric of the river.

Together, these early crossings reflect how infrastructure supported the expansion of west London into commuter suburbs, something that still underpins the way these areas function today.

Battersea and Chelsea: character, constraint and change

As we moved east through Wandsworth and Battersea, the river began to feel busier, and the bridges more varied in form and role.

Battersea Bridge remains a good example of Victorian engineering constrained by its context. Its narrow

View from Charing Cross Bridge

width and alignment on a bend in the river continue to influence how it operates, a reminder that design decisions can have very long-term implications for maintenance and use.

Albert Bridge is always a highlight. Known as "The Trembling Lady", it demonstrates how early innovation often came with unforeseen challenges. The "break step" signs are a simple but effective response, and, for me, a fascinating example of how risk has been managed in practice over time.

Passing through Battersea Park gave a welcome pause and marked the point where the 15 km walkers joined. It also reinforced how important these riverside assets are not just as transport corridors, but as wider public spaces supporting health, wellbeing and recreation.

Approaching the centre: scale and intensity

Moving through Chelsea and towards Vauxhall, the pace and scale of development increases noticeably.

Chelsea Bridge and Vauxhall Bridge reflect different moments in London's infrastructure story. From public works designed to stimulate employment, to bridges built to accommodate trams and increased traffic capacity, each crossing tells you something about the priorities of its time.

At Vauxhall, the addition of sculpture and civic symbolism feels like a statement of confidence in public infrastructure and public service. It is a reminder that these structures were never purely functional; they were also intended to represent the ambitions of the city.

The civic heart: where infrastructure and identity meet

Crossing Lambeth and Westminster Bridges, the walk moves firmly into the civic core of London. Here, infrastructure, governance and public life overlap in a very visible way.

The contrasting colours of the bridges - red for the Lords and green for the Commons are small details, but they reinforce how embedded these structures are in the identity of the city.

From here, the frequency of crossings increases, and the character of the river shifts again. The Golden Jubilee footbridge at Charing Cross stands out as a more modern intervention, providing a clear, accessible pedestrian route alongside the historic railway bridge. Its uninterrupted view towards Parliament explains why it is such a popular filming location, but it also demonstrates how relatively recent investment can significantly improve movement and experience along the river.

Central crossings: layers of history and innovation

Waterloo Bridge, often referred to as the "Ladies' Bridge", brings an important social dimension, recognising the role of women in its construction during the war. It is also one of the best vantage points on the route, connecting major cultural and commercial areas.

At Blackfriars, the detailing rewards closer inspection. The bird carvings marking the transition from freshwater to tidal Thames are easy to miss, but once noticed, they add another layer of meaning to the structure. The adjacent railway bridge, with its solar panels, is a clear example of how existing infrastructure can be adapted to meet modern sustainability goals.

The Millennium Bridge provides a more contemporary lesson. Its early issues with movement and the introduction of damping technology have influenced modern pedestrian bridge design well beyond London. It is a useful reminder that even recent projects continue to evolve after completion.

Final stretch: history into landmark

Crossing Southwark and London Bridges, the depth of history becomes more apparent. This stretch has supported crossings for centuries, and it shows in the layering of old and new around the river.

And then, finally, Tower Bridge. Both a working piece of infrastructure and one of London's defining landmarks, it provides a fitting end point to the walk and a moment to reflect on the journey.

Reflections on the walk

Building on the success of 2025, which saw nearly 800 walkers raise over £30,000 for charity, this year's event continued to grow, supporting causes such as Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation. With a choice of 15 km or 25 km routes, it struck a strong balance between accessibility and challenge.

For me, completing the 25 km was not just about the distance. It was the conversations along the way, starting as an ACES group but naturally mixing with others, catching up with colleagues, and meeting new people across the public sector. The event felt genuinely inclusive, with a shared sense of purpose throughout.

There was also real value in experiencing infrastructure at this pace. Walking the route makes you notice how bridges connect communities, influence development, and continue to function as everyday assets. It reinforces why

Birds on Blackfriars Bridge

long-term stewardship, maintenance and investment matter, because these structures are not just historic artefacts, they are essential to how the city works day to day.

The organisation and support throughout the route were excellent, and we certainly added to the atmosphere with our Public Sector Challenge purple pom-pom hats.

34,000 steps later, we crossed the finish line to be welcomed by Olympians Colin Jackson CBE and Fatima Whitbread MBE, and a fantastic reception at The Dickens Inn in St Katharine Docks. The sense of achievement and camaraderie captured exactly what the Public Sector Challenge is about: bringing people together to do something positive, both for themselves and for the communities they serve.

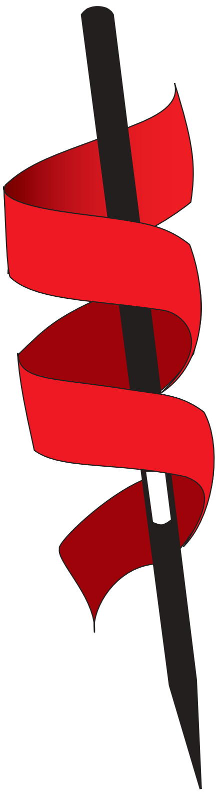
Looking ahead, the momentum does not stop here. The Public Sector Challenge returns later this year with the "Earth, Mynd and Shire" event in September in Shropshire, offering a different landscape but the same sense of purpose:

https://publicsectorchallenge.co.uk/earth-mynd-and-shire

And, of course, keep an eye out for the return of the London Bridges Walk in 2027.

Public Sector Challenge Shropshire

The Public Sector Challenge is open to all classes of ACES membership and our FACES group and we are now collecting expressions of interest for this year's event in Shropshire on 11 September. If you would like to know more, there is lots of information about up-coming challenges on the website Home - Public Sector Challenge or to get involved in the ACES team, please get in touch with the ACES President, Alan Richards, alanrichards@southend.gov.uk



'Why not use the ACES website for free* advertising of your job vacancies?

The ACES website Job Vacancies page (open to all) caters for member and non-member organisations advertising for public sector property posts.

The page gives a summary of the available post with the details of location, salary and closing date and provides a link to the organisation's own website for further details and application form etc.

The Job Vacancies page is currently available to ACES member organisations to advertise opportunities **at no cost.**

You gain direct access to likely candidates already working in the public sector property arena with the expertise and experience that you are looking for.

The new and improved ACES website enables advertisers to enter their vacancy details direct online and include their logo, website links and required details (subject to approval by ACES Secretary).

*The cost per advert for non-members is currently £100.00 for a maximum of 4 weeks' exposure on the ACES website; this is still excellent value!!

Contact the ACES Secretary, Trevor Bishop MRICS, at secretary@aces.org.uk for further information.

ACES National Conference 2026

The future of housing, surveying and local government.

Location: **Southend-on-Sea, Essex**

Conference: **Thursday 24 September 2026** (one day event) **at The Palace Hotel, Southend**

Pre-conference Networking Meal: **Wednesday 23 September 2026** (evening) **at Roslin Beach Hotel**

Post-Conference Dinner: **Thursday 24 September 2026: At Porters Civic House**

Social Programme: **Thursday 24 September 2026** (one day event) **– a morning visit to RHS Hyde Hall, then an afternoon at the seaside**

Post-Conference Networking Reception: **Thursday 24 September 2026 (5.30-7pm) at Southend Pier**

For further information on speakers, agenda and how to book, see the ACES web site https://aces.org.uk

The Conference

The ACES flagship annual event will be an in-person conference on 24 September 2026 held in Southend-on-Sea at The Palace Hotel with stunning views across the Thames Estuary.

The conference will comprise two distinct sessions, but there will be plenty of learning available during both.

The morning session will focus on housing and regeneration, with key speakers on this area. We also have the great privilege of welcoming RICS President Nick Maclean OBE RD FRICS who will share his reflections on his year in office, the RICS priorities and how they align with those of ACES as we work to strengthen the relationship further.

Of course, Local Government Reform will be a key feature of the afternoon session along with some local case studies of projects across the Eastern Region. We will also include a session on our own wellbeing and ensuring that we look after ourselves.

The Conference will deliver 6 hours formal CPD.

The delegate rate has been held at last year's cost, which represents exceptional value for money.

Cost – ACES Members - £100 (early bird) otherwise it's £130; Other Public Sector Delegate - £150.00 per person; Corporate Delegates - £175.00 per person

The networking and social elements

Pre-Conference Networking Meal

Wednesday 23 September 2026 (evening) – welcome drinks and a 3-course meal at the fabulous Roslin Beach Hotel overlooking the beach at Thorpe Bay and the Thames Estuary.
The Roslin is a multi-award winning hotel and restaurant, something of a culinary jewel in the city.

Cost - £75

Social Programme and Post Conference Meal

Thursday 24 September 2026 (one day event) - for those who prefer the social side to the conference, a fantastic social programme has been arranged by Marcus Perry. The main programme will take place on Thursday with an optional informal meal on the Thursday evening.

Cost - £100 (social programme Thursday)

Post Conference drinks reception (including train ride) at the infamous Southend Pier' the Longest Pleasure Pier in the world.
Post conference Dinner at Porters Civic House, followed by a tour - **£50.**

Friday 25 September 2026

A one-off bonus – for both business and social delegates able to stay on an extra day (and highly recommended) a day trip from the Pier on the Waverley paddle steamer, the world's last sea-going passenger paddle steamer. Cost **£65** per person, plus **£7.70** return pier train ride per person. For further information on the social programme see www.aces.org.uk

Accommodation

Conference Hotel – The Palace Hotel (image opposite), SS1 2AL. ACES has negotiated special rates. See ACES' website for full details of prices and how to claim them.
There are ample alternative hotels nearby.

James is a Director in Boyer's London office. He has over 10 years' experience delivering complex urban regeneration projects throughout London and the South East.

James draws on his extensive experience and expertise to navigate private and public sector projects through all stages of the planning system, ensuring the full development potential of each opportunity is unlocked. This experience encompasses residential development, estate regeneration, purpose-built student accommodation, town centre regeneration, asset repositioning, and industrial and logistics.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING Section 106 alone is not enough

James Cogan jamescogan@boyerplanning.co.uk

James puts forward options for meeting the critical affordable housing shortage: "there must be more room for professional judgement and for policy that recognises viability as a constraint." James emphatically states "We must stop treating affordable housing as a by-product of private housing development and start treating it as critical national infrastructure" and promotes direct public delivery.

The question of how we can deliver more affordable homes is not new, but the need to find an answer is even more pressing today when affordable housing need has reached at least 180,000 homes a year, and delivery is falling.

To find a credible answer, we need to be frank about what is driving demand up and delivery down. The current system failed to keep up with demand even when the housing market was strong, and this failure is even starker in a challenging market. Simply hoping a stronger housing market will lead to more affordable homes is foolish. We must accept that for too long, affordable housing delivery has conveniently been outsourced to the private sector via planning obligations, with rigid affordable housing requirements not only reducing the number of affordable homes being delivered, but also stopping schemes altogether.

The existing model is flawed

The scale of need is widely recognised. Even in good years, we still fall woefully short of the number of affordable homes required.

This is because the current model is over reliant on cross-subsidy and private developers building affordable homes, with private developers shouldering the cost and risk of delivering affordable homes, alongside infrastructure and an ever-expanding list of policy requirements. In a buoyant market, that can work on some sites, but in a less buoyant market affordable housing is often the first thing to give.

The government estimates that over 180,000 affordable homes are required per year, which is no less than 60% of the 300,000 homes the government aspires to deliver in total. It goes without saying that these homes will not be delivered by cross-subsidy alone. So what are the alternatives?

Realistic quotas that support delivery

Even when the affordable housing requirement is set at 35%, which is most common, this can reduce the number of affordable homes delivered in absolute terms.

All too often this is interpreted as '35% affordable or nothing'. Adhering to this rigidly, even in the face of changing economic climates, simply results in nothing being built. The politicians may boast of delivering 35% affordable homes, but they never acknowledge the number of homes that are left on the drawing board.

Instead, there must be more room for professional judgement and for policy that recognises viability as a constraint. While time-limited flexibilities, such as we are seeing in London currently, can be legitimate when markets shift sharply, we can't assume everything will go back to normal when they come to an end.

Cash in lieu: important, but not a free pass

Increased use of cash in lieu of on-site affordable housing, as is proposed for small and medium sites in the revised NPPF, should be welcomed and not simply reserved for small and medium sites. Many sites cannot sustain on-site affordable housing even where provision appears to be viable; isolated affordable homes or very small numbers can face limited appetite from registered providers. In these circumstances, a commuted sum can unlock development, while also contributing to meeting affordable housing need.

Yet cash in lieu of on-site affordable housing is only as effective as the system that turns cash into homes: in constrained urban boroughs, for example, where land availability is low and values are high, local planning authorities may accumulate substantial contributions but are unable to deploy these as there are few suitable or available sites on which to spend the money.

This challenge is evident in the HBF's recent findings that local authorities are sitting on over £9bn of unspent financial contributions, including over £700m of affordable housing contributions.

Therefore, if the use of cash payments is to increase, we will need rules that ensure delivery:

- A clear definition of purpose: cash in lieu should unlock homes that would not otherwise come forward, not subsidise homes that were already viable without it
- Credible routes to deployment, whether through identified sites, partnerships or pipeline schemes
- Transparent valuation and reporting. If commuted sums are to retain legitimacy, the method must be understandable and reporting must show how money converts into homes within defined timeframes
- Capacity to deliver: not just cash but procurement, land assembly, design capability and programme management.

The public sector as buyer and builder

The gap in today's model, compared to the 1970s when housing delivery was last consistently in the 300,000s, is the absence of the state as a delivery agent. We need the state to do more than regulate: it must also act as landowner, commissioner, buyer and long-term partner.

Land held by the public sector should serve a public purpose. Government and local authorities can assemble land, set clear objectives for tenure mix, affordability and infrastructure, and invite private partners to deliver against them. Homes England and mayoral authorities can be pivotal in using land assembly powers, setting delivery frameworks and supporting schemes that would struggle under a pure cross-subsidy model.

The importance of partnerships

An expanded public sector role can, in addition to allowing the public sector to do what it does best, let the private sector do what it does best too: delivery, innovation, risk management and access to capital.

The future direction

We must stop treating affordable housing as a by-product of private housing development and start treating it as critical national infrastructure.

In practical terms, that means increasing public delivery and commissioning, using quotas intelligently and flexibly, using cash in lieu strategically and investing in capacity, both in the public sector and public/private partnerships. The answer lies in combining this into a system that produces more homes, more consistently.

Chris is an Associate Director in Boyer's Midlands office, with significant professional experience managing complex planning and development projects. Prior to joining Boyer, Chris has worked for a large multi-disciplinary consultancy featuring residential sales and lettings, commercial, rural and professional services.

Acting on behalf a variety of clients, from landowners to housebuilders and developers, Chris undertakes a diverse range of projects, leading complex planning applications and appeals, as well as guiding clients through the strategic site promotion process and advising landowners on developer agreements and land sales. Chris is a chartered member of the RTPI and an associate member of the RICS.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Cash in lieu - A pragmatic solution or a dangerous precedent?

Chris Green chrisgreen@boyerplanning.co.uk

Chris develops the arguments raised in the preceding article, that "cash in lieu can become a deferral mechanism rather than a housing solution…. the answer is not to reject the extension of cash in lieu, but to use it carefully."

Developers paying cash in lieu of building affordable homes is not new: commuted sums already form part of the planning system and are often used where on-site provision is impractical or would produce a worse outcome. However, a significant change in the recent draft NPPF is the suggestion that this route could become easier to use for medium-sized housing sites, rather than remaining something that is considered on a case-by-case basis.

The draft guidance itself still requires affordable housing to be delivered on site (allowing an off-site contribution or a cash payment only where that is robustly justified and where the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities is maintained). However, the consultation also asks whether medium developments - defined as schemes of 10 to 49 homes on sites of up to 2.5 ha. - should be able to discharge affordable housing requirements through a payment in lieu more readily. Essentially, if the current draft NPPF becomes policy, cash in lieu would apply more easily to a wider category of sites.

Medium-sized sites

Medium-sized sites can suffer disproportionate disadvantages and this is reflected in the ever-declining SME housebuilder market. Analysis by the HBF (Planning for Small Sites) shows that in 2024, just over 17,000 homes were approved on sites of 3 to 9 units, compared with around 35,000 in an average year during the 2000s. The share of plots on these sites has fallen from almost 20% in 2008 to 6-8% now, while average site size has climbed to just over 41 units per site.

Furthermore, a modest scheme can spend months in negotiation over a handful of affordable units, only to run into limited appetite from registered providers (RP) for taking very small numbers of homes in a particular location or tenure mix.

That is where cash in lieu becomes a practical solution. If a commuted sum can unlock a stalled scheme, and if that money is then used to support affordable delivery more efficiently elsewhere, there is a strong argument for flexibility. It may also avoid the odd outcomes we sometimes see on medium sites, where a 'token' amount of on-site affordable housing is technically policy compliant but not especially coherent from a management or place-making perspective.

There is also a wider economic case. SME builders have been squeezed by rising costs, slower planning and the cumulative burden of regulation. If the government wishes to support SMEs, it must address the practical frictions that stop otherwise viable sites from coming forward – of which this is one.

Risks

That said, there are risks in moving too casually in this direction. Firstly, affordable housing provided on site is not only a number on a spreadsheet, but is vital to the creation of mixed communities.

Secondly, a commuted sum only works if the LPA can turn money into homes. That requires land, delivery partners, officer resource and a clear pipeline. Without that, cash in lieu can become a deferral mechanism rather than a housing solution. As we have seen recently, s106 money may sit in council accounts for years while the promised affordable homes materialise slowly or not at all.

The third is valuation. If cash payments are to become more common, they will need to be calculated transparently and consistently. Otherwise, every negotiation risks becoming another argument about viability. The government is right to ask what guidance would be needed on this. A system that claims to simplify delivery will fail if it simply replaces one area of dispute with another.

From my point of view, the answer is not to reject the extension of cash in lieu, but to use it carefully. It should remain a targeted tool, not a universal escape hatch. The strongest case is on genuinely medium-sized sites where on-site provision would be awkward, delay delivery, or fail to attract an RP partner. The case is much weaker where the effect would simply be to dilute mixed tenure communities or to shift burdens onto councils without a credible route to spending the receipts quickly.

If the government proceeds, safeguards must be put in place. The valuation method should be clear and standardised; receipts should be ringfenced and reported on transparently and there should be expectations on the pace at which authorities deploy the money.

Handled well, this proposal could help unlock a category of site that has become unnecessarily difficult to deliver, while also providing the necessary affordable housing in the most suitable locations. Handled badly, it could weaken confidence in affordable housing policy, while doing little to increase actual supply.

Charles is Head of Land & Development at Lambert Smith Hampton based at the head office in London. He has been with the business for over 11 years specialising in delivering projects across the country with key clients that include national and regional housebuilders, public sector bodies, charities and strategic land specialists.

UKREIIF 'Landowner Forum' Panel session

Charles McClean ccmclean@lsh.co.uk

Charles summarises the breakfast panel event held at the LSH Leeds office during UKReiif. "Our first Landed x LSH at UKREiiF was a great success, and provided interesting and creative solutions to the challenges facing our housing market."

It was destination Leeds in late May as the UK property industry once again looked towards UKREiiF for inspiration.

Panel discussion

With so many people now attending fringe events rather than the conference itself, Lambert Smith Hampton hosted a breakfast panel event in our Leeds city centre office on the Wednesday morning, with some excellent speakers and guests attending.

In conjunction with Ben Holden of Landed magazine (a supplement to Showhouse Magazine, the UK property industry's answer to Vogue) our first 'Landowner forum' addressed the issues facing the UK residential development market including infrastructure, viability, landowner aspirations, government policy and affordable housing.

To address these challenges, we curated an expert panel involved at the sharp end of these issues:

- Conan Farningham – Development Director at Sanctuary Housing
- Andrew Byrne – Group Property Development Director at Devonshire Group
- George Warren – Head of Integrated Water Management at Anglian Water; and
- Stephen Hemming – LSH Senior Director and Head of Planning Consultancy for the Midlands.

Planning

As you would expect for a land and development event, Ben directed the opening questions to LSH's planning

expert. Steve Hemming provided an overview of the updates in the latest iteration of the NPPF, and set the scene for the remaining period of this Labour Government and what we can expect from the market. It was clear that while the changes to the planning system have made material improvements to the possibility and probability of building at new sites, there are still massive barriers to viability, led most notably by spiraling build costs, which have been worsened by the conflict in the Middle East.

Having echoed these challenges, we reminded the audience that building completions in London had, practically speaking, ground to a halt, and other landowners were reluctant to explore transactions where the land value is lower than their expectations.

It was at this point that Andrew Byrne came in to give the landowner perspective, and he agreed that the current market conditions meant that he would be waiting and watching before committing. He explained that the Devonshire Group, which owns historic estates like Chatsworth House, has extensive landholdings and therefore is unlike a landowner with just one 'lottery ticket' that has to be cashed in. This gives the Group the ability to think extremely long term and focus on the legacy of their decisions rather than just short-term profit expectations.

Water

One challenge that has severe long-term consequences is the provision and treatment of water. Underfunding and profit maximisation in the water industry have been well publicised recently, and it is evident that to fulfil the ambitions of building the homes this country needs, our approach to water must change. Recent reports suggest there are 30,000 units across the country, including 7,000 affordable homes, that cannot be delivered as there is a shortage of water availability and sewage treatment capacity.

George Warren of Anglian Water outlined some ways for the water sector and the development sector to work together more collaboratively. One key aspect of improving housebuilding's approach to water is the use of water smart technology, such as rainwater harvesting and water re-use pipe systems. Developers were glad to hear that the additional costs of implementing the equipment are often partly or wholly covered by developer incentives offered by the water companies to encourage best practice in water use.

Affordable homes

Speaking of affordable homes, no one is better placed than Sanctuary Housing (one of the country's largest registered providers) to comment on the challenges in that area of development. Conan Farningham gave a comprehensive view from a housing association perspective, describing the challenges of making developments stack up with the previously outlined obstacles. Despite this, Conan was optimistic for Sanctuary's intention of building 1,000 new homes per year and continuing to explore new opportunities in their priority areas.

He inspired the audience and fellow panel members to believe in the power of partnership. It was acknowledged that everyone in the room wants there to be a better future and that we are all working towards that aim. Therefore, the most effective way of achieving that outcome is to seek collaboration, be open-minded and honest, and share widely across sectors. If this event was a small encapsulation of this approach, then we feel confident that we are taking steps towards success.

Panel outcomes

Encouragingly, the common thread was a clear appetite for collaboration, with cross-sector partnerships and smarter infrastructure solutions offering a credible route to unlock sites and rebuild momentum suggesting that, with the right alignment, progress is not only possible but already underway.

Our first **Landed x LSH** at UKREiiF was a great success and provided interesting and creative solutions to the challenges facing our housing market.

Look out for our next event coming soon!

Tim has 30 years' experience in the land and new homes sector and has worked for some of the industry's best-known companies – such as The Berkeley Group, Laing Homes and Crest Nicholson.

Tim oversees the whole of Leaders Romans Group's Land and New Homes business, currently a team of over 40 professionals working in the department on a daily basis. The team acts for numerous national and local developers, advising them on all aspects of new homes development.

LEASEHOLD REFORM How will the new homes market be impacted by leasehold reform?

Tim Foreman tforeman@lrg.co.uk

Tim explains that commonhold may be the right long-term destination, but if ministers want more apartment-led development, they need a transition that developers, lenders and buyers can price, understand and support.

The government has two potentially conflicting objectives: to meet ambitious housing targets and to move away from a leasehold model that has plainly lost public trust. Those are not incompatible and in principle should reinforce each other.

But there is a potential issue with higher-density, apartment-led developments – which are a high priority given density requirements. So to meet the 1.5 million homes target (including 88,000 p.a. for London) any potential issues impacting on flat sales must be addressed.

The challenge will be in managing the transition from leasehold to commonhold in such a way that keeps supply moving.

A better destination, but a difficult journey

The political case for leasehold reform is easy to understand, and a tenure that offers greater transparency and a cleaner form of ownership ought to have long-term appeal.

The Draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill sets out a much more serious model for commonhold than currently exists. It seeks to overcome the reasons commonhold previously failed, especially around mixed-use development, governance, reserve funds and the practical running of larger schemes.

The Commonhold White Paper states that fewer than 20 commonhold developments have been built in England and Wales, comprising fewer than 200 units. When a model has barely been used, it is unsurprising that the market is wary.

Where housing delivery and reform meet

From my perspective, the risk is not that developers will simply refuse to build apartments. It is more subtle: uncertainty affects appraisals, phasing, lending terms, sales rates and the appetite to start. If the market cannot judge how buyers will respond, how lenders will underwrite commonhold flats at scale, or how complex blocks will operate over time, the result is likely to be slower decisions and a more selective pipeline.

The government's ambition for growth relies heavily on urban intensification. The recently published revised NPPF puts even more emphasis on making effective use of land and building at higher densities in well-connected places. In London, the gap between housing need and delivery is already stark. Elsewhere and increasingly, the pressure to build more homes on constrained land means that more sites must work harder, more schemes will need to go upwards, and more homes for sale will need to be flats. So the transition to commonhold is much more than a legal reform; it is a delivery issue.

The need for confidence

For commonhold to work at scale, confidence is needed throughout the market.

Developers need confidence that the structure is workable for phased schemes, mixed-use assets, and the sort of design changes that often arise over the life of a project. Lenders need confidence that the security is robust, the governance is clear, and the product can be explained consistently. And buyers need confidence that they are purchasing something understandable, mortgageable and saleable.

That is where today's market context matters. The flats market is not entering this transition from a position of strength; and uncertainty affects how quickly buyers commit, how valuers look at risk, and how lenders shape products. Even good reform can unsettle the market if it arrives before the market knows how it will work in practice.

A pragmatic transition

But this is not to argue against commonhold – there are real advantages in a better commonhold model.

If owners have clearer control and a more direct stake in how their building is run, that should create a healthier long-term proposition. The draft Bill also makes a serious effort to deal with mixed-use schemes through sections and separate cost allocation, which is essential if commonhold is to work in modern urban development, rather than just in simple residential blocks. Government has also recognised that shared ownership and certain lease-based finance products must be able to operate within the new framework.

But recognition is not the same as market readiness. It will be important for the government not to force the pace to tick off a manifesto commitment, but to sequence the change properly.

That means a clear transition period rather than a cliff edge; standard documents, guidance and consumer messaging that can be used across the market; lenders being brought in early enough that mortgage availability does not lag behind legislation and stress-testing the model on large, mixed-use and phased schemes, before ministers assume that what works on paper will work on every site. Finally, it means being realistic about exemptions or permitted structures where they are necessary to protect supply during the shift. The government's own consultation (Moving to commonhold: banning leasehold for new flats) is explicitly asking for views on scope, exemptions, timing and transitional arrangements, which suggests ministers know the move has to be managed carefully.

Political priorities

I suspect the government can deliver both housing growth and leasehold reform, but only if it accepts that commonhold is not just a new legal wrapper for flats. It is a market transition with consequences for land buying, scheme design, development finance, sales and long-term management.

That transition should succeed over time. But adaptation needs confidence; and confidence comes from detail, testing and a sense that ministers understand how development actually happens.

If the government gets this right, commonhold could help restore trust in flats, at the same time as supporting more urban delivery. If it gets it wrong, it could hamper development further, at considerable political, personal and economic cost to all concerned.

Dee is an Associate and Property Litigation Solicitor at Holmes & Hills Solicitors. She advises landlords, tenants and property owners on a wide range of property disputes, providing practical and commercially focused legal advice.

RENTERS RIGHTS ACT Good intentions vs strained capacity: What the Renters Rights Act really means for the public sector

Dee Karatay dk@holmes-hills.co.uk

Dee puts forward some searching questions about implementation and implications of the Renters Rights Act: "for all its good intentions, risks aggravating a system which is already full of competing pressures that overwhelm local authorities and public services."

The Renters Rights Act 2025 has been the most significant shake-up of the private rented sector since the Tenant Fees Act 2019. Its objectives are ambitious: stronger protections for tenants, the abolition of "no-fault" evictions, the introduction of a Private Rented Sector Ombudsman, and a host of enhanced enforcement powers for local authorities. For renters, the legislation promises greater security and higher standards, but behind the enticing headlines lies the most important question: is the public sector even equipped to deliver on these promises?

As a solicitor specialising in property litigation, advising both public and private sector clients, I find myself increasingly concerned that the Act, for all its good intentions, risks aggravating a system which is already full of competing pressures that overwhelm local authorities and public services.

Pressure on an already strained system

The private rented sector currently houses approximately 4.6m households in England. A significant proportion of these are owned by smaller, individual landlords — the so-called "accidental" or "amateur" landlords who may own one or two properties. For many of these landlords, the cumulative weight of regulatory change over recent years, from the Tenant Fees Act to changes in mortgage interest tax relief, has already caused significant struggle, and the Renters Rights Act may well prove to be the final straw for these groups especially.

The abolition of Section 21, while implied to be positive for tenant security, fundamentally alters the risk profile of property investment for smaller landlords. The prospect of navigating an expanded set of prescribed grounds for possession through a court system already significantly struggling under the weight of a significant backlog is, for many, simply not worth the standard benefits. Industry surveys have consistently suggested that a meaningful proportion of landlords intend to sell up in the wake of the Act, and I have already seen some evidence of this with my own client base.

The immediate consequence for the public sector is stark. Every property that leaves the private rented sector is a property that is no longer available to house tenants who may be limited to no other alternative options. Local authority housing teams, already operating with waiting lists that stretch into the thousands, face the prospect of increased demand for social housing, temporary accommodation, and homelessness services. Considering the current advice tenants receive on a daily basis is that they cannot be assisted until a bailiff is knocking on their door; it does not bode well where the number of rented properties will continue to decrease.

The uncomfortable reality is that the Act's protections, by making it harder for landlords to regain possession of their properties, will likely paradoxically accelerate the reduction of the very housing stock those protections are designed to regulate.

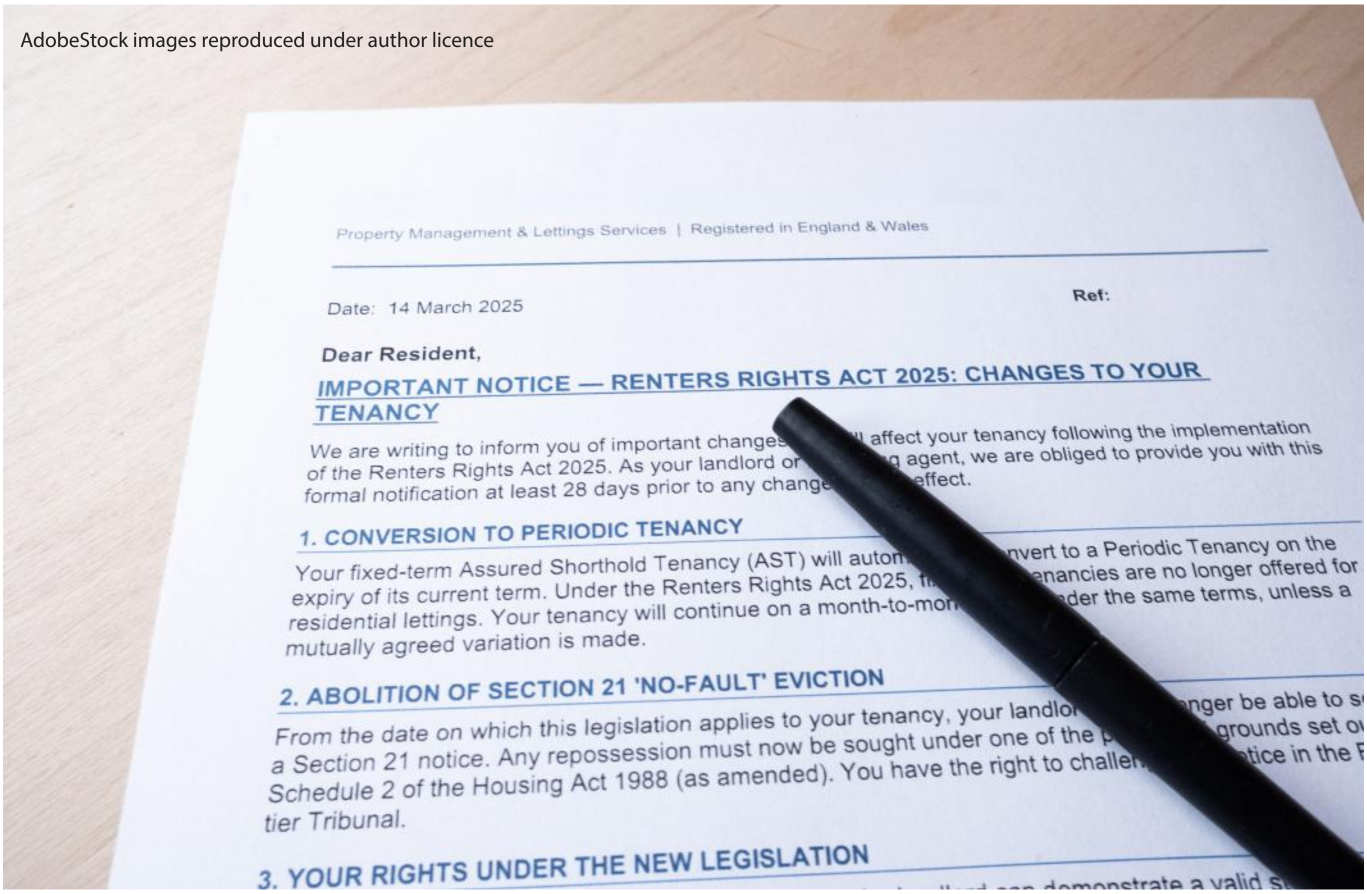
With expanded powers comes greater responsibility

Perhaps the most significant operational challenge the Act presents to the public sector lies in the expansion of local authority enforcement responsibilities.

Under the new framework, local authorities gain enhanced powers to investigate and penalise non-compliant landlords, including the ability to impose civil penalties of up to £40,000 for certain offences. The introduction of a national Property Portal and a mandatory Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector will generate substantial new regulatory obligations. Local authorities will also be expected to play a central role in supporting the new Ombudsman service, handling referrals and coordinating enforcement action where landlords fail to comply with Ombudsman decisions.

On paper, these are welcome developments. In practice, they raise a fundamental question of capacity.

Many local authority housing enforcement teams are already operating



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on skeleton staffing levels. Environmental health officers, trading standards professionals, and housing inspectors - the very people who will be on the front line of delivering the Act's ambitions - are in critically short supply.

The Act introduces new legal frameworks, new procedural requirements, and new decision-making responsibilities that will by its nature require significant investment in training and professional development. Officers who have spent their careers working within the existing regulatory architecture will need to be upskilled rapidly to navigate the new landscape. The learning curve is steep, and the margin for error is slim. Poorly executed enforcement action invites legal challenge, wasted resources, and reputational damage and a further stall in the much-anticipated improvements that have been promised for so long.

There is, as I understand at the time of writing, no ring-fenced central government funding to support local authorities in meeting these expanded obligations. The expectation appears to be that the revenue generated from civil penalties will, over time, create a self-funding enforcement model. This is optimistic at best. Penalty income is inherently unpredictable, and the upfront investment required to build enforcement capacity must come from somewhere. For councils already making difficult choices about which statutory services to prioritise, the maths simply does not add up.

Standards vs consistency

Even assuming that the resource question can be addressed, a further challenge of consistency looms.

The private rented sector is national. Tenants in Witham deserve the same standard of protection as tenants in Kensington. Yet the devolved nature of local authority enforcement means that the quality and rigour of regulatory oversight will inevitably vary from one authority to the next. Some councils have well-established, proactive enforcement teams with a track record of taking robust action against rogue landlords. Others, through no fault of their own, lack the infrastructure, expertise, or political will to do the same.

The risk is that the Act creates a two-tier system – not between landlords and tenants, but between tenants in well-resourced areas and those in areas where enforcement is, in practical terms, little more than notional. Without a credible mechanism for monitoring and benchmarking local authority performance, and without meaningful consequences for underperformance, there is a genuine danger that the Act's protections will exist in theory but fail to materialise in practice.

The proposed Property Portal arguably offers some cause for cautious optimism. A centralised, publicly accessible database of landlord registrations and compliance records has the potential to improve transparency and reduce the information asymmetry that has historically lessened effective enforcement. But a database is only as useful as the infrastructure that sits behind it. Data without action is merely more admin.

Looking ahead

None of this is to suggest that the Renters Rights Act is misconceived or flawed in theory.

The private rented sector has needed meaningful reform for years, and the Act represents an attempt by the government to rebalance what most believe to be a relationship that has too often been weighted against tenants. However, legislation which aims to completely resurface this balance needs to have completed the due diligence in remedying the flaws already present, before overhauling the entire system. Otherwise, it simply adds to the backlog of the court system as well as the public bodies, which in practice will make it worse for tenants.

What is actually needed now is an honest, pragmatic conversation addressing funding, workforce planning, training, and the development of robust, consistent enforcement standards. It must acknowledge that ambition without resource is redundant. The Renters Rights Act has changed and will continue to change the landscape. The question now is whether the public sector will be given the tools to navigate it, and hopefully sooner rather than later.

If you would like to discuss how the Renters Rights Act may affect your organisation, or require advice on housing disputes, regulatory compliance or property litigation, please get in touch with Dee Karatay or a member of the Holmes & Hills Property Litigation team www.holmes-hills.co.uk .

Kevin is Corporate Projects Manager at Broxbourne Borough Council. He is a former chartered surveyor with 48 years' experience working for local government and quangos covering large scale regeneration projects including the Millenium Dome, Football club relocations, shopping developments, data centres, offices, etc. He is a member of the Eastern Branch of ACES and has written a number of times for ACES' Terrier. He won an ACES Award for Excellence in 2025.

Sousaphone player with the Hertfordshire Showband (the UKs only entrant in the Marching Band section of the World Music Contest in Kerkrade, Netherlands this coming July).

BROOKFIELD GARDEN VILLAGE What have the Romans ever done for us - (a tale of roads, digging and delays)

Kevin Clark

Kevin wrote about Brookfield Riverside development in 2020 Winter Terrier, where he as ked "Madness or inspired intervention?" He concluded "The processes the councils have been through to date, with its advisors and development partner, will provide a robust platform for the partnership, and vision to develop into the full-blown project, with a massive acceleration expected over the next 12 months." So here we are, inevitably meeting with unanticipated challenges along the way, outlined below. But Kevin does warn us that it is a complicated site.

As the Monty Python discourse in the Life of Brian details - apart from medicine, irrigation, health, roads, cheese, education, baths and the Circus Maximus, what have the Romans ever done for us?

In respect of Broxbourne Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Councils (together "the councils") proposals for Brookfield Garden Village (BGV) the focus fell on roads (although it also involves education and health, but at the moment not a lot of cheese), specifically Ermine Street, which, as a lot of readers will be aware, is a road that ran, and in some places still runs, from London to Lincoln and York.

English Heritage

Through Broxbourne the route, it seems, runs through the council owned Cheshunt Park and northwards through the planned Brookfield Garden Village (BGV) which is jointly owned by the councils. The route of the road was catered for in the original masterplan designs and considered during the local plan process and at Planning Committee stages. However, at the last knockings of the Planning Committee approval process, Historic England (HE), in considering some magnetronic surveys carried out by the councils, decided there was enough evidence to justify placing a Schedule Ancient Monument (SAM) order along the route of the road, but with a 50 metre buffer zone (along each side), as there were indications of the possibility of some sort of settlement at the northern end of the site. This zoning potentially wiped out at least 200 homes out of 1,250 planned and therefore rendering the whole project unviable.

As can be imagined, this left everyone a bit stunned and wondering why HE suddenly took this stance, especially as a number of years early the BBC (that is British Broadcasting Corporation not Broxbourne Borough Council!) Time Team had done an investigation on the road route a bit further south in Cheshunt Park which only made limited discoveries.

Within the planned Garden Village area there are already two other scheduled ancient monuments which are not being touched, mainly because they also lie in

some Ancient Woodland (it's a complicated site); during consultations HE wanted a 50-metre buffer zone around these as well but this was not accepted and the LPA dictated a 15-metre buffer zone, so make of that what you will.

So what did the councils do? The councils' heritage consultants, Tetra Tech, immediately went into consultation with HE to try and delay the scheduling because once scheduled , in effect, that's it, no right of appeal except when it reaches Secretary of State stage, where it may be possible for a political intervention.

After some negotiations it was agreed that the councils would carry out archaeological trenching across the whole of the BGV site and not just the area affected by Ermine Street. Apart from, that is - I said it was a complicated site - the landfill areas from previous gravel extraction.

A scheme of trial trenching was agreed and it covered approximately 5% of the site in a herring bone type fashion, but with a greater concentration in areas of concern. A quick glimpse at Google Earth reveals the extent of the trenching, with the A10 to the east of the site, and it looks like a lot more than 5%! The green swathe of trees in the middle contains the other two SAMs and the route of Ermine Street lies to the west of this, travelling north from a small copse of trees.

The results of the dig were not spectacular, the route of the road was reasonably clearly defined by the ditches on either side, but the surface of the road was not present in any great detail, having probably been disturbed over the years by ploughing and digging of drainage trenches. A large horde of broken pottery was found, but nothing that would essentially prove that a settlement had existed (such as foundations, brickwork, other distinctive finds), and it was considered that it was more likely a small staging post travelling north out of London, as the site is considered to be roughly a day's march for the Roman Legions from central London.

Across the remainder of the site there was again little of note apart from one solitary iron age axe head (shown in the image)

Planning and land matters

Following on from the results, a much smaller zoning area was agreed with HE and a redesign of the master plan meant that with a reference to the road as open space

and slightly moving around of dwellings, coupled with small density increases, the original target of 1,250 homes could be maintained and still keeping within the overall Garden Village concept.

The revised masterplan (see image) shows the SAM of Ermine Street clearly visible to the west of the site.

An amended planning application was submitted and outline approval given on 27 August 2025 (almost two years after the original submission) - this time with no outstanding objections. However, the way was still not 100% clear - did I mention this was a complicated site?

Brookfield Master Plan, August 2025

A portion of the site was owned by local farmers, who had retained the land from the original sale to facilitate the overall project, and the councils were in an agreement with them over how the site, once planning permission was granted, would be marketed and values split.

With the changes to the overall scheme in the intervening years, from the agreement to the submission of planning application, the councils considered that the acquisition of the retained land would now provide a much cleaner proposal to the market.

Despite attempts by the councils to buy out the agreement, the farmers negotiated a private deal with another third party, and over the past 2-3 years, the councils have been in fresh negotiations with this party to reach a modernised version of the agreement, allowing for the changes in the proposed development (the original agreement was entered into in 2014) and a smoother way of bringing the site to the market, not forgetting the councils' ambitions for a new town centre adjoining the Garden Village: Riverside. This agreement has now been successfully concluded and marketing of the land for the first two phases of housing land, amounting to 600 units, commenced in May 2026.

Relocations

To enable all of this, the councils have also had to facilitate the relocations of a local gypsy community, a council vehicle depot, statutory allotments, and a waste recycling centre, as well as coping with a high pressure gas/oil pipeline running through the site and two local streams, badgers, bats, newts, the likely requirement of offsite BNG units to enable the 10% increase, and making major layout changes to the adjacent council owned golf course to allow for the necessary roads infrastructure (did I mention this was a complicated site?).

Realising a vision

The councils are now close to being able to realise a vision that first came forward in 2001, as well as the marketing of the land for the first 600 units being underway; the detailed design for the initial required infrastructure has been completed, and is awaiting final approvals from relevant bodies.

The councils of course will also be affected by LGR while the project is in the infancy of implementation, and this will need to be factored into any agreements with prospective developers. Restricted budgets also mean an inability to implement the required upfront infrastructure works (despite numerous grant and loan applications to central government) which if available, would accelerate the overall programme by around 12 months (note: further applications still being made!).

So in answer to my original question, the Romans provided us with a delay of around two years, increased costs, and a vast amount of broken pottery, which the councils will have to store pending any further investigations that are required as the proposed development progresses, and an open space which cannot be disturbed in any way but will enhance the overall feel of the Garden Village (so it's not all bad!).

In summation - they came, they saw, they built a road (said with my tongue firmly in my cheek) and the councils are coping with it and the commencement of the marketing of the land is a significant step forward for the overall Brookfield Project.

MARMOT CITY, NEWCASTLE
Marmot City – An opportunity for local authority asset management for a fairer, healthier Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Ellie Howell, Dan Martin, Joe Higgins and Leo Chadwick

Stuart Knight facilitated this article and worked closely with the 4 author students from the Master of Planning Course at Newcastle University. The students' research endeavoured to find out and produce recommendations as to how commercial property owned by the council could be used to create healthier environments for communities. Thanks Stuart for facilitating this insightful piece. Now see if you can persuade them to become surveyors.


Dan

Ellie


Leo


Joe

The Marmot City initiative in practice

As part of our final year of the Master of Planning course at Newcastle University we were tasked with supporting the Public Health and Property teams within Newcastle City Council (NCC). The brief was to discover potential ways that they can align their commercial property management with Newcastle's strategic commitment to a 'Marmot City'. The Marmot Review, the foundation of the Marmot City initiative, takes a holistic approach and provides 8 evidence-based principles that should be applied to address health inequalities. There are now more than 50 places across England, Wales and Scotland that have adopted the Marmot approach and are committed to becoming Marmot Places and embedding the following policy principles:

1. Give every child the best start in life
2. Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
3. Create fair employment and good work for all
4. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable place and communities
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention
7. Tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes
8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

Through the research and analysis, we better understood that there is an important relationship between public health and commercial environments. The Marmot Review (2010) highlighted the importance of the social determinants of health, which is backed up by the Public Health England 'Healthy High Streets' framework and the Place Standard Tool that recognise that the quality and accessibility of public places can have a prominent impact on health and wellbeing of individuals and the resilience of communities.

The research therefore endeavoured to find out and produce recommendations as to how commercial property owned by the council could be used to create healthier environments for communities. The report delves into the idea that while NCC's property portfolio is mainly dictated by supply and demand of the market, there is a vital link between a neighbourhood's commercial mix and the wellbeing of residents. The findings suggest that local authorities can play an active stewardship role in shaping the long-term function, resilience and social value of local centres through commercial property management.

The report used a place-based approach to provide a consultancy-level assessment of Newcastle's commercial retail property assets. The study bridges the gap between the Marmot recommendations and the practical reality of commercial property management. Commercial tenancies are not solely physical infrastructures, but instead serve as spaces which provide assets like employment, social interaction and a provision of essential food infrastructure. These are some of the social determinants of health that positively shape the daily lives and wellbeing of residents.

Project context

Our approach was to consider two contrasting local centres in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne as the focus for the assessment: Heaton Park Road in Heaton, and Welbeck Road in Walker. These locations offer a clear comparison between a relatively stable, emerging district centre, and a neighbourhood centre experiencing more entrenched deprivation and physical neglect.

Heaton can be described as an 'up-and-coming' area characterised by a relatively high footfall and stronger commercial demand. This is therefore mirrored in Heaton's more favourable economic profile, while Walker is a slower economy, operating within a more challenging socio-economic context. NCC's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides key information on health and economic statistics for all wards in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The JSNA identifies Walker as one of the city's most deprived neighbourhoods, with almost three-quarters of households experiencing deprivation in at least one key domain of employment, education, health, disability or housing. In contrast to this, Heaton JSNA data displays a considerably stronger socio-economic profile. This is reflected in higher levels of self-reported health and stronger commercial activity.

This report conveys that 'Healthy Placemaking' is not a one-size-fits-all model and instead the design of healthy high streets should be actively curated to reflect the demographics of the residents that it serves. While NCC does not own all the commercial assets within a locality, the management of properties where it does hold ownership should shift from a standardised property management approach towards a demographic-led strategy for its commercial assets to support the building blocks of health.

To enable structured quantitative comparison, a Social-Value Quality Index (SVQI) was developed and applied to both sites. The SVQI assessed six categories:

1. Physical condition and accessibility
2. Economic vitality and employment
3. Social value and community use
4. Environmental sustainability and active travel
5. Equity and inclusion
6. Health and wellbeing impact.

The SVQI was designed and used as a diagnostic tool. Its purpose was not to produce precise measurement, but to support structured discussion and comparison when interpreted alongside qualitative evidence. It must be noted that this project did not use existing evidence-based tools, such as the Place Standard Tool, and should be viewed only as a starting point as to how a high street such as a local or district centre could be assessed in the future. The SVQI was intended as an exploratory and site-specific framework, designed to support comparative discussion around the relationship between commercial environments, social value and health outcomes within local and district centres.

The scores produced from the SVQI were collectively agreed to reduce individual bias and were intended to be indicative rather than definitive. The results were then presented using bar charts to highlight patterns of strength and weakness across each site.

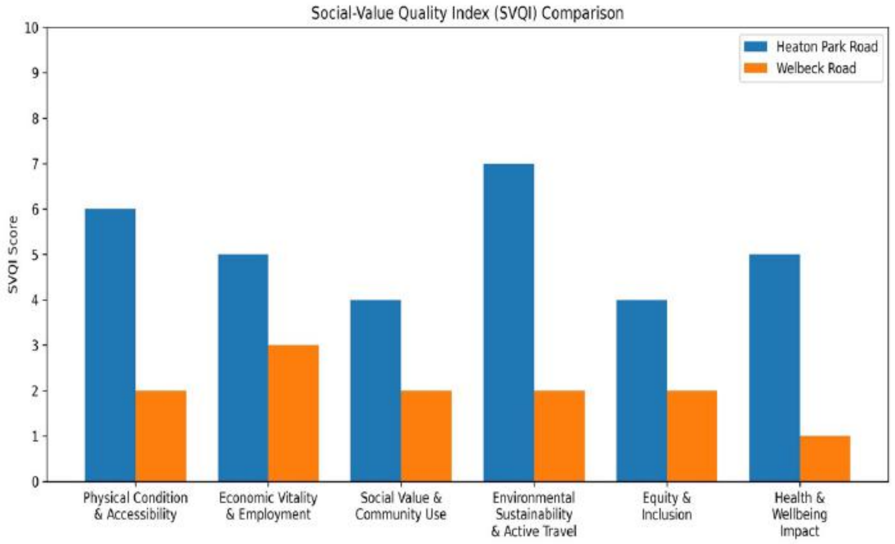
To complement the SVQI, semi-structured interviews were conducted with one tenant with a council tenancy in each area. In Heaton, an interview was undertaken with the owner of 1b Books, a business which operates as both a commercial business and a community space. In Walker, an interview was conducted with an employee of L and G Funeral Directors on St Anthony's Road. The interviews explored perceptions of footfall, safety, affordability, business sustainability, community role and barriers to improvement.

Findings

Heaton Park Road

The SVQI scores for Heaton Park Road reflect a moderately performing high street, which aligns with Heaton's context within Newcastle's economy. The scores suggest that Heaton Park Road is a centre which benefits from baseline investment, consistent demand and reasonable environmental quality. However, it still displays limitations which prevent it from delivering higher levels of social value. These limitations are reflected in the lower

Category	Indicators
Physical Condition and Accessibility	Building condition, accessibility, maintenance, EPC, safety
Economic Vitality and Employment	Occupancy rate, business mix, job creation, affordability
Social Value and Community Use	Community tenants, engagement, public use, inclusivity
Environmental Sustainability and Active Travel	Active travel, recycling, green infrastructure, air quality
Equity and Inclusion	Tenant diversity, local employment, skills/training opportunities
Health and Wellbeing Impact	Health access, sense of place. Wellbeing outcomes



Heaton Park Road Ellie

scores for social infrastructure, equity and health-related indicators.

The score of 6 for physical condition reflects a well-maintained and functional street environment. Shopfronts overall were presentable and attractive, although there were several businesses which weren't open during the day or were boarded up, which detracted from the aesthetic. The street also benefits from good public and active transport links. However, the score of 4 for social value indicates a weakness in the street's ability to act as a wider social anchor. Although cafés and the bookshop provide informal spaces for interaction, there are no dedicated community facilities such as libraries or community halls. The interactions along the street are incidental rather than intentional and are dependent on spending money. However, one of Newcastle's most prominent parks (Heaton Park) does have an entrance at the top of Heaton Park Road, which does provide a community asset for more deliberate social interaction. This is important to consider as part of the holistic role the council plays in place-making but was beyond the scope of this research project.

Ultimately, the SVQI paints Heaton Park Road as a functioning high street that benefits from its socio-economic context, but it falls short in social infrastructure, inclusion and health outcomes. This uneven pattern is important because multiple, interacting determinants shape wellbeing, meaning that partial strengths may not translate into equitable outcomes without deliberate action.

Welbeck Road

The SVQI scores for Welbeck Road indicate a low performing neighbourhood centre. In contrast to Heaton Park Road, where the SVQI profile shows uneven performance and more targeted weaknesses, Welbeck Road displays consistently low outcomes across every category. This suggests that the challenges are systemic rather than isolated weaknesses.

The score of 2 for physical condition and accessibility reflects a street environment that appears functional but tired, with worn and uneven pavements and areas where water pooled along the kerb line. Several shopfronts were shuttered during daytime hours, which contributed to a sense of inactivity. While the built fabric itself appears broadly stable, the public realm shows little evidence of recent investment. The high street received a score of 3 for economic vitality and employment, which reflects the limited strength of the local commercial environment. The observed mix was dominated by vape shops, betting shops and takeaways. Footfall was relatively low at the time of observation. The recognised underperformance seen from both the SVQI and the interview responses suggest that the street is under-trading and under-delivering social value.

Ultimately, the SVQI paints Welbeck Road as a neighbourhood centre experiencing systemic, structural underperformance rather than isolated weaknesses. Unlike Heaton Park Road, where the challenges relate more to unrealised social value potential, Welbeck Road demonstrates the cumulative effects of existing within a more complex and deprived socio-economic context which would benefit from more long-term investment, to strengthen its commercial diversity and repair the environmental decline. The site observations and interviews suggest that market-led management alone may be insufficient in reversing these trends without more active stewardship and intervention from the local authority.

Transferable lessons for local authority commercial property management

Overall, the report argues that commercial property management can operate as a practical lever for health equity when it is aligned with place-based public health objectives. The contrasting evidence from Heaton and Walker shows that healthier local centres are not produced by market confidence alone. They require active stewardship, clear priorities and interventions that treat everyday place quality as part of improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities.

NCC's existing social value commitment already recognises that procurement and asset management can contribute to wider social, economic and environmental outcomes, reflecting the principles of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. Within this context, the findings of the report suggest that commercial property assets should not be viewed solely through a rental income lens, but also as part of a wider place-based strategy for supporting healthier and more resilient communities.

For Heaton Park Road, the emphasis is on incremental, social-value-led enhancement rather than intensive regeneration. Recommendations focus on formalising support for socially productive tenancies, embedding social function into letting criteria, improving street management as a low-cost health intervention, and gradually diversifying health-supportive uses so that wellbeing provision is not reliant on a single service.

The results from Welbeck Road suggests that market-led management is unlikely to reverse decline. A health-led stewardship approach is recommended, grounded in proportionate intervention. In certain circumstances, proposed actions could include differential rent and supported lease models, treating basic public realm investment as preventative health infrastructure, actively rebalancing the commercial mix, and recognising and stabilising informal health anchor tenancies.

While local authorities must remain cognisant of statutory obligations relating to asset disposal and leasing, including considerations around best consideration and financial return under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972, the findings suggest there remains scope for councils to incorporate broader social value objectives into commercial property management and stewardship approaches.

Conclusion

The contrasting evidence from Heaton and Walker in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne demonstrates that the everyday management of commercial property assets has the potential to influence health outcomes, community resilience and neighbourhood vitality. Healthier local centres are not produced by market confidence alone. Instead, they require active stewardship and a strategic approach to the commercial mix and everyday place quality.

This research therefore highlights the potential for local authorities to use their commercial property portfolios not simply as financial assets, but as tools to support healthier and more resilient communities that experience fewer health inequalities.

This research project gives a starting point for how local authorities could begin to assess and create guidance to inform their approach to commercial tenancies. However, understanding the potential would require more robust and evidence-based comparison of similar high streets with and without social-value focused commercial assets management.

Alex is the head of the public sector land team at Savills and provides development strategies and disposal advice to clients across the UK. With over 20 years' experience in the public sector development market, Alex joined Savills in 2016 to operate across the UK business, working with London and regional teams to deliver procurement, agency and consultancy services to a wide range of public sector bodies. Alex is an expert in The Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) procurement and sales, having led teams on many high profile projects, including the Olympic Park, and Chelsea Barracks. Other specialisms include developing workable overage clauses and the Charities Act.

PUBLIC SECTOR PLACEMAKING

Why the public sector now has a defining role in the next phase of mixed-use regeneration

Alex McKinlay alex.mckinlay@savills.com

"From infrastructure and planning certainty to patient capital and long-term delivery, public-private partnerships will be central to creating the resilient, mixed-use city centres needed for the future." Alex urges the public sector to step in where there are viability issues across all sectors and: "the public sector has a major opportunity not just to support mixed-use regeneration, but to actively shape it."

The need for public private partnerships

When I look across the UK's regional cities, I see a new phase of urban regeneration taking shape - one defined not by a lack of demand, but by the challenge of turning demand into viable, deliverable, mixed-use places. Over the past two decades, city centres have become far more desirable places to live, work and socialise, and the relationship between residential, commercial and leisure uses has become more intertwined than ever. But if the next cycle of growth is to happen at scale, I believe the public sector has an increasingly important role to play - not simply as regulator, but as convenor, catalyst and long-term partner.

What strikes me most is that the underlying fundamentals are strong. Build to Rent has overtaken private sale in many city-centre markets, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) has expanded rapidly, co-living is emerging, office occupiers are concentrating on best-in-class space, and retail is evolving through experience, placemaking and diversification. Yet across all of these sectors, viability pressures are becoming the defining constraint. Construction costs remain high, borrowing costs have increased, and in many cases capital values have not kept pace. In other words, the issue is not whether people want vibrant urban centres - it is whether the market can deliver them unaided. That is precisely where I see the greatest opportunity for the public sector.

One of the clearest messages from Savills' latest research reports – "UK Cities: a mixed-use perspective" - is that successful regeneration is increasingly a partnership exercise. Institutional investors are already bringing patient capital, long-term income horizons and a placemaking mindset, while government policy continues to support a "brownfield first" approach that prioritises urban intensification and mixed-use destinations. That combination feels significant. Public bodies can create the conditions for growth through land assembly, infrastructure, planning certainty and targeted funding, while private capital can drive delivery, scale and operational expertise. In a more challenging viability environment, that public-private alignment is no longer a nice-to-have; it is central to unlocking development.

Some city examples

Manchester offers one of the strongest examples of what this can look like in practice. The city's regeneration story has been supported not just by market confidence, but by consistent strategic leadership from Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester mayoral office. That leadership has helped sustain international investor confidence and underpinned major long-term masterplans that are extending the city centre. What stands out to me in particular is the Combined Authority's Good Growth Fund - a circa £2bn funding pot drawing on the integrated settlement, government investment, the Greater Manchester Pension Fund, and borrowing to deliver growth across Greater Manchester. The fact that office and Build to Rent schemes are already benefiting from this patient equity capital suggests a model of public-private partnership that other combined authorities may well seek to emulate.

Birmingham tells a slightly different but equally compelling story. There, the arrival of HS2 at Curzon Street is described as one of the most transformative infrastructure-led regeneration opportunities in the country. Even before trains are running, HS2 has acted as a catalyst for development in Eastside and Digbeth, helping reshape the latter from a largely industrial area into a creative and media hub with new residential neighbourhoods, studios, public realm improvements and mixed-use schemes. That matters because it shows how public infrastructure investment can change market perception and private-sector confidence. I also think Birmingham demonstrates how civic investment in culture and public space can strengthen the commercial proposition of a place, as seen around Paradise, Snow Hill, Arena Central and the wider area around the Library of Birmingham.

Bristol, to my mind, highlights another key opportunity for the public sector: enabling the next geography of growth when the historic core is constrained. The report shows that Bristol's tightly bounded geography and heritage assets have limited residential delivery, even though demand remains strong. That is why Temple Quarter and city centre regeneration areas such as Broadmead feel so important. Temple Quarter is positioned as the city's most significant urban expansion opportunity in a generation, expected to deliver around 10,000 homes and 22,000 jobs, anchored by the University of Bristol's new campus and supported by improved connectivity. I see that as a classic public-private proposition: infrastructure, institutions and civic vision from the public side; development, investment and mixed-use delivery from the private side.

Leeds reinforces the strategic value of public-sector involvement, even where the market is already active. It has become a national leader in Build to Rent and PBSA delivery, with substantial volumes supplied over the last decade. But our research suggests that its biggest long-term opportunity lies in the South Bank and areas to the south of the city centre - vast regeneration zones capable of effectively doubling the size of the city centre. Even with the cancellation of HS2 removing one potential catalyst, the scale and location of that opportunity remain compelling and underlines an important point: where regeneration areas are large, complex and phased over time, the public sector has an essential role in maintaining momentum, coordinating investment and preserving confidence through changing market cycles.

Glasgow perhaps makes the case for partnership most explicitly. The city has a large metropolitan population, strong universities and a substantial commercial base, yet relatively limited city-centre residential delivery. The report notes that creative partnerships and funding solutions will be essential if Glasgow is to grow its city centre population and meet demand spinning out of its academic institutions. I think that is enormously telling. It suggests that in some places the market case is present, but the funding structure, policy environment, or delivery model, still need to be stitched together. The example of the Barclays Campus at Tradeston, alongside the Student Loans Company headquarters and adjacent Build to Rent development, shows how office-led investment can catalyse wider mixed-use regeneration.

Edinburgh brings a different but equally important public sector opportunity into focus: directing growth to the right places when heritage and land supply limit what can happen in the traditional core. Our research highlights Leith and the northern waterfront as the next phase of development, with the tram extension improving connectivity and unlocking higher-density residential-led mixed-use and cultural development. I read that as a reminder that transport intervention is not simply about movement; it is a land-use and regeneration tool. When the historic centre cannot absorb large-scale growth, public investment in connectivity can help open up alternative districts for sustainable expansion while preserving what makes the city distinctive.

Placemaking opportunities

More broadly, I think the public sector's opportunity lies in understanding that mixed-use regeneration is about much more than housing numbers or isolated commercial schemes. It is also about placemaking and the idea that shops, bars, restaurants and cafés provide the ground-floor activation that connects homes, offices and hotels and gives places life. The report also shows how secondary retail areas are being repositioned into mixed-use destinations, and how public realm, amenity and core city centre environments remain critical to occupier demand. For public bodies, that creates a clear agenda: shape places holistically, not sector by sector. The strongest partnerships will be those that combine planning, transport, public space, culture and investment strategy into one coherent urban proposition.

It's clear that regional cities across the UK are entering a promising but more complex phase of regeneration. Demand is still there, and in many cases it is strong across residential, student, office and experience-led retail. But delivery has become more difficult, more selective and more dependent on alignment between public ambition and private capital. That is why I believe public-private partnerships will be central to what happens next.

Whether it is patient capital in Greater Manchester, infrastructure-led regeneration in Birmingham, expansion at Temple Quarter, long-horizon opportunity in Leeds, creative funding solutions in Glasgow or transport-enabled growth in Edinburgh, the public sector has a major opportunity not just to support mixed-use regeneration, but to actively shape it. And if it does, the next cycle of urban growth could be more resilient, more inclusive and more transformative than he last.


CIPFA

Bex is co-director of Platform Places and Footwork, where she facilitates a national movement of 50+ 'Community Asset Developers' and councils – who support each other to transform their town centres for economic, social and ecological resilience. Bex also co-founded circular economy business Library of Things.

UNLOCKING COMMUNITY ASSETS What council officers can learn from each other

Bex Trevalyan bex@platformplaces.com

Bex outlines some community asset case studies of entrepreneurial local community organisations, which "cannot work without partnerships with supportive local authorities, which can be game-changing."

Introduction

When Graylingwell Hospital in Chichester was sold to developers in 2009, the community didn't just hope for the best. Chichester Community Development Trust (CCDT) was established as a condition of the sale, with a mandate to represent local people and shape what came next.

Fast forward to 2025 and CCDT, in partnership with Chichester District Council and others, has activated more than a dozen new, disused and underused spaces for community needs: community gardens, a wellbeing centre, learning spaces, sports clubs, art studios and bike repair shops.

That is what genuine council and community partnership look like in practice. And it is the kind of story we hear more and more.

But for many council property and regeneration officers, a story like this raises as many questions as it answers. How did the council manage the risk? Where did the capacity come from? And how do you bring colleagues in legal, and finance along with you?

These are exactly the questions we have been asking too.

A growing national movement

At Platform Places and Footwork Trust, we are facilitating a national movement of over 50 Community Asset Developers. Entrepreneurial, locally led organisations like CCDT, Civic Square in Birmingham, Hastings Commons, and Back on the Map in Sunderland, securing and activating portfolios of assets to regenerate their neighbourhoods for resilient local economies, communities and the environment.

They all agree on one thing: partnerships with supportive local authorities can be game-changing.

Together with ACES and others, we have been speaking with council officers across England who have been involved in exemplary approaches to community assets, asking how it started, what the barriers were, and what made it work. Here are some of those stories. And an invitation to join what comes next.

How do we balance risk and opportunity?

The last thing any local authority wants is to transfer an asset to a community organisation, and watch it struggle. We hear that concern regularly. It is legitimate.

Local authorities need to manage risk, and balance this with the need to deliver social value and resilient local economies. When it comes to community assets, the worry is that community organisations simply don't have the capacity to manage complex assets and capital build projects. As one officer put it:

"the last thing we want is for a council to transfer assets to a community organisation, then it goes bankrupt and we have to take back the liability ten years down the line."

But it is also, in most cases, a perceived risk rather than a proven one. And the way that risk is framed inside a council determines everything that follows.

In the Wirral, Kate Pierce, Regeneration Delivery Lead at Wirral Borough Council, has worked closely with 6 community organisations to secure and activate buildings across Birkenhead through £25m in Towns Deal funding. Her experience is unambiguous:

"They're all doing really well. I'm really proud of all of them for getting to the point where they're actually delivering, the challenge of getting to this point should not be underestimated. These organisations don't have a big workforce or experience of delivering capital build projects of this size and scale. All credit to them for making it work."

Community organisations, when properly supported, can and do manage complex capital projects. They can also access funding from foundations, social investors, heritage bodies, and community share offers that local authorities typically cannot. The risk calculus looks different once that is understood.

But Kate is candid about what proper support actually requires. Wirral's approach didn't start with the Towns Fund bid; it started years earlier, with sustained relationship-building with community organisations, and a genuine commitment to listening to what they needed. When the bid opportunity came, the trust was already there.

That listening had practical consequences. When community organisations flagged that retrospective grant payments were unworkable for small organisations without cashflow, the council changed the system.

"5 years ago, our usual approach was to enter a grant agreement with an organisation, then release the funds only once they had shown us evidence of their receipts. I realised early on that this wasn't going to work for these small organisations – because they didn't have the cashflow to take on these huge projects. I was then able to have conversations with my Head of Finance and Director of Regeneration to get their buy-in to change our systems."

In another town in Yorkshire, a complementary approach has been to get community organisations into buildings quickly on a tenancy at will or short-term lease, rather than waiting for a fully formed business plan. The assets team there find that organisations almost always refine their plans once they are actually in the building.

"So many people change their business case once they're in the building – based on feedback from the community, for example."

It builds trust on both sides. Officers meet organisations in-person, from the moment they express interest, myth-busting early on, and aligning expectations on timelines and probabilities. For community organisations, that contact is often the difference between a viable plan and one that was never going to work.

But knowing this works and having the capacity to make it happen are two very different things. So where does that capacity come from?

How do we find capacity?

Knowing that community asset strategies and policies work is one thing. Having the time and headspace to write, update and deliver these strategies and policies is another. This is perhaps the most honest barrier we hear from officers: not resistance to the idea, but a lack of time and resources to deal with the level of demand from communities, and address the number of under-invested assets.

It is a Catch-22 that many people in this field will recognise. Making the case for dedicated resource requires someone already to have the headspace to do so. And without that resource, the work either doesn't happen or falls to someone carrying it alongside a very full day job.

Sheffield found a way through it.

Sheffield was once a national pioneer in Community Asset Transfers (CAT), but the onset of austerity and the disbanding of its Community Buildings Team in 2010 left the council for over a decade with no capacity and no formal policy. To kickstart discussions, an interim policy was approved in March 2024 and Diane Owens, Community Services Manager, was seconded from another community-facing role within the council to review the backlog of CAT requests, and work with the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to co-design a new CAT policy.

What followed was 18 months of conversations with over 100 local organisations and individuals, cross-party councillors, and real cases rather than policy templates. Capacity started with making time to listen and learn from the wealth of expertise in the city.

The result was strong political backing, including £410,000 in revenue funds for a dedicated five-person team to deliver CATs going forward, along with a grant scheme, and funds to support VCFSE sector-led initiatives for training, peer support, and strategic voice and influence.

This CAT policy co-design process has started to shift the culture inside Sheffield City Council too.

"Different teams had different starting points but now I'm starting to hear a shared language of community benefit, of partnership and potential rather than of risk." - Diane Owens, Community Services Manager, Sheffield City Council:

"Your council doesn't need unlimited resources, but a clear process, a willingness to listen and be honest, and officers who understand community value."

Meanwhile, in a nearby town, the key to the council's new community assets approach was a single point of contact that community organisations could trust.

"Revenue funding for a dedicated role has been game-changing. It's meant we can go out, engage with community organisations, and make the process uniform. The groups now know who their go-to person is."

Fifteen assets have been transferred since – from libraries, to town halls, to sports clubs – all on 125-year peppercorn leases. Trust and capacity has been built with a range of community organisations – all supported and enabled by one dedicated, resourced council officer.

But securing resources and redesigning the process is only part of the picture. The harder question is what happens inside a council when you ask people to think differently about the buildings they manage and the communities they serve.

How do we shift mindsets internally?

Securing an asset for a community organisation rarely depends on one team. It depends on cross-departmental working, including legal and finance teams, who can feel a long way from the front line. They typically don't have direct relationships and trust with the non-

Future Yard's music venue in Birkenhead - Credit: Future Yard

council leaders delivering this work.

In the Wirral, Kate Pierce found that the most important groundwork was not procedural. It was relational.

"Obviously as a council we have to be aware of and manage risk. It's been critical to get my counterparts in teams like legal and finance to see their role as not just to minimise the council's exposure to risk, but also to help deliver these projects and realise the ambition. I've wanted them to feel part of this delivery team and share the positive outcomes."

Abstract arguments about community capacity are hard to win in a meeting room. Kate's solution was to take colleagues to visit community organisations and venues in-person. Both Make CIC and Future Yard were secured and activated through Towns Deal funding in partnership with Wirral Council:

"The moment when things shifted was when we showed colleagues and senior leaders around Future Yard and Make CIC in-person. They all suddenly got it! There was a lot of energy in the room that day about what was possible."

Seeing is believing. Strong director-level leadership matters too. Officers need to be able to speak candidly to senior leaders, to flag where processes are not working, and propose alternatives. In the Wirral, that trust existed. It is what allowed Kate to change the grant payment system.

Shifting mindsets is not a culture change programme. It is a series of conversations, relationships and moments. And it is entirely within reach.

Make CIC's new building in Birkenhead - Credit: Make CIC

The movement is growing - join it!

The Wirral, Sheffield and Calderdale are not exceptional councils with exceptional resources. They are councils that chose to look at the problem differently, backed their communities and built the internal relationships to make it work. That is replicable. And it is happening more and more.

Across England, council officers from Bristol, to Camden, to Plymouth, are beginning to share this learning, compare notes and shape what good practice looks like from a local authority perspective. We are part of that conversation with our collaborators ACES, New Local, Locality, One Public Estate and the Greater London Authority – and we want you to be too.

Read more case studies from councils working differently with community assets at: https://www.platformplaces.com/inspiration

Have a story to share? Get in touch. We would love to include you in our next peer conversation with council officers working in this space.

Ben boasts 16 years in energy asset development, having served at notable firms like Arup, ESB, and Lightsource, and has experience across technologies such as energy storage, biomass, onshore wind, nuclear power, and more. Over the last 6 years at AMP, he's spearheaded the development of flexible assets, initiating 300MW+ of distributed gas and energy storage across over 60 distinct projects.

BATTERY BOXES

Batteries, blackouts and the bits of your estate you've forgotten about

Ben Wallace ben.wallace@ampcleanenergy.com

Ben here expands on earlier articles about why Battery Box works financially, to this one about why this matters operationally. "it's part of a much broader conversation about how energy works across a local authorities' estate."

There's a particular moment we've probably all experienced. You're halfway through something important; Teams call, email, a spreadsheet that's just about behaving - and suddenly everything goes off. Silence. Darkness. Mild panic. Someone inevitably says, "*It'll be back in a minute.*" Now imagine that, but across an entire country.

On 28 April 2025, Spain and Portugal experienced a full-scale blackout that brought transport systems to a halt, disrupted communications, and left entire regions without power for hours. What's perhaps most striking isn't that it happened, it's how it happened. It wasn't one single catastrophic failure, rather a chain of issues that escalated in seconds.

The fallout has not been limited to Spain and the UK, and many other European countries are looking to bolster the requirements for essential infrastructure to be more "energy resilient".

One emerging technology that is excellent at providing that resilience, which also has a low environmental impact compared to the traditional diesel generator, is Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).

Which brings me back to a familiar subject for anyone who might recall our Spring 2024 and Spring 2025 ACES Terrier pieces (or indeed any of our Terrier adverts!): the rather unassuming BESS we call a Battery Box.

Battery Box: A quick recap

In earlier issues I spoke about Battery Box in fairly simple terms: let us rent space on your estate, often small parcels that that aren't of other development value, and in return, you receive a reliable income stream with very little management burden.

That remains entirely true. If anything, as more capacity is needed across the grid, the opportunity for estates to host these assets has become more compelling rather than less. But what's changed since my first article, is the breadth of value these BESS can deliver beyond rent.

If the first article was about "why this works financially", this one is really about "why this matters operationally".

The shift from income to infrastructure

At its core, a battery is very simple: it stores electricity when it's available, abundant and low cost, and then exports it when there isn't enough and its expensive. But once you place that capability on an estate, particularly one with multiple tenants, varying demand profiles and growing pressure from electrification, it starts to do far more than just sit there quietly earning rent; it becomes a tool. And like most useful tools, it tends to solve several problems at once.

When resilience stops being theoretical

For a long time, "power resilience" has been one of those phrases that sits comfortably in strategy documents, but doesn't necessarily translate into day-to-day decision-making. Events like the Iberian blackout have shifted that perspective. It was the most severe outage of its kind in Europe in decades, and it highlighted how quickly a modern system can unravel when the conditions line up the wrong way. Regulators have been explicit in the response: greater flexibility, faster response assets, and systems that can support the grid at a local level, rather than relying solely on national infrastructure. This is where localised batteries quietly excel.

Placed on an estate, they can support critical loads, smooth out fluctuations in demand and, depending on configuration, provide a layer of backup or support that simply wasn't there before. For occupiers, particularly those with operational or commercial sensitivity to outages, that's not just a 'nice to have'. It's increasingly part of the conversation around leasing, covenant strength and long-term attractiveness of space. And at Battery Box, we are already speaking to many telecom companies, water companies, and even Electric Vehicle charging companies, on how our systems can help them improve their resilience.

The complexity of energy bills

Reducing your energy bill can be as easy as lowering your consumption, but that only gets you so far and often its not even possible without impacting your business.

The variable cost, i.e. how much you consume, also changes based on when (what time) you consume it. Power prices are generally cheaper at night than during the day. Using a BESS to charge at night, and then use that power during the day, can dramatically lower your costs.

There is also a growing fixed charge on your bill. This is partly driven by your peak demand, which might only be for a few minutes a day, compared to a lower base use. Using BESS you can 'shave' that peak demand period, lower your connection capacity, and dramatically cut your fixed costs. This approach can see, on some sites, returns on investment in as little as 3 years.

Electric vehicles: from aspiration to constraint

If there's one area where the conversation has moved particularly quickly, it's electric vehicles. A few years ago, EV charging was a mark of progress. Now, for many estates, it's becoming a logistical challenge.

Connections need upgrading. Demand spikes need managing. Tenants want provision without disruption. It's not uncommon for the biggest barrier to rolling out additional charging to be the local grid connection itself, which is either constrained, expensive to upgrade, or often both. This is precisely the sort of problem batteries are designed to solve.

Rather than building infrastructure for the single busiest moment of the week (or month), a battery allows that demand to be delivered more intelligently, by charging steadily in the background and delivering power when it's actually needed. In practical terms, that can mean fewer upgrades, faster deployment, and a smoother experience for occupiers.

Instead of EV infrastructure being something that creates friction, it becomes something that can be scaled sensibly and, in some cases, commercially.

Making solar do what people thought it did in the first place

Solar has been a familiar feature on estates for years now, and rightly so. But anyone who's spent time looking at the numbers will know that without storage, a significant proportion of the value can be lost, not because the energy isn't generated, but because it arrives at the wrong time. Sunny afternoons don't always align with peak demand.

Without a battery, excess generation is typically exported or underutilised. With a battery, it can be held and used when it's actually needed, dramatically increasing the usefulness of the system. For estates with existing rooftop solar, this is often the missing piece of the puzzle. It turns something that is broadly positive (and good for the ESG report) into something that is far more integrated into the way energy is actually managed on site.

So where does that leave Battery Box?

It would be easy to think of all the above as separate ideas - income, resilience, cost management, EVs, renewables. But in reality, they're converging. The same piece of infrastructure can contribute, in different ways, to all of them.

That's really the evolution we're seeing. When I first wrote about Battery Box, the message was quite simple: this is a relatively low-impact way of generating income from spare land. That's still a perfectly valid starting point, and for many estates, it remains the primary driver. But increasingly, it's part of a much broader conversation about how energy works across a local authorities' estate:

- how it's used
- when it's used
- how reliable it is
- and how much control the landlord or occupiers actually have over it.

The interesting part is that all of this can be introduced without fundamentally changing the look or feel of a site, given the small nature of BESS installations.

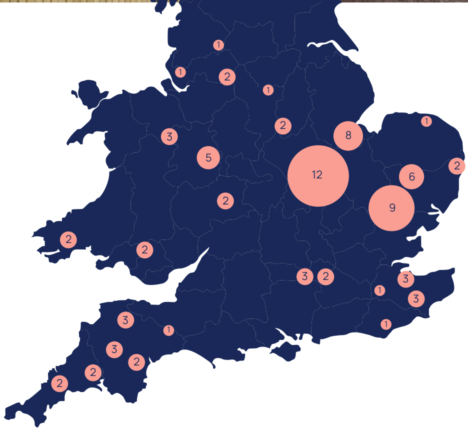
A final thought (and a familiar one)

There's a tendency in our industry to focus on the visible, like the frontages, the buildings, the spaces people interact with day to day. But increasingly, value is being created (and lost) in the background systems that support those spaces. Energy is one of them. And batteries (unexciting as they may sound!) are becoming one of the simplest ways of taking a bit more control of that system, whether through income, resilience, or operational efficiency.

As I've said in previous pieces, it's often the overlooked corners of an estate that end up offering the most interesting opportunities. This just happens to be one that is growing in relevance rather than fading away.

If it's something you'd like to explore

If you've got parts of an estate that aren't doing much, or you're starting to think about EV infrastructure, solar optimisation or resilience more generally, it's worth having a conversation. Happy to sense check whether it's relevant, or just talk through how it tends to work in practice. (And I promise to keep the battery chat to a reasonable level.)



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Guy is Strategic Property Adviser working independently and leading Watling Consulting. He helped shape the original 1999/2000 Local Authority Good Practice Asset Management Guidelines and brings a multi-decade view of how councils' estates and property functions have evolved.

Guy worked in consulting and corporate finance at PwC and EY for two decades. He later established and led the Strategic Advisory team at Avison Young. A public-sector property strategist and transformation specialist, he has 30 years' experience across local and central government, higher education and the NHS. He is currently focused on helping councils and government deliver transformation, LGR programmes and the shift to neighbourhood health.

LGR AND THE PUBLIC ESTATE
From future boundaries to vesting day - Why estate savings require realism about transition capacity and politics

Guy Brett Guy.Brett@watling.com

Guy summarises the myriad of challenges facing asset managers to ready the public estate for the reorganised councils, and outlines the risks of achieving rewards from property rationalisation.

Summary

Local government reorganisation creates a real opportunity to rethink the public estate, from offices and depots to locality hubs, community assets, housing and regeneration. But experience from accelerated and early priority LGR areas suggests that the period between the new boundaries being known and vesting day is quickly consumed by more immediate property work. Asset data, ownership, contracts, FM, compliance, systems, workforce, s16 agreements and s24 controls all have to be understood well enough for successor councils to be safe, legal and operational on Day 1.

This article argues that this is not a reason to lower ambition, but it does require realism about timing and capacity. Business cases and budget plans may assume savings from a rationalised and repurposed estate, but those benefits will not flow automatically from reorganisation. If councils want early estate rationalisation, capital receipts, running cost reductions and service integration, they will need dedicated strategic property, transformation and programme capacity alongside transition work. Otherwise, savings profiles should be tested and delivery risk made explicit.

Reshaping the estate

For councils still awaiting (or recently received) decisions on their future LGR arrangements, local government reorganisation is understandably being framed as a major opportunity to reshape the public estate. Successor councils should be able to think differently about offices, depots, community assets, locality hubs, housing, regeneration and the relationship between property and service reform.

That opportunity is real. It also connects directly with the wider challenge set out in "Unlocking the Public Estate" (1): local authorities already understand that land and buildings can support service reform, financial resilience and place outcomes, but often lack the capacity, governance and funding alignment to act at pace. LGR creates a structural moment to address that problem. It does not remove the underlying constraints.

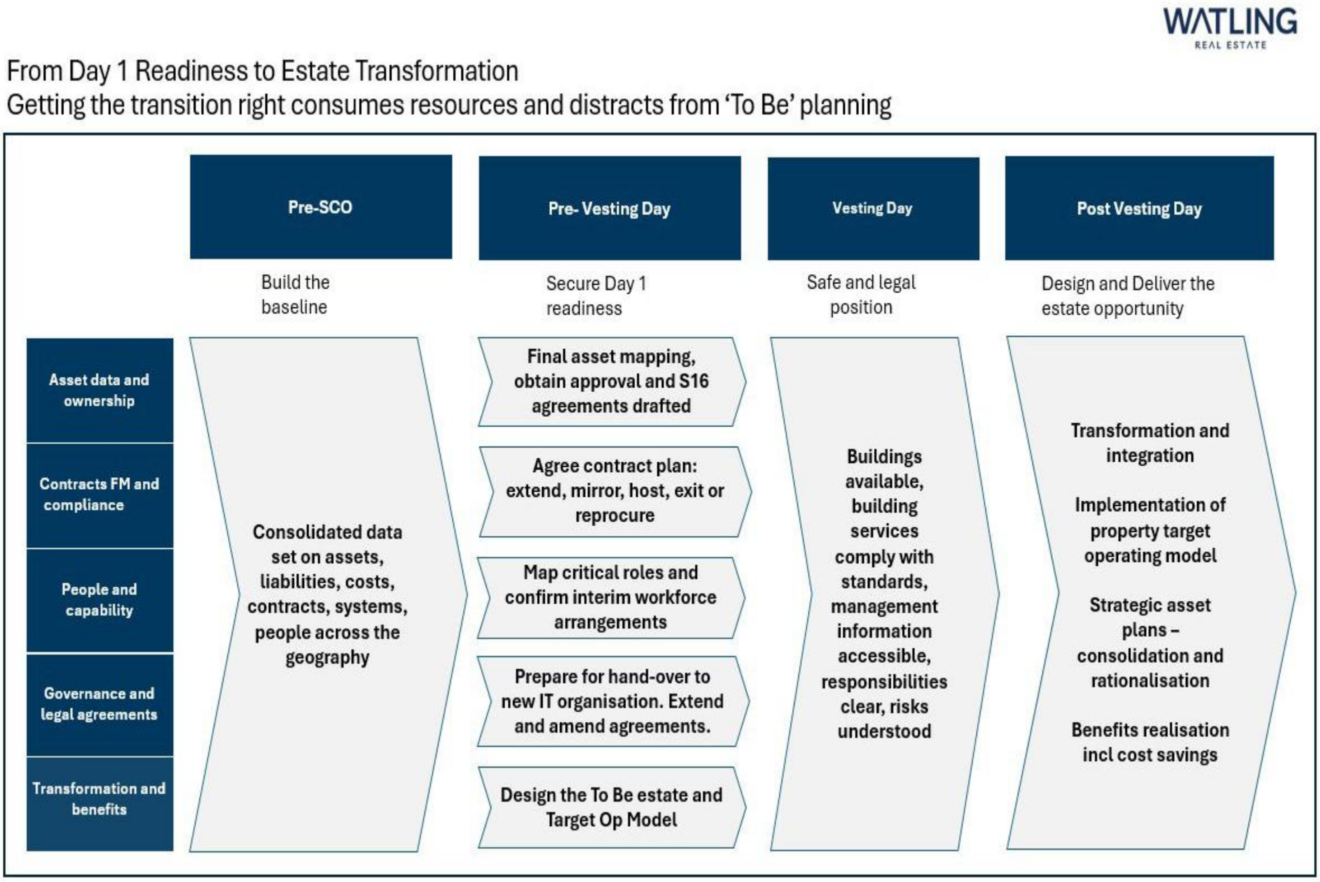
The experience of accelerated and early priority LGR places points to a more immediate reality. Once the future model is known, the property question quickly becomes practical: what has to be undertaken for the new councils to be safe, legal and operational on Day 1?

Data

The answer is substantial. Property teams have to build a consolidated baseline of assets, liabilities, costs, leases, contracts, systems, people and operational use across predecessor organisations. They have to test ownership and occupation, identify assets that do not sit neatly within future boundaries, and understand how shared, cross-boundary, trust, investment or operationally complex assets should be treated. In some places, title and ownership information have been significant gaps. Elsewhere, the title data has been fairly complete, but contracts, FM, compliance, systems or workforce mapping are the bigger pressure points.

Boundary complexity adds further work. Where a county is split into several new unitaries, county services, people, assets and budgets have to be disaggregated. Where a new city or urban unitary crosses existing district boundaries, parts of districts may also need to be disaggregated. The result is not just a new map; it is a set of vesting lines that have to be tested against how assets, contracts and services actually operate.

The s16 work-around is a good example of why this becomes resource-intensive. In simple terms, s16 agreements can



be used where the default transfer of property, rights and liabilities does not match operational reality. They may be needed for shared assets, cross-boundary use, contract hosting arrangements or other cases where a clean transfer would not work. S24 controls can restrict certain disposals or contracts before vesting day, so the forward decision pipeline has to be visible and managed.

The legal machinery of LGR may transfer property, rights and liabilities by operation of law, but that does not remove the practical burden of understanding what is owned, used, contracted, occupied, maintained and relied upon before Day 1. A successor authority may inherit the legal position, but it also inherits the operational risk, compliance exposure, contract obligations and delivery dependencies.

This is why future estate planning becomes harder than it appears from the outside. The ambition to rationalise and repurpose the estate is often genuine. The difficulty is that the same people who might prepare the transformation plan are often validating data, resolving title questions, mapping contracts, supporting s16 discussions, maintaining compliance, and keeping business as usual running. Legal, HR, finance, procurement and programme capacity is also under pressure across the wider LGR programme.

The political dimension

There is a political dimension too. Before successor councils are fully formed, there may not be a single accepted owner of the future estate conversation. One organisation may see early rationalisation planning as sensible preparation. Another may see it as an attempt to make decisions that should belong to the new council. Even data collection can become sensitive if it is perceived as control rather than fair transition planning.

The financial risk is that business cases and budget planning assume savings from a rationalised, repurposed estate before the capacity exists to deliver them. Some savings will be achievable, but the issue is timing. If councils want estate rationalisation, capital receipts, running cost reductions and service integration to flow early, they will need dedicated strategic property, finance, business transformation, HR, and programme capacity alongside the Day 1 transition work. Without that capacity, savings profiles should be tested and risk flagged.

For the next group of councils, the practical challenge is to start early without confusing planning with delivery. Property needs to be inside the core LGR programme, not treated as a late technical workstream. The immediate priorities are a minimum viable evidence base, early identification of complex assets and contracts, clear routes for s16 and s24 decisions, continuity of FM and compliance, and an honest view of the workforce and capability required.

The estate opportunity remains significant, but new councils risk inheriting both an unreformed estate and savings assumptions that cannot realistically be delivered in the first year.

Download the full report here: Unlocking the Public Estate - Findings - Watling Real Estate.

LGR & RECRUITMENT Park Avenue Recruitment

Alicia Gristwood alicia@park-avenue.co.uk and
Grace Esberger grace@park-avenue.co.uk

New advertiser to ACES Terrier, Alicia and Grace here explain how LGR is shaping the organisations we work with, and in turn, shaping the recruitment market. "Whether navigating LGR, supporting teams through uncertainty, or attracting and retaining talent, open and honest communication underpins success." Prioritising wellbeing and communication throughout the process are key.

Alicia is Senior Executive Consultant for Property, Surveying, Development & Regeneration, and Property Services in London and the Southeast. Nearly five years in, she has built a strong track record of placing high-quality professionals into the public sector, helping local authorities overcome persistent recruitment challenges. Her work has supported councils in addressing issues including ineffective placements, long-term vacancies, and gaps in strategic property expertise.

Grace is Principal Consultant for the General Practice and Data divisions in the Midlands and North of the UK. In almost two years with the business, Grace has built a strong track record of delivering high-quality recruitment solutions across the public sector. Specialising in general practice recruitment, she has become a trusted partner to both clients and candidates across the North. She has also recently begun developing a new data analysts desk, expanding the business's reach into a growing and highly sought-after market.

Introduction to Park Avenue Recruitment

Park Avenue Recruitment is a dedicated recruitment partner to the Built Environment, supporting local authorities and housing associations delivering place-changing projects and life-changing community services. Now celebrating nine years in the industry, we've developed a genuine interest in the work councils do and the communities they serve. By providing experienced professionals at the point they're needed most, we help organisations create immediate value and lasting impact.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is shaping the organisations we work with, and in turn, shaping the recruitment market. Operating at the centre of local authority resourcing, we have a real-time view of how these changes are influencing team structures, hiring decisions and workforce planning across the country. Through our day-to-day conversations with clients and candidates, we're seeing first-hand how LGR is impacting both interim and permanent recruitment, along with the challenges and opportunities it presents.

How has LGR impacted the interim property market so far?

Since the introduction of LGR, the interim property market has experienced a noticeable shift. Ongoing uncertainty around structures, budgets and long-term workforce planning has meant many councils are leaning more heavily on interim professionals to maintain stability and delivery during periods of change.

Demand for specialist interims, particularly across estates, asset management and property data, remains strong, as authorities balance transformation programmes alongside day-to-day service delivery.

At the same time, we're seeing an interesting dynamic emerge in the permanent market. In some regions, particularly across the Southeast and Southwest, permanent recruitment has remained active, with candidates seeking long-term security in response to the uncertainty created by LGR. This has led to an increase in applications and, in certain areas, more successful permanent hires.

However, this isn't consistent across the market. Confidence in permanent hiring still varies depending on geography and an authority's position within the LGR process. Movement across the market, particularly into London, where LGR is not taking place, has also contributed to talent migration. As a result, councils outside of London are often relying on interim professionals to backfill gaps and maintain service continuity.

From a team structure perspective, the various phases of LGR are beginning to reshape how property functions operate. In Surrey authorities, where changes are expected from 2027, we've seen permanent staff repositioned into more strategic roles focused on future structures and data preparation. This has created a corresponding gap at an operational level, with interims stepping in to ensure business-as-usual activity continues uninterrupted.

In this sense, interim professionals are playing a critical role in sustaining delivery, while permanent teams focus on longer-term transformation.

Where are the roles?

Throughout our experience as a consultant, councils often follow similar recruitment patterns, facing the same challenges and competing for the same skill sets at similar times.

Since the introduction of LGR, there has been a clear shift in the interim recruitment market, particularly across property and estates functions. Many councils are managing uncertainty around structures, budgets and long-term workforce planning, which has reduced overall confidence in permanent hiring in some areas. As a result, there is continued reliance on interim professionals to provide stability, specialist expertise and additional capacity.

Within the property sector, demand has notably increased for interim data and transformation professionals, particularly GIS analysts and property data specialists. These roles are critical in supporting the consolidation and transformation of estates and asset management systems, with many councils identifying gaps in the quality and accessibility of their property data as they prepare for future authority structures.

Prior to LGR, these roles were not a significant part of my recruitment focus. However, over the past two months, demand has increased considerably, averaging around one requirement per week, with some councils seeking to appoint multiple professionals simultaneously. This reflects both the scale of transformation underway and the urgency to secure specialist support.

Alongside this, demand remains consistent for interim estates managers, asset managers, building surveyors and capital projects professionals, as councils work to maintain service delivery while navigating organisational change and ongoing budget pressures.

Another key trend is the increased competition for experienced local government professionals. With multiple authorities recruiting for similar roles at the same time, candidate shortages and upward pressure on interim rates are becoming more common.

Looking ahead, while permanent recruitment is still active in parts of the market, broader confidence is likely to remain mixed until organisational structures become clearer. In the meantime, interim professionals will continue to play a vital role in supporting transformation, system integration and service continuity across local government property teams.

How can you prepare?

1. Prioritise your wellbeing

Any leadership coach will tell you that the most effective leaders prioritise their own wellbeing, particularly during periods of change. Taking time to reflect and stay aligned to your goals puts you in a stronger position to support your team.

This isn't about stepping away; it's about showing up consistently with clarity and energy. Your approach sets the tone. Leaders who look after themselves are better equipped to make balanced decisions, maintain perspective and support others through uncertainty.

2. Speak to your network

Organisational change can feel uncertain, especially in the context of LGR. Engaging with your professional network, particularly those navigating similar challenges, is invaluable [Ed – ACES, of course].

While shadow authorities are forming at an organisational level, on a personal level, peers across neighbouring authorities are often facing the same pressures. Sharing perspectives can generate ideas, build confidence and help the sector navigate change more collectively.

Conversations with both clients and candidates also highlight the importance of maintaining a constructive outlook. While not always easy, reframing the narrative from concern to opportunity can shift the tone of conversations and support professional resilience.

3. Prepare for resourcing challenges

With LGR underway, change is inevitable. Keeping employees informed throughout the transition is one of the simplest ways to reduce uncertainty and minimise attrition.

That said, movement is unavoidable. We've seen this in other councils transitioning to unitary models, where experienced staff seek longer-term security elsewhere. Combined with an already competitive market, this makes forward planning essential.

Engaging early with trusted recruitment partners can provide valuable insight into the market. Consider:

- What are candidates currently expecting?
- How do we compare to competing organisations?
- How competitive is the market right now?
- What non-financial factors are attracting candidates?
- What type of work are professionals seeking?

Alongside this, ensure your organisation stands out. Whether interim or permanent, candidates are often considering multiple opportunities. Be clear on what sets you apart, whether that's projects, flexibility, culture or leadership.

Finally, your process matters. Clear timelines, streamlined interview stages, and consistent communication all contribute to a stronger reputation in the candidate market. Building strong recruitment partnerships early ensures better representation of your organisation and more meaningful engagement with potential hires.

Conclusion

If there's one consistent theme throughout, it's communication.

Whether navigating LGR, supporting teams through uncertainty, or attracting and retaining talent, open and honest communication underpins success. Creating an environment where people feel able to share ideas, concerns and ambitions strengthens both individuals and teams.

Change across local government is inevitable, but how we approach it is within our control. Those who communicate clearly, plan proactively and remain adaptable will be best placed to navigate the transition successfully, while continuing to deliver for the communities they serve.

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Andrew is a Partner of Remit Consulting LLP and advises property investors and agents on business strategy and technology. As a chartered surveyor, he worked in property management, agency, rent review and strategic corporate property advice, before becoming a management consultant at Ernst & Young. At E&Y, he co-founded the Real Estate Information Solutions team and then, in 2003, founded Remit Consulting LLP.

ASSET MANAGMENT SYSTEMS

Platforms in place, value unproven: the state of property asset management systems in local government

Andrew Waller Andrew.Waller@remitconsulting.com

The 2025 ACES Property Asset Management Systems Survey was delivered by Remit Consulting, in partnership with ACES, exactly a decade after the firm's first benchmark survey in 2015. The survey was conducted across 40 UK local authority estates teams. The findings paint a detailed picture of how the sector uses, funds, and thinks about its property systems. Some of what they reveal is encouraging. Some of it should prompt serious reflection.

Context

Property asset management systems sit at the heart of how local authority estates teams do their jobs. They hold lease data, asset registers, compliance records, and financial information. They are the operational backbone of teams that manage some of the most complex and consequential property portfolios in the country.

Yet until now, the sector has had relatively little independent data on how those systems are performing, how satisfied teams are with them, and whether the investment they represent is delivering measurable value. The 2025 ACES survey, which we delivered in partnership with ACES, was designed to address that gap. Forty respondents, 31 questions, and a broad set of themes covering system choice, data quality, workloads, staffing, and the emerging role of AI and automation.

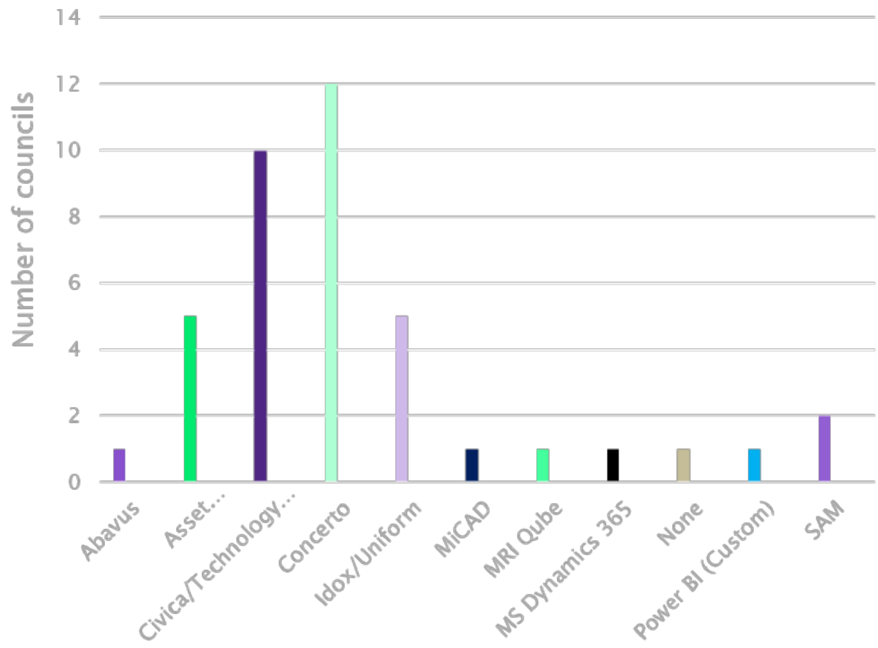
The results are worth reading carefully, not because they tell a simple story of success or failure, but because they reveal a sector at a genuine inflection point.

The graphs and charts illustrate these results.

A consolidated market, built on varied foundations

One of the clearest findings is how far the market has standardised. Three quarters of councils now rely on software companies, and a small number of platforms account for most users. Concerto leads the field at 30% of respondents, with Civica/Technology Forge and Idox Uniform also widely used. A decade ago, bespoke in-house platforms were far more common. Today they are the exception.

That consolidation reflects something practical. Sustaining an internally developed system in a constrained IT environment is increasingly difficult, and most councils have recognised the benefits of working with specialist suppliers who have the scale and resources to maintain and develop platforms over time. The shift is less a strategic choice than a rational response to operational reality.



What the headline numbers obscure, though, is the variety underneath. Systems in current use range from nine years old to a platform with a heritage stretching back nearly fifty years! The median implementation year is 2015, which means many platforms are now approaching, or have passed, a natural renewal point. Adoption years span 1990 to 2025. This is not a sector that has modernised in a single wave: it is one that carries a wide range of legacy alongside its newer investments, and the implications of that vary considerably from one authority to the next.

Heavy workloads, static teams

The survey's most striking findings are not about systems at all. They are about people.

Three quarters of respondents describe their current workload as heavy or extremely heavy. Only a quarter feel it is manageable, even allowing for the fact that most describe it as stretched. At the same time, team sizes have remained largely flat. Over the past two years, headcount has reduced in a third of authorities and stayed the same in 40%. Looking ahead, 55% expect no change in team size, and a fifth anticipate further reductions.

This is the context in which property systems operate. Teams are being asked to do more, with the same or fewer people, and they are increasingly looking to technology to absorb that pressure. Systems are no longer just tools for recording information; they are expected to support compliance, enable reporting, and help overstretched teams function effectively.

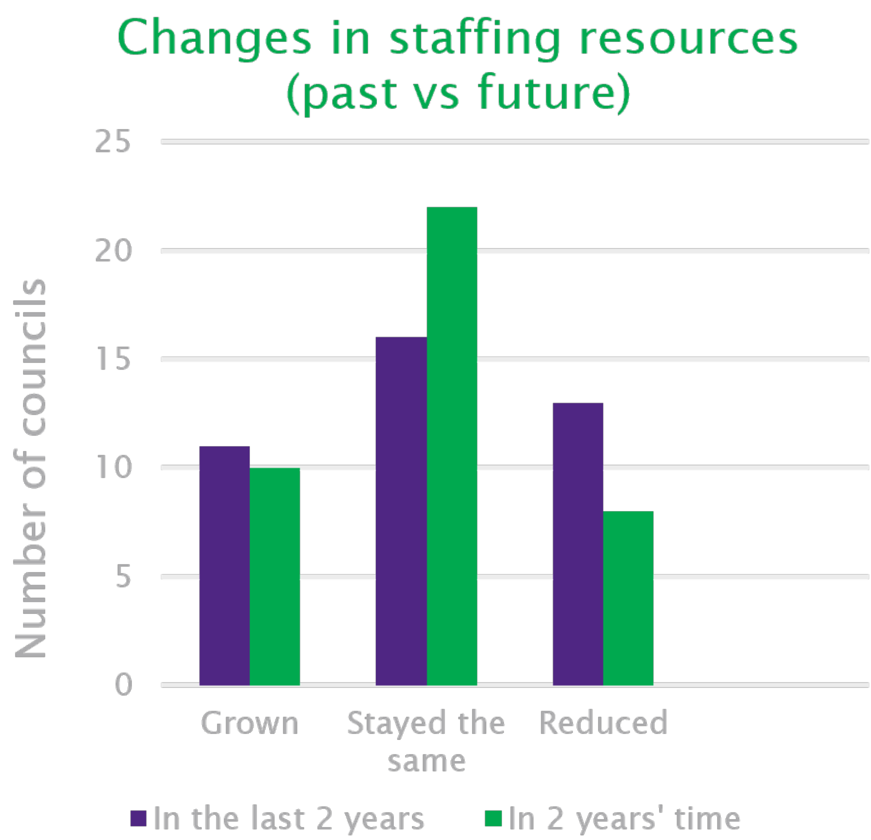
Whether they are doing that is a harder question to answer. The modal number of daily active users across surveyed councils is fewer than five, even in organisations with large property teams. System access may be widespread, but day-to-day engagement is limited. That gap, between the system as a potential resource and the system as a lived tool, is one of the survey's more thought-provoking details. The question it raises is a fair one: are modern property platforms genuinely reducing workload, or are they simply helping teams survive it?

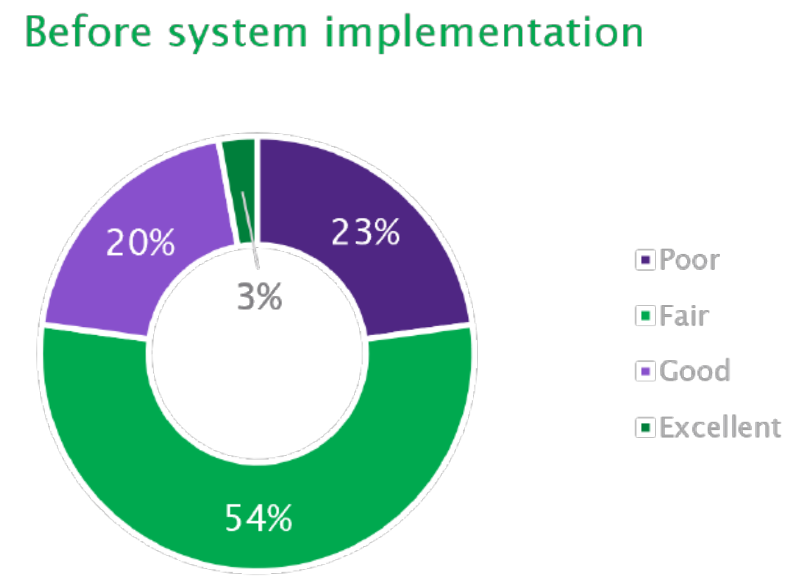
Spending money without measuring results

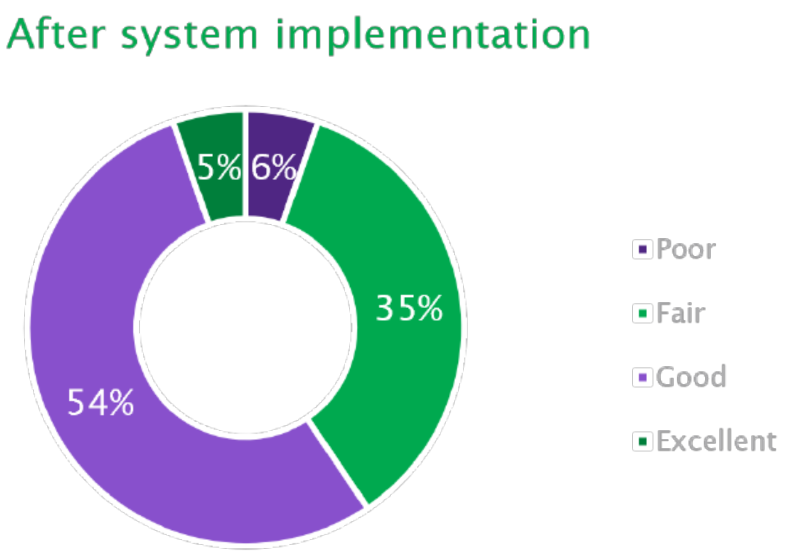
If the workload data is striking, the measurement data is uncomfortable.

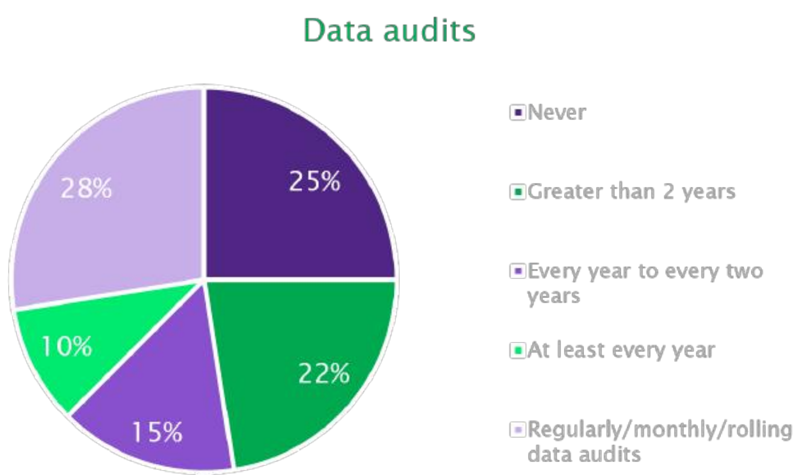
Only 17% of councils formally measure the benefits their property system delivers. That means four out of five authorities are spending real money on platforms they have no structured way of evaluating. Annual spend across the survey ranges from under £25,000 to well over £250,000, yet the data shows no correlation between spend and satisfaction. Higher investment does not produce higher satisfaction scores. Some of the most satisfied councils spend modestly. Some of the least satisfied spend significantly more.

Our survey report describes this as a cycle of "spiral replacement": systems are procured, implemented, and eventually replaced, without anyone establishing whether the previous system delivered what was expected of it. That is a pattern the sector cannot afford to continue, particularly as expectations of what systems should deliver keep rising and budgets remain tight.









This matters beyond the immediate question of value for money. Without clear KPIs and a structured approach to post-implementation review, councils cannot demonstrate to senior leadership that their systems are working, cannot identify where performance could improve, and cannot build a credible case for future investment. The gap between expenditure and evaluation is not just a missed efficiency: it is a governance issue.

Data quality: one-off gains, ongoing risk

The survey asked councils to rate their data quality before and after system implementation. The results are genuinely encouraging on the surface: the proportion rating data as good nearly tripled after go-live, and those rating it as poor dropped significantly. The number reporting excellent data quality also doubled post-implementation.

These are real improvements, and they reflect the sustained effort that most councils put into data cleansing when a new system is introduced. The problem is what tends to happen next.

A quarter of respondents have never conducted a data audit since implementation. Only 28% carry out audits on a rolling or regular basis. Our analysis notes that councils which audit regularly report more consistent and reliable data outcomes, and that where governance is weak, the gains achieved during implementation risk eroding over time.

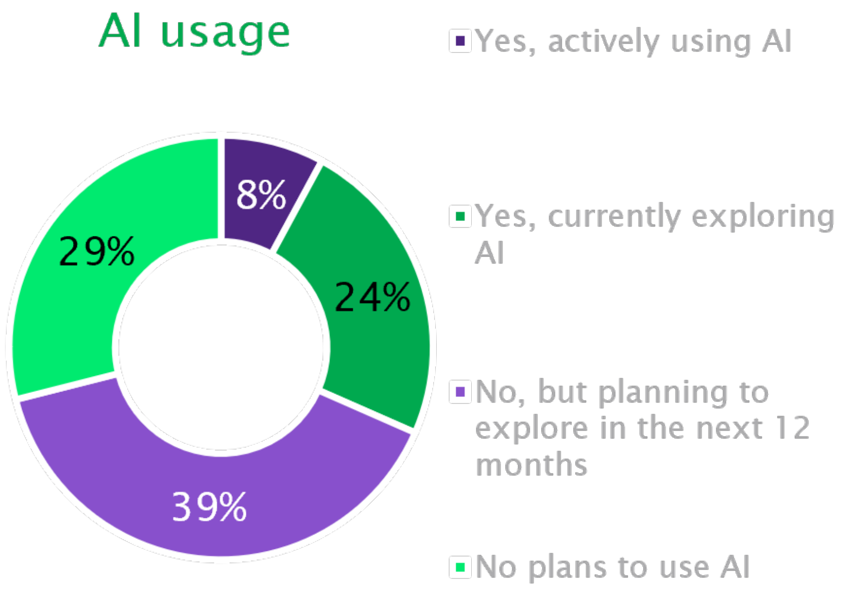
This is a familiar pattern in any sector that invests heavily in project-time improvements but struggles to sustain them in business-as-usual operations. The investment in data quality at go-live is real; the discipline required to maintain it is harder to embed and easier to deprioritise when teams are already under pressure.

It also has direct implications for AI readiness. AI tools, including the lease data abstraction and reporting functions that many councils are now exploring, depend on data that is structured, accurate, and up to date. Councils that allow data quality to drift after implementation are not just losing the benefit of their own investment; they are also limiting their ability to make effective use of the next generation of tools.

AI: growing interest, realistic expectations

AI adoption across the surveyed councils is at an early stage. Only 8% are actively using AI in their property function. A further 24% are currently exploring it, 39% plan to explore within the next 12 months, and 29% have no current plans.

Where AI is being used, lease data abstraction is the most common application, followed by data analysis and reporting. These are practical, well-suited use cases: they involve structured, repetitive tasks where automation can genuinely reduce manual effort.



One finding is worth pausing on. Councils that are already using or exploring AI are not more satisfied with their systems overall than those that are not. In fact, the highest average satisfaction scores in the survey come from councils that use no AI at all. This is counterintuitive, but it is probably less a reflection on AI than on the underlying factors that drive satisfaction: system quality, supplier support, integration, and data foundations. Those things matter more than any individual tool layered on top.

The lesson is not that AI is without value. It is that AI is not a shortcut. Councils that invest in governance, data quality, and effective integration will be better placed to benefit from AI when they introduce it than those that adopt it without those foundations in place.

What Local Government Reorganisation changes about all of this

Our findings take on additional weight in the context of local government reorganisation (LGR), and the merging of multiple authorities, with multiple property systems, multiple datasets, and multiple approaches to data governance and compliance. The vulnerabilities we identified, including weak audit disciplines, inconsistent data quality, limited daily system engagement, and the absence of benefit measurement, are exactly the ones that reorganisation will expose and amplify.

Bringing together two or three authorities is not simply a matter of choosing which system to keep and migrating the data. It means reconciling different data standards, assessing systems that may be at very different points in their lifecycle, and establishing governance frameworks for an estate that may be significantly larger and more complex than any of the predecessor organisations managed individually.

Our survey makes the case clearly: LGR requires early system integration planning, not as a technical afterthought but as a core strand of the reorganisation programme. Property data and property technology need to be on the table at the same time as governance structures and service delivery models. Estates professionals who can articulate the system landscape, its risks and its opportunities, are not just implementers in this process. They are strategic partners.

Looking ahead: stewardship, not replacement

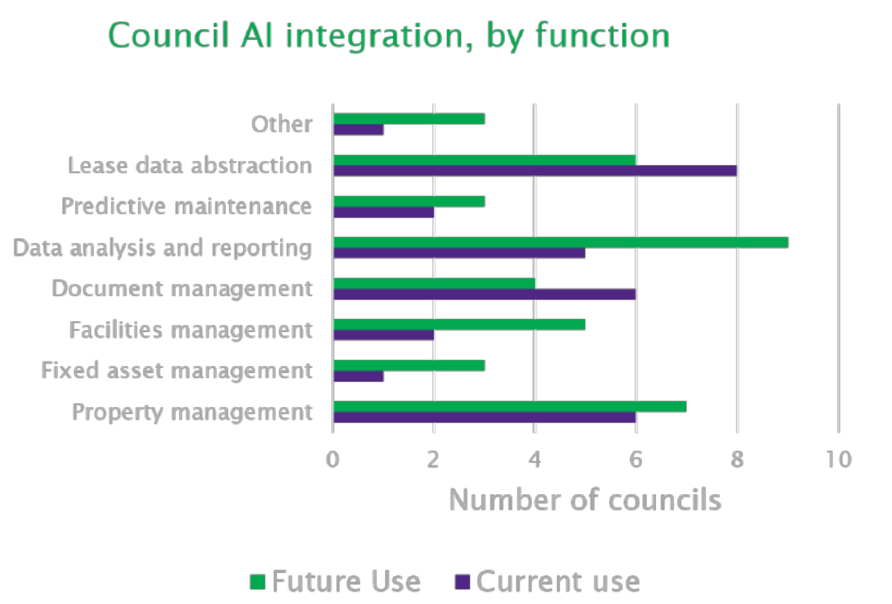
Comparing the 2025 survey to the 2015 benchmark, we describe the past decade as one of steady maturation rather than disruption. Platforms have standardised, legacy has aged, and the sector's attention is now shifting from adoption to optimisation.

That framing feels right. The technology foundations are largely in place. Most councils have a system. The question now is whether they have built the organisational discipline around it to extract genuine value from it.

Our findings point consistently towards the same set of priorities: measure system outcomes properly; embed routine data governance rather than relying on project-time clean-ups; invest in integration so that property systems talk effectively to financial and document management platforms; and treat the asset management system as living infrastructure rather than a static purchase. None of that requires a new procurement exercise. It requires clearer governance, better business cases, and a more strategic approach to the tools the sector already has.

The opportunity is there. Our survey provides an honest baseline from which to move forward.

The full ACES Property Asset Management Systems Survey report is available from Remit Consulting. For further information or to discuss the findings, contact Andrew Waller at andrew.waller@remitconsulting.com.



Sophie is a Senior Analyst in the Research team at Carter Jonas, reporting on market trends and themes across both the rural and commercial divisions.

MODEL ESTATE PERFORMANCE 2026

Sophie Davidson Sophie.Davidson@carterjonas.co.uk

The Model Estate report has been featured for more years than I can remember, lastly in 2025 Summer Terrier. It provides useful short and long-term trends and comparisons for asset classes typically managed by local authority surveyors.

About the Model Estate

The 'Model Estate' is a hypothetical agricultural estate created by Carter Jonas in 2010. The Estate has evolved over the years and comprises over 3,000 acres. It includes a combination of let and in-hand farms, a commercial and residential portfolio, a telecoms mast, fishing rights, a syndicate shoot, a solar farm, a 100MW Battery Energy Storage System, and a quarry. It is located within the geographical triangle bounded by the M4, M40 and M5 motorways.

In using the example of a hypothetical mixed rural estate, similar in structure to many under the management of Carter Jonas, we gain an interesting and helpful insight into the performance of a rural estate and the dynamics at play. This enables us to make strategic recommendations for the future.

Please note that all findings in this report are based on valuations undertaken on 31 December 2025.

Overview

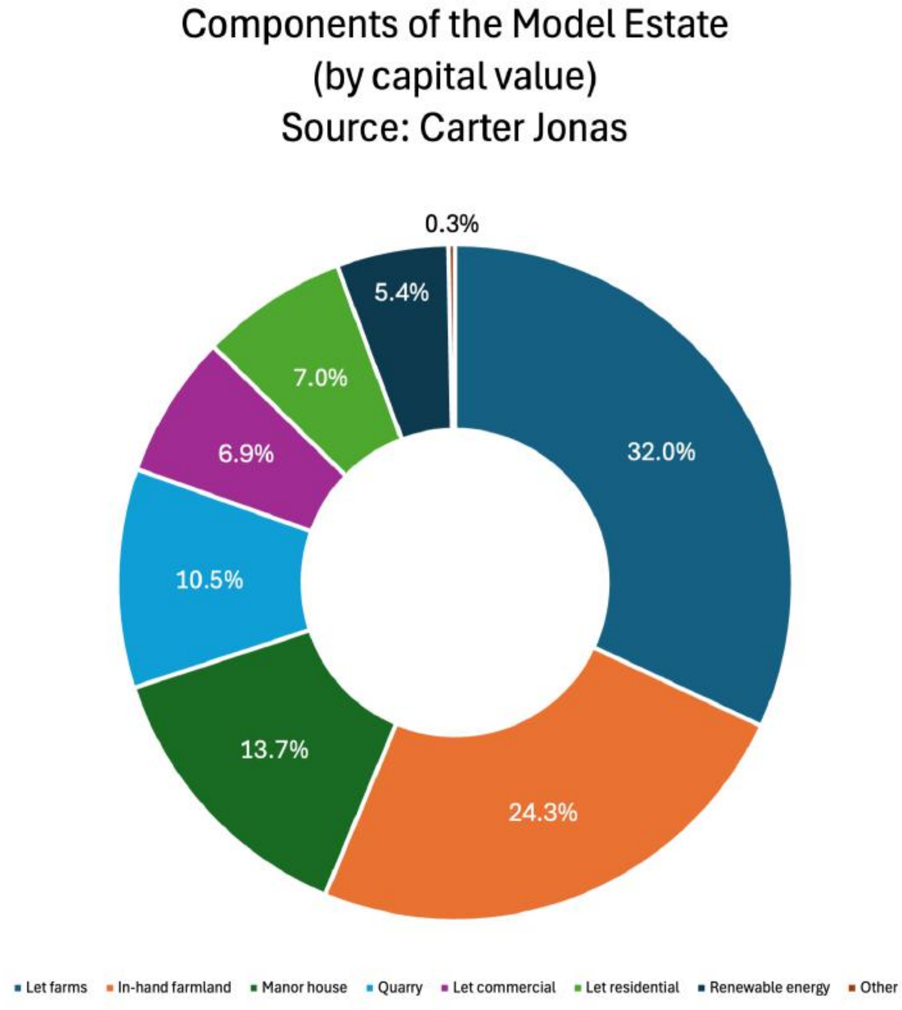
The Model Estate was valued at £53.55m in December 2025, representing a modest 0.7% decline from a valuation of £53.91m in 2024. This marks a deviation from the capital growth trend seen over the past five years, largely reflecting pricing corrections across many asset classes within the Estate.

The valuation has been undertaken during a period of structural change, most notably following reforms to Inheritance Tax (IHT). The Autumn Budget in October 2024 set out significant changes to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR), with a partial rollback announced in December 2025. Many rural estates are now exposed to IHT for the first time, bringing greater focus on proactive succession planning and a clear understanding of asset values and relief eligibility.

However, rural estates remain comparatively attractive relative to many other investments, supported by their income-generating capacity and long-term capital growth prospects. Over the past decade, the Model Estate has delivered a robust annualised growth rate of 3.3%, equating to cumulative growth of 38.3%. This underlines the robustness of diversified estates, which have continued to demonstrate strong long-term performance despite short-term adjustments in specific asset classes.

Component performance

As in previous years, there was considerable variation in capital growth across the different assets. The Estate's renewable energy portfolio was the standout performer by year-on-year



increase, with levels of growth that far exceed the other assets. However, although it increased its share of the total valuation from 3.6% to 5.4%, this remains a relatively small contributor.

The let farm portfolio made a positive contribution to the overall valuation and, at 32.0% of the Estate's total value, remains a key determinant. By contrast, the in-hand farmland, which accounts for 24.3% of the valuation, recorded a decline over the year, partially offsetting these gains.

The let residential portfolio, commercial assets, Manor House and quarry all ended the year in negative territory. Meanwhile, the 'other' assets maintained their value.

Renewable energy: 46.9%

The Estate's renewable energy assets, comprising a solar farm and a Battery Energy Storage System, were the Estate's top-performing asset for the fourth consecutive year. The solar asset benefits from stable, contracted income streams, while the battery system is now operational and performing as expected.

The integrated operation of energy generation and storage provide a clear competitive advantage, supporting flexibility, resilience and secure income. This aligns with a growing investor appetite for income strip investments, where demand for assets backed by contracted income is strengthening values.

Despite an increase in its share of the Estate's total value from 3.6% to 5.3%, it remains a relatively small component in value terms. This reflects a disproportionately high value contribution relative to its 1.0% share of total acreage.

Let farms: 2.3%

The Estate's let farmland continued its upward trend, increasing by 2.3% from the previous year. Representing 58.1% of the Estate's total land area, this makes a positive contribution to the overall valuation.

The let farmland market has remained highly competitive, characterised by a lack of supply relative to demand. The volume of land coming to the market has been limited, reflecting, in part, a growing landlord preference to retain control and flexibility.

Defra data shows that land rented for a year or more, as a proportion of owned agricultural land, fell from 47.0% to 46.8% (-17,458 acres) in the 12 months to June 2025, marking the smallest area recorded since the start of the dataset in 2002. This is a result of a combination of factors, including the increasing allocation of land towards diversification opportunities that offer the prospect of higher returns, alongside changes to APR and BPR (detailed above). These changes have reinforced a preference for structures that increase the proportion of trading assets relative to investment assets, in line with the Balfour principle, as a means of mitigating tax liabilities.

The increase in value of the Estate's let farmland contrasts with the softening seen in average farmland values more broadly. Demand for well-let land has remained supported by limited supply and the prospect of holdings moving closer to reversion. As a result, pricing is increasingly driven by vacant possession potential, rather than income return alone.

Other: 0.0%

The value of the sporting rights, telecoms mast and fishing rights held firm over the last year. These assets continue to generate a steady income, with an overall yield of 13.0%.

Residential: -1.4%

There was a -1.4% change in the value of the Estate's let residential assets over the year, reversing the robust upward trend seen over the past five years. Even though tenant demand remains firm, the investment case for rural residential assets has weakened.

Our recent research on the impact of the government's intention to raise Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) found that 93.3% of privately rented housing on rural estates are currently below an EPC C, and so are at risk of being non-compliant. This compares to 56.5% of all privately let residential properties in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). The likely requirement for significant capital investment has reduced investor appetite, particularly for older, less energy efficient stock.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 introduces major reforms from May 2026, including the removal of no-fault evictions and fixed-term tenancies, alongside rent control measures. While these provisions strengthen tenant protections, they reduce management flexibility and have further weakened investor sentiment. In addition, a 2% income tax surcharge on rental income is due to be introduced from April 2027.

There is already evidence of estate owners choosing to sell non-core assets or converting them to less regulated uses, such as holiday lets. Our recent private landlord survey revealed that 22% of the portfolio landlords who responded have already sold some properties, citing reasons such as tax and legislative changes.

That said, if the supply of rental properties is further reduced, landlords who invest in upgrades could benefit from a supply and demand imbalance, with a smaller supply of homes likely to command higher rents, subject to any rent controls which appear under consideration.

In-hand farmland: -2.3%

In line with broader trends in the farmland market, the value of the Estate's in-hand farmland portfolio recorded a -2.3% change over the year, following six consecutive years of capital growth. By both value and land area, the in-hand farmland is the second largest portfolio after let farms, and is a key determinant of the overall valuation.

Our farmland index indicates that average land values peaked in Q1 2025, before easing gradually in the subsequent months, as economic and political pressures took hold. Both commodity price volatility and eroding profit margins remained key considerations. In particular, elevated borrowing costs, rising labour expenses, and the delayed launch of the Sustainable Farming Incentive have placed pressure on cash flows and led buyers to adopt a more selective approach. Certain segments of the market have continued to command premium prices, but overall, sentiment has become more cautious. This has been particularly noticeable where rollover buyers (benefiting from Business Asset Rollover Relief) are present, where local demand is strong, or where environmental purchasers are active.

Commercial: -4.4%

Following three years of marginal losses, the decline in the value of the Estate's commercial assets accelerated in 2025. Formerly agricultural buildings, the Estate's commercial portfolio comprises fully let office and industrial assets.

The reflects a broader correction in the commercial market, where demand is now heavily concentrated on prime, well-located assets. The RICS UK Commercial Property Monitor reports that both occupier and investment sentiment were negative throughout 2025, albeit with slight improvement towards the end of the year. The report highlights that 'secondary properties remain under pressure'.

Conditions in the office market are highly polarised. Demand and pricing resilience are focused on amenity-rich, energy efficient buildings with connectivity to urban centres, a trend reinforced by the forthcoming tightening of MEES regulations, with a minimum EPC rating of B set to come into force in 2031 (for commercial buildings over 1,000 sq m). In contrast, secondary offices (like those on the Estate) experienced softer pricing, reflecting weaker occupier demand in the market and exposure to MEES-related obsolescence risk.

Similar themes are evident across the rural industrial market, where pricing is increasingly linked to condition, specification and anticipated capital investment.

Despite this, demand persists for competitively priced local workspace offering lifestyle benefits, including lower running costs, parking provision, and attractive rural settings. Limited new supply provides some long-term support, although value resilience will depend on proactive asset improvement and repositioning.

Manor House: -6.6%

The Estate's manor house recorded a change of -6.6% in 2026, following a period of stable valuations over the previous four years.

Several factors are shaping the market, including persistently high borrowing costs, increased sensitivity to running and maintenance expenses, and a growing focus on energy efficiency and sustainability. Buyer demand has become more selective, with the strongest interest now directed towards well-located, energy-efficient properties requiring limited immediate capital expenditure. While underlying demand for high-quality rural living remains, these considerations have continued to weigh on sentiment.

Perhaps the most significant looming change to the market is the High-Value Council Tax Surcharge, targeting properties valued at over £2m. While the change isn't due to come into force until April 2028, the Valuation Office Agency will begin assessments in 2026. Potential buyers are already factoring these recurring annual costs (estimated to be between £2,500 and £7,500 p.a.), into their long-term calculations.

Quarry: -9.9%

Operational activity remained subdued through 2025, with quarry sales declining further due to continued weakness in housebuilding and infrastructure demand. Index linked rent reviews helped offset this, with a 3.75% increase applied to rent and royalty payments.

Encouragingly, the first phase of restoration progressed, including the start of inert waste tipping, which generated around £135,000 in additional royalty income. This also enabled the return of initial restored land to the Estate, now in aftercare and currently used for grazing. However, the operator has issued notice to occupy additional unworked land, and a planning application for a lateral extension is expected shortly.

Despite weaker mineral sales and ongoing reserve depletion, the quarry's value has remained relatively resilient, supported by lease driven income growth and long-term demand. Capital value declined by 9.9% over the past year, alongside significant mineral extraction.

Alternative asset classes

Performance across alternative investment asset classes was mixed in 2025. On a capital growth basis, the Model Estate ranked fourth, slipping from third place held over the previous two years. The basket of tangible assets includes gold, equities, commercial property, residential property, classic cars and fine wine.

Gold prices recorded exceptionally strong growth of 64.6% in 2025. This strength builds on an already robust longer-term trend. Gold is considered a safe haven asset due to its scarcity, global acceptance and independence from financial institutions, qualities that support demand during periods of economic uncertainty, inflationary pressure or geopolitical stress.

Equities, measured using the FTSE All-Share index, rose by 19.8% in 2025, supported by improved expectations around monetary policy and resilient corporate earnings in several key sectors. However, performance was highly polarised. Gains were heavily concentrated in the commodity, defence and aerospace, and banking sectors, masking weaker outcomes in areas such as real estate, construction and media.

The Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) All Property index (reflecting mostly commercial property values) recorded capital growth of 1.0% in 2025. At an aggregate level, this points to a stabilisation in capital values following a sharp correction between Q3 2022 and Q4 2023. However, performance remained varied across sectors, with retail and industrial assets showing growth, while offices, residential, hotels and other sectors declined.

MSCI Residential, which tracks the investment performance of institutionally owned residential property, recorded a capital value decline of approximately 1.4%. While rental performance remained relatively resilient, this drop reflects the impact of higher interest rates, regulatory changes, and market polarisation.

Fine wine declined by 2.5%, indicating a more selective and consolidating market, while classic cars fell by 3.7% as price growth continued to cool following post pandemic gains.

Conclusions

The Model Estate stands out for its relative stability and consistency. Despite a small decline of -0.7% in 2025, it delivers positive annualised capital growth across every longer time horizon shownODEL. The pattern supports the view that a rural estate's diversified mix of assets and income streams can help smooth performance when individual components or sectors are under pressure, resulting in lower volatility.

Chris is a Director in the Hartnell Taylor Cook Business Rates Team. He is also Junior Vice President of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) and serves on the IRRV National Council.

Hartnell Taylor Cook LLP is on multiple public sector frameworks including, but not limited to, the Central Government Agency's Estate Management Services 2 including Lot 6 Rating, and Homes England's Property and Financial Professional Services Framework Lot 1 including Valuation Services. Please contact Kate.Flaherty@htcre.co.uk (Director of Public Sector) for more information.

BUSINESS RATES Is the criticism fair?

Chris Grose Chris.Grose@htcre.co.uk

Chris argues that the current system of business rates is efficient, and counters all the arguments put forward by dissenters.

History and evolution

Hardly a week goes by without someone criticising the business rates system. However, many criticisms come from those with vested interests, including rating agents, politicians and trade bodies.

The current system was introduced on 1 April 1990, after there had been no revaluation since 1973 and no national rate in the pound. Each billing authority set its own rate, and the government considered that some were charging businesses excessively because they had no vote, while keeping domestic rates lower.

The non-domestic system was changed with a revaluation based on rental values as at 1 April 1988 and a single rate in the pound of 34.8p. Domestic rates were replaced by the community charge, later replaced by council tax in 1993. Council tax has had no revaluation since, except in Wales in 2005, although further revaluations are now being considered in Wales and Scotland.

The 1990 revaluation immediately created large increases for some businesses, leading to transitional relief. Since then, problems have often been addressed by adding further reliefs, leaving a system with reliefs layered on reliefs.

Business rates remain an efficient tax. In 2025–26, billing authorities collected £27.8bn, or 96.8% of the amount due, compared with £42.9bn in council tax, a 95.6% collection rate. Critics therefore need to identify an equally efficient alternative.

It also has the advantage that the liability is, in principle, formula based. Reliefs and multiple multipliers have made the calculation more complex, but the amount owed can still be calculated.

Despite this, the system has faced repeated reviews:

- 2014 Business Rate Review
- 2020 Fundamental Review of Business Rates
- 2024 Transforming Business Rates

The 2024 review is notable because the Labour government had proposed abolition in its manifesto, but instead pursued further reform.

Announced changes include moving from five-year to three-year revaluations, the Check Challenge Appeal process, the forthcoming duty to notify, a longer empty rate reset occupation period, lower multipliers for retail, hospitality and leisure, higher multipliers for high-value properties, capped increases for pubs, and a review of slab versus slice multipliers.

As I write, Keir Starmer has resigned and we await a new Labour leader. Andy Burnham has suggested raising the small business rates threshold from RV £12,000 to £18,000, tapering relief to £21,000, and exempting single-site shops, cafés and restaurants. He proposes funding this through higher taxes on online tech giants and warehouses, and by reducing avoidance.

Will this address the criticisms? Of course not. It is another round of tinkering that will create further problems.

The faults with this proposal are:

- A single-site business expanding to a second property would pay rates on both, discouraging growth
- Increasing small business relief does not remove cliff edges as businesses move out of relief
- For pubs, the issue may be historic underassessment rather than current unfairness
- It increases pressure on other ratepayers who must fund it
- It does not address the system's main concerns.

What remains unclear is what the true criticisms are and whether they can be addressed at all.

The concerns

The main concerns appear to be:

- The level of the tax is too high
- The rents its based on are historic
- The requirement for a revaluation to be cost neutral makes predicting rates difficult
- It's unfair on property intensive businesses
- Empty rates are a burden
- The assessments are incorrect.

Taking each in turn:

<u>Level of the tax</u>
The current multipliers are:
(see table below)

The initial UBR in 1990 was 34.8p, so the government can say one 2026/27 multiplier is lower than 1990/91. But there is now a wide gap between the lowest and highest multipliers, and local additions such as Crossrail and City of London supplements can take the rate for large city hereditaments to 56p. It is therefore misleading to imply that ratepayers are paying less than in 1990.

The yield from business rates is intended to rise by inflation, with the rate reset at revaluation. The fact that most multipliers are now well above the 1990 level suggests the total value of the Rating List has not kept pace with inflation, meaning average rental values have lagged behind, which raises a question - why invest in property.

Reducing the rate in the pound or giving sector-specific relief reduces government yield, which must be recovered elsewhere. A council tax revaluation with retention could be one controversial option; a Land Value Tax, as suggested by Andy Burnham, would bring its own challenges.

<u>The rents are historic</u>
The antecedent valuation date is set two years before a Rating List comes into force. That lag appears long, but there are practical reasons. Ideally, the draft List and multipliers would be published at least six months in advance, so ratepayers can budget and raise serious errors. Government then needs time to calculate the rate in the pound, while the Valuation Office must value around 2million properties, gather and analyse rents, produce valuation scales, and complete manual valuations. Rental evidence can only be collected once leases are agreed and reported.

The lag might be reduced to around 18 months, but probably not much less.

Views on the lag depend on the rental market. If rents are rising, ratepayers benefit; if rents are falling, they object. It is unsurprising that retailers have led arguments about historic dates and delays.

England	**2025–26**	**2026-27**	**Comment**
Small business RHL multiplier		38.2p*	Retail, hospitality leisure (RHL) hereditaments under £51,000
Standard RHL multiplier		43p*	RHL hereditaments with RVs between £51,000 and £499,999
National small business multiplier	49.9p	43.2p*	Non-RHL hereditaments with RV under £51,000
National standard multiplier	55.5p	48p*	Non-RHL hereditaments with RVs between £51,000 and £499,999
High-value multiplier		50.8p*	All hereditaments with RVs of £500,000 or above
*There is a 1-year, 1p supplement to rate bills for those not receiving transitional relief nor the supporting small business scheme not shown in these figures			

Unfair on property intensive businesses

Retail and hospitality businesses need premises, so argue that business rates are unfair because they pay a larger share than other sectors. But this is not straightforward. Offices, for example, are now often fully occupied only Tuesday to Thursday, yet still pay rates for seven days a week.

Industrial uses occupy around 3.5 times as much space as retail, but rates per square metre are much lower. Since rateable values are based on rents, if retailers are paying too much, the underlying issue may be rent levels rather than the rates system itself.

Lower multipliers for particular classes may simply support higher rents and, over time, higher rateable values.

The high street versus online retail issue is difficult, especially because many national retailers now operate both physical and online businesses, and may end up paying twice.

Empty rates

Empty rates burden ratepayers but also raise revenue. Properties are rarely kept empty deliberately to support rents and capital values. They are usually empty because:

- There is no demand from a suitable tenant
- They are being let, a process that can take around a year
- They are awaiting redevelopment.

Landlords cannot let to just anyone; they need tenants with a track record or viable business plan. Some units clearly have very limited demand but still attract rates based on the rent they might achieve if let. The Supreme Court decision in Telereal Trillium v Hewitt has contributed to this position, although as expressed in the Upper Tribunal in the same case, the real answer may lie between 100% of occupied value and £0. Until that is tested, full rates discourage investment.

Agency colleagues advise that letting a unit will take around a year from marketing to lease commencement, assuming it lets at all. The legal process is now often the main delay.

Redevelopment also takes time, particularly where full site possession or planning consent is unresolved. Empty rates can make otherwise viable schemes uneconomic.

A solution should preserve some revenue while limiting avoidance. Full time limited exemptions encourage mitigation, so my preference would be 50% liability throughout the vacant period.

Assessments are incorrect

This criticism is often raised by rating agents and industry bodies. Some argue that a higher proportion of successful proposals proves assessments are wrong, but the change may reflect the Check Challenge system reducing spurious proposals.

Individual ratepayers often cannot judge whether their assessment is correct because they lack comparable evidence. The current system also encourages late proposals, as there is only one opportunity and new evidence is difficult to introduce later. Programming proposals for similar properties in the same location could help by encouraging coordinated discussion between occupiers, agents and the Valuation Office.

Conclusion

There are elements of the system that could be reformed, but the necessary changes are fairly minor. They do not justify major alterations or the claim that the system is broken. The system raises a significant amount of tax revenue at a relatively low cost, with a high collection rate. If there was a simple alternative, then it would have been introduced by one of the reviews.

Amanda is a Solicitor and Legal Director at Birketts LLP, advising on a broad range of commercial real estate transactions. She represents a variety of clients including local government, healthcare, charities and private investors. Her work includes an emphasis on the public sector.

DfE SCHOOL LAND GUIDANCE implications for local authorities

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Amanda kindly volunteered this article. With LGR, management of schools' matters will become more comprehensive (pun sort of intended!). The DfE guidance also covers potential land issues held by local authorities on land which is used for schools' purposes, with particular attention to playing fields: "In practice, the key takeaway is that playing field disposals should be treated as a distinct workstream within any project, with dedicated legal and strategic oversight."

The Department for Education's (DfE) updated non-statutory guidance on land transactions involving schools is primarily directed at academy trusts and governing bodies. However, it has material implications for local authorities as landowners, trustees and transactional counterparties. In practice, the revisions reinforce the direction of travel rather than introducing new legal requirements, but they do sharpen risk points for councils involved in school-related property transactions.

1. Increased emphasis on consent discipline affects transaction certainty

For local authorities, the most immediate implication is procedural. The refreshed guidance underscores that DfE consent is not a formality and should be treated as a gating issue rather than a parallel workstream.

There is a greater risk that transactions may pause while Secretary of State notifications or consent decisions are awaited where a local authority is:

- disposing of land to an academy trust
- entering into a shared-use arrangement
- facilitating redevelopment involving retained school land
- involved in the rationalisation of surplus education estate.

This has knock-on implications for programme management, development agreements and conditional contracts – particularly where third-party developers are involved.

Authorities should assume that completion timetables linked to education land are now more tightly controlled and less flexible, and plan disposals accordingly.

2. The nil-value principle reinforces constraints on capital receipts

The guidance restates, with some force, the nil-value principle: that land funded from the public purse should not generate profit when transferred within the public sector for educational purposes.

For local authorities, this reinforces an existing policy pressure point. The expectation is firmly against market value consideration, save for cost recovery where land is being transferred:

- from a local authority to an academy trust
- between public sector bodies for continued educational use
- as part of reorganisation or closure of maintained provision.

While this does not change the underlying legal position, it strengthens the DfE's hand in resisting capital receipts assumptions within wider regeneration or estates strategies. Authorities should be cautious about building budget expectations around education land disposals unless the end-use clearly falls outside the public education sphere and consent has been secured.

3. Greater clarity on 'disposal' helps with early risk identification

The guidance performs a valuable function in delineating the differing statutory concepts of "disposal" as they apply across the maintained school and academy estates, which are not always aligned and can lead to unintended compliance risks if conflated.

For maintained schools, the statutory regime under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and associated regulations casts the net relatively widely, capturing not only outright transfers but also the grant of lesser interests in land.

In contrast, academy trusts are primarily governed by a combination of their funding agreements and charity law principles, with the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Secretary of State oversight operating through consent mechanisms rather than a single codified statutory definition. The guidance therefore helps to clarify where those regimes intersect and, critically, where they diverge.

For local authorities, this distinction is particularly pertinent in two recurring scenarios. First, when engaging with foundation and voluntary schools, the authority will often not be the legal estate holder and therefore not the disposing party in a strict sense. However, the statutory framework still imposes consultation, notification or consent requirements on the authority in its capacity as maintaining body or by virtue of its wider education functions. The practical effect is that the authority cannot treat itself as a passive bystander: it must remain alert to transactions initiated by governing bodies or trustees which may trigger DfE processes, particularly where playing fields or publicly funded land are concerned.

Secondly, in the context of academies, the issue is less about statutory "disposals" in the traditional sense and more about the breadth of controls embedded in funding agreements. These agreements commonly require Secretary of State consent for a range of dealings with land, extending beyond freehold transfers or leases to include the grant of easements, rights of way, licences, or the creation of security. While such interests may fall short of a "disposal" for local government property law purposes, they are often expressly caught by the contractual regime governing academy land. The guidance usefully flags this mismatch, which can otherwise lead to inadvertent breaches where parties assume that a transaction falling outside statutory disposal definitions is unregulated.

From a local authority perspective, the overarching message is that early and properly informed legal scrutiny is essential. Transactions which, viewed through a conventional local government property lens, appear routine or low risk - such as the grant of a wayleave, the regularisation of boundary arrangements, or the release of a restrictive covenant - may nevertheless engage DfE oversight. Failure to identify this at the outset can introduce avoidable delay, particularly where retrospective consent is required or where the Department raises substantive concerns about the impact on educational provision or publicly funded assets.

In practice, this reinforces the need for a joined-up approach between property, education and (where relevant) external academy stakeholders at the inception of any proposed land dealing.

A short upfront analysis of whether the land is publicly funded, whether it forms part of a maintained school or academy estate, and whether any funding agreement or statutory restriction is engaged will often save significant time later in the transaction. It also enables authorities to manage expectations internally and with counterparties as to timescales and the likelihood of Secretary of State involvement, which remains a critical path issue in many school land transactions.

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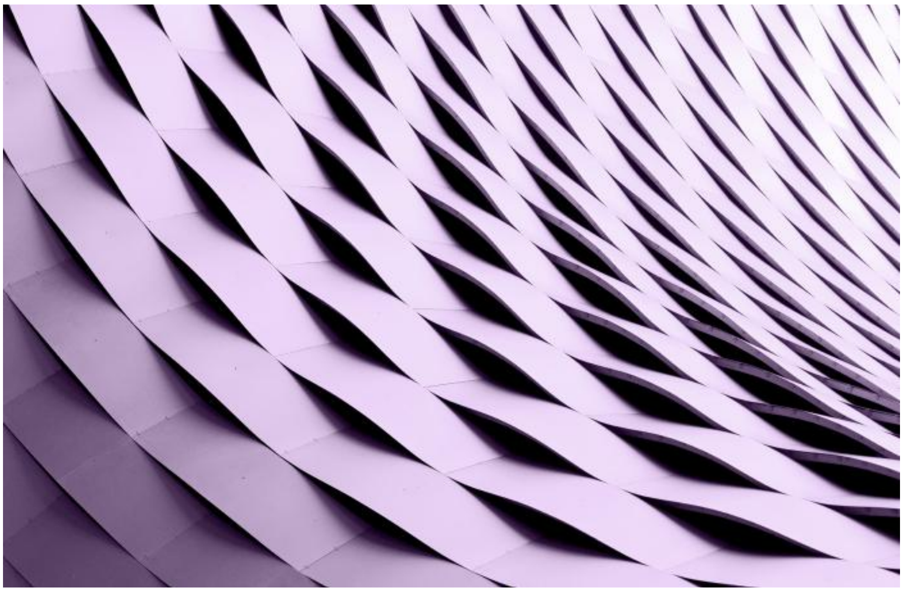

4. Heightened transparency risks for authorities as information holders

The reminder that consent applications are potentially disclosable under freedom of information legislation has implications for councils as much as for trusts. Local authorities frequently provide supporting information to academies or governing bodies – particularly where land history, valuation evidence or policy justification is involved.

Authorities should be mindful that:

- information supplied informally may be incorporated into consent applications
- information may later be subject to public scrutiny.

There is therefore a stronger case for ensuring internal governance and sign-off over what information is shared, and clarity on how commercial sensitivity is explained.

5. Playing fields remain a high-risk category

The expanded commentary on playing field disposals usefully underlines that this remains one of the most politically and legally sensitive categories of school land.

The DfE has, for some time, applied a heightened level of scrutiny to proposals involving the loss or repurposing of playing fields, reflecting both policy commitments around school sport, and wider public interest considerations. The current guidance brings that position into sharper relief by providing greater clarity around process expectations and evidential thresholds.

In particular, the consultation obligations are both broader in scope and more clearly articulated than in earlier iterations of the guidance. Authorities can no longer treat consultation as a relatively informal or box-ticking exercise confined to immediate stakeholders. There is now a clear expectation that consultation will extend to a wider cohort, potentially including parents, local communities, Sport England and other relevant bodies, depending on the nature and scale of the proposal. The emphasis is on demonstrating genuine engagement, with sufficient information provided to consultees to enable informed responses. This effectively raises the procedural bar and, in practical terms, lengthens pre-application timetables for schemes involving playing field land.

Alongside this, the evidencing of consultation has become more prescriptive. It is no longer sufficient to provide a high-level summary of responses or a generic statement that consultation has been undertaken. The Department now expects a structured audit trail, typically including consultation materials, distribution lists, detailed summaries of representations received, and a clear explanation of how those representations have influenced (or failed to influence) the final proposal. From a practitioner's perspective, this necessitates a more disciplined approach to record-keeping from the outset. Authorities will need to ensure that consultation strategies are designed with evidential requirements in mind, rather than seeking to reconstruct the position retrospectively when a consent application is made.

The guidance also reinforces that "nil value" disposals of playing field land are not simply a matter of financial accounting, but are intrinsically linked to demonstrable educational outcomes. In essence, where land is to be disposed of at less than best consideration (or no consideration), the Department will expect to see a clear and direct reinvestment into alternative educational provision - often in the form of replacement sports facilities or broader improvements to the school estate that can be justified as delivering equal or better outcomes for pupils. The linkage between the land loss and the compensatory benefit must be explicit, evidence-based and, ideally, secured as part of the transaction structure.

For local authorities, the cumulative effect of these changes is a noticeable reduction in flexibility, particularly within wider estate rationalisation or asset optimisation strategies. The historic approach, whereby a loss of education land in one location might be justified by reference to a capital receipt supporting the wider education portfolio, is now less likely to find favour in the absence of a clear, site-specific educational benefit. In other words, purely financial mitigation, however robust from a local government perspective, will not in itself satisfy the DfE's policy tests.

This has important implications for schemes involving school reorganisation, co-location or the release of surplus land. Authorities will need to ensure that proposals are underpinned by a coherent strategic narrative which aligns estate decisions with demonstrable educational need. That narrative must then be supported by contemporaneous documentary evidence, including option appraisals, needs assessments, and (where relevant) feasibility work for replacement provision.

In practice, the key takeaway is that playing field disposals should be treated as a distinct workstream within any project, with dedicated legal and strategic oversight. Early engagement with stakeholders, careful structuring of the justification case, and rigorous documentation will be critical to navigating the consent process successfully and avoiding delay or refusal at Secretary of State level.

6. Solar and telecoms leases: long-term estate control is the priority

The sections on solar and telecommunications arrangements will affect local authorities in two ways:

1. Where the authority retains a freehold or superior interest, the drafting of these leases may constrain future development potential
2. Where authorities are co-ordinating estate-wide energy or digital strategies, the guidance prioritises flexibility over income generation.

The emphasis on relocation rights, termination flexibility and restraint in granting Code-level telecoms rights aligns with local authority estate management priorities, but it also means councils should resist pressure to standardise arrangements without site-specific review.

7. Auctions, nurseries and procedural tightening

Smaller points in the guidance also carry local authority implications:

- Where land connected with schools is being acquired or disposed of at auction, consent should be secured in advance – requiring earlier political and officer sign-off
- The introduction of a shortened form for nursery-related disposals may assist councils involved in early years expansion but does not remove the need for strategic alignment with education policy.

Overall impact for local authorities

Taken as a whole, the updated guidance does not alter the balance of power, but it does reduce the scope for pragmatic shortcuts. For local authorities, the practical implications are:

- longer lead-in times for transactions involving schools
- reinforced limits on value extraction from education land
- greater transparency and reputational risk management, and
- an increased need for early alignment between legal, estates and education teams.

In short, councils should expect greater procedural certainty, but less commercial flexibility, and plan their school estate strategies accordingly.

Henry is a principal associate within the property disputes team at Mills & Reeve. He works with both private and public sector clients, dealing with landlord and tenant disputes and other property related issues.

DILAPIDATIONS The tale of the Pearl City: Section 18(1), phased works and expert evidence

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Henry presented at ACES North West Branch's CPD Day and kindly agreed to give a detailed explanation of disrepair and dilapidation claims at lease end, by way of this article, using the High Court's decision for one recent case, explained below.

The High Court's decision in Peachside Ltd v Lee and Keung is a significant modern authority on dilapidations, offering a detailed application of section 18(1) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1927. While it does not establish new law, it is particularly valuable for its practical treatment of (i) the statutory cap under section 18(1), (ii) the landlord's phased works strategy in "escaping" the tenant's s18 defence, and (iii) the decisive role of expert evidence in determining quantum.

Background

The claim arose out of a commercial lease of restaurant premises in Manchester' Chinatown, known as the Pearl City. At lease expiry in March 2021, the landlord alleged (and the tenant did not dispute) that the tenant had left the property in a severe state of disrepair, having effectively only removed their chattels and carried out no repairs as required by the lease. The judge memorably described the property as a "warzone with grease." This firm wanted to M&R fact check the judge's findings here and a deep dive online revealed a 2017 Google Review commending five stars and enthusing that there was "nowhere batter in the Chinese Quarter after midnight"…

The landlord sought substantial damages, asserting that extensive works were required to remedy breaches of the repairing covenant. The tenants resisted the claim on familiar grounds:

- That the claim exceeded the section 18(1) diminution cap ("first limb"); and
- That the landlord intended redevelopment such that repairs would be rendered valueless (supersession) ("second limb").

Understanding and utilising both limbs of s18 is essential in identifying a landlord's true claim for damages, and avoiding an overly slavish kowtowing to the schedule of dilapidations or Scott Schedule negotiated by the landlord and tenant's respective surveyors following lease termination. Section 18(1) imposes a dual restriction, often described as the first limb and second limb of s18, on a landlord's claim for damages for breach of repairing covenants. What made the case notable was that both limbs of section 18(1) were fully engaged and considered by the court and secondly how the landlord escaped the tenant's s18 defence via a two phased works programme.

The first limb of s18 – diminution in value

Under the first limb, damages are capped at the reduction in value of the landlord's reversion caused by the disrepair. This is assessed objectively by comparing:

- The value of the property in its actual condition; and
- Its hypothetical value if it had been in repair at lease expiry.

This first limb is an important statutory defence for tenants seeking to reduce a potential dilapidations claim and serves as a key caveat to the landlord's schedule of dilapidations, which simply identifies the landlord's asserted costs for carrying out the works required to comply with the tenant's yield up obligations. The courts have identified that the costs of the works are evidence of loss, but not the correct measure of loss, an important distinction. Effectively, if it would not be reasonable for a landlord to carry out the works identified in the Scott Schedule, given the limited financial improvement to the landlord's reversionary interest by carrying out those works, then those works should be discounted.

The second limb of s18 – supersession

Damages are irrecoverable where the landlord intends to carry out works (such as demolition, structural alterations or improvements) that would make the repairs valueless. Importantly for the second limb to be engaged, the landlord must intend to carry out the works, irrespective of the state of repair of the premises as left by the tenant. For older units or units which require modernisation, to comply with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulations, this second limb can be an important defence where it can be shown that the landlord would carry out the relevant works, irrespective of the state of the premises as left by the tenant on lease expiry.

In Peachside, the court had to grapple with both limbs simultaneously. The first limb required a valuation exercise grounded in expert evidence, and the second limb required investigation of the landlord's actual intentions regarding redevelopment, and was heavily influenced by evidence of fact provided by the landlord.

The two phases of the landlord's works

A central factual and legal issue was the landlord's decision to carry out works in two distinct phases. A key issue of contention between the parties was whether the landlord always intended to carry out the works in both phases, or only intended to carry out the second phase if the landlord did not obtain a letting after carrying out the first phase of works. This is important, as the second limb is only engaged where the relevant works of "supersession" are to be completed on lease expiry or shortly after lease expiry.

Phase 1: Repair and reinstatement
The first phase involved stripping out the premises to a shell and carrying out repairs to remedy the disrepair required under the terms of the lease and returning the property to a basic shell in a lettable condition. This phase aligned closely with the landlord's dilapidations claim, as set out in the Scott Schedule, as it corresponded to the works required to remedy breaches of covenant.

Phase 2: Redevelopment and conversion
The second phase was more ambitious and included:

- Conversion of the property for office use in a manner whereby it would be effectively ready to let to a prospective tenant; and
- Installation of structural changes including a new passenger lift serving the premises using additional premises on the ground floor which were also owned by the landlord, but were let at the time of the Phase 1 works. When the Phase 2 works would be conducted, it was anticipated that these additional premises would be available to the landlord to install the ground floor lift.

The landlord and tenant's arguments

The tenants characterised the two-phase approach as an "elaborate charade", arguing that the landlord always intended to carry out both phases of the works and had merely split the works to avoid the second limb of s18. If the landlord always intended to carry out Phase 2 of the works and convert the restaurant into lettable office space with improved access via the lift, then the repair works required by phase 1 would be superseded under the second limb of s18, and the landlord's claim severely compromised. The tenant argued that the only reason the landlord was delaying the works was to allow time for the ground floor unit to become available, to allow them to install the new lift to the premises and improve the ground floor access.

The landlord however effectively pleaded poverty. They argued they wanted to spend the minimum required to achieve a letting and if the smaller Phase 1 works had been successful in achieving a letting, they would not have carried out the Phase 2 works.

The court's approach

The judge carefully analysed whether the phases were:

- Sequential and conditional, or
- A disguised single redevelopment scheme.

Ultimately, the court accepted that Phase 1 works had a genuine standalone purpose (to enable reletting) and that the Phase 2 works were contingent and not inevitable at the term date. This finding was crucial. If redevelopment had been inevitable, the claim could have been defeated under the supersession principle. Instead, the landlord succeeded in recovering substantial damages.

The Importance of expert evidence

Perhaps the most instructive aspect of Peachside is the central role played by expert evidence. There was at the time of trial a significant conflict between the parties' experts, especially on:

- The diminution in value of the property under the first limb of s18 (having found that the second limb did not apply); and
- The impact of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 works on rental value and marketability.

The court ultimately preferred the landlord's valuer, finding that the property, if repaired under the Phase 1 works, could achieve a reasonable office rental value and the landlord's conditional two stage works were commercially rational, given the financial position of the landlord.

The tenant's expert faced criticism for straying outside his area of expertise (e.g. into building surveying issues); and appearing overly aligned and advocating their client's case. As a result, the court preferred the expert evidence of the landlord.

This highlights a recurring judicial theme - expert independence and discipline are critical. An expert who becomes an advocate on behalf of his client risks losing credibility. The role of the expert is to present their expert opinion to the court and not argue legal or factual points before the court; that is the role of parties' respective barristers.

Conclusion

Peachside v Lee and Keung is a valuable modern illustration of how courts approach section 18(1) in practice. Its detailed treatment of phased works and expert evidence underscores that dilapidations claims are rarely straightforward.

Above all, the case demonstrates that success depends not just on legal principle, but on credible evidence and persuasive expert analysis.

Caroline is a highly experienced commercial property litigator, advising across all aspects of commercial landlord and tenant disputes, as well as broader real estate litigation. She leads substantial claims and manages teams handling telecoms and property portfolios. Caroline has advised a wide range of clients, including retailers, property investment companies, government departments, developers, telecommunications operators, and charities. She is a member of the Property Litigation Association and regularly lectures on property-related issues to clients and surveyors.

Davitt Jones Bould is the UK's largest and most experienced specialist real estate law firm, operating for over 25 years. With over 75 senior lawyers, we offer unparalleled expertise across the full range of real estate legal services — including commercial property, planning, construction, environment, real estate finance, and property litigation https://www.djblaw.co.uk/

THE INSOLVENT TENANT

Caroline Wort Caroline.Wort@djblaw.co.uk

Caroline presented at the Eastern Branch meeting held at Croxley Park, arranged by Paul Brooks, Watford Borough Council, on 27 March 2026. She kindly agreed to write on this timely and relevant issue of insolvent tenants and terminating tenancies. "A landlord facing non-payment of rent should act swiftly to recover it." Thanks Caroline and Paul.

Landlord options

Amid the current political and economic uncertainties, landlords are becoming increasingly concerned about the financial viability of their commercial tenants. With this in mind, it would be helpful to consider the various remedies available to a landlord when its commercial tenant faces financial difficulties and becomes insolvent.

The landlord has an array of remedies it can pursue against a commercial tenant who is not paying their rent, and some of these may include bringing the tenancy to an end. However, this needs to be balanced against insolvency legislation, which is designed to protect all creditors when there are insufficient funds to satisfy them.

Generally, a landlord should act quickly when it suspects that a tenant is in financial difficulty and struggling to pay its rent. The landlord may accept that the lease will continue, and take whatever measures are available to recover the rent, or it may wish to bring the lease to an early end in the hope of finding a new tenant.

The landlord needs to be mindful of the costs of vacant premises, notably rates and security. This means that, on occasion, even when the tenant is not paying rent, there may be some merit in allowing the tenant to remain in occupation.

This article will consider the landlord's remedies to recover rent and, if the landlord has decided that it is best to cut its losses and terminate the tenancy, the restrictions that insolvency legislation imposes on the landlord's ability to pursue the tenant.

The options available to recover rent include court proceedings, exercising Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery (CRAR), requiring the subtenant to pay, calling on rent deposits, and pursuing guarantors. The options available to the landlord to bring the lease to an early end include forfeiture, surrender, break options, and disclaimer, where available.

Court proceedings to recover the rent

Court proceedings are not always the fastest way of recovering rent, but they can be effective. If the tenant is in administration or compulsory liquidation, the landlord will need the consent of the court, administrator, or liquidator to sue or continue suing the tenant. If the tenant is an individual and is in bankruptcy, there will be an automatic stay of any proceedings.

Where the company is in a company voluntary arrangement (CVA), or an individual is in an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA), the terms of those arrangements will dictate whether the landlord is entitled to sue for the arrears. It must be remembered that there is an initial moratorium on an IVA, preventing the landlord from taking action.

Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery (CRAR)
The CRAR procedure requires the landlord to serve notice on the tenant before the landlord is entitled to instruct enforcement agents to seize goods to recover the arrears. The restrictions on the landlord taking this action when the tenant is insolvent are similar to those that apply when suing for rent, and again, the landlord is likely to need permission to proceed.

Requiring the subtenant to pay the rent
Where there is a subtenant in the premises, the landlord can serve notice under s81 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, requiring the subtenant to pay rent directly to the landlord. Credit must be given for this amount against the tenant's own rent.

This can usually be done without the consent of the court, administrators, or liquidators, although it may be challenged. In the case of a CVA or an IVA, the terms of the agreement will determine whether this option is available to the landlord.

Calling upon the guarantors
If the tenant's obligations are guaranteed under the terms of the lease, the landlord should ensure that it promptly demands the rent from any guarantors.

There may also be an Authorised Guarantee Agreement (AGA) in place where the lease has been assigned. The landlord should seek the rent from the former tenant under the AGA as soon as possible, by serving a notice under s17 on the former tenant, remembering that this must be served within six months of the rent falling due.

Rent deposits
If there is a rent deposit, it is prudent to draw down from it as early as possible, even if the tenant is not required to top it up immediately. Ideally, this should be done before the tenant enters into any form of insolvency procedure. There are restrictions against drawing down on a rent deposit once the tenant is subject to an insolvency procedure, but this will also depend on the wording of the rent deposit deed.


Caroline (far right) and Paul (second left) at Croxley Park

Forfeiture
The most useful of these options is forfeiture, which allows a landlord to end the lease when the tenant has failed to pay the rent. There are a number of prerequisites to taking such action, and the landlord must be certain that there is a right to re-enter the premises for breach of covenant, and that the landlord has not waived this right by taking any action consistent with the lease continuing. If the breach is not rent arrears, the landlord must also serve a s146 notice pursuant to the Law of Property Act 1925. It is always sensible to get advice before taking this step.

Forfeiture can be affected by either peaceable re-entry or court proceedings. Peaceable re-entry allows the landlord to recover possession quickly and mitigate any future losses. However, it should be noted that in either case, the tenant and any subtenants have the right to apply for relief from forfeiture to recover possession of the premises.

Further, the landlord should be aware that it cannot forfeit the lease without either the permission of the liquidator, or the court where the tenant is already in liquidation, bankruptcy, or administration, or where the tenant is subject to a voluntary arrangement.

Surrender
Where the parties are in discussion, it may be in both parties' interests to terminate the lease. By agreement, the parties can surrender the lease. While this is best done by deed, it is also possible to surrender the lease by operation of law. Landlords should be careful where a tenant vacates the premises, to ensure that the landlord does not inadvertently surrender the lease. If a tenant offers the keys back, it is arguable that this is an offer of surrender, which may be accepted when the landlord accepts the keys. Landlords should always be careful when taking back the keys to the premises and, if it is not intended to accept a surrender of the lease, should make this abundantly clear, preferably in writing.

Break options
If there is a landlord's break option, this is also an effective way of bringing the lease to an end. However, landlords' break options need to be carefully construed, and often they are only redevelopment break options, which means that the landlord can only exercise the option if it intends to redevelop the premises. It should also be noted that if the tenancy is protected by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, a landlord's break option will only serve to trigger the renewal process. However, if the tenant is insolvent, it may not wish to take a new lease.

Tenant disclaimer
If the tenant is in liquidation or bankruptcy, the liquidator or trustee in bankruptcy may disclaim the lease. This is a simple process under the Insolvency Act 1986 and allows a liquidator to serve notice on the landlord terminating the lease with immediate effect. The landlord would have the option to apply to court to have the lease vested in any guarantor or subtenant. The landlord also has the ability to claim rent and future rent, although this will be subject to a discount in the liquidation.

Conclusion

A landlord facing non-payment of rent should act swiftly to recover it. However, the landlord should seek advice at an early stage if it is concerned that the tenant may have entered into some form of insolvency procedure, and to check that any action taken is lawful.

David is a land agent, consultant, and member of the Natural Capital team at Carter Jonas. Prior to this, David was Head of the Property Services function at Northumbrian Water for over 25 years. As part of that role, he helped develop the organisation's thinking around corporate natural capital accounting and biodiversity net gain, including how this link into their corporate property strategy and wider business goals.

David was also involved in major projects such as the Abberton Reservoir expansion scheme, increasing its water level by 3.2 metres, so creating an additional 15m litres of freshwater storage. The scheme required careful environmental consideration being within a SSSI, Special Protection Area, and Ramsar Site.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN
Is it a useful tool for managing local authority estates?

David Alborough MRICS MRAC David.alborough@carterjonas.co.uk

In the ever-changing world of Biodiversity Net Gain, David gives a resume of the latest round of government consultations, but says there are opportunities for managers of public sector estates. "Given the uncertainties that remain, local authorities may be best served by starting small, building experience and understanding, and allowing their approach to evolve as the market continues to mature."

A maturing market

Twenty-eight months on, much has changed in the wonderful world of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This article explores what's been happening in the market, where it may be heading, and the implications of the latest government consultations.

Since mandatory BNG was introduced in February 2024, the market has continued to mature. At the time of writing, there are 263 habitat banks covering more than 8,500 hectares, with over 37,000 biodiversity units available for sale. More than 2,000 allocations have now been made to developments, representing a threefold increase over the last year alone.

At first glance, these figures may suggest a significant oversupply of biodiversity units. However, the reality is more nuanced. Many habitat banks have units under option awaiting allocation to developments. As these units have not yet been formally allocated, they continue to appear as available on the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register, potentially overstating the level of supply within the market.

Development and trends

When considering the future trajectory of the market, it is important to reflect on the conditions that existed when mandatory BNG was introduced. Several factors influenced the market's early development:

- When the regime became mandatory in February 2024, development activity was subdued and market uncertainty remained high in the lead-up to the General Election
- Only 20% of major planning applications were determined within the statutory 13-week timeframe
- Discharge of the statutory BNG condition is a post-consent matter
- The planning application process typically begins 6-12 months before submission, with even longer lead-in times for larger or more complex schemes. As a result, BNG was often not considered - or only partially considered - during the initial design stages
- The mitigation hierarchy created a strong preference for on-site BNG delivery
- Many developers, local planning authorities and infrastructure providers were not fully prepared for the implementation of BNG
- Establishing a habitat bank could take between one and three years, while the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register - required for the registration of off-site biodiversity units - was launched on the same day that BNG became mandatory

- At the time of implementation, infrastructure providers across the water, rail and electricity sectors were between periodic funding cycles and therefore had limited visibility of their likely demand for biodiversity units
- Due to the long lead-in times associated with infrastructure projects, much of the existing project pipeline had not accounted for BNG requirements. In many cases, the processes used to develop and assess projects also needed to be adapted to accommodate BNG
- Some landowners and organisations, such as Environment Bank, invested heavily in creating biodiversity units ahead of demand and before securing any sales.

As a result, several trends have emerged within the market:

- BNG has frequently been considered relatively late in the development process
- Developers and local planning authorities have typically sought the most straightforward route through the process to avoid delaying development. As a result, the application of the mitigation hierarchy has often remained largely unchallenged
- Given that developers have direct control over their sites, and have historically transferred long-term obligations to management companies, many have favoured on-site delivery where feasible
- Where off-site biodiversity units have been required, a reactive approach has typically been adopted on a project-by-project basis, with limited strategic oversight or consideration of alternative delivery models
- Some developers have sought to estimate future biodiversity unit requirements using high-level assumptions based on historic development projects and average unit requirements per hectare
- Consequently, biodiversity units have often been procured within relatively short timescales, favouring habitat banks that are either already registered on the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register or nearing approval
- In many cases, biodiversity units have been sourced some distance from the development site. This has been particularly evident for habitat types in limited supply, such as watercourse units
- Infrastructure providers have entered the market at scale relatively recently
- The impact of public procurement requirements has encouraged the establishment of supplier frameworks for biodiversity unit provision, often favouring larger and more established habitat banks.

A two-tier market

Over time, a two-tier market has emerged. Large habitat banks with units already created and available for allocation are increasingly offering significant discounts on bulk purchases and marketing these nationally. This contrasts with smaller, localised suppliers and providers of higher-distinctiveness biodiversity units, where supply is often more constrained.

The result has been a significant reduction in the price of Other Neutral Grassland units, of which approximately 21,000 are currently available for allocation. For larger transactions - typically 20 units or more - prices can be as low as £15,000 per unit, compared with a more commonly quoted market price of around £25,000 per unit. The higher figure often continues to be referenced in smaller-scale negotiations, where supply is constrained, or where planning considerations create a preference for, and attribute a premium to, particular habitat types or delivery locations.

Further downward pressure on prices may emerge in the short term, as larger habitat banks seek to recover their upfront investment and procurement processes increasingly focus on cost competitiveness. However, the supply of these units is finite and current pricing trends may not persist indefinitely. As existing stock is absorbed, there may be upward pressure on prices over the next two to three years, particularly if new habitat banks are not established at a sufficient rate. Procurement frameworks used by infrastructure providers do not always incentivise new entrants to the market, while the inclusion of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) within the BNG regime could create localised supply shortages in the medium term.

A further polarisation of the market may emerge between grassland units and more specialist habitats, such as wetland and watercourse units, with suppliers increasingly developing schemes targeted at specific market sectors.

Government consultations

There have been three consultations on the operation of BNG during the last 12 months. The government has already responded to two of these, while the third has only recently closed. In its recent response, the government acknowledged the importance of providing stability to the market. However, given the pace of policy development and ongoing consultation activity since implementation, it is reasonable to question whether the market has been afforded the stability it seeks to achieve.

The three consultations have focused on the introduction of BNG for NSIPs, measures intended to simplify the process for small sites, and a proposed exemption for certain brownfield developments. Of these, the following points are likely to be of greatest relevance to local authority landowners.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

The government has confirmed that NSIPs will be brought within the BNG regime from 2 November. The spatial risk multiplier will also be amended to allow linear schemes to deliver off-site compensation within any Local Planning Authority and National Character Area through which the scheme passes, on a one-to-one basis.

NSIPs will be required to submit an Outline Biodiversity Gain Plan at the application stage, including details of how the required biodiversity gain will be secured. The full interpretation of what constitutes 'secured' has yet to be tested in practice, but the requirement may encourage developers to acquire biodiversity units, or options over them, at an earlier stage in the project lifecycle.

Promoters of NSIPs are often seeking to deliver multiple benefits, including public access and wider environmental outcomes. Local authority landowners may therefore be well placed to help meet this demand, particularly where they can offer opportunities at scale. With a significant pipeline of projects expected to enter the regime, demand for biodiversity units could increase substantially.

However, capturing this opportunity

may present challenges. Projects funded through the public sector are typically required to comply with public procurement regulations, meaning prospective suppliers must engage with formal tendering processes. In addition, the organisation promoting a scheme is not always the party that ultimately delivers it. Early discussions may therefore not translate into a sale if the eventual developer adopts an alternative route to market. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to whether agreements can be structured to allow novation to a future delivery partner.

<u>Minor, medium and brownfield developments</u>

Turning to the second consultation, which focuses on minor, medium and brownfield developments, one of the most significant proposals is the introduction of a new exemption for developments below 0.2 hectares. It's anticipated that this will sit alongside the existing de minimis exemption for developments resulting in the loss of no more than 25sq.m. of habitat. According to some estimates, this new exemption could remove a significant proportion of schemes from the regime. However, given the relatively small number of biodiversity units typically involved, the overall impact on market demand is expected to be considerably lower (c.10%).

The exemption for temporary habitat loss has also been extended to five years. However, it should be noted that the test is whether the habitat can return to a functioning ecological state within that period, which may not be achievable for all habitat types.

A welcomed modification is the relaxing of the biodiversity hierarchy for minor developments, typically those involving up to nine dwellings. These schemes will no longer be required to prioritise on-site delivery, which could increase demand for off-site biodiversity units. These changes are currently expected to come into effect on 31 July.

Additional exemptions will include development undertaken primarily to enhance nature and for low-impact development that supports public parks and sports facilities.

Finally, changes are proposed to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Of particular significance is the proposal to replace Local Planning Authority and National Character Area boundaries with Local Nature Recovery Strategy boundaries for the purposes of the spatial risk multiplier. This could have a significant impact - both positive and negative - on individual habitat banks, as it would alter the geographic area within which biodiversity units can be traded on a one-for-one basis. These changes are expected to come into effect later in 2026.

<u>Exemptions for brownfield sites</u>

The final consultation considers potential exemptions for brownfield sites. The rationale is that, for smaller brownfield developments, the cost and availability of Open Mosaic Habitat units can present a barrier to bringing sites forward for development. Proposals include the introduction of a formal definition of a brownfield site, including consideration of the proportion of previously developed land required to qualify. Consideration has also been given to introducing an area-based exemption above the 0.2-hectare threshold proposed for all development.

Additional proposals include amendments to the definition of Open Mosaic Habitat within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and allowing its constituent features to be replicated in alternative locations, making it easier to identify suitable replacement habitat.

The prospect of a further exemption has prompted a strong response from habitat bank operators and environmental non-governmental organisations, who argue that it could weaken both the off-site market and the principle of compensating biodiversity losses associated with brownfield development. The government will need to strike a careful balance between these concerns and its ambition to support economic growth through the delivery of brownfield development.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the BNG market continues to evolve at pace. For local authorities considering how BNG could support their estate objectives, now may be an opportune time to explore the opportunities available. The cost, complexity and time required to establish habitat banks have reduced considerably, while demand is expected to increase over the medium term.

However, caution should be exercised when assessing the implications of proposed policy changes. The final BNG regime differed in several important respects from the initial consultation proposals, and the same may prove true of the latest reforms. The ultimate impact of these changes - particularly the introduction of NSIPs into the regime - will only become clear once the regulations are finalised and implemented.

Given the uncertainties that remain, local authorities may be best served by starting small, building experience and understanding, and allowing their approach to evolve as the market continues to mature.

ACES' TERRIER WEBSITE

We have now taken a major step in the development and accessibility of the ACES' Terrier and thanks to the expertise of Marcus M, the journal now has its own website where the experience of reading the Terrier has reached a whole new level through the implementation of the latest technology.

The new Terrier website will become a key resource primarily for surveyors in the public sector, but also for the property profession as a whole.

David is an authorised High Court Enforcement Officer with around 40 years' experience in specialist evictions and enforcement. He is the director for corporate governance and compliance at The Sheriff's Office and regularly works with the National Eviction Team, both companies being part of High Court Enforcement Group.

He has a wealth of experience in dealing with high profile enforcement operations and has planned and led operations to remove demonstrators from complex locations, including St Paul's Cathedral (OCCUPY!), Admiralty Arch, Parliament Square, Bexhill-Hastings by-pass, nuclear power sites, and numerous fracking sites, including Balcombe.

FREEMEN-ON-THE-LAND Pseudo law, possession and protecting council assets

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Something I hadn't heard of, David here explains the beliefs of Freemen-on-the-Land and how safely to deal with them in law.

Beliefs

For many local authorities, "Freemen-on-the-Land" (FoTL) are a growing problem – turning straightforward possession work into high risk, resource-intensive projects, and undermining council tax collection with pseudo law.

FoTL believe that legislation and court orders only apply if they personally agree to it, and that, by withholding consent, they can prevent enforcement. They misinterpret documents as Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights to say that they supersede modern statute. They claim that local authorities are "corporations" engaged in private contract, rather than public bodies exercising statutory powers.

These ideas, imported from the North American "sovereign citizen" movement, gained traction in the UK from the late 2000s via online forums and social media, and is now widespread across debt recovery and possessions.

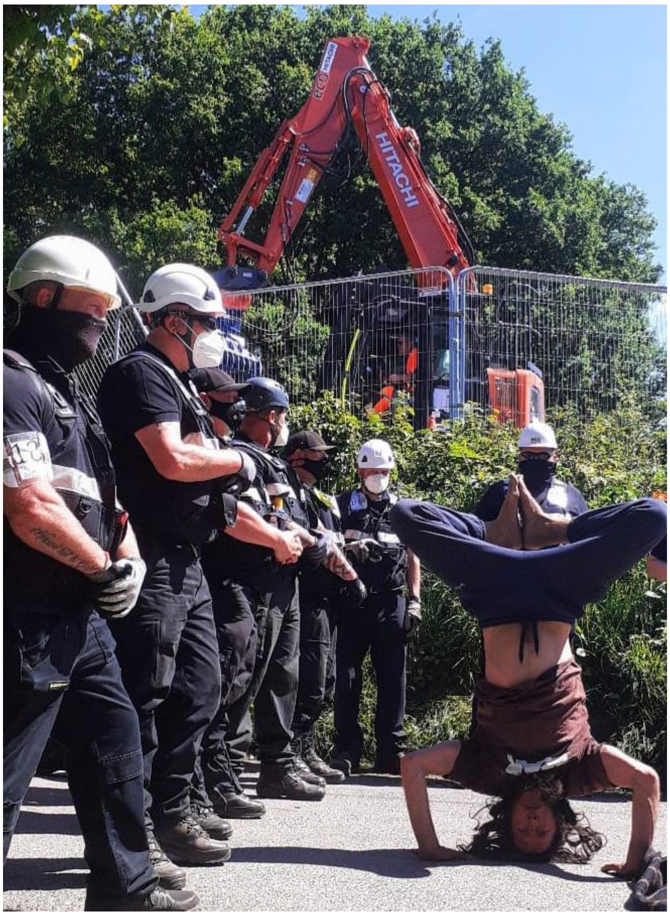
FoTL may style themselves as "Common Law Court diplomats", brandishing documents from supposed "courts" which have no status in UK law, and claiming that these instruments stay enforcement. They may challenge the validity of a writ of possession because it is a digital copy and lacks a "wet-ink" judicial signature, despite the fact that this is not required for the writ to be valid. They may also give:

- Unusual documentation and titles, made up court orders, invented badges of office, and references to "common law constables" – there is no such thing in UK law
- Assertions that clause 61 of Magna Carta allows them to reject modern legislation or convene their own "juries" to sit in judgment on councils, despite those clauses being long cancelled and never having such meaning
- Physical obstruction of evictions by activist groups who believe they are resisting unlawful actions by councils, enforcement agents or mortgagees.

The legal position

The key point is that none of this alters the legal position. Courts across the UK, and other common-law jurisdictions, have repeatedly rejected FoTL arguments as having no legal basis.

When land or property is occupied by trespassers, protestors or defaulting occupiers, a writ of possession remains the most robust method of recovery. A possession order, usually obtained in the County Court, can be transferred to the High Court for enforcement by a High Court Enforcement Officer (HCEO), who will then obtain a writ of possession.



If the possession order is against persons unknown, there is no need to obtain court permission to transfer the order up to the High Court.

The advantages of a writ of possession include:

- It is an absolute remedy, commanding the HCEO to deliver vacant possession
- The HCEO may use reasonable force where necessary and can require police attendance to execute the writ safely
- Obstruction of an enforcement agent acting under a court order is a criminal offence under s10 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, with imprisonment and/or a level 5 fine on conviction
- If there is a re-occupation, a further writ of restitution can be obtained to remove returners without starting fresh possession proceedings.

Council preparation

The operational emphasis for local authorities should be on preparation: robust risk assessment, early engagement with enforcement partners, securing a Computer-Aided Dispatch reference, and early liaison with the police where resistance is likely, and planning post-eviction security (for example, physical barriers, alarms, guardians or K9 units) to minimise the risk of re-occupation in the critical 24–48 hours after enforcement.

If there is likely to be media coverage, almost a certainty with social media, a communications plan is necessary.

Case studies

The images illustrate three separate cases of FoTL evictions.

To give an example of FoTL in action, the eviction of Nottinghamshire homeowner Tom Crawford became a touchstone for FoTL activists. Following a long-running mortgage dispute, Mr Crawford was evicted by one of our Group companies, The Sheriff's Office, after losing possession proceedings. It attracted large-scale support from protestors aligned with freeman-type arguments, who attempted to resist enforcement and later "reclaimed" the property. His case illustrates several practical themes for estates managers:

1. FoTL rhetoric can rapidly transform a private or technical dispute into a public-order issue, drawing in hundreds of supporters and significant police resources
2. Activists frequently present the eventual enforcement as illegitimate, even where courts at multiple levels have rejected their arguments and upheld the claimant's rights, which can undermine public understanding of lawful possession work
3. Using specialist enforcement teams who have expertise and experience in this area is essential.

When it comes to council tax, FoTL use the same arguments – no contract, no consent, "straw-man" theories separating the "living man" from their legal persona – to claim they are not liable for council tax, with courts repeatedly confirming that liability arises from statute, not agreement.

Co-ordinated policy and training across revenues, legal and estates functions can pay dividends: shared templates for responding to FoTL correspondence, clear internal guidance on recognising pseudo law, and agreed escalation routes when behaviour crosses into threats or organised obstruction.

Andrea is a chartered building surveyor with over 25 years of post-qualification experience in the commercial property sector. She specialises in vendor surveys, pre-acquisition due diligence, condition surveys, and dilapidations advice, helping clients understand building risks and maximise value throughout the property lifecycle.

Andrea works with both public and private sector organisations and is recognised for her practical, commercially focused approach to building surveying. She is passionate about training and knowledge, and as well as being an MRICS surveyor she holds TechIOSH and AIFireE qualifications.

VENDOR SURVEYS
The strategic advantage of vendor's surveys

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Andrea outlines the advantages of sellers commissioning vendor surveys prior to completing commercial property transactions, not least, to mitigate risk. It also gives the vendor a well-informed understanding of the asset to be sold. She recommends a greater take-up, to reduce delays down the line.

Commercial property transactions can falter for many reasons, but one of the most common is the discovery of unexpected issues during a purchaser's due diligence process. Technical surveys undertaken late in negotiations can reveal building defects, compliance gaps, or significant lifecycle costs that were previously unknown to both parties. When this occurs, transactions may slow, prices may be renegotiated, and in some cases deals collapse entirely.

One increasingly adopted way to mitigate this risk is through the commissioning of a vendor survey before a property is brought to market.

Despite the advantages this approach can offer, many sellers still rely on the traditional model of waiting for the buyer to commission surveys once terms have been agreed. While common practice, this can introduce uncertainty and reduce the seller's control over the transaction. A vendor survey allows sellers to understand the condition of their asset before marketing begins, providing clarity on potential risks and enabling informed decision-making from the outset.

What Is a vendor survey – and why does it matter?

A vendor survey is a comprehensive inspection and assessment of a property commissioned by the seller prior to marketing. The survey typically reviews the building fabric, structure, services and compliance matters, identifying both existing defects and potential future liabilities.

Rather than reacting to issues uncovered during a purchaser's technical due diligence, the vendor gains early visibility of the asset's condition. This knowledge enables potential risks to be managed proactively and ensures discussions with prospective buyers are based on clear and defensible information.

In practical terms, the vendor survey shifts the balance of the transaction. Instead of responding to unforeseen technical findings later in the process, the seller is able to approach negotiations with a well-informed understanding of the property.

The practical benefits

Professionalism and transparency

Buyers in the commercial property market are increasingly cautious of unforeseen liabilities. When technical information is provided at the outset, it demonstrates transparency and signals that the asset has been professionally assessed.

Properties marketed with this level of preparation often attract more informed interest, as potential buyers can better understand the condition of the building and the risks associated with ownership.

Accurate and defensible pricing

Transactions frequently encounter difficulties when a purchaser's survey identifies unexpected defects. Vendor surveys allow sellers to establish realistic pricing from the outset or address relatively minor issues before they become negotiation obstacles.

This reduces the likelihood of late-stage price adjustments and helps maintain certainty around the agreed value.

<u>More efficient transactions</u>
Where technical information is available from the beginning of the marketing process, purchasers are able to progress their due diligence more efficiently. Queries can be addressed early, and technical concerns resolved before they develop into delays.

As a result, transactions involving vendor surveys often progress with fewer interruptions and reduced negotiation friction.

<u>Reduced risk of deal failure</u>
The discovery of significant defects late in the transaction process remains one of the most common causes of failed property sales. Such findings can lead to substantial price reductions or the withdrawal of the purchaser entirely.

By identifying potential issues at an early stage and determining how they are addressed or disclosed, vendor surveys allow sellers to maintain greater control over the transaction process.

Common issues identified during vendor surveys

Building surveys commissioned prior to sale frequently identify a range of matters that may influence negotiations if discovered later by a purchaser. Watts surveyors commonly encounter the following:

- Compliance and regulatory matters - Vendor surveys may identify gaps in documentation or regulatory compliance, including fire safety provisions or historic alterations. Addressing these matters before marketing begins can prevent them becoming obstacles during the purchaser's due diligence process
- Lifecycle and maintenance considerations - Mechanical and electrical systems approaching the end of their service life are a common finding. Early identification allows sellers to provide clarity on anticipated replacement or maintenance requirements, enabling buyers to incorporate these costs within their investment appraisal
- Building fabric defects - Issues relating to roofing systems, façades, external envelope elements or drainage are also frequently encountered. Identifying these issues early provides the opportunity for remedial works to be undertaken or for accurate cost information to be provided to prospective purchasers.

Managing information during the sales process

A common consideration for vendors commissioning a survey is how much information should be shared with potential buyers.

In practice, a structured approach is often adopted. A summary of key findings may be provided within the marketing documentation, with the full survey report made available to serious parties during the due diligence stage. This allows transparency to be maintained, while enabling the vendor to manage the disclosure of detailed technical information appropriately.

A proactive approach to property transactions

In an increasingly transparent and risk-conscious property market, preparation plays a critical role in the success of commercial transactions. Vendor surveys provide clarity on the condition of an asset, allow potential risks to be managed before marketing begins, and support negotiations based on informed technical understanding.

For property owners seeking to reduce transaction risk and maintain momentum through the sales process, commissioning a vendor survey prior to marketing can provide a significant strategic advantage.

At Watts, we have worked with a range of public sector organisations, including the MOD, the Department for Education, local authorities, the NHS, and several museums, providing surveys, property advice, and transaction support.

To date, we have not seen significant uptake of vendor surveys within this sector, perhaps due to the perceived upfront costs. However, in an increasingly challenging market, with a growing focus on long-term value, sustainability, and informed decision-making, it is surely only a matter of time before their benefits are more widely recognised.

Neil is Head of Engagement at ACES.

Hannah is Graduate Estates & Commercial Property Surveyor, Corporate Property – Assets and Investment, Suffolk County Council.

FACES CANDIDATE SUPPORT
How we can help

Neil Webster, Hannah Hammond and Tayo Olanite

Introduced by Neil, Hannah and Tayo give insights into the APC experience. Congratulations to both in getting those precious MRICS letters.

As part of the Future ACES (FACES) programme we have been offering support to candidates for their RICS Assessment of Professional Competency (APC). In particular, we have been providing mock interviews ahead of their formal interview with the panel. We are pleased to report that the majority of candidates are passing, thanks to their dedication and the support of their employees - but we like to think we have played a small part.

I therefore asked two of the recently successful candidates, Hannah and Tayo, to give me their views on the process. Their articles are published in full below.

If you or a colleague are on the journey towards RICS qualification and are not signed up to FACES, you can do so here https://tinyurl.com/3crkj57u

If you are signed up and would like a mock interview, just contact Neil at neil.webster@aces.org.uk .

Now lets here from the successful candidates:

Hannah

Becoming MRICS is my proudest achievement to date – not because it came easily, but because it absolutely didn't.

I followed the apprenticeship route and, after graduating, actually deferred sitting my APC twice. Quite simply, I didn't feel ready. When I did eventually put myself forward, I was referred on my first attempt. I found that incredibly tough – it felt like a huge setback, and if I'm honest, I seriously questioned whether I wanted to continue.

However, looking back, the feedback I received was fair, honest and ultimately invaluable. It gave me a clear picture of where I needed to improve, and I came back into the process with a completely different mindset. For my second attempt, I committed fully. I booked in regular mock interviews, revised consistently, and really drilled into the mandatory competencies and key data. I made sure I knew my case study and summary of experience inside out.

Tayo is employed by Hyndburn Borough Council.

I also made good use of AI tools to support my revision, helping me structure answers, test my knowledge, and refine my understanding of key topics, and even run quick fire live revision sessions on tough topics – it even gave me constructive criticism, advising me to practice answering more concisely. Alongside that, I was incredibly fortunate to have the support of colleagues across ACES and the wider public sector, who gave up their time to run mocks and Q&A sessions. I'd also like to give a special mention to colleagues in the MOD who kindly allowed me to join their weekly APC catch-ups, despite me being nothing to do with their own organisation – that support made a real difference.

Going into my second interview, I felt much better prepared – although that didn't make it any less nerve-wracking. When I came out, I was convinced I had failed again, and had already started thinking about taking a year out and what my next case study would be. In reality, that was just my pessimism and classic overthinking taking over. The interview had gone far more smoothly than before. I took my time, asked for questions to be rephrased where needed, and felt much more in control – something I had really struggled with previously.

Passing as a public sector candidate came with its own challenges. I was very aware that I hadn't had exposure to the same structured APC programmes or breadth of client-side experience as some in the private sector. I had to be confident in framing my experience around the fact that my "client" is the public sector organisation I work for, and demonstrate that value clearly within my submissions.

Now, having come through the process, I can honestly say it was hard, stressful and at times quite daunting. Whether you pass first time or are referred, the journey is not easy. But the sense of relief and achievement when you finally get that result – and realise you never have to look at your APC notes again – is unmatched.

As a coordinator for FACES, I'm keen to use my experience to support others once I have the time to do so – particularly those who might feel unsure about taking the step to sit their APC, so please if you are an APC candidate not sure where to start, or simply looking for a quick chat with someone who has been there, please do reach out. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that persistence really does pay off.

Tayo

Following the final submission, you receive confirmation that your submission has been accepted, followed by notification of your interview date. At this stage, the preparation becomes more intense, and it can often feel as though you have not done enough or still have a long way to go.

After the interview comes the anxious wait for the final result. However, once the notification confirms your qualification, every stage of the journey, preparation and support received from your Counsellor or Supervisor, ACES, APC Groups become worthwhile.

I experienced each of these stages until I received the email confirming my qualification on 20 November 2025. Looking back at the 24-month structural training within the Corporate Property Department at Hyndburn Borough Council, I can confidently say that, even coming from the informed position, the process of training and bringing together all required elements to reach the final submission stage is the real journey of the APC experience. I would like to thank my counsellor Mandy Catterall (Retired) and Supervisor (Helen McCue-Melling), Phil Haslam (counsellor) and everyone at Hyndburn Borough Council who have supported me during this journey.

My APC journey formally began in 2023. Although 24 months initially seemed like a long time, but trust me, it passes very quickly. Early preparation and planning with your counsellor or supervisor regarding competencies and how you intend to achieve the required levels for each competency are crucial to success. Selecting the right competencies, identifying any gaps in workload or case experience, and understanding what is required to achieve Level 2 or Level 3 competency are all extremely important. Where necessary, opportunities for secondments or shadowing within another firm to gain additional experience should be discussed and agreed upon early with your counsellor. Regular or quarterly meetings with your counsellor to review workload, alongside Q&A's sessions, are invaluable. These discussions help to build confidence, identify knowledge gaps, and assess how effectively competencies are being met throughout the training period.

I am particularly grateful to ACES members for their prompt support in arranging a mock interview session, despite my request being made at very short notice and close to the interview date. The mock interview, conducted by experienced professionals, significantly boosted my confidence ahead of the APC interview, and they provided valuable feedback that I was able to work on before the final assessment.

For success throughout the APC journey and at interview stage, I would strongly advise candidates to start preparing early. Keep detailed records of examples and cases you have worked on, ensuring you understand how they align with the required competency levels. Joining APC support groups or reaching out to organisations such as ACES to assist with APC group sessions and Q&A discussions can also be highly beneficial. In addition, attending APC-related CPD events, contacting RICS early if you have concerns, and maintaining regular communication with your counsellor or supervisor regarding your progress are all important steps. Regular workload reviews and Q&A sessions will help ensure that you continue to develop towards the required competency levels.

Most importantly, know your submission thoroughly before the interview. Confidence comes from preparation, understanding your experience, and being able to discuss your competencies clearly and professionally.

Tayo was formally approved as a full ACES member on 1 July.

Susan is a director of APC Academy Ltd and CostNexus Ltd. She has extensive experience in assisting candidates and employers through the APC, delivering and managing APC Academy services, to help candidates and employers make sense of the process and produce competent compliant submissions and Interview ready candidates.

Susan is involved in many APC and RICS related roles including, inter alia, RICS Regional Training Advisor for Scotland, APC assessor, APC chairman, consultant with RICS Training, and a speaker and facilitator for the bi-annual RICS APC Prep Day, which provides general information for candidates in Scotland to focus on the final year of training.

APC MANDATORY COMPETENCY How can APC candidates demonstrate diversity, inclusion and teamworking?

Susan Hanley FRICS susan.hanley@apc-academy.co.uk

I was invited by a RICS colleague to download this article from the RICS website, which advises on meeting the diversity, inclusion and teamworking mandatory competency requirements of the APC. Thanks to the RICS for allowing me to publish it.

Understanding team dynamics and inclusive practices is fundamental to achieving this Level 1 mandatory competency, with an opportunity to align with RICS Rules of Conduct practice guidance. Diversity, inclusion and teamworking is a mandatory competency taken to Level 1 of the APC. Candidates across all pathways and routes must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the principles, behaviour and dynamics of successfully working in a team. This includes how team members are selected and the roles they play, the importance of diversity, and knowledge of the policies, legislation and guidance applicable to non-discrimination.

As this is a mandatory competency, your summary of experience content and assessment is only to Level 1 and your focus should remain on knowledge and understanding. However, the RICS Requirements and Competencies guide includes Level 2 and Level 3 for candidates who select it as one of their optional competencies. In addition, the assessment portal provides templates that contain useful prompts and guidance.

Candidates must use succinct and focused writing to ensure they do not exceed the 1,500-word limit for mandatory competencies, which represents approximately 90 words per competency per level.

Support your Level 1 knowledge

Level 1 requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding both in their submission document and at their final assessment. This knowledge should be supported, where possible, by its source. Examples of possible sources are a relevant training course, structured reading or university modules. These should naturally link to your CPD record.

If you have attended training on inclusive communication or completed university modules on team dynamics, make reference to these sources. For example: 'I attended a CPD session on unconscious bias and learned about strategies and systems to mitigate this.'

Start with the examples in the pathways guide. Assessors will use your submission, combined with the requirements of the pathways guide, to formulate questions. A compliant submission that is in line with the pathways guide will enable questioning around the examples you have given. For example, your submission may state: 'I understand the importance of diversity in a team', and assessors may ask, 'Why is diversity important in a team?' Or, 'How does diversity enhance a team? Can you give me an example?'

Be ready to support your statements of knowledge with examples: 'I have been part of a team of members with different backgrounds and different levels of experience and this generated both technical depth and innovative approaches to solving problems.'

The principles of diversity and inclusion link directly to the RICS Rules of Conduct, particularly Rule 4, which requires members to 'treat others with respect and encourage diversity and inclusion'. This rule establishes a professional obligation to promote inclusive practices and respectful behaviour. You may include content along the lines of: 'I understand that as an RICS member I am required to treat others with respect and encourage diversity, as set out in Rule 4 of the Rules of Conduct.' You may even have examples of promoting inclusive practices or challenging discriminatory behaviour that you can refer to if questioned.

The pathways guide refers to: 'Internal diversity and inclusion policies, including any applicable to non-discrimination or anti-harassment in the workplace.'

Expanding on your knowledge

This competency requires knowledge of inclusive communications and an understanding of how partnering and collaborative working affects the team. It is important to ensure your communication methods are accessible to all and that any barriers to engagement are identified and dealt with appropriately.

You may write in your submission: 'I understand that inclusive communication requires considering the needs of all team members.' However, be aware that assessors may follow up and ask for examples around how you would put this into practice. Some examples include:

- ensuring written communications are clear and appropriate for the audience
- providing visual aids for complex or technical information, and
- ensuring meetings are structured in a way that allows all participants to contribute.

Always be prepared to back up your statement of knowledge with clear understanding. Again, while the word limits require your summary of experience to be brief, you should be ready to expand on your stated knowledge, understanding what benefits this brings:

'When team members work collaboratively, projects can benefit from early intervention, improved problem solving and reduced disputes.

'I understand that collaborative working requires trust, open communication and shared objectives.'

Preparing for final assessment

At the final assessment, expect direct questioning on this competency. Assessors will have reviewed your written submission for compliance with the requirements and to inform any questions they may ask. Assessors will typically signpost the competency they are questioning: 'I am now going to ask you about your Level 1 competency, Diversity, inclusion and teamworking.'

Assessors may also ask for examples based on what you have written: 'Can you share an example of working as part of an effective team?' Even though this is a Level 1 competency requiring knowledge rather than practical application, you can draw on experience: 'On a recent project, the design team worked effectively because I established clear communication protocols, held regular coordination meetings, and ensured each consultant understood their scope and responsibilities.'

Assessors use your submission – along with the pathways guide – as the basis for questions. They may ask you to explain concepts or apply your knowledge to scenarios.

Remember that the APC is holistic, and while assessors will likely ask direct questions on this competency, they may also assess your knowledge through discussions about other competencies.

- Ensure your written submission covers a minimum of two of the key areas. These include team selection and roles, the value of diversity, inclusive communication, collaborative working, supply chain management, as well as appropriate legislation and policies. Your word count will prevent you from including all relevant information
- Stay within your word count: remember that this competency shares the 1,500-word limit with ten other mandatory competencies
- Reference the sources of your knowledge, such as training courses, university modules or structured reading, and cross reference these with your CPD as much as possible
- Review all examples in the pathways guide, not just those you mention in your submission. Be prepared to discuss any of the examples listed at Level 1
- Practice answering questions out loud based on what you have written and the pathways guide requirement.

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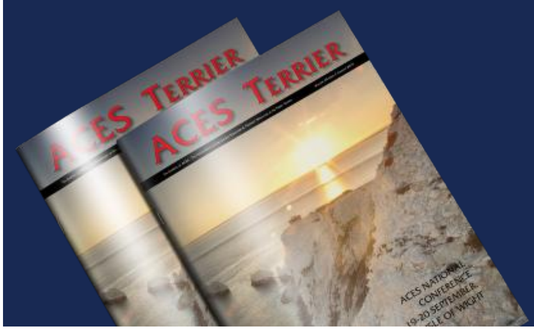

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APC SESSION 2026 How to support your APC candidates in Session 2026?

Jen Lemen BSc (Hons) FRICS jen@property-elite.co.uk

Jen gives useful advice to Councillors to support their candidates through the many hurdles of the APC process. Note – an important deadline is in July. For Counsellors and candidates, use ACES'Terrier website to look at Jen's regular useful articles on APC (https://www.acesterrier.org.uk/).

As we head further into 2026, the countdown to the Session 2 APC submission window is officially on. As a Counsellor and mentor to APC candidates, the months running into the Autumn are when my organisational skills really come to the fore.

For candidates, getting their submission right is only half of the APC challenge. Navigating the administrative requirements, key deadlines and Counsellor sign off process is where many fall short, and there is much that we can do, as part of their support network, to avoid disappointment and delay.

Whether you are supporting candidates on one of the Land and Property or Built Environment pathways, a valid, successful submission requires backward planning from today. Many candidates do not even make it to interview because they fail to comply with the basic requirements set out by RICS. This includes returning the Intent to Submit form, ensuring their Preview Submission is completed, and selecting the right competencies (based on the relevant Pathway Guide).

Below, I set out my basic roadmap for candidates submitting in Session 2 2026, combining the RICS deadlines with the realistic internal timelines that you and your candidates ideally need to follow.

Know your deadlines - the external RICS process

The RICS timelines differ significantly depending on your candidates' sector pathway and route. The dates discussed below relate to final submission, not candidates submitting for Preliminary Review.

Land & Property pathways:

- Eligibility Communication - RICS will email eligible candidates on 7 July 2026 to initiate the submission process
- Apprentices - must pass through Gateway by 27 July 2026
- Intent to Submit window – candidates must formally return the Intent to Submit form to RICS between 7 July and 24 July 2026. Miss this, and they will not be able to submit in Session 2
- Submission window - candidates must submit using the online RICS Assessment Platform between 10 August and 20 August 2026. This includes their Counsellor sign off and proposer and two seconder approvals. These are all carried out online - no physical signatures or approvals are required. Candidates

can request their proposer and seconder approvals in advance of the deadline - we suggest doing this up to 3 months in advance

- Interview window - candidates must keep the 5-week period commencing 5 October 2026 completely free. Previously, candidates could confirm their preference of interview dates, but this has been removed by RICS, given assessor shortages. If a candidate cannot attend their given interview date, they will simply be asked to wait until the next submission window by RICS. Thus, ensure that you advise your candidates not to book any holidays or events requiring their attendance within this time period (Monday to Friday). Candidates will be given 2 weeks' notice by email of their interview date, so this should help with planning work commitments during this 5-week period.

Built Environment pathways:

- Eligibility Communication - RICS will email eligible candidates on 11 August 2026 to initiate the submission process
- Apprentices - must pass through Gateway by 31 August 2026
- Intent to Submit window – candidates must formally return the Intent to Submit form to RICS between 11 August and 28 August 2026. Miss this, and they will not be able to submit in Session 2
- Submission window - candidates must submit using the online RICS Assessment Platform between 14 September and 24 September 2026. This includes their Counsellor sign off and proposer and two seconder approvals. These are all carried out online - no physical signatures or approvals are required. Candidates can request their proposed and seconder approvals in advance of the deadline - we suggest doing this up to 3 months in advance
- Interview window - candidates must keep the 5-week period commencing 2 November 2026 completely free. Previously, candidates could confirm their preference of interview dates, but this has been removed by RICS given assessor shortages. If a candidate cannot attend their given interview date, they will simply be asked to wait until the next submission window by RICS. Thus, ensure that you advise your candidates not to book any holidays or events requiring their attendance within this time period (Monday to Friday). Candidates will be given 2 weeks' notice by email of their interview date, so this should help with planning work commitments during this 5-week period.

Note that the intent to submit form is not just a soft expression of interest; it is a hard administrative requirement, and, if missed, a candidate cannot submit for final assessment.

Realistic timeline - the internal process

From a Counsellor's perspective, the biggest mistake candidates make is assuming that finishing their final draft means they are ready to submit. The review, amendment and RICS Assessment Platform sign-off process always takes longer than all parties anticipate.

As a Counsellor, you should be regularly meeting with your candidates throughout their APC journey. This means every 3 months as a minimum, in line with the RICS Candidate and Counsellor Guides, or, ideally, more regularly. You are likely to need to meet with your candidates more frequently as their submission window comes closer.

I always recommend setting out a clear plan with your candidates towards submission, including key review deadlines and internal sign off targets. The worst thing possible is a candidate who does not engage and then asks for your sign off at the last minute. This simply should not happen as being a Counsellor is a process, not just a tick box exercise. An engaged candidate is usually a joy to work with and when sign off time comes, it's a simple process as you have seen their work develop over a long period of time.

To ensure that you and your candidates do not leave the final sign off until the last minute, here are my suggested internal timeframes to work to:

- Meet with your candidate at least every 3 months, if not more frequently. Every two weeks for a shorter meeting can work well. Between these, your candidate could write up a couple of levels for various competencies, or work on a skeleton draft for their Case Study. You can also discuss their structured training diary and their CPD record. Each Counsellor session should have an agenda, set by the candidate, beforehand and a set of minutes and action points afterwards. You can use AI to help with this; I particularly

Milestone	**Land & Property Pathways**	**Built Environment Pathways**
Eligibility communication	7 July 2026	11 August 2026
Apprentice Gateway deadline	27 July 2026	31 August 2026
Intent to Submit window	7 July – 24 July 2026	11 August – 28 August 2026
Official Submission window	10 August – 20 August 2026	14 September – 24 September 2026
5-Week Interview window	Commencing 5 October 2026	Commencing 2 November 2026

like Fireflies.AI which produces meeting transcripts, summaries and action plans and circulates them automatically to all parties after the meeting ends. You still need to do the hard work though and agree the action plan during the session!

- If you can review a working draft during the 6-9 months prior to submission, then by 3 months prior you should have fully reviewed your candidate's work. Alternatively, you may wish to set them a 3-month prior deadline to send you the full final draft. I recommend working away from the RICS Assessment Platform and using a Word document for this, giving feedback via track changes and comment boxes. Only when the submission is complete should it be uploaded to the Platform - for me, this makes the review process a lot smoother
- Remind your candidates that the use of generative AI is not permitted by RICS [Ed – see Jen's article in 2026 Spring Terrier]. I have had candidates ignore this and send me submissions which have included the use of AI. Sometimes it is easy to spot, such as the use of certain grammar or language which is out of sync with the candidate's usual style; others it is not - and you may need to use an AI checker to identify it (as RICS will when the candidate submits for final assessment)
- If you set your candidates a deadline to submit their work to you, commit to a defined turnaround period. 7 working days is usually sufficient as it gives you time to review, provide feedback and then reflect on their work. If you need longer, let them know - it can be very disheartening as a candidate to put hard work into a piece of work and then not receive any feedback on it. Similarly, if you do not have time to act as a Counsellor then do not commit to it - successful candidates have committed, motivated Counsellors to support them
- Once your candidate has finalised their submission, then you can convert the Summary of Experience and Case Study into a PDF and upload them to the RICS Assessment Platform. The CPD Record and diary are inputted directly online. They can then submit them through the Platform to you for approval and final sign off. Ensure that you read the Platform User Guide so you understand how the sign off process works, as it is not necessarily straightforward. Give yourself sufficient time to sign off your candidates before the submission window closes. If you have multiple candidates where you are acting as Counsellor, give them a deadline for approval well in advance of the actual RICS submission window. Remind your candidates that they also need their proposer and two seconder approvals provided before they can submit. As Counsellor, you are also free to provide one of these additional approvals
- Ensure that you check that the candidate has met the basic RICS requirements to submit; a filled in Preview Submission (employment history, academic qualifications, etc), sufficient CPD record (total hours and % formal), sufficient diary days (400 for 24 months' structured training, or 200 for 12 months' structured training), word counts within the stated RICS (absolute!) requirements, and compliant competency choices (check their pathway guide, levels required, and any 'or' lists for mandatory competencies taken to a higher level as a technical competency)
- Tell your candidates to put the Intent to Submit and final submission deadlines in their calendar and give them a polite nudge, if needed, to make sure they submit on time. The RICS windows generally close on a Thursday at 1600 (UK time) so ensure that all approvals are completed in time. A candidate cannot submit until they have all of the Assessment Platform requirements completed.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the role of a Counsellor or mentor is to provide consistent support during a high-pressure period for your candidates. By enforcing internal milestones and reminding candidates of the absolute RICS deadlines, you can protect your candidates from avoidable disappointment or delay.

By establishing a structured timeline during your candidates' structured training period, you can ensure that your candidates walk into their final assessment interview ready to demonstrate their professional competence. This means no panic over timeframes, last minute sign offs, or miscommunications over deadlines!

Wishing you and your candidates the very best of luck for the Session 2 2026 assessment window!

Danni is the Next Generation Manager at RICS.

NEXT GENERATION SURVEYORS

Inspiring the next generation of surveyors

Danni Foster dfoster@rics.org

Danni outlines some of the activities and tools the RICS supports, with a target to enthuse school children to think of surveying as a career. The Inspire Ambassadors are at the heart of this work.

At the RICS, our strategy is to be a world-class member organisation, and one of our key priorities is to attract and retain a diverse membership.

There is strong focus on the next generation; teams across RICS are committed to ensuring that careers within the surveying profession, across both the natural and built environments, are visible, accessible and exciting for children and school leavers.

Our members dedicate significant time to support this effort by visiting schools, colleges and universities as Inspire Ambassadors. They deliver talks, presentations and attend open days and careers fairs. Alongside this, we have partnered with both Springpod and Unifrog to extend our reach and engage with a wider audience.

Springpod

We have partnered with Springpod to offer a free virtual work experience platform, helping students gain a deeper understanding of careers in surveying. The programme introduces learners to RICS and the vital role we play in setting the gold standard for surveyors worldwide. It explores the breadth of career pathways available, from quantity surveying to corporate real estate. The content is engaging and interactive, with quizzes and fun activities designed to build students' knowledge and confidence.

Students aged 13 and over can sign up to the programme, which provides more than seven hours of content. On completion, participants receive a certificate that can be used in CVs and applications, helping them stand out when applying for industry related roles.

To date more than 2,500 students have enrolled, with the programme receiving an overall rating of 8.6 out of 10. Feedback has been extremely positive:

"Thank you so much for offering this programme, it has allowed me to understand more about the many careers you can go through this and all of the different areas, along with feeling more confident on how to get there after listening to people's real stories and experiences."

"I enjoyed gaining a realistic insight into the day-to-day work of a chartered surveyor and learning about the different career pathways within surveying. The programme helped me understand how theory is applied in real situations and made the route to becoming RICS Chartered feel clear and achievable."

Currently, only 36% of students in the UK gain in-person work experience before leaving education. Supporting virtual work experience initiatives such as Springpod helps remove barriers including geography, financial constraints and limited employer access, which can disproportionately affect students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.

If you know a young person who would be interested in exploring a career in surveying, please share the programme link Surveying Work Experience with RICS | Springpod

Unifrog

To further expand our reach, we have also partnered with Unifrog, an online careers platform used by over 3,000 schools across the UK, more than 1,000 international schools and over two million users globally.

Unifrog supports students in exploring post-16 and post-18 pathways, from apprenticeships and university courses, to emerging career options. This partnership allows RICS to connect with students at a critical decision-making stage, providing trust and relevant insights into surveying careers.

As part of this collaboration, we have launched a new video focused on mineral surveying, featuring RICS member Bethany Cleaver. The video is hosted on our Unifrog profile and offers direct insight into a specialist area of surveying, highlighting the real-world impact of the profession.

Through Bethany's experience, students can better understand what mineral surveying involves, its role within the built and natural environment, and the opportunities it presents.

This marks an important step towards our longer-term ambition to build a comprehensive library of content covering all surveying pathways. Our aim is to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions and inspire a more diverse pipeline of future professionals, while strengthening the visibility and relevance of the profession globally.

The video is also available on YouTube Unifrog x RICS - Minerals Surveyor

Inspire Ambassadors

Our Inspire Ambassadors are at the heart of this work. They include students, candidates, Associate and Chartered members who represent RICS at events and engage directly with students, bringing the profession to life by showcasing their day-to-day roles and sharing their passion for the industry.

Through school visits, careers fairs, university events and virtual sessions, Inspire Ambassadors provide first-hand insight into what a career in surveying really looks like. By sharing their own journeys, experience and challenges, they help to make the profession more relatable and accessible, particularly for students who may not previously have considered surveying as a career option.

In addition to outreach activity, Inspire Ambassadors also support current students, candidates and apprentices as

they progress through their Assessment of Professional Competence. By offering guidance, encouragement and practical insight, they help to build confidence and support the next generation in achieving professional status.

This community of volunteers is instrumental in strengthening our global pipeline of talent and ensuring that the profession continues to evolve to reflect the diverse societies it serves. Their contribution not only raises awareness of surveying careers, but also reinforces the value and impact of the profession on the world around us.

If you would be interested in becoming an Inspire Ambassador and playing a part in inspiring the next generation, please sign up

If you want to find out more, please contact us nextgen@rics.org

Phil is a director in the development and public sector consulting team at Lambert Smith Hampton. He works largely for public sector clients, providing support on developer procurement, options analysis, viability, contract negotiations, disposals and general consultancy. Phil has worked in commercial property for over 20 years, during which time he has worked for Homes England, Solihull MBC, JLL, Avison Young, and National Grid.

PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTANTS The dark art of consultancy, Part 2

Phil Farrell PFarrell@lsh.co.uk

Phil continues with Part 2 of his 'dark arts'. Part 1 can be found in 2026 Spring Terrier. It's well worth picking up Phil's insights in the first part, if you missed it. He observes: "You perhaps won't appreciate this, particularly if you have worked in the public sector for most of your career, but you are very peculiar clients, totally different from most of the clients we work for." But, the public sector genuinely cares. Phil exhorts the value of lasting trustful relationships.

We are peculiar clients

In the last issue of ACES' Terrier I considered whether it could be useful for the public sector to understand how private sector consultancies work. The theory being that a bit more knowledge, and perhaps empathy, might make for a more productive relationship.

In this second instalment I provide some suggestions to public sector surveyors on how they could make the most from consultants. I won't pretend that many of these suggestions will not also have advantages for the consultants as well, but strictly in terms of them being more efficient and effective in their jobs. The relationship between consultants and clients (particularly public sector clients) has to be ethical and legal at all times, erring on the side of caution if there is any doubt.

Perhaps the most important thing to understand is that all surveyors are not the same. Surveyor is a misleadingly unified term – valuers, agents, rating surveyors, property managers, estate agents, quantity surveyors can all be RICS qualified surveyors, but in reality, they all work in very different fields, only connected by the fact that it involves buildings or land.

From the perspective of getting the right service for you and your organisation, my best advice would be to spend time finding the right person or team. Nobody walks into a hospital and just asks for a doctor. You want someone who has specialised in your particular ailment. Only a few surveyors, a very few, have any idea how to work with the public sector.

You perhaps won't appreciate this, particularly if you have worked in the public sector for most of your career, but you are very peculiar clients, totally different from most of the clients we work for. The vast majority of clients for surveying firms are private sector – investors, developers, occupiers. They need a service and contact a surveyor they know to do it, or ask for a quick fee quote to compare a few firms. Terms are exchanged (often belatedly, much to the fury of the compliance team) and the work starts. Compare that to the processes of public sector procurement legislation: Frameworks, Prior Information Notices, Pre-Qualification Questionnaires, sifting briefs, Invitation to Tender, social value, financial checks, equality and diversity questionnaires. The majority of surveyors have never completed a public sector framework or tender, and they are more than happy to leave it like that.

Then if appointed by the public sector, we arrive at the challenge that many of my colleagues can never, ever understand: profit is not the only deciding factor in assessing success! The public sector cares (as in genuinely cares, not just providing high quality lip service in the annual mission statement update) about place making, community cohesion, social outcomes, design, environmental improvements, job creation, social housing provision and a plethora of other non-financial issues.

Though it is always nice if there is a profit on top as well.

Most surveyors work for companies and people whose sole purpose, quite legitimately, is to make profit from land, property and development. If they make up 95% of a company's clients is it any wonder that the surveyors struggle to adjust to a new, baffling definition of the successful outcome?

So, if you don't want to start every appointment with a lengthy lecture on your obligation to serve the 'Public Good', how do you find that simpatico person to engage with? Well in many circumstances they will find you. These are the people who are the lead contact on the frameworks such as Crown Commercial Service, Homes England, Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation, etc.

How to find the right team

But, if you are not going through an established framework, you should look initially for the person, people or team that focuses on public sector work. There is no universally accepted name for such a team, but they tend to work in the consultancy (as opposed to transaction) part of the business, and often have 'development' in their title. The best way to find the right person is through recommendations from your public sector colleagues, but published articles, LinkedIn posts and their attendance at public sector conferences are also indicators.

There are some consultancies that have a reputation for delivering public sector work and might be your first port of call, but a note of caution - there are very few people in any firm who specialise in the public sector, and if they choose to join another firm, it can entirely strip their previous company of that skill set. Follow the people, not the companies.

It is also worth noting that the public sector specialist won't be able to deliver every service you need, but they can act as the conduit to bring in other colleagues and manage them for you to get the sector specific outputs you need. A good specialist surveyor acts almost as a translator between the public sector client and the property industry.

Trust

On reflection I was premature in my statements above. The following is actually the best advice I can offer: once you have gone through all of the effort of securing approval to tender, writing, issuing and scoring the tenders, agreeing the appointment of the right specialist consultant, and they have committed significant resource to respond to the tender and get the appointment through their compliance process, actually trust the person. Do not keep the consultant at arms-length and treat them like a spy in the camp.

This is a re-occurring problem. Even though the client has appointed you to help them, and as a professional they enjoy your loyalty and duty of care, they won't be open enough about the project to really let you understand all of the aspects and advise them with full knowledge. There seems to be an assumption that all consultants are just trying to find insider information, which they can take advantage of for nefarious reasons. We are not given all the relevant information, reports, or details of other consultants. We are not invited to all useful meetings on the project. We are kept well away from senior officers and members.

I suspect this seems to be fundamentally down to mistrust of the private sector and its motivations for profit. I once had an infuriating discussion with a public sector planning officer who challenged why a development appraisal should contain any developer's profit. Not an unreasonable level of profit, but any profit at all. Perhaps instead of 'Developer's Profit' the appraisal should use the description 'Developer's salaries, tax, rent, national insurance, pensions, and a little bonus for taking the risk.'

I will return to the doctor analogy – would you withhold a few symptoms from your GP in case they offered you a better diagnosis? Trust us, tell us your problems, share information - see how it works out.

Conversely, clients that really bring us into the heart of the project get a much better informed service, and often a lot of free advice in addition to the specific task they appointed us to advise on. Generally, consultants who focus on public sector work are genuinely interested in the built environment and all that involves, and they like to talk about their sector.

Let's be clear, much of consultancy is about advice. We can provide you with advice on the issue you are facing so you can evaluate all the potential options, but it is always up to you and your colleagues to decide whether to take the advice.

And you are among friends here; we can all be honest about the fact that sometimes the public sector officer knows the solution to the problem before they appoint the consultant. However, their 'superiors' or Members will only believe advice that comes with a price tag and the assurance of the consultancy's logo on the report. You should feel free to share your thoughts with the consultant. It is a foolish surveyor indeed who is not willing to listen to the opinion of an experienced officer who has lived and breathed the local area for decades.

The right question

A major problem I have encountered with how the public sector uses consultants is we are asked to provide advice on the wrong question. If you ask us the wrong question, there is a very good chance you will get the wrong answer.

I regularly receive tenders that are asking consultants to deliver services that will not tackle the problem at hand. Don't ask for a master plan if your main issue is viability. Don't procure soft market testing when the market's response is screamingly obvious. Don't openly market land for office development, when your prevailing office rents are half of the level needed for viable construction.

The decision for the consultant is whether to just ignore the fault in the tender's premise and simply try to win the instruction, or to approach the public authority and explain why its approach won't work. I have decided to take the ethical high road a few times. Bear in the the time and effort that the public sector officers have had to put in before issuing the tender, and bearing in mind the potential bruising of egos if they had to withdraw the tender and explain why to their hierarchy, guess how welcomed and successful my honest advice has been?

As part of your process of understanding your problem and defining the solution, pick up the phone to a trusted consultant and ask their advice. Explain the issues (they will understand if some elements are confidential) you are facing and ask their advice on the actions you can take to address them. They will be able to give you a fresh perspective on market appetite, viability, competing schemes, etc. They should also be able to suggest innovative solutions that conform to the regulatory framework the public sector has to work within.

Lasting meaningful connections

Property is still very much a people business, built on trust and relationships. I want to develop a strong connection with clients which will last many years. This is not only mutually beneficial, but also professionally satisfying – don't forget that many consultants get as attached to their projects as their clients do and want to see them through to a successful conclusion. So, when a client or prospective client asks my opinion, I try to be as open, helpful and imaginative as possible.

The usual result from a friendly chat is that you have additional comfort that you are on the right track. Sometimes, you may have an improvement or an alternative solution to consider before finalising your plans, but that is much better than a failed project. My aim from each interaction with the public sector surveyor is to become, or remain, a trusted advisor, even if I deprive myself of the potential for a short-term fee. In my experience, this is the way to create a sustainable business model, and maintain a positive reputation, which is still vitally important in our industry.

The public sector can legitimately take advantage of this situation. Reach out to the consultants; have that occasional coffee; discuss your problems. To paraphrase Gordon Gecko: 'Gossip is good'.

You will very quickly realise if the consultant is not playing the game, if they are asking for inappropriate information, if they seeking unfair advantage. When a consultant does not respect those professional and ethical boundaries then cut them off. They are a liability and should not be working with the public sector.

It would be ideal if we could get over the client/consultant position and regard all of us (including other consultants, developers, contractors, solicitors, etc.) as working together in the property industry. We all have our particular roles, but we can achieve nothing without each other. There are certain regulations, ethical considerations, commercial confidentiality etc. which must be respected, and as long as they are, then co-operation and communication is the way to achieve success.

An experienced consultant is a mine of knowledge and a conduit to even more within their firm and network. If you have a problem, then pick up the phone to a trusted consultant you know, or perhaps one that you don't, and ask their advice. They will appreciate being consulted - they might even have the answer.

ACES' TERRIER WEBSITE

We have now taken a major step in the development and accessibility of the ACES' Terrier and thanks to the expertise of Marcus M, the journal now has its own website where the experience of reading the Terrier has reached a whole new level through the implementation of the latest technology.

The new Terrier website will become a key resource primarily for surveyors in the public sector, but also for the property profession as a whole.

LEE KINDER, NORTH WEST BRANCH

June 2026 Update

Annual CPD event

Spring has been a busy period for the North West Branch organising our annual CPD event, closely followed by our OGM meeting.

The Annual CPD event took place on 14 May at Haydock Park Racecourse in St. Helens.

I was very proud to deliver another sell out event, with 128 delegates attending from across approximately 35 local authorities and public sector organisations in the North West.

The event was kicked off as usual by Jeremy Steele, a Partner with Knights Solicitors who gave a commercial property update presentation covering the statutory ban on upwards only rent reviews, the interaction between contractual renewal options and s28 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, and landlord development breaks in renewal leases.

Our next speakers were Rebecca Rowley and Henry Mahalski from Mills & Reeve LLP who presented on dilapidations, covering the structure of claims, reinstatement notices, loss of rent claims, valuation considerations, interim schedules, and how to resolve dilapidation claims.

The next presentation was by our ACES North West branch member Stuart Knight from Knight Property Consulting Ltd and Mark Walshe from Cumberland Council who spoke about Local Government Reorganisation and their learning experiences and observations of the formation of Cumberland Council from Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council, Allerdale Borough Council and Copeland Borough Council. This presentation generated a number of questions as there were a number of local authorities in the room that are about to go through LGR.

A break for lunch provided the opportunity for delegates to network and enjoy the usual sunshine on the racecourse terrace, which was a pleasant surprise as the weather leading up to the event and in the morning had been poor.

The first afternoon speaker - another ACES North West branch member, Kevin Aspin from Aspin & Company Ltd. Kevin presented on Professional Standards and a Red Book 2026 Valuation update. A ethical standards refresher was warmly received, and a helpful overview of the RICS Valuation Global Standards.

Our final speaker of the day was Ed Blight from Avison Young, who delivered an excellent North West property market update. Ed talked through the macro-economic factors that impact the property market in general within the UK. Ed then focussed on the North West, considering GDP, employment across the office, industrial, retail and residential sectors.

We thank all our speakers for another fabulous event, including our ACES Executive Team, ACES members and guests for their support and attendance, and Haydock Park Racecourse for again hosting the event and providing the hospitality.

We received lots of positive feedback about the event and the Executive Team has since met to review this and what minor tweaks we will look to make for next year's event.

Branch OGM

The CPD event was closely followed by the Branch OGM meeting on 22 May at Kilhey Court Hotel in Wigan.

23 Branch members and guests attended the meeting, which was extremely pleasing as the CPD event had only been the week before.

Other business included a financial update from our Branch Treasurer, Mike Forster including reviewing expenditure and income from the Haydock Park CPD event. The branch Secretary David Mee gave an update on the general branch matters, including positive news that the branch had secured five new members from Lancaster Council and Cheshire East Council.

The branch chair gave an overview of the upcoming ACES Awards for Excellence, National Conference taking place in Southend on 24 September, and the National AGM, London, 19 November. He also advised that a report had been approved at ACES Council on recruitment and retention in the public sector.

The meeting also provided the opportunity to review the feedback from the CPD event, which was in general an overriding success, with excellent feedback about the five presentations and topic areas. Discussion took place about how we could potentially increase the numbers next year, with regard to

the seating layout, to accommodate the waiting list for places that always arises.

The branch meeting concluded with a presentation from Spencer Turner on recent changes to the CPO legislation processes and compensation. Spencer talked through how the basis of value was shifting away from market value for certain purposes including social housing, education and medical, and the changes to compensation in s188, 189 and 190 of the Act.

The next meeting of the branch is Friday 10 July, which is also being attended by Alan Richards ACES President. This visit will include a visit to Ingol Health Centre which has recently undergone refurbishment and a de-carbonisation project.

GERRY DEVINE, WELSH BRANCH

Summer Meeting – 19 May 2026

Our first live meeting of the year was held in the conference room at Y Storfa (The Store), a recently refurbished and re-modelled community services hub in the former BHS & Miss Selfridge store on Oxford Street, part of Swansea City Council's regeneration of the city centre (https://www.swansea.gov.uk/ystorfaregeneration) (see later in this report).

Welsh Branch Chairman, Ben Winstanley, and branch members were delighted to welcome not only ACES President, Alan Richards, but also RICS Governing Council Next Generation representative, Cartier Olivia Charles (see her interesting and thought-provoking article in the current issue of Modus by RICS).

Alan Richards thanked the Branch for the invitations for Cartier, who would speak later about FACES, and himself, to talk about current and planned actions within ACES:

- Membership Survey found that many respondents favoured hybrid meetings for better or wider engagement
- Review of ACES Constitution
- Andrew Stirling, ACES SVP, is about to launch the ACES Awards for Excellence and applications are encouraged as we need to celebrate our achievements in a variety of fields whether that be in retrofit, university links or any other projects in which we've been involved
- ACES National Conference 2026 was outlined [Ed – see flyer in this issue of ACES Terrier]
- "We Built It" is the title given to an ACES recruitment and retention project in which Neil Webster, ACES Engagement & Development Officer, is working with universities (and drawing on Clive's experience working with The University of South Wales (USW))
- Public Sector Challenge, to be held in Shropshire (Little Stretton – so close to Wales) on 11 September, a great fundraising event for Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation. These events are a great way of networking with others in the public sector
- Progress on ACES' housing initiative is slow as it seems to be in competition with similar initiatives from RICS and affordable housing groups, with the latest funding aimed only at registered providers
- ACES Terrier now has its own website and can be read online. He encouraged people to write about their projects: ACES Terrier is a great opportunity get them into print and get your name 'out there'.

The Branch Chairman took the opportunity to deliver Welsh Branch news. Sadly for the branch - but not for them - we have two very experienced members retiring: Geoff Bacon and Chris Brain, the branch CPD provider, who is retiring after this meeting. He pointed out that not only was Chris able to de-mystify asset valuations (in his Asset Valuation Circle) but he also came up with brilliant CPD sessions for the branch, presented with great skill and enthusiasm.

Cartier Olivia Charles spoke about the rapid changes affecting our profession – LGR; new initiatives in sustainability and data analytics, and we need more surveyors. RICS Next Generation is pushing for more graduate roles to be opened up. Estates work impacts across all services in local authorities (LAs). However, budgets are very limited in the public sector, restricting job creation but through ACES there are great networking opportunities.

When Cartier was elected, she found that RICS didn't understand the pressures on the public sector. RICS Wales Regional Board Member, Clive Ball, urged Cartier to keep up the fantastic work she is doing at RICS and elsewhere, saying that RICS Wales will help with APC preparation work wherever possible. The shocking statistic is that the numbers of eligible graduates converting to become RICS members is less than 10% and that when more surveyors are urgently needed! The USW Real Estate course is growing, albeit slowly, and he feels ACES and RICS can do more to support the work of the university.

Cartier, RICS Matrics Awards 2025 Ambassador of the Year, drew attention to the RICS Inspire Ambassador Course [Ed – see article in this issue] but said not many public sector members are coming forward to join up and we need more! There are limited opportunities for graduates or apprentices. While there is plenty of work, budgets do not afford training: Cartier suggested that LAs should hold back 10-20% of the work to give to young people to enable them to do their APC. The President added that ACES affords tremendous opportunities for secondments (with the private sector) and cross-LA working.

Clive Ball reminded all that in Wales we have a T-Level in the Built Environment, and one member of his team is a RICS Inspire Ambassador, who was attending a taster day event in Swansea University for GCSE-level students; he also often attends careers days in schools and colleges.

Asset management and estates

Discussions ensued on various Corporate Landlord (CL) models. A number of members outlined their CL models, which varied with the services included.

Property asset management systems (PAMS)

It seems that a number of LAs and other public sector bodies in Wales are currently reviewing their PAMS, perhaps prompted by the introduction of CL models or, in one instance, a collaborative working arrangement between two neighbouring LAs under an Interim Joint Head of Property, both of which had introduced CL models. A number of members outlined their experiences with procurement and systems. One member organisation had built its own bespoke system with the help of IT and AI (Co-pilot). It was a lot of hard work but they have been pleased with the result, used mainly for the administration of leases. The President advised to buy in a system and adapt your processes to suit it [Ed – see full article of the recent asset management survey conducted by Remit and ACES in this issue].

Co-location and rationalisation

This discussion centred on levels of desk use since the 'return to the office', or is it 'non-return'? This varied from 13% to over 75% in one authority, peaking in mid-week with much use made of breakout areas for discussions and meetings with colleagues.

Mandatory time in the office varied from none to three at one organisation which they said is better for teamwork, especially with graduates, and one or two LAs use a rota system for office cover on some days. The President's view is that it is in property managers' interests to be seen in the office, to build relationships with members, to show leadership, and develop trust with other department managers and team members. The priority is to get the work done and often the most effective way is to see people face-to-face. Two years ago was different, but there has been a cultural shift since then.

Building Safety Act

Most managers reported having this high on their agenda.

Climate change/Net Zero (NZ)

One Property Manager (PM) reported a proactive planned maintenance programme of decarbonisation with no gas boilers, and LED lighting. The Welsh Government (WG) representative said the new team of politicians was just settling in at the Senedd (after the Welsh elections), but were in support of the NZ 2030 agenda. However, one PM opined that NZ by 2030 is not achievable due to a lack of investment; another PM said many of the politicians do not see NZ as a priority, while yet another said his LA has moved away from NZ branding to 'Energy Efficiency'.

Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM)

An ACES Member was elected to Chair the Wales Regional Committee of IWFM (See https://www.iwfm.org.uk/community/groups/regions/wales.html) which was established in January. While there is different legislation in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland, guidance on the website tends to be England centred. FM takes in hotels and stadia, as well as offices and retail, so there are many job opportunities and courses available. The Chair is working with colleges, e.g., Gower College in Swansea, to offer courses through their programmes.

Cyson Cymru

Newport City Council's JV with Norse Group to outsource its Property function, set up in 2014, ended on 31 December 2025. As it was successful, NCC wished to have a similar arrangement and established its own trading company, Cyson Cymru, which became operational on 1 January 2026. Cyson Cymru's Property Manager reported that the transition was relatively smooth - most staff transferred from Newport Norse to Cyson Cymru, but the new structure is generating more work instructions from across the council, the main client, so there are some areas where staffing is thin. They are therefore recruiting with a view to doing work for other councils in the future.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Review

The report commissioned by the previous Welsh Government was not published before the pre-election moratorium.

Members described their experiences of CAT. They ranged across leasehold and freehold transfers; transfers were mainly to sports clubs.

Welsh Government & Ystadau Cymru Matters

Chris Brain had done some coordination work for WG and guidance has been issued. InSite- the recommendation is that if property is available to let or for sale it should be listed on InSite as the internal market for all public sector property. The Empty Property Handbook was issued in Dec. 2025 in two parts: 1. General and 2. Action Templates for commercial and residential property.

Y Storfa (The Store)

Swansea's Property Manager gave a short resume of how the former BHS and Miss Selfridge store in the city centre had become a recently opened community hub and our venue for the meeting. When the store became vacant, the council considered stepping in to reuse the building. Coincidentally, at the time plans were being made to vacate the civic offices which had become problematic. Plans were drawn up with the help of a Transforming Towns grant to convert the former store into the council's contact centre, library and the County Archives Service, as well as offices for Careers Wales. A requirement for archives to have a minimum 4 hours fire protection led to a late stage re-design and this, as well as dealing with embedded carbon and photovoltaics, added immensely to the costs. The project was led by estates and, with footfall already rising to over 1,700 a day, feedback is that the citizens of Swansea are very proud of the result.

Battery Energy Storage Sub-Group
A number of LAs in South Wales had been approached in recent months by a company that had identified multiple sites (in one LA around 120 sites!) in each LA that the company thought would be suitable for small scale battery energy storage use. One PM approached National Grid (NG) as these facilities were said to be back-up for NG in periods of heavy demand. However, NG advised that as their own batteries are around 100 times the size of those proposed by the battery storage company, they were not interested in such small sites.

The online meeting was attended by representatives from 8 LAs, as well as one from WG and the Branch Secretary. It was reported that an agent's view (informally) was that the initial offers made were much too low and the standard draft agreement offered could be much improved. A decision was made to appoint the agent on a joint basis, on behalf of a number of the LAs, to provide formal advice on site valuation and lease terms. This had since been progressed and reported at the Swansea meeting.

USW Real Estate Degree
USW is trying to balance the number of student placements for September with course places; there are still one or two places available.

CPD session
Using AI including Compliance with the RICS AI Professional Standard, the CPD workshop was facilitated by Chris Brain of Chris Brain Associates.

Welsh Political Landscape - Chris made a brief summary of the seismic changes in the WG following the Senedd elections on 7 May. With just 29% of the previous incumbents returned, Chris focussed on the Plaid Cymru Manifesto pledges on housing, local government and planning.

RICS AI Professional Standard – published in September 2025, and effective from 9 March 2026, Chris opened the discussions with an AI Reality Check looking at some of the pitfalls that have already caught out the unwary in some high-profile cases. This was followed by a wider AI discussion on which attendees were using AI, for what purpose, the benefits and the downsides, and finally looking at AI examples – how AI can be used to improve productivity to the benefit of surveyors.

This was Chris' last CPD session for the Welsh Branch, leaving us with the question, "How do you replace the irreplaceable?" We wish Chris a long, healthy and happy retirement!

JOHN READ, NORTH EAST AND YORKSHIRE BRANCH

The North East and Yorkshire branch has been active over the last few months, including a great meeting and CPD day hosted by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

The day was an opportunity for Barnsley MBC to showcase its designation as the UK's first government-backed "Tech Town," focusing on rapid AI adoption to improve local services, enhance digital skills, and boost the local economy.

In addition, speakers showed how the council had successfully integrated health and wellbeing into its town centre regeneration, with the integration of NHS services into the retail offer at the recently acquired Alhambra Shopping Centre and Glassworks Centre. They showed how the town centre offer has been much improved with many public realm schemes, including the Glassworks Square, the trio of massive, illuminated Yorkshire Rose sculptures, and the award winning indoor market scheme.

After the morning presentations, the attendees had a guided tour, giving them a great opportunity to have a butchers

around Barnsley town centre to experience recent achievements and regeneration projects, with one of the market traders even outlining the origin and history of the famous Barnsley Chop.

In our monthly virtual meetings, in addition to queries raised about day to day workload matters, the topics discussed have included:

- Indexation in asset valuations
- Recruitment
- The Armed Forces Bill
- M4(3) Building Regulations regarding space standards and their impact on capital receipts
- The Building Safety Levy
- RTB valuation backlogs
- High Street Auctions
- Participation in the Public Sector Challenge.

We have further virtual meetings scheduled, and the next in-person meeting will be the AGM and CPD day in November. Early plans are in hand, looking at York as a possible location.

JACQUELINE CUMISKEY, EASTERN BRANCH


Sizewell Visitor Centre

l to r Ellis Rix, Alan Richards, Mark Barber, Hannah Hammond (FACES), Simon Cartmell (Chair)

Since the beginning of the year ACES Eastern branch continues its monthly catchups supplemented with CPD.

ACES Branch visit to Sizewell C

On 26 June 2026, members of the Eastern Branch enjoyed an insightful and informative visit to the Sizewell C development, gaining a first-hand understanding of one of the UK's most significant infrastructure projects.

The day began at the Live Well Hub in Leiston, operated by Leiston Town Council, where attendees were welcomed by Ellis Rix, Housing Project Manager for Sizewell C at East Suffolk Council. Ellis delivered an engaging presentation outlining the considerable housing challenges and opportunities arising from the project as it progresses.

With construction expected to generate a workforce of approximately 7,900 people, around 5,900 workers are anticipated to relocate temporarily from outside East Suffolk. This unprecedented influx of workers will place significant demand on local housing, with an estimated shortfall of around 1,200 private rented properties needed to meet demand.

While Sizewell C is providing accommodation for many workers within the district, it will not house the entire workforce. Under the project's Deed of Obligations, East Suffolk Council has a responsibility to facilitate additional accommodation provision, and has developed a comprehensive strategy to deliver the required bed spaces. Ellis explained how the council is actively monitoring housing pressures, planning interventions, and implementing initiatives designed to maintain a balanced housing market, while minimising impacts on local communities.

Following the presentation, the group boarded the Sizewell C shuttle bus for the short 15-minute journey to the recently opened Sizewell C Visitor Centre. Here, attendees had the opportunity to explore detailed scale models and informative displays illustrating the vision behind the project, its role in supporting the UK's future energy needs, and the economic and social benefits it is expected to bring to the local area, Suffolk, and the nation as a whole.

The visit provided a fascinating insight into both the scale of the development and the extensive planning required to support one of the largest construction projects currently underway in the UK.

Attendees were delighted to be joined by:

- Alan Richards – ACES President and Eastern Branch member
- Mark Barber – Regional Business Development Manager (East Midlands & East of England), RICS

Future CPD events include Business Rates 2026; High Street Retail Auctions early adopter; AI CPD requirements; new rules on contractual control rights for land.

CIPFA performance in public services

Diploma in Public Sector Asset Management

As a result of a protracted period of austerity in our economy and particularly in the public sector, key knowledge, skills and experience have been lost in property and asset management teams across the UK.

With little in the way of practical and bespoke training directed at the public sector asset management professional, CIPFA Property and the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors (ACES) have designed a modular diploma that seeks to deliver the skills and knowledge in those key areas of public sector asset management identified as requiring the greatest support:

Module 1	Strategic Asset Management, Introduction and Organisation
Module 2	Development of Documentation and Asset Management Challenge
Module 3	Business Case Development and Option Appraisal
Module 4	Capital Projects and Maintenance
Module 5	Data and Performance
Module 6	Operational vs Non-Operational Property
Module 7	Asset Management Today

Who should attend

The diploma is an ideal qualification for a range of staff who may be involved in Property Asset Management within a public sector setting. These include but are not limited to:-

- Property Staff new to the public sector or new to Asset Management
- New starters with little or no previous training
- Staff in other areas who may be involved in strategic property activity i.e. finance professionals, key clients from services, etc.
- More experienced property staff who have specific knowledge gaps or would like a more comprehensive understanding of this area.

How will the diploma be taught?

Whilst the diploma can only be attained by completing all 7 modules and successfully passing the end of course examination, each module is discreet and can be taken independent of other modules to help fill specific knowledge gaps. The course is to be completed through online webinar training

How will the diploma be assessed?

Short confirmatory assessments will be completed at the end of each module to ensure students have understood the module content. At the end of module 7 a full written assessment will be completed covering all elements of the course.

What will be the cost of the diploma?

The cost of each module will be £420 for CIPFA Property Network Members and ACES members. For non-members each module will cost £525. Existing members taking all 7 modules get a £200 discount.

Network Members—£2,940+VAT for the full Diploma

Non Network Members—£3,675+VAT for the full Diploma

For a copy of the course syllabus please contact Keeley Forsyth , Senior Business Support Officer keeley.forsyth@cipfa.org