



# MODUS

by RICS



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Acorn Web

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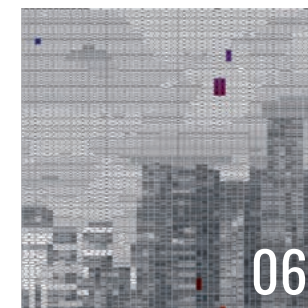
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# UNLOCKING TALENT FOR THE SURVEYING PROFESSION

A new pipeline for the next generation  
of residential surveyors – from all backgrounds



We must raise the profile of surveying, open new talent pipelines and ensure that the profession is an open and welcoming place when new talent arrives.

**Justin Young, RICS CEO**  
**Surveying Skills Report, 2025**



At Sava, we turn potential into performance. Our professional qualifications and practical training give residential surveyors the skills, guidance, and confidence to succeed. Diverse talent, real-world experience, and professional growth: that's how we are contributing to a stronger, more confident residential property sector.

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**– Daniel Hopla, Sava graduate and Residential Surveyor at Peer | King Surveyors**  
**Former Instructor in Armoured Tactics, Royal Air Force**



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**– Claire Martin, Technical Trainer, e.surv Chartered Surveyors**

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# I want every member to feel proud of their designation

It is a privilege to take on the role of President of RICS, to represent our profession at a time when its relevance and impact have never been greater.

The Institution has been a constant companion, a critical friend and confidant to me for most of my career. Especially while working in the Middle East, my membership offered me a central hub to the many spokes of my profession. I've served myriad governance roles within the Institution, and supported many past Presidents, the wisdom of whom I shan't hesitate to call upon during my tenure.

As we begin 2026, the challenges facing the built and natural environments are increasingly complex – climate change, urbanisation, technological disruption, and shifting regulatory frameworks all demand thoughtful, expert responses. Chartered surveyors are uniquely positioned to lead in these areas, and my focus as President will be on ensuring our members are empowered, recognised, and heard.

### Influence and trust

One of my priority areas as President is to increase RICS' influence and trust among key decision-makers – governments, regulators, and other institutions – at international, national and local levels. As I noted in my digital Modus column in September, RICS is already being offered seats at the tables of the UK government, and it's upon this foundation that I hope to build. As a profession, we bring deep expertise and a commitment to the public interest, and it is essential that this is reflected in the rooms where decisions are made.

We will work to secure representation at critical fora, ensuring that RICS members continue to have a voice in shaping the policies and frameworks that govern our work. This is about more than visibility – it's about impact. Our

members are already delivering solutions on the ground; now we must ensure their insights inform strategy at the highest levels – how governments are measuring and managing carbon emissions, building new towns or tackling housing shortages.

### Closing the skills gap

The skills shortage across the profession is a challenge we must address head-on. As the demands on surveyors evolve, so too must our approach to education and training. I will champion greater collaboration between industry, academia, education providers and policymakers in order to ensure our pathways into the profession are inclusive, future-focused, and globally relevant.

I want to hear directly from those working in education on what they believe to be the barriers to young people choosing careers in the built environment. And, armed with that insight, we can create tangible, long-lasting change.

I will continue to play an active role in engaging with schools, universities, and beyond to explore alternative routes into the profession, and to attract and retain a diverse membership. RICS has a unique role to play in convening like-minded organisations to support lifelong learning and equip professionals with the knowledge and experience they need to thrive.

### Elevating the member experience

At the heart of RICS is its membership. I want every member to feel proud of their designation, confident in their reputation, and secure in the demand for their services. We will continue to invest to deliver an enriching experience to all members through cutting-edge thought leadership, events, and CPD resources that support members throughout their careers and amplify their impact.



**"The challenges facing the built and natural environments are increasingly complex"**

**NICK MACLEAN FRICS**  
**PRESIDENT, RICS**

### Looking forward

Over the coming year, I'll be travelling to meet members, listen to your experiences, and learn what matters to you most. Your feedback will shape our direction and ensure that RICS remains responsive, relevant, and resilient.

Together, we will build on the strong foundations laid by my predecessors and continue to evolve RICS into an organisation that not only sets standards, but sets the pace.

Thank you for your continued commitment to excellence. I look forward to serving you in the year ahead.



# What do surveyors really think about

Ahead of the new RICS professional standard on responsible use of AI that comes into effect in March, four experts explain how it's changing the industry

WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VERA VAN DE SEYP

It's all well and good Modus writing about the benefits and drawbacks of artificial intelligence (AI) for the surveying profession, but what do surveyors *actually* think of it?

New technology often has the potential to improve our lives and raise professional standards, but it also comes with challenges. Never is this truer than in the case of AI and how it is applied to the built environment.

We spoke to four experts from across the industry spectrum – residential, commercial, building surveying and valuation – to find out how the technology is impacting the work they do. ▶





## COMMERCIAL

MARIA WIEDNER MRICS IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF CAMBRIDGE FINANCE AND A MEMBER OF RICS' COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PROFESSIONAL GROUP PANEL (PGP)

### Is the commercial property sector embracing the potential uses of AI?

The sector is aware of AI's potential – larger firms and forward-looking investors are experimenting with AI for valuations, asset management and market analysis.

However, compared with sectors such as finance, commercial property has been slower to embrace AI due to fragmented data, confidentiality concerns and cultural resistance to change. The sector risks falling behind unless adoption accelerates.

### What opportunities and challenges has AI brought with it?

The opportunities include faster analysis of large datasets; automated valuations and cash flow modelling; improved forecasting of rents, yields and market cycles; and enhanced decision support through scenario analysis and sensitivity testing.

However, there are challenges too, such as data quality and consistency, as well as concerns about transparency and 'black box' AI models (where the user isn't able to see the internal workings of a system). Surveyors and analysts often lack AI and data science training, which creates a skills gap. Then there are ethical and regulatory questions, especially aligning outputs with RICS Red Book standards.

### What is the general sentiment in commercial property towards AI?

Many surveying professionals recognise AI's efficiency benefits but worry about accuracy, accountability and the risk of being replaced. The sentiment is mixed: younger professionals are more open to AI, while senior surveyors are cautious, focusing on professional judgement and client trust.

### Are companies finding the integration of AI challenging?

Yes. Integration is proving difficult because property data is siloed across different platforms, formats and owners. AI requires clean, structured datasets to deliver value, but the industry still struggles with fragmented leases, valuation assumptions and transaction data. Many companies also lack in-house technical expertise and must rely on external providers, adding to costs and integration challenges.

### Is AI streamlining certain processes in the industry? And is it improving the quality of data received?

AI can automate repetitive and data-heavy tasks such as lease abstraction, rent roll analysis, comparable evidence collation and initial valuation modelling. This can save significant time and reduce human error. However, interpretation, professional judgement and compliance with RICS standards cannot be fully automated. AI should be viewed as an assistant that supports surveyors in making informed, compliant decisions, rather than as a replacement for professional expertise.

Valuations can be streamlined, particularly for standardised asset classes like residential, logistics and retail portfolios. Automated valuation models (AVMs) speed up comparisons and produce indicative values. However, data quality is not necessarily improved by AI; rather, AI helps clean and structure existing datasets. ▶



## AI TRAINING IS CRITICAL

In RICS' *Surveying skills report 2025*, members identified AI as the most critical emerging skill for the next five to 10 years. Encouragingly, it also revealed the belief that the advance of technology (in the form of digital tools or data) will help surveyors provide greater value for clients.

**59%** of respondents say the use of advanced digital tools is the emerging skill that will be most important for surveyors in the next five to 10 years

RICS is committed to tackling the skills gap – and fast. It is taking on a driving role to galvanise impactful and accelerated collaboration between our membership, our industry, employers and professional bodies, academia and government. Our next step is to collectively plot a data-led and unified roadmap.

To read the results of the survey and to keep up-to-date on RICS' progress in upskilling our membership, go to [rics.org/surveyingskillsreport](https://rics.org/surveyingskillsreport)





## BUILDING SURVEYING

ADRIAN TAGG MRICS IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN BUILDING SURVEYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF READING AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SURVEYING FIRM TECH DD LTD

**Are building surveying professionals embracing the potential of AI?**  
Building surveyors want to root out and establish the facts through evidence-based analysis, epitomised by a physical site inspection. Why would they place their faith or trust in something that is untested in an environment where professional liability and client confidence is key?

Despite this, the role of the building surveyor has changed significantly since the formation of RICS in 1868. As well as reviewing documents before inspections or after a visit to corroborate the findings, there is a need to input survey findings into reports and present this to clients who often require a summary of the key information, risks, investment costs or other ‘red flag’ issues. Surveyors are certainly beginning to use AI for these administrative tasks or legal and technical analysis.

**What opportunities or challenges has AI brought?**  
With clients paying fees that are often fixed for professional advice, AI that makes the process of document review or other administrative tasks more efficient is a real opportunity to get more work done.

It has proved effective with the review of lease clauses, such as those covering repair obligations or principal dates associated with break clauses or key terms. While this is still considered to be in its infancy, I spoke to a director at Savills recently who said: “It takes a fraction of a second to do what we used to do in an hour or so, and so far has been very accurate, even with crumpled old paper leases.”

**How can predictive AI help in areas like building maintenance? And is its use becoming widespread?**  
Predictive AI is probably a phrase that will worry most surveyors in a professional environment where they are liable for their advice. There are instances

where the use of the word ‘renew’ instead of ‘replace’ has resulted in thousands of pounds of damages being awarded. Can AI interpret such nuance?  
Having said that, there is an attempt to utilise predictive AI for things such as the likely presence of mould to residential properties. Surely older houses are more prone to damp and therefore more likely to suffer mould? However, the variables in this assumption appear too great as building occupation, the presence of heating and ventilation, and human activity such as drying washing on radiators can have wildly differing outcomes on the generation of mould. Despite this, there are surveyors developing AI to establish the likelihood of such events.

**What is the general sentiment among building surveying professionals towards AI?**  
While building surveyors are naturally cautious and suspicious, they are also inquisitive as well as pragmatic. AI is seen as something that can be of benefit, and clients would welcome this if it reduced professional fees, but the majority of surveyors appear reluctant to allow AI to interfere with the physical survey or site data collection process.

**To what extent can AI automate certain surveying processes without compromising RICS standards?**  
This is the most challenging and thorny issue with the use of AI, as all professional members are obliged to adopt best practice or the rules of engagement stipulated within the professional standards.  
In terms of client instruction, professional responsibility and liability there is no flexibility built into professional standards or professional liability insurance policies to accommodate AI. There still remains a need for surveyors to inspect, analyse, report and sign off on their advice.



## VALUATION

PAUL AYLOTT MRICS IS HEAD OF VALUATIONS AND LEASE ADVISORY AT GLENNY LLP CHARTERED SURVEYORS

**Is the valuation sector embracing the potential of AI?**  
The sector is embracing AI and automation as much as, if not more than, other sectors of real estate. In general, valuation firms have been progressive yet measured in adopting automation, particularly in respect of collecting data and completing due diligence tasks.

**What are the main opportunities or challenges AI has brought with it?**  
The main opportunities in this sector are around efficiency, faster data analysis and the ability to draw insights from large data sets. Reducing time spent on repetitive tasks, which allows surveyors to focus on professional judgement and client service, is a significant opportunity.  
The main challenge is balancing this with ensuring that the professional service provided meets RICS standards and the clients understand the process and how conclusions are reached.

**Is the change presented by AI mostly positive, negative or are you still undecided?**  
On balance, the change is positive. Automation and AI have the potential to enhance rather than replace professional expertise. There is of course caution about over-reliance on technology without human oversight.  
Valuation is not just about the numbers but about local knowledge, professional judgement and context, things that AI is not yet capable of replicating.

**What is the general sentiment among valuation professionals towards AI?**  
There is an expectation, particularly among the younger generation of registered valuers, that AI and automation should play a key part

of the task, reducing the repetitive elements so professionals can focus on judgement and client service. I believe that this will gather momentum as the next generation of valuers enters the marketplace, and it might become a differential to candidates when considering career options and which firm to join.  
Businesses that invest in automation and AI are likely to attract the best quality candidates. And the removal of many repetitive tasks in the valuation process might make the sector more appealing to real estate graduates entering the market. However, the importance of graduates and trainees understanding the valuation process cannot be ignored.

**Are there concerns around the transparency of AI in valuation and over-reliance on it?**  
Transparency is key in the valuation process. Businesses that are able to adopt AI and automation into their valuation practices but still ensure that transparency and professional service is at the heart of every step of the process will see the benefits.  
The ultimate responsibility for accuracy, compliance and professional judgement remains with the surveyor. AI and automation should be seen as a supporting process rather than a replacement. ▶

“Transparency is key in the valuation process”





# RESIDENTIAL

IAN MCGUINNESS FRICS IS A PARTNER AND HEAD OF ANALYTICS AT KNIGHT FRANK

### What opportunities or challenges has AI brought with it?

On the opportunity side, the gains are significant. We’ve seen a step-change in how quickly professionals can synthesise insight. Interfaces such as ChatGPT now support rapid cross-referencing of planning documents, consultation responses and other unstructured datasets. What once took hours of manual review can now be triaged in minutes.

Machine vision has opened up new possibilities, especially in under-surveyed areas. Models like Meta’s Segment Anything can classify building form or land use even when structured data doesn’t exist, which is enormously valuable in early-stage site analysis.

It’s also helping professionals turn data into more persuasive, client-friendly narratives – a capability that’s already reshaping how we pitch, present and advise.

That said, the hype can be misleading. AI is sometimes sold into the industry as a one-size-fits-all solution. In reality, the term ‘AI’ now encompasses a wide range of pre-existing capabilities. Without clarity, non-technical decision-makers can easily be oversold.

We’re still operating in a landscape of ethical and regulatory uncertainty. Some third-party use cases have fallen short when tested for

“The prize isn’t automation for its own sake. It’s amplified expertise”



explainability or auditability. For a profession built on trust, that’s a red flag and we need to stay vigilant about transparency.

### What is the general sentiment in residential surveying towards AI?

There’s interest in how AI can help with report writing, defect recognition or valuation modelling – particularly given increasing client demands and cost pressures. But there’s also scepticism, especially where AI is presented as a magic wand without clarity on its provenance, limitations or compliance with professional standards.

### Can AI be combined with other newer technologies such as drones to increase the scale or quantity of work a residential surveyor can do?

Absolutely, the potential is enormous. Drones already extend a surveyor’s reach, allowing rapid, safe access to rooftops, large estates and otherwise inaccessible areas. But when AI is applied to the imagery and

spatial data those drones collect, our interpretation of the data becomes more intelligent.

AI systems can classify materials, flag structural anomalies, assess gradients, even detect signs of environmental stress – all in real time, and at scale. This not only accelerates the survey process but supports more consistent, repeatable decision-making across large portfolios.

### To what extent can AI automate certain surveying processes without compromising RICS standards?

Clear opportunities for automation lie in routine valuation modelling, photo classification and tagging, template-driven report generation and risk-flagging based on predefined indicators. However, full automation of high-stakes professional opinion is unlikely to meet RICS standards without a human in the loop. AI should augment, not replace, surveyor judgement. Insight can be accelerated, but responsibility can’t be outsourced. The prize isn’t automation for its own sake. It’s amplified expertise. ■

## RESPONSIBLE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The RICS professional standard *Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice* was published in September 2025 and comes into practice from 9 March 2026.

The standard is supportive of the use of AI systems that are likely to drive the profession forward. At the same time, however, it is generally accepted that use of these systems also carries high levels of risk, both professional and commercial, to individuals and firms if not managed appropriately.





# Could small modular reactors power the UK's growth?

Rolls-Royce has been given the green light to produce a lighter, more agile breed of nuclear reactor that offers net zero-friendly energy security

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI

**B**ack in 2006, then British prime minister, Tony Blair, called the UK's failure to build new nuclear power stations a "dereliction of duty".

Just nine months later, energy giant EDF put forward a proposal to build a new nuclear plant, which would be ready to go by 2017. By 2012, the budget had been set at £16bn for a cutting-edge European Pressurised Reactor at Hinkley Point in Somerset, south-west England. It could provide up to 7% of the nation's electricity – but its operational date had already been pushed back to 2019.

A year later, 2023 was given as the earliest Hinkley Point C would produce power and, 12 years on, the project is now expected to cost up to £46bn and not produce power until 2031.

A 2024 report estimated that there had been about 7,000 substantial design changes to the initial plans since the build was conceived, each contributing to the ballooning price tag. While few would argue with the need for decarbonised, sovereign energy, there are not many that would regard the soaring costs and lengthy delays of Hinkley Point C as the way of achieving it.

What if, instead of building a large nuclear plant, each component of which is bespoke, we could deploy a series of ready-to-go, smaller plants that could be rolled out across the country? This is the theory behind small modular reactors (SMRs), and the chancellor's spending review in June 2025 gave the green light to Rolls-Royce to build them. It was ►

ROLLS-ROYCE, GETTY

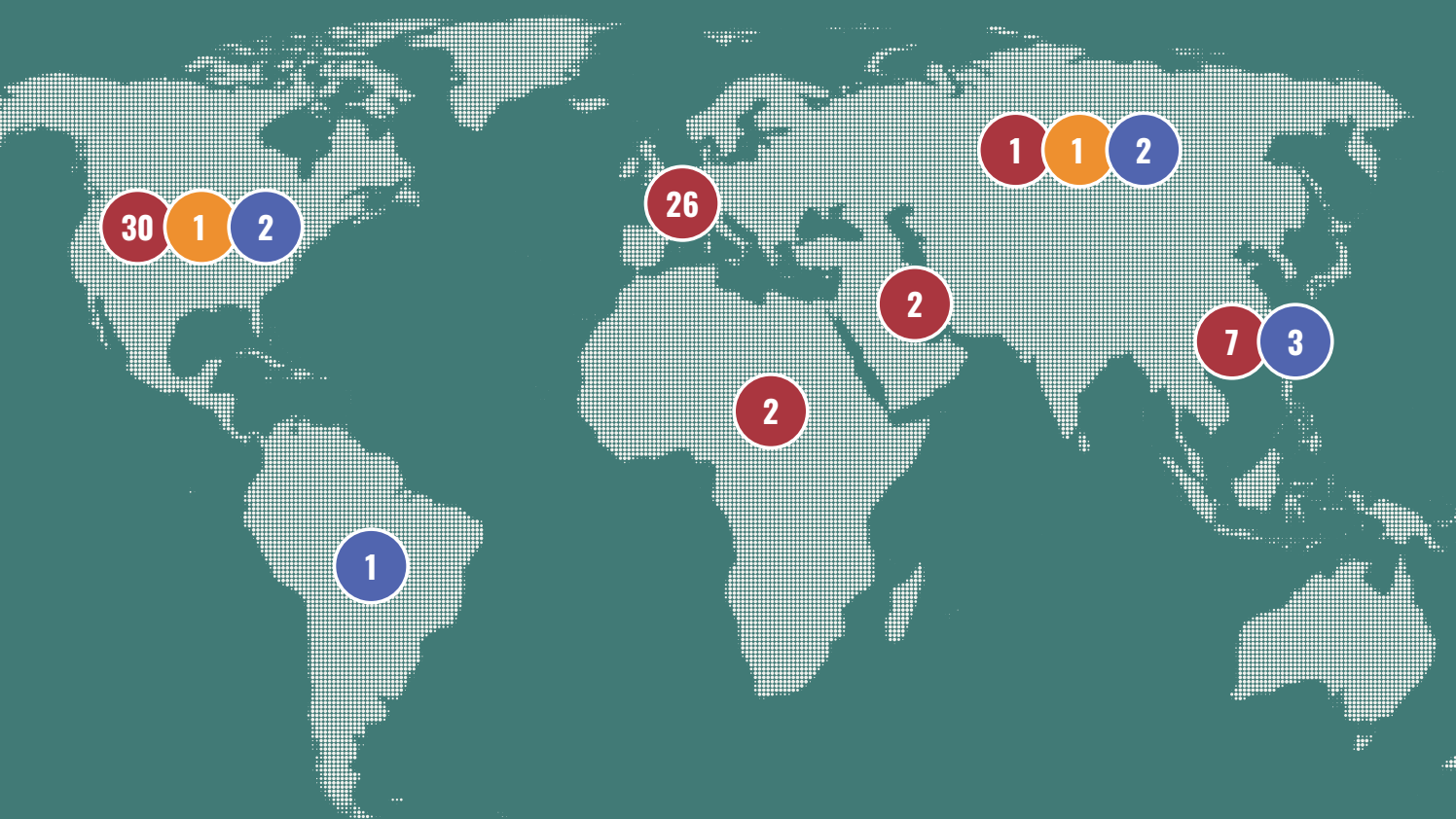
Rolls-Royce's vision for how the SMR will look



↓  
**POWER ACROSS THE WORLD**

Interest in nuclear innovation crosses continents. From the earliest steps and proposals to construction work being well underway, SMR sites around the globe are noted on the map below.

- Planning stages (non-binding agreements, technology selection process)
- Permits and licences for construction received
- Construction has started on the site



**North America**  
30 planned  
1 permits received  
2 under construction

**South America**  
1 under construction

**UK & Europe**  
26 planned

**Africa**  
2 planned

**Middle East**  
2 planned

**Russia**  
1 planned  
1 permits received  
2 under construction

**APAC**  
7 planned  
3 under construction

SOURCE: THE NEA SMALL MODULAR REACTOR DASHBOARD, THIRD EDITION

one of four companies vying to produce SMRs in the UK and it is estimated that an SMR will cost in the region of £1.8bn – a fraction of the bloated budget of Hinkley Point C.

So how can it be done? “The most important bit of ‘SMR’ is the ‘M’ – they’re modular, they can be manufactured,” says an industry source who asked not to be named. “At Hinkley, they have had to build sheds just to weld everything on site. With an SMR, you build everything in a factory and deliver it to site. It’s a system that becomes increasingly efficient. Your construction risk is significantly decreased.”

**Great British Energy – Nuclear**

A government-owned body that covers England and Wales, Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N), will oversee the early genesis of SMRs. It has acquired two sites that were originally owned by the nuclear arm of Japanese company Hitachi for development at Wylfa on Ynys Môn (Anglesey) in north Wales and Oldbury-on-Severn in Gloucestershire, south-west England.

These are destined to be the first to host SMRs and two different models will be developed and tested. Eventually, the government has ambitions to scale up production having set a target of 24GW of nuclear energy by 2050. SMRs have an output of up to 300MW (although Rolls-Royce says its model could generate 470MW), whereas a facility such as Hinkley Point C should be able to produce 3.2GW, as will the similarly sized (and equally blighted) Sizewell C in Suffolk, east England.

“GBE-N was set up to give the market confidence [in developing nuclear power],” says the industry source. “The idea is to get the private sector involved. If GBE-N gets it right, they could see an SMR coming online every year.”

GBE-N is something of a misnomer, however. The Scottish government has rejected building new nuclear plants, based partly on the difficulties experienced at Hinkley Point. Northern Ireland has never had a nuclear power station and, with no current infrastructure or specialist workforce to support development, together with a prohibition against nuclear plants in the Republic of Ireland, is unlikely to have one any time soon.

Nevertheless, GBE-N sees SMRs as a way of boosting jobs both within the manufacturing and running of SMRs but also within high-energy consumption industries, such as data centres, which could be attracted to countries with a source of reliable energy production. Canada recently announced that it was commissioning four SMRs in Ontario, but the UK is likely to be the first country to harness the technology in Europe.

If GBE-N’s plans to roll out a series of SMRs are realised, it could place the UK at the forefront of SMR technology

**“SMRs are another opportunity to mitigate climate change”**

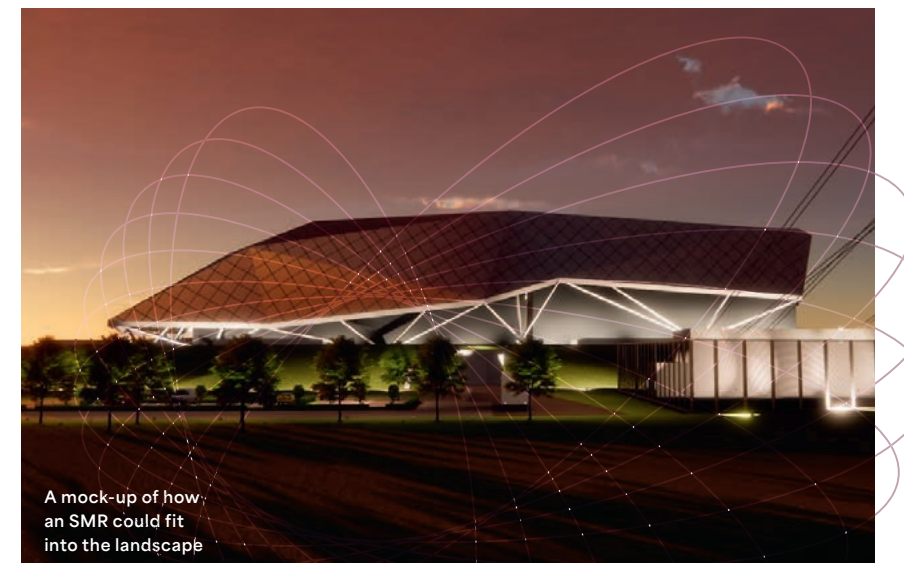
**JASON DREISBACH**  
PORTFOLIO DIRECTOR, ATKINSRÉALIS

in Europe and potentially the western world. (China has already forged ahead with the deployment of its own design of SMRs.)

“We’re very excited about SMRs,” says Jason Dreisbach, portfolio director for advanced energy technologies at engineering giant AtkinsRéalis, which has been working on the Canadian proposals. “They’re another opportunity to mitigate climate change. [They could suit] areas where there is less land available or where the demand is very localised, like rural Canada.”

The size of SMRs certainly makes them more flexible in terms of location. Rolls-Royce has calculated that an SMR will require just over five acres of land per unit. By comparison, Hinkley Point C sits on 430-acre site and Sizewell C covers 80 acres.

Although the plan is to have several SMRs that could be dotted around the country – current UK prime minister Keir Starmer has spoken about “ripping up archaic rules” to allow them to be imposed in new areas – it is much more likely that instead of building a mega 3.2GW plant, several SMRs will be located on one site that already has a nuclear heritage. This will ensure that the specialist skills are already in place, and that locals are familiar with and less likely to be bothered by nuclear energy generation. ▶



A mock-up of how an SMR could fit into the landscape

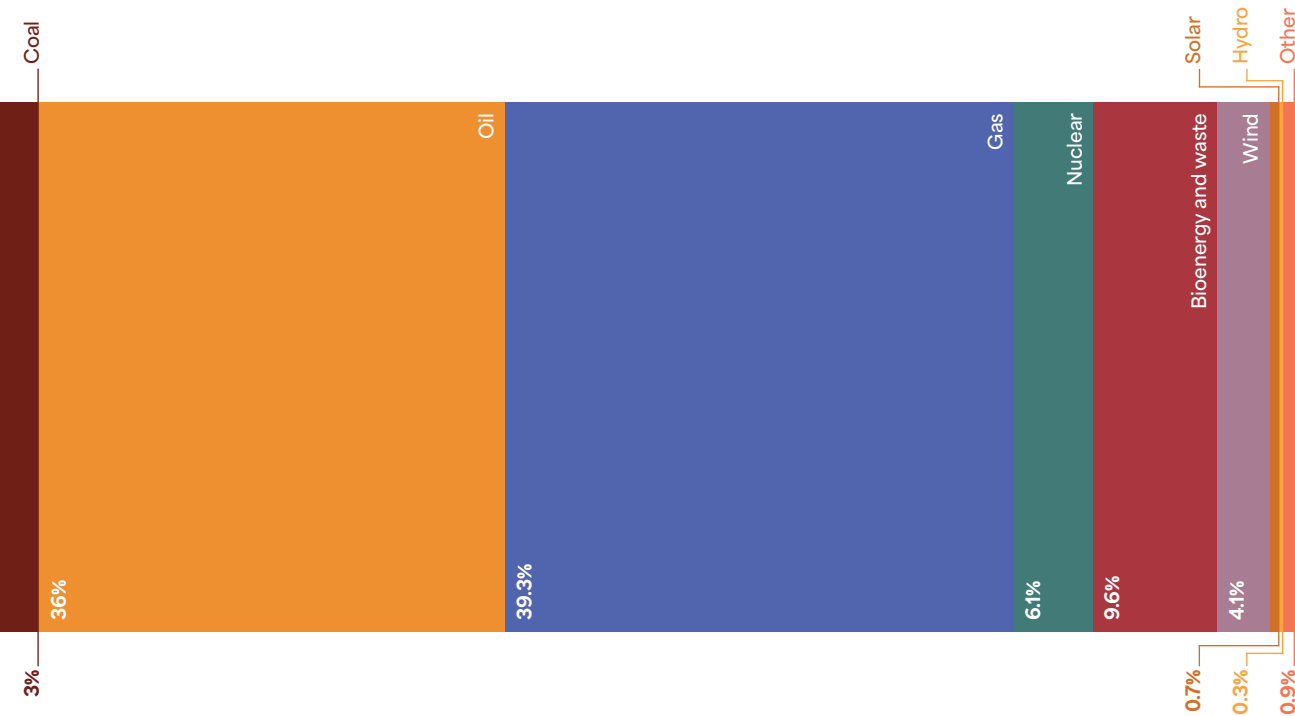
ROLLS-ROYCE, GETTY





FUEL FINDINGS

Energy consumption by fuel type in the UK in 2022\*



Regardless of location, if one SMR is hit by a technical or structural problem, its neighbouring reactors should be able to carry on – meaning interruptions in output are minimal. If (and it is a very big if according to the nuclear industry) something goes catastrophically wrong, then any potential disaster is much easier to contain in an SMR compared with a mega-plant.

More stable energy costs

If Chernobyl, the Ukrainian nuclear plant that exploded in 1986, turned many against nuclear power for decades, the Ukrainian war has, ironically, led many to rethink their stance. The soaring energy costs that many European countries experienced after their boycott of Russian fuel imports has underlined the importance of energy sovereignty. With

“There’s always going to be room for traditional plants and SMRs”

JASON DREISBACH  
PORTFOLIO DIRECTOR, ATKINSRÉALIS



renewables only likely to provide a proportion of many nations’ needs, nuclear has become far more attractive.

There are naysayers who are unconvinced by largely unproven SMR technology. They are not persuaded that SMRs will create cheaper electricity, arguing that a manufacturer would have to produce dozens of units to create efficiencies, and that some overheads, such as security, increase with a greater number of smaller facilities rather than single large plants.

“There’s always going to be room for both traditional gigawatt plants and SMRs,” says Dreisbach. “There are economies of scale with gigawatt facilities but SMRs fill some gaps. One of the advantages of SMRs is some of the infrastructure from traditional plants could be used for them but they’re not a replacement. We need both types.”

Nevertheless, in Britain at least, the SMR push has been championed by both the former Conservative government and is now a crucial building block in the current Labour government’s energy policy.

“It’s a triple whammy,” says the industry source. “Nuclear provides the lowest carbon energy, it keeps crucial assets on British soil and the nuclear fuel supply chain is very resilient coming from Canada and Australia. They’re countries which we’re not likely to fall out with any time soon. The first SMRs won’t be easy but, if we’re serious about net zero, then this is a major contribution towards that target.” ■

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

HOW TO SHAPE A SPECIALISM

Developing the Land and Resources Rights of Light APC pathway



“Many experienced professionals are yet to engage with the Rights of Light APC pathway”

EMILY FORTH MRICS  
RICS GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBER  
LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

When Peter Defoe FRICS, senior fellow at Anglia Ruskin University and RICS Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) counsellor, published *Understanding Rights of Light* for the APC last year, it provided valuable insight into the evolving professional context for surveyors working in this specialist field.

He discussed the 2019 introduction of the Land and Resources Rights of Light APC pathway to RICS membership and explained how surveyors specialising in daylight, sunlight and rights of light can navigate the journey to becoming chartered surveyors. So, why does this pathway matter for the discipline?

Why the pathway matters

Daylight, sunlight and rights of light are critical considerations that can leave modern developments exposed to planning and legal risks if overlooked. Yet many practitioners are not chartered surveyors and many firms are unregulated. Without the professional oversight and accountability that come with RICS regulation, this creates the potential for a wide variation in the standards of advice and service provided.

Becoming a chartered member of RICS is a statement of integrity. Until recently achieving chartered status was difficult for rights of light professionals. RICS pathways required competencies that did not reflect the specialist nature of the discipline, and many candidates were forced to follow different pathways to meet the assessment criteria.

The introduction of the Rights of Light APC pathway in 2019 addressed that gap. It provides a route to membership that reflects the realities of our work while aligning with the standards of practice expected by RICS. This pathway recognises rights of light as a distinct specialism and gives new entrants and experienced practitioners a clear framework for professional development.

The barriers to progress

Many experienced professionals are yet to engage with the Rights of Light APC pathway and fewer still have completed the process to become chartered.

Another challenge lies in mentoring for candidates. We need more qualified professionals to take on the role of counsellor, but this requires more uptake of the pathway and more professionals becoming chartered RICS members.

The assessment process also presents difficulties. Interview panels are usually not specialists in daylight, sunlight and rights of light. The lack of familiarity with the nuances of the subject can lead to additional challenges when questioning candidates at interview. This issue is compounded when the few specialists who are qualified assessors are often unable to assess candidates they know.

How we can catch up

Increased visibility and promotion of the Rights of Light APC pathway is essential. We need to encourage more individuals to enrol as candidates and more firms to strive for RICS regulation. Senior practitioners in the rights of light field who qualified through other routes need to be encouraged to come forward for counsellor and assessor training.

RICS could consider some flexibility in assessor requirements. Currently, surveyors must be qualified chartered members for two years before they can assess candidates. Allowing practitioners with significant professional experience to become assessors soon after passing the APC could make a real difference.

More candidates, counsellors and assessors is how we can build on the Rights of Light APC pathway and bring the daylight, sunlight and rights of light surveying discipline in line with others. The framework is in place, so now we need to promote it and help to shape the future of our profession.



The remarkable restoration of

# Sheerness Dockyard Church

A heritage-led regeneration project that has spurred further economic growth in a neglected area of the UK and won major awards in the process

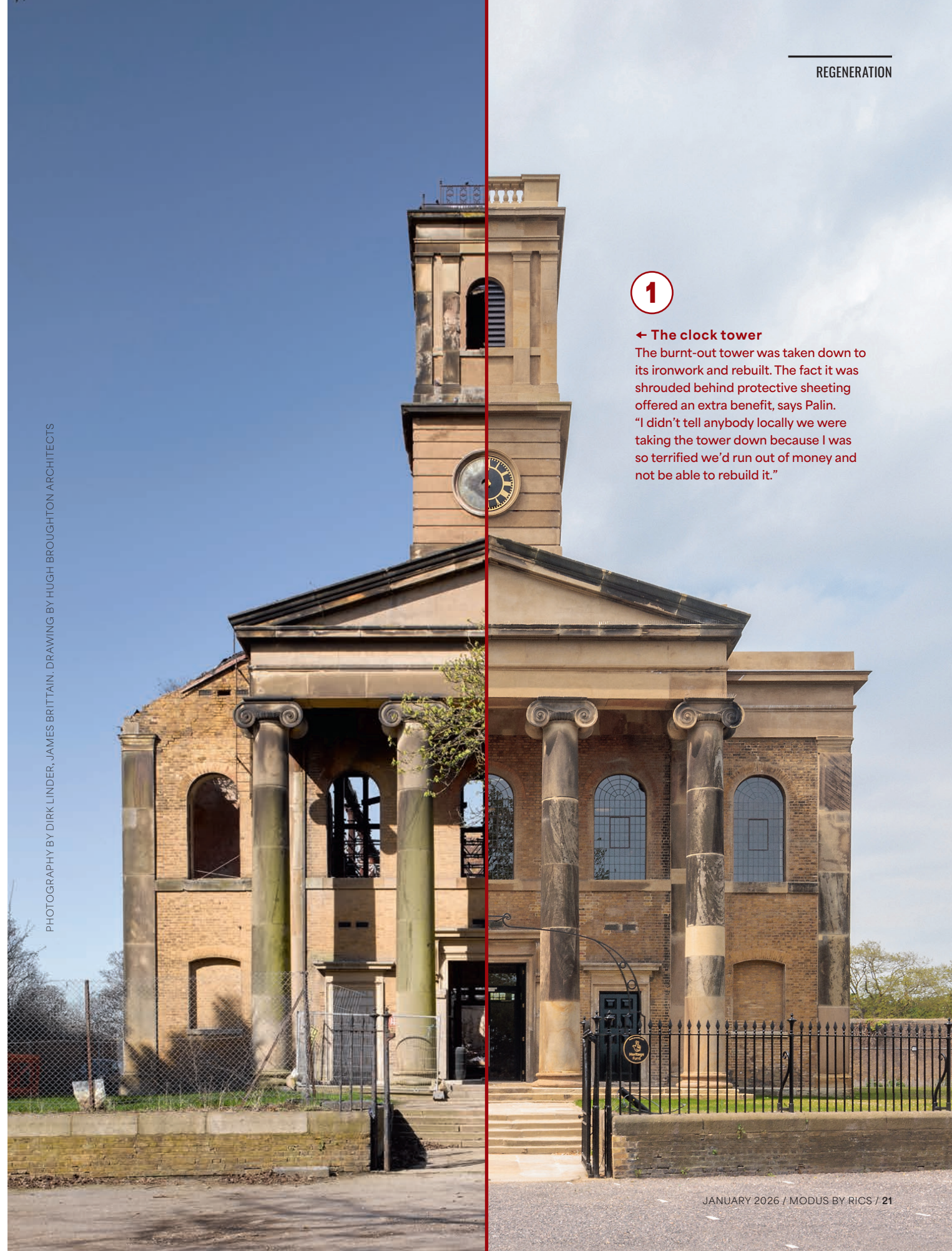
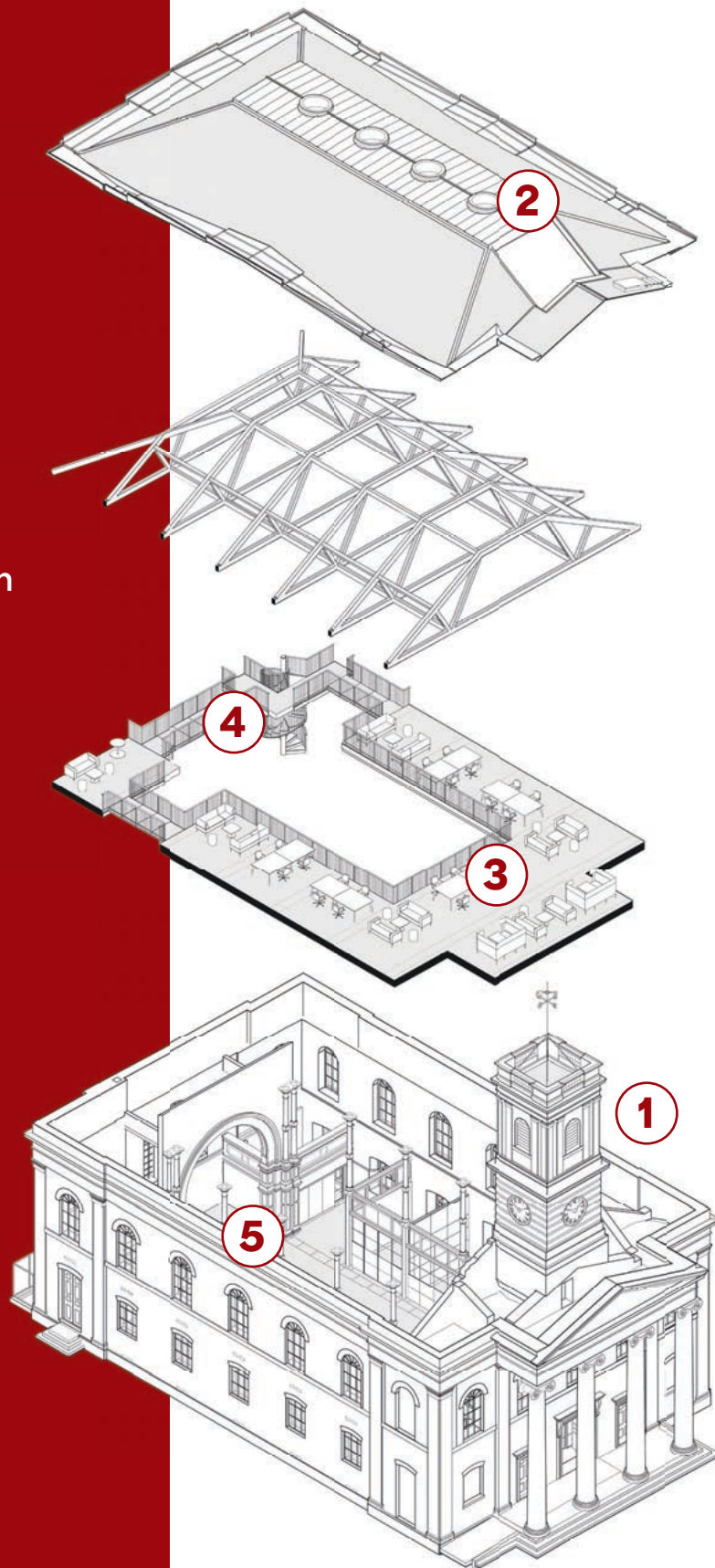
WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS

**O**n the Isle of Sheppey in north Kent, looking out over the Thames Estuary, is Sheerness Dockyard Church – winner of RICS' 2024 UK Project of the Year Award.

It was built in 1828, designed by George Ledwell Taylor, surveyor of buildings to the navy. Sheerness was an important naval base from the mid-17th century until 1960 when it closed, and the church was later deconsecrated in the 1970s. The church fell into disrepair for several decades until it was gutted by a huge fire in 2001, which left it without a roof and completely exposed to the elements.

It was emblematic of an economically deprived area of the UK that had once been a busy naval base and was now suffering from a lack of jobs and opportunities for the people who lived there. In a 2019 survey of the UK's council districts, Swale, where Sheerness is located, was found to be one of the poorest wards in the country.

All of this meant there was very little chance of the local authorities finding the resources to restore an historic Grade II\* listed Georgian church. ►



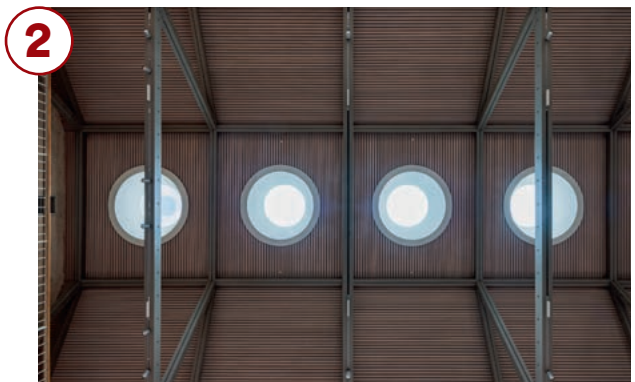
1

## ← The clock tower

The burnt-out tower was taken down to its ironwork and rebuilt. The fact it was shrouded behind protective sheeting offered an extra benefit, says Palin. "I didn't tell anybody locally we were taking the tower down because I was so terrified we'd run out of money and not be able to rebuild it."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIRK LINDER, JAMES BRITTAIN. DRAWING BY HUGH BROUGHTON ARCHITECTS





**2**

↑ **A new roof**  
Four circular windows were incorporated into the new roof to illuminate the space below



**3**

↑ **Co-working space**  
The site is now managed by Fruitbowl Media, who run co-working spaces around Kent

Not only that, but it is one of just four surviving dockyard churches in Britain (with the others to be found in Portsmouth, Chatham and Pembroke).

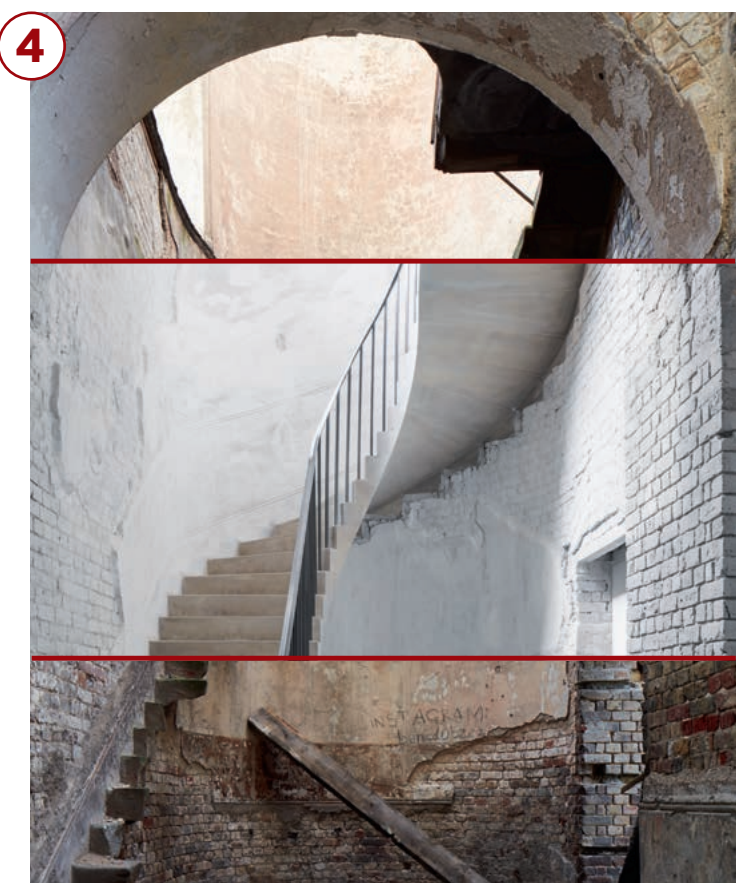
“This broken tower, this burnt-out building was symbolic of the fact that Sheppey had been abandoned by everyone,” says William Palin, CEO of Barts Heritage and client lead on the Sheerness Dockyard Church project. He first became aware of the church and its precarious state in 2006, while working with a preservation trust repairing a Tudor gatehouse on the Isle of Sheppey. He describes the church as “clinging on for dear life”.

The sorry state the building was in is echoed by Martin Ashley, managing partner at Martin Ashley Architects, who collaborated with Hugh Broughton Architects on the project. “I recently re-read our initial condition survey, and my God I had forgotten... I can honestly say this one was all but lost,” he says.

**Heritage-led regeneration**

Palin says the socioeconomic situation in Sheerness meant it was obvious the church should become something that would contribute to the town and its people, in “a process of heritage-led regeneration”.

“It was always envisaged that there would be an element of support for local young people



**4**

← **Two stone staircases**  
One of the cantilevered stone staircases was kept in its derelict state and the other restored, as a reminder of the sorry condition the building was in

developing independent businesses,” says Robert Songhurst, associate at Hugh Broughton Architects, who was project architect from the early design stages of Sheerness Dockyard Church’s restoration. “It’s also a co-working space with a café as part of a multi-threaded approach to make the site financially viable and sustainable.”

The Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust’s plans for the church received a warm welcome from Sheerness residents. On top of restoring the church and keeping a valued local landmark, it would gain a community use. The Trust was also involved in the renovation of the neighbouring houses in Naval Terrace – Georgian townhouses that needed attention but had the potential to be high-quality homes.

**Regenerative effect**

Once the restoration was complete, the day-to-day management of the building was handed over to Fruitbowl Media, who run co-working spaces around

Kent. The building is now known as IslandWorks at Dockyard Church and it has hosted cultural events such as immersive theatre, film screenings and classical concerts that benefit from its church acoustics. “They’ve taken it on enthusiastically and are engaging really well with the community and getting all those uses in there,” says Songhurst.

The successful Dockyard Church project has also lit the touchpaper for wider regeneration efforts in the region – in January 2023, Swale Borough Council was awarded £20m by the government for the Sheerness Revival project.

“Swale’s bid included three projects, which would visibly change Sheerness town centre,” says Kevin Moore, chair of the Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust. “These are the regeneration of Beachfields, a dated health and leisure facility; an extension to Sheppey College; and the refurbishment of Masters House, to allow young entrepreneurs to have the opportunity to develop new business ventures.”

Moore reflects on the significant impact it’s had on a neglected area of the UK, and says: “I hope the success of this project demonstrates soaring ambition can win out.” ■



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**5**

↓

**‘A DYNAMIC, FUTURE-FOCUSED SPACE FOR SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT’**

**The verdict of the RICS Awards judges**

The RICS Awards judges said: “A collaboration between Hugh Broughton Architects and Martin Ashley Architects has successfully guided the restoration of the Grade II\* listed Sheerness Dockyard Church. It has been transformed from a fire-damaged ruin to a welcoming new community hub on the Isle of Sheppey.

“The team achieved a delicate balance, working together since 2017 to deliver this exemplary heritage-led regeneration scheme.”

Awards judge Kerry Gibbs MRICS added: “This restoration has faithfully preserved the church’s historical integrity while creating a dynamic, future-focused space for social empowerment.”

Find out more about the 12 regional RICS Awards being reintroduced for 2026 at [rics.org/ukawards](https://rics.org/ukawards)



Do *family ties* make a surveying practice



WORDS BY KAREN DAY PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL LECKIE HAIR AND MAKEUP BY LAURA FLYNN

LEFT: KATE AVERY MRICS, RIGHT: LOUISE AVERY MRICS

*stronger?*



# Meet the directors of Avery & Co, a Liverpool-based surveying firm that has celebrated 21 years despite major global challenges and an ever-changing property market

Louise and Kate Avery were once told that they could run a small country. In fact, the formidable family duo runs Avery & Co, a firm of residential chartered surveyors in north-west England. It is one of many family-owned firms that are the cornerstone of the UK surveying industry.

Last year marked Avery & Co's 21st anniversary, and over the decades it's weathered major market shifts, a global financial crash and COVID-19 to become a firmly established surveying brand. For Louise and Kate (both MRICS), their success stems from their sense of family, a parent-and-daughter bond that enables collaboration and provides mutual strength and support. "I don't think we'd have done it without each other," says Avery & Co director Kate.

Today the Liverpool-based company specialises in the survey and valuation of residential property and operates across the north-west of England and North Wales. It works with homeowners and buyers as well as corporate clients from mortgage lenders to social landlords.

The firm currently employs 14 staff, including five other surveyors, and is recruiting more. Alongside the business, the duo organises a national CPD conference annually for 120 surveying colleagues, while Louise has helped draft sections of the RICS Valuation – Global Standards UK National Supplement and sits on RICS' expert group on the home survey standard.

There is something special about family-owned businesses and Avery & Co is no exception to this. The two live around the corner from each other and are, as managing director Louise says, "always together". Kate describes them as "balancing each other out", taking on specific tasks in the business without ever having to discuss it. They finish each other's sentences while subtly appreciating one another's strengths and accomplishments; Louise's drive to do the best and Kate stepping up to become a director just as the pandemic hit.

They're honest that running a business together is hard. "You're eating your dinner at night and you're still talking

about it," Louise says. "If it's good you share successes, but if you have challenges that will affect the family environment." Kate adds: "When you're talking to a family member, you're going to be a bit more honest. You don't really hold back, and sometimes that's a good thing, sometimes it's a bad thing."

## A changing business landscape

The two have navigated a fair few of those challenges along the way. "One of the hardest things about business is just adapting," says Kate. "It constantly changes and it's never really steady." Indeed, Avery & Co bears little resemblance to its beginnings back in 2004, when Louise, who qualified in 1990, set up alone as a consultant valuer. "I didn't really have a vision," she recalls. "I think it was more about freedom, I wanted to work for myself and have more control over what I did."

Louise navigated the financial crash in 2008/09, describing it as a "terrible time", and when work began to dry up she decided to volunteer as a special constable, joining Merseyside Police. "I thought I could spend some of my extra time putting a bit back into the community," she says. She rose through the ranks to become an inspector, supervising 80 officers, and it's here she says that she learned a lot about how to respectfully manage people.

She resigned six years later when the pressures of running Avery & Co and family life become too great. During this time Kate was growing up and remembers accompanying Louise to inspections in the school holidays.

When the market started to pick back up in 2012, Louise was offered a panel appointment providing mortgage valuations for a major lender, which heralded a huge increase in work. As a sole practitioner she'd often felt lonely, so she looked up her former surveyor colleagues who had semi-retired after the financial crash.

"One of them was stacking shelves in a supermarket," she recalls. She asked them to come on board and suddenly she had a team. "It was very attractive for me at the time," Louise says. "You've got people working around you who have the same objectives, the same worries and the same need to do the best job you can. I've always wanted to make sure if I do something, I do it properly and that's very important for the people who work with us as well."

It is these shared professional values and the bonds they create that still run through the ethos of Avery & Co today. "People join our business, and they do stay," says Kate. "We do everything to support them, and I know they do the same for us." She points to long-term colleague Paul Riding FRICS, a surveyor and auditor who trained Louise early in her career, then joined Avery & Co and helped train Kate. "Paul's role has been to bring out our values, our vision for the business and our standards. And he's helped us enormously," says Louise.

## An unexpected career choice

It was through these professional bonds that Kate's interest in surveying was piqued. By 2012 she was at university studying for a degree in geography and had joined the firm helping with admin as a side job to earn money. "It was never really something I had considered as a career," she recalls. But then ►



“You don’t really hold back, and sometimes that’s a good thing, sometimes it’s a bad thing”

KATE AVERY MRICS  
DIRECTOR



“If you have challenges, that will affect the family environment.”

LOUISE AVERY MRICS  
MANAGING DIRECTOR





## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

There were 5,126,505 family businesses in the UK in 2023, accounting for 93.2% of all firms in the private sector. There were 4,467,190 in England, 329,847 in Scotland, 206,248 in Wales, and 123,221 in Northern Ireland.

Despite being major players in all industries, family firms were particularly important to the performance of certain areas of the economy. Firms in construction, for example, accounted for 72% of total private sector turnover in the industry and 80.8% of employment – the highest proportions for any industry.

Comparing businesses of the same size, family ownership rates were highest in south-west England, Yorkshire and the Humber, north-west England, and the West Midlands. London had the lowest family ownership rate by a notable margin: 5.4 percentage points below the national average.

Family business employment amounted to a total of 15.8m jobs in 2023, or 57% of total private sector employment in the UK. For every £100 of turnover generated by family businesses, £17.50 was paid in taxes. Family businesses contributed a total of £422bn in taxation in 2023.

This is a highlight from *The State of the Nation: the UK family business sector in 2023*, a CEBR report for the Family Business Research Foundation, published in January 2025.

she started going out on inspections with Avery's team of older, experienced surveyors. "They were teaching me things, and I thought I do quite like this, it's interesting."

Kate completed a postgraduate degree qualifying as a surveyor and valuer in 2017 and completed her APC to become a chartered surveyor in 2023. She worked hard to pivot the company away from mortgage lender valuations to dealing directly with home buyers. "This is where the model of the business is now," says Louise. "It's a totally different business."

One of their biggest challenges and their proudest achievement came during the pandemic. In February 2020, Kate had jumped into the role of director to run the business alongside Louise. A month later the first COVID-19 lockdowns happened and the industry and the world ground to a halt. Kate had the uncertainty of a new role, her own daughters – who were four and one at the time – and the existential pressures of life during lockdown. She learned a lot, quickly. "I juggled every role across the business, as did Louise," says Kate. "We wanted to keep the business going the best we could and ensure it remained secure for everyone to return to work."

Looking back, she says it was a huge turning point for the company. "Everyone pulled together, and we did everything we could to make it work. And I think we formed really nice working relationships off the back of that, which changed the business for the positive." Louise adds: "It did, we were all really keen on ensuring this didn't defeat us."

Avery & Co remains in a good place. Kate and Louise have since developed a new generation of surveyors, taking them through the qualifying process. "It's nice to say that we've done that," says Louise. But they are both clear that without each other, Avery & Co wouldn't be the business it is today. ■

## LOCAL COMMUNITIES

# Will business rates reform revive ailing high streets?



## “This is really a story about the health of the local economy”

**SIMON RUBINSOHN**  
CHIEF ECONOMIST, RICS

Against a backdrop of a challenging macroeconomic environment and a cautious consumer, it is not surprising that the state of the high street across the country continues to hit the headlines.

It also remains a major issue for policymakers and politics. This has been highlighted in a recent research paper by the University of Warwick and the Economic and Social Research Council, entitled *Local Decline and Populism*, which found a “significant positive association” between the two factors.

Assessing the vibrancy of the retail estate is much broader in scope than just shops. It includes community facilities, leisure and hospitality and potentially residential and offices. This is a story about the health of the local economy.

That couldn't be more starkly demonstrated than in analysis by Centre for Cities, which shows London, Cambridge and Oxford as the three cities with the lowest high street vacancy rate followed by York and Brighton. At the other end of the spectrum, the highest figures are found in Newport, Bradford, Blackpool and Basildon.

A number of measures have been announced by the government to try and address this issue. In December, High Street Rental Auctions came into force to enable local leaders to manage long-term vacant properties. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, currently working its way through parliament, is also intended to devolve greater power to enable policies that address the specific needs of their area.

At the end of last year the government implemented legislation granting local authorities the power to auction off leases for commercial properties that have remained unoccupied for more than a year. JLL has suggested that this “represents a potentially powerful tool for local authorities to combat vacancy rates and revive struggling high streets”.

Most recently, the government unveiled the ‘Pride in Place’ scheme – an initiative designed to give local authorities greater powers to control the retail environment and regulate unwanted businesses. It also promises up to £5bn for 339 “overlooked” communities over the next decade.

Despite all these measures, a big concern I have is whether the devolution programme will be backed up with fiscal levers for local leaders. It is perhaps inevitable at a time when public borrowing is under pressure and tax levels are hitting new highs that central government is reluctant to cede tools that are critical to the success of devolution.

Meanwhile, business rates reform is very much on the agenda. The British Retail Consortium contends that “the most pressing question is the how government's plan for a permanent business rates reduction for retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) premises will be implemented”.

At the 2024 Autumn Budget, the chancellor announced targeted measures such as the introduction of permanently lower business tax rates for RHL for 2026-27. This intervention was included in the Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Act, which will impose a higher multiplier on businesses with a rateable value over £500,000.

The complexity of this is highlighted by fears that anchor tenants on the high streets will unfairly bear the brunt of the necessary support to ease pressure on RHL businesses; there is also the matter of how to repurpose legacy anchor stores.

Addressing regional inequalities, local decline and the state of some high streets will require a long-term commitment by central government to deliver finance and meaningful devolved powers. It also needs to put in place national policies that create the right environment for business to invest, innovate and boost productivity.

That means not penalising the more successful parts of the economy.



# When dams

WORDS BY GREGORY SCRUGGS  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FABRIZIO LENCI

# fall, rivers flow

The story of the Klamath River is one of renewal and repair. As historic hydroelectric dams come down, ecosystems are reviving, indigenous nations are reclaiming their traditions, and new lessons are emerging for surveyors on how to balance progress with responsibility

## A DAMAGED PAST AND A RIVER REBORN

The 20th century's faith in hard infrastructure – for power, irrigation and flood control – came at a cost. On the Klamath River, straddling Oregon and California in the United States, a chain of dams severed fish populations and eroded Native American treaty rights. Tribal communities watched others fish freely while their own access was restricted.

## TURNING THE TIDE

Momentum for change built through the early 2000s, driven by mass fish die-offs, public protests and years of advocacy. Gradually, a landmark legal settlement cleared the way for the world's largest dam removal. The Klamath's long-awaited release after decades of negotiation and scientific input could begin.

## COLLABORATION AS A CATALYST

The dismantling of the Klamath dams demanded an intricate alliance of governments, utilities and tribal nations. Innovative funding (from state bonds to utility surcharges) paired with indigenous leadership ensured the project restored not just the river's flow, but its cultural identity.

## “A reminder that value can't always be counted in dollars”

## LESSONS FOR SURVEYORS

For surveyors, the Klamath story is a reminder that value can't always be counted in dollars. Weighing environmental health, cultural heritage and community rights demands both technical skill and ethical insight.

## NEW SKILLS REQUIRED

“The narrative has changed around dams,” says RICS Director of Land and Resources James Kavanagh MRICS. “We've had a blind spot about where we've placed them and how we've only measured their economic value.”

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# Why the Church of England has faith in social housing

The Church and its Bishop of Housing have ambitious plans to develop underused land into affordable and social housing

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOUG CHAYKA



To give an idea of the challenges faced in Winson Green, the neighbourhood in which Newbigin House stands, it is just around the corner from James Turner Street, the location of Channel 4's infamous Benefits Street.

This 2014 docuseries claimed – not without controversy – to have found a road in Birmingham in which 95% of residents were unemployed. Yet Newbigin House is likely to be a showpiece in forthcoming months, as the 16 new homes built in the grounds of the former vicarage make it one of the first developments to emerge from the Church of England's project to create social and affordable housing.

In 2021, the estate agency Knight Frank assisted the Church of England (CoE) in an audit of its property holdings. No one was exactly sure what the Church owned, despite it being one of the country's largest landowners. It turned out to be 200,000 acres – an area more than half the size of Greater London – and, while much of that land was in use, a significant proportion was not or it had the potential to be used more efficiently.

The subsequent *Coming Home* report outlined the CoE's plan to use some of that land to provide affordable housing and become an exemplar of its own Christian mission.

Now – and with little fanfare – the first of the initiative's houses are starting to appear. Last year, the Church Housing Association (CHA) was registered as a housing provider.

#### Good quality, affordable housing

Central to the *Coming Home* initiative is the idea that any new homes the CoE builds should include housing that is safe, stable, sociable, satisfying and sustainable. It's quite a contrast to the dilapidated homes that characterise much social housing stock or the grudgingly-built mandated units from private developers, which are often less well-appointed and may even feature so-called “poor doors”.

“We're looking at quality,” says Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford and the inaugural Bishop of Housing. “We want healthy communities, and at the heart of those are good quality, affordable housing.”

Nevertheless, the torrent of houses that such a supply of land might have implied has been more of a trickle. In an article in The Church Times earlier this year, Francis-Dehqani wrote that progress had been “slower and more challenging than hoped”.

Part of this might be due to what she politely terms the CoE's “decentralised” nature – to an outsider, navigating the dizzying level of stakeholders looks all but impossible. It includes, for example, 42 dioceses made up of 12,500 parishes; CoE schools;

the churches themselves and the associated glebe land that comes with them (land belonging to the CoE separate from a church building); plus a variety of residential housing, often, in the case of parsonages, sitting on large plots.

Then there are departmental bodies such as the Church Commissioners, which ensures the ongoing funding of the Church; the Archbishops' Council, which can fund projects such as *Coming Home* (and does offer micro-grants); the Church Development Agency; the above mentioned CHA; the Church Housing Foundation and a Forum for Church Housing.

Part of the reason for the gentle pace is, Francis-Dehqani says, that the CoE “lacks expertise, the liquid assets to develop”. Instead, it wants to partner with organisations that will ensure its resources are used wisely. This is no bad thing – there have been a series of disastrous cases of public bodies, such as councils, setting up property development wings that failed and wiping out reserves with risky property investments.

#### Building relationships and trust

“The CHA wants to build 150 homes in the first few years but with a remit to go beyond that,” says Daniel Mayes MRICS, CEO of the Church Development Agency and one of the people who spearheaded Newbigin House. “We want to build relationships and do things properly and thoroughly... This is where [the CoE] becomes a trusted partner. The Church is seen as having a good covenant.”

Part of his work is to assess sites for development: “We're looking at parsonage back gardens, glebe land or rural exception sites [land within a village envelope that can only be developed for affordable or social housing].”

**“We want healthy communities, and at the heart of those are good quality, affordable housing”**

**GULI FRANCIS-DEHQANI**  
BISHOP OF HOUSING

Despite the CHA's cautious ambitions, Mayes says there are 30 projects in the pipeline that will result in 900 homes within his West Midlands stomping ground. These projects include work with Birmingham City Council, which could potentially provide 300 units and, separately, the Nishkam Centre, a Sikh community group in the city's Handsworth area, to develop housing. Any homes developed by the CoE will be open to applicants of any religion – or of no faith at all.

Yet, if you heard about *Coming Home* and thought that the CoE would be more or less donating its land to build housing for those in need, in much the way that the wealthy historically built almshouses, Mayes corrects this perception. He has to give Red Book valuations of any land assets and to work with partners to realise those assets, sometimes to reinvest the money in dilapidated church buildings.

He gives the example of St Michael's in Hall Green, Birmingham, a “1970s church with a flat roof that was leaking like a sieve”. Mayes suggests that the land around it can be built upon “and the capital reinvested in the worshipping space”. It's a neat solution, although perhaps one that doesn't sit entirely comfortably with the Christian zeal of the initiative. But, with thousands of parish churches to maintain, and with some leaders reluctant to develop their churches' land, perhaps this offers a motivation that it would be hard to argue against. More controversially, his pragmatism extends to being relaxed about some Church land being used for non-social housing. “It's certainly an option,” he says. “The remit was to develop affordable housing and we could develop private housing which will unlock social homes. It's a balance. On a larger site, there might be a blend of tenure.”

#### Social benefits

It is the CoE brand that is likely to carry many of these developments forward: in England people might have become less religious, but the Anglican church is generally still regarded benevolently. ►



## A VOICE IN WESTMINSTER

At the forefront of the Church's affordable housing initiative is Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford. It is an apt appointment as, perhaps uniquely among senior clergy, she experienced homelessness herself at a young age – although she bats away any suggestion of equivalence: “I hesitate to call it homelessness,” she says. “It was more a loss of home.”

However it is defined, she and her family, including her father, an Anglican priest, escaped revolutionary Iran and almost-inevitable persecution for their Christian beliefs.

After their arrival in England, they were eventually housed in a flat belonging to the Church. “It gave us the base from which to rebuild our lives,” she says. One can't help but admire the neatness of the circle: she is now campaigning for the CoE to provide more housing for those in need.

Of her unusual role as the Bishop of Housing, she says: “The Archbishop of Canterbury was keen to have someone who had a voice in the House of Lords. I don't have any power as such, but I can speak to the issue. [I can encourage] people within the Church to use their lead.”





Mayes accepts that the Church's image may well make developing sites easier for him than many private developers. "Even in our most affluent communities, there's a realisation that people cannot afford to buy in the villages where they grew up," he says. "With a trusted partner like the CoE, there will be a quality scheme delivered and we're not doing it for commercial reasons. There are a lot of social benefits."

Chief among those will be the opportunity to create stable homes for a section of society who have become used to the fragility of the rental sector. Not only are the bishop and Mayes promising high-quality homes and – eventually – plenty of them, they are determined that rents should not just be

“Even in our most affluent communities, there’s a realisation that people cannot afford to buy in the villages where they grew up”

DANIEL MAYES MRICS  
THE CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

affordable but fair. In the UK, the definition of an affordable rent is slippery, and is meant to be “at least 20% below local market rents”, but this has mostly been interpreted as 80% of the market rates with the legal ceiling becoming a very solid floor.

“The definition of affordable [has become] a little bit meaningless... I often say, the affordable definition is only a guide and anyone can choose to redefine that,” says Francis-Dehqani, who suggests that there are different approaches to working out how affordability can be assessed. “I would like to see us concentrating on social rented housing, which means we can remain involved in the lives of some people who live there [offering support].”

Mayes agrees. “The part of *Coming Home* that I really liked wasn't just about building homes, it was about building communities,” he says.

The subtitle of *Coming Home* is “tackling the housing crisis together”. The government's ambitious target of 1.5m new homes in this parliament must mean they are crying out for credible development partners. Have there been talks? “I believe there are conversations to be had between the government and the Church,” says Mayes. “Regardless of that target, we want to deliver homes, and where we can partner, we will.”

Bishop Guli, however, sounds a more sceptical note. “There's a real danger that focusing on numbers – the language of ‘units’ betrays the emphasis on quantity – will lead to a sacrifice of quality,” she says. “There are already too many poor-quality homes being built, which is why the *Coming Home* report sets out what good housing looks like. ■

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## Why models underestimate historic building performance

While reducing the environmental impact of Britain's historic buildings is critical, current assessment methods often fail to reflect their actual energy performance

WORDS BY DR SAMANTHA ORGAN FRICS, PROF. RICHARD FITTON FRICS AND GRANT HENSHAW

**THERE ARE 6.5M BUILDINGS** in England, Scotland and Wales that date from before 1919 – around 20–30% of Britain's building stock – and reducing their carbon emissions is critical.

Improving the energy efficiency of traditional buildings may also enhance their comfort and support their continued use.

However, if professionals are to advise clients effectively to improve performance and reduce emissions, they need an accurate understanding of how the properties behave.

### Procedural assumptions misrepresent U-values

The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) ([modus.short.gy/be-SAP](https://modus.short.gy/be-SAP)) is used for new domestic builds and Reduced SAP (RdSAP) for existing domestic properties, and both require a number of assumptions to be made in the absence of complete information. This includes assumptions about thermal

conductivity – that is, the U-values – of building elements.

Although the procedures are relatively inexpensive and straightforward ways to calculate and compare the energy performance of residential properties, they have been widely criticised. Indeed, critics have often argued that RdSAP disproportionately disadvantages traditional buildings, with modelled U-values for their solid walls shown in research to assume poorer performance than in-situ measurements.

While the assumed U-value for solid walls constructed before 1975 is now 1.7 W/m<sup>2</sup>K, evidence indicates that the actual value of a number of these walls will be lower.

More recently, the UK government's Demonstration of Energy Efficiency Potential (DEEP) research project found that pre-retrofit U-values across the studied buildings differed widely, reflecting the variability of the original fabric ([modus.short.gy/be-DEE](https://modus.short.gy/be-DEE)).

DEEP also found that the default U-values adopted in calculations were not always well aligned with in-situ values, and could be up to 15% worse, highlighting that outputs from models such as RdSAP may not be robust.

This has implications not only for energy performance certificates (EPCs) and related minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES), but also for predicting the potential carbon reductions, energy savings and returns on investment following energy efficiency interventions, and what we advise our clients may change if the actual building performance is different from what is assumed.

### Research assesses heat loss in-situ

In 2023 and 2024, the University of Salford and the National Trust conducted in-situ U-value measurements across nine solid-walled pre-1919 residential properties from the trust's domestic let estate in the north of England and the Midlands.

The sample consisted of three solid-brick semi-detached properties and six detached properties made of solid stone, limestone or sandstone. The gross internal floor areas of each ranged from 72m<sup>2</sup> to 245m<sup>2</sup>, with a median of 124m<sup>2</sup>. By way of comparison, the average dwelling size in England is 97m<sup>2</sup> and 76m<sup>2</sup> for private rental properties.

The study measured heat loss through the external walls only (rather than other building elements) using U-values, enabling comparison with the assumptions generally used in models such as SAP and RdSAP.

The compared U-value, as defined by *ISO 7345: 2018 Thermal performance of buildings and building components – Physical quantities and definitions*, represents the heat flow rate through a material per unit of area and temperature difference.

The work followed *ISO 9869-1: 2014 Thermal insulation – Building elements – In-situ measurement of thermal resistance and thermal transmittance*, which uses a moving average to calculate in-situ U-values.

Measurements were taken using heat flux plates attached to walls, along with temperature sensors. This ensured accurate readings by using thermal paste and polythene film to avoid disturbance to decorations, for proper sensor contact.

All work was conducted during the heating season, which was from October to March, in order to ensure an acceptable temperature differential of greater than 10°C, reducing measurement uncertainty. Data analysis was conducted over a minimum period of 72 hours to ensure stable measurement and conforming to ISO 9869-1.

Air permeability increases heat loss through convection, so this was also measured using a blower door test at 50 Pascals conducted by a certified third-party provider following ATTMA Technical Standard L1.

### Performance better than modelled

As with previous research, the measurement process identified gaps between U-values measured in-situ and some of the assumed values in RdSAP and SAP, with these gaps ranging from 0.99W/m<sup>2</sup>K to 1.67W/m<sup>2</sup>K.

**Buildings in all cases lost less heat than had been modelled**

### U-values in numbers



# 0.99-1.57W/m<sup>2</sup>k

The measurement process identified gaps between U-values measured in-situ and some of the assumed values in RdSAP and SAP, with these gaps ranging from 0.99W/m<sup>2</sup>K to 1.67W/m<sup>2</sup>K



# 1 EPC band

Four of the properties in the research were able to move up by one EPC rating band when measured data replaced assumed values in either the SAP or RdSAP models for the dwellings

These measured U-values were between 12.1% and 46.7% better than assumed. In-situ airtightness measurements were more variable, though, as we might expect from a small study, in particular of heritage buildings of this type. While seven of the nine properties outperformed the models, the overall range of difference extended from 51.7% better to 57.1% worse than assumed.

Together, these numbers help us to calculate whole-dwelling heat-loss figures. These also varied considerably when comparing in-situ measurements with assumed values, ranging from 12.1% to 46.7% better than assumed. This showed that the buildings in all cases lost less heat than had been modelled.

When these results are consolidated using a simple RdSAP method, we find that the measured performance can be significantly different from the modelled value. Indeed, four of the properties in the research were able to move up by one EPC rating band when measured data replaced assumed values in either the SAP or RdSAP models.

### Retrofitting relies on accurate data

It is important that the older dwellings are characterised in a proper way, but the study demonstrates that these buildings are extremely variable in terms of heat loss through the fabric or infiltration. Such characteristics are difficult to reflect in a standardised series of assumptions in a model.

However, although our case study was small, it points to the fact that such models do not cater well for some of our older building stock. This has several implications.

When we set our baseline before designing retrofits then this figure may understate the

actual performance. Retrofit designs and final performance figures and savings are skewed.

Secondly, when we consider MEES, the purely modelled approach using assumed values may misrepresent older buildings and suggest that is not practical to treat them.

However, RdSAP was updated in June 2025 and now enables the recording of the thickness of stone and solid walls in calculating heat loss ([modus.short.gy/be-EHE](https://modus.short.gy/be-EHE)).

The wall thickness has not previously been used to calculate the U-value of the wall. This inclusion will lead to a change in the resultant EPC rating following the introduction of RdSAP 10 ([modus.short.gy/be-GAP](https://modus.short.gy/be-GAP)).

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# How moving to the Middle East has developed my career

An open-minded approach to her career has seen one building surveyor grow professionally and personally by relocating to Dubai, learning from local insights and global expertise alike

WORDS BY GEORGINA LEES

**LIKE MANY OTHERS**, I assumed that careers in construction were limited to architecture, engineering, law or project management.

I was introduced to building surveying through my family's involvement in real estate. My father, who had been involved in residential and commercial real estate, purchased an old textiles mill in Yorkshire and redeveloped it into a range of commercial units. During this process, we engaged building surveyors to assist with various landlord and tenant matters, which gave me my first insight into the profession.

Later, while studying for my A-levels, we were encouraged to complete a week of work experience. Wanting to explore a career that offered a balance between office and on-site work, I chose to gain experience with Michael Steel & Co, where I was able to experience the daily life of a surveyor first hand.

This exposure completely changed my perspective. I was drawn to the diversity of the role, with its balance of technical problem solving, site inspections, report writing and client interaction. It offered both structure and variety, and I knew then that it was the right path for me.

## Career prospects make the UAE an attractive option

The pandemic and lockdowns led to a period of significant reflection for many, myself included. After four years of studying building

surveying at Sheffield Hallam University and one year in a placement, working at a multi-disciplinary construction consultancy, I was concerned about my career prospects and how COVID-19 would reshape the UK economy and construction industry.

So, when I started my job search, I was open-minded about options and came across a position in Dubai at a project development consultancy. I applied and was offered the job to start almost immediately in September 2020. My employer managed the whole visa process, travel and medical, I just had to get my degree attested in the UK before moving.

I landed on my feet with a great company and mentor, who taught me everything about building surveying in the region. I was taking a move into an unknown environment, but one that has enabled significant professional development and personal growth.

**The region has taught me that leadership is rooted in emotional intelligence, inclusive communication, cultural sensitivity and adaptability**

Since relocating, I have gained exposure to a range of projects, including airports, commercial and recreational portfolios, residential communities, industrial assets and major hospitality developments.

My role has involved providing core building surveying services across the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia and Egypt, including areas such as technical due diligence, reinstatement cost assessments, snagging surveys, reserve fund studies, defect analysis, landlord and tenant matters and planned preventative maintenance surveys.

Working in this dynamic and fast-evolving market has enhanced my technical knowledge and adaptability. Now, as I navigate the APC building surveying pathway to RICS membership, my experience has strengthened my professional resilience and deepened my commitment to becoming chartered.

## Professionalism key to cracking male-dominated industry

Working in the Middle East has also presented unique challenges, though, particularly as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry. Women make up approximately 10% of the total construction and infrastructure workforce in the Middle East, and most of these roles are administration with only 2% working on site; in the UK, women make up around 16% of the construction workforce.

Being one of the few women on site or in a technical discussion can feel overwhelming at times. It requires a higher degree of self-assurance and confidence. I've learned to view this not as a limitation, though, but as a motivator – to represent and encourage greater diversity in the profession and demonstrate the value women bring to technical roles.

Adapting to regional work cultures and standards has been another key part of my professional development. In the Middle East, projects often involve multinational teams, speedy progress, and a blend of local, British and American construction standards.

This experience has deepened my understanding of global practice and highlighted the importance of creating inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued.

It has also reinforced how vital it is to adapt RICS standards to suit regional contexts without compromising professional integrity.

## Local values enable global collaboration

The Middle East is renowned for its deep-rooted culture of hospitality, a value that extends far beyond personal interactions and plays a significant role in the built environment professions.

There are some key differences in client interaction between the Middle East and the UK. In the Middle East, relationships play a much larger role and there is a strong emphasis on trust and respect before progressing with technical discussions.

Communication tends to be less direct compared to the UK and there are often greater expectations for flexibility and responsiveness, particularly in the hospitality sector where timelines can be fluid.

For me, business development has played a bigger role in the Middle East compared to the UK. This often requires attending industry events, having evening commitments or informal meetings such as a coffee catch-up, lunches or even a sporting event.

Here, hospitality is not just a social custom but reflects one's character and intent. Understanding and embracing this can have a positive influence in building and sustaining professional relationships.

Whether working with contractors, consultants, security or labourers on site, showing respect and treating everyone equally is not only appreciated but remembered.

Fostering a sense of mutual respect also helps create a collaborative environment. Even small gestures such as greeting a worker in their own language, understanding their challenges or simply sharing a coffee break can remove many social barriers.

## International insights encourage personal growth

Working in the Middle East has also played a pivotal role in my personal and professional development, particularly in leadership, resilience and communication. This culturally rich and diverse environment has taught me the importance of clear communication, whether in technical reporting or day-to-day collaboration across teams.

Early in my career I struggled with speaking up, whether in sharing ideas in meetings or asserting my position on technical matters. But through exposure to high-pressure situations, support from mentors and learning to navigate diverse cultural expectations, I have developed a more confident voice.

The region has taught me that leadership is rooted in emotional intelligence, inclusive communication, cultural sensitivity and adaptability. These are skills I continue to refine, but they offer a foundation for the way I approach my work.

## Rewarding career journey

For those considering a move into the Middle Eastern surveying or construction professions, my advice is simple: be open, be adaptable, and do not underestimate the value you bring.

For women in particular, while the path may be challenging – like so many male-dominated industries – I do wholeheartedly recommend it. Yes, it can be daunting in terms of cultural expectations and building credibility, for instance; but these experiences develop one's resilience and confidence in a way that is hard to do elsewhere.

On some sites, there are often no female facilities, which can feel awkward. There have also been experiences where workers have taken photos of me without my consent, which made me feel extremely uncomfortable and made me reflect on surveying safety as a young female working in the Middle East.

In meetings, I've occasionally found that questions or technical discussions were directed to my male colleagues, even when I was the lead on the project, simply because of my gender and probably my age.

That said, these experiences have also motivated me to build confidence in my expertise and assert my voice in professional settings. Over time, as I've gained more experience and built strong relationships, I've found that respect naturally follows.

There have also been many positive experiences. I've had colleagues and clients, both male and female, who have been incredibly supportive and proactive in creating more inclusive working environments. These contrasting experiences have given me resilience and a real passion for helping shape a culture where women and younger professionals can thrive in the industry.

The rewards are great, from contributing to iconic projects, learning from industry experts, expanding your technical and cultural skill sets and growing on a daily basis.

It is not always glamorous. But for the work, the people you encounter and the opportunities and knowledge you will develop, it is worth pursuing.

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**Related competencies include:** Diversity, inclusion and teamworking, Inclusive environments

## VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE

RICS' head of diversity, equity and inclusion Sybil Taunton says: "RICS offers virtual work experience as a great opportunity for students aged 13+ to learn more about surveying careers and opportunities within the built and natural environment."

This work experience provides more than seven hours of content, and participants receive a certificate of completion. Start your surveying journey now by visiting the work experience platform:  
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# Maintenance is essential to mitigate rooftop PV fire risks

As the number of building-applied photovoltaic installations grows, combustible materials, unclear responsibilities and a lack of authoritative guidance contribute to increased fire risk

WORDS BY DR BENJAMIN RALPH

**UK ADOPTION OF** building-applied photovoltaic (BAPV) systems has surged in recent years, prompted by reduction of installation costs and a focus on sustainability.

However, the increasing deployment of BAPV presents fire safety challenges, including risks to property, operational continuity and life safety. These stem from design flaws, installation errors, component defects and environmental factors.

A study of 58 PV-related fires by the Building Research Establishment attributes 36% of these to poor installation practices, 12% to faulty products, 5% to system design errors and 47% to unknown causes.

And an audit by Clean Energy Associates of more than 600 rooftop PV systems across 14 countries in 2023 reveals that 97% exhibited a safety defect of some kind.

Poorly trained installers increase the likelihood of mismatched connectors, improper wiring and inadequate grounding. Environmental factors contribute to ignition risks, too, with rodents and birds damaging panels and cabling, or nesting in components.

## Plastics and fire dynamics increase vulnerability

Some BAPV systems include plastic components such as frames, mounts and back sheets, which can contribute to fire development once a fire has begun because they can be made of combustible materials. The use of PV systems with non-combustible components, such as metal frames, can significantly reduce these risks, but systems incorporating plastics remain widespread.

Installed systems also significantly alter the dynamics of fire spread on a roof; the gap between angled panels and the roof creates a stack effect, for instance, enabling heat and

## In the absence of statutory guidance, insurers had to shape fire safety standards for BAPV systems

smoke to accumulate and spread rapidly beneath the system.

A panel that is heated by fire can also radiate back down to the roof materials below, which accelerates fire propagation. These dynamics are influenced by panel inclination, array geometry and roof composition. However, current roof fire-testing standards fail to account for these.

Altered fire dynamics increase the vulnerability of roof assemblies, particularly when combustible membranes, insulation or other materials are present beneath the panels.

Even if a BAPV system itself is non-combustible, these dynamics can lead to fire performance failures in roofs that meet statutory guidance in the government's *Fire Safety: Approved Document B*.

If a fire mitigation layer is used between the PV system and roof to reduce risk, this can exacerbate secondary issues such as moisture retention, drainage problems and material decay. These may undermine the roof in the long term and invalidate any warranties.

Meanwhile, bird mitigation strategies such as nets may trap debris and worsen risks, though laser deterrents or trained birds of prey could be used.

## Why funding's allocation of responsibility threatens safety

Fire safety is also affected by BAPV funding structures, which define responsibilities for design, installation and maintenance.

Under power purchase agreements (PPAs), third-party investors fund the installation and retain ownership and maintenance responsibilities, while the building owner or operator purchases the energy generated.

This arrangement can create a disconnect between system maintenance and building users, meaning fire safety may be overlooked. However, technically savvy system owners are often more inclined to maintain systems, to optimise output and returns.

An alternative to this is a rental model, where landlords fund BAPV while tenants benefit from the energy output and typically assume maintenance responsibilities – though the division of roles frequently leads to accountability gaps as well.

Tenants may lack the motivation, expertise or resources needed for maintenance, jeopardising fire safety, while poorly defined agreements or miscommunication can increase the risk of inadequate upkeep.

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Self-funded models in turn mean that tenants independently finance and install systems. These projects often prioritise short-term cost savings, which can result in contractors compromising safety and quality. Inadequate oversight and a focus on minimising capital expenditure can lead to poorly designed and installed systems.

## Lack of regulation prompts private-sector guidance

UK fire safety regulations are goal-based, focusing on outcomes rather than prescribing methods. *Fire safety: Approved Document B and BS 9999: 2017 Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings. Code of practice (modus.short.gy/be-bsi)* both lack specific provision for BAPV systems.

Critical aspects, such as panel inclination, gap height, roof material combustibility, access and array geometry, remain inadequately understood. This lack of specificity results in inconsistent application of fire safety measures, with projects often relying on variable levels of industry knowledge.

In the absence of statutory guidance, insurers had to shape fire safety standards for BAPV systems. Documents such as *RC62: Recommendations for fire safety with PV panel installations (modus.short.gy/be-FPA)*, jointly developed by RISC Authority and the Fire Protection Association – along with prescriptive standards from insurers such as Aviva, FM and Swiss Re – offer recommendations on installation, material selection and system design.

These standards often include requirements for maximum array sizes, minimum offset distances, such as clearance between the edge of the roof and panels, and non-combustible materials beneath PV systems. While effective for reducing property losses, they focus on minimising claim costs and protecting assets rather than addressing broader goals, like life safety, ESG-related targets or cost. Stakeholders must adapt these recommendations to suit specific project needs to develop a tailored package of safety measures.

Third-party certifications such as the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS), which only covers systems of 50kW or less, and those provided by the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting also play a key role in safeguarding safety.

However, fragmented supply chains complicate consistent application. Main

## Risky roofs

# 36%

A study of 58 PV-related fires by Building Research Establishment attributes 36% of these to poor installation practices, 12% to faulty products, 5% to system design errors and 47% to unknown causes.\*

# 97%

A 2023 audit by Clean Energy Associates of more than 600 rooftop PV systems across 14 countries reveals that 97% exhibited a defect of some kind.\*\*

Sources: \*Gov.uk Fire incidents involving solar panels. \*\*Intertek CEA

contractors may hold certifications that subcontractors may not, leading to variations in quality. If a non-certified subcontractor is working under an MCS umbrella scheme with a larger company, the work they carry out will be classified as MCS-compliant.

## Design critical to reduce risks and enable access

Proper design and routing of cabling is also critical. Cables can be elevated off combustible roofing materials and housed in robust, fireproof and ventilated containment.

Routing cables externally or in fire-resistant enclosures enhances protection. The design should avoid sharp bends to reduce mechanical stress and ensure durability.

Structural integrity is likewise essential, particularly with the increased frequency of extreme weather. Systems must be designed to withstand high winds and hail using durable mounting systems and components to reduce the likelihood of damage that may cause electrical faults.

Systems must also be designed for safe and practical access to enable maintenance and emergency interventions. The former requires sufficient spacing for cleaning and inspections, without which debris such as leaves, dirt and vermin nests can accumulate as potential fuel

for fires and obstruct ventilation, raising the likelihood of overheating.

Maintenance protocols should include the regular use of thermal imaging tools to detect micro cracks in PV panels as well. These are often caused by hail, bird impacts or physical damage, and can create hot spots leading to localised overheating and potential ignition.

Firefighters also require pathways through arrays and unobstructed roof edges in the event of an emergency. And access points such as internal stairs should be secured to prevent unauthorised use, reducing risks of vandalism and system damage. Careful planning must balance safety, security and functionality to mitigate long-term risks.

## How technology can support competent working practices

Panel-level electronics, including DC optimisers, arc fault detection systems and rapid shutdown devices, can isolate faults and mitigate the risk of ignition from arcing, where electricity jumps across two points. The risk of cell hot spots (where a cell or group of cells become defective and dissipates power instead of producing it) is also reduced.

Remote monitoring systems also improve risk management by enabling real-time tracking of temperature, electrical performance and potential anomalies. Drones and roof-based robots equipped with thermal imaging can complement manual inspections.

However, the use of advanced technologies such as these must be paired with systemic improvements to address underlying risks. Fragmented supply chains, cost-driven procurement models and weak regulatory frameworks create the conditions for hazards.

Even the best tools cannot compensate for poorly designed or installed systems. Effective risk management begins with engaging competent design and construction teams.

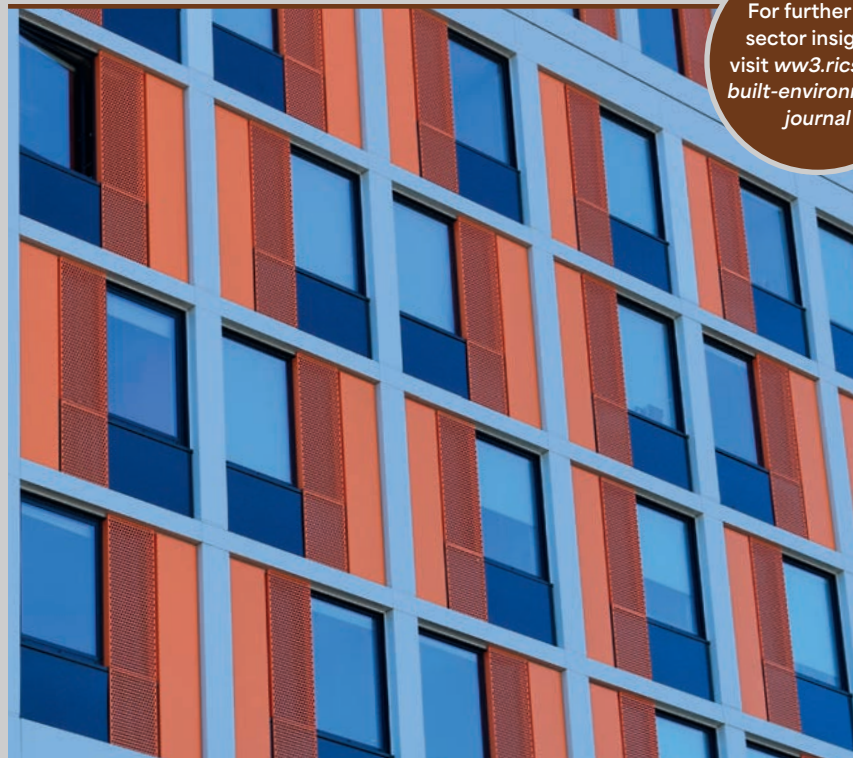
Cost-benefit analysis is essential. Expensive technologies should not overshadow the importance of getting the basics right, such as proper system design, and component selection and installation.

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**Related competencies include:** Fire safety, Inspection, Legal/regulatory compliance



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## Building surveying and building control standards and guidance

### RICS prioritising safety reforms

RICS is working closely with the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) to devise and implement an agenda of reforms in response to the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry final report.

While the government moves to a more comprehensive system of registration of competence in the built environment, RICS is demonstrating the relevance of professional bodies by developing a programme of training aimed at supporting members and firms.

Of highest priority are considerations of the future of building control, fire engineering, principal contractors and the competence of all built environment professionals, including consideration of CPD and training.

RICS has already implemented new training programmes such as Principal Designer (Building Regulations) and many more are planned to happen throughout the year.

#### Shaping revised PAS 9980

RICS experts have been contributing to shaping the updated version 2 of BSI PAS 9980 *Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls and Cladding of Flats*, which is expected to publish in early 2026.

While EWS1 forms continue to be required by some lenders, we are engaging with the lenders to ensure FRAEW reports can eventually be universally used and EWS1 usage fades away.

#### RICS at the UN

RICS' influence on the development of global fire safety standards and practice came to the fore in 2025 and laid foundations for future collaboration and progress.

At the UN in October we presented the launch of the updated *Decade of Action for Fire Safety 2026-2035*, which now includes wildfires. In addition, RICS co-hosted World Fire Safety Day, which is now moving to a resolution sponsored by Mexico at the UN General Assembly in 2026.

### Recently published

RICS has published the first global professional standard for the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in surveying practice – a decisive move to guide the profession through the rapid evolution of AI technologies.

*Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Surveying Practice* ([modus.short.gy/c-AIS](https://modus.short.gy/c-AIS)) will take effect in March 2026, and sets out mandatory requirements and best practice expectations for RICS members and regulated firms worldwide. It addresses the growing integration of AI across valuation, construction, infrastructure, and land services – aiming to ensure these tools are used ethically, transparently and with professional oversight.

### Forthcoming publications

Significant publications in the built environment sector planned for 2026/27 include the following:

- Design and Specification, Practice information (update)
- Contract Administration, Practice information (update)
- Project Monitoring, Practice information (update)

Members are invited to contribute suggestions for the 2027 publication updating programme.

### Consumer guides

RICS continues to develop its library of free, easy-to-understand consumer guides to support confident, informed choices. We have added five building surveying titles this year:

- Damp and mould
- Heat pumps
- Fire safety for landlords (update)
- Fire safety for homeowners/occupiers and residents (update)
- RAAC

To read these and other guides in the series, visit [rics.org/consumer-guides](http://rics.org/consumer-guides)

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### PGP interim chair message

## The three Cs of competence, collaboration and clarity

INTERIM PANEL CHAIR HELEN MCKEOWN MRICS



The *Building Safety Act 2022* ushered in a new era of accountability and transparency in the built environment. It challenges us to rethink how we build, manage and regulate our spaces.

The three Cs of competency, collaboration and clarity are not just regulatory buzzwords; they are the pillars of a safer, smarter built environment.

Digital twins powered by AI technology are powerful tools in our arsenal. By embracing them, we can empower every stakeholder, from surveyor to building user, to play their part in building safety.

Let's not wait for the next crisis before we act. Let's lead with competence, collaborate with purpose and communicate with clarity.

Ensuring and declaring competency doesn't end with qualifications – it begins with a commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). In this new regulatory landscape, professionals must take a structured approach to learning, identifying gaps in their knowledge and actively seeking to close them.

This is especially critical when we consider cognitive biases such as the Dunning-Kruger effect, where individuals with limited expertise may overestimate their competence. By embracing CPD, professionals can counteract this bias, build self-awareness and develop the depth of understanding required to navigate complex safety responsibilities.

RICS is responding to this challenge with a renewed focus on assessment and entry standards. *The Entry and Assessment Review Final Report (2024)* outlines a bold new model approved by the



### Let's not wait for the next crisis before we act

Standards and Regulation Board (SRB), designed to ensure that RICS assessments evolve in step with current practice and legislation.

Central to this reform is the establishment of a Programme Design, Implementation and Oversight Group tasked with shaping a framework

that supports lifelong learning and professional growth.

This marks a pivotal shift to an approach that captures all career stages, from aspiring entrants to seasoned practitioners. Whether you're a newly qualified surveyor or a senior building control officer, the message is clear: competency is not a destination, but a continuous journey.

That journey must be intentional, inclusive and informed by personal reflection and institutional reform.



# Members must comply with new digital marketing laws

As the *Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024* takes force, those working in property must ensure they advertise prices clearly and prevent consumers being misled or put under pressure

WORDS BY NEIL WARWICK OBE

**ARRIVING MORE THAN 25 YEARS** after the *Competition Act 1998*, the *Digital Markets, Competition and Consumer Act 2024* (DMCC) marks a significant change in business regulation.

The consumer provisions of the new act came into force last year, accompanied by a policy paper from the government entitled *Strategic Steer to the Competition and Markets Authority* ([modus.short.gy/p-CMA](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/strategic-steer-to-the-competition-and-markets-authority)).

The policy paper sets out that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) should use its new direct powers under the legislation to help the economy grow by promoting trust and confidence while deterring poor corporate practices.

Although the legislation applies to all businesses, there are particular implications for those working in property, with the act introducing several specific offences relevant to RICS members.

## Drip pricing subject to CMA scrutiny

So-called drip pricing involves advertising a price that does not cover certain goods or services on which the overall purchase depends. This would include, for example, advertising a new home at a fixed price but failing to mention that necessary upgrades to

bathrooms, kitchens or fixtures and fittings are not factored into this amount.

While this is an extreme and unlikely scenario, the 2024 Act empowers the CMA to take a nuanced view of online advertising and intervene where housebuilders are overly optimistic about, for example, estimated service charges or ground rents.

Such information must be made available at any invitation to purchase, which the DMCC defines as “a commercial practice involving the provision of information to a consumer (a) which indicates the characteristics of a product and its price, and (b) which enables, or purports to enable, the consumer to decide whether to purchase the product or take another transactional decision in relation to the product”.

In addition, the CMA has been clear that if a business uses modified, edited, retouched, or overly generous computer-generated images that show a property to be significantly better in terms of design or specification than it actually is to attract potential customers, this will be classed as misleading advertising and subject to prosecution.

There is no specific guidance in the DMCC regarding auctions at this stage. But as much transparency as possible is recommended. It

is not expected that auctioneers estimate a final price, but all deeds must be clearly disclosed alongside the starting price.

The legislation is clear that any mandatory fees and taxes must be included in total property prices. Where the fee is variable and cannot be accurately calculated, the information provided about how these variable fees are to be calculated must enable the consumer to calculate the total price.

This information must be set out with as much prominence as the product’s headline; for example, where a headline price is displayed on a webpage, information about the variable fees should not be presented in smaller text at the bottom of the page.

The guidance is unclear with regard to stamp duty. However, the CMA is clear that even where it is not possible to estimate tax, purchasers should know that tax must be paid and how this will be calculated.

**Not taking reasonable steps to prevent fake reviews is an unfair commercial practice**

## Firms must identify and remove fake reviews

Schedule 20 of the DMCC sets out at paragraph 13(3) that publishing consumer reviews without taking reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent fake reviews is an unfair commercial practice.

Therefore, any business that uses customer reviews – including those on third-party sites – must have a compliance policy to police these. Fake reviews will be classed as those that purport to be, but are not, based on a person’s genuine experience.

Such a compliance policy must contain a commitment to remove fake reviews together with an assurance that the business will not suppress unfavourable comments. The meaning of a review is in this context broad in scope, and includes texts, speech and graphic representations, such as a star rating.

Moreover, it is important that any reviews for which incentives have been offered (e.g. an offer for those giving reviews to be entered into a prize draw) are clearly identified.

This aspect of the legislation will have an immediate impact on property portals such as Zoopla or Rightmove, which offer such incentives and are likely, therefore, to be of interest to the CMA.

GETTY



### Act seeks to eliminate misuse of urgency claims

The CMA will be keen on targeting time-limited offers and sales methods that confer a sense of urgency (e.g. “only three left at this price”) particularly if it suspects that such claims are aimed at vulnerable people.

While the initial focus will be on mass consumer events such as Black Friday, the authority will also look, for example, into instances where a banner advert on a website states “Only three houses remain”, or a countdown timer that says prices will rise after a certain period of time.

Overlaying the specific offences set out in the 2024 Act, the CMA will be looking at things such as the vulnerability of the target audience. It could, for instance, consider specific sectors such as care homes or mobility-friendly premises to ensure that any claims about ease of access are verifiable.

The act extends the definition of “vulnerable” to include contextual vulnerability – which could be of interest to those dealing with customers who have recently experienced bereavement, divorce, financial struggles or other situational stressors – introducing a higher standard of care for traders.

Another issue relevant to the property sector that the CMA will be considering

### The CMA has made it clear that greenwashing is to be a strategic enforcement priority

closely is greenwashing. The new act includes specific provision for prosecuting businesses that make environmental claims that cannot then be verified. While the law for this already existed, the CMA has made it clear that greenwashing is intended to be a strategic enforcement priority.

For example, during the consultation period on the legislation, the CMA indicated that posting a picture of what land could look like after remediation will be scrutinised, and businesses will be prosecuted if such imagery is inaccurate.

Moreover, websites will be examined to see how difficult it is for users to unsubscribe from email updates or electronic newsletters, although focus on this is likely to coincide with the act’s subscription prohibitions, which are due to come into force in April this year.

The act primarily addresses paid subscriptions and includes a number of restrictions particularly in relation to trial

periods, cooling-off periods and notifications to customers regarding cancellation rights.

The new rules have the effect of mandating these periods at specified intervals, to crack down on automatically renewed subscription services which unfairly capture consumers in long, expensive contracts.

### Compliance will offer clarity for consumers

Businesses operating a website for consumers will fall within the scope of the 2024 Act and must comply with its requirements.

The CMA has indicated through guidance that businesses must prioritise this, designing consumer compliance procedures and training staff, including regular training for sales teams and clear procedures for the review of marketing promotions by internal legal teams where possible.

As well as housebuilders, estate agents and online property portals, the act will cover residential surveyors who have their own websites or auctioneers who express pricing by way of a reference to a percentage.

All advertising must either list the exact price or display a simple calculation that can be easily understood by the average consumer, defined as being reasonably well informed, observant and circumspect.

The key message for businesses advertising to the public is that they must have compliance procedures in place to protect consumers.

While it was best practice for businesses to have consumer compliance policies previously, the new act places a much greater focus on this and the CMA has been very clear that it expects all businesses to enact such policies and procedures.

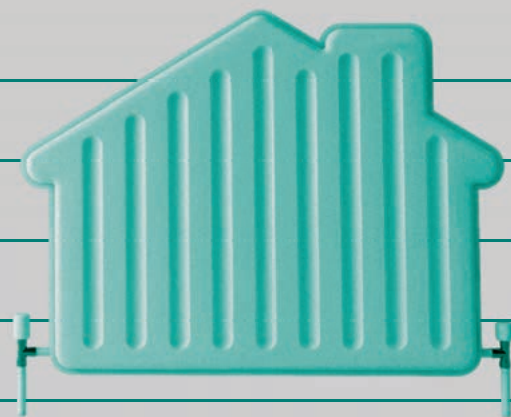
Many businesses previously adopted less-than-compliant policies and procedures, taking a risk-based approach. Given that the risk profile of consumer law breaches has significantly changed, organisations should revise their approach to consumer compliance.

**For more must-read articles, visit [ww3.rics.org/property-journal](http://ww3.rics.org/property-journal)**

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**Related competencies include:** Data management, Technology

## Surveyors integral to national retrofit strategy



### RICS members have a key role to play in assessing UK homes for retrofitting and ensuring projects are designed and delivered to a high standard

WORDS BY STEVE LEES MRICS

**DOMESTIC RETROFITTING IS** one of the key factors in the UK meeting its decarbonisation targets and improving the long-term performance of buildings and the wellbeing of occupants.

Last year, the government committed to work with industry partners to upgrade millions of homes over the course of the current parliament. This should reduce domestic energy bills, fuel poverty and carbon emissions, as well as raise minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) for private rented homes and social housing.

Yet widely reported cases of domestic retrofit works failing to deliver intended carbon savings, and in some instances causing significant defects or exacerbating damp, mould and condensation, have underlined the urgent need to increase professionalism in the sector.

RICS is well positioned to become a go-to resource for clients, lenders and funders needing clear and impartial advice for retrofit projects. And members with expertise in surveying residential properties already possess transferable competencies in building pathology, construction technology and moisture movement.

To harness and enhance this expertise, RICS is moving at pace to deliver the

appropriate and up-to-date technical knowledge and training required to provide residential retrofit services.

### Tackling the skills challenge

Effective since October 2024, RICS’ *Residential retrofit standard* sets out concise mandatory and recommended instructions for members and regulated firms providing retrofit services.

Building on existing entry requirements, the proposed new pathway to RICS membership – Residential Retrofit Surveying (AssocRICS) – is a major turning point and would contribute to extending RICS conduct and competency standards for the public benefit.

Supported by structured continuing professional development (CPD), it will be important for specialists to blend core surveying skills, such as those relating to the physical inspection of different residential building types, with an understanding of new energy efficiency measures, for example.

### The proposed new pathway to RICS membership is a major turning point

This is especially important for retrofit assessors, who inspect a building at the start of a project and comprehensively survey and record relevant details and data in preparation for the retrofit design.

A detailed retrofit assessment is not only fundamental to a project’s success but also a service where current and future RICS members can bridge a national skills gap.

### Retrofit assessment framework introduced

A standardised framework for retrofit assessment is now in place with the recent publication of *BS 40104 Assessment of dwellings for retrofit* ([modus.short.gy/p-AOD](https://modus.short.gy/p-AOD)), and RICS’ *Residential retrofit standard* states that BS 40104 will be used for retrofit inspection tasks.

Chair of the BS 40104 drafting panel Professor Richard Fitton FRICS explains the critical importance of retrofit assessment:

“A robust retrofit assessment is fundamental to delivering meaningful improvements in the energy performance of existing buildings. Without it, there is a significant risk that retrofit measures will be poorly designed, inappropriately specified or fail to achieve their intended outcomes.

“From a policy and funding perspective, retrofit assessment is also essential for accountability: it provides the baseline data against which improvements can be measured and verified. In short, assessment is not an administrative step but the foundation of effective, safe and sustainable retrofit.”

With retrofit professionals and services in increasing demand, it is vital that professional bodies such as RICS leverage their expertise and support upskilling in the sector to raise standards and avoid project bottlenecks.

As with most successful outcomes, collaboration is critical. RICS must continue to work with the wider sector – from training providers, lenders, energy suppliers and academics – to develop guidance and support for members ready and willing to contribute to the national retrofit strategy.

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## BREACHES FACE SIGNIFICANT FINES AND DIRECT ACTION

The most eye-catching part of the act is the scale of fines that can be imposed for breaches, including:

- 10% of group worldwide turnover or £300,000, whichever is higher
- fines of 5% of group worldwide turnover or £15,000 per day for continued non-compliance, whichever is higher
- up to £300,000 for individuals who breach the act.

The enforcement powers introduced by the act also mean that the CMA can take direct action against businesses that breach the legislation without requiring a court order.

This effectively means that the CMA will become the multi-sector primary regulator for consumer

issues, with the power to raid business premises without notice – so-called dawn-raid powers – to obtain information and evidence of potential breaches of the act.

The Advertising Standards Agency will remain – although it is reviewing its Codes of Advertising Practices in light of the act. National Trading Standards has recently withdrawn its guidance on the basis that its underlying rules have been repealed and restated in the DMCC but are subject to a number of changes.

With these extensive new powers, it is expected that other enforcement bodies will defer to the CMA when it comes to enforcement, especially in relation to online business-to-consumer advertising.



# Valuing plant and machinery amid AI, ESG and geopolitical changes

Valuing plant and equipment that incorporates new technology can be difficult because observed data is scarce

WORDS BY SAM HINDER MRICS



**PLANT AND EQUIPMENT** represent a significant proportion of the wider tangible fixed asset class around the world, which also encompasses real estate and inventory. *RICS Valuation – Global Standards (Red Book Global Standards)* outlines that plant and equipment may be broadly divided into four categories: plant/machinery, production process plant, infrastructure and equipment.

However, with the development of new technologies across many sectors, the valuation of plant and equipment has like other asset classes experienced challenges – which also affect the way the class is financed.

It is important to begin valuations of this asset class like those in any other. The first thing is to determine the purpose of the valuation and the relevant basis for doing so.

The approaches applied to any new technology should reflect the nature of the asset under consideration, but also have regard

to the way similar, established asset types would be valued.

With new technologies, however, there are risks in the way such values are derived and whether they are supportable. For instance, emerging asset classes such as hydrogen power generation and battery storage often lack any mature or even early market data.

The only data available is usually provided by the original equipment manufacturer, and perhaps by the customer looking to invest in the asset. With limited or no observable data, then, how do you value such assets?

The established three valuation approaches of market, income and cost should be applied to the valuation of new technology assets in the same way that they are applied to any other plant, machinery and equipment asset.

When considering new technology assets, the application of the chosen approaches needs to be credible and appropriate to the

available information on the asset. Thought should also be given to the sector in which the asset will be used, the asset's function and the consideration of other similar type and established asset technologies. Moreover, the approach taken should include rigorous modelling with structured judgement.

When it comes to assets based on new technologies, valuers must assess and review changes in asset pricing, the uptake of the asset by end users and the growth of suppliers and asset manufacturers. This will help to inform valuations and evaluate whether a market for the asset is becoming established.

## Leases evolving in response to geopolitical context

Another critical factor is that geopolitical tensions and trade tariffs are affecting supply chains and manufacturing. These can have an impact on plant and equipment asset values.

Any changes in such values, or the perceived effect of policies on these, tend to alter the risk profiles and appetite of those who finance plant and equipment. Such financing is generally by way of funding new equipment or asset-backed lending against used assets offered as collateral.

Increases in costs resulting from policy and geopolitical issues influence the new prices of plant machinery and equipment. This has an impact on their management, including maintenance, running costs and capital expenditure such as major overhauls and replacement of core components.

These increases can affect the operating life cycle of plant, machinery and equipment and thus the value profile, which is central to the structure of an asset finance agreement.

Lessors are therefore having to re-evaluate risk assumptions and appetite, especially for asset types in portfolios more exposed to these international risks and cost impacts.

Accordingly, lessors are considering how to share such risks with lessees by changing their lease terms, with capital providers looking to evolve their underwriting to address risks, sourcing and operational practices. This does not mean that there are no attractive entry points for value-focused investors, however.

Developing accurate asset value profiles that look to capture the dynamics of the market allow lenders to better address risks, as well as better understand how assets are declining in value and the resulting residual value positions, which affects lease terms. The valuer must, therefore, ensure valuations consider the key influences in this regard.

## ESG agenda has influence on investors

While there are challenges in financing certain classes of plant and equipment, many lenders have an increasing interest in and appetite for funding renewables and alternative technology plant and equipment.

Asset financing preferences and the sectors in which such assets operate is particular to individual lenders, who will focus on areas that reflect their environmental, social and governance (ESG) approach, policies and commercial targets.

The valuation advice provided to lenders should thus include a comprehensive understanding of the type of asset the lender is looking to fund and the sectors in which it will be used. Key considerations include:

- the type of technology
- the original equipment manufacturer
- its expected use relative to the sector and other market participants
- similarities with existing equivalent technology
- useful economic life
- asset efficiency and life cycle of the asset – alternative uses and sustainability (materials of construction)
- current demand patterns
- any saturation points in the market
- estimates of the regularity of mark-to-market appraisals.

Valuers must always be conscious of what they are being asked to value: is it a concept asset or still at research and development stage? Are the assets bespoke? And is the technology evolving at a pace whereby current asset models are being superseded frequently?

## Many lenders have an increasing interest in and appetite for funding renewables

Changes in legislation and regulation that apply to existing technologies should be understood in the context of any impact on asset valuation.

Regulations such as the *UK Emissions Trading Scheme* and the *Medium Combustion Plant Directive* both have implications for investment in energy-intensive industries and power generation using established, fossil-fuel-based technologies.

With asset investment in renewable infrastructure such as biomass power generation, solar farms and battery storage ever increasing, valuers need to be cognisant of relevant incentives.

These incentives include government sector payment mechanisms, appropriate asset management and the monitoring of value markers such as cost fluctuations, market establishment and obsolescence.

## AI use should be informed by professional judgement

Of course, artificial intelligence (AI) is now another vital consideration. AI keeps evolving and is growing in use in the valuation profession, with data processing, market

research and advanced modelling capable of powerfully enhancing valuation practice.

AI is notably efficient at looking at vast amounts of data to ascertain any discernible patterns, allowing more in-depth analysis, and automating repetitive and predictive tasks.

Plant and equipment valuations can already present the valuer with vast datasets, and market research can involve sources spanning UK, pan-European or global marketplaces.

The gathering and interpretation of data is crucial for developing accurate valuation models, especially for capital-intensive businesses and extensive asset portfolios. AI can be invaluable in supporting this work.

However, the role of the valuer in interpreting asset-related data, understanding the context, drawing on previous experience and the application of appropriate analysis and practical methods to the subject valuation will not be replaced by AI, which should be seen as a collaborative tool and not a substitute for the valuer's judgement.

RICS has published *Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice*, which provides a framework for expert oversight, governance and risk management.

In-depth analysis allows asset-specific data such as capital expenditure and operational costs to be incorporated consistently and more effectively into the valuation.

But ultimately, the output of such analysis should be combined with the valuer's assessment of key considerations such as macroeconomic factors, market participant activity and sentiment in the sector.

Advances in machine learning will greatly help with the valuation process, enabling more sophisticated techniques and analysis of huge volumes of different data sets. But this approach must be combined with the valuer's understanding of the asset and market-specific knowledge, strategic interpretation of a potential transaction, and awareness of sellers' and buyers' intentions.

The plant and machinery valuer needs to evolve from a data calculator to a risk interpreter and strategic advisor, where professional judgement is key.

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**Related competencies include:** Valuation



For more sector insights, visit [www3.rics.org/property-journal](http://www3.rics.org/property-journal)

## Commercial property standards and guidance

### Recently published

#### ***Service charges in commercial property, 2nd edition professional standard, UK***

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

Note: On 8 October 2025, this professional standard was reissued to address an error at page 5, subsection 1.6. The original wording 'This professional standard is effective for all service charge periods commencing from 31 December 2025' has been amended to 'This professional standard is effective from 31 December 2025.'

#### ***Digital risks in buildings, 1st edition practice information, global***

The impacts of digital risks are not limited to the digital world. They can have a material impact on building operation, health and safety, income and building value.

This paper explores how the risk profile of buildings is evolving due to technology, the implications for property professionals and suggested next steps.

Find out more about commercial real estate standards and practice information at [modus.short.gy/p-RES](http://modus.short.gy/p-RES)

### Consultations

#### ***Code of measuring practice, 7th edition, UK***

This standard, which applies to all building classes (except offices and residential buildings) will be updated to keep all members up-to-date and informed of changes in market practices in measurement, specifically:

- to consider whether there should be comment on vertical measurement; and
- to ensure the standard appropriately reflects the evolution in buildings since the previous edition.

### PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

#### **UK&I Restrictive covenants in commercial real estate: identifying, managing and reducing risks**

This webinar demystifies the legal framework around restrictive covenants, showing surveyors, valuers and advisers how to spot red flags, navigate enforcement hurdles and negotiate workable solutions. Find out more about this course and other offerings at [modus.short.gy/p-TC](http://modus.short.gy/p-TC)

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### **Upwards-only rent reviews**

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill proposes banning upwards-only rent reviews for new commercial leases. RICS is working with members and industry to respond and shape the proposed legislation, to ensure we can create an environment that attracts and encourages investment, as well as businesses of all sizes.

See [modus.short.gy/p-RRB](http://modus.short.gy/p-RRB) for updates.

#### **Landlord and Tenant Act Review**

The Law Commission has proposed extending the qualification period for business tenancies from six months to two years. This proposal is still under consideration and RICS is involved in the discussions.

#### **RICS Property Investment Forum**

The RICS Property Investment Forum (PIF) convenes up to four times a year. It was originally set up in response to the global financial crisis. Its purpose has evolved to inform and brief RICS' senior management on key areas affecting the UK property investment market. In doing so, it seeks the organisation's leadership and support in responding to the challenges and opportunities ahead to sustain a liquid, transparent and efficient market in the UK.

## Residential property standards and guidance

### Recently published

#### ***Retrofitting and improving the energy efficiency of your home, consumer guide, UK***

This consumer guide replaces and updates the previous *Low carbon homes consumer guide*. The aim of this guide is to help consumers identify the benefits of retrofitting their homes for greater energy efficiency, how to go about doing this and some useful resources.

that can be offered as part of a survey, from retrofitting to drone inspections

#### ***Residential stock condition survey code of practice, 1st edition practice information, UK***

This paper outlines best practice for undertaking stock condition surveys in the residential property sector. It is aimed at RICS members and member firms who are involved in the delivery of stock condition surveys, as well as those working in the private rented sector, and registered social housing providers.

### Forthcoming publications

#### ***Home survey standard 2nd edition professional standard, UK***

The RICS *Home survey standard 1st edition* was created in 2019, and became effective in 2021 (post-COVID-19), to demonstrate consistency, deliver the highest quality of service, meet with evolving consumer needs and contribute to delivering trust in the home survey market across the UK.

The 2nd edition will include:

- greater clarity on the levels of surveying
- more information on benchmarking the levels of inspection
- guidance on 'additional risk' properties
- guidance on additional services

### PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

#### **Conferences**

#### **RICS UK&I Residential Property Conference, October 2026**

Dates are provisional, please check [rics.org/conferences](http://rics.org/conferences) for updates.



### PGP chair's message

## Offering insights in the built environment



#### **PANEL CHAIR EMMA FLETCHER MRICS**

In the last few months, the PGP have shared their insights with RICS on topics such as house sales, green construction challenges, new home registrations, skills gaps, affordable housing, the Scotland Home Report review, leasehold reform, mortgage rates, the Renters Rights Bill and much more. Their insights provide a valuable perspective on what's happening in the residential property industry. RICS can and does use this to drive forward key initiatives.

The PGP have worked with RICS on some exciting developments, such as:

- a new consumer guide – Retrofitting and improving the energy efficiency of your home
- new proposed pathways into the profession – Residential Retrofit Surveying (AssocRICS) and Sustainability Advisory (MRICS)
- Entry and Assessments working groups – discussing pathways and competencies, emphasising the need for simplification and updating to reflect current industry requirements

There are some standards, guidance and consumer guides being produced for the sector and publishing later in the year – for example, a Residential Service Charges Consumer Guide and guidance on Inspecting Buildings with Energy Efficiency Measures.

For more information on the residential property PGP, please visit [rics.org/grouppanels](http://rics.org/grouppanels)

### PGP chair's message

## Big plans for 2026



#### **PANEL CHAIR RODDY HOUSTON MRICS**

Since the last issue of Modus, the Professional Group Panels (PGP) have been working with RICS to establish priorities for 2026. This has involved providing market insights in the form of problem statements submitted to RICS for them to consider a workable solution, whether it be guidance, training, education or another solution/product, to support the membership and the public. The PGP have also been liaising with RICS on a few key issues, namely:

- the government's proposal to ban upwards-only rent reviews

- the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Act
- developing the programme for the RICS Commercial Property Conference, which took place in November at RICS HQ in London

RICS is working on producing new and updated standards and guidance for this sector, including an updated Licence for Alterations of Commercial Property document to improve the quality and fairness of negotiations on licences to alter, which should make the legal drafting process more efficient.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### **Residential Retrofit Surveying (AssocRICS) - proposed pathway**

As our sectors evolve and new specialisms emerge, RICS is committed to staying ahead of the curve. We're launching an innovation programme to develop and pilot three new professional pathways, to expand the profession's reach and better serve the changing needs of markets and employers. For more, see [modus.short.gy/p-ENPP](http://modus.short.gy/p-ENPP)

#### **RICS responds to major changes in home buying and selling**

The UK government will launch a consultation on wide-ranging reforms to the home buying and selling process. RICS supports the establishment of consistent and comprehensive upfront information for buyers, ensuring clarity at the beginning of the process and reducing the risk of failed transactions. It is critical that such decisions on upfront information be undertaken by those professionally qualified.

#### **Renter's rights bill and the Decent Homes Standard**

RICS has been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on the decent homes standard and what 'decent' looks like, as well as the issue of compliance and how landlords demonstrate they will be complying with the standard.



## Valuation standards and guidance

### Recently published

#### Red Book National Supplement – Australia

This is an updated supplement; the previous edition was published in 2017. It sets out guidance for members on the application of *RICS Valuation – Global Standards* (*‘Red Book’*) 2025, to valuations undertaken subject to Australian jurisdiction.

#### Valuation of licensed leisure property including public houses, bars, nightclubs and restaurants, 2nd edition professional standard, UK

RICS members and external stakeholders requested an update of the 2010 RICS guidance Capital and Rental Valuation of Public Houses, Bars, Restaurants and Nightclubs in England and Wales. The updated standard will be retitled Valuation of licensed leisure property including public houses, bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

#### Valuation of medical centres and surgery premises, 3rd edition professional standard, UK

The UK GP medical centre property market offers opportunities for investors looking for stable, long-term returns with low risks. The updates include:

- a full update of the content including legislative changes in the NHS Framework and BMA guidance
- addition of sustainability and ESG section
- addition of a designated appendix

relating to Scotland, and Wales, and now incorporating additional information in respect to Northern Ireland

[Download the full publication from \*modus.short.gy/p-VMC\*](#)

#### Bank lending valuations and mortgage lending value 2nd edition, professional standard, Europe

This updated professional standard, effective from 1 January 2026, is essential for RICS members providing valuation services for bank-lending purposes in or subject to EU jurisdictions.

[Download the full publication from \*modus.short.gy/p-VLB\*](#)

### Forthcoming publications

#### Residential property valuation for owner occupation, 1st edition professional standard, UK

The aim of this standard is to establish a clear set of dedicated industry guidance for RICS valuers of their services, for the valuation of residential property in the UK.

#### Secured lending valuation of properties in multi-storey, multi-occupancy residential buildings with cladding, 2nd edition professional standard, UK

This update is to ensure the guidance remains proportionate as to when an EWS1 form should be required on buildings of four storeys or fewer.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Red Book Global – Translations

*The Red Book Global Standards 2024/5* is now published in Arabic, Dutch, French, German, Simplified Chinese and Spanish.

#### Valuation pathway update

RICS has reviewed the valuation pathway, considering the broad scope of valuation, the different asset classes and ensuring it is relevant to all areas of practice.

#### Publication for business valuers on ESG information requests

RICS and other bodies have jointly released a publication to support business valuation professionals in gathering environmental, social and governance (ESG) information.

### PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

#### Global Understanding Valuation Methods and Techniques to Effectively Value Assets held by REITs

Watch our on-demand webinar to hear our market expert dissect the various valuation methods and techniques, address challenges unique to REITs, and explore techniques such as the income method, comparable transactions, and asset-based valuation.

### RELAUNCHING THE CPD FRAMEWORK

## Investing in ourselves and investing in our future



### “RICS CPD will be industry-leading”

**SIMON RAWLINSON MRICS**  
CHAIR OF RICS' KPC

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role as chair of the Knowledge and Practice Committee (KPC) is the opportunity to contribute directly to RICS initiatives aimed at improving the quality of our professional services and the experience of members.

The relaunch of RICS' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework this year will certainly keep me and the wider KPC membership busy. We'll be helping to ensure that the updated framework fulfils its purpose in raising standards, while also making sure that CPD products are much better aligned to the needs of members, at all stages of their career.

If I reflect on the training I undertook last year, I realise that I could have been more deliberate in my choice of topics. I could have spent more time building my understanding of AI, for example, as well as sector-specific developments such as the circular economy in construction. I will pass the CPD requirements of course, but I would have used my time better if my CPD priorities were planned in advance.

The new framework to be launched next year will encourage me and all other members to build this plan – reflecting on my personal practice and identifying the training and development that best meets my needs.

As a long-standing member working in a large firm, my CPD needs are naturally different to those of members running small businesses or surveyors at the start of their careers. Although the material we use will differ, our shared CPD commitment gives us all the opportunity to plan our investment in our futures.

RICS is also investing in CPD, not just in the development of the framework, but in new content and new ways of accessing knowledge and learning. I have seen extensive plans for new AI, technology and sustainability content and anticipate more programmes covering mandatory topics including ethics. RICS material will be delivered using multiple formats, from bite-sized insights to full-day conferences using a state-of-the-art learning management system. RICS CPD will be industry-leading, giving members the opportunity to tailor their development for benefit of our clients, our businesses, and our careers.

This is a big investment by the Institution – enhancing the competitiveness and quality of our professional services. This will directly support our professional standards and build competence in the public interest. As members, we need to back up that investment by planning our transition – thinking about what we study, how we demonstrate relevance and how our CPD enhances our practice.

As I start to plan and record my CPD for 2026, I will be thinking more carefully about my objectives for the year, the CPD material available and my plans to keep ahead in the market place. It will help me to respond to the challenges of AI and to expand my knowledge of evolving markets.

I urge you to do the same. After all, it is only members, backed by RICS, that can invest in ourselves and our futures.

### PGP chair’s message

## Get involved with the PGP



**PANEL CHAIR NICK KNIGHT MRICS**

The PGP have been working with RICS to inform business planning and workstreams for 2026. They have been sharing their insights and identifying hot topics and issues in the market, while focusing on the priorities and challenges faced by valuation professionals, to ensure RICS addresses the issues that matter to the valuation sector. The panel have been discussing ideas for the next RICS Valuation Conference as well as an event to mark 50 years since the first Red Book was published.

There are some exciting valuation standards and guidance projects in the pipeline, including one on AI in

Real Estate Valuation and Sustainability in Residential Property Valuation. There is also an update to Comparable Evidence in Real Estate Valuation and a cross-sector publication on data centres.

RICS is open to expressions of interest if you would like to join an expert group to work on a particular standard, so do get in touch if you can spare some time to share your knowledge and expertise.

The PGP are supporting the work that the Valuation Assurance Committee is doing to implement the recommendations of the Valuation Review around strengthening support for compliance in valuation firms. They are working to develop pilot proposals in collaboration with valuation firms for consideration by the Standards and Regulation Board.





## AI increases efficiency in waste management

While smart sensors and AI are being widely adopted in the waste and recycling sector, realising the technology's full potential to cut landfill and repurpose materials needs systemic changes

WORDS BY DR MICHAEL GROVES

**DESPITE A PUSH** for circularity in our industrial systems, including regulations such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging ([modus.short.gy/L-EPR](https://modus.short.gy/L-EPR)), we still have a global problem with waste going to landfill or into the environment.

Waste generation continues to grow and is predicted to reach 3.4bn tonnes by 2050. Rising levels of waste are also linked to the rapid growth in consumption. *The Circularity Gap report 2024* notes that more than 90% of the materials extracted and used to make

products and packaging ultimately become waste. In essence, only 7.2% of these materials go back into the production system.

This is poor from both resource efficiency and climate perspectives. For example, according to the UN International Resource Panel, the production of materials accounted for 23% of global carbon emissions in 2015 – up from 15% in 1995.

While the media has focused so far on household and consumer waste, the volume of industrial waste generation globally is 18

times greater, according to the World Economic Forum. The infrastructure sector is responsible for 30% of this, but next on the list – and growing rapidly – is material generated by manufacturers. Although global manufacturing output is more than \$40tr per year, 20% of every dollar spent in manufacturing is wasted due to inefficiencies.

### Technology supports material tracking and recovery

Across the industrial system, though, the past five years have also seen significant developments in technology from sensing, robotics and industrial automation to machine learning, which can help create, measure, track and process materials to underpin new circular business models.

In particular, the waste and recycling sector has adopted sensor systems that measure the volume of material in containers and vehicles – the so-called ‘internet of bins’ rather than internet of things.

For example, the City of Edinburgh Council has installed 11,000 such sensors across its on-street bins to monitor and optimise container deployment and collection. Sensors or smart labels printed onto packaging can also be embedded in reusable packaging and

goods, in a substrate that enables the asset to be tracked.

Meanwhile, the waste and recycling sector has deployed AI in the form of machine vision systems for robotic sorting of packaging waste in materials recovery facilities.

High-resolution cameras above conveyor belts linked to AI-driven software identify the different types of material used in packaging, which can then be sorted. The cameras can also identify brand names, so companies have a better idea of how much of their packaging consumers recycle.

At a micro scale, machine vision and weighing are also being used in commercial real estate to measure recycling and general waste. Hospitality operators are using such systems to measure and reduce food waste.

### Legislators are introducing sensor-based schemes

As this technology becomes more widely used, the EU is pushing for digital product passports based on sensors and smart labelling as well as encouraging the adoption of reusable systems. Digital product passports include information on products or packaging that can be scanned or read by a sensor. Information can include date, time and place of manufacture, the material types, amounts and other metrics on their environmental or carbon impact.

Reusable systems include coffee cups with an embedded sensor, which can be returned directly to the retailer or through a reverse vending machine, where they are collected, washed and returned for reuse.

In September 2025, the European Parliament also approved new measures to prevent waste food and textiles, which will require digital technologies to measure and track material through sale and recovery. Textile producers, for instance, will have to sign up to an EPR programme, requiring them to cover the cost of collection, sorting and recycling of textile products.

Meanwhile, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is set to roll out a mandatory digital waste tracking system in the spring. After various iterations, this will require all waste and recycling operators to use approved software that can readily export data for each nation's environmental regulator.

At the same time, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland will see the roll-out of a

### Wasting away

# 18x

The volume of industrial waste generation globally is 18 times greater than household and consumer waste

# 3.4bn

Waste generation predicted to reach 3.4bn tonnes by 2050.

Sources: World Bank

deposit return scheme for single-use plastic and metal drinks containers, with beverage producers adding a refundable deposit to the cost of a product.

This will be redeemable using a network of reverse vending machines that will read the smart labels on each returned container. The aim is to reduce littering, improve recovery rates and generate quality recycled material by offering a financial incentive to return the item.

### AI could help map complex value chain

These applications are positive: but only insofar as they make the current paradigm of waste management and recycling work more efficiently. Such systems only see material in one part of the overall waste value chain.

For instance, bin-fill sensors see material put into on-street bins, but not where this goes after the bin is emptied. Machine vision in turn only sees material coming into and through material recovery facilities, and does not track it beyond that site. Bin sensor

**Digital product passports include information on products or packaging that can be scanned or read by a sensor**

systems do not qualify the type of material either, and machine vision systems only measure what they are trained to identify.

The challenge for the global urban and industrial waste system is that the pathways for all this material – recyclable, general or hazardous – are complex. The generation, movement and processing of waste is a dynamic system of material flowing around organisations and territories.

These materials emerge from operational sites and are then collected by haulers or carriers and taken to locations often operated by other firms, where the material may be sorted, processed and moved to further sites. What happens to material will be determined not only by where in the world the operators are based but by the amount of waste, its value, the costs, the haulers and contractors, the infrastructure, the regulations and a host of other factors.

In the next five years, sensor, data and robotic systems will be more widely deployed, underpinning a more efficient and effective materials system and supporting circular business models. These systems will be deployed by city and national governments, waste and recycling operators and the organisations that produce waste.

Through judicious and widespread digitisation, it is now possible to build digital twins of complex, global value chains that can enable the systemic changes needed to reduce waste at source and maximise the recovery of material.

The very complexity of the datasets involved lends itself to digitisation and AI to automate, process, analyse and create a clear view of the system. While technology can be the enabler, growing circularity will also need regulation, investment and a realignment of priorities.

**For more must-read articles, visit [www3.rics.org/land-journal](https://www3.rics.org/land-journal)**

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# Lack of future aggregate puts construction at risk

The latest Aggregate Minerals Survey report for government shows a continued decline in reserves of aggregates

WORDS BY KATE YOUNG MRICS  
AND MATTHEW CUTHBERT MRICS

**PUBLISHED IN AUGUST** last year, the *Aggregate Minerals Survey 2023* (AMS2023) report compiles data from mineral operators to assess the national supply, demand and reserves of aggregates to inform future mineral planning policy.

AMS2023 reaffirms what the industry has been saying for a number of years. Demand for aggregates is increasing, reserves are continuing to reduce and access is becoming more complicated.

The findings ([modus.short.gy/l-MPA](https://modus.short.gy/l-MPA)) from the Mineral Products Association (MPA) highlight the recent downturn in the market, exposing an immediate challenge to fulfilling the government's construction and development targets. This will likely now need an increase in production during this parliament to reach these targets.

However, the short-term challenges to minerals, which include rising energy costs, rising material costs and labour shortages, all prevent increased production at market selling price, and demonstrate its ability to affect other construction sectors such as cement.

The amount of minerals being processed is dependent on market demand and whether this demand can be met.

## Demand for aggregates is increasing, reserves are continuing to reduce and access is becoming more complicated

Secondary aggregates, which are not extracted from the natural environment, can ease the pressure on landbanks. Mineral planning authorities ensure a steady and adequate supply of minerals for future construction demand through these landbank reserves. However, secondary aggregates are not yet a substitute for primary aggregates. Secondary aggregates, typically recycled or produced as a by-product, do not have the consistency, quality and volume needed for certain construction applications. As a result, primary aggregates still need to be extracted to meet short- to medium-term demand.

As well as the government's target to build 1.5m new homes by 2029, the new National

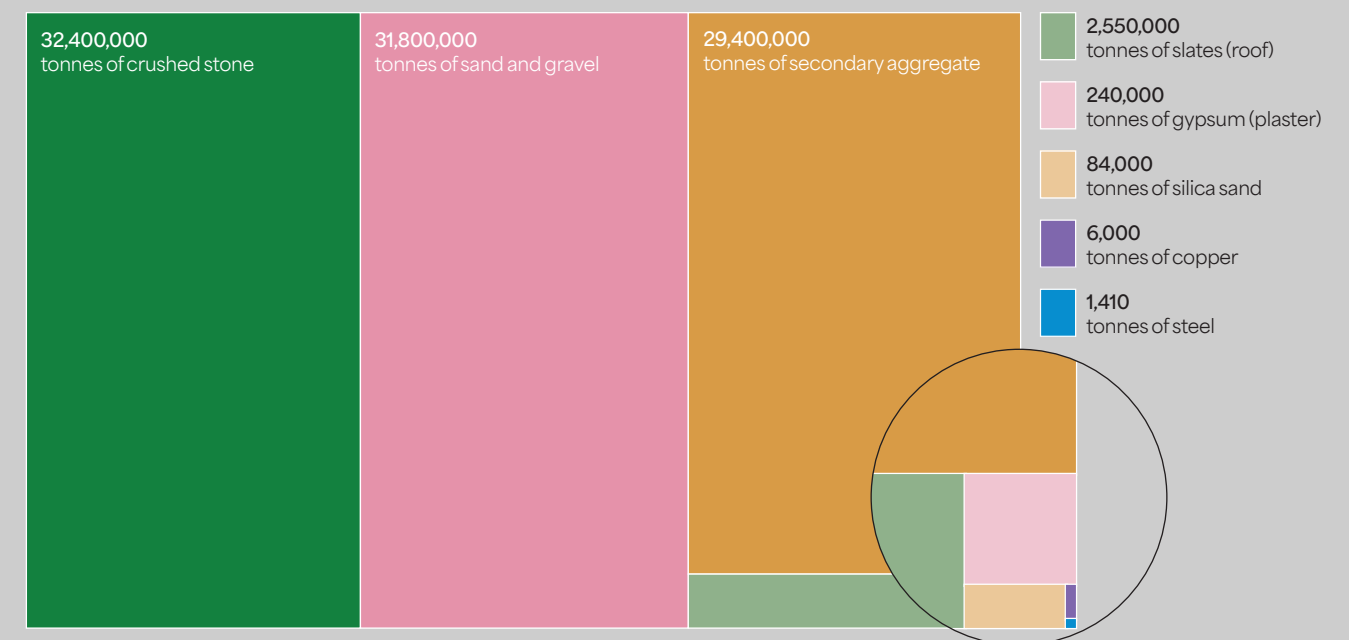
Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority's 10-year strategy also sets out a clear ambition for development and growth in both the housing and infrastructure sectors. This includes transport, schools, hospitals and environmental developments.

The RICS Minerals Advisory Group has estimated the tonnage of minerals needed to achieve the 1.5m new homes targets. When this is compared with the UK mineral statistics for 2023 published by the British Geological Survey for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), you can see that a large percentage of the UK's existing sand and gravel landbank is needed for new housing projects (*see fig. 2*).

These figures exclude transport and energy infrastructure, as well as new schools and services, needed for increased housebuilding, so actual figures may be higher.

The AMS2023 outlines that, following the major decrease in aggregates sales after the 2008 financial crises, sales increased by approximately 20% between 2009 and 2023. The construction sector was beginning to bounce back, but aggregate demand will need to increase rapidly to fulfil the government's housing targets.

**Fig 1. Estimated tonnes of minerals needed for 300,000 homes\* per year to achieve the target of 1.5m new homes in five years**



Source: RICS Minerals Advisory Group. \*Estimate of average three-bed detached home in the UK, floor area between 90-110m<sup>2</sup> and a ceiling height of 2.4m



Fig 2. Amount of materials needed to build new houses compared to minerals produced

	300,000 homes per year needs approximately*	Minerals produced in 2023 (BGS statistics)	Percentage of national landbank
Crushed stone	32.4m tonnes	121.471m tonnes	27%
Sand and gravel	31.8m tonnes	37.37m tonnes	85%
Secondary aggregate	29.4m tonnes	unknown	-
Slates (roof)	2.55m tonnes	0.17m tonnes	Over 100%
Gypsum (plaster)	0.24m tonnes	2.2m tonnes	11%
Copper	6,000 tonnes	imported	-
Steel	1,410 tonnes	imported	-
Silica sand for glass	84,000 tonnes	4,741,000 tonnes	2%

Source: British Geological Survey for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. \*estimated by RICS Minerals Advisory Group

The sector is now facing a potential return to reducing demand following the challenging 2025 market period. Government needs to consider where the minerals will come from and how effectively they can be produced.

Shortfall in mineral reserves are a concern

Since the early 2000s, mineral planning authorities have produced local aggregate assessments, which evaluate current and future demand for minerals in their area and identify how this demand will be met through the allocation of resources.

The Managed Aggregate Supply System (MASS) is the UK’s national planning framework whose job it is to ensure a steady and adequate supply of aggregate through monitoring and managing extraction rates. MASS has tried to ensure this supply of construction aggregates, such as sand, gravel and crushed rock, across the country despite regional imbalances in natural resources.

MASS does not assess if the system is fit for purpose, but rather replenishment rates

– the rate at which sold minerals are replaced by new allocations. These have been falling.

The MPA’s *11th Annual Mineral Planning Survey Report (11AMPSR)* outlined that over a 10-year average from 2014 to 2023, only 33% of crushed rock reserves and 61% of sand and gravel reserves sold have been replenished.

Overcoming this shortfall in replenishment of primary aggregate reserves either requires a reduction in demand or mineral reserves to be topped up. As the long-term strategy is not to reduce demand, new mineral reserves must be provided.

Adding to the reserve pressures is the 2042 expiry date. This deadline originates from the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981, which set all planning permissions granted for mineral workings before 22

The industry is struggling to make up this shortfall

February 1982 to expire in February 2042. This affects sand, gravel and hard rock reserves, but it is especially relevant to crushed rock. Around 48% of permitted crushed rock reserves in England and Wales expire in 2042.

If you include reserves with planning permissions that will naturally expire before 2042, the situation is even worse. According to the MPA, 68% of crushed rock reserves and 85% of sand and gravel reserves across England and Wales will no longer be usable.

The industry is struggling to make up this shortfall before new sites are taken into consideration. These are coming forward as proposals because of the need to allocate sites in local development plans before planning permission is submitted.

*11AMPSR* states that since 1999, of the 141 crushed rock planning applications submitted that provide reserves, only two have been for new sites while the remainder are for extensions to existing sites. The disparity is less acute for sand and gravel planning applications, but extensions still represent most new applications.

The UK’s substantial offshore geological deposits of marine sand and gravel can supplement terrestrial reserves. However, the amount of sand and gravel landed depends on the availability of aggregate wharves.

Increasingly, aggregate wharves and their processing facilities face challenges from competing development, primarily residential development of neighbouring brownfield industrial land, which can conflict with 24-hour operations due to amenity issues for the housing. These wharves must be safeguarded through reaffirmed and enforced planning policy protections if marine sand and gravel is to maintain or increase its contribution to reserves.

Access to onshore reserves is becoming more complicated

The difficulty in identifying, establishing, financing and operating new onshore reserves has grown in the past 20 years. The UK has geological resources, but access to them depends on planning consent.

The main geological processes that create reserves and cause minerals to be available are often the same processes that form the important and enhanced landscapes and ecology that require protection. This creates a question of balance between protecting the environment and economic growth.

According to the MPA, in 2023 it took on average 22.6 months for a sand and gravel application to be approved and issued, and 36.6 months for crushed rock. Most of this delay is in the post-submission phase, partly due to underfunded and understaffed mineral planning departments.

National and regional guidelines for aggregate provision in England have not been updated since 2009, with the guideline on the aggregate provision required only going up to 2020. The government focus on critical minerals is welcome but it should not be at the expense of policy and strategy regarding construction aggregates.

The emphasis on local development plans to calculate regional requirements for minerals tend to under-represent national need. Regions depend on imports from other areas of the UK, but mineral local plans, which are drafted by the respective mineral planning authority, struggle to properly account for this inter-regional reliance.

Each mineral planning authority uses its own approach to forecasting demand in its



Aggregate wharves face challenges from competing land uses

locality, often based on local 10-year sales averages. This makes it difficult to establish need over wider areas and across borders. The delay in aggregate need assessments in local plans means that increase in growth or housing expansion often takes a few years to be reflected.

Without strong national minerals guidance on needs, planning decisions are focusing on local interest – such as perceived noise, traffic or landscape impact – even with significant work by applicants to show that the developments have little effect and any impact is temporary, for the life of the operation.

Why does a shortfall of minerals really matter?

What impact could the issues mentioned in *AMS2023* have on the wider economy?

Minerals are the foundation of industries such as construction, technology, energy and manufacturing. Prices rise because of scarcity plus the operational challenges of production and extraction. These costs are passed on to consumers, contributing to inflation.

While some mineral reliance may be offset by secondary aggregates, they cannot replace all primary aggregate uses and there will continue to be a shortfall. Of course, the reuse of minerals should be encouraged, but secondary aggregates still need a sustainable supply of primary aggregate to fill the shortfall in the medium term.

There are no easy solutions to these challenges, but the growing problem requires the government to focus on domestic mineral security, for general construction aggregates as has been done for critical minerals.

The government needs to acknowledge the impact minerals have in other national sectors and how vital they are to the UK economy. The construction sector needs continued investment in planning teams in local authorities to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and capacity to consider complex mineral planning applications in a timely way.

Local decision-making is generally a good idea. However, for minerals, a nationally coordinated approach is also necessary. This will ensure that the demand to achieve the planned national infrastructure and housing targets is available and can be implemented in local development plans.

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PHOTO © JOANNE BAKER



## Land and natural resources standards and guidance



### Recently published

#### ***Flooding and its implications for property professionals, Practice information, 1st edition***

This paper provides an overview of the diverse impacts of flooding on professional practice and the importance of adopting strategic, cross-disciplinary approaches to mitigate associated risks. It highlights the need for collaboration across traditional boundaries, recognising the valuable roles played by professionals across different RICS disciplines.

#### ***Land agreements for development purposes, Professional Standard, 1st edition***

This Framework has been developed to help land professionals measure the way rural land performs. It is designed to be flexible and simple to use, setting out a process to help users design their own key performance indicators (KPIs) – quantifiable measurements that create a baseline to enable performance measurement and track changes over time. It will benefit all decision-makers who own, manage or have an interest in rural land.

#### ***RICS International Land Performance Framework, Practice information, 1st edition***

This Framework has been developed to help

land professionals measure the way rural land performs and is designed to be flexible and simple to use, setting out a process to help users design their own key performance indicators (KPIs) – quantifiable measurements that create a baseline to enable performance measurement and track changes over time. It will benefit all decision-makers who own, manage or have an interest in rural land.

### Forthcoming publications

#### ***Affordable housing developments – valuation considerations, professional standard, 1st edition***

This standard aims to assist practitioners in the approach to the valuation of affordable housing development land. This area of practice is highly regulated and subject to changes in government policy and programmes for the support of affordable housing in the public housing delivery sector through housing associations and others.

#### **Also in development**

Look out for updates on [modus.short.gy/I-SAG](https://modus.short.gy/I-SAG)

- *Party Wall legislation and procedure, 8th edition*
- *Valuing biodiversity in urban areas*

## PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

### Conferences

#### **UK&I Minerals and Waste Conference, April 2026**

#### **UK&I Rural Conference, June 2026**

Dates are provisional, please check [rics.org/conferences](https://rics.org/conferences) for updates.



SHUTTERSTOCK

## PGP chair's message

### Land, nature and the future of development in the UK



#### INTERIM PANEL CHAIR GRACE PROWSE

Land is our most fundamental resource, and its use is central to addressing the UK's challenges of climate resilience, biodiversity loss and housing demand. The Land & Natural Resources Professional Group is at the heart of this national debate. I am honoured to step in as interim chair and would like to thank my predecessor, David Sandbrook, for his dedicated service.

The reach of our land professionals is wide. Members of our RICS Minerals Advisory Group have recently written an article for our online Land Journal on minerals. They highlight findings from the *Aggregate Minerals Survey 2023* published in August, which compiles data from mineral operators to assess the national supply, demand and reserves of aggregates to inform future mineral planning policy. The Survey reaffirms what the industry has been saying for some time, which is that demand for aggregates is increasing, reserves are continuing to reduce

### RICS members have a critical role to play in bringing these initiatives to fruition

and access is becoming more complicated. The article contains some key messages for those engaged in the delivery of housing targets and infrastructure and the need to consider there are no easy solutions to these challenges – but the growing problem requires the government to focus on domestic mineral security for general construction aggregates as has been done for critical minerals.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Land rights and consents processes for electricity network infrastructure**

RICS responded to the recent consultation on proposed changes to land rights and consents processes for electricity network infrastructure.

Land rights and consents processes are the processes and permissions that enable network operators to access private land for the purposes of building and maintaining electricity infrastructure. It is vital that these processes protect the rights of landowners, local stakeholders and the environment, while enabling the timely delivery of important infrastructure. Network investment is critical, not just for the energy transition, but also to support economic growth.

### **Planning reform and risk**

In pursuit of 1.5m dwellings during this parliament, the government has been engaging in widespread reform of the planning system seen as a cause of delay and a barrier to accelerating house building. RICS has supported many of the reforms, which are intended to bring more certainty for both communities and developers about what is acceptable development.

Fundamental to a plan-led system is ensuring all local plans are up to date. Around 75% of them are not. In addition to speeding up plan-making, government is introducing 'spatial development strategies'. These are larger than local plans, intended to create a quasi-regional level of planning to direct investment to the appropriate places.

There is also local government reform taking place. While most of these reforms are welcome, questions are raised about the order in which plans are being produced. Local development plans may end up preceding the relevant spatial development strategy to which they should conform.

All of this is being carried out relying on already overstretched professional resources. Combine this with the scheduled local elections in June 2026 and the politics of planning quickly begins to dominate an already complex regulatory environment, making delivery less certain.

[rics.org/land](https://rics.org/land)

### **Join us at the 2026 GeoBusiness show**

RICS is a proud partner of this annual event taking place in ExCeL London on 3-4 June 2026. Find out more and register for your free ticket at [geobusinessshow.com](https://geobusinessshow.com)

For further key sector insights, visit [www3.rics.org/land-journal](https://www3.rics.org/land-journal)



# Courts find that WhatsApps have contractual consequences

Construction firms are increasingly communicating through informal channels on smartphones – but two recent legal cases illustrate the potential pitfalls of instant messaging

WORDS BY ANNE-MARIE FRIEL AND CHRISTOPHER SKINNER

**WHATSAPP AND OTHER** messaging tools have become ubiquitous in business communication, offering convenience, speed and reach in creating customer relationships. However, their informal nature can also give rise to data management issues and runs the risk of accidentally creating legally binding obligations.

These tools are designed for quick and informal communication on a smartphone, and users may not give their full attention to messages they receive or the weight of the responses that they send.

This can have significant consequences further down the line. They also create an entirely separate chain of communications from that of emails, and it may not be easy to combine the two sets of documentation.

Two recent cases, *Jaevée Homes Limited v Steve Fincham (trading as Fincham Demolition) [2025] EWHC 942 (TCC)* and *Lloyds Developments Ltd v Accor Hotel Services UK Ltd [2024] EWHC 1238 (TCC)* illustrate these risks and offer practical lessons for professionals in the construction industry.

## Unclear terms prompt dispute over alleged breach

When Steve Fincham was approached by Jaevée Homes for demolition services, he provided Jaevée with a quotation by email.

Subsequent discussions as to whether Fincham would be awarded the job occurred between the parties over email and WhatsApp.

This led up to a key WhatsApp conversation in which Ben James of Jaevée responded “Yes” when asked by Fincham whether he had been given the job. Some elements of the payment arrangements were also discussed, in particular that there would be monthly applications and that payments would be made every 28 or 30 days from invoice.

A few days after this WhatsApp conversation, Jaevée emailed Fincham a set of contract documents that included a purchase order and formal contract terms. These terms contained detailed provisions

**Jaevée certainly never intended for the WhatsApp conversation to be the binding contract, but this intention was not relevant to the court's final determination**

requiring Fincham to submit payment applications on a fixed date each month. However, Fincham had never communicated any acceptance of the formal contract terms.

Once the works had commenced, Fincham issued four invoices to Jaevée over a two-month period totalling £195,857.50. Jaevée argued that this was in breach of the payment application process set out in the formal contract terms in relation to payment, as had been emailed by Jaevée.

Jaevée only paid a total of £80,000 against these invoices, and a dispute arose regarding the amount of work completed as well as the sum properly due to Fincham.

## Messages found to constitute contract

Fincham initiated adjudication proceedings for the outstanding sums and was successful on the basis that his quotation, combined with the WhatsApp messages, constituted the agreed contract between the parties, to the exclusion of the contract terms that Jaevée had later provided by email.

In later High Court proceedings to enforce the adjudication, the judge further set out that even though the WhatsApp messages were informal they contained the scope of works, price and payment terms, which were the minimum elements needed to validly conclude a contract. Crucially, the judge found

that there was no indication that any further terms would need to be agreed.

The absence of agreement on the other details (including a specific start date, duration and detailed payment terms) did not preclude the formation of a valid contract, as the court believed that much of this information could be inferred or implied.

While the payment terms stated in the WhatsApp messages did not fully comply with the requirements of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the court determined that any gaps in these terms could be satisfactorily filled by the Scheme for Construction Contracts Regulations 1998.

Jaevée had also argued that the invoices could not be considered as payment notices under the act, but the court disagreed and stated that given the nature and scope of the works, the invoices and the information they contained were sufficient as applications for payment. The court also pointed to the fact that the WhatsApp messages, as a validly concluded contract, had referred to payment following the provision of an invoice.

The court was able to infer the relevant monthly periods based on the formation of the contract through WhatsApp, and determined that three out of the four invoices submitted by Fincham were valid applications

for payment. Fincham was entitled to be paid a total of £157,107.50, which was £77,107.50 more than he had already been paid by Jaevée.

Jaevée certainly never intended for the WhatsApp conversation to be the binding contract, but this intention was not relevant to the court's final determination.

Even if some key details are missing, the court is willing to take a pragmatic approach to infer this information from either common law or statute. But this can lead to ambiguous or unintended obligations for the parties.

In this case, since the duration of the works had not been agreed, there was only an obligation on Jaevée to complete the works within a reasonable period.

## Hotel owner criticised for format of redacted communications

In addition to risks associated with informal messaging apps in contract negotiations, an ongoing litigation demonstrates the potential risks in the context of a dispute.

*Lloyds Developments Limited v Accor Hotel Services UK Limited* is one of the later cases in a series of legal skirmishes going back to 2022 between the hotel owner Lloyds and the developer Accor for the construction and management of a 17-storey, 290-bed hotel in Glasgow. This specific case was related to a claim for further security for costs made by Accor due to Lloyds going into administration.

During the hearing, Lloyds disclosed a PDF of redacted WhatsApp messages between relevant persons that were considered by the court to be in a muddled or jumbled form.

As the court's reading of the messages was “impossible or incomprehensible”, it ordered that the unredacted messages were to be reviewed by an independent law firm at Lloyds' expense. This independent firm would then determine what could be disclosed from an unbiased viewpoint.

Lloyds was also instructed by the court to explain the creation of the “jumbled” PDF, and how such a “patently inadequate document came to be produced”.

The implication of the criticism is that the courts expect that, where meaningful business communications are being conducted via platforms such as WhatsApp, these should be subject to the same standards and scrutiny that would otherwise be expected for written communications, if they are to be relied upon.

In this case, it was more difficult for redaction to be justified, on the basis of

confidentiality, privilege or otherwise, than it might have been, had the information been contained in a different format.

The line between legitimate business and personal communications can easily become blurred or substantially overlap. Where litigation may arise, any disclosure exercise could become a minefield that may risk the ire of the court, as it did in this case.

## Caution urged to make best use of convenient platforms

The use of WhatsApp and other personal messaging platforms is becoming increasingly common due to their speed and convenience, reflecting a broader shift in the way business communication is conducted.

However, both Jaevée and Lloyds demonstrate that courts are prepared to treat such informal communication as binding, and subject them to the same scrutiny as any other formal business documents.

For professionals in the built environment, this means adapting our communication practices to reflect this reality and ensure clarity, compliance and control.

There are a few key lessons if businesses are to harness the benefits of messaging platforms without exposing themselves to unintended legal risks.

- Treat your informal communication channels with the same rigour as you would any of your other business channels and look to use more formal methods for important business exchanges.
- Remember the principles of contract formation. If there is a clear and certain agreement reached to provide something in exchange for a price then, if the parties indicate an intention to be bound by this agreement, and have the requisite capacity, a binding contract can be formed, regardless of the setting in which it takes place.
- Ensure that your data management policies consider how to record, retain and manage data in messaging platforms.

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**Related competencies include:** Contract administration, Data management, Legal/regulatory compliance



# Communication and negotiation integral to APC

While this is a mandatory competency as part of the APC, you can demonstrate that you have achieved it throughout your submission and interview

WORDS BY SUSAN HANLEY FRICS

## COMMUNICATION AND NEGOTIATION

is a mandatory competency to Level 2 of the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC), and candidates across all pathways and routes must demonstrate that they meet requirements covering communication in writing, graphically and orally as well as in the process and strategy of negotiation.

The best place to start with any competency is the APC guidance. The templates for the written submission contain useful prompts and are available from the assessment portal.

The guidance provides examples of the knowledge required at Level 1 and its application at Level 2. Candidates are not expected to include content matching all examples, and should be conscious not to exceed the 1,500-word limit for mandatory competencies. This represents about 90 words per competency per level.

### Provide sources to support your Level 1 knowledge

At Level 1, competencies require the candidate to demonstrate knowledge and understanding both in their submission document and at final assessment.

Ideally your knowledge at this level will be supported by the source of that knowledge, such as a training course, university modules, on-the-job experience or structured reading.

You can start collating information by asking yourself what you know, how you know it and whether that knowledge meets the requirements. If you have received training on presentation software or spreadsheets, for example, you could use this to illustrate the

source of your knowledge, noting: “I attended an in-house course on PowerPoint and learned how to produce an effective slideshow.”

Assessors will use your submission and the pathway guide for their questions, so when presented with examples such as PowerPoint training they may ask the following.

- As a result of your training, what do you consider makes an effective presentation?
- How do you ensure a presentation is suitable for its intended audience?

To prepare, you can extract similar questions based on the content of your own submission document. If your degree included modules on communication or negotiation you could mention this, saying: “At university I completed a module on effective negotiation, as part of which I learned the importance of establishing objectives and setting a strategy before entering any negotiation.”

Assessors may then consider asking: “What did you learn from this module that has been beneficial in your current role?”

### Specific examples prove applied understanding at Level 2

Level 2 requires candidates to provide evidence of applying oral, written, graphic

**At interview, you have control over the first 10 minutes as you present on your case study**

and presentation skills practically in a variety of situations, which specifically includes where negotiation is involved.

You should ensure you have a variety of actual, project-specific examples that the assessors can use as the basis for questioning.

You might say, for instance: “On a school refurbishment project in Birmingham, I met the contractor each week to agree the value of instructions. I ensured the list of instructions was issued before the meeting. Where we disagreed on the value for additional cladding, I presented my basis for the valuation and we reached agreement.”

Try to avoid the use of generic statements such as “I have been involved in many complex negotiations”, “I prepare lots of reports” or “I agree the value of instructions across all projects for which I’m responsible”.

Thinking back to Level 1 and the way the assessors base their questions on your submission, consider how much simpler it is to recall an actual negotiation you prepared for or talk through a report you compiled than it is to recall a good example from the “many” or “lots” you have carried out.

The use of project-specific examples allows you to focus on the task, visualising the report or recalling the stages of your negotiation as a way to help with your responses.

When presented with specific examples at Level 2, an assessor may consider asking questions such as the following:

- “On the school refurbishment project in Birmingham, how did you go about agreeing the value of the instruction?”
- “What would you have done if you could not reach agreement on this value?”

You should prepare for follow-up questions such as: “How did you record the outcome?”

### Assessment will be comprehensive and holistic

Remember that, given the holistic nature of the APC, assessors will review your written submission for compliance with the requirements and ask questions informed by these at final assessment.

A compliant submission provides the assessors with a good first impression. At interview, you have control over the first 10 minutes as you present on your case study. Indeed, this is an excellent way for you to demonstrate your communication and presentation skills.

Ensure you cover mandatory competencies in your revision as you work towards your final interview. While it may be tempting to focus revision solely on those tricky Level 3 technical competencies, you should ensure that your revision covers all competencies – don’t rely solely on your everyday use of communication and negotiation skills to carry you through.

In preparation, consider what you have written and the questions the assessors may extract from this. Ask a colleague or mentor to question you based on your written work, review the pathway guide requirements and ensure your knowledge and experience covers the requirements.

At final assessment most candidates will be directly questioned on the Communication and negotiation competency. This should be very clear, with the assessor saying something like: “I am now going to ask you a question on your Level 2 competency, Communication and negotiation.”

However, some assessors may seek to ascertain that you meet the requirements through your responses to other competencies that require communication and negotiation. For example, when demonstrating compliance with your technical competencies you may talk through a cost report you produced or describe how you prepared for your final account negotiations, showing that you have achieved Communication and negotiation.

**Susan Hanley FRICS** is a director of APC Academy Ltd and a director of CostNexus Ltd [susan.hanley@apc-academy.co.uk](mailto:susan.hanley@apc-academy.co.uk)

**Related competencies include:**  
Communication and negotiation

## PREPARATION AND COMPLIANCE IS KEY

Check your word count. Keeping within the 1,500 words for 16 levels across 11 mandatory competencies requires succinct writing.

Check your written work meets all the requirements and that you provide examples at each level. Be sure to include only knowledge and understanding at Level 1, and evidence of practical application at Level 2.

Be prepared for questions on all the Level 1 examples in the pathway guide, not just those you have written about. Remember that Level 1 is knowledge; even if you haven’t carried out a task, you are expected to know and understand the requirements.

At Level 2, make sure you include actual, project-specific examples.

Practise and perfect your 10-minute presentation – be your own best evidence of good oral communication and presentation skills.





# Skills gap means recruiters competing for scarce talent

With labour shortages continuing to affect the industry as a whole, the operations manager of a RICS-regulated consultancy explains how the firm has approached recruitment in a difficult market

WORDS BY RUTH JAKEMAN

**THE UK CONSTRUCTION** industry is facing a significant skills gap, which is not only slowing productivity but damaging the sector itself and the wider economy.

Many respondents to RICS' UK Construction Monitor (*modus.short.gy/c-UKCM*) frequently cite a lack of skilled workers and skills training as barriers to taking on more work. But what is the experience of companies who come face to face with the skills gap when they look to hire new staff and expand their offering?

Clarke & Watt Building Consultancy was founded in 2020 and has since grown significantly, doubling its turnover between 2023 and 2024. The goal for 2025 is to repeat that success, and head of operations Ruth Jakeman was last year made responsible for the business's recruitment drive. However, a shortage of skilled candidates has made the process particularly difficult.

**Construction Journal: How has the skills gap affected your recruitment?**  
**Ruth Jakeman:** When I took charge of recruitment, we looked at two main strategies: taking on a senior surveyor who is nearly or newly chartered or taking on a more junior surveyor and developing their skills and understanding of the industry from within.

Finding a senior surveyor proved to be challenging – there were very few responses to our ads on platforms such as LinkedIn and Indeed, and the experience of those who did respond often wasn't right for the business.

The small number of people who did fit the bill wanted quite high salaries, with some non-chartered candidates expecting to start at £45,000. As a firm we feel this is incredibly high, considering they were not chartered and we would consequently need to invest time to support them in becoming a RICS member.

So when this approach proved unsuccessful, we pivoted to focus on more junior applicants. Although we got to offer stage more than once, we were pipped at the post on each occasion by competing firms.

We particularly liked one candidate, but they were offered what we felt was an extortionate salary elsewhere and the opportunity to work in a larger office environment. This suited his needs, but not all firms can offer this.

I am finding graduates with a 2:1 are being employed within a four- to six-week period. As a result, we have to run interview sessions

regularly – and offers need to made as soon as a good candidate is identified. You can't say "I'll come back to you in a few weeks," because the market is so competitive.

In the end, it took seven or eight months to find someone. Rather than taking on a graduate we took on a candidate who was relatively new to the surveying profession but who had extensive experience in construction.

He is completing an RICS Certificate in Building Surveying Practice (*modus.short.gy/c-BSP*), and his understanding of building pathology has been an asset to the business. A lot of graduates didn't appear to have that practical knowledge but it is so important, especially at the start of their careers.

I am also finding that companies are doing a lot to retain their staff, so movement within the industry is low, salaries are high and bonus packages are competitive. I often headhunt through LinkedIn; however, this can be time-consuming as not many surveyors are looking to move. We have considered using recruiters, but they can request fees of up to 17% [of the successful applicant's starting salary].

**CJ: How ready are graduates for the workplace?**  
**RJ:** My directors, Jordan Clarke MRICS and Samuel Watt, said that the main element missing for graduates is the knowledge and understanding of building pathology.

We have also seen a reduction in the number of students who take a gap year at university. Although completing their degree quicker can seem like a positive thing, this affects their professional expertise and understanding of the industry. Our directors both completed gap years, which helped them get a real sense of how a building is constructed and the work that's required at every stage from a surveyor's perspective.

I have interviewed many graduates, and they have informed me that the final year of their degree is very procedural and focuses on getting people straight into the workplace. There's a lot of emphasis on what a graduate

One graduate told me that he had only been out on site once throughout his whole degree

should earn within a year or two of finishing university; but the figures quoted might not be realistic for someone who recently graduated or has little practical experience.

Universities could do more to set realistic salary expectations and advise students on the amount of writing that the job requires. Our junior surveyors are still adjusting to the time and effort required to produce detailed reports, undoubtedly one of the most challenging aspects of the role.

Another thing universities can do to better prepare students is offer more hands-on experience and work placements, to underpin their practical knowledge. One graduate told me that he had only been out on site once throughout his whole degree.

**CJ: Are there any new trends in terms of what graduates are asking for?**

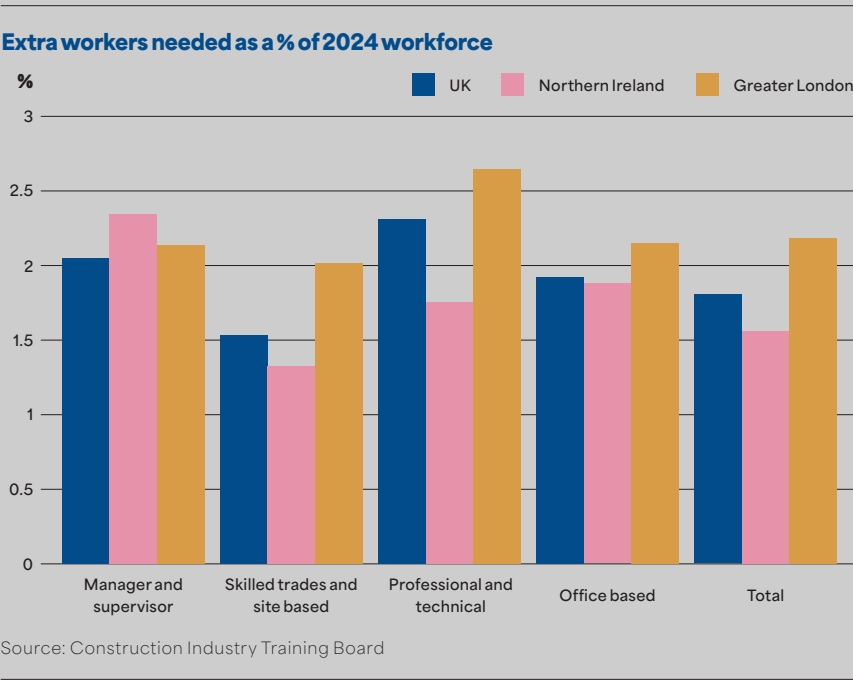
**RJ:** A lot of graduates are keen to start their APC immediately, which is great for the industry. However, this is not always realistic in the first year of employment. We need to set expectations for how intense this process can be. Some graduates need to adjust their mindset after finishing university and stepping into full-time work.

In university, students are to an extent spoon-fed about when assignments are due; but while working full time, if you want to become chartered it's not going to happen straight away. Even though we do support the process, the needs of the business come first and the route to becoming MRICS takes self-discipline and a lot of self-led work.

Since 2020 there has been a shift in culture between working from the office towards working from home. At CWBC we believe that working together in a collaborative environment enhances learning and ongoing development. While remote working contracts are desirable, we like to ensure they don't hinder our staff's development.

**CJ: How do you manage the recruitment process and prevent it taking up all your time?**

**RJ:** We take a broad approach to recruitment and ensure we're visible through proactive engagement on LinkedIn and job boards. We continually run a job advert on Indeed, too. We've also engaged with universities and advertise on their internal job boards and attend career events. One very effective way of engaging talent is by maintaining a network



and keeping in contact with people on LinkedIn and through regular phone calls.

A lot of businesses could benefit from staying in touch with candidates they have interviewed, as not every job will work out. It's all about creating a network of colleagues.

I don't look for traditional candidates, for example, a graduate or surveyor. It's important to look for transferable skills from within the construction industry, ensuing a more versatile talent pool.

Our most recent recruit has a civil engineering degree and has worked as a site foreman on residential and commercial projects. This has given him a vast array of skills and an in-depth understanding of construction materials, costs and methods.

**CJ: What other skills gaps are affecting business?**

**RJ:** We don't do in-house valuations. However, we get a lot of enquiries for this and in our experience there's a serious shortage of RICS-qualified valuers across the Yorkshire area.

Another shortage we've encountered is in structural engineering – this part of the industry is definitely lacking in new graduates or candidates with the relevant skills. Discussions with such colleagues have drawn attention to this shortage as they are finding it hard to recruit, and the challenges they face

mirror those we encounter when recruiting surveyors. Some of the firms I work with are having to turn work down as they are unable to fulfil the demand.

**CJ: Are you concerned about anything that's anticipated for this year, such as the increase in National Insurance?**

**RJ:** We are always tracking the markets to ensure we proactively respond to changes in the economic climate, adjusting our services to suit. The changes to National Insurance have made us more aware of the financial impact of increasing headcount, and it is certainly more challenging to balance workload and staffing levels.

Luckily, we have a great team, and everyone wants to see the business continue to grow, so during busy periods we pull together and work well to achieve our goals.

While we strive to keep the costs as competitive as possible, the increase in National Insurance will, unfortunately, increase costs for services across all industries.

**Ruth Jakeman** is operations manager at CWBC [admin@cwbc.co.uk](mailto:admin@cwbc.co.uk)

**Related competencies include:**  
Quantity surveying and construction



For further key sector insights, visit [ww3.rics.org/construction-journal](http://ww3.rics.org/construction-journal)

## PGP chair's message

### Putting AI and sustainability at the heart of our profession



PANEL CHAIR ROGER ESSON MRICS

As the surveying profession accelerates into a digital, data-driven age, one principle remains unchanged – namely our requirement to serve the public interest. From the ethical use of AI to the delivery of safe, sustainable projects, the value of our profession lies in trust, competence and accountability.

Many businesses are already using AI but a recent survey of members suggested that over 45% were not using the technology yet. RICS has recently issued the Global Standard for the *Responsible use of AI in surveying practice* that defines the boundaries of this technology for surveyors, ensuring transparency, human oversight and accountability.

Additionally, through initiatives such as AI4QS, the profession is building data literacy and confidence. However, technology alone is not enough and I don't believe it will replace the profession. What sets surveyors apart is our ability to interpret, challenge and apply information responsibly, balancing the speed of digital with professional judgement.

I truly believe that AI, technology and automation will help us in our respective roles, but there is also renewed recognition in the skill of measurement. AI may produce quantities and forecasts for us, but it is our ability as surveying professionals to check and validate its outputs that ensures truth and trust are maintained.

Sustainability is also high on our agenda at the moment and is at the heart of everything we do. We make sustainability measurable, accountable and real, and the upcoming trial pathway in sustainability has the potential to strengthen our message and welcome new professionals to the institution.

### What sets surveyors apart is our ability to interpret, challenge and apply information responsibly

Additionally, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's recently published 'Clean Energy Mission' highlights the UK's need for evidence-based, low-carbon delivery. The surveying profession is uniquely equipped to meet many of the challenges including quantifying carbon, verifying performance and managing risk.

Acting responsibly and in the public interest isn't just something from our collective past, it's fundamental to our future.

So, in the spirit of using technology, I asked ChatGPT to come up with a one-liner that summarised the relationship between AI and our profession. Its answer was better than anything I would have come up with. It said: "AI brings speed; measurement brings truth."

## Construction standards and guidance

### New Rules of Measurement

Following the launch of the Whole Life Carbon Assessment (WLCA) Professional Standard, which provides a methodology for the calculation of embodied and operative carbon within projects, we now need to turn our attention to the New Rules of Measurement (NRM) guidance. This will enable the QS profession to be prepared for reporting on project carbon footprint.

The revision will build on the latest version to the NRM suite (published in 2021) for the estimating of construction capital cost (NRM 1) and life cycle maintenance costs (NRM 3) and will enable members to report on the WLCA-based carbon footprint calculation and to advise clients with option appraisals across all three aspects. At the same time, the NRM suite will be aligned with data standards across other industry bodies such as CIBSE, SFG20 and Uniclass. It is hoped that this NRM suite update can be published in 2026.

### Emerging trends

We are shortly intending to publish an insight paper on the subject of emerging trends for the QS, with the expectation that this will become an annual publication. Trending topics for the first paper are set to be the use of AI for QS's (aligning with the recent survey published in September 2025 on the use of AI in construction (*modus.short.gy/c-AIC*) and the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).

### Construction conference

The QS and Construction Conference was held in October 2025 in London HQ. Roger Esson MRICS, the Construction PGP Chair, introduced the event, which included panel discussions and speakers. Subjects covered included: the Private Sector Playbook and the productivity; the skills challenge; AI for the QS and the future developments; net zero matters; insolvency risks; and the construction case law update.

### EQS review

A cross-discipline review and overhaul of all the pathway guides is underway. Discussions about content of the QS and PM pathways will focus on ensuring that the competencies to be demonstrated by APC candidates continue to be fit for purpose to suit changing market demands. A broader review of the whole APC process is proposed and members should look out for published proposals with a view to being involved in the discussions.

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION ON MYRICS COMMUNITY

It's your space to discuss the profession with your fellow members, and the perfect place to share your thoughts on Modus - we'd love to hear your feedback!  
[community.rics.org](http://community.rics.org)

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## PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

### Training courses

#### Certificate in BIM - online course

The rise of Building Information Modelling (BIM) and digital technology has revolutionised project delivery in construction, shifting the required managerial skills. Project managers now play a vital role in advocating BIM benefits to clients and stakeholders, guiding its strategic application, and demonstrating expertise in project execution. This online course will help BIM managers to grasp project lifecycle information needs, establish effective information management processes, and foster collaborative environments.

#### Certificate in Construction Project Management - online course

You'll explore each project stage and its key steps. This includes planning, organising and controlling construction operations, and managing feasibility studies, design, construction, maintenance, refurbishment and demolition. The content provides a well-rounded view of construction project management and essential skills.

Find out more about these courses at [rics.org/training-events](http://rics.org/training-events)





RICS MATRICS

# Creating connections and careers through RICS

**Lauren Lemcke MRICS is an associate in the cost management team at AECOM**



RICS Matrics is our early career community, designed to support students, apprentices, trainees and newly qualified professionals (up to 10 years after qualification). It provides a platform to influence the profession, build networks and gain valuable support through the assessment process and beyond.

Across the UK, 27 local Matrics committees deliver a wide range of assistance from peer support groups and development sessions to free online CPD opportunities, networking and social events, all designed to develop the leaders of tomorrow.

I'm proud to serve on the UK RICS Matrics Board, having worked my way up from the Brighton Committee, where I began as a committee member before becoming chair, then regional chair for London and the south-east, and joining the UK Board in November 2024.

I was honoured to be named the RICS Matrics Surveyor of the Year

2024 – a recognition that still feels surreal and that I am immensely proud of. The network has been instrumental in building my confidence, professional connections and leadership skills. I'm incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement it has given me.

My first Matrics event was the relaunch of the Brighton Committee in 2022. I didn't know a single person and was nervous walking into a room full of surveyors. But within minutes, I was warmly welcomed, and by the end of the night, I'd made lasting connections.

From that first event to now, Matrics has shaped my career, offering opportunities, support and experiences such as writing for Modus and visiting the Houses of Parliament to find out more about the future of the industry. I would highly recommend getting involved to all early career surveyors.

**To find out about upcoming events, follow the regional RICS Matrics UK LinkedIn pages, and to sign up for our events please visit [rics.org/matrics](https://rics.org/matrics)**

## SUPPORTING OUR FELLOW SURVEYORS

**Philippa Sampson-Bancroft FRICS reveals the vital work done by the LionHeart charity**



More than 150 people a day. It's a figure that really sticks out for me – that's how many people LionHeart's staff were supporting, on average, on any given day in 2024/25.

Surveyors, just like me and you, or their loved ones, being supported through any of life's challenges: ill health, bereavement, loss of income, mental health issues, problems at home or at work.

As a fellow of RICS, being chair of the board of LionHeart is a position I am immensely proud to hold. It's a charity dedicated to supporting my fellow professionals practically, emotionally or financially, when they need it most.

Since 2018, demand for that support has more than doubled. Last year, we approved more than £420,000 in grants to help those in financial crisis, and provided thousands of hours of support, advice and counselling.

It's a privilege to play a part in making a real difference to those people, just as the surveyors who first established an independent charity to look after their own intended back in 1899. We look forward to continuing that during 2026, and to keep developing our support even further. As part of that commitment, LionHeart will shortly be running a mental health survey, which I urge you to complete.

As is the case for many charities, increased demand has come against a backdrop of increased costs and falling donations. I end by thanking those of you who have chosen to donate £25 to LionHeart if you've recently renewed your RICS subs. If you weren't able to donate at the time, or don't pay your own subs, please consider donating online now. Just £2 a month would help us to keep helping our own, now and in the future.

**To find out more visit [lionheart.org.uk](https://lionheart.org.uk)**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

# Building bridges, not barriers



**Sunny-Thomas Obasuyi MRICS is an associate partner at HartDixon**

As the NextGen representative on RICS Governing Council, I'm often asked what young professionals want from our industry. Recently, at the Skills Gap Spotlight event at RICS HQ, I posed a different question: how flexible are we in letting people in?

For too long, our profession has functioned as a gatekeeper when we should have been a gateway. The conventional route into surveying creates barriers that exclude talented individuals. A career changer with valuable project management experience might be told they need to start over. A neurodivergent professional with remarkable attention to detail might be overlooked because they don't interview conventionally.

As someone who achieved MRICS while navigating dyslexia, I understand how obstacles can feel insurmountable.

Technology-enabled learning helps dismantle these barriers. Virtual training accommodates different processing speeds and learning styles. AI-assisted tools support those with learning differences, which is important given that 15% to 20% of the UK population is neurodivergent. Online platforms enable professionals to upskill around existing commitments.

RICS is making progress in recognising that professional competency comes from multiple routes. New pathways in Retrofit Surveying, Sustainability Advisory and Data Analytics reflect this.

But the Skills Gap event (see column to the right) made something crystal clear: this isn't just about new entrants.

We lose 73,800 potential professionals annually because only 10% of surveying undergrads become RICS members. But we're also losing experienced practitioners who can't see how to adapt to rapid changes in PropTech, data analytics and AI.

This is where intergenerational learning becomes powerful. NextGen professionals often understand PropTech and digital tools instinctively. Experienced practitioners bring strategic thinking and commercial awareness that only comes with years of practice. The same online platforms that lower barriers for new entrants also enable seasoned surveyors to upskill in emerging technologies.

A 25-year-old can teach a 55-year-old about AI-assisted site analysis, while that 55-year-old mentors the younger colleague on navigating complex stakeholder negotiations.

How many talented people never entered our profession, and how many capable practitioners are struggling to adapt, because our approaches have been too narrow or too inflexible?

NextGen professionals have options. They're choosing industries offering purpose-driven work and flexibility. But existing professionals also have options. If we don't support their development, we'll lose institutional knowledge.

We don't need to lower standards. We need to raise our ambition about who we welcome and how we develop everyone, at every career stage.

Modern learning approaches aren't charity. They're bridges connecting diverse talent to our profession, connecting generations and connecting our industry to the future it needs.

**“We need to raise our ambition about who we welcome”**

SHUTTERSTOCK

## SKILLS NEWS



### Surveying skills report 2025

Based on a survey of our global membership, RICS' *Surveying skills report* is the first of its kind, providing an in-depth exploration of skills shortages in surveying. It uncovers the reality of the skills gap right now and, in an industry that is ever-evolving and working at pace to meet demanding targets in housing and decarbonisation, identifies the developing needs of future surveyors.

The findings are clear: current initiatives on skills, though valuable, are not working fast enough.

**Find out more and download the survey results from [rics.org/surveyingskillsreport](https://rics.org/surveyingskillsreport)**



### Closing the skills gap

Industry stakeholders and the next generation of surveyors met at RICS HQ in October to discuss the skills gap and devise practical solutions to help close it.

Held in partnership with BE News, the 'Skills Gap Spotlight + Hackathon' welcomed around 100 senior leaders and almost 40 hackathon participants from the across the sector and the UK. Alongside a series of keynote and panel discussions, young professionals and students gathered as part of a hackathon challenge to come up with ideas to help close the skills gap.

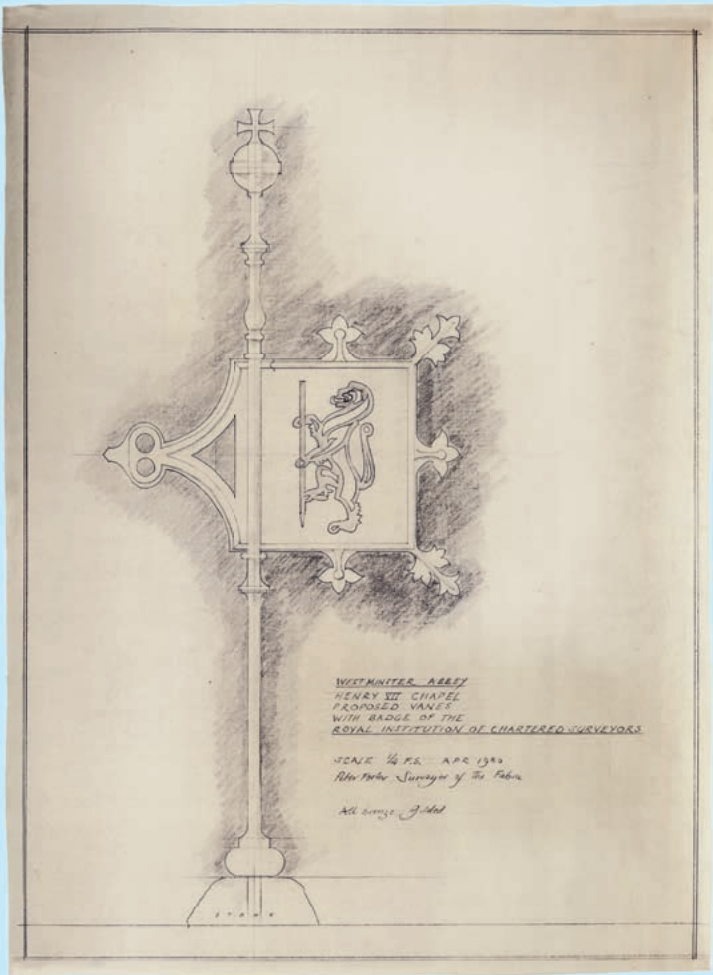
The two-day event sparked conversations highlighting the need to make a career in the industry more attractive and visible to young people while also supporting, recognising and upskilling professionals in emerging areas of expertise, as well as reducing barriers to entry and attracting diverse talent into the sector.

**For more details of the event and future events, visit [rics.org/closingthegap](https://rics.org/closingthegap)**



FROM THE ARCHIVE

# Westminster Abbey’s weathervanes



In 1981, to commemorate the Institution’s centenary of being granted its Royal Charter, RICS donated the 16 gilded bronze weathervanes that adorn Henry VII’s Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey. These weathervanes feature Tudor emblems, including a portcullis, a falcon and a greyhound, which were replicated from the interior of the chapel.

The weathervanes were designed by architect John Peter Foster, who served as Westminster Abbey’s Surveyor of the Fabric from 1973 to 1988.

During his tenure, Foster oversaw the extensive restoration of the abbey’s exterior,

as well as the cleaning and repairs at St Margaret’s Westminster. In addition to the weathervanes, he designed various other elements of the abbey, including the memorial stone for poet WH Auden, a new grille around Elizabeth I’s tomb, and the case for the Queen’s Westminsters roll of honour.

Foster’s contributions to Westminster Abbey’s history are truly noteworthy, and RICS’ donation of the weathervanes serves as a lasting reminder of its long association with the abbey.

With thanks to RICS Library’s Knowledge and Information Services for tracking down the original designs in the archives.

## KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Our Knowledge and Information Services are here to assist you with your work. We’ve integrated our traditional library with an online resource and enquiry service for all members wherever they are.

You can visit our beautiful library at RICS HQ, Parliament Square, London, which contains historical materials related to surveying.

The following services are also available from the library:

### Discounted BSI access

We have worked closely with BSI to give RICS micro-businesses a heavy discount on a 12-month subscription package, including:

- Access to full text viewing (not downloading) of the complete BSI Knowledge (*knowledge.bsigroup.com*) online library core content set of BS, BS EN, BS EN ISO/IEC, PAS
- Circa 90,000 full text documents (current, historical, withdrawn and draft)
- Alerts to track standards and receive email notifications if a standard changes
- Unlimited searching and viewing (no download or printing, but with the ability to paste extracts into an offline document).

### VLeBooks

Access to more than 350 e-books including:

- *Parry’s Valuation And Investment Tables*
- *Spon’s Architects and Builders Price Book 2026*
- *How To Become A Chartered Surveyor*

### Enquiry service

Queries on technical or ethical issues, or RICS standards, can be submitted to [knowledge@rics.org](mailto:knowledge@rics.org)

To learn about all of these services, scan the QR code





## WHO GETS FIRED WHEN THE AI SCREWS UP?

AI can predict protein structures, write elegant code, and chat its way through a philosophy exam. It’s genuinely extraordinary.

Which is why every software vendor on earth is now cramming it into their products like it’s a legal requirement.

But here’s the thing: AI makes mistakes. Confident, plausible-sounding mistakes. And unlike an

accountancy error you can trace back to cell AF248, AI failures aren’t predictable. They’re creative.

At Trace, we’re known for property management software that gets it right. Trusted, reliable, auditable right. So as we bring AI capabilities into our products, we’re doing it carefully. Really carefully.

That means using AI to augment

your judgment, not replace it. Software that supports human oversight, not ignores it. And tools that make you better at your job, not excuses for getting it wrong.

In other words, the power of AI, but with the control firmly in your hands. Because, in property management, “the algorithm made me do it” really isn’t going to fly.

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