



MODUS

by RICS



MEET THE GUARDIANS 08

The surveyors protecting the nation's oldest and most fragile buildings

BEHIND THE THRILL RIDES 18

Christopher Bird MRICS manages a global portfolio of theme parks, wax museums and the London Eye

OVERHEATED HOMES 54

A growing problem during warmer British summers

ESSENTIAL INSIGHT ON THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

June 2026 | ww3.rics.org/modus ww3.rics.org/journals



THE PURPOSE
ISSUE →

INCLUDING
Journals

Highlights from
across sectors

Who keeps our historic
buildings standing?

Specialist Professional Indemnity Insurance for Chartered Surveyors



We understand your profession almost as much as you do

Anchorman have been arranging Professional Indemnity (PI) Insurance for surveyors for nearly 30 years. So you know that with us, you'll be in safe hands. Whether you're a long-established firm or a start-up, we take the time to understand your business, matching your cover accordingly.

-  Specialist advice and guidance
-  Exclusive in-house scheme with an "A" rated insurer*
-  Developed for your specific needs
-  Access to a wide range of other RICS approved insurers

Hear what our clients say about us:

"We have used Anchorman for years. They always provide a great quote, but as importantly to us, they provide great advice and support throughout the year, if we have technical questions we want to run by them in terms of the PI cover and services we offer. Thank you for your great support."

Paul, PSC Surveying, Leeds, 2026

Reaching out to our friendly UK-based team couldn't be easier.

-   info@anchormanprofessions.co.uk
-  01837 650030
-  www.anchormanprofessions.co.uk

*Independent ratings from third party rating companies. Correct as at April 2026.

Anchorman Professions is a trading name of Arthur J. Gallagher Insurance Brokers Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered Office: Spectrum Building, 55 Blythswood Street, Glasgow, G2 7AT. Registered in Scotland. Company Number: SC108909. FP639-2026. Exp 18.04.2027.

RICS CONTACTS

For enquiries, APC guidance, subscriptions, passwords, library and bookshop:
+44 (0)24 7686 8555
contact@rics.org

For Regulation enquiries

+44 (0)24 7686 8555
regulation@rics.org

Dispute Resolution

+44 (0) 207 3334 3806
drs@rics.org

LionHeart

+44 121 289 3300
info@lionheart.org.uk

FOR RICS

Built Environment Journal

Barney Hatt Bhatt@rics.org

Construction Journal

Brian Ward Bward@rics.org

Land Journal

Sian Morgan Sianmorgan@rics.org

Property Journal

Patrick McGauley and Adam Bell

Pmcgauley@rics.org, Abell@rics.org

Editorial and Production Manager

Toni Gill

FOR SUNDAY

Head of Content

Ashley Stewart-Noble

Editor

Mark Williams

Creative Lead

Rob Hearn

Chief Sub Editors

Emma Johnston and Samantha Robinson

Creative

Nina Whitley-Jones

Content Director

Richard Robinson

Account Director

Jenny Hogan

Head of RICS Sales

Sam Gilbert

Production Director

Michael Wood

CEO

Toby Smeeton

Repro

F1 Colour

Printer

Acorn Web

Published by Sunday,

5th Floor, The Risborough,

21 Risborough Street, SE1 OHG

wearesunday.com

Cover photography by

James Arthur Allen

Editorial enquiries

editor@ricsmodus.com

Modus by RICS ISSN 3050-0222

Views expressed in Modus by RICS

are those of the named author and

are not necessarily those of RICS

or the publisher. The contents are

fully protected by copyright and

may not be reproduced without the

prior permission of the publisher. All

information correct at time of going

to press. All rights reserved. The

publisher cannot accept liability for

errors or omissions. RICS does not

accept responsibility for loss, injury

or damage or costs that result

from, or are connected in any way

to, the use of products or services

advertised. This magazine can be

recycled for use in newspapers and

packaging. Please dispose of it at

your local collection point.



The purpose issue

MODUS



05

President's column

When we invest in educating the next generation of surveyors, we strengthen our influence, says Nick Maclean FRICS

08

Protecting our built heritage

Three surveyors discuss conservation skills, climate pressures and evolving repair methods

18

A rollercoaster career

Theme parks, city icons and indoor pop-ups shape Chris Bird MRICS' global property brief

23

Cartier Olivia Charles MRICS

New voices can help the profession adapt faster to technology, ethics and change

24

Power beneath the waves

RICS members are helping create a vast UK-to-Germany interconnector across land and sea

26

Why beavers matter

Nature-based flood defences may help safeguard homes and build local resilience

30

AI-powered ethics

RICS members examine AI ethics, practical risks and why human judgement matters

36

Rewilding by drone

Surveyors and drones are teaming up to accelerate Britain's forest recovery

43

Pride, power and property

How visible allyship in the built environment shapes who feels safe

44

Pedals and pinch points

London's cycling patterns show where infrastructure works and where risks remain

46

Granny flats

Flexible backyard homes offer multi-generational living but face complex rules

50

Can collaborative regulation rebuild trust?

A new regulatory model could strengthen safety while reducing delays and distrust

54

The hidden cost of keeping warm

Glazing, insulation and climate change could turn well-sealed homes into summer hotboxes



JOURNALS 61

62 Built environment

Exploring ESG-driven due diligence, and new thinking on complex concrete transfer slabs.

70 Property

Student housing is maturing, and Basel 3.1 is reshaping property valuations

80 Land

Data helps landowners target vineyard sites, and are golf courses prime land for housing?

88 Construction

Improving contract clarity, and embedding practical neurodiversity inclusion in workplaces

MORE FROM RICS

06

RICS updates

The new CPD framework and Member App, plus how the profession grew in 2025 and closing the surveying skills gap

96

More from RICS

DRS turns 50, obituaries, and bereavement support from LionHeart

98

From the archive

The first edition of the RICS Red Book

The surveying talent was always there – it just needed a different door

1,000th graduate qualifies through the Sava School of Surveying

The Sava School of Surveying is a leading provider of professional surveying qualifications, shaping careers and supporting better homes. Since 2014, our degree-equivalent Level 6 Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation has been helping to address the industry’s skills gap by opening doors into residential surveying and RICS membership for people from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience.

This year, we celebrate our 1,000th graduate – a major milestone that reflects our growing impact and commitment to opening up the profession.

Key stats about our surveying graduates:



95% graduate
employment rate



95% join the RICS
after qualifying



98% of graduates
recommend us



The Sava School of Surveying has opened the door for many of us who might not otherwise have had access to the profession. I would wholeheartedly recommend their Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation to anyone. Their training provided me with all the essential skills and knowledge I needed to truly understand surveying at its core. I’m now employed by an award-winning surveying firm and I couldn’t be happier.

Cesar Sanchez

Sava School of Surveying’s 1,000th graduate



PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

When we invest in education, we strengthen our influence

Robert Penn Warren, the American poet and novelist, said: “History cannot give us a programme for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future.”

Many quotes exist to represent the value of learning from the past, but this one best captures the duality of honouring the past while embracing the future. We must create a strategy informed by previous success, and failure, while also being prepared to innovate and tread a new path in the face of new information.

At the end of March, I co-hosted, with RICS President Elect Maureen Ehrenberg and CEO Justin Young, a brilliant lunch for ten RICS Past Presidents: Graham Chase, Max Crofts, Peter Fall, Barry Gilbertson, Jonathan Harris CBE, John Hughes, Christopher Jonas, Simon Pott, Roy Swanston and David Tuffin.

Their experience spans decades, with the earliest having served as President in 1992 and the most recent sitting as President in 2017. (Sadly, three Past Presidents have died in recent months – you can find their obituaries on page 97.) Although our perspectives are different, we are connected by a ‘golden thread’, a thread that is woven into the fabric of RICS, strengthening it for generations to come.

One of my priorities for my presidential year is confidence. And while the profession faces pressures today that didn’t exist 30 years ago, my predecessors are no strangers to navigating periods of faltering confidence. Following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, for example, RICS leadership worked tirelessly to reinforce trust in valuation, governance and professional standards, supporting members as markets recalibrated and public confidence wavered. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, RICS acted quickly to provide practical

guidance on business continuity, market disruption, rent and valuation uncertainty, and professional judgement in unprecedented circumstances.

Today, our members are operating against a backdrop of geopolitical instability, climate risk, regulatory change, housing affordability challenges and the accelerating impact of artificial intelligence. In response, RICS continues to support members through updated global standards, market insight, professional statements, guidance on sustainability and emerging technologies, and a trusted professional framework that enables members to act with clarity and confidence. At times of uncertainty, the strength of RICS lies in offering consistency, credibility and collective reassurance, helping members navigate change while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and public trust.

My other focuses for this year are influence and education. While each has different implications, they are not separate ambitions. When we invest in educating the next generation of surveyors, we strengthen our influence. When our influence is strengthened, we are given more opportunities to build confidence. And that means confidence from the public, governments and within the profession.

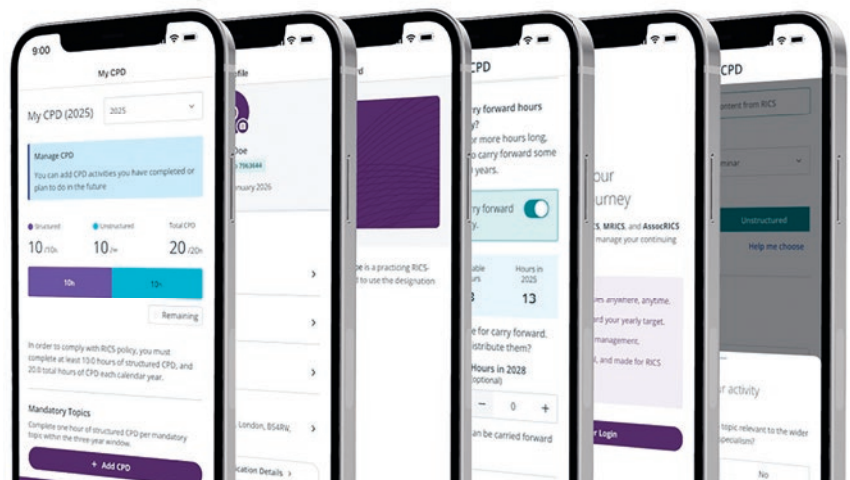
I will be holding another lunch for Past Presidents in October this year, where I will update them on our progress as an institution ten months into my term. I hope that they will continue for many years. I will certainly advocate for gathering many cumulative years of wisdom in one room to my successor.

And who knows, perhaps I will have some wisdom to share from the other side of the table this time next year? It’s an esteemed group that I will be proud to be part of.



“At times of uncertainty, the strength of RICS lies in offering consistency, credibility and collective reassurance”

NICK MACLEAN FRICS
PRESIDENT, RICS



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Updated CPD approach and new Member App

RICS has updated its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework and launched a new member app to help members keep up to date with their CPD and professional status.

The new CPD framework centres on a flexible, outcomes-based approach that enables RICS members to upskill in essential areas including artificial intelligence (AI), environmental sustainability and evolving client needs.

Members were consulted globally and it became clear that the fast pace of change means surveyors increasingly require expertise in technology and legislation that didn't exist when many qualified – from AI-powered valuation tools to net zero building assessments and climate risk analysis.

The revised CPD approach aims to uphold professional standards and strengthen professional accountability by ensuring members can demonstrate how their ongoing learning translates into better service delivery, sound professional judgement and protection

“Trust depends on our members staying current as the industry evolves”

of public interest. Quality CPD enables members to meet their ethical obligations to clients, communities and the wider public.

The new RICS Member App is available to download for Android and Apple. It helps members access the tools they need to manage their professional obligations. Whether it's logging CPD or keeping their RICS digital ID updated, members now have one intuitive app that supports their professional growth.

Christine O'Rourke, Executive Director, Professional Standards at RICS, says: “RICS professionals are trusted to give the public and their clients accurate, up-to-date advice, and that trust depends on our members staying current as the industry evolves.

“Whether it's understanding how climate risks affect property values, applying new regulations or using emerging technologies responsibly, surveyors need to keep learning throughout their careers – it's about demonstrating that you have the relevant expertise to serve your clients and protect the public properly.

“The response to our consultation showed members understand this responsibility and want a system that helps them stay sharp.”

The new framework is in effect now, with the Member App rolling out to RICS professionals globally.

RICS LAUNCHES LANDMARK AI STANDARD

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

(See page 30 for an article on the ethical implications of this standard.)

The new standard came into effect in March 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 – and aims to ensure these tools are used ethically, transparently and with professional oversight.

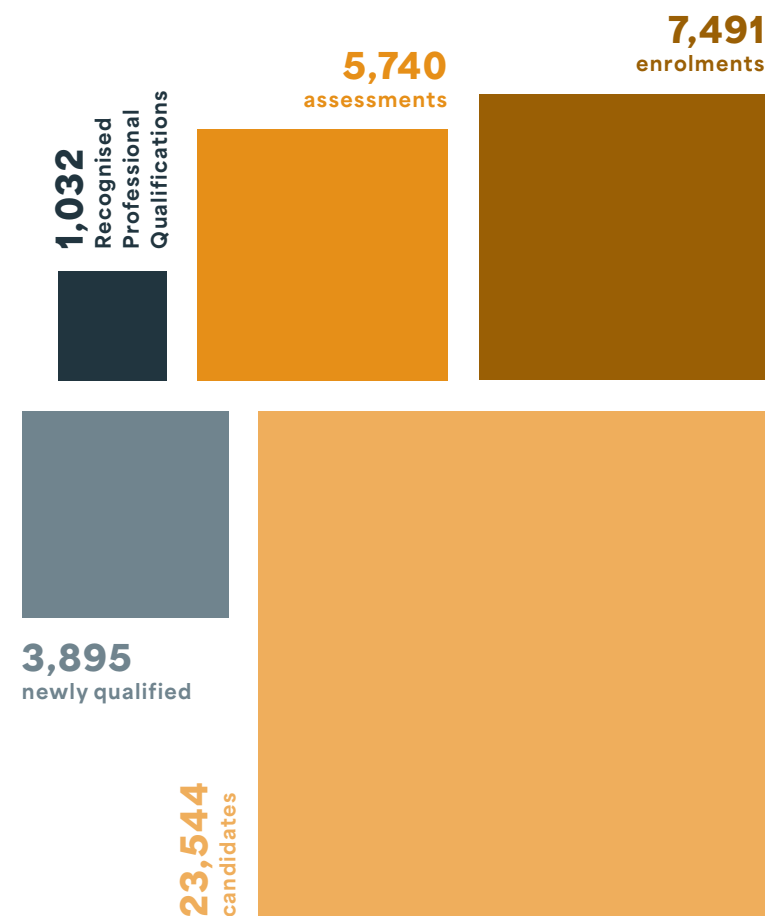
Some of the key requirements of the new standard include:

- **Governance and risk management**
Firms must implement clear policies around data use, AI system governance and risk documentation – including the creation of risk registers and due diligence procedures.
- **Professional judgement and oversight**
Surveyors must assess the reliability of AI outputs and remain accountable for all work, applying professional scepticism and expertise throughout.
- **Transparency and client communication**
Clients must be informed, in writing, of when and how AI will be used in service delivery, including options for redress or opting out.
- **Responsible development of AI**
For firms developing their own AI systems, the standard mandates assessments of data quality, stakeholder involvement, sustainability impact and legal compliance.

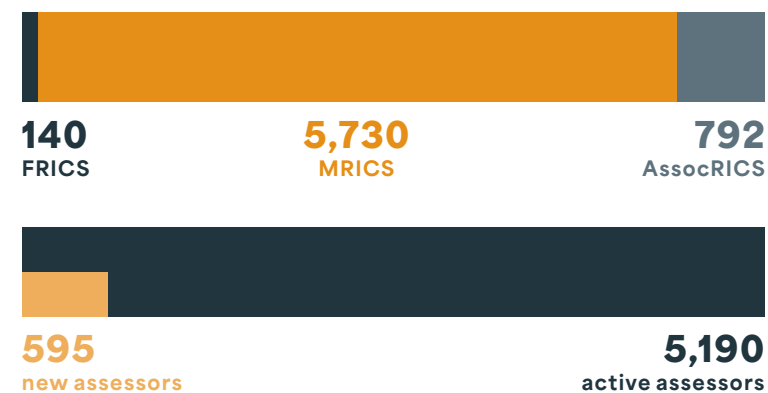


The growth of the profession in 2025

The profession remains in good health and continues to attract significant numbers to the industry



The number of assessments in 2025



SHUTTERSTOCK



CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

Surveyors play a central role in shaping the built and natural environments that we live, work and socialise in.

Last year, thousands of surveyors took part in the *Surveying skills report*, highlighting the real and urgent problems resulting from shortages in surveying skills. Respondents to the survey highlighted the impacts of skills shortages in reducing capacity, increasing costs and stifling innovation.

This year, RICS wants to dig deeper. Critically, we want to understand the core issues at the heart of surveying skills shortages and to evidence how surveyors are adapting as the skills, tools and expectations on surveying professionals evolve.

A data-driven, evidence-based understanding of the skills landscape among our professionals allows us to collaborate with industry, academia and policymakers and identify targeted, practical solutions to address skills gaps and shortages.

A core part of our work on skills, the *Surveying skills report 2026* asks every surveyor, wherever they are around the world, to tell us about the challenges – big and small – and opportunities that lie in closing the skills gap in surveying.

We need your help. Please keep an eye out for the short survey, due for launch this summer, which will only take ten minutes to complete. Your support will inform our work to advance surveying skills around the world.

“For more than 150 years, RICS members have advanced our understanding of the built and natural environments,” says Nick Maclean FRICS, RICS President, in the *Surveying skills report 2025*.

“We are involved in every aspect of our changing world through planning, valuing, funding, advising and delivering real estate, land and construction. As we continue to be confronted by an ever-growing list of challenges, there has never been a more important time to join our profession.

“Taking a lead from this, we have a shared responsibility to act now to help meet the needs of the communities and places we shape.”

The keepers of our built heritage

→
Meet three building surveyors tasked with looking after our history

WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES ARTHUR ALLEN
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY NAOMI LAKE



“Do work experience if you can, even if it’s just a week. I did some with structural engineers and it was absolutely fascinating”

JOANNE WILLIAMS MRICS
HISTORIC ENGLAND

Specialising in the conservation of historic buildings might seem like an esoteric vocation, but 30-40% of building stock in the UK was constructed using traditional methods or materials. And some of it was built many hundreds of years ago.

As time has passed, our knowledge of those skills and materials has faded, replaced by more modern methods. But important historic buildings still need to be maintained, repaired and preserved for future generations to enjoy, and our older building stock looked after appropriately to stave off decay.

This is where RICS-certified historic building professionals come in. Karen Gwilliams FRICS has worked for the National Trust and English Heritage, and is now a freelance consultant surveyor. Joanne Williams MRICS, from Historic England, is on the Building Surveying and Building Control Professional Group Panel at RICS, as well as the Building Conservation Advisory Group. And Sam Wheeler MRICS is a partner at Philip Hughes Associates – a consultancy specialising in historic building conservation – as well as a Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) scholar.

Keeping traditional skills alive

One of the most pressing concerns for the surveying industry as a whole, but especially among conservation specialists, is the skills gap and training the next generation in historic building conservation skills.

“If we do see a skills gap, it’s probably in finding contractors that have people with good craft skills,” Gwilliams explains.

“Lead-working skills for roof work and timber frame repairs, for example – there are various craft skills in which we see things declining rather than improving.

“For example, a lot of the English Heritage monuments in the east of England are of flint construction, but finding people who are good at flint repairs is not always easy. Contractors go out of business or they don’t do succession planning and teach younger employees the skills.”

Wheeler agrees that greater emphasis is needed on the conservation skill set in apprenticeships, especially when it comes to historic materials and methods. “Most of the training is based on new builds, although in the south-west [of England] we’ve been quite lucky,” he says. “There are a few big companies that have trained people up with traditional skills. But even then, it’s still very difficult to get a variety of skilled people, especially for tenders.”

For Williams, the problem lies in the number of specialist conservation surveyors that are available for work. “If you think of the RICS Building Conservation Accreditation Scheme, there are only about 150 of us on it,” she says. “And half of those are probably English Heritage, National Trust or Historic England people, so we can’t even go into general practice and help people because we’re employed privately.

“And at university, most courses teach modern methods. Traditional materials and methods are either dropped entirely or they’re covered in a week. That’s mind-boggling to me when 40% of the building stock is traditional construction.”

So how can young surveyors who want to focus on historic ▶



Joanne Williams MRICS
in the parlour at Montacute
House, Somerset



Karen Gwilliams FRICS
in the drawing room at
Montacute House

“Geospatial information, coupled with new developments in AI and machine learning, has a lot of application for our work as surveyors”

KAREN GWILLIAMS FRICS
CONSULTANT SURVEYOR

buildings get the skills and experience they need? It all comes down to the individual and how motivated they are to pursue conservation work, suggests Williams. “Do work experience if you can, even if it’s just a week,” she says. “I did some with structural engineers and it was absolutely fascinating.”

Wheeler says that when employers in the sector are choosing who to hire, they often pick someone who’s got that “bit of extra experience or passion for it – love for old buildings that tends to stand out. Any background experience you can get helps because it shows somebody like me that you’ve got that passion for what we do.”

“There are various routes into the profession now that didn’t exist 20 years ago, adds Gwilliams. “I think things are looking quite positive in terms of being able to recruit young people and give them a start.”

Historic buildings and climate change

The sun may have come out eventually but the start of this year was a wet one, with some parts of the UK receiving record quantities of rainfall for January. Flood warnings were commonplace and it felt like nothing ever had the chance to dry out properly, including buildings. Changing weather patterns present a unique set of challenges for historic buildings.

“There’s a balance between how much adaption you can do and how much of the historic character and fabric you can keep,” says Wheeler. “If you have a new building that isn’t coping with heavy rainfall, you could probably remove the gutters and replace them with something that worked. But with an old

building, you then lose some of the character, some of the fabric and some of the detailing that has made it important enough to be listed.”

Gwilliams says that not only is climate change creating new challenges, but there’s the Ministry of Works-era repairs from the mid-20th century to contend with. “They went across the whole of the national heritage collection doing improvement work after the Second World War, introducing cement or concrete into these structures for the first time. That whole swathe of repair work is reaching the end of its life and is vulnerable to increasingly frequent extreme weather events.”

However, Williams points out that while the effects of climate change are mostly negative, a warmer climate might mean fewer days of freezing conditions. The freeze-thaw action that old buildings endure on frosty days could be significantly reduced.

She also highlights the resilience of historic buildings that have stood for hundreds of years. “We’ve had several mini ice ages in the past few hundred years and they’ve dealt with those. They’ve gone through this environment of constant change, such as mass pollution during the Victorian era, when we burned so much coal. Despite all of that, they’ve survived. Maybe the older building stock is a lot more resilient because it’s got fewer layers and is less complex.”

Solving old problems with new technology

While heavy rainfall or structural damage caused by frost are not new situations, the technology used to identify and fix problems in our historic buildings has evolved significantly. ▶

“Being able to work on an amazing building in a wonderful location and bring it back from the brink was quite special”

SAM WHEELER MRICS
PHILIP HUGHES ASSOCIATES

Drones, thermography or artificial intelligence (AI) are all tools the contemporary surveyor has at their disposal.

“I was quite fortunate at English Heritage because I was able to call on the skills of the geospatial team at Historic England, who are a knowledgeable and talented group of people,” says Gwilliams. “Geospatial information, coupled with new developments in AI and machine learning, has a lot of application for our work as surveyors. If you’re trying to minimise subjectivity in a condition survey, for example, or trying to identify patterns of deterioration across a building’s fabric, you can quickly put a dataset together and analyse it.”

Gwilliams also highlights the need for a surveyor to understand the data: “The information that you derive from that work has to be interpreted by a trained professional who knows what they’re looking at. This technology doesn’t exist in isolation – we’re always going to need to be there to interpret it.”

And as helpful as new technology is, Wheeler makes the point that we are continually improving our knowledge of historic building materials and construction methods. The understanding of lime mortars is something that stands out to him. “We had nearly lost that knowledge by the end of the Second World War, but since the 1980s we’ve been trying to relearn it,” he says. “Our understanding of hydraulic limes, especially, has really improved. What we’ve found is that over time, the hydraulic limes keep gaining strength and become less porous. The longer they’re in place, the harder and stronger they get.”

Stand-out projects

Any chartered surveyor who has fashioned a career working on historic buildings is bound to have a few favourites that stand out in the memory. For Wheeler, it’s St Giles House at Wimborne St Giles in Dorset.

“It’s a very impressive country house, but it was at the point of becoming derelict. Water was pouring through and there was a dry-rot outbreak,” he says. “In previous times, people had treated the dry rot with copious amounts of poisonous chemicals, and there had been a partial demolition project that had started and never finished. Being able to work on an amazing building in a wonderful location and bring it back from the brink was quite special. It’s now used as a home.”

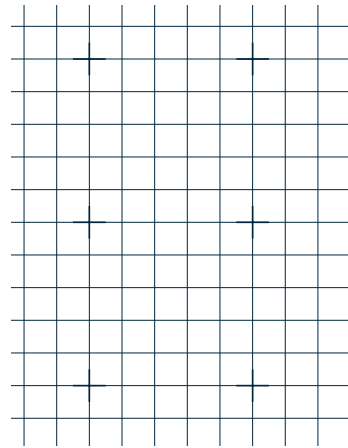
Gwilliams chooses a project from her time as an operations surveyor for the National Trust, an early 1600s timber-frame building called Cwmmau Farmhouse. It’s in Herefordshire, close to the border of England and Wales, and appeared as a setting in the film *Hamnet*, starring Paul Mescal and Jessie Buckley.

“It was a hunting lodge originally, then a farmhouse and now it’s getting good use as a holiday cottage,” says Gwilliams. “Fire safety was key because of it being a timber-frame building – we worked with some very good local carpenters to upgrade all the internal doors to fire doors. I learned a lot from those contractors. That was a really good job to work on.”

Williams remembers one of her first conservation projects fondly for similar reasons – the amount she learned on the job: “It was my case study for my APC, Staunton Harold, just off Calke Abbey estate in Derbyshire. It was a medieval chapel that ▶



Sam Wheeler MRICS
in the Great Hall at
Montacute House



got rebuilt in a Gothic style. There were so many different professional people on it. The building had Blue Lias stone, which is a problem stone in my opinion, and no one in 30 years had figured out why the floor was delaminating so much – it was becoming a major trip hazard.

“We had to get an osteoarchaeologist involved, an architect, a structural engineer – it was really interesting to have all these professionals surveying what was going on and we used ground-penetrating radar.”

However, Williams has also learned that it’s not always possible to save every structure. She says one of the biggest challenges is when you have to accept loss due to factors like climate change, flooding or coastal erosion.

“Sometimes you just have to accept the fact that unless you want to spend £20bn on it, loss is the only option. It’s figuring out the tipping point where adaptation is acceptable because it provides bigger benefits or when it’s gone beyond that from a technical, feasibility and economic point of view.”

Wheeler says one of the things he loves most about the job is “trying to keep these buildings going, sometimes against the odds”. Although, he adds, improving the education and understanding around historic buildings would be helpful for future generations of conservation professionals. “Probably two-thirds of my work is undoing things that were done 50 or 60 years ago with the wrong type of materials.”

With any craft or traditional skills, the only way to keep them in our collective knowledge is to make sure we continue to practise them. The same applies to the conservation of historic buildings: as long as we have chartered surveyors equipped with the specialist knowledge to look after them, they will continue to stand as important monuments for many years to come. ■



HEAR MORE ABOUT HISTORIC BUILDINGS FROM THE EXPERTS

Before their photoshoot at Montacute House in Somerset, Karen, Joanne and Sam took part in a discussion about surveying historic buildings for the RICS Podcast. You can listen to that episode starring the guardians of our most beloved buildings by scanning the QR code.



WATERPROOFING REFURBISHMENT MADE EASY WITH TRIFLEX

Say goodbye to the risks of removing existing waterproofing systems with cold liquid applied Triflex overlay solutions. From single ply, EPDM, TPO, to felt and asphalt, we are compatible with over 7000 substrates.

With less risk, less waste and less disruption you can save time and maximise convenience for you and your clients. Simply get in touch for a Triflex overlay consultation.

Download our free guide, Waterproofing overlay solutions made simple:



CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERT INSIGHT

Benefit from our expertise and gain in-depth knowledge of liquid applied technologies, helping you make informed decisions with increased confidence.

- [Specifier’s Guide to Flat Roof Failures: Risk and Resolution](#)
- [Specifier’s Guide to Testing for Sustainable Car Park Refurbishment](#)

Are you ready to enhance your professional expertise? Scan the QR code to register for one of our two new CPD seminars today.

Contact us:



Request a CPD:



Merlin Entertainments' group property director Christopher Bird MRICS looks after a global portfolio of leisure attractions, and they all come with their own unique challenges

WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH EDGOOSE

What a bonus it must be to enjoy theme park thrill rides when your portfolio includes Alton Towers, Heide Park in Germany and Gardaland in Italy.

Chris Bird MRICS is the vice president of global property at Merlin Entertainments, which runs attractions all over the world, including Thorpe Park where Modus met him on a sunny September morning.

A chartered valuation surveyor, his career began with Savills in China before he passed his APC in Hong Kong while working for Colliers. In that role, he visited a range of Asian countries including Myanmar, Mongolia and East Timor for hospitality-based valuation work. "I got a lot of exposure to a variety of projects," he says.

After Colliers came a role with Merlin Entertainments, initially based in Hong Kong, then the US and now the UK where he lives a short drive away from Merlin's Chessington World of Adventures. Despite returning to the UK, his focus is global and involves looking after more than 130 Merlin attractions in 20 countries.

One of the early challenges in his latest role involved compiling a comprehensive digital portfolio of all Merlin's global real estate that included leasehold and freehold properties, old and new. "It was a real discovery of everything we had, creating a database to put it all together – it took the best part of a year to wade through the documents and get everything where it needed to be."

Merlin was formed in 1999 by a management buyout of Vardon Attractions and has become the second biggest theme park operator in the world after Disney. "It's quite broad, you've got multiple countries, multiple legal systems, multiple leases and a relatively small team to keep track of it all," says Bird.

A difficult year

The COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult time for a company whose business involves attracting large numbers of people to indoor and outdoor attractions. "We were 95% closed, at one point I think we only had one attraction open," says Bird. "That was a short, sharp shock. But things like Sea Life aquariums ▶

A rollercoaster career



“You’ve got multiple countries, multiple legal systems, multiple leases and a relatively small team to keep track of it all”

don’t stop, we still needed to be active and running them because they’ve got to look after the fish”

When the lockdowns ended, it created a wave of enthusiasm for entertainment that led to “a year and a half of quite strong recovery,” he says. “Now we’re in this fluctuating market. It’s just a bit more volatile than it was after that peak in demand.”

One way to boost visitor numbers to a theme park is to build a high-profile new ride, which is what Thorpe Park did in 2024 when it opened Hyperia, the UK’s tallest, fastest rollercoaster at nearly 236ft (72m) high and reaching 81mph. “It’s the first ride that has made me close my eyes in a while,” says Bird.

It was built on the site of Loggers Leap, a ride made famous in the early 1990s by a royal visit from Princess Diana and her sons William and Harry. Making space for new rides by replacing old ones is doubly important at Thorpe Park (which welcomes 1.5m visitors a year) because it’s surrounded by water and can’t easily expand its boundaries.

“It’s a constant evolution of the park. The rides last ten or 20 years. As they reach the end of life, you either choose to redo them or put something else in. Hyperia had a huge impact on Thorpe Park because it was such a special rollercoaster with some unique features. It brought a lot of people back to the park.”

Keeping an eye on London

With so many sites in the portfolio, does Bird have a favourite? “The London Eye,” he says. It was originally known as the Millennium Wheel and sponsored by British Airways who sold ‘flight’ tickets for it. Now, the Eye is as much a part of the London skyline as the older surrounding structures.

“It was only supposed to stand for five years, that’s how they got it approved,” he says. “There was so much opposition to it at the beginning, and then it got through and now it’s 25 years old and you can’t imagine it not being there. I’ve been involved in getting the required planning approvals for it to remain there for another 25 years.

“If you think of its neighbours, it’s a bit of a miracle they got it built opposite the Houses of Parliament and Ministry of Defence – it’s surrounded by Grade I listed buildings.” ▶



“If you think of the London Eye’s neighbours, it’s a bit of a miracle they got it built”



The London Eye kicked off a spate of other global cities trying the same thing – installing a giant Ferris wheel-style viewing platform in an urban centre – with varying levels of success.

Industry trends

One trend that Bird is seeing, especially in the US, is an increase in residency or pop-up attractions in shopping malls. This is partly driven by the effect of inflation on capital expenditure and partly because there is a lot of vacant retail space that can be repurposed to attract visitors.



“Merlin is piloting short-term, capital expenditure-light attractions such as Super Neon and WONDR in US shopping malls, offering immersive, themed experiences as a response to rising construction costs and changing consumer preferences,” he says.

A major advantage of indoor attractions like these is evading weather conditions that can cause problems for outdoor parks. “We had a hailstorm in Italy with golf ball-sized hailstones right across the park that caused a lot of damage. People had to abandon their cars because the windscreens were completely smashed.”

Another challenge was opening a new Madame Tussauds, full of waxworks, in a warm location like Dubai. “Your air conditioning can’t fail, because they will melt,” says Bird.

While he has no desire to return to the pandemic era, it did make digital ticketing the norm, which is very helpful when managing crowd sizes and predicting footfall across the parks.

The key aim of Merlin Entertainments, he says, is to bring families together for a fun day out, “immersed in a great experience, away from devices and creating memories”. Which is a fine ambition, whether you’re operating the teacup ride or you’re group property director of the whole operation. ■

SPEAKING UP FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The next generation isn’t just the future, it’s shaping the present



“Questioning how things have always been done is an opportunity to improve them”

CARTIER OLIVIA CHARLES MRICS
STRATEGIC ASSET & ESTATES MANAGER
(NON-CHILDREN’S SERVICES)
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

At 27, and as the current Next Generation representative on RICS Governing Council, I’m often asked to speak about the future of the profession. But from what I see day to day, this isn’t just about what’s coming next. It’s also about what’s already happening.

I didn’t grow up with a clear understanding of what surveying was, or the impact it could have. Like many, I knew the term, but not the depth of what the profession does. It was only through exposure that I began to understand its value. Now, through the work I do speaking to students and early career professionals, I see that gap still exists.

And the reality is, the industry can’t afford that gap. The UK construction sector alone needs more than 250,000 additional workers by 2028 to meet demand, particularly as we work towards net zero by 2050. At the same time, awareness of careers in the built environment remains low.

So we don’t have a talent problem, we have an awareness, access and perception problem. There is still a tendency to view younger professionals as something to develop, rather than people who can actively contribute now. Yet from what I see, both on the ground and within governing spaces, there is a huge amount of insight already there. The challenge is not capability, it’s whether space is being created for those voices to be heard.

We talk a lot about multi-generational workforces, but in reality, learning tends to flow one way. Senior professionals mentor those coming through, passing on experience and technical knowledge. That’s important. But there is also real value in flipping that dynamic and creating space for reverse mentoring.

That’s because the next generation doesn’t just need to learn from the industry. The industry can learn from us, too. This becomes even more important when you look at how quickly the sector

is changing. The built environment is responsible for around 40% of global carbon emissions, placing it right at the centre of the sustainability agenda. At the same time, AI and digital tools are reshaping how we analyse data, manage assets and make decisions.

For many in the next generation, these aren’t future trends. They are already part of how we think and work. And yet, that way of thinking is often misunderstood.

The term “Gen Z” gets thrown around a lot, usually with a negative tone. Lazy. Too reliant on tech. Not willing to work hard. But that’s not what is happening. What looks like resistance is often just a different approach. For example, using AI isn’t about cutting corners. It’s about working smarter, freeing up time and focusing on higher-value tasks.

Questioning how things have always been done isn’t a lack of respect, it’s an opportunity to improve them. And being more vocal about sustainability or ethics isn’t idealistic, it reflects the reality of where the profession is heading.

If anything, the risk isn’t that the next generation is changing how we work, it’s that the industry doesn’t move with it. Because standing still isn’t neutral any more – it’s falling behind.

In my role on Governing Council, I’ve seen how powerful it is when space is genuinely created for different perspectives. When those earlier in their careers are listened to, conversations become more forward-looking, more balanced and more aligned with where the profession is heading.

This isn’t about replacing experience. It’s about strengthening it.

The best outcomes come when experience meets new thinking, and both sides are open enough to learn from each other. The next generation isn’t waiting to be ready, it already is. And if we’re still questioning whether Gen Z has value to add, we’re asking the wrong question.

Connecting

The multi-billion-pound Tarchon Interconnector demands complex cross-border consents and marine and land rights negotiations, with chartered surveyors playing a role in securing easements, managing stakeholder engagement and keeping the ambitious programme on track

WORDS BY STUART WATSON

1. CAPACITY: 1.4GW

The Tarchon Interconnector will have a capacity of 1.4GW, equivalent to roughly 64% of the UK's largest gas-fired power station, Pembroke (2.2GW), making it a major high-voltage, direct current (HVDC) electricity link between Great Britain and Germany.

3.6GW Dogger Bank Wind Farm

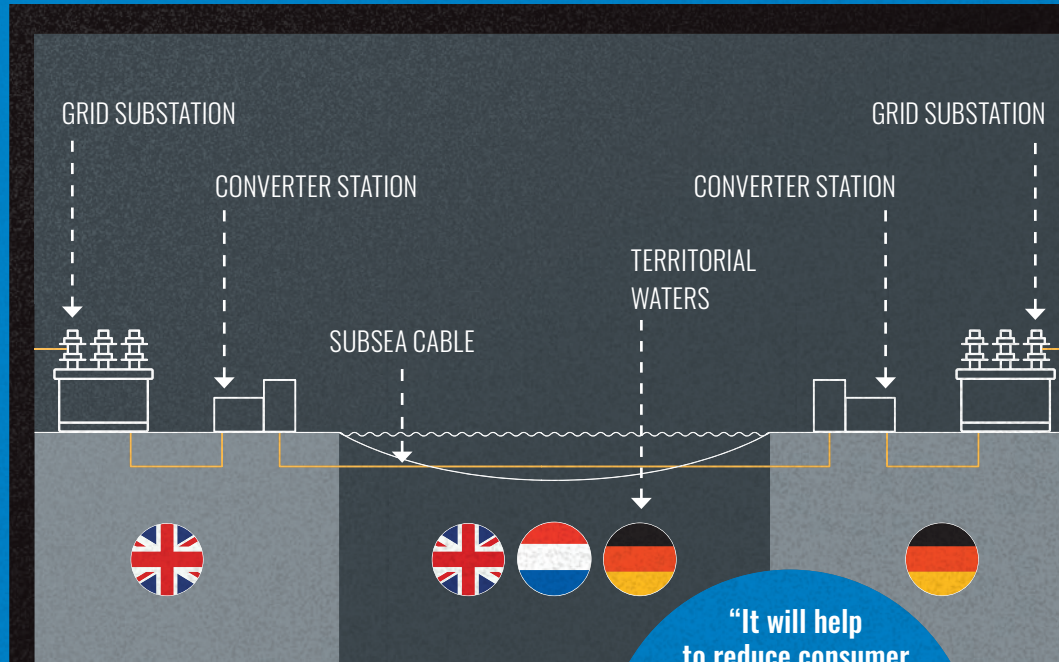
2.2GW Pembroke Gas Station

1.4GW Tarchon Connector

2. CABLE LENGTH: APPROXIMATELY 466 MILES



The interconnector will be a combination of land and subsea cables approximately 750km in length, running from Essex in Great Britain to Niederlangen in Lower Saxony, Germany.



3. MAXIMUM WATER DEPTH: 56M

The subsea cable route will pass through waters reaching a maximum depth of 56m across the North Sea.

"It will help to reduce consumer bills by allowing the import of cheaper electricity from one market to another"

JONATHAN WOOD MRICS
TARCHON INTERCONNECTOR

4. HOMES POWERED: UP TO 1.5 MILLION

At full capacity, Tarchon will deliver enough electricity to power up to 1.5 million homes, approximately 57% of homes in the East of England region.



57% of homes in the East of England powered

5. PROJECT VALUE: £2.4 BILLION

Tarchon's £2.4bn investment is almost double the combined cost of the MaresConnect (€860m) and LirIC (£700m) interconnectors approved at the same time by Ofgem.

Tarchon Interconnector £2.4bn

MaresConnect €860m

LirIC £700m

Continents

Dam

Once made extinct from the British Isles, the “archetypal ecosystem engineer” is being reintroduced to waterways - and getting straight down to work

WORDS BY MARK WILLIAMS

news

good

Could the return of beavers upstream of where you live have a positive effect on the value of your house or the cost of your home insurance?

It sounds fanciful that a colony of semi-aquatic rodents could achieve something like this, but they are certainly part of a broader flood prevention jigsaw puzzle. Having been extinct from Britain for around 400 years, these furry mammals are once again starting to flourish in rural England and Scotland, thanks to dedicated beaver release projects.

One organisation running such projects is Forestry England. After successful enclosed trials in 2018 and 2019, it started releasing Eurasian beavers into the wild in 2024. Similar work is being done by the National Trust, Natural England and Forestry and Land Scotland, among others. In fact, Scotland is more than a decade ahead of England on bringing back beavers, which is why it now has a wild beaver population of around 2,000 compared to just 500 south of the border.

“Beaver introduction was first mooted to Scottish Natural Heritage in 1995. Perhaps we looked at the success of that trial and were inspired to try it here,” says Andrew Stringer, head of environment and nature recovery at Forestry England.

So why, out of all the once thriving but since vanished inhabitants of the British Isles, were beavers chosen for a return? “The species that arguably has the most impacts on its wider environment and the most positive impacts from a nature perspective are beavers,” says Stringer. They are the archetypal ecosystem engineer – they’re hugely influential [on their surroundings].”

Beavers are experts in woodland management, especially along watercourses. On top of the flood prevention benefits, they boost the biodiversity of the areas they return to by creating new wetland habitats for other creatures to thrive in. By managing watercourses, damming streams and slowing the flow of rivers, beavers are doing valuable work that could make a difference to our towns and cities in the event of heavy rainfall. Because when the rain pours down, if just a fraction of it is diverted by dams that could be ▶



↓
BEAVER FACTS

1
There are two existing species of beavers - Eurasian and North American

2
Eurasian beavers commonly weigh between 18-30kg

3
They have orange teeth caused by the iron in their enamel, which makes their teeth strong enough to chomp through wood

4
Beavers can hold their breath underwater for up to 15 minutes

5
They are vegetarian and their favourite wood is aspen and willow*

the difference between an urban river bursting its banks or not.

Beavers are interconnected with other climate adaptation and water attenuation work being done, from depaving to major multimillion pound infrastructure flood defence projects. Water levels are rising, heavy rainfall is becoming more common and our built environment needs suitable protection.

Their benefits aren't limited to flood prevention either, but drought and wildfire reduction too. Keeping more water in forests in the summer, through the creation of wetlands, makes it harder for fires to spread.

The financial argument for beavers

"The cost of reintroducing beavers could have an absolutely disproportional benefit to asset values," says Philip Wilbourn FRICS, a chartered environmental surveyor and leading authority on flood risk management, who assisted with the RICS consumer guide to flooding. "That little dam that they're building, that colony that they're creating upstream in a tributary that runs into a river could have a huge effect downstream on the urban fabric." He's keen to point out that beavers are just a part of the flood prevention solution and will only work where the climate and topography is suitable.

The financial impact of reduced flood risk is felt

"That little dam ... could have a huge effect downstream"

PHILIP WILBOURN FRICS
CHARTERED ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYOR

on both a house-by-house scale and a broader national policy scale. "If you have two properties that are the same but one floods and one doesn't, one's going to be worth more than the other," says Wilbourn. On a larger scale, he adds: "The Bank of England is demanding that financial institutions quantify their exposure to climate change and the existential risk posed by environmental factors. We are going to face a world where insurance is a decider on property investment. We will see areas become flood ghettos because people can't afford the insurance to live there."

Not everyone loves beavers

Forestry England engages with local communities before proposing a beaver release plan and there are usually some objections. "Beavers are vegetarian, so they don't eat fish, but someone might be concerned about the dams impeding the migration of salmon and trout," says Stringer.

But as he points out, salmon, trout and beavers have lived alongside each other for millions of years. "They are co-evolved, co-adapted and we expect negative impacts to be extremely rare," he says.

Based on the current success of beaver projects and population increase, Stringer believes that "in 100 years there will be beavers in every catchment in England" and we might want them in some catchments sooner for the benefits they bring.

In the UK, flooding causes £2.6bn of immediate physical damage to property and infrastructure each year. This is expected to rise to £3.6bn by 2050, according to the report *From Risk to Resilience* by policy research agency Public First.

"As sea levels rise and the rate of rainfall increases, flooding in urban areas is going to be an increasingly major problem," says Wilbourn. "We can't stop water falling from the sky, but we have to stop it arriving in the wrong place at the wrong time." ■

* SOURCE: WORLD WILDLIFE FUND FOR NATURE. IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

The UK's leading metal roof & gutter refurbishment solution



- Protect long term roof assets
- Ideal dilapidations solutions
- Up to 25 year BBA approved guarantees
- 81% saving on embodied carbon compared to replacement*
- Free roof condition reports†



Plygene®

Gutter Refurbishment



Delcote®

Long Term Roof Protection



Seamsil®

Stops Cut Edge Corrosion

We're attending
RICS Conferences
Cardiff 16th June
Glasgow 26th June
On hand for **Expert Advice**
or to book in a **CPD**

* Comparing Delcote®25 to roof sheet replacement, figures taken from the BSRIA Guide: Embodied Carbon – The Inventory of Carbon and Energy. † Subject to T&C's.

Keeping humans in the loop



The new RICS standard on artificial intelligence provides guidance on its implementation and ethical use

WORDS BY NOELLA PIO KIVLEHAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN HICKEY



W

ith the term artificial intelligence first coined in the 1950s, AI has technically been around for decades. But the launch of generative AI software ChatGPT in 2022 threw the technology firmly into

the global spotlight and it swiftly became part of everyday life for many individuals and organisations.

In the workplace, the technology's impact has been profound, helping to create business efficiency and better time management. An RICS report, *Artificial intelligence in construction 2025*, found that nearly half of RICS member companies use AI to some extent – although within that figure only 2.5% reported widespread adoption, compared with 34% who are in early pilot phases of AI implementation.

But there's a storm brewing, one loaded with caution over the technology, how to use it, the job losses it could lead to and how it could make cyber attacks easier. The growing power of AI, the way it is being implemented and its possible risks prompted the RICS to launch its professional standard *Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice*, which came into effect in March.

The standard represents a major shift in how professionals understand and apply AI in the surveying industry, while looking at common misconceptions about AI and its potential to transform the sector, along with the ethical issues surveyors should know about.

"The new standard normalises AI use, gives clarity in what are we using it for and reassures clients and the public we're using it responsibly," says Nella Pang MRICS, MD of Omega RE. Trust and integrity are

what RICS stands for, says Pang, which means not letting AI tools "make up their own assumptions. It is about how surveyors use the technology to our best ability to ensure we're giving our clients the most credible information."

Pang was speaking on The RICS Podcast with James Garner FRICS, head of AI and data at Gleeds, both of whom were part of the RICS expert working group that developed the AI standard. The podcast was hosted by Chris Alder, Senior Executive

Officer for Standards and Regulations at RICS, who started with the simple question of defining AI as we know it.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's formal explanation, says Alder, describes it as being a machine-based system that generates outputs, such as predictions, content, recommendations or decisions that could influence physical or virtual environments.

But different AI systems vary in their levels of

autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment. The new standard clarifies this by focusing on material use and its impact on surveyors' results.

Model behaviour

Garner says booking meeting rooms with AI is a simple action that does not affect results. However, using Copilot or ChatGPT, which are generative AI, for project output can significantly impact outcomes, so accuracy is crucial.

Generative and analytical are the two distinct AI branches, with the former popular for creating new material and the same prompt giving different answers. The latter is more focused on processing structured data to make predictions and identify patterns.

"The new standard [recognises] we've a baseline understanding of AI and the different flavours of AI and what they're good for," says Garner. He adds that if a surveyor is doing analytical tasks, they use an analytical algorithm, whereas for creative tasks or role playing with AI, generative is better. "They've both got their place. It is finding the correct tools for the job," says Garner.

When it comes to people, there are four different AI personas as defined by Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn's co-founder, says Garner: doomers – the technology is an existential threat to humanity; gloomers – those worried about the impact of the tech on their lives; bloomers – who use it 'responsibly' and at a moderate pace; and zoomers – who have completely embraced AI.

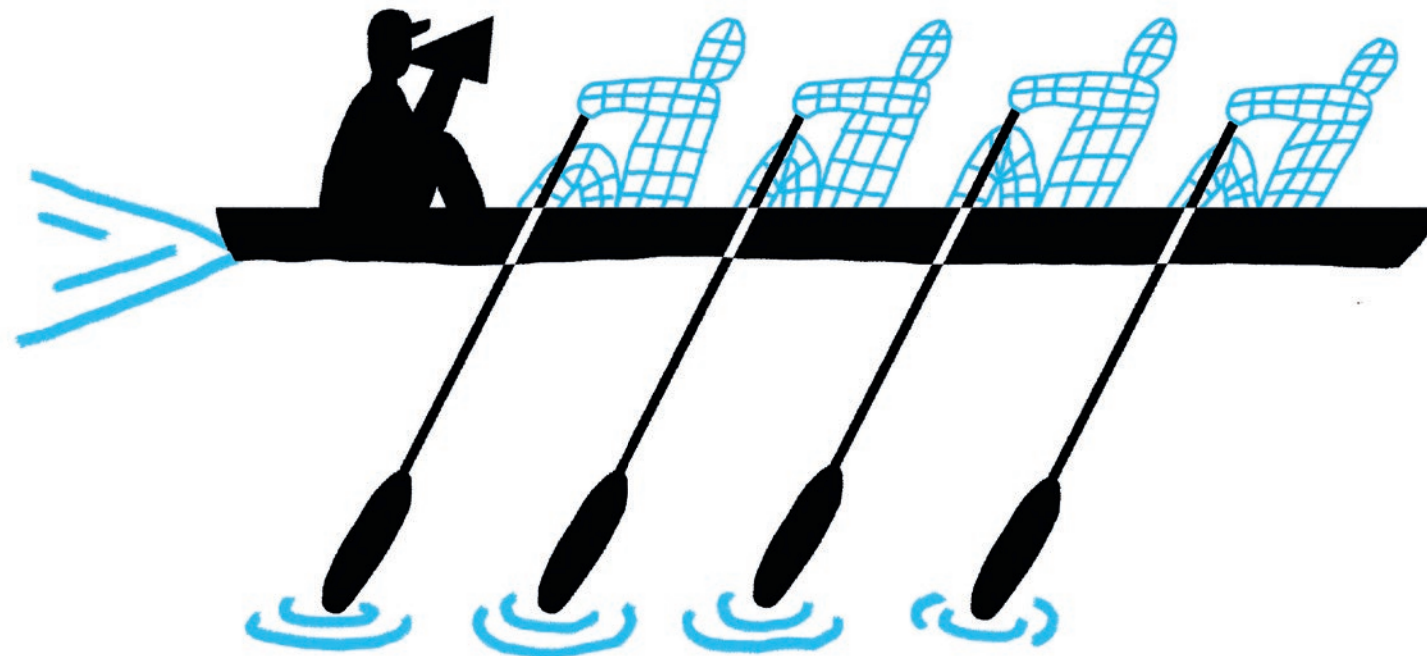
"I probably fall into that last camp," admits Garner, who says there is no right or wrong and people can be those personas at various times, but it does matter when it comes to a business context.

Organisations, whether big corporations or SMEs, need to define their stance on the technology first, he says, before addressing employees' apprehensions. Worries about issues such as bias can stop AI being used. "The barriers are around mindset more than anything else," says Garner.

Culture is another factor, says Pang, as some grew up with this technology, whereas older generations can find it new and fast moving: "They're nervous to even try it because they don't know what the exposure is."

Pang is keen to emphasise that AI in surveying is not about replacing surveyors with robots, but using tools to analyse data and detect patterns that help them in their work: "AI is not making the decisions. It needs a human being to make the professional judgement and that distinction matters.

Having the human in the loop, is crucial says ▶



“The new standard normalises AI use, gives clarity in what are we using it for and reassures clients and the public we’re using it responsibly”

NELLA PANG MRICS
OMEGA RE



Garner, who acknowledges the technology is “a real opportunity” for surveyors, enhancing what can be done by enabling AI to take away “the grunt work” and let surveyors spend more time with clients.

“Used properly, it’s incredibly powerful,” he says, “but humans must retain control.” Giving an analogy of bookends, Garner says the human should be on either side, with AI in the middle being constrained. “The human, the chartered surveyor, starts by taking responsibility for telling

“The human, the chartered surveyor, starts by taking responsibility for telling the AI what to do and what we expect of it, just as you might tell an apprentice”

JAMES GARNER FRIGS GLEEDS

the AI what to do and what we expect of it, just as you might tell an apprentice or a graduate what to do.”

Ultimately, grasping what the AI produces is essential, so results can be clearly explained when a client requests information about them.

Dangers of cybersecurity

The use of AI by surveyors is only part of the picture. As new technologies develop, it also heightens the focus on security and the safeguards against cyber attacks.

For protection, Pang recommends two-factor authentication, avoiding similar passwords, having a separate phone for banking, updating privacy policies and GDPR, revising employee handbooks and providing anti-money laundering training for staff.

If a data breach happens, it should be reported to the Information Commissioners Office within 48 hours, while looking at the consequences for clients. “It’s about managing risk,” says Pang.

An additional concern comes from the possibility that organisations and individuals may not realise one AI tool is feeding data to another AI tool. “Understand whether they are linked,” says Pang. “You’re part of this one company, but your parent company is also over here. Are there connecting companies? One may sit in the likes of China – do they have access to that data?”

AI can also surface underlying data issues – not only with passwords, but with content management and file-sharing systems such as SharePoint. “My advice is not go too fast if you’re implementing more complex uses of AI, where you are linking it up to your company’s SharePoint,” says Garner.

And a wary eye should be kept on free models such as ChatGPT or Gemini, with Garner warning: “Nothing is free in this world. There is a payoff. The reason they’re free is because you’re giving them permission to basically utilise that data... which is a huge concern when you’re dealing with confidential data.”

Despite the downsides, Garner says AI needs to be seen as an opportunity where people have been given a powerful tool and they should not be scared about it: “Be cautious but have no fear.”

Pang again reiterates AI will not replace surveyors. However, those who choose to ignore how to implement AI and govern it responsibly, “are the ones that will be replaced. There is no hiding from this. It’s coming, and it’s a question of how we adapt and continue to improve the profession.” ■



GarlandUK

Specified with confidence, accountability built in.



Reliable systems. Proven performance
Engineered for longevity in demanding environments



Robust specifications
Fully compliant, detail-driven and aligned with current regulation



Clear accountability
One partner responsible for design, materials and installation



Dedicated technical support
Supporting you from survey through to aftercare.



Long-term assurance
Up to 30 year Single-Point Guarantee

One specification. One responsibility.
Total confidence.

Find your local Technical Manager



✉ contact@garlanduk.com ☎ 01174 401 050 🌐 garlanduk.com



Seeds

the

sky

from



Pioneering trials using drones to scatter seeds across hard-to-reach locations, with the help of geomatics surveyors, could revolutionise woodland creation in the UK



WORDS BY STEPHEN COUSINS

AUTOSPRAY

Tree planting is at the root of the global response to climate change, helping offset pollution by sucking up carbon emissions and boosting natural biodiversity in the process.

The UK government pledged to plant 30,000ha of new woodland each year by 2025 as part of its commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2050. However, it consistently fell short of this target and just 15,580ha of newly-created woodland was reported in 2024/25, according to Forest Research.

Sam Manning, project manager for south-west rainforests at conservation charity the Woodland Trust, says the biggest issues holding back progress are land availability, cash flow and a lack of qualified officers in local councils needed to move schemes forward.

“For a lot of landowners, funding the schemes is a real problem, so if we can make them less expensive, it will inherently unlock a lot more woodland creation and save the taxpayer a massive amount of money,” says Manning.

Technological innovation can help boost productivity and cut costs, and hopes are high that using autonomous drones to scatter seeds across large areas could revolutionise forest regrowth in the UK. Many potential woodland creation sites are too steep, unsafe or remote for traditional methods of planting or spreading seeds, making drones a promising solution.

A recent trial, funded by the government’s Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), saw the Woodland Trust partner with the South West Rainforest Alliance and contractor AutoSpray Systems to distribute 75,000 native seeds by drone across the landscape of Bodmin in Cornwall.

An XAG drone, weighing 110kg and able to carry up to 58kg of seeds in its hopper, hovered a few metres above the ground dispersing seed onto sloping or hard-to-reach sites. These are normally inaccessible or unsafe for human planters or are on patches where soils are too thin to allow planting with spades.

The machine was able to seed 10ha of land in just eight hours, a scale of work not possible using conventional means.

Qualified surveyors were critical to the pilot, baselining the habitats to be seeded, mapping out locations for the drone to

“We want to make woodland creation and woodland restoration far more accessible”

SAM MANNING
WOODLAND TRUST



Moving equipment across terrain manually so that drones remain in visual line of sight



Getting the seed mix right is crucial



Loading seed into the hopper

fly and helping secure landscape permissions. Now the partners are moving ahead with a more ambitious second phase, having secured permission from regulator the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to fly drones beyond the visual line of sight (BVLOS).

“We want to make woodland creation and woodland restoration far more accessible in terms of how efficient, scalable and cheap it is, so we can meet challenges around nature recovery and particularly climate mitigation,” says Manning. “The Climate Change Panel targets are legally binding, so if we’re going to meet them we need new technology.”

Limited resource

Rainforests are typically associated with tropical, humid countries, but milder climates in the mid-latitudes are also home to temperate rainforests characterised by cool temperatures, abundant moisture and rare ecosystems providing vital habitats for diverse wildlife.

Roughly three-quarters of Devon and Cornwall was once rainforest, but 90% of this has been lost, making these ancient woodlands, rich in biodiversity, among the most precious and threatened habitats in Britain.

According to the South West Rainforest Alliance, more than 1,000 species of native plants are found in surviving rainforest, including rare ferns and mosses and at least 300 species of environmentally sensitive lichens, making their conservation a top priority.

The Bodmin trial involved the development of a new seeding technique, which, if fully implemented, the Alliance believes could triple the area of temperate rainforest in Devon and Cornwall from 8% to 25% of land area by 2050.

Andrew Sproson, co-founder of AutoSpray Systems, compares his drones to mechanical birds that mimic natural rewilding processes from a bygone era, when there were fewer built up areas and birds, squirrels and other animals would distribute seeds to expand forests naturally.

“Our drones are trying to replicate nature and give it a bit of a helping hand – we get hundreds of thousands of seeds down per hectare in minutes,” says Sproson.

The project partners ran experiments to develop and refine a custom seed mix incorporating species such as pedunculate oak, alder, wild cherry, downy birch and hazel, all British trees native to rainforests. ▶

AUTOSPRAY



Seeds distributed across the landscape

“Rural surveyors can play a pivotal role in evaluating where and how this technology creates best value”

ED RANDALL MRICS
WOODLAND TRUST

“How do I know that I’m going to hit a particular patch on a ravine with a 50% gradient, how am I going to get to that area accurately?” says Sproson, “That’s where the survey data came in. The team supplied us with a shapefile [a geospatial vector data format used to define areas and boundaries], which the drone uses to navigate.”

In addition, surveyors baselined the most suitable habitats for reseeded and oversaw landscape permissions and applications for conversion to woodland. For example, the ex-mining site is in a National Character Area, within a sight line of a significant tourist area, requiring various Environmental Impact Assessments.

Ed Randall MRICS, land and property manager at the Woodland Trust, says: “This drone seeding trial demonstrates how rural surveyors can play a pivotal role in evaluating where and how this technology creates best value. By assessing soil conditions, topography and species mix, surveyors are well placed to advise landowners on practical deployment, monitor establishment success and integrate drone seeding into broader land management strategies.”

The reseeded process saw the drone fly autonomously, its path guided by data in an app that set the height and speed, area of operation and application rate based on the project research.

As the team eagerly awaits results on seed germination and coverage rates (expected in 2027-28), other lessons are already being learned.

According to the Woodland Trust, the standard AXG drones deployed struggled with larger seeds and needed frequent clearing, so modifications will be required for future trials. Although the process was considerably cheaper than conventional planting, costing around £2,000 per hectare compared with £3,000-£4,000, the seed market was found to be inadequate to meet demand at this scale. Obtaining volumes at even the lowest densities, of 2,000 seeds per hectare, was a challenge.

The trial was a logistical headache, Sproson notes, requiring physical effort to shift equipment across difficult terrain to get close enough to maintain a visual line of sight with the areas of drone operation, as per regulatory requirements. ▶

These were loaded into a hopper on the underside of a drone fitted with a spinning corkscrew-like auger, which pushes the seed towards a fan that disperses them at a steady rate.

“We spent months developing the concept of a seed mix, with the Woodland Trust giving their expert opinion. We had to figure out a way to make it commercially viable and do it as quickly as possible to a high standard,” says Sproson.

While a birch seed is light and equivalent in size to a grain of instant coffee, an acorn is much larger and heavier, making it harder to create a mix that could be applied evenly. The solution was to apply a clay-based coating to the smaller seeds to give them extra bulk and weight. Wood pellets and sawdust were mixed in to achieve the right consistency.

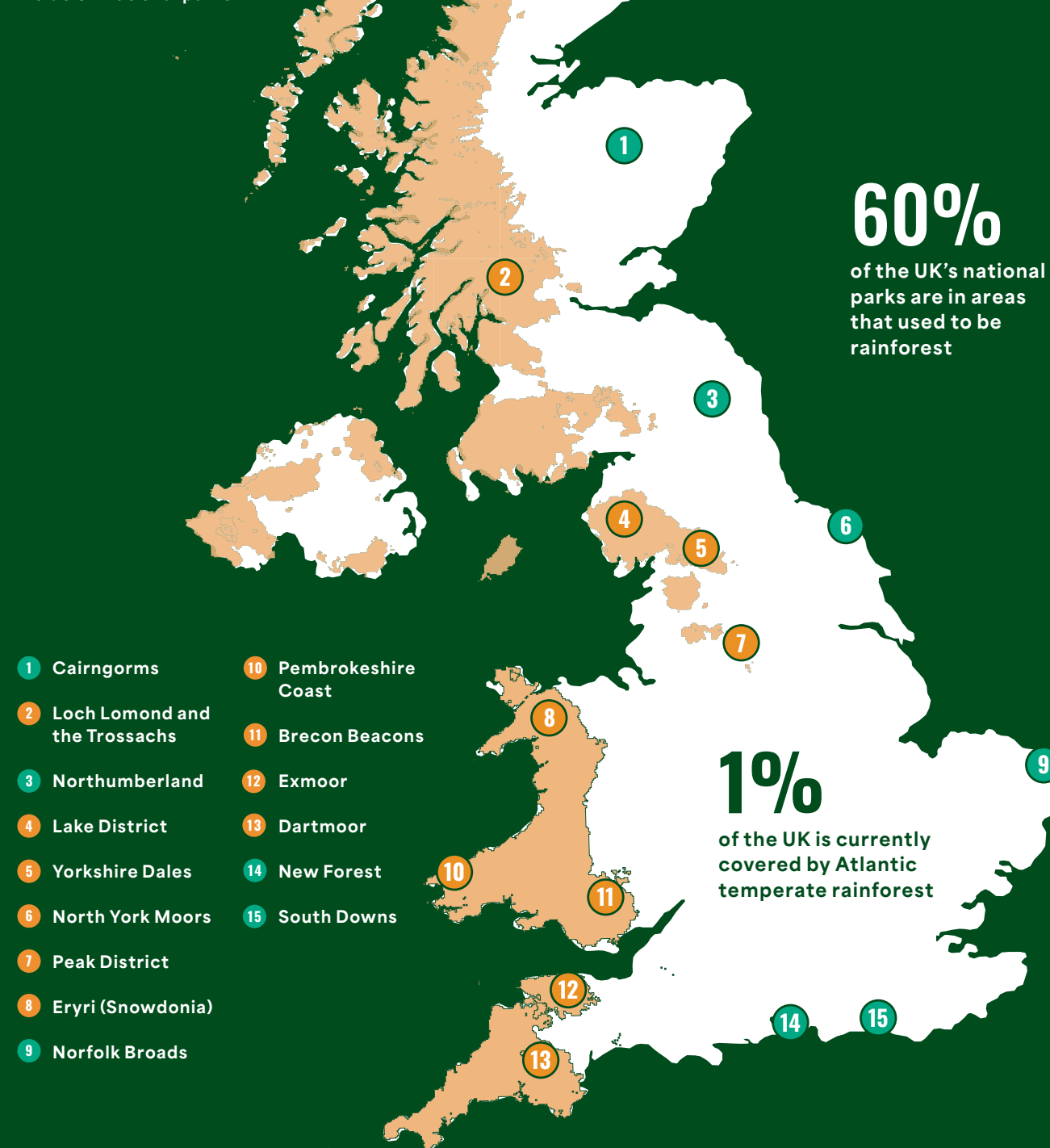
Expert input

Surveyors at the Woodland Trust were critical to pinpointing where precisely to fly the drone. Remote areas of improved grassland, upland moorland and an ex-mining site with extremely degraded soils dominated by bryophytes (small gorse and heather) were all targeted.

THE PERFECT WILD PLACES AROUND THE UK

Land ripe for reseeded in the British Isles oceanic zone (for temperate rainforests) is most abundant around current fragments of rainforest and inside UK national parks

- Oceanic Zone
- Not in Oceanic Zone
- In Oceanic Zone



- 1 Cairngorms
- 2 Loch Lomond and the Trossachs
- 3 Northumberland
- 4 Lake District
- 5 Yorkshire Dales
- 6 North York Moors
- 7 Peak District
- 8 Eryri (Snowdonia)
- 9 Norfolk Broads
- 10 Pembrokeshire Coast
- 11 Brecon Beacons
- 12 Exmoor
- 13 Dartmoor
- 14 New Forest
- 15 South Downs

SOURCE: BRITISH ISLES OCEANIC ZONE (FOR TEMPERATE RAINFORESTS), THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS

AUTOSPRAY



Drones can reach areas too remote for people

Sky's the limit

A follow-on trial – the Beyond Restoration project involving AutoSpray, National Trust, the Woodland Trust, and North Pennines National Landscape – is funded by Innovate UK's Future Flight Programme. It aims to address this issue by allowing drones to fly BVLOS for the first time.

The trial involves trained pilots with special permission from the CAA to operate outside visual range, opening up the possibility to cover much larger areas of land at pace.

“Our drones are trying to replicate nature and give it a bit of a helping hand”

ANDREW SPROSON,
AUTOSPRAY SYSTEMS

The Woodland Trust aims to establish five BVLOS-approved sites to seed new native trees across over 40 hectares, including in the North, the Midlands, an expansion of the Bodmin trial sites and possibly Dartmoor.

Other enhancements will include higher seed densities, additional species, such as hawthorn and rowan, improved ground preparation and new drone technologies, potentially including 3D printing to create bespoke parts.

According to Manning, the aim is to focus on ex-mining sites where there is minimal risk to humans from drones and where vegetative competition is reduced, meaning a higher percentage chance of seed germination. Results will be carefully monitored to ensure there are no negative impacts on wildlife or people.

Drone-based afforestation is non-existent in Europe but more commonplace in countries such as the USA, Africa and China, mainly due to the vast distances involved.

“Looking at how successful it is abroad, and how cheap it has made reforestation, there's no reason why we couldn't see the same thing happen here,” says Manning, “Lots of contractors are already rushing to become early adopters and do this kind of work. They view it as an attractive potential new market.” ■

NORTH PENNINES NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION

Pride: why visible allyship matters



KELLY CANTERFORD MRICS
CO-CHAIR OF FREEHOLD



DAN WESTLEY MRICS
CO-CHAIR OF FREEHOLD

As professionals in the built environment, surveyors have the honour of shaping the world in which we live. Through our work we create and protect the built and natural environments, making them sustainable, resilient and, importantly, inclusive for all. The decisions we influence every day, from who occupies space to how that space is presented to the public, help define whose presence is recognised, respected and protected.

During June, cities around the world come alive with the colours of the rainbow. Flags are raised, windows are dressed and buildings shine in support of Pride and LGBTQIA+ inclusion. That visibility matters just as much today as it did when the Pride movement began in the late 1960s. We are seeing hard-fought LGBTQIA+ rights challenged and, in some places, rolled back. Pride is no longer simply a celebration; it remains a statement of visibility, solidarity and safety.

While some cultures, traditions and laws remain beyond our control, the UK, on the whole, remains a safe and inclusive place where people are free to be who they are and love who they love. As one of the world's leading cities, London attracts significant inward investment, including from countries where LGBTQIA+ people do not enjoy the same protections. As surveyors, we are often responsible for managing and balancing these complex relationships between investors, owners and occupiers, while ensuring that buildings operate safely, responsibly and in alignment with local expectations.

These decisions are not abstract. In recent years, landlords have faced public and stakeholder pressure over occupiers whose activities or values were viewed as being in conflict with inclusion. In some cases, leases were not renewed; in others, policies were tightened. Importantly, these actions are not unique to LGBTQIA+ issues. Increasingly, landlords are applying clear ethical and environmental, social

and governance frameworks to occupier selection, reflecting environmental impact, labour standards, community harm and reputational risk. Ethical lettings have become a recognised part of asset stewardship rather than an exception.

This conversation goes beyond the owner-occupier relationship. Over recent years, we have seen landlords illuminate buildings and chimneys to mark cultural events such as Christmas, or to raise awareness of charitable causes. These landmarks are regularly emblazoned in colour for celebrations rooted in traditional values and yet some remain conspicuously dark during Pride. That absence is also a message, whether intended or not.

Lighting a building does not, on its own, make an organisation inclusive. But visibility does matter. It signals to employees, visitors and the wider public whether they are likely to be safe, welcome and respected in that space. As a network supporting LGBTQIA+ people working in the built environment, Freehold has seen how visible allyship, when paired with meaningful policies and behaviour can positively shape workplace culture and confidence across the sector.

We recognise that many organisations operate globally, including in regions where LGBTQIA+ people are not afforded the same protections as they are in the UK. However, responsible businesses recognise that their core values include safeguarding the dignity and safety of their people, regardless of geography. Inclusion is not something that stops at a border.

The culture of a profession is shaped by the organisations within it, and the culture of organisations is shaped by people. As members of this profession and as RICS professionals we are bound by Rules of Conduct founded on honesty, integrity, competence, service, respect and responsibility. But treating people with dignity and respect is not only a professional obligation – it is a basic human right.

“The culture of a profession is shaped by the organisations within it”

Pedal power

What travel data reveals about London's streets

WORDS BY TOBY MATHEWS AND ASHLEY STEWART-NOBLE

We're increasingly relying on movement data to understand how cities are used. Journey patterns, popular routes and collision clusters reveal where streets and public spaces are under strain, or where design is not matching behaviour on the ground. That evidence helps surveyors make the case for targeted interventions such as new crossings, safer junction layouts or improved cycling links, and to demonstrate the impact of infrastructure investment over time.

James Kavanagh MRICS, Head of Land and Resources at RICS, has experienced London's cycling transformation, and knows exactly what's behind it.

"I've cycled London's streets for decades, and what strikes me most is how profoundly the city's cycling environment is now shaped and safeguarded by planning intelligence, infrastructure design and interoperable geospatial data," he says. "We're no longer relying on intuition or outdated models of how people should move through the city; we're responding to how they move."

"The granular journey data that now underpins planning - from the nearly 9m recorded Santander Cycle hires in 2025, to the detailed routing, collision mapping and junction-level risk analysis (Old Street, Elephant and Castle and Waterloo roundabouts were once notoriously dangerous) - has transformed how cycling infrastructure is conceived, built and refined."

"These insights are essential. They tell us why places like Waterloo Station 3 dock support more than 104,000 annual hires, and where junctions like Camberwell Green or Brixton still demand deeper design interventions. That fusion of evidence, geospatial interoperability and responsive urban design is precisely why cycling in London feels safer today than it did 20, ten or even five years ago."

We've drawn on London's Santander Cycles journey data for 2025 to highlight the busiest docking stations, routes and bikes across London. This has been combined with STATS19 road collision records for 2025, plus an analysis of the 5,000 most common start-end journey pairs, to map both cycle demand and risk at junction level and along key roads.

12,963

Peak summer hotspot

Hyde Park Corner saw 12,963 journeys in August 2025, the highest monthly total recorded at any docking station.

5,152

Loop rides reign in the east

Within Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the Podium docking station generated 5,152 journeys that both started and ended there, making it one of London's most popular loop ride locations.

104,759

London's bike hire hub

Waterloo Station 3 dock handled 104,759 journeys in 2025, making it the single busiest docking station in the network.

Multimodal danger point

The junction of Brixton Road, Brixton Hill, Coldharbour Lane and Acre Lane had six accidents and a weighted score of eight out of ten for all traffic, and also ranks among the worst junctions for cycle-involved collisions, with a cycle severity score of six.

London's worst intersection

The junction around Camberwell Green, Denmark Hill and Camberwell New Road recorded four accidents and the highest weighted severity score of ten for all vehicle collisions in 2025.*

↑ 68%

Strike day surge: central London network-wide spike

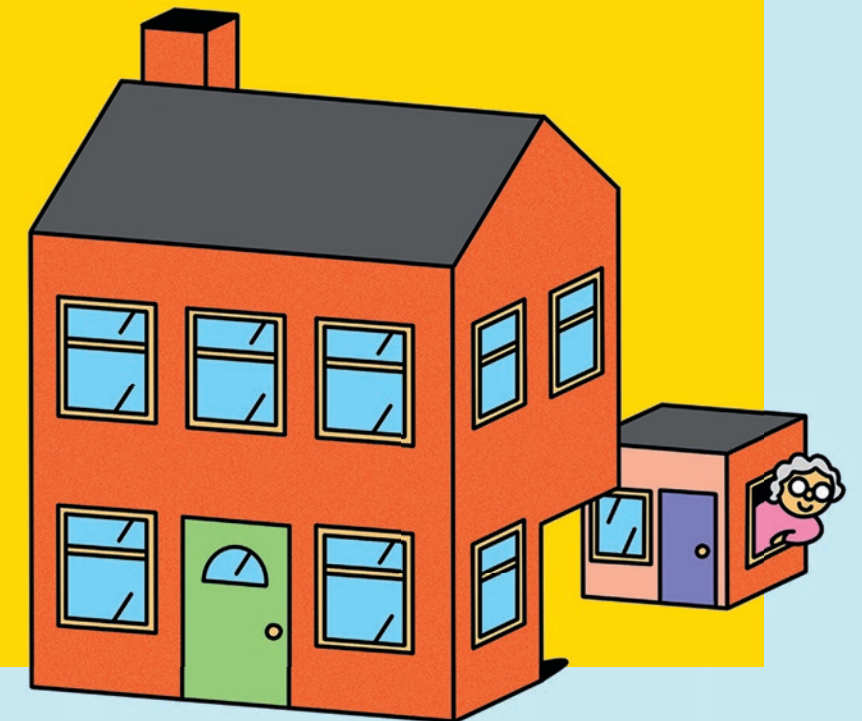
During the 8-11 September 2025 rail and Tube strikes, daily bike hires averaged 41,655 - up 68% on typical weekday levels for the month, peaking at 45,824 on 9 September.

* The collision hotspots shown here are indicative rather than definitive. Crashes were grouped into 100-metre grids and then assigned to the nearest junction name, so locations and rankings involve some professional judgement. Junction scores use a weighted severity index (fatal, serious, slight), which means a small number of serious crashes can outrank a larger number of minor incidents.

Families and national healthcare systems stand to benefit if more people are allowed to build extra accommodation on their property for older relatives

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY VINCENT KILBRIDE

**How the rise
of ‘granny flats’
can unlock
housing supply**



No one likes to think about becoming older and less independent. But, as the populations of developed countries skew to an older average age, it is something everyone must consider.

As people live longer, their health and social needs take centre stage. Options for care are purpose-built facilities or living with relatives – adult children who are approaching old age themselves.

In the UK and many European countries, purpose-built facilities can feel a little institutional. Care homes specialise in looking after elderly people who are no longer confident about being able to look after themselves independently. Each person has their own bedroom and bathroom but all meals are served together and there are communal living rooms.

The elderly often feel they have lost agency in these environments and the facilities have a reputation for not stimulating their residents.

The cost is also prohibitive: according to Age UK, the average cost for a “self-funder” – a resident with more than £23,500 of assets who will not receive state help – is £949 per week, rising to £1,267 in the cases of those requiring more intensive care such as people with advanced dementia or mobility issues.

“There is a big gap for retirement homes in Europe,” says Gary Touyz FRICS, vice president with CBRE’s Seniors Housing & Healthcare Group. “There’s a huge leap in going from the family home to a care home. It’s often a need decision rather than a lifestyle decision.”

But frequently, the alternative of staying in their homes where they might be living without any support at all seems risky. Properties with ‘granny annexes’ – typically, a bedroom, bathroom and living room which are accessible from the main home – are increasingly sought after as a compromise. The problem? There are so few homes that have them.

“We’re seeing a significant growth in demand for the conversion of a building to include an annexe,” says Julia Meadowcroft, a partner at Knight Frank. “Buyers want flexible spaces with different levels of integration [but] it is unusual to find that ground-floor space which is easily adaptable.”

Increasingly, many countries regard building granny flats as a win-win. They allow for extra capacity in the existing housing stock, are privately funded and, if they are to be occupied by the elderly, relieve pressure on care and safeguarding services.

Regulatory change

In parts of the US, including Chicago, there are proposals to allow the construction of small separate living accommodation in the gardens of existing homes. In July, John Cummins, Ireland’s Minister of State for Planning, announced plans to allow units

“There’s a huge leap in going from the family home to a care home”

GARY TOUYZ FRICS
CBRE

of up to 484ft² (45m²) to be built in addition to an existing house. “I have been clear that this is not a solution to the housing challenges we face but it does provide an option for people who want to live independently of their family home,” he said.

Elsewhere, the allowances are even more generous. New Zealand has recently suggested that granny flats can be built up to a size of 753ft² (70m²) without requiring planning permission. In parts of Australia, the size permitted will be up to 861ft² (80m²).

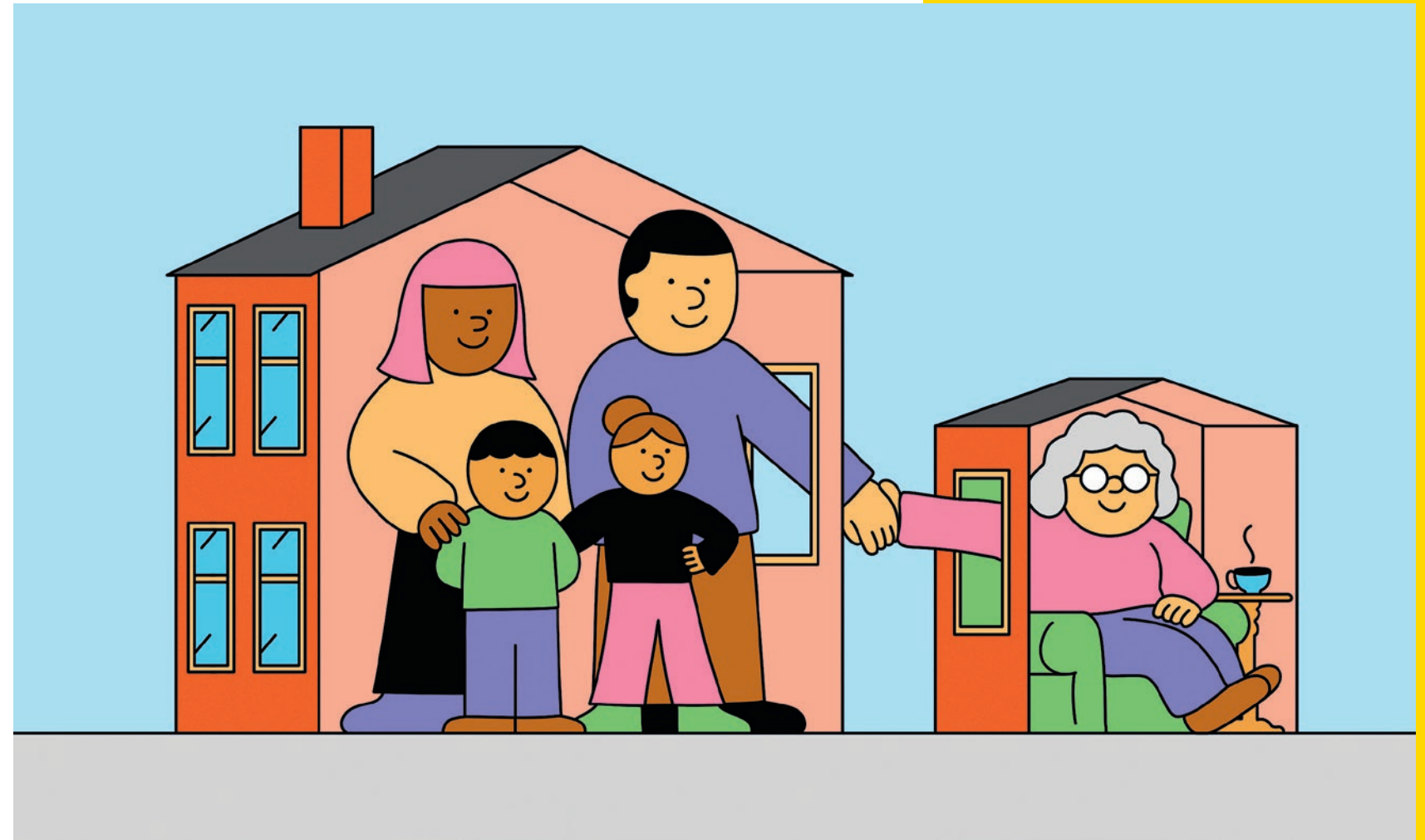
The picture in the UK is less straightforward, however. Although the building of small units to accommodate family members is encouraged, there are factors that make it more difficult. The first is the UK’s housing stock, which is among the oldest in Europe – almost 40% of it was built before the Second World War – and size: at an average of about 970ft² (90m²), it is among the smallest in Europe.

Council tax is another thorny issue. In the optimum scenario, the resident could qualify for no council tax at all. In the worst case, the granny flat could be seen as an additional property and subject to a 100% surcharge (up to 300% in Wales).

Likewise, the British tax authority, HMRC, has been showing an increased interest in collecting stamp duty – the sales tax payable – on homes with granny annexes. Previously exempt, the ‘multi-dwellings relief’ was abolished in 2024, meaning that anyone buying a home that includes a granny annexe might find themselves paying stamp duty running to additional tens of thousands of pounds.

If someone is selling a property with a granny annexe, even if it is part of their principal home – and most granny annexes come with the condition that they cannot be sold as a stand-alone unit – then, potentially, it could be taxable. There is a risk that HMRC could regard it as subject to capital gains tax, if it has ever been rented or used as a holiday let.

Nevertheless, multi-generational living is gaining in popularity. This may be partly due to families not wanting to spend their elderly relatives’ savings



and housing equity on care home fees. But moving elderly people out of large family homes to smaller, more supported accommodation has many benefits. Releasing their larger family homes onto the market keeps the housing market more fluid.

Granny annexes for the young

Meadowcroft observes that granny annexes are increasingly used by young people who return home after university or a period of independent living and are unable to afford local rents. “The cost of living and the cost of buying a property has certainly made these arrangements more popular,” she says.

In North America and Australia, Touyz has seen the rise of rented accommodation specifically for the elderly. “They have a more established rental market, whereas in the UK there’s still an obsession with being a homeowner. The [retiree] may only need the accommodation for eight or ten years so it doesn’t make financial sense to build an annexe.”

We all require housing that suits our needs. Maybe the ‘granny annexe’ needs a name rebrand. The garden lodge or private guest suite, perhaps? ■



PRACTICAL RETROFIT GUIDANCE

Supporting better homes for every life stage

RICS’ first *Residential retrofit standard* responds to growing UK demand for retrofit services, helping consumers receive advice from skilled, regulated professionals and upholding high standards in this expanding market. Effective since 31 October 2024, it sets clear mandatory and recommended requirements that guide RICS members in providing retrofit services tailored to clients’ changing needs.

It also offers residential property surveyors an opportunity to upskill and adopt more sustainable working practices, supporting the rapid increase in retrofit activity needed to help meet the UK’s net zero targets.

Find out how the *RICS Residential retrofit standard* can support projects at [rics.org/retrofit](https://www.rics.org/retrofit)

Can collaboration succeed where compliance has failed?

Outcome-based, collaborative regulation is a new approach to working based on scientific research that better serves the public interest

WORDS BY STUART WATSON

The Grenfell Tower fire claimed 72 lives and brought the issue of building safety into the public eye. In the nine years that have passed since, governments have grappled with how to improve safety, regain public trust and reform a construction regulation system that the inquiry into the tragedy condemned as “seriously defective”.

Today, as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consults on the architecture of a revised regulatory system, RICS is championing a radical approach. It's one that could define the next chapter in professional regulation and form the foundation for a trust-based regulatory ecosystem for the built environment sector.

Outcome-based collaborative regulation (OBCR) is a new approach to regulation based on scientific research about how people behave. It is grounded in observations that regulation is more effective and produces results that better serve the public interest when it encourages people to cooperate, rather than simply threatening them with sanctions for non-compliance.

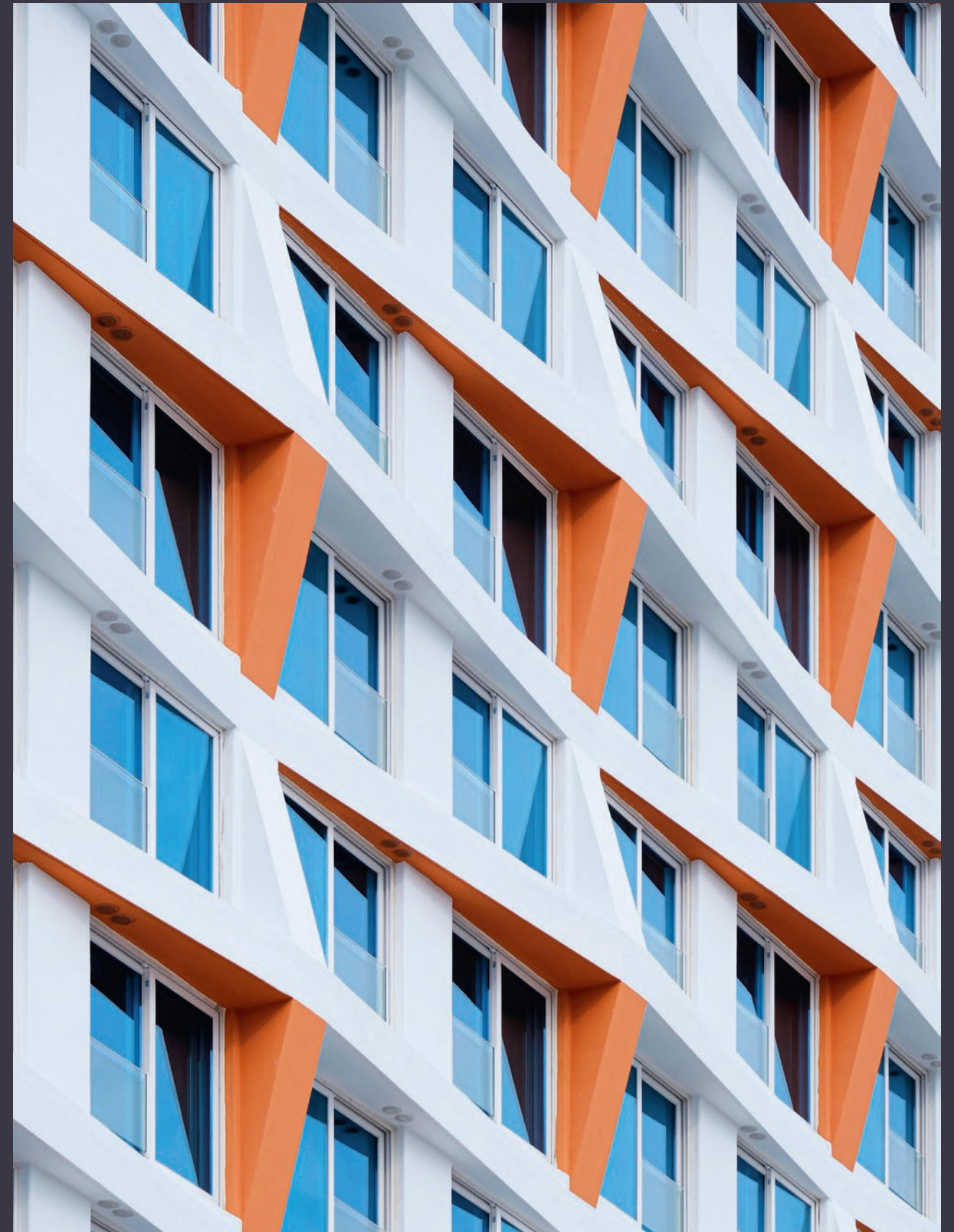
“We want to help the government, the profession and the public to view regulation in a much more expansive way that will ultimately protect public safety,” says Chris Alder, Senior Executive Officer, Standards and Regulation at RICS. The chief determinants of decisions around building safety are founded in ethics and competence of the people involved, he argues.

Statutory regulation is needed to ensure compliance in the areas of highest risk, for example fire safety, he says. But what he calls “whole system regulation” would be more effective to guide the behaviour of actors across the full range of the construction ecosystem, whether they be professionals, trades, manufacturers, suppliers or educators, he suggests.

“A more expansive approach involving insight into behavioural science is needed to help everyone involved improve competence, do the right thing and flag issues when they see them,” he says.

Christopher Hodges, emeritus professor of justice systems at the University of Oxford, is one of the UK's leading thinkers on regulatory systems. He advocates the OBCR approach. “If you can get into the space whereby people are well trained, well motivated, doing the right thing whatever the circumstances, then that is incredibly powerful. And to do that you use a collaborative mechanism rather than a fear-based enforcement mechanism.”

He points to the success of cooperative approaches to regulation in industries such as aviation and nuclear power, where all the participants have a strong individual and collective focus on the crucial importance of safety. While actors in those sectors have plenty of rules with which they must comply, he observes that they are also constantly feeding back any information relevant to safety and sharing it across the industry, however minor or potentially embarrassing it appears. ▶



UNSPASH

Hodges says there is a shift in thinking about regulatory systems away from breaches and compliance, and towards outcomes. OBCR-style approaches involve the regulator and stakeholders governing their system in a collaborative way, using feedback from a trusted community of participants to upgrade systems and improve outcomes. He identifies six key elements of an OBCR system:

1. All stakeholders agree on purposes, outcomes, evidence metrics and systems.
2. They agree on expectations for how those who wish to be trusted should behave and set out this agreement in a code.
3. All actors who wish to join the “trust community” and “regulatory trust track” produce evidence that they are trustworthy.
4. Those actors who do not wish to produce evidence of trustworthiness continue to be regulated under traditional rules and enforcement, but without the benefits of having a trusted reputation.
5. The trusted parties cooperate in a respectful environment, identifying and fixing problems, working towards the desired outcomes and increasing performance.
6. All parties help to identify harms and risks quickly and take action to provide protection.

Better collaboration, safer buildings

Applying a similar system to building safety would enable regulators to harness the involvement of a wide range of previously untapped participants to improve outcomes, says Alder. For example, the landscaping contractor or car park attendant would be aware of the need to preserve access to fire hydrants and emergency equipment, or a decorator might flag the risk posed by a sprinkler system covered by a plastic bag.

He envisages it would also lead to the establishment of an agile system of regulation based on risk: “The model can deliver hard-edged, compliance-based regulation where needed, or allow participation in a trusted ‘help us innovate, help us grow’ model.” That could remove some of the regulatory logjams that have held back growth and prevent red tape from stifling innovation aimed at speeding up delivery, while continuing to protect public safety, he suggests.

For example, delays in receiving approval from the Building Safety Regulator, which was established after the Grenfell tragedy to regulate the safety of high-rise buildings, have been blamed for restricting the progress of housing projects.

“In a number of sectors, we’ve seen regulatory models that may have been right for specific points in time and specific issues, often using old prescriptive approaches. Not all of them have kept pace with change and evolved as risks have changed, harming the ability to grow,” says Alder.

He believes we are reaching “a new frontier of professionalism,” an inflection point at which technology-driven change is transforming how professions operate. As well as the advantages associated with viewing regulation through a different lens, whole system regulation promises to enable the built environment sector to seize the opportunities presented by advances in technology and AI, says Alder. “You create a system in which participants can share concerns, intelligence and information, and that can then be analysed to provide real-time risk analysis.”

RICS has invited consultancy firm Arup to join the conversation around digitally enabling a new regulatory model for construction. Simon Evans, global digital energy and global digital twin leader at Arup, has been working with the energy industry since 2021 to improve data sharing. He says that there is widespread recognition now, stimulated by the UK’s industrial strategy, that large-scale data sharing is needed in every sector of the economy. Meanwhile, the value of data as an economic asset is beginning to be recognised.

Information sharing

Within the construction sector, if data associated with a project is submitted digitally and shared with the regulator securely, among many other use cases it can enable a much “deeper, fine-grained” machine-to-machine regulatory check to take place. That analysis could identify missing data and potential risks, improving regulatory certainty, Evans says. He adds that a digitalised and automated regulatory system will also reduce the burden of compliance on businesses.



SHUTTERSTOCK

“We want to help the government view regulation in a much more expansive way that will ultimately protect public safety”

CHRIS ALDER
RICS

Moreover, Evans suggests that there are wider potential benefits to data sharing. “You create an opportunity where the whole business process can be reimagined, and efficiencies can come into the system that you’ve never seen before.”

In construction, that could lead to swifter and more efficient approvals processes, project completion and auditing of health and safety data. Buildings can be digitally enabled and ‘smart’, improving their operation and providing better services. Ultimately, he believes that data could be shared across sectors such as energy, water, transport and the built environment if their systems are designed to be compatible. This integration could boost the whole national economy.

Hodges recognises that there will sometimes be tension between competing outcomes. For example, in the construction sector there’s the public’s need for safe and affordable housing, the private sector’s need to generate profits and the government’s desire to encourage economic growth. “If it is done right, this approach can be extraordinarily powerful and effective, because all the outcomes can be achieved, although not necessarily all at once,” he argues.

In its prospectus for the establishment of a single construction regulator, published at the end of 2025, MHCLG acknowledges that the built environment needs to be regulated as a system, which should “contribute to positive outcomes through setting clear expectations of what is required, enabling people and businesses who can be trusted to benefit, and enforcing consequences for those

who consistently or deliberately fail to do the right thing and put people at risk.”

Hodges says he is not yet aware of any governments around the world that have defined outcome delivery as the principal role of a regulator. Some regulators have been measuring their own outcomes, however, and several OBCR pilot schemes have been undertaken. These include a Safe Food system in Queensland, Australia, and one by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency to support the net zero transition of the former oil refinery at Grangemouth in Scotland, as well as schemes in Finland, India and Singapore.

“The momentum is really building at the moment, although it is at an early stage,” he says. “I’m not aware that anyone has tried to do this so far in construction, property or housing, but it is a sector where there’s certainly quite a lot of enthusiasm for this.”

Building a community of trust across the built environment sector would take years and involve significant behavioural change, accepts Alder, but the potential benefits in the UK and internationally could be transformative.

In the coming months, he says RICS will continue to share its experience on professionalism, professional development and what effective regulation looks like, as well as helping to convene academics and industry leaders. Doing this will help support the government’s understanding of the sector’s ecosystem more fully as it progresses its plans for regulatory reform. ■

Have we made our homes too toasty?



Overheated homes in summer may be the unexpected consequence of the push for energy efficiency and insulated warmth in winter

WORDS BY GELA PERTUSINI

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CARL GODFREY

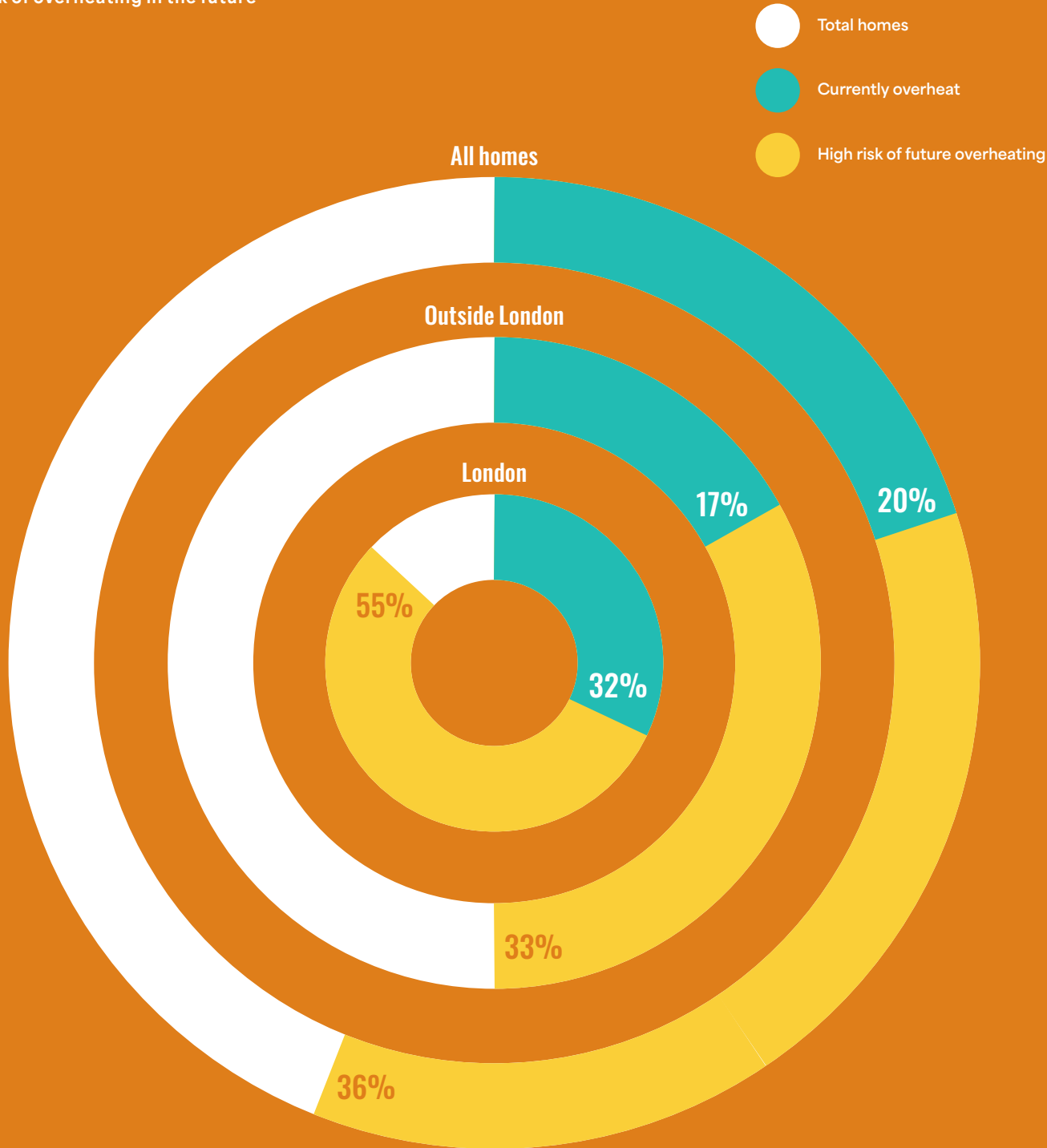
It's easy to point the finger at Kevin McCloud, the presenter of *Grand Designs* – arguably Britain's most enduring lifestyle show. He has done more to popularise the concept of bringing light into British homes than anyone else. "Flooding the rooms with light" is one of the best-known signifiers of his approval.

Since the programme first launched 27 years ago, the UK has fallen in love with open-plan living and generously glazed extensions. Small, relatively easy-to-heat rooms have been combined to create one visually pleasing but, it was feared, colder, draughtier whole. As heating bills have grown and building regulations tightened, more emphasis has fallen on energy efficiency, which is often synonymous with using as much insulation as possible.

Insulation is brilliant at keeping in warmth, which during the cold winters is a priority. But, as the UK's winters have become wetter and milder and its summers have become longer and warmer, an unexpected problem has arisen: the overheating of homes. That wonderful run of bifold doors and the huge roof lantern that looked so fabulous in the architect's render of your kitchen extension? It becomes a liability in July when it doesn't just feel that light is flooding the room, it is as if the sun is in ▶

↓
IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERE

Warmer summers will see more homes overheat. This chart shows the proportion of homes in England that currently overheat and are at high risk of overheating in the future



SOURCES: RESOLUTION FOUNDATION, RE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH HOUSING SURVEY 2020-21 DATA, ENGLISH HOUSING SURVEY ENERGY FOLLOW UP SURVEY

there with you, too. And it's a problem that is only likely to get worse as climate change persists.

In 2022, Approved Document O came into force, which sought to limit solar gain within new build residential properties. But these properties only account for a small fraction of British homes and, as stamp duty and other expenses make moving so expensive, many people opt to renovate and reconfigure their existing homes by adding extensions that typically include a large amount of glazing and insulation. What can be done to tackle this problem in older buildings?

"Overheating hasn't really been considered from a retrofit perspective," says Matthew Allcock MRICS, retrofit technical lead at Baily Garner.

"The driver for many people has been an increased energy performance certificate (EPC) score and reduced space heating demand. This has often necessitated thick levels of external wall insulation, which does keep the heat in but also demands occupants modify their behaviour to a certain extent – they need to open windows in the summer, for example. They are potentially trapping a lot of heat inside during the warmer months," he says.

Blinds alone – the usual British accommodation – simply will not tackle the issue and he points to solutions in the PAS 2035 Standard, which recommends building a generous overhang into the roofs of rooms or extensions receiving a lot of direct sunlight to prevent it entering in the first place.

Too much weather

Undoubtedly, part of the problem is that British weather is very seasonal and what applies in summer needs a completely different approach in winter. "In the UK, we have to deal with a



“We’ve gone down a route that has led to lots of glazing purely for aesthetic reasons and the more glazing you have, the more likely your homes are to overheat”

EMILY MANSFIELD
BAILY GARNER

very diverse range of temperatures,” says Emily Mansfield, head of sustainability at Baily Garner. “The big question is how do you design buildings to cope with that? We’ve gone down a route that has led to lots of glazing purely for aesthetic reasons and the more glazing you have, the more likely your homes are to overheat. There was no stipulation that people had to measure thermal comfort.”

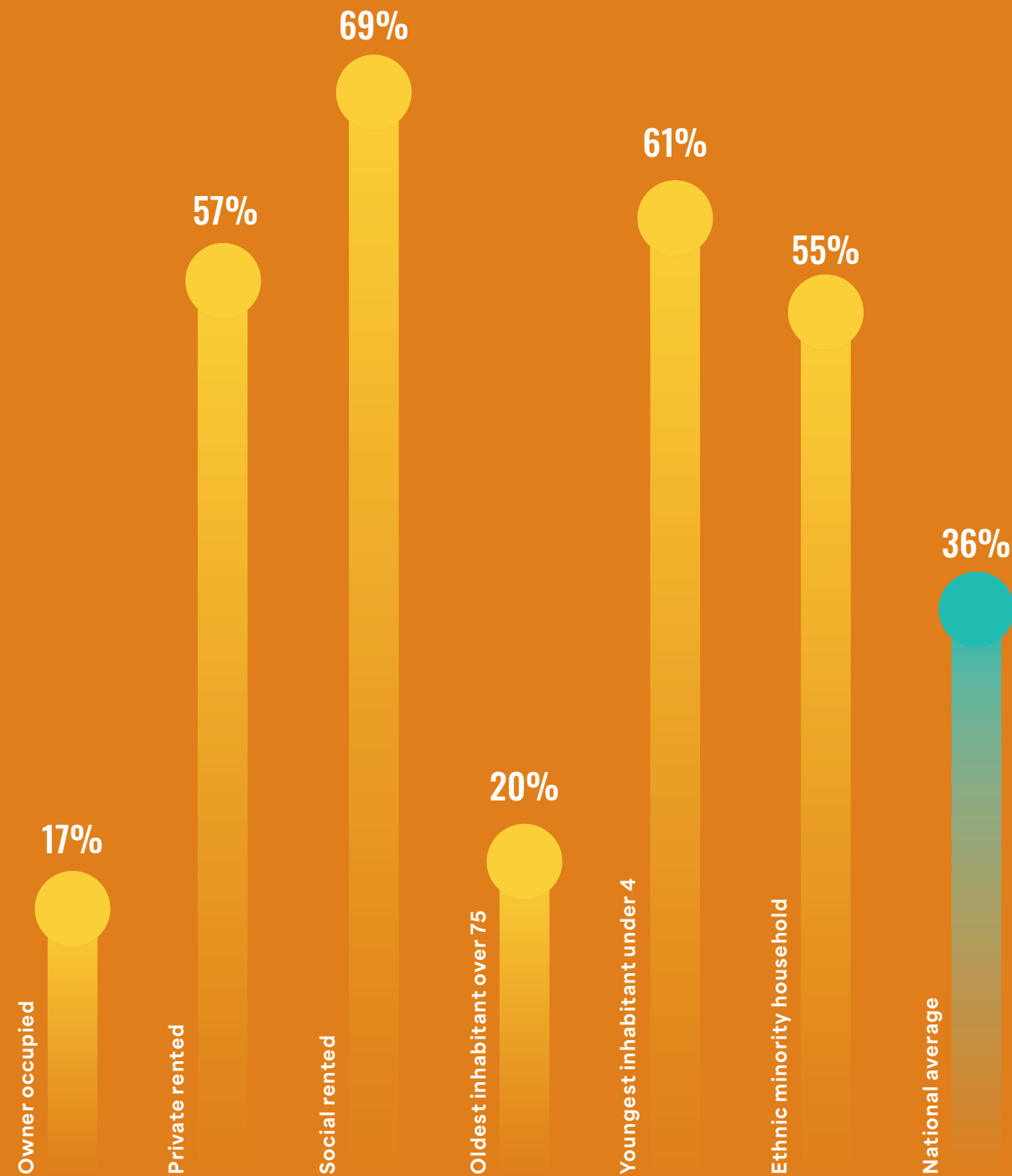
The problem, she feels, is that if ventilation is such an issue that it needs to become mechanical to keep air moving in a home, then this wipes out a lot of the reduced carbon gains of building a property that can easily be kept warm. Air conditioning guzzles energy – it is responsible for about 10% of global electricity consumption – and potentially leaks polluting hydrofluorocarbons into the environment. But it is becoming particularly necessary in apartment blocks, which, because the units are tightly packed together, are at much greater risk of overheating.

Antony Parkinson MRICS, head of block management at JLL, is well aware of the challenges of living with large windows. In 2020 he extended his own home and installed a large amount of glazing and a skylight, a measure that does lead to a certain ▶



WHO'S AT RISK?

Renters and households with young children are over-represented in high-risk homes. This graph shows the proportion of homes in England at high risk of overheating, by selected occupant characteristics



SOURCES: RESOLUTION FOUNDATION, RF ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH HOUSING SURVEY 2020-21 DATA

“Features such as trickle vents allow some air circulation, but most people keep them closed because they fear draughts”

ANTONY PARKINSON MRICS
JLL

amount of discomfort at the height of summer. “For 11 months a year it’s very pleasant so I wouldn’t change it. But it can be very, very hot for two or three weeks.”

The problem, he feels, is partly a structural one regarding the shape of many British homes: narrow but deep. “In Britain, we have the issue that we want to bring in sun during the winter, especially to the centre of an extended house that risks becoming quite dark and unwelcoming otherwise.”

Parkinson worked for two years on the RICS property standards team and, like Allcock and Mansfield, he believes ventilation is key. He feels part of the issue is that we have made our homes increasingly unbreathable with modern materials and construction methods, as well as striving for airtight conditions.

“It’s partly a cultural problem,” he says. “We have to have features such as trickle vents to allow some air circulation, but most people keep them closed because they fear draughts. The real issue to be concerned about is a build-up of warm damp air that condenses in, for example, the roof space.”

He believes that the British should try to learn from people already living in warmer climates. In Mediterranean countries, for example, the sun is given only a cautious welcome in the home. Shutters and windows are closed during much of the day; walls in traditional buildings are often made of very thick stone, which keeps the interior relatively cool; outside spaces are planted with shade-giving plants and have verandas, loggias and pergolas to keep the sun out of the building.

However, building a veranda would mean having a plot size uncommon for most British homes and shutters are a difficult add-on as British windows open outwards.

“In winter, you just turn your heating on and it’s fine,” Parkinson says. “However, in the summer, there is less of an escape.”

But there are some solutions and they don’t have to be especially high-tech. Parkinson has, for example, invested in a product rather like a giant shower cap that can be popped over his skylight during the summer to block out the sun.

Mansfield says that “the key thing residents can do to help is



use those cooler evening temperatures [to air their properties]”. She does, however, flag up some concern that while new build homes should have adequate thermal comfort, not all new homes will. “Part O is currently for new accommodation, but it should be brought in for change of use. I’m thinking particularly of commercial buildings such as offices, which often include a lot of glazing.”

As global warming continues to play its part in heating UK summers to temperatures that often need to be coped with rather than enjoyed, balancing thermal efficiency with cooling and ventilation strategies has come to the fore. We’ve spent a lot of time and effort trying to keep heat in, but we also have to let it out to prevent our homes from becoming uninhabitable when the mercury rises. ■

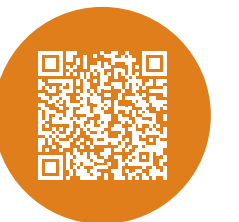


COOLER, SAFER HOMES IN A WARMING CLIMATE

Helping surveyors future-proof homes

The RICS residential retrofit standard supports surveyors to improve efficiency while assessing and managing overheating risks, helping ensure homes stay comfortable, healthy and resilient as temperatures rise.

RICS Members can download the standard at [rics.org/retrofit](https://www.rics.org/retrofit)





HelIDRONE

AERIAL INSPECTION SERVICES

- ▶ Eliminates working-at-height risks
- ▶ Unrestricted access to complex structures
- ▶ Fully compliant and insured operations
- ▶ High-resolution photographic datasets
- ▶ Enables detailed and defensible condition reports



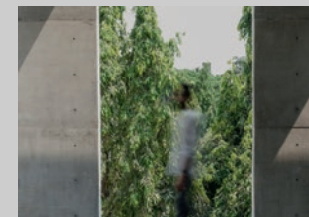
CALL **0800 038 5795**
OR VISIT

HELIDRONESURVEYS.CO.UK
TO FIND OUT MORE

Journals

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

For more essential surveying insights, visit www3.rics.org/journals



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- 62** Reinforced concrete transfer slabs: what you need to know
- 66** Why technical due diligence reports keep buildings standing
- 68** PGP Chair's column, new standards and guidance



PROPERTY

- 70** Student housing: from niche to established asset class
- 74** What impact will the Basel 3.1 accord have on bank lending valuations?
- 76** Latest standards and guidance, PGP columns



LAND

- 80** Where in the UK can landowners profit from wine?
- 82** How to use London's golf courses to build homes
- 86** PGP's column, plus latest standards and guidance



CONSTRUCTION

- 88** Embracing neurodiversity in the built environment
- 92** Unclear drafting can create costly risk allocation
- 94** New standards and guidance, Chair's column

What you need to know about reinforced concrete transfer slabs

Reinforced concrete transfer slabs are frequently concealed within buildings, yet recent warnings from the Building Safety Regulator have highlighted them as a potential risk factor in partial structural collapse

WORDS BY TREVOR RUSHTON FRICS



IN DECEMBER 2025, the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) issued a pointed reminder to the UK construction and property sectors: reinforced concrete buildings containing transfer slabs may present greater structural risk than previously understood.

The reminder followed worries expressed by Collaborative Reporting for Safer Structures (CROSS-UK) who had issued a commentary on concerns around punching shear in December 2024. The Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) also released guidance in November 2024.

The regulator's notice highlighted uncertainties in historical design practices alongside the possibility of brittle failure modes – most notably punching shear. Its notice, which was published on 19 December 2025, urged building owners to “understand whether they have a transfer slab and seek professional advice where there are visible signs of distress or specific concerns regarding the building's condition.”

The announcement immediately ignited industry-wide attention, and RICS responded in early 2026 with a Practice Alert, advice and FAQs and a webinar.

Together, these warnings represent a turning point – an acknowledgement that transfer slabs, in regular use from around 2000, merit more scrutiny than they have historically received.

Recent cases

Recently, the First-tier Tribunal granted a remediation order in a case involving punching shear in a balcony and around the soffit of planted columns in a 12-storey residential block, Wotton Court.

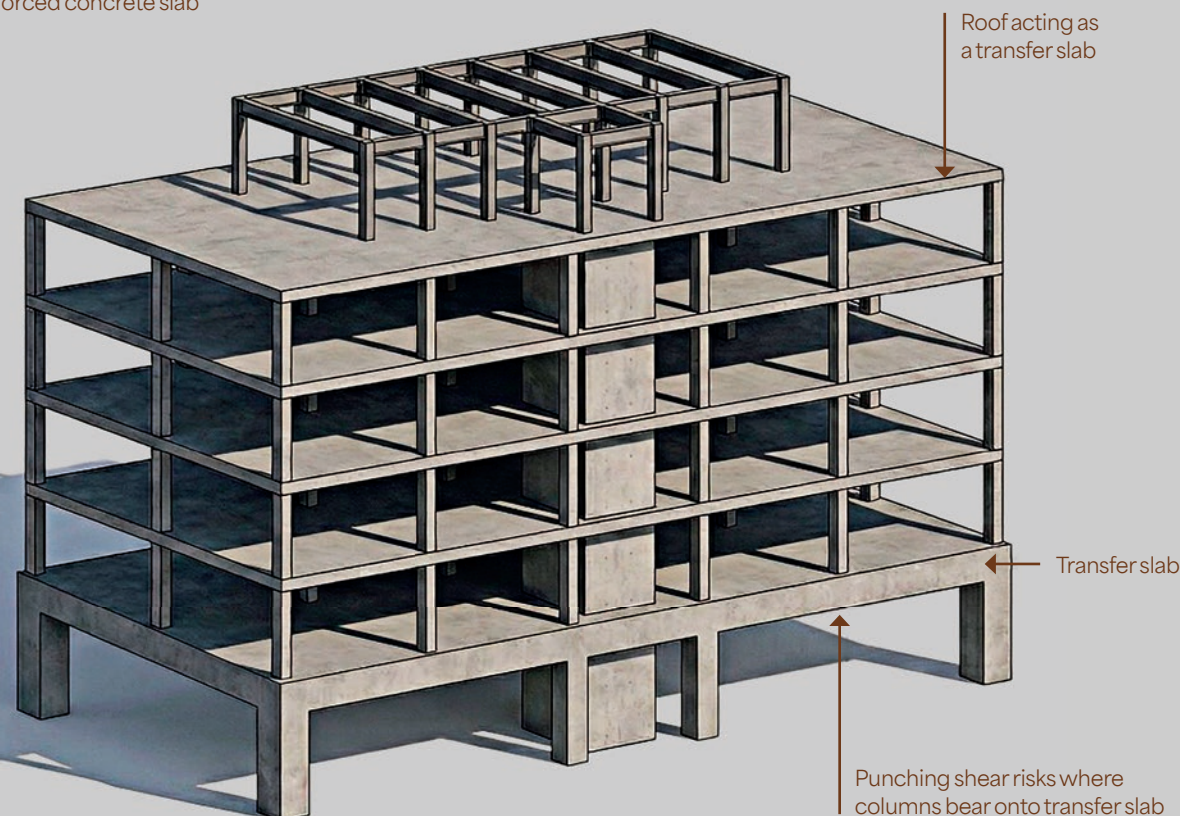
The tribunal found that cracking patterns around key support columns and the first-floor slab indicated a likely punching shear mechanism, which was severe enough to warrant emergency evacuation and a remediation order under Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA 2022).

This case is significant because it underscores how the BSA 2022 is being used to compel landlords to investigate and remedy structural risks, marking an important precedent for managing latent defects in buildings constructed during periods of variable regulatory oversight.

A second case occurred at an East London development, Stratford Halo, where residents of one of the blocks were instructed to leave

How transfer slabs are used, and where there are risks

A transfer slab is a thicker-than-usual, heavily reinforced concrete slab



their homes at four hours' notice after structural investigations raised immediate concerns about the building's stability.

Earlier in the year, ground-floor tenants in an adjoining part of the development had already been moved to facilitate intrusive checks amid BSA 2022 doubts about the adequacy of key supporting elements.

The situation later escalated when residents of two additional blocks were also evacuated at short notice for structural safety reasons, indicating significant and unresolved concerns about the integrity of the estate.

As is to be expected, details of the investigation are currently confidential, and it has not been confirmed that punching shear is the actual mechanism of failure, although there is speculation that it is.

What is a transfer slab?

A transfer slab is a thicker-than-usual, heavily reinforced concrete slab that redirects vertical loads where the columns above do not align with those below. By redistributing forces through the slab, designers can create column-free spaces at lower levels – ground to second floor in, for example, retail or lobby areas – or step upper floors back to form terraces.

Comprehensive national data is limited, but typical buildings include residential developments, student living, hotels – perhaps to a lesser extent – and mixed use.

Many transfer slabs are designed as flat slabs, removing the need for downstand beams and reducing the cost and complexity of temporary works – and it is flat slabs rather than those with downstand beams that

harbour concern. But this simplicity masks underlying challenges: to compensate for the absence of beams, these slabs must be significantly thicker.

Greater depth influences thermal behaviour during curing and increases shrinkage, factors that alter their real-world performance. Of course, a slab that is of insufficient thickness or strength could suffer from excessive deflection and this could create its own set of fabric and user problems (see above).

Why is there concern?

The heart of the current concern lies in punching shear: a brittle failure mode in which a concentrated load – typically a planted column – shears a plug of concrete through the slab.

Because punching shear failures offer little warning, even small inaccuracies in structural reinforcement modelling or construction can have significant consequences.

There have been notable examples of this form of failure – Wolverhampton's Pipers Row car park in 1997 being regularly cited – although the circumstances here did not relate to transfer slabs but to a form of construction known as lift slab, where floors are cast at ground level and then jacked up into position.

In this case, poor repairs, a lack of efficient connections between floor slabs and general neglect were major triggers – punching shear was the end result of a combination of contributory factors.

Similarly, the central issue in the 2021 collapse of the Champlain Towers residential block in Florida was the insufficient punching-shear capacity of the pool-deck slab, whose design did not adequately account for the applied loads.

A number of additional landscaping features significantly increased these stresses, and it remains uncertain whether the original design considered the topping slab or the added planters.

Recent analysis by IStructE suggests that some of the earlier structural modelling codes and guidance practices did not adequately account for:

- the complex interaction between offset columns above and below a slab
- the structural effects of temporary works during construction
- the long-term shrinkage behaviour of thick slabs.

These factors can result in higher in-service shear forces and axial loads than originally anticipated. Signs of distress can be difficult to interpret, and early warning may take the form of excessive deflection of floor slabs, or unusual cracking to floor slabs and columns, but in many cases completed finishes may conceal the evidence.

Cracking that a surveyor may previously have dismissed as the effects of normal shrinkage may be more significant, particularly if it exists in the vicinity of column heads.

A shift in design methodology

One reason for the renewed focus is the historical variability in how engineers have designed transfer slabs.

Even structural engineers face challenges when assessing older transfer slabs

Before November 2024, when IStructE published its *Design of transfer slabs* guidance, there was no universally accepted methodology. The transition from prescriptive British Standards to the more principles-based Eurocodes BS EN 1990–1999 in 2005 gave engineers more discretion, but also introduced notable variations in approach.

With increasingly sophisticated 3D modelling software and finite element analysis being adopted across the industry, the absence of standardised assumptions meant that actual in-service loads and stresses could be materially underestimated.

The IStructE guidance on punching shear and transfer slabs, published in December 2025, aimed to rectify this, establishing clearer methodologies for both new design and assessment of existing structures.

Note that a failure to comply with latest guidance does not necessarily mean that a transfer slab is defective, but it does trigger a need for reassurance.

How to recognise transfer slabs

The RICS Practice Alert reminded surveyors that, while they are not expected to perform structural assessments, they must be able to recognise when a building contains a transfer slab and understand the associated risk profile. For higher-risk buildings (HRBs), the presence of a transfer slab may require updates to building safety case reports.

A reasonable initial review typically begins with a drawing-based desktop study. Differences in column grids or unusually thick floor slabs can indicate a transfer structure. Where possible, physical inspection of exposed soffits may help confirm slab depth and configuration. However, architectural finishes, insulation, raised floors and mechanical installations often obscure structural elements, limiting visibility.

Surveyors may also encounter cracks, localised deflection, or out-of-plumb columns, but these require cautious interpretation.

What challenges are engineers facing?

Even structural engineers face challenges when assessing older transfer slabs. Reinforcement is concealed, and intrusive investigation carries risk.

Non-destructive testing can help estimate depth and reinforcement layout, but verifying the presence and spacing of 'as-built' shear reinforcement remains difficult.

Furthermore, temporary works used during the original construction can significantly influence early-age behaviour and load distribution, yet records of these systems are often unavailable. In some cases, the outcome may remain inconclusive and periodic monitoring – ranging from visual inspections to sensor-based deflection tracking – may offer the most pragmatic mitigation strategy.

A proportionate path forward

The recent alerts from the BSR, IStructE and RICS do not imply that all transfer slabs are unsafe. Rather, they highlight the need for informed evaluation. Chartered surveyors are likely to be in the front line when it comes to early diagnosis or warning signs, but for the most part engineering advice will be needed.

Initial measures could include:

- identifying whether a transfer slab exists
- gathering available design and construction documentation
- be aware that crack patterns could be significant; look out for signs of deflection – this may be hard to identify but effects on floor levels, furniture, window and door fit, partitions, etc. could be indicators
- escalating to a chartered structural engineer who is familiar with and fully competent in the issues whenever uncertainty arises
- for HRBs, ensure that any findings inform the building safety case.

The industry's task is to approach the issue with balance: acknowledging the genuine concerns while avoiding unnecessary alarm. Transfer slabs have performed successfully in many buildings, but they demand respect and in some cases, renewed scrutiny.

Trevor Rushton FRICS is chairman of Watts Group Limited
trevor.rushton@watts.co.uk

Related competencies include: Health and safety, Inspection, Risk management

TDD must look beyond today to ensure buildings will last

Opinion **By integrating environmental, social and governance considerations and potential climate impacts, technical due diligence reports can shape the future of the built environment**

WORDS BY CRAIG MACDONALD FRICS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS not new. It was defined in 1987 by the UN Brundtland Commission as “meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Both this and the overlapping environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) agenda, which has emerged more recently, have inevitably affected building surveyors’ scope of work.

This means that, for investors as well as building surveyors, sustainability is no longer a noble extra; it is an integral part of risk and asset management. This is why ESG considerations must now be embedded into technical due diligence (TDD) reports, rather than tacked on.

A TDD inspection should also investigate the potential legacy of a building, not just determine its capital expenditure for the next ten years. What if the property is still standing in 100 years’ time? If not, why not?

No one wants to own a building that turns out to be structurally unsound, environmentally harmful or out of sync with modern expectations on accessibility and community amenity – and discover on top

of this that it costs five times more than anticipated to put right.

Repurposed office demonstrates longer-term thinking

How these ESG considerations can be applied in practice is seen in the transformation of an office park in Tuggeranong, 22km from Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory.

During Cromwell Property Group’s acquisition of the asset in the 2000s, the company considered whether the tenant-customer, the Department of Social Services, would stay there for the long term. If not, could the building be repurposed? A college, hotel or aged-care facility – what might its next incarnation be?

As part of its own due diligence, Cromwell asked consultants to run simulations to determine the most energy-efficient window sizes, types and locations, as well as room depths allowing the greatest natural light. The goal was not just to have the best building for the time, but to ensure it would remain the best building ten years later.

Eventually, the government tenant did plan to leave and – following an expression of

interest in 2013 – Cromwell and its new construction partner were chosen to develop a separate office building for the department on the same site.

By 2015, more than 2,000 staff members were relocated to their new offices at Soward Way, Greenway, which was just metres away from the previous workplace. The office buildings they left vacant could easily have become stranded assets, but Cromwell’s managers had already laid the groundwork to safeguard the investment.

In an industry first move, the firm converted the vacant office buildings into a 350-apartment, 500-resident retirement and aged-care community, the seed asset for a new aged-care fund in a joint venture with LDK Healthcare. Cromwell’s careful preparations for this will undoubtedly form part of the TDD of the future.

Top of the range today may well be obsolete tomorrow

This kind of foresight will become increasingly necessary as we face new challenges in the future. If we don’t act responsibly, we risk exacerbating the problems we already face.

SHUTTERSTOCK

We’re constructing buildings to last a century, so we need to think generationally

environmental certification frameworks such as National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS), as well as recognising the importance of coordinating specialists for climate risk assessments.

Representative concentration pathways (RCPs) – scenarios that describe different trajectories for greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations – play a crucial role in such assessments by providing a framework for evaluating potential climate impacts.

RCPs offer a way to model potential changes in temperature, precipitation, sea-level rise and extreme weather events under different GHG scenarios. For example, RCP 8.5 is considered a high-emissions pathway, sometimes referred to as business as usual, while RCP 4.5 represents humanity taking moderate action to mitigate emissions.

These considerations will become especially relevant to those buying property in coastal locations – which represents nearly all of Australia’s building stock – since this will be exposed to increased temperature and humidity in the years ahead, which can accelerate the corrosion of steel. You thought I was going to say rising sea-level risk? There are many factors to consider.

The RCPs help in assessing the risks associated with the performance of building components. For example, if the average number of 40°C days per year increases from three to more than ten, will the building’s air conditioning keep occupants comfortable on those days, or will they fail?

If there is a building management system, historic performance data can be queried to see whether this worked – which gives the facility managers and consultants far more credibility than relying on the manufacturer’s recommended service life to determine a date for replacement.

This offers an opportunity to upgrade to a more energy-efficient option as well as saving money – not just in terms of current operations but protecting the asset well into the future. Put that into your investment product disclosure statement.

We’re constructing buildings to last a century, so we need to think generationally.

The materials used in construction, their sustainability and ability to remain compliant as regulations and performance standards change are now critical considerations.

For example, cross-laminated timber may be touted today as the next big thing, but what about in 50 years? Will it be surpassed by better, more sustainable options, such as steel recycled using 100% renewable energy?

Similarly, replacing old chillers and gas boilers with electric systems is a great idea. However, what happens if the refrigerants become environmentally unacceptable?

Bear in mind that city office buildings designed to last 50 years often last only eight before requiring major refits – not just superficial changes but complete overhauls of their air conditioning systems, for instance. We therefore need to consider the long-term viability of our investments, balancing the risks and upsides.

TDD and climate risk assessments

This means that there is an increasing need for those carrying out TDD to understand

Financial bottom line underscores ESG agenda

Underlining the financial imperative, in 2015 the Financial Stability Board created the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), which, in 2017, issued recommendations on the types of information that companies should disclose to support investors, lenders and insurance underwriters in appropriately assessing and pricing risks related to climate change.

Since then, there has been a significant increase in demand from investors for improved climate-related financial disclosures. In 2023, TCFD issued its sixth and final report, before it was disbanded on the basis that it had fulfilled its remit, with its responsibilities since taken up by the International Sustainability Standards Board.

Nevertheless, it is the taskforce’s recommendations that provide a foundation on which to improve the ability of investors and others to assess and price climate-related risk and opportunities appropriately. Therefore product disclosure statements that comply with TCFD recommendations are now considered best practice.

Professionals must inform, not lecture, their clients about these developments, providing clear and practical advice. You can focus on problems with buildings, but these problems eventually become financial, and it is often finances that people understand above anything else.

Demonstrating a solid commitment to the ESG agenda is linked to profit, given that it also improves corporate reputation, competitive advantage and access to capital. ESG considerations now shape the legacy of a building, influencing not just its current value but also its future adaptability and its sustainability.

This holistic approach ensures that we not only build – or buy – for today but also for generations to come, aligning with the enduring principles of sustainability.

Craig MacDonald FRICS is director of Beyond Condition and author of *The building detective: A journey into the hidden stories of property, people, and problem solving* craig@beyondcondition.com

Related competencies include: Ethics, Rules of Conduct and professionalism, Sustainability

For further key sector insights, visit www3.rics.org/built-environment-journal



Building surveying and building control standards and guidance

Forthcoming standards and guidance

Global Sustainability Guide

This document is for all disciplines of surveying, showing and establishing a base level of knowledge in sustainability that can be applied across all stages of a property life cycle. It will be global as far as possible, although consideration will need to be given as to how to present material specific to UK members.

The aim of the project is to upskill the profession to a base line of knowledge, and will contain:

- a glossary of terms (so far as possible in a global context)
- an overview of a property project life cycle and where RICS professionals interact at the various stages, and;
- be underpinned by external resources which will provide additional guidance for further knowledge development.

A glossary is necessary because there is misuse of language in the profession, and a common language is the foundation of establishing a base line of knowledge. An example of a common misuse of terms includes energy efficiency and retrofit. Whereas energy efficiency includes everything that you could possibly do to a building to improve its energy performance and that includes retrofitting, retrofit is only about adding something to a building that it did not have when it was constructed.

Design and Specification - Update 2026

An update to the current 2013 edition, that takes into account regulatory and legislative changes updating best practice guidance relevant to the tasks and processes of design and specification for small to medium-size construction projects.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Reinforced concrete transfer slabs

Following publication by the Building Safety Regulator in mid-December 2025 of concerns regarding reinforced concrete transfer slabs, RICS issued a Practice Alert to all members, held a technical webinar to inform members in January and developed the *Transfer slabs in buildings: Advice and FAQs* page on rics.org. Further guidance is expected from the Building Safety Regulator and the Institution of Structural Engineers.

Single construction regulator

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued their consultation and prospectus on the proposed Single Construction Regulator, to which RICS responded in detail. A further consultation on the future of the professions anticipates changes to mandatory assessment of competence and registration.

MHCLG also issued a consultation on mandatory assessment of competence and registration of fire risk assessors, and RICS responded in detail.

RAAC

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in housing has been identified predominantly in Scotland in social housing, and RICS is engaged with the Scottish Government following release of guidance by the Institution of Structural Engineers. Further information is available on the *RAAC Advice and FAQs* page on rics.org.

Fire safety training

RICS was commissioned by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to develop two training courses (Basic and Advanced) on external wall systems assessment. Funded by the government, for Fire and Rescue Services in England, this was delivered on time in March.

The Institution continues to engage with parliamentarians in England and the devolved nations on fire and building safety concerns.

PGP chair's message

Building safety, competency and the PGP's growing role

PANEL CHAIR HELEN MCKEOWN MRICS

My previous articles for Modus covered the skills shortage within the built environment, and demonstration of competency against the backdrop of the Building Safety Act 2022. In the past four months, RICS and the PGPs have been collaborating on various working groups to plan out how best to address these issues.

An example of this ramping up of activity has included various members of our panel attending a series of weekly sessions as part of the Building Surveying Working Group. It is tasked with reviewing and updating the APC competencies across the pathway as part of this comprehensive review of the required skills and competencies that our industry and clients depend upon. My particular thanks to Joanne Williams MRICS and Neil Wotherspoon FRICS, and Governing Council BS representative, Richard Cass MRICS, for their commitment and thought leadership.

The PGP's work has also involved working alongside Gary Strong FRICS, MHCLG and the Building Safety Regulator on the competency framework, among other subjects.

I don't have enough column inches to list our other activity that goes on both within the PGP quarterly meetings and additional volunteering time outside of the PGP itself – of which there is plenty.

When I attended the RICS Dilapidations conference in March, I was pleased to gather positive feedback from members regarding the step-change that is afoot; direct engagement with practitioners and an open-call format of communication demonstrating a deliberate shift towards membership-led

A deliberate shift towards membership-led insight gathering – as opposed to top-down policy development

insight gathering – as opposed to top-down policy development – was discussed more than once.

One of my goals since being elected Chair of the PGP is to make the PGP more accessible to the membership, encourage more engagement and therefore gather more of that valuable insight. Watch this space. I chaired the Building Surveying conference in May as well as staffing the PGP stand with Rosemary Silver FRICS and other panel members. It was great to meet attendees and gather insight and feedback.

In other news, the PGP are actively recruiting for three roles for BS and BC professionals to apply, and these are open to AssocRICS, MRICS and FRICS. In an ever-changing landscape, our PGP members are at the forefront, contributing to how the built environment is being formed for the future of our profession and generations that follow.



PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Training courses

Certificate of Building Surveying Practice - online course

This online course equips you with essential knowledge in construction technology, contract administration, building pathology and regulatory compliance, preparing you for key responsibilities in this multi-disciplinary field.

Find out more about these courses at rics.org/training-events

Upcoming conferences:

UK&I Building Surveying Conference - May 2026

UK&I Building Conservation Conference - September 2026

UK&I Fire Safety Conference - October 2026

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



Student housing: from niche to established asset class

Accommodation for students has become a resilient, in-demand institutional asset driven by improved stock quality and quantity, large-scale investment and consolidation across Europe

WORDS BY PATRIK PAVLACIC MRICS

THE STUDENT HOUSING sector continues its transformation from a university-led niche market into a globally recognised institutional asset class.

Thanks to its strong fundamentals, a growing recognition meets an increasing interest in the context of investment opportunities compared with other real estate sectors such as hotels and offices.

The PwC and Urban Land Institute (ULI) *Emerging Trends in Real Estate® Europe 2026* report highlights the continued strength of living sectors, with student housing, co-living and senior living all ranking among investors' top ten choices.

Student housing remains ranked third across investment, development and overall prospects – a confirmation of the sector's resilience, the depth of demand and growing institutional trust.

From public origins to growing private market

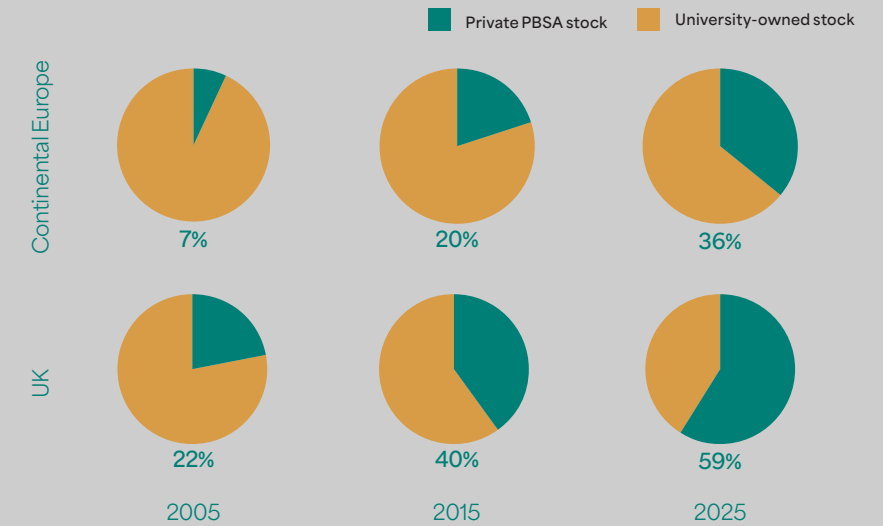
While the term 'student housing' encompasses all forms of accommodation used by students, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) refers to student housing that is specifically designed and built to cater to students' needs.

PBSA is available for longer-term rent and includes not only professionally maintained communal areas with amenities but also dedicated services for residents.

Historically, university-owned housing was the primary option for students. By the 2000s, however, the most student-populated cities had diversified their student housing options to include traditional dorms as well as privately run, purpose-built residences.

This has led to a growing share of private PBSA providers in the market. BONARD data

Share of the private PBSA stock



Note: The data is based on 173 cities in eight countries: UK - 72 cities; continental Europe: Germany - 42 cities, Italy - 13 cities, France - ten cities, Poland - eight cities, Portugal - two cities, Spain - 15 cities and the Netherlands - 11 cities. Source: BONARD, 2025

As much as 59% of the total bed capacity in the UK is managed by private stakeholders, up from 40% in 2015

indicates that as much as 59% of the total bed capacity in the UK is managed by private stakeholders, up from 40% in 2015, while in continental Europe the share stands at 36%, up from 20% in 2015.

The student housing market has not only expanded in scale but it has also undergone a visible upgrade in stock quality. A growing share of operational beds is now found in well-designed properties developed and managed to meet the expectations of both students and institutional investors.

A notable trend is the integration of popular amenities as standard features in new developments. More operators are equipping their residences with gyms, advanced security systems, terraces and outdoor social spaces, and games and TV rooms, as well as multifunctional common areas that support both academic and social life.

UNSPASH

This growing quantity and quality in stock is currently transforming the student housing sector from a highly fragmented, developer-led niche market into an institutional-grade asset class with a substantial base of scalable, profitable portfolios.

As of 2025, the European market comprised nearly 295 portfolios (two or more assets under the management of one operator), representing more than 2,470 operational assets. In the UK, there were 114 portfolio brands accounting for approximately 1,400 operational assets. In comparison, there were 64 portfolios in Canada, representing 340 operational assets.

Structural drivers, emerging risks and uneven outlook

Student housing offers a unique and compelling value proposition for investors, owing largely to its structural demand drivers:

- rising international and domestic student mobility
- persistent undersupply
- sustainable rental growth in line with inflation and
- the counter-cyclical nature of higher education enrolment during economic downturns.

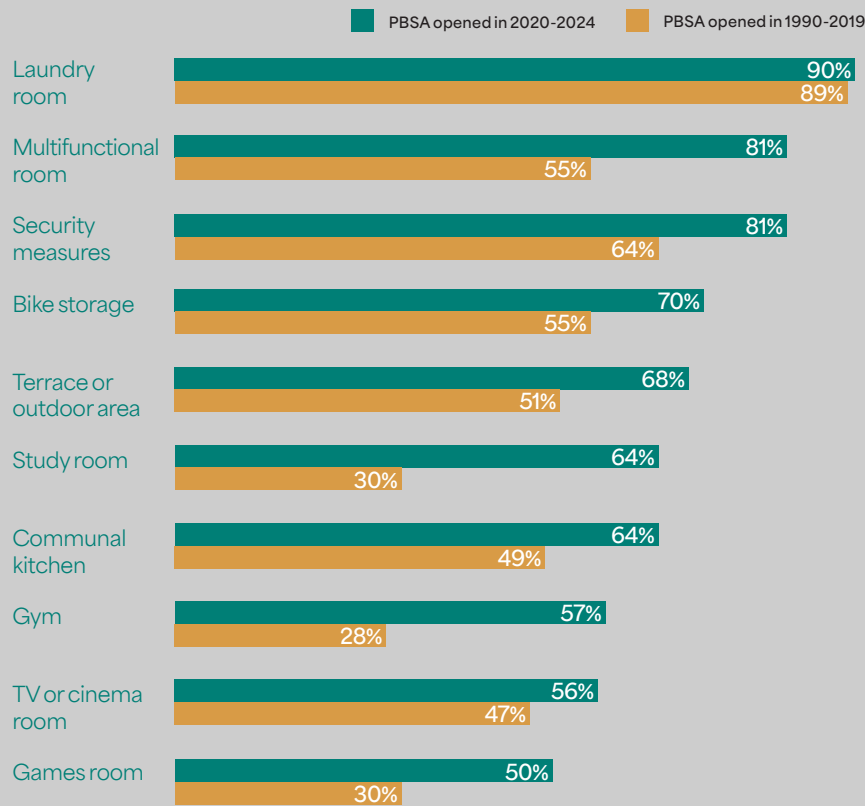
Compared with other real estate segments that are highly sensitive to economic cycles, such as hotels, student housing offers significantly more predictable income and resilience, supported by the annual academic cycle and consistent demand from domestic and international students.

After predominant expansion since 2022, student housing yields tend to stabilise in some core markets (e.g. London at 4.3%, Paris at 4.5% and Berlin at 4.7%) mainly due to the softening of global interest rate policy.

Although PBSA market fundamentals remain strong, several factors are constraining development. Rapid rental growth has pushed affordability pressures across Europe, particularly for international students affected by currency shifts and rising price sensitivity. This may also trigger increased political and regulatory scrutiny in cities already facing housing shortages.

The sector's outlook is further shaped by uneven external drivers: demographic shifts, varying international mobility trends and differing visa or post-study work policies across countries.

Evolution of PBSA amenities (privately run assets) in Europe



Source: BONARD calculations based on data for the European cities available in-house, 2025

Combined with ongoing planning and construction challenges, these dynamics point to continued disparities in supply growth and market performance across regions.

Surging demand and limited supply

Unlike other real estate asset classes, the sector proves to be counter-cyclical and resilient to macro-level crises such as COVID-19, when student housing preserved a very high occupancy rate.

It is comparatively easier to forecast future demand, being linked to higher education institution enrolment as well as academic cycle rent structures. In addition to this, investing in assets near different higher education institutions or geographical areas can diversify risks.

The demand for student accommodation is on a steep upward trajectory, driven primarily by international mobility.

European countries are experiencing the fastest growth in international student numbers and are among the most attractive for foreign direct investments thanks to more affordable tuition, English-taught programmes and flexible visa policies.

Domestic mobility is reinforcing this trend: in 2024, an average of over 60% of domestic students studied outside their home city, creating consistent demand for housing across university hubs. In the UK, this figure exceeded 70%, underscoring how domestic student mobility can bolster occupancy even in mature markets.

Together, international and domestic student mobility provide a resilient demand base across primary and secondary destinations alike.

Lack of supply remains a critical challenge and leads to higher occupancy rates, especially across continental Europe where the

occupancy rate for private sector PBSA in 2025 was 96%; the net provision rate (ie the total number of beds versus the sum of domestic mobile and international students) is currently 25% in continental Europe and 35% in the UK.

For investors, however, the structural undersupply ensures that new student housing stock will continue to be quickly absorbed by the growing demand, reinforcing the sector's ongoing resilience and long-term growth potential.

As the market continues to mature, continental Europe is likely to follow the trajectory already seen in more advanced student housing markets like the UK, where consolidation has led to fewer, larger platforms with predictable income and proven operational models.

Transaction activity correlates with maturation

In recent years the sector has witnessed an increase in large-scale transactions, indicating a growing institutional appetite for student housing assets. This trend signals not only

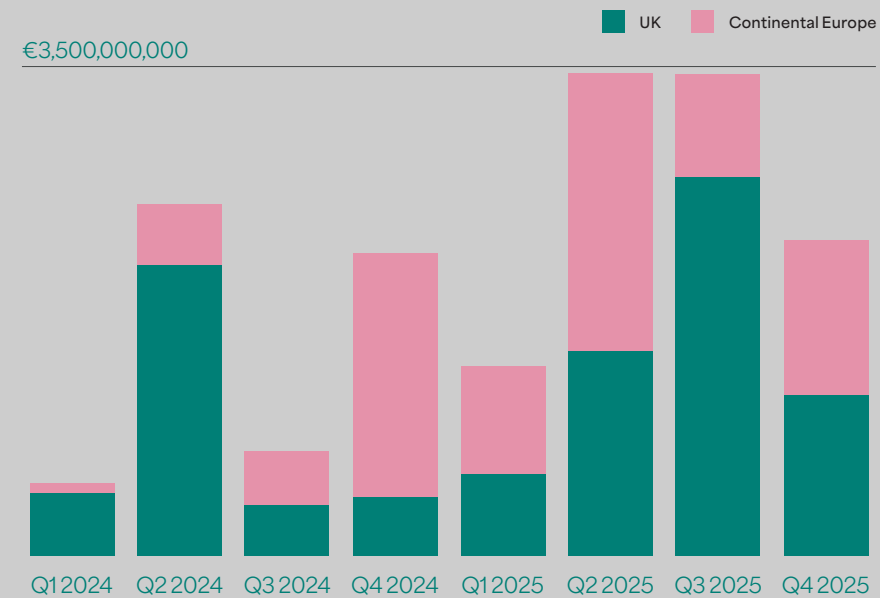
Growing investment ticket sizes signal that the sector is maturing

plenty of confidence in the sector's long-term fundamentals but also the emergence of a truly transactable, portfolio-driven investment landscape.

The market has been shaped by some of the largest student housing transactions ever recorded in Europe. Landmark deals such as Blackstone's £4.7bn takeover of iQ Student Accommodation, GIC and Greystar's £3.3bn acquisition of Student Roost and Xior's €939m purchase of Basecamp demonstrate how investment volumes have not only grown in scale but have also become increasingly concentrated in portfolio-level assets.

Platform-building transaction activity continued throughout 2025 as well, with the €1.2bn CPP Investments acquisition of Livensa Living representing one of the most significant student housing deals concluded

Volume of PBSA transactions in the UK and continental Europe



Note: The graph is based on in-house data for European and UK transactions from Q1 2024 to Q4 2025. The data include the purchase of operational assets, forward deals and joint ventures. For a minor share of deals where deal value per bed was unavailable, extrapolation with average deal value applied. Source: BONARD, 2026

in southern Europe. This transaction added approximately 9,000 student beds in Spain and Portugal to CPP's portfolio.

And Macquarie's recent move to acquire and consolidate 12,000 beds across Europe through merging Milestone and BaseStack Living is reinforcing this shift from 'isolated' developments to platform consolidation.

Growing investment ticket sizes signal that the sector is maturing: portfolios are now of sufficient scale and quality to attract institutional capital. Moreover, they illustrate

how many investors are choosing to enter or expand in the student housing space through large portfolio acquisitions rather than incremental asset-by-asset development.

Thanks to liquidity, consolidation opportunities and scalable operational models, the sector is becoming a platform for strategic growth and long-term value creation.

Market outlook

In the long term, student housing is expected to be a dynamic and growing sector worldwide, particularly in view of its strong demand fundamentals and space shortages.

It is expected that transactable platforms will be created that offer relevant opportunities for institutional capital.

In the medium to long term, more portfolios will enter the market, either organically through development pipelines or via platform consolidation.

Moreover, governments worldwide – including in Ireland, Australia and South Africa – now recognise that student housing represents a structured, regulated and professionally managed form of accommodation that can alleviate local housing pressures and contribute to national affordable housing policies.

The foundation for long-term merger and acquisition activity is already being laid, with structural, demographic and economic trends all pointing towards growth and consolidation, predominantly across Europe and Canada.

Patrik Pavlacic MRICS is chief intelligence officer at BONARD
 patrik.pavlacic@bonard.com

Related competencies include: Housing strategy and provision, Investment management, Property management, Valuation



Basel 3.1 prudently conservative valuation criteria

What impact will the Basel 3.1 accord's prudently conservative valuation criteria have on bank lending valuations? The author of RICS' practice information examines this question

WORDS BY PROFESSOR NEIL CROSBY MRICS

ASA RESULT of the discussions surrounding the 2008 global financial crisis, there have been significant changes to the regulatory environment for banks.

Real estate lending is central to the operation of financial markets. The lending process requires reliable and financially sustainable valuations at origination and for monitoring existing loan books. Property

valuation has been included among these regulatory changes.

In 2017, the Bank for International Settlements' Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) produced global guidance for the regulation of the financial industry, including banks, known widely as Basel 3.1. Many countries use this guidance to produce their capital requirements regulations (CRR).

However, not every country has adopted all the detailed guidance in Basel 3.1. As a result, the regulations, including those relating to the valuation of real estate, may vary and it is impossible to produce detailed guidance at a global level. However, it is possible to identify the themes running through the changes to property valuation for bank lending purposes.

RICS has responded through two publications. The first is an updated edition of RICS' *Bank lending valuations and mortgage lending value*.

This revised professional standard updates the detail surrounding the use of mortgage lending value (MLV) by some countries, in particular how the EU has organised its CRR following the adoption of Basel 3.1. The standard solidifies the use of MLV in the covered bond market.

The second relevant publication is RICS' *Bank lending valuations: Basel 3.1 prudently conservative valuation criteria adjustments*.

This is a new global practice information paper that addresses the revisions in the Basel 3.1 accord, which have introduced new prudently conservative valuation criteria (PCVC) for the valuation of real estate.

These revisions in Basel 3.1 are in the process of being adopted for both the

origination and monitoring of real estate loans by numerous countries and regions, e.g. the EU, but not in the UK.

The revisions have already had a significant impact on the use of MLV in the revised EU CRR, as set out in the RICS professional standard on bank lending valuations, including mortgage lending value.

The impact of the Basel 3.1 PCVC is not yet clear, so the new RICS practice information on the Basel 3.1 criteria addresses the challenges of implementing the criteria globally and provides high-level, research-based principles that accord with existing knowledge on long-term, through-the-cycle real estate valuation.

Prudently conservative valuation criteria

Basel 3.1 proposes four criteria to be applied to property valuation. The current edition of RICS' *Bank lending valuations: Basel 3.1 prudently conservative valuation criteria adjustments* sets out the new criteria and discusses the existing definitions of market value and MLV and how they differ.

The new criteria are as follows:

1. 'To ensure that the value of the property is appraised in a prudently conservative manner, the valuation must exclude expectations of price increases'. As there is no explanatory text in Basel 3.1 or the revised EU CRR to accompany the criteria, the meaning of each criterion must be assumed. Given the cyclical nature of property prices and the recognition that economic crises are precipitated by unrealistic price escalation above long-term equilibrium price levels, with escalated property prices attracting ever-increasing loan support, the intention is surely to restrict the valuation to a figure that takes no account of unreasonable current price levels.
2. The second criterion states that property valuation should ignore the 'potential for the current market price to be significantly above the value that would be sustainable over the life of the loan'. This fits with the first criterion's aim as it states significantly above rather than just above.
3. The third criterion states that 'national supervisors should provide guidance, setting out prudent valuation criteria where such guidance does not already exist under national law'.

4. The fourth criterion states that 'if a market value can be determined, the valuation should not be higher than the market value'.

The fourth criterion, therefore, sets out the relationship between the Basel 3.1 property value and market value.

The RICS practice information concludes that, although it is not a requirement, every property valuation formed using the Basel 3.1 criteria should include a market value, with the property value being framed as an adjustment to market value.

According to the fourth criterion, the property value could be equal to or lower than market value, but not higher.

Implementation of Basel 3.1 property valuation criteria

Industry professionals and academics undertook research before Basel 3.1 into what have been called long-term valuations. Most of that research was based on UK market data, with the UK real estate industry and academia working together.

The long-term valuation research programme was sponsored by the valuation industry through the Investment Property Forum along with Bank of England involvement and encouragement. It produced reports in 2017 and 2020 setting out how longer-term trends using established market analysis models could be compared to actual price levels across different segments of the real estate market to identify over- and under-pricing in current markets.

Since the EU decided to adopt the Basel 3.1 property valuation criteria in 2019, long-term value research funded by the Property Trust and Investment Property Forum has analysed the criteria and how they might be applied to mainland European markets.

The recommendations of the research into long-term valuations and PCVC have been incorporated into both RICS publications mentioned above.

Having reviewed the long-term valuation research in its consultation and presumably deciding that the difficulties of implementing the criteria were too great, the UK government decided not to adopt the revised Basel 3.1 PCVC in its revised CRR.

Bank lending valuation methods remain largely unaffected in the UK for now, although overseas property owners may

Where valuers feel they lack capability or support to determine the adjustment factor, they should decline the whole instruction or offer to provide a market valuation only

require additional advice to comply with their own financial regulations.

The current position in jurisdictions that have adopted the Basel 3.1 PCVC, such as the EU, is as follows.

- The valuation criteria within Basel 3.1 do not accord with the definition of market value or the definition of MLV. There are some sound, practical solutions to the implementation of the PCVC that have been thoroughly researched and tested against past cyclical downturns in real estate markets.
- The solutions are based on an adjustment to the existing basis of market value. The adjustments require the analysis of real estate markets, and the adjustment factors are not grounded in individual property characteristics. The adjustment factor should be based on long-term market trends compared to current prices. The analysis should be implemented nationally or regionally and not left to individual valuers. This requires data over the long-term, and data availability differs widely globally.

Although national supervisors have the responsibility for the Basel 3.1 criteria, they may pass this responsibility to lenders, who can pass it down to valuers. At the time of writing, it appears that lenders are beginning to take responsibility for PCVC adjustments and not leaving it to individual valuers.

Implications for valuers

Where valuers rather than regulators or lenders take on the responsibility for the PCVC adjustments to market value, they should be aware of the inconsistencies between the Basel 3.1 criteria and the existing bases of market value and MLV.

- Check instructions – in view of the current lack of national guidance as to its application, valuers should clarify the nature of their instructions and whether it requires a market value or an adjusted market value.
- Assess competence – valuers must be clear that if accepting instructions that require an assessment of whether an adjustment is required and the quantum of that adjustment, they must have the knowledge and information to make those judgements.
- Recommended RICS response – where individual valuers do not feel they have the capability or support to determine the adjustment factor, they should decline the whole instruction or offer to provide a market valuation only. When providing a market valuation only, valuers should explicitly state in their instruction and reporting process that they are not considering the PCVC and rather providing only a market valuation under the International Valuation Standards definition of market value, which is reproduced in the RICS Valuation – Global Standards (Red Book Global Standards).

RICS has taken the view that instructing individual valuers to make the PCVC adjustments to their market valuations would lead to significant inconsistencies in approach and outcome. Therefore, unless they are supremely confident in their ability to identify cyclical over- or under-pricing, valuers should not provide the adjustment.

This position could change. The practice information paper provides detailed reference to research on long-term, through-the-cycle valuations that could be harnessed nationally and regionally by regulators, lenders and valuers to provide a sound and rational basis for those adjustments to counter any procyclicality in property prices, which are the comparable basis for all market valuations.

Professor Neil Crosby MRICS is professor emeritus at University of Reading and lead author for RICS' *Discounted cashflow valuations; Bank lending valuations and mortgage lending value; and Bank lending valuations: Basel 3.1 prudently conservative valuation criteria adjustments*.
n.crosby@henley.reading.ac.uk

Related competencies include: Valuation

For more sector insights, visit www3.rics.org/property-journal

Commercial property standards and guidance

Forthcoming consultations

Code of measuring practice 7th edition

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

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

Find out more about commercial real estate standards and practice information at rics.org/realestatestandards

Licence for alterations in commercial property 3rd edition

The aim of this update is to improve the quality and fairness of negotiations on licences to alter that should make the legal drafting process more efficient. This paper ties into the *Code for Leasing Business Premises* and to the Landlord and Tenant 1954 Act Government Review, which we will hear more of soon - RICS is engaging in this review and leading in areas of dispute. This paper also links strongly to ESG issues, including retrofit.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

UK Commercial Property Conference, date TBC

Bringing together industry leaders, policymakers and forward-thinking professionals for a crucial examination of the forces defining the future of commercial real estate.

Hong Kong Conference, 3 July 2026

This conference will explore how Hong Kong can shape a resilient, future-ready built environment through policy insight, strategic development and technological advancement.

Find out more about this and other events at rics.org/training

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

Work is continuing on updating the commercial property pathway for MRICS and AssocRICS.

NEWS IN BRIEF

London-wide licensing policy

The Mayor of London is drafting a London-wide licensing policy to tackle the challenges faced by boroughs and businesses. The policy complements the London Plan and would help deliver on the Mayor's vision for a safer, more vibrant and prosperous city. It aims to:

- increase economic growth in hospitality, culture, events and nightlife, while ensuring safe and inclusive environments
- boost London's reputation as a destination for tourism, business and investment
- improve the quality, transparency and use of data and information to inform licensing decision-making.

Commercial property market shows signs of stabilisation despite ongoing headwinds

According to the latest RICS *UK Commercial Property Monitor* for Q4 2025, while elevated borrowing costs and a challenging macroeconomic backdrop continue to weigh on activity, survey respondents reported a gradual improvement in confidence. Notably, 32% of contributors now believe market conditions are consistent with the early stages of an upturn, up from 27% in Q3.

Town centre regeneration schemes

Islington and Lambeth boroughs are piloting the adoption of high street rental auction (HSRA) powers to tackle empty shops and revive high streets. Community-led partnerships are transforming town-centre buildings for long-term local benefit in five neighbourhoods.

Artificial intelligence is another major theme, bringing disruption and opportunity. While there are concerns about its impact on traditional roles, there is also a growing need for practical, use-case-driven training.

All of this sits within a volatile economic context. Geopolitical risks are affecting commodity prices, interest rate expectations and real estate values. There are clear upsides in sectors, but these are balanced by ongoing cost-of-living pressures, higher borrowing costs and supply-side constraints.

Despite this uncertainty, there are positives. Clients are demanding more sophisticated advice on real estate assets, from investment strategy to carbon performance, creating an opportunity for surveyors to provide clarity and solutions in an increasingly complex environment.

Residential property standards and guidance

Recently published

Service charge residential management code, 4th edition

The *Service charge residential management code* sets out best practices for managing residential leasehold properties with a focus on raising standards, promoting consistency and ensuring transparency.

The 4th edition of the code, reviewed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and approved by the Secretary of State, is effective from 7 April 2026. It applies only to residential leasehold properties in England, but practitioners operating in other parts of the UK are encouraged to follow the best practice guidelines contained in the code.

This code is written to promote desirable practices in respect of the management of residential leasehold property, with the latest edition of the code reflecting recent developments in legislation, such as the *Building Safety Act 2022* and the *Fire Safety Act 2021* and good practice. Effective property management requires cooperation and a shared understanding of procedures and potential problems.

It is intended to be followed by RICS members and regulated firms acting as managing agents, and all parties

responsible for or affected by service charges including social housing providers, landlords, leaseholders and occupiers. Additionally, parts are specifically intended for other parties such as property owners and professional advisers.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

UK&I Home Surveys in Practice - three-part web class

The UK Home Surveys web class offers a prime opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and ensure compliance, providing you with the latest guidance and best practices for conducting Home Surveys in strict adherence to the standards set forth in the *RICS Home Survey Standard*. Through engaging case studies and cutting-edge insights spanning key elements of the home survey reports, these web classes offer a convenient and easily digestible way to refresh and expand your knowledge.

RICS UK&I Residential Property Conference - 8 October 2026

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

PGP chair's message

Retrofit, reform and the rise of AI



PANEL CHAIR EMMA FLETCHER MRICS

It has been a busy time for the Residential PGP. Vicky Clark is the new residential representative on the Governing Council and we also finally have the *Future Homes Standard* (first mooted in 2019!) with a stronger emphasis on low-carbon technologies such as solar panels and heat pumps. The cancellation of ECO funding and the imminent arrival of the Warm Homes Fund brings challenges and opportunities, and the new Retrofit pathway for APC students are very much needed to help with decarbonising our homes.

Topics such as funding for council stock acquisition, the surge and backlog in right-to-buy applications, and the resulting uncertainty in social housing supply have also been topics for discussion.

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in property management systems – including its potential to automate tenant communications and repairs, along with the associated risks and opportunities – has been a consistent theme of discussions within the PGP. RICS' Tech Partner Programme is set up to help members navigate this rapidly changing world.

The PGP has been actively involved in RICS' engagement with government consultations, particularly those around the subjects of commonhold and leasehold reform, rental reform and service charges, as well as appearing in the media as part of a response to the growing public interest in the residential market.

PGP chair's message

Navigating uncertainty



PANEL CHAIR RODDY HOUSTON MRICS

The commercial property landscape is being shaped by global pressures, policy uncertainty and rapid technological change, creating both challenges and opportunities for the profession.

In the UK, uncertainty around policy continues to weigh on the market. Discussions about the Devolution Bill, potential changes to upward-only rent reviews and the review of the Landlord and Tenant Act make it difficult for landlords and tenants to plan with confidence. Furthermore, environmental regulation adds another layer of complexity.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK Warm Homes Plan

The UK government has announced its Warm Homes Plan, setting out how it will help people find ways to save money on energy bills and transform building stock into low-carbon homes that are fit for the future.

See what RICS President Nick Maclean FRICS said: rics.org/warmhomesplan

RICS further engagement on UK home buying and selling

Following the publication of the proposed reforms, RICS engaged with members, industry leaders and consumer representatives to shape the response and gather insight. RICS would like to acknowledge the valuable insight provided especially by members, and we will continue to work with government as they respond to the consultation. rics.org/buyingandsellingreform

Future Homes and Buildings Standards

The UK government has published its *Future Homes and Buildings Standards*. Justin Young, RICS CEO, said: "RICS professionals are central to delivering this transition, and we are supporting government and industry through new membership pathways that build expertise in retrofit and sustainability."

Valuation standards and guidance

Recently published

ESG and sustainability in commercial property valuation, 4th edition

This global professional standard, effective from 30 April 2026, provides a practical framework for considering significant sustainability and ESG factors in commercial property valuation.

The standard:

- Supports the application of updated RICS Valuation - Global Standards (Red Book Global Standards) and International Valuation Standards (IVS) (both effective from 31 January 2025), including cross-referencing mandatory and best practice ESG requirements, placing them in the context of commercial property valuation.
- Confirms RICS requirements and recommendations around the appropriate consideration and application of ESG-related cost information in commercial property valuation.
- Sets out the differences between valuation and strategic ESG risk advice.
- For the first time includes jurisdictional coverage, covering external legal and regulatory matters relevant to the UK, EU and Australia.
- Includes housekeeping updates from the 3rd edition (effective 31 January 2022) to reflect latest practice (eg revised definitions, consideration of ESG-related income and efficiencies in commercial

property and valuation, development of global Key Performance Indicators).

Depreciated replacement cost (DRC) method of valuation for financial reporting, 1st edition amendment

HM Treasury's thematic review of non-investment asset valuation has confirmed minor but material changes affecting Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) valuations used for UK public sector financial reporting. Alternative site assumptions are now prohibited: valuers must not assume relocation to lower-value sites or land outside the required service-delivery zone. Land and buildings must be valued as a single integrated DRC asset, and land costed on a Modern Equivalent Asset (MEA) basis must remain within the required geography.

The 'cost approach' and DRC method are regarded as synonymous terms; both are in common use around the world to describe a method of valuation of all types of assets. This practice guidance also highlights the reporting requirements outlined in RICS Valuation - Global Standards 2017 - UK national supplement (RB UK) that are particularly relevant when the DRC method has been used.

The 1st edition has now been updated to reflect these requirements with targeted updates taken to maintain consistency, auditability and regulatory compliance.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS)

RICS valuation team has worked with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), in relation to the new High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS), as announced in the Autumn budget 2025. The use of RICS Valuation standards, valuation approach, desktop-based assessments and potential exclusions were part of the discussions. The HVCTS will come into effect in April 2028.



PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Certificate in Commercial Valuation Methodology

This certificate will advance your skills in the core valuation methods used for commercial real estate, such as the investment method and the residual method. Through interactive online learning and realistic case studies, this course will help you apply the correct process and calculation for each method.

PGP chair's message

Valuation under pressure



PANEL CHAIR
NICK KNIGHT MRICS

The valuation profession is facing mounting challenges around audit evidence and reporting standards. Concerns have emerged over insufficient justification for valuation opinions and the persistence of 'tick-box' approaches, particularly in residential valuations. Valuers are being urged to take a more rigorous approach as insolvency activity rises and funding pressures intensify across certain sectors.

At the same time, a rapidly shifting global landscape is adding complexity. Regulatory changes in the US, combined with geopolitical uncertainty, are influencing asset values worldwide. In this environment, the importance of time-stamping valuations and maintaining

robust, transparent documentation has become critical to ensure credibility and defensibility.

Another notable trend is the growing classification of real estate assets as infrastructure. This shift is prompting debate around how to distinguish between business and asset valuations, with implications for valuation standards and investor strategies.

Market conditions remain uncertain. Housing delivery has slowed, and valuers must clearly communicate risks, assumptions and context within their reports. This includes ensuring the relevance of evidence and, in some cases, introducing shelf-life statements to reflect volatility.

While increased volatility and changing risk-free rates have undoubtedly affected transactions, most deals continue to proceed, reinforcing the importance of contextualised, well-supported valuation advice in a rapidly evolving global market.

CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Greening the giga-infrastructure project



“We must widen the sustainability dashboard beyond carbon”

MATTHEW TALLISS FRICS
SENIOR COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR,
ARCADIS

Giga-infrastructure projects promise transformation in terms of connectivity, capacity and greater levels of productivity, but their true legacy is in how they leave communities healthier.

A key metric for surveyors is measuring the sustainable impact a project has on the community it serves. Carbon is a metric we use but it should serve alongside measures for nature, water, circularity and social value. For leadership teams, the real question is: what needs to change in our decisions so sustainability is embedded in everything we do?

Consider all sustainability pillars

Firstly, we must widen the sustainability dashboard and metrics beyond carbon, which is now routinely measured in design and construction through the RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment standard. However, equivalent attention is not given to biodiversity net gain, circularity and social value, even though bringing these into infrastructure projects can produce more nature-positive designs, strengthen resilience, cut waste through circular choices and build local social value.

If we treat every sustainability pillar like cost, with clear baselines, defined success measures, named owners and proper resourcing, we can unlock the same level of ecological, community and supply chain benefits that robust carbon reporting is already providing.

Shift to lifecycle decisions

Secondly, on giga projects, sustainability must be anchored in whole life cost decisions. Too often, options are chosen on build cost, and only later do decades of renewals, operations, maintenance and end-of-life disposal costs emerge – which make up the largest share of total cost.

Focusing on the whole life cost of an asset forces you to consider its

performance from design through to end-of-life. That lens brings sustainability with it: it promotes circular use and reuse of materials to cut waste, encourages resilient specifications for future climate challenges and supports smarter choices about water and other natural resources.

The whole life cost approach encourages long-term investment, providing value in terms of cost and sustainability. RICS has whole life cost guidance, which sets a foundation standard for surveyors.

Champion green giga-projects

Thirdly, we have UK giga-infrastructure projects already demonstrating how all pillars of sustainability can be brought together. The TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is a standout example, demonstrating integrated environmental, social and economic benefits in practice.

TRU is committing to at least 10% biodiversity net gain and a programme-wide biodiversity plan with long-term habitat management. This focuses on avoiding and minimising impacts and will leave a lasting positive ecological legacy for the local area.

Furthermore, TRU is embedding circularity alongside water stewardship with circular economy commitments and robust water pollution prevention controls built into project delivery governance.

Carbon remains an essential consideration, but on its own it is not enough to create full sustainability. Project leaders are still primarily judged on the traditional, assured metrics of cost, time and quality.

If we widen the lens to embrace the full breadth of sustainability – carbon, nature, circularity and social value – and make whole life cost the decision spine, we can produce assets that leave communities healthier for future generations.

Where in the UK can landowners profit from wine?

Although UK wine production is increasing, finding the best site for viticulture can be difficult. One company has introduced a system that takes the guesswork out of the process



WORDS BY JAMES PRYOR AND NIKOS PAPANESIOS

ACCORDING TO WINEGB, the body representing the wine industry in Britain, UK wine production has increased tenfold since the early 2000s, with more than 16.5m bottles produced last year.

Acreage under vine has also expanded rapidly, with more than 4,841ha planted across 1,100 vineyards as of 2025. The sector's contribution to the economy is also notable. WineGB's 2025 industry report estimates that UK wine generates more than £510m annually, supporting more than 3,300 full-time and 13,000 seasonal roles.

The remarkable growth of English wine has been facilitated by several coinciding factors, including technological advancements, strategic investments and, perhaps most crucially, climate change.

For many years, the UK was too cold to viably grow grapes for wine production – even the most resilient sparkling varieties require a minimum average temperature of 13C throughout the growing season from April to October. However, climate change-induced temperature rises have meant that much of

the south and east of England are now regularly above this threshold.

With national temperatures rising at a rate of approximately 0.25C per decade, Knight Frank models forecast the total area of climatically suitable land for viticulture in the UK to increase from 71,000km² in 2024 to 120,000km² in 2034, unlocking land predominantly across the Midlands.

Although rising temperatures create promising growing conditions for the UK's relatively cool climate, excessive heat across northern Europe is lowering production volumes in France by as much as 23%. In fact, these harsh conditions are driving

Producers are increasingly turning to tourism to supplement the relatively small scales of production

demand for land in the English countryside by established overseas producers; French champagne house Taittinger is just one of those expanding into England to hedge their bets.

Innovation and sustainability key to viticulture

In addition to a mild growing season, location is a critical determinant of wine quality and commercial viability – the optimal site has chalk or limestone soil and is south-facing with a slope of between three to ten degrees to promote surface water runoff.

Historically, site identification was time-expensive and inefficient, using a combination of anecdotal knowledge and manual surveys. However, we can now quickly and accurately identify optimal sites using geographic information systems and datasets pertaining to climate conditions, soil types and terrain.

Technological advances are also driving improvements and success in the UK wine industry. The recent adoption of precision agriculture such as global positioning systems,

remote sensing, robotics and automation has enabled growers to better monitor weather conditions and vine health and improve efficiency on the farm.

Many commercial vineyards in the UK are increasingly using some form of precision agriculture. Inside the winery, producers have adopted inert gas presses, which extract juice in an oxygen-free environment that preserves aromas and taste; temperature-controlled fermentation tanks, which allow for precise regulation of yeast activity to control flavour; and advanced filtration systems to enhance quality and yield.

Through bodies such as Innovate UK, the UK government has provided more than £10m in research grants for viticulture and oenology – the science of winemaking – since 2018. These grants have supported research on disease-resistant grape varieties, climate adaptation and low-intervention winemaking.

Sustainability is also at the forefront of producers' strategy – 40% of English vineyards are certified under the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain scheme, which sets industry standards for environmental stewardship.

Electric machinery, rainwater harvesting and organic pesticides are all becoming increasingly common, reflecting both regulatory pressures and consumer demand for sustainable produce.

Rise in wine tourism boosts revenues

In addition to the increasing demand for wine made in the UK, wine tourism is contributing significantly to producers' revenue.

UK vineyards and wineries are attracting more visitors, which is generating direct revenue from tourism. Indirect spending on, for example, accommodation, dining and visits to other local attractions, is also up.

Participants in WineGB's Industry Survey 2024 indicated that tourism accounted for 25% of total operating income; but there's still room to grow. For comparison, Napa Valley, a mature wine region in northern California, welcomes nearly four million visitors each year and generates spending of \$2.5bn annually, according to Napa Valley Vintners. Knight Frank has calculated that this is nearly five times more spend per person compared with UK producers.

To help UK vineyards maximise the benefits of tourism, Knight Frank provides bespoke consultancy advice on local demographics and placemaking opportunities.

How UK wine became a serious contender in the viticulture industry

£510m

UK wine generates more than £510m annually

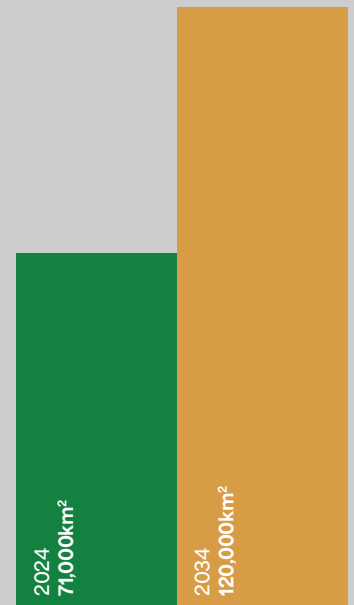
10.6m

UK wine production has increased tenfold since the early 2000s, with more than 10.6m bottles produced last year

4,841ha

Acreage under vine has also expanded rapidly, with more than 4,841ha planted across 1,100 vineyards as of 2025

Source: WineGB, Knight Frank



The total area of climatically suitable land for viticulture in the UK to increase from 71,000km² in 2024 to 120,000km² in 2034

Placemaking is the strategic and collaborative process of shaping an environment – both physically and socially – to enhance its appeal as a visitor destination.

Producers are increasingly turning to tourism to supplement the relatively small scales of production in the sector, reflecting the broader trend of growth in the experience economy.

While UK wine is typically positioned as a premium product, in today's challenging economic climate, the most successful and resilient businesses are those offering visitors more than just great wine.

What's in store for UK viticulture?

Driven by continued investment and increasing consumer appetite, UK wine is poised for further growth.

Critical acclaim is driving demand both domestically and abroad, with exports now accounting for 9% of sales and rising. That said, wine producers that embrace tourism and the experience economy will be more successful and resilient than those that do

not, but only if their strategy is clear and well-executed.

Climate change presents both challenges and opportunities for growers, for whom securing suitable land is becoming increasingly difficult.

Digital transformation will continue to shape all aspects of the wine-making process; advances in new technologies, including artificial intelligence, will create new opportunities we cannot yet conceive, while sustainability will remain central to the practice.

James Pryor is senior analyst at Knight Frank james.pryor@knightfrank.com

Nikos Papanesios is head of innovation analytics at Knight Frank nikolaos.papanesios@knightfrank.com

Related competencies include: Agriculture, GIS (geographical information systems), Land use and diversification

How to use London's golf courses to build homes

Would London's golfers give up some exclusive courses to provide housing for 140,000 people in the city? And how would our planning system cope with such creative thinking?

WORDS BY RUSSELL CURTIS



SHUTTERSTOCK

LOCKDOWN SEEMS A long time ago. It's now been six years since Boris Johnson announced that the UK was descending into its first lockdown and everyone in the nation scuttled home (if they were lucky enough to have one). Thus commenced the ritual of social distancing, home working and slathering ourselves in hand sanitiser.

The pandemic reshaped the housing market. Houses spiked in value as those who could afford to fled from flats in the cities for a new life in the provinces and – even though many regretted this decision and decided the rural life wasn't for them – the price of flats in London hasn't kept pace with that of houses. This isn't just a preference for homes with bigger gardens, but a consequence of the cladding scandal, mortgageability and growing scepticism about leasehold property.

While the price of flats has fallen, there's one appalling statistic that has been inexorably

We might be short of homes, but one thing we're not short of is land

heading in the other direction: the financial cost of homelessness has rocketed and, half a decade after the pandemic, there's little sign of improvement. The financial cost is scandalous; the human impact is a tragedy.

We might be short of homes, but one thing we're not short of is land. There is developable land across the capital – land that does not demand expensive remediation and is close to high streets. Land that is owned by the very councils that are slowly being bankrupted by the insidious rise of homelessness. Land that is sparsely used, save for bashing small white balls about. There is land in abundance.

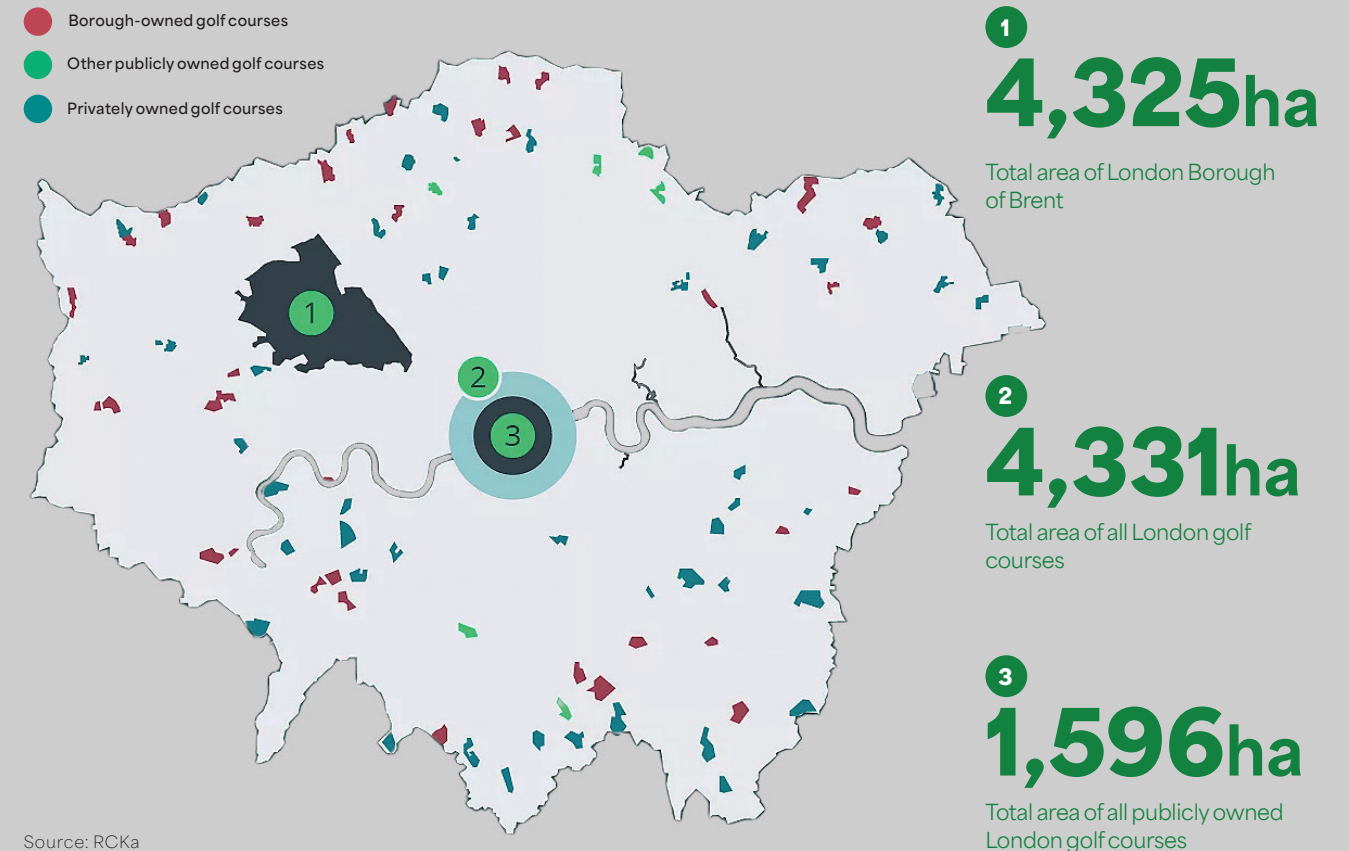
Golf courses are a huge land resource in London's suburban boroughs

Of all the suburban boroughs, Enfield faces the greatest challenge, recording 400 households presenting as homeless every month. It has more than 3,000 families in temporary accommodation, costing taxpayers around £80m per year. At the same time, the council owns three golf courses, with two more in private ownership and a sixth under the control of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. Together, the borough's courses occupy more than 330ha – around 4% of its total area.

This is a common pattern across London, particularly in the outer areas, where fingers of green belt push their way into the suburbs between radial rail and tube lines. Enfield's neighbouring Barnet has nine courses and Bromley, in the south-east of London, 11. Although Richmond upon Thames has only

Par for the course: London's golf clubs possess vast swathes of green space

- Borough-owned golf courses
- Other publicly owned golf courses
- Privately owned golf courses



Source: RCKa

seven, they're huge and together take up 7% of the borough's area – the largest proportion of any in London. Southwark's Dulwich and Sydenham Hill Golf Club, owned by the Dulwich Estate and located in the borough's southern tip, is the closest to central London and extends to more than 33ha.

In total, there are more than 90 active golf clubs in Greater London. Cumulatively they occupy an area greater than Brent – a mid-sized borough home to 330,000 people. London's publicly-owned courses alone – of which there are more than 40 – take up an area larger than the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, which has a total population of 185,000.

When the city is under such pressure to provide homes for a growing population, and with house prices continuing to spiral upwards, it is only right to question whether golf represents a just use of a scarce resource.

Attitudes towards development of green belt and metropolitan open land are changing

Of course, wholesale redevelopment of Enfield's – or any borough's – fairways and putting greens is not realistic, nor reasonable.

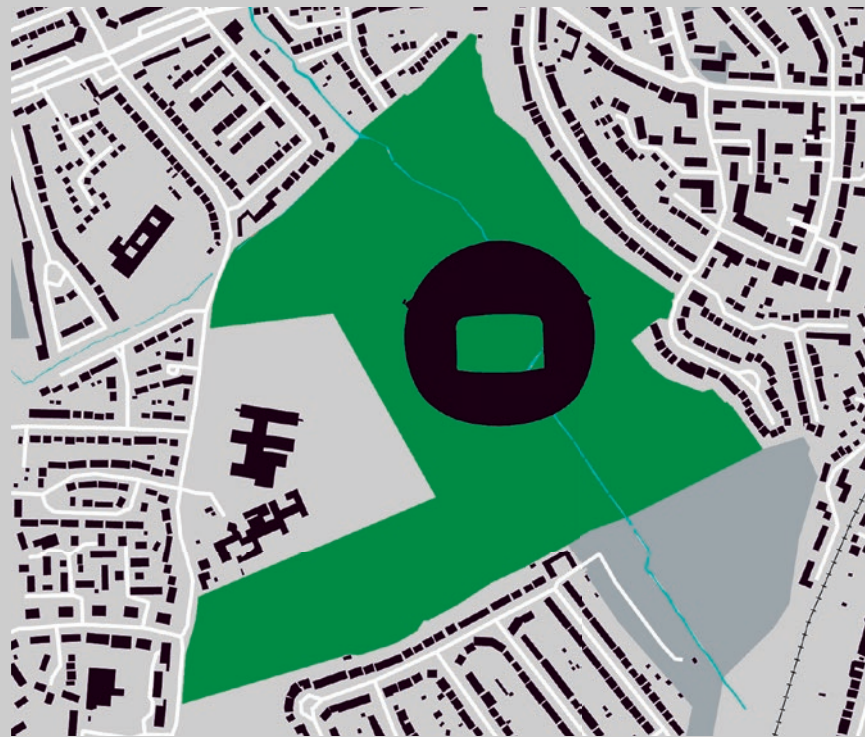
Irrespective of the political challenges, the planning constraints are considerable. Most golf courses sit in either green belt or metropolitan open land (MOL), with the latter being a planning designation unique to London that affords the same protections as green belt. Or at least it did; plans are afoot.

In the mayor of London's *Towards a New London Plan* (the London Plan), published in May 2025, there is a noticeable shift in position when it comes to green space, and golf courses in particular. The document acknowledged that, "given the challenging housing target, there may be some very specific circumstances where certain MOL, such as golf courses, could be considered for release for housing."

"These are often not publicly accessible and offer limited biodiversity value. They could also provide new accessible open spaces and parks alongside housing and other development."

Some golf clubs are now investigating ways to release land for other uses that might provide much-needed income to invest in tired facilities. However, they come up against the very planning barriers imposed to protect them from unwanted development.

Wembley Stadium overlaid on Enfield Golf Course. The entire stadium - which can seat 90,000 people - takes up the area of just two holes.



Source: RCKa

The capacity of the city's courses to deal with a wider societal need is significantly limited

Concern over biodiversity loss causing pushback against development

Even when development is necessary for a club's survival, the mere suggestion of building on surplus green space is met with resistance.

The argument is twofold: golf courses provide vital open space accessible to Londoners, and they contribute to the city's ecology. But the latter is a fallacy. High water usage and the frequent mowing of a largely monocultural landscape do not

provide significant biodiversity benefits, as many claim.

As with motorways, trees and hedges along the edges of fairways attract wildlife. But that doesn't make them inherently biodiverse; for highways and fairways, nature is a by-product, not an objective.

An average-sized suburban golf course might have around 20% of its area occupied by either fairways or green, with a further 50% occupied by rough and 30% by tree cover. That's not an insignificant amount, but rewilding and opening these spaces to the public, as Lewisham Council did in 2019 at Beckenham Place Park, could offer significant ecological benefits to the wider area.

A third of London's area is considered to be green. Parks and gardens occupy around 11,500ha of land in London and playing fields and sports grounds around 5,600ha. That compares well with other global cities.

Golf courses are the third largest category

of open space, occupying more than 4,330ha. But with each golfer requiring more than one hectare to play, the capacity of the city's courses to deal with a wider societal need is significantly limited.

Creative town planning overcomes barriers to development in open spaces

Although it is often presented as a binary choice between fields or concrete, development in open spaces does not have to be a zero-sum game. There is no reason why, with a little creativity and imagination, we cannot find ways to improve public access, promote biodiversity and provide vital new – or even enhance current – social infrastructure, parkland, food production, leisure spaces and housing, while at the same time respecting the important contribution that open spaces make to the character of suburban London.

Clusters of high-density housing set in biodiverse landscapes and linked to the wider public transport network by cycle routes would be entirely compatible with the broader policy aims of the London Plan, if carried out in an intelligent way. Policy must evolve to allow this to happen.

This town structure could also be achieved without a net loss of golfing capacity. The intelligent consolidation of a single course could shorten some higher-par holes without reducing their total number, releasing much-needed land for other uses and improving the experience for time-poor players.

A large number of London's golf courses lie in easy reach of public transport or close to

Even at a modest density of 60 homes per hectare, the space occupied by a single golfer could provide homes for 380 people.



Source: RCKa

high streets. More than 1,400ha, a third, lie within what is broadly understood to be accessible – close to public transport and high streets – and are therefore suitable for incremental intensification. The areas of public courses that meet these criteria could provide homes for 140,000 people and London's golfers would still have 1,500 holes to play.

In fact, most of London's courses lie within the outer edges of the city, and there are a further 74 courses no more than 5km over the border into the Home Counties. Golfers are not, and will not be, deprived of choice when it comes to places to play.

Challenges are multifaceted, but development projects are underway

The challenges facing London are myriad, and no single intervention will solve the current housing crisis once and for all. But failing to house those who need a decent place to live is not a result of factors outside our control – it is a choice. Access to decent housing is one of the most significant contributors to social and economic inequality.

At last, politicians seem willing to face this challenge head on and there are examples of golf course development in the city.

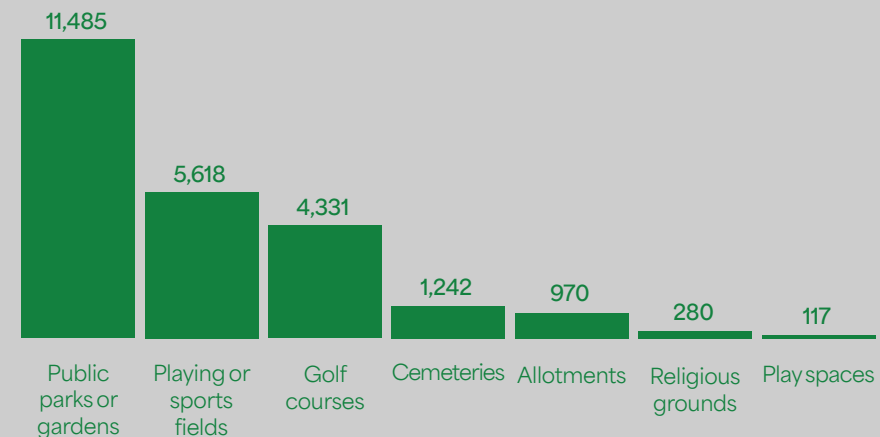
- Barking and Dagenham Council recently approved the sale of Crowlands Heath golf course to be developed for housing.
- Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe allowed proposals for the All England Club to expand into Wimbledon Park Golf Club, opening up more space for public access.
- Back in Enfield, its Crews Hill course sits in the middle of the government's favoured location for a new town.

One by one, golfing holes are making way for homes.

Russell Curtis is founding director at RCKa
russell.curtis@rcka.co.uk

Related competencies include: Development appraisals, Economic development, Planning and development management

Area of types of green space in London (hectares)



For further key sector insights, visit www3.rics.org/land-journal

Land and natural resources standards and guidance

Recently published

Land agreements for development purposes, Professional standard, 1st edition

This standard aims to ensure surveyors provide the best and most up-to-date advice when advising clients on agreement types available to either the landowner, purchaser or promoter in this complex area of practice.

RICS international land performance framework, Practice information, 1st edition

RICS *International Land Performance Framework* (ILPF) provides a clear, practical pathway to measuring the holistic performance of rural land assets. It supports businesses in measuring both strategic and operational land performance, enabling them to identify improvement opportunities and mitigate performance risks.

Coming soon

Affordable housing developments - valuation considerations, Professional standard, 1st edition

This standard assists 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.

Party wall legislation and procedure, 8th edition

This updated practice guidance includes enhanced appendices, revised letters of appointment and terms, and an updated draft award. It strengthens the guidance on regulatory and conduct matters, including fee practices, use of the Third Surveyor, serving of notices and public engagement.

Also in development

Look out for updates on rics.org/sectorstandards

- *Assessing biodiversity net gain for developments*
- *Negotiating options and leases for renewable energy schemes, 2nd edition*

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Conferences

RICS Planning & Development Conference - October 2026

RICS Global Land & Property Conference (virtual) - November 2026

RICS Telecoms Annual Conference - November 2026

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

Weekly online classes

Global Development Appraisals Method and Process - three parts
Starts 15 July 2026, 9.30am - 11am
4.5 hours structured CPD

Build confidence in development appraisals - learn key valuation methods, residual analysis and risk factors. Gain practical insight into cashflows, phased developments and sensitivity analysis to strengthen valuation reporting.

Global Property Development Strategies - three parts
Starts 1 July 2026, 1.30pm - 3pm
4.5 hours structured CPD

Understand the full development process - from concept to construction - while assessing risk, stakeholders and strategic decision-making. Learn key valuation techniques, funding structures and risk analysis methods to deliver successful development outcomes.

PGP chair's message

Land, nature and the future of development in the UK

PANEL CHAIR GRACE PROWSE MRICS

It's been a busy period across Land and Natural Resources. In agriculture, the work of the Farm Tenancy Forum continues to progress. Recent outputs include a guidance note to support landlords and tenants considering long-term farm business tenancies (FBTs) in England.



RICS has also contributed to the development of the *Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Code of practice for Wales*, which aims to promote clarity, communication and mutual respect within the tenanted sector.

RICS *Land Journal* has published two articles on the *Land Use Framework for England*, following our detailed response to the consultation on the framework.

Natural capital remains a key area of focus for RICS and I recommend a recent podcast, *Navigating the complexities of natural capital*, at rics.org/podcasts.

We were delighted to see so many members at both the RICS Minerals and Waste Conference and the RICS Rural Conference, and to receive such positive feedback on the quality and relevance of the content.

Government continues to prioritise planning reform as a means of accelerating housing delivery. Earlier this year, RICS responded to the *National Planning Policy Framework 2025* consultation, covering housing delivery, land management, green belts, data centres, minerals, and energy and water resources. RICS members also supported the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government through roundtable discussions on complex viability issues. We look forward to seeing the intended benefits of these reforms coming through.

Finally, our Geospatial Expert Group has provided specialist advice to GNSS users in the Gulf region, and RICS is again engaging with FIG ahead of its Cape Town event. Our South African and Commonwealth colleagues played a central role in the 2026 Surveyor of the Year celebrations held in March.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Geospatial practice advice - gulf conflict and use of GNSS

The Geospatial Expert Group has issued guidance on GNSS spoofing and mitigation in the Arabian Gulf. [Read more on rics.org/news](http://rics.org/news)

Long-term farm business tenancies

The Farm Tenancy Forum has published new guidance on long-term farm business tenancies. This guidance was developed by the Farm Tenancy Forum on which RICS is represented, and has been developed to help landlords, tenants and their advisers think through the main considerations involved in agreeing a long-term tenancy. [Read more on rics.org/standards](http://rics.org/standards)

Land Use Framework - England

RICS is pleased to see the long-awaited *Land Use Framework for England* published. It sets out how England should use land more effectively to meet its needs across sectors including housing, energy infrastructure and clean power, food production and nature recovery.

As outlined by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, the framework is not a replacement for the planning system but instead it is a document that is a blueprint for smarter, more informed decisions, and it shares cutting-edge data with those who need it the most. RICS responded to the *Land Use Framework* consultation.

RICS responds to NPPF consultation

In March 2026, the RICS Planning and Development Expert Group responded to 225 government consultation questions, welcoming the ambition to reform the planning system while stressing the need for a modern, evidence-driven framework that supports economic growth.

The response emphasises maintaining the business case for

development amid rising costs and fragile market conditions, cautioning against over-reliance on plan-stage viability assessments and underscoring the continued importance of site-specific testing. RICS supports digital transformation of the planning system, highlighting high-quality geospatial data as critical to faster, more effective plan-making and long-term spatial strategies. It also calls for realistic implementation timelines, clearer guidance on cross-boundary cooperation and infrastructure alignment, and targeted measures to support housing demand, to ensure reforms deliver balanced economic, social and environmental outcomes. [Read more on rics.org/news](http://rics.org/news)

Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) Designation

RICS and the Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES) have launched a landmark partnership agreement, offering access to a new Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) designation available for professional members of both institutions. This new designation recognises expertise and demonstrates ability to work with the high standards of both professional bodies. [Find out more at rics.org/CCES](http://rics.org/CCES)

Surveying for Climate Resilience

Surveying for Climate Resilience: Practical Climate Actions highlights the essential role of surveying professionals in advancing climate resilience. The publication is the result of the work in the FIG Climate Compass Task Force (2023-2026) and offers practical strategies and real-world examples to support climate adaptation, mitigation and disaster resilience at national and local levels. With its 16 high-level Climate Actions, this publication marks a significant milestone for FIG, of which RICS is a founding member.

Embracing neurodiversity in the built environment

Construction workplaces require both written policies and practical, measurable action to ensure neurodiverse colleagues are given the opportunity to thrive in the sector

WORDS BY ABIGAIL BLUMZON FRICS

NEURODIVERSITY IS AN important topic of conversation across the built environment. It matters not only for social and ethical motives, but for two specific reasons that are fundamental to our profession.

First, workplaces in construction span both permanent offices and temporary sites that effectively become offices for many months and sometimes years. Creating psychologically safe, sensory-aware and cognitively accessible environments supports productivity, reduces burnout and helps retain talent.

Second, when our industry understands and reflects the diversity of society, we're better equipped to design spaces that include everyone who uses them, rather than unintentionally excluding some individuals through assumption or oversight.

Our sector already employs a significant proportion of neurodivergent professionals, both those who are formally diagnosed and others who have self-identified. A recent 2025 research report by the Association for Project Management found that 46% of project professionals in construction consider themselves neurodivergent, compared with 31% across all sectors.

A 2023 report by the National Federation of Builders (NFB) titled *Neurodiversity in Construction* found that around one in four construction workers identifies as neurodiverse, and that 17% have been formally diagnosed.

In other words, neurodiversity isn't a marginal concern in construction. However, the NFB report also found that 75% of construction workers say they were not asked about neurodiversity at the hiring or onboarding stages, which signals a lost opportunity to offer support or build understanding from the beginning.

This gives us an ethical obligation to support our people and a commercial imperative to harness the strengths that diverse colleagues bring.

Evidence is growing that the inclusion of neurodiverse colleagues in teams can improve project outcomes through innovation, attention to detail, lateral thinking and rigorous risk-based reasoning.

As chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee at Bailey Partnership, a 200-person construction consultancy, I have spent much of the last year gathering internal data, mapping disability and neurodiversity representation

across our workforce and working to build support structures to empower colleagues.

Alongside chairing the committee, I lead our Chichester office and South Coast project management team. My day-to-day work includes engaging with colleagues, clients, contractors, consultants, supply chains and resident groups.

Chairing the committee alongside my everyday work has taught me that people process and communicate information in profoundly different ways, and that language, structure and clarity are vital to success.

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to natural variations in the human brain, encompassing autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette syndrome and other cognitive profiles. It recognises that neurological differences should be acknowledged and respected.

Neurodivergent describes people whose cognitive functioning differs from societal norms. Neurotypical describes cognitive functioning aligned with those norms.

As someone with ADHD, I've experienced both the benefits and the friction it can bring. Neurodiversity can bring valuable strengths: pattern recognition, visual problem-solving, deep focus, creativity, hyper-specific expertise and novel problem-framing.

Challenges, meanwhile, can include sensory overload, difficulty with ambiguous tasks, working memory limitations or fatigue from masking, which is a process where individuals moderate their behaviour in an attempt to fit into social norms.

Therefore a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in modern project environments.

Leadership modelling is equally essential. When senior figures normalise adjustments, express curiosity rather than judgement and show vulnerability themselves, it accelerates inclusion across the organisation

Instead, tailoring communication and workflow to individual colleagues' strengths can unlock performance.

Embedding EDI in practice: how our committee works

The EDI committee was created as part of a conscious decision by Bailey Partnership's leadership to strengthen our culture and improve staff well-being, while responding to clients' increasing expectations around inclusion and social responsibility.

It has united colleagues across our offices and professional disciplines who are passionate about change, including project managers, quantity surveyors, building surveyors, architects, engineers and others.

Coming into the committee chair role, I drew on the skills I've developed as a RICS chartered project manager to understand our baseline and shape our direction.

My first step was to understand our starting point – assessing where we were, what strengths we had and where the gaps lay. From there, I drafted our manifesto: a clear vision, shared values and a set of objectives.

Together, the committee established a concise constitution outlining member responsibilities, time commitments and meeting cadence, giving the committee structure alongside enthusiasm.

Our strategic priorities include the following:

- Data gathering – understanding who we are and where the gaps are
- Inclusive design – embedding inclusion in both physical and digital spaces
- Onboarding and training – ensuring accessibility from day one
- Progression – removing barriers to advancement
- Recruitment – attracting and retaining diverse talent
- Wellbeing – fostering psychological safety and work-life balance.

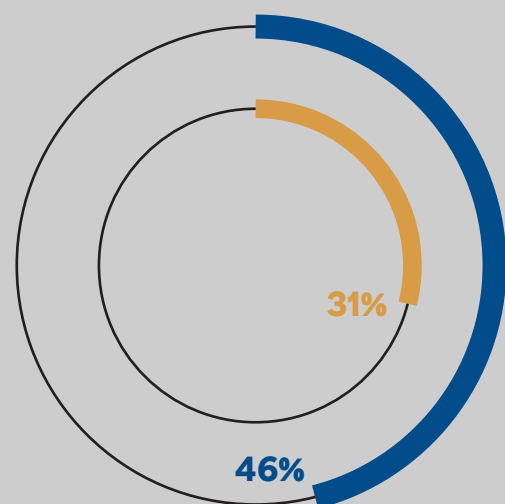
Neurodiversity cuts across every one of these priorities. It shapes how we write job descriptions – using plain language and clear essential criteria – and how we structure interviews, such as offering flexible formats or additional time where needed.

It influences the way we communicate tasks, promoting clarity over ambiguity, as well as how we manage teams to prevent overload and burnout.

A neurodiverse workforce in numbers

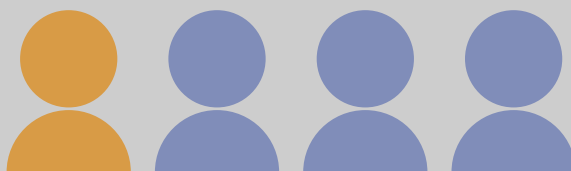
Professionals that consider themselves neurodivergent

■ Project professionals in construction
■ Professionals in all sectors

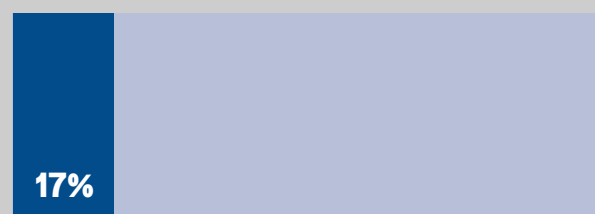


Source: Association for Project Management

One in four construction workers identifies as neurodiverse



Only 17% of construction workers have been formally diagnosed as neurodiverse



It also affects the tools we choose in order to ensure our software is accessible, and even how we design our offices, where sensory considerations can make a significant difference to comfort and performance.

We have learned that consistency matters. Adjustments can't rely on individual managers' discretion, nor on employees feeling safe enough to start those conversations.

The goal is to create systemic inclusion: an environment where good practice is built in.

This year, we launched our first ever firm-wide diversity questionnaire at Bailey Partnership. Before its distribution, we focused heavily on building psychological safety and explaining the purpose of the questionnaire clearly; this was not about monitoring individuals, but about understanding our workforce at a collective level.

The questionnaire was fully anonymous, designed to provide a current baseline for the firm and complemented by our standard process of one-to-one conversations between line managers and staff members.

These individual conversations allowed us to provide support where needed, while the

questionnaire helped us understand broader trends across the organisation.

Data from the survey provided important insights. When asked whether they have a disability or long-term health condition, 7.3% identified as having physical disabilities and 4.6% identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities. Less than 1% chose not to respond to this question.

In a separate neurodiversity question, 14.7% identified as neurodivergent and 4.6% preferred not to say.

These results reflect patterns that are seen across the wider industry and reinforce the importance of establishing consistent, informed support structures across the practice – not simply for compliance, but also to ensure that all of our colleagues feel

Line manager training and wider staff education underpin every other adjustment

psychologically safe, seen and able to contribute at their best.

Practical adjustments that work

We are still at the early stages of this journey, and awareness must come first.

Building and embedding disability inclusion takes time and reinforcement. As the APM's *Promoting Neurodiversity: Unveiling Barriers and Enablers in the Project Management Profession* report notes, targeted awareness training for managers and HR professionals is essential for improving communication, empathy and confidence.

Line manager training and wider staff education underpin every other adjustment. We can't make accommodations or recognise when they're needed without understanding what to look for.

Over the past year, we've delivered inclusion training to all of our staff, with further sessions planned for the future. The subject of neurodiversity now features regularly in our internal communications, with gentle reminders woven through team briefings and leadership forums.

It's also important to note that many of the adjustments described in this article are practices I've been trialling in the Chichester office and the South Coast project management team.

We are continually assessing what works or doesn't work, and which approaches are ready to scale more widely across the practice. These examples reflect what we are doing now in certain teams, and what we are working towards embedding more consistently across the firm as awareness and confidence grow.

We are steadily putting practical adjustments in place; each one is a step towards making inclusion something people feel every day, rather than just paying lip service to it.

Clearer communication has been one of the most immediately impactful areas. This includes:

- sharing meeting agendas in advance, with clear objectives, to help colleagues prepare mentally and emotionally
- providing project-critical information both verbally and in follow-up bullet points to support those colleagues with working-memory challenges
- encouraging varied participation styles, such as cameras-off or chat responses
- avoiding ambiguous phrasing such as 'ASAP' or 'just'.

We have also made progress in enhancing workspaces and environments, offering quiet areas or noise-reducing headphones, avoiding harsh lighting and supporting hybrid working arrangements to allow for sensory recovery.

While flexible working requests and reasonable adjustments have been part of our employee rights and HR policy, our work through the EDI committee is focused on normalising these conversations.

As a result staff feel safe and empowered to raise their needs proactively with line managers, rather than waiting until challenges become unmanageable.

In terms of workflow and management, customising task structures to align with people's strengths has proved to be one of the simplest and most effective performance enhancers we've tried.

Breaking tasks into smaller and more manageable steps, explicitly identifying priorities – 'critical by Friday' versus 'nice to have' – and providing predictable routines all help reduce cognitive overload.

We have actively normalised the use of assistive tools such as speech-to-text software and in-meeting notes. I use these tools myself every day.

A strength-based approach also underpins how we allocate work. Assigning tasks based on individual strengths rather than hierarchy unlocks both performance and engagement.

In my own team, giving ownership of data analysis to a colleague with exceptional pattern-recognition skills not only improved risk reporting, but also boosted their confidence and motivation.

Building roles around strengths rather than rigid job titles benefits everyone and is one of the most reliable ways to translate inclusion into measurable results.

Alongside these practical adjustments, we are working to build supportive cultural structures. When senior professionals disclose their own neurodivergence, it often empowers others to be open, too. We are actively trying to normalise these conversations and create psychologically safe disclosure pathways.

Peer-mentoring networks are another area being explored by the EDI committee as a future initiative.

Finally, inclusive recruitment remains a crucial part of the picture. Transparency is key: sharing interview questions in advance, offering additional thinking time and accommodating written or visual responses all help candidates perform at their best.

Lessons learned and ongoing challenges

This remains a learning journey, and a few themes have become clear.

- Education is critical, and support can vary depending on a line manager's awareness, confidence and willingness to adapt
- Many neurodivergent colleagues self-manage, building their own systems and coping strategies, but these can only go so far without formal support
- Policies must be visible and accessible, and adjustments should not rely on trial and error or private negotiation
- Consistency matters. No one should receive a reduced level of support simply because of who happens to manage them.

Psychological safety sits at the heart of everything. When colleagues feel able to be honest about cognitive overload, sensory

RICS COMMENT

Inclusive space and design go beyond aesthetics and functionality; they focus on creating environments that accommodate the diverse needs, experiences and abilities of all individuals.

By intentionally considering inclusivity in the design process, we can cultivate spaces that promote accessibility, foster a sense of belonging and empower everyone to fully participate and thrive.

Learn more through the RICS Rules of Conduct guidance: [rics.org/inclusive-spaces](https://www.rics.org/inclusive-spaces)

stress or communication preferences, projects run more smoothly.

Leadership modelling is equally essential. When senior figures normalise adjustments, express curiosity rather than judgement and show vulnerability, it accelerates inclusion.

Small behaviours such as language choices, meeting etiquette and openness about personal needs set the tone for everyone else.

The progress we've made so far has already shifted conversations across our practice and shown how small, thoughtful adjustments can unlock extraordinary potential. We still have more work to do, but the direction is clear and the benefits are tangible.

Neurodiversity matters to our profession because it improves:

- retention – people stay where they feel seen
- innovation – cognitive diversity drives creative problem-solving and
- fairness – we design spaces for society; we must reflect it.

I encourage firms and leaders to start the conversation. Build a committee. Gather data. Train managers. And above all, listen.

By building workplaces where neurodivergent colleagues can thrive, we will improve project outcomes, but also build a profession that reflects the world we serve.

Abigail Blumzon FRICS is a specialist in fire safety and facade remediation at Bailey Partnership
a.blumzon@baileyp.co.uk

Unclear drafting can create costly risk allocation

The inclusion of bespoke clauses and amendments must be carefully monitored by all relevant parties to ensure that their intentions and responsibilities are recorded correctly



WORDS BY CLAIRE MCCARRY MRICS

LAST YEAR'S TECHNOLOGY and Construction Court case of John Sisk & Son Ltd v Capital & Centric (Rose) Ltd [2025] EWHC 594 highlights the importance of properly constructing contract amendments and the impact that unclear bespoke provisions or amendments can have on risk allocation and responsibilities of parties to a construction contract.

Background of the case

This case relates to a claim brought by Sisk seeking the court's judgment as to the proper construction of a clarification clause. Sisk was employed as a contractor by Capital & Centric for the design and construction of two new residential buildings together with repair work of two existing listed mills. The JCT Design and Build 2016 contract was heavily amended with bespoke provisions and additional contract documents Volumes 1–4.

A dispute arose regarding the risk associated with the existing structures on site. Sisk claimed that the contract allocated the risk to Capital & Centric, whereas Capital & Centric's competing argument was that they had agreed to take the existing structures risk subject to certain conditions.

The issue was initially referred to an independent adjudicator, who found in Capital & Centric's favour that the contract allocated the risk associated with the existing structures to Sisk.

The contractor subsequently sought declaratory relief from the court, which led to this judgment.

The issue

Which party was contractually responsible for the risks associated with the existing structures, including their ability to support or facilitate the proposed works?

The Schedule of Amendments to the contract included bespoke clauses at 2.42.1 to 2.42.3, which sought to make Sisk responsible for all risks associated to the existing structures and site. An additional clause at 2.42.4 stated: 'This clause 2.42 shall be subject to item 2 of the Clarifications'.

'Clarifications' was a defined term in the contract, comprised of the document 'Contract Clarifications' contained within 'Volume 2, Appendix 2.9' of the 'Employer's Requirements'.

It was the wording within item two of the clarifications that was the central issue of the

dispute (see table below). Unhelpfully, the contract did not define the meaning of 'Employer Risk' or 'Existing Structures Risk'.

The contract was produced in two versions: a paper version and an electronic version.

Both versions contained the contract clarifications, but the electronic version contained two clarification documents, one entitled contract clarifications and the other entitled tender submission clarifications.

This additional document recorded Sisk's comment that it was unable to price the risk and its proposal that Capital & Centric should warrant that the structural condition of the existing fabric was suitable for the new works. Capital & Centric's recorded response was that Sisk's comments were not accepted.

Sisk relied on the contract clarifications document, arguing that item two, in particular the phrase 'Employer Risk', should be interpreted as passing the risk of the existing structures to Capital & Centric.

	Sisk Clarification	Comments / Risk Owner
2	Existing structures risk including ability to support / facilitate proposed works	The employer is to insure the existing buildings/ works. Employer also to obtain warranty from Arup with regard to the suitability of the proposed works. Employer risk.

SHUTTERSTOCK

In contrast, Capital & Centric relied on the tender submission clarifications document in which, they countered, the allocation of the existing structures risk is confirmed as remaining with Sisk.

Further, they argued that the wording of item two simply meant that Capital & Centric was to insure the existing structures and to seek a warranty from Arup, the consultant employed by Capital & Centric to undertake pre-contract investigations.

Judge finds in favour of contractor

The judge found that both the contract clarifications and tender submission clarifications formed part of the contract.

However, the former was of more relevance to the proper interpretation of the contract and in particular clause 2.42, which dealt with the responsibility for existing structures.

The reasons given for this were:

- the contract definition of 'Clarifications' did not include reference to both, it referred expressly and only to 'Contract Clarifications', and this had to be reference to the specific contract clarifications worksheet not the clarifications document as a whole, and
- clause 2.42.4 refers to 'item 2 of the Clarifications' and it is obvious from the content of the clarifications that this can only be a reference to item two of the contract clarifications worksheet.

Focusing then on item two of the contract clarifications, the judge held that the term 'Employer Risk' could 'reasonably obviously be understood in [its] normal or natural meaning', so Capital & Centric was the 'risk owner' in relation to the unsuitability of the existing structures, including their ability to support or facilitate the proposed works.

The judge dismissed Capital & Centric's argument that the words 'Employer Risk' related to a risk of Capital & Centric failing to provide the required insurance or warranty.

The court found in favour of Sisk, overturning the adjudicator's decision, deciding that the risk of the unsuitability of the existing structures, including their ability

The dispute could have been avoided if, among other things, the ambiguities in the language had been avoided and the relevant contract documents had been more clearly referenced

to support or facilitate the proposed works, lay solely with Capital & Centric.

Key lessons

This case is a reminder that the allocation of risk is crucial for project success and dispute avoidance as well as the importance of clear drafting to ensure the terms of the contract reflect the agreement of the parties, particularly in relation to risk allocation.

The dispute could have been avoided if, among other things, the ambiguities in the language had been avoided and if the relevant contract documents had been more clearly referenced.

It is also a reminder that it is the responsibility of both parties to review the contract, including any referenced or appended documents, further to negotiations, to ensure the final version clearly and expressly captures their intentions.

Where tailored contract terms are required to achieve the intended risk allocation, amendments should be made by practitioners who have experience in contract drafting.

Claire McCarry MRICS is a director at HF Law claire.mccarry@hf.law

Related competencies include:
Contract administration, Legal/regulatory compliance

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



Construction standards and guidance

Construction guidance project

Work continues on drafting the UK-based construction guidance material as an update to the current *Black Book* guidance. Following consultation with members, it has been decided not to continue with the previously proposed global standard but instead focus initially on UK guidance.

We are grateful to the considerable number of volunteer members who have been supporting the technical authors.

Later in the year, we will be consulting publicly on the revised documents, and you are encouraged to contribute to this exercise so as to ensure that the guidance is relevant for the QS and PM disciplines.

Separately, we will be planning, in conjunction with our World Regional Board colleagues, various pieces of guidance that will address the specific and relevant guidance for a number of key world market sectors – initial planning will take place

in the second half of 2026 with a view to publication in 2027.

WLCA and NRM alignment

We are at the early stages of planning for an updated piece of guidance that seeks to enhance the coverage of the new rules of measurement (NRM) suite of guidance to include an interface with whole life carbon assessment (WLCA). This should enable members to better advise their clients on the existing aspects of estimating for capital cost and life cycle (maintenance) cost, together with accounting for the carbon footprint of the proposed development.

This will 'map across' with the data required at the relevant stage of a project in respect of cost and carbon. It is hoped that this guidance can be published in 2027. An earlier publication (February 2026) had updates to NRM 3 Logic and Levels tables.

PRACTICE ESSENTIALS

Upcoming conferences

Global Construction and Infrastructure Conference - 23 June 2026

An all-day international conference covering three separate time zones, with an excellent line-up of globally relevant speakers.

UK Construction and QS Conference - October 2026

Work and planning continues for the UK QS Conference. This year it will be held online and over two consecutive mornings, 6 and 7 October 2026. Look out for further details in due course.

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

SHUTTERSTOCK

PGP chair's message

RICS Construction Professional Group: a look ahead



PANEL CHAIR TOM BELL FRICS

Having recently taken over as Chair of the Construction PGP, it has provided me with both a daunting and exciting challenge.

The Construction PGP has been working hard to ensure that the content discussed is reflective of all aspects of construction. However, this has been somewhat overshadowed by the conflict in the Middle East. While it is very early to advise on the impact of this conflict, we are working with RICS to ensure all members are sufficiently briefed on how to deal with this matter and how to advise their clients.

Additionally, we are actively working with the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) to ensure that the inflationary advice provided reflects both market conditions and where we believe the market will be in the next six to 12 months (based upon historic data).

Closer to home, we are seeing differentials across many sectors. The public sector appears to be weathering the storm, with investment in defence, education and health care. But this is offset in the private sector, where projects are stalling or lacking traction – mainly due to a volatile funding market.

The Construction PGP continues to influence policy and where applicable guide and advise on specific items. We are working alongside other RICS members to influence and support the ongoing update of the *Construction Guidance* (currently known as the *Black Book*), and the PGP remains committed to ensuring members' views are consistently addressed with regards to any adjustments to the APC pathways and process.

As we look forward to the Global Construction and Infrastructure Conference being held on 23 June 2026, the Construction

The public sector appears to be weathering the storm... but this is offset in the private sector, where projects are stalling or lacking traction

PGP is also influencing the ongoing structured review of the current conference portfolio. We hope this review results in a streamlined portfolio that fully serves members' interests while covering important and interesting issues and topics.

As the PGP continues to evolve, there remains a need to ensure that we are representative and covering the needs of all members. As such, we will be looking to increase the number of members on the Construction PGP. If you are interested in getting involved, details will be available soon at rics.org



NEWS IN BRIEF

ICSG SLGs

Following the Grenfell Tower fire and the subsequent *Building Safety Act* 2022, work is taking place to enhance the competency of construction professionals. RICS members have been involved in contributing to a number of the Industry Competence Steering Group (ICSG) Sector-Led groups (SLGs).

Construction Playbook update

RICS members have contributed to providing insight and assistance to the Cabinet Office on the update of the latest revision to the *Playbook*, which is due to be published shortly.

Webinar on AI and construction

A recent RICS podcast involved a discussion with Amit Patel MRICS and James Garner MRICS on the subject of the developing presence and impact of AI and digital solutions on the work of surveyors within the construction industry. This is to be considered in the context of other recently published RICS guidance on the subject. Check out this episode of the RICS Podcast at rics.org/podcasts

Emerging trends

We continue to consider the contents of a suitable paper that will aim to serve as a resource for members within the industry, enabling them to enhance their skill sets, seek expertise in specific areas and access project examples or expert opinions within niche sectors. Watch out for further details on this piece of work.



CELEBRATING THE PROFESSION

DRS: a 50-year milestone

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the RICS Dispute Resolution Service (DRS). Since 1976, DRS has been at the forefront of delivering alternative dispute resolution (ADR) appointment services, training programmes and innovative solutions for the built environment.

Contributing to professional development and standards

From its earliest days, DRS has set industry best practice for ADR. We have contributed to the development of around 20 RICS professional standards, with another currently in development to help members navigate the use of AI in ADR procedures.

As we look ahead, our commitment to setting and maintaining the highest professional standards remains unwavering. Soon we will introduce standards and guidance on the impact of technology on dispute resolution. This demonstrates our focus on continually embracing fresh challenges and opportunities.

We invite you to join us in celebrating our milestone anniversary throughout the year with events, initiatives and exclusive content.

John Fletcher, Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Service at RICS says: "Fifty years is a significant milestone for any organisation. For me, it is an honour to reflect on the evolution of DRS since I joined RICS 15 years ago, particularly because the changes during this time have been so significant and positive.

"The past five decades have reshaped how disputes are managed, resolved and avoided. DRS has played a key role in shaping policy and driving change. This evolution has been highly significant for RICS members – whether they benefit from fee-earning opportunities as dispute resolvers or undertake training to advise clients and employers effectively. DRS has consistently supported members in conducting ADR proceedings to the highest professional standards."

Stay up-to-date with everything happening as part of DRS 50 by visiting rics.org/DRS50



THE RED BOOK AT 50 – A GLOBAL STANDARD

The *Red Book* also celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2026. It was introduced to raise consistency and professionalism in valuation practice, particularly in the UK. Over time, it has become a global standard, embedded in valuation practice across international markets.

Its longevity reflects the fact that it was designed to adapt, responding to changes in markets, regulation and client expectations. Importantly, the *Red Book* is not static – it evolves with the profession, ensuring it remains relevant in increasingly complex global investment environments.

Building trust in valuation

At its core, the *Red Book* sets out clear ethical, professional and technical expectations for valuers. For clients and investors alike, this creates confidence that valuations are objective, transparent and independently prepared.

In complex or volatile markets, those qualities become even more critical to decision-making and risk management. A *Red Book*-compliant valuation is widely recognised as a hallmark of professional credibility, helping distinguish trusted advice from unregulated opinion.

Purpose of the Red Book

"Quality is the bedrock of all successful businesses and the *Red Book* is a quality assurance document for all valuations," says Nick French MRICS, Chair, Global Valuation Standards Expert Working Group at RICS.

"The appointment of a qualified and registered RICS *Red Book* valuer ensures objectivity and transparency to guarantee that valuation reports are consistent and to the highest global standard. *Red Book* valuations provide the quality and public trust essential to underpin the business world."

There will be events to mark this anniversary during 2026. Details can be found at rics.org/training-events



Michael Clark FRICS

Though Michael was President of RICS from 1987 to 1988, his time here began in 1972 when he was chosen to represent the Sussex branch on the General Council. He later served as honorary secretary to the Institution from 1990 to 1993.

After leaving RICS, Michael continued working at his family firm St John Smith until he retired in 1992. That same year, he became Master of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors, emphasising his continued dedication to advancing our profession.

At the time of his passing, Michael was our longest-surviving former President. He will be remembered for his warmth, broad smile and integrity.

Michael passed away on 12 November 2025 and is survived by his three children: Nicola, Alizanne and Andrew.

Jeremy David Bagot Bayliss FRICS

Jeremy was President at RICS from 1996 to 1997. Here, he chaired the committee responsible for recommending the overhauling of the rating system, which would later be called the *Bayliss Report*.

Before his time as President, Jeremy was a chartered surveyor for more than 30 years, starting his career as a graduate at Gerald Eve in 1960. Rising from partner to joint senior partner and then eventually senior partner, he retired in 1997.

After retiring from the property industry, Jeremy took up a new career as chief executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew – a nod to his favourite pastime, gardening. He will be remembered for his charm, passion and fun-natured spirit.

Jeremy passed away on 27 January 2026 and is survived by his two sons, Jonathan and Patrick.

Clive Hewitt Lewis FRICS

Clive Lewis was RICS President from 1993 to 1994. He started his surveying career at Goddard & Smith, before setting up his own practice, Clive Lewis & Partners, in 1962.

He served as British Chapter president and World president at the International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI), joint chairman of Colliers Erdman Lewis and President of the RICS General Practice division.

During his time at RICS, Clive helped co-write the very first RICS *Red Book*. As President, he helped steer the organisation through a difficult time by creating new standards and training for RICS arbitrators and independent experts. Known for his love of sport, he led RICS in cricket tournaments in the Middle East.

Clive will be remembered for his generosity and competitive spirit. He is survived by his three children: Simon, Victoria and Mark.



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT FROM LIONHEART

Most of the people we at LionHeart support never imagine they'll be in a position where they'll need help. But there is one universal experience that everyone goes through and that is bereavement.

Losing someone close to you can be devastating and overwhelming; juggling normal family life and work can feel like an impossibility.

Despite being something everyone experiences, grief can be a lonely place. There's no right or wrong way to grieve; everybody will experience different stages and reactions.

Every year, LionHeart supports surveyors who have suffered a loss, or their partners. That support may look different for each person and their individual circumstances, but can include:

- Financial support – if a bereavement has left you struggling financially
- Counselling – bereavement counselling including specialist youth counselling
- Legal advice helpline – next-steps advice if you're grappling with winding up a business or dealing with probate
- Signposting – including benefits advice
- Emotional support – sometimes people just need a listening ear and someone to walk with them as they navigate their new world, and that's exactly what our team of support officers and counsellors are good at

Whatever your personal circumstances, please get in touch with LionHeart for friendly, confidential support and an understanding ear.

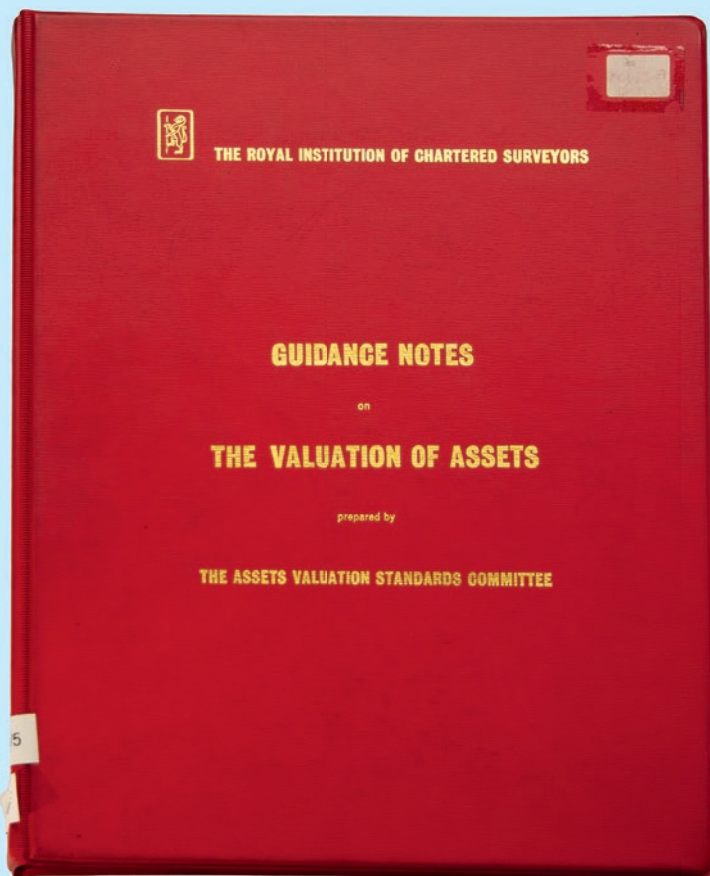
Bena Kansara, LionHeart support services manager

Find out more: lionheart.org.uk/bereavement

SHUTTERSTOCK

FROM THE ARCHIVE

The first edition of the Red Book



In 2026, RICS marks the 50th anniversary of *RICS Valuation - Global Standards*, better known as the Red Book. First published in 1976, the Red Book has become the definitive reference point for valuation, supporting confident decision-making in markets across the world.

As we celebrate the success of the Red Book over 50 years, we are examining how the heritage of RICS valuation standards will continue to underpin global valuation for the next 50 years.

The Red Book's contribution spans far beyond bricks and mortar, underpinning

valuations across antiques, art, plant and machinery, natural capital, rural and coastal assets, infrastructure, heritage, cultural and community assets and the growing area of intangible and emerging asset types. Its enduring influence is testament to RICS members' ongoing commitment to the public interest and upholding the highest professional standards.

As we acknowledge 50 years of the Red Book, we're keeping one eye to the future of valuation, where high standards, ethical practice and public confidence will remain at the heart of the profession.

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

To learn about all of these services, scan the QR code



Be Compliant, Beat Complaints.

Attention to detail builds your Bauder flat roof specification



Competency matters to us, it is what builds trust, reliability, and long-term success in every flat roof project we deliver.

By consistently applying our expertise to every specification, you can be confident that our solutions, products, services, and guidance are always accurate, compliant, and effective.



Interested? read more

Get in touch because success starts here.

01473 257671
bauder.co.uk/contact us



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.

tracesolutions **POWER TO THE PEOPLE**