



ACES COUNCIL 26th April 2024

Liaison Officer & Branch Reports

Contents

Liaison Officer Reports	2
Commercial, Strategic & Agricultural Asset Management Report	2
Rating & Taxation Report	3
Regeneration & Housing Report	4
RICS Liaison Report.....	7
Valuation Report	8
Branch Reports	9
Eastern Branch	9
Heart of England Branch	10
North East Branch	11
North West Branch	12
Rural Branch	14
Scottish Branch	15
South east Branch	16
South West Branch	17
Welsh Branch.....	18



ITEM 19

ACES Council 26th April 2024

Liaison Officer Reports

Commercial, Strategic & Agricultural Asset Management Report

To follow...

April 2024

[Back to contents page](#)

Rating & Taxation Report

To follow...

Rating

Taxation

Regeneration & Housing Report

With a General Election due to take place at some point this year, it is unlikely that we will see many new initiatives with legislative activity limited to guiding existing legislation through Parliament, notably the Renters Reform Bill and Leasehold & Freehold Reform Bill.

Levelling up / Regeneration

Developer contributions & infrastructure

The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill came into force on 23rd October 2023. It aims to speed up planning, encourage better quality building design, hold developers to account, cut bureaucracy and encourage Councils to build more homes. It will also give powers to Councils to increase Council tax on empty homes and reform compensation for CPO's, by removing 'hope value' (although it is not clear how this last measure will work).

The Act is quite limited in scope with much of its implementation dependent on delivery by local Councils and other than additional funding that the Government is providing specifically to local planning departments (to help speed up planning), measures will be dependent upon existing local authority budgets. Whether Council's choose to deliver on these measures will depend on the resources they have available and on what they want to prioritise.

No further rounds of levelling up funding have been announced following the awards made to the round 2 bids earlier last year.

Housing

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act in June 2022, was the first stage of the Government's reform of the leasehold system and private rented housing sector. Two further pieces of legislation were tabled in Parliament last year as part of this wider reform, these being the Leasehold & Freehold Reform Bill (introduced in November 2023) and the Renters Reform Bill (May 2023). Given the looming General Election it is not clear however if these Bills will come into law before Parliament is dissolved.

Leasehold & Freehold Reform Bill

This Bill proposes a number of significant measures that will improve the security and limit the cost of leasehold ownership. The Bill proposes a ban on the sale of new leasehold houses but not flats. Some specialised forms of housing will also be excluded from this ban. The main proposals in the Bill, other than the ban on new leaseholds are:

- Increase the standard lease extension for flats and houses to 990 years (up from 90 years in flats and 50 in houses), with ground rents at a peppercorn
- Remove marriage value in calculations regarding the value of a reversionary freehold
- Remove the requirement for a new leaseholder to have owned their flat for 2 years before they can benefit from the measures in the Bill
- Increase the 25% non-residential limit preventing leaseholders in buildings with a mix of homes and other uses such as shops and offices from buying their freehold or taking over management of their building

- Speeding up and simplifying the buying and selling of leasehold property, with maximum fees and strict timescales for the supply of information
- More transparency over the management of property by managing agents, including; limits on agent's commission on activities such as arranging insurance; a requirement for managing freeholders to belong to a redress scheme; granting freeholders on mixed tenure estates the same rights as leaseholders to challenge service charges and controls to ensure that freeholders and developers cannot escape their liabilities under the Building Safety Act 2022

The measures in this Bill will significantly increase the security and costs for leaseholders who have a relatively short time remaining on their lease. It is also likely to significantly reduce the cost of leaseholders in houses, where they have the right to purchase the freehold, given the option that exists of acquiring a virtual freehold (990 year lease) at a peppercorn. It is not clear however how the owners of leasehold flats and houses on leases with maybe 200 years remaining who are paying very high and often reviewable ground rents can limit their liabilities.

Renters Reform Bill

The main feature of this Bill is the proposed abolition of section 21 (no fault) evictions in order to provide better security for tenants. The Bill will also provide for further controls over excessive rent increases to ensure landlords cannot attempt to use this method of forcing tenants out of their accommodation. In order to balance the needs of tenant security with landlord's rights over their property, the Bill will give landlords greater rights for possession, where the accommodation is required by the landlord or for another uses, which will now include for housing key workers.

The Bill will be implemented in two phases to ensure that all stakeholders have sufficient notice to implement the necessary changes. The first stage, which is envisaged to be 6 months after the Bill becomes law, will see the legislation apply to new tenancies and the second state to all existing tenancies.

Registered Providers will follow the same rules as the private rented sector although some forms of supported housing will likely be excluded

Short Term Lets

Following the March Budget, one announcement that is worth mentioning regards control over short term residential lettings. Planning permission will now be required for short term lets with the intention for a new use class to be created. Homeowners will still be able to let out their home for up to 90 days per year and any lettings within this timescale will not trigger a change of use, although how this will be managed is yet to be seen. A mandatory national register is also to be set up to provide local authorities with information on short term lets.

Housing Safety

The Building Safety Act has now been in place for almost 2 years, which requires all buildings of height to be assessed for fire safety (other than new buildings which should be compliant with the tougher building regulations regime), via the EWS1 (external wall system) process, that was introduced following the Grenfell fire. The EWS1 form should consider balconies and other structural elements that could result in the spread of fire, as well as external cladding although not every residential block of flats will require an EWS1.

The provision of a Government backed insurance indemnity scheme for ESW1 assessors has undoubtedly helped to free up the barrier that the ESW1 process was having on the sale of flats by allowing assessors to provide reports to meet mortgagor requirements.

The recent fire in a block of apartments in Valencia (February 2024) where 10 people died and 138 apartments were destroyed, is a salutary reminder of how important this legislation is to the safety of occupiers of high rise residential accommodation.

Gill Boyle 4.4.2024

[Back to contents page](#)

RICS Liaison Report

Report of Meeting with RICS 18th March 2024 - Online

Present:

Alison Adams
Paul Bagust
Dominic Colliyer
Neil Webster
Sam Partridge

RICS Activity

- Public Sector Forum event in May – Recruitment and Retention topic for discussion
- Report on entry to the profession awaited
- RICS leadership team being formed up with a new role of Chief Engagements officer under Marketing Lead. Our contact being Strategic Partnership lead Alison who reports to the Marketing lead. Paul Bagust continues his role as Head of Standards.
Papers in Preparation
- Residential Retrofit
- Commercial Retrofit (In draft)
- New Commercial Service Charge Code
- Review of MEES (September)
- Revised asset management planning guidance
- New UK version of Code of Measuring Practice

RICS Public Sector Forum

- Next meeting May.
- ACES representation ?

ACES activity

- Intention to hold this year's AGM 15.11.24 at Great George Street with sit down lunch
- Represented at local partnership panel at UK REIF-Offices for Good
- Embracing FACES for new entrants into public sector professional work

Standing Item

- Branch chairs to invite RICS regional representation at Branch meetings.

Next meeting June at Great George Street.

Sam Partridge/Daniella Barrow

April 2024

[Back to contents page](#)

Valuation Report

To follow...

[Back to contents page](#)



Branch Reports

EASTERN BRANCH

Secretary's Spring Report 2024

Eastern Branch continues to hold monthly virtual meetings, where members and guests are encouraged to attend. The meetings may include an invited speaker, or be opportunities for colleagues to discuss topics of practical interest.

We have started the year with 3 speakers:

18 January - Esther Round, Senior Associate and Biodiversity Net Gain Lead, Agriculture and Estates Team, Birketts LLP.

15 February - Julian Crowley, Director and Sean Keogh of GL Hearne who will give us a presentation on 2023 Rating Revaluation.

14 March – The Building Safety Act 2022 by Stuart Raven, Partner, Commercial Property (Ipswich) Birketts LLP.

Speakers generally agree to write a subsequent article for ACES Terrier. The programme continues through to the summer.

On 22 March there was an open invitation for people to visit the ACES' award-winning retrofit property by Southend on Sea before it is let [Ed – see article in 2023/24 Winter Terrier]. The in-person Branch meeting is planned for April, with final details being made.

There are still some gaps in representation from councils in the Eastern region, but an effort is being made to identify and extend the invitation to join.

Jacqueline Cumiskey - Secretary, Eastern Branch 2023-24

[Back to contents page](#)

HEART OF ENGLAND BRANCH

Branch Report

ACES Heart of England Branch Report – April 2024

The Branch held a well-attended hybrid meeting in Birmingham on 8th February, hosted by NHS Property Services. The meeting was joined by Marcus Perry in his role as Branch Liaison Officer. Ian Mercer, Miranda Jones and Ben Owen from Bruton Knowles gave an excellent and comprehensive presentation on Biodiversity Net Gain and the opportunities and implications for Local Authorities as landowners and developers. Following the CPD presentation, there was a wide-ranging discussion on current topics of interest to Branch members, future CPD opportunities and agreement to the introduction of online monthly meetings providing short CPD sessions and an open forum discussion. The next formal hybrid Branch meeting is on the 6th of June.

The first of the online monthly meetings took place on 17th April and was again well attended and provided an opportunity for members to discuss a range of current topics and issues of interest. These included Levelling Up Fund and Levelling Up Cultural projects, experience and insights into successful engagement with funding bodies, particularly DLUHC; estate management and lettings policies for high street retail units; office utilisation and repurposing civic office buildings; RAAC and Asset Valuations. The next online monthly meeting is on the 15th of May.

We have welcomed Ben Colman (WMCA), Matt Trewartha (High Peak and Staffs Moorlands BCs) and Louise Beeby (Newcastle under Lyme BC) as Branch members.

**Andrew Stirling
Branch Secretary**

[Back to contents page](#)

NORTH EAST BRANCH

To follow.

NORTH WEST BRANCH

ACES North West Branch Ordinary General Meeting. 10.00am. Friday 1st March 2024.

The Edge Conference Centre. Riverside, Wigan.

The meeting was attended by 18 people and 19 people tabled their apologies. This was the first ever Branch meeting at The Edge Conference Centre in Wigan following the Branch being displaced from their long standing venue due to a hotel closure. The meeting was chaired by Branch Chair, Paul Edgeworth of Stockport Council.

The normal business matters were dealt with quite quickly including the fact that Steve Littler from St Helens Council had put his name forward for the position of Branch Vice Chair. His appointment was unanimously approved at the meeting.

The meeting was notified that Vanessa Case (Blackburn with Darwen Council) has become a new member and Christine Dean (West Lancashire Council) has resigned her membership. The Chair covered a brief report from Branch Secretary, David Mee, including the note that he had been focussed on sending out the flyer and booking form for the Branch CPD event at Haydock Park Racecourse on the 9/5/24, processing the returned booking forms and the invoicing. Branch Treasurer, Mike Forster, gave his report on Branch finances. A venue deposit payment has been paid for the 9/5/24 CPD event and the balance payment is due to be paid by the end of March.

National Secretary, Trevor Bishop, gave his usual report on national ACES issues. Membership stands at 410 and has stabilised at that level. Approximately 60% of national subscriptions have now been paid. National finances are healthy, primarily due to the SAMP Diploma, although this may tail off. The future of the diploma is under review. ACES is also looking at ideas to assist members through training opportunities. Next week sees the annual RICS Valuation Conference. The RICS approached ACES to be a partner for the conference which is recognition that RICS is listening more to the public sector and values ACES work and input. 2 free delegate places were provided to ACES. This year's annual conference will likely be held in the Norwich area in September and the National AGM at RICS HQ in mid- November. The Award for Excellence will be determined at the AGM. An extension to the range of awards is being considered and it has been suggested that members submit nominations for the RICS awards in advance of the ACES award. Rachel Kneale asked if there were any free places offered to ACES for MIPIM. Trevor confirmed that there was a place and it had been allocated to a FACES member and that the attendee is to provide a feedback report following the event. Neil Webster has been working with FACES and the idea of allocating the space to that group was to generate further interest. Peter Gregory commented that the widening of the Awards for Excellence was welcomed but expressed some concern that it may disincentivise nominations if a project can't be delivered by property teams alone. Trevor responded that nominations are valid for projects delivered either by members alone or as part of a wider group. Mike Forster asked if there has been any feedback from the RICS consultation on agricultural landlord and tenant matters. Trevor advised that Dan Meek had responded to the initial consultation, the consultation is in 2 parts, and is a work in progress. Feedback will be put on the web site.

The Chair reported on the organisation of the 9/4/24 CPD event. As of now, 7 booking forms have been received and all have been invoiced for a total of 29 delegates at an

invoice value of £2,610. Booking form returns are a little slower than usual, but this might be because we have started the sale process earlier than usual this year and there is still some 9/10 weeks to go until the day of the event. It would be helpful if those present at the OGM could get their forms in, if they haven't already done so. Five speakers have been confirmed for the event with 3 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon.

There was an interesting discussion on the subject of staff recruitment where difficulties are being experienced across authorities, particularly when experienced staff of some 5-10 years post qualification experience is sought. Use of agency staff is often required but hourly rates are high. Some authorities are looking to restructure and review salary bands. Employer payment of professional fees seems to be an important incentive.

The meeting received an interesting and informative 30 minute update on CPO referencing and related case law from Scott Kershaw of Lambert Smith Hampton. This was followed by an interesting discussion on Local Government Finances and Budgets for 2024/25. Stockport has signed off £10m savings (or cuts!) this year and the forecast is for a requirement for a further £26m next year. The Stockport Treasurer does consider property to be a revenue generator and a fire sale is currently not being considered. He also said that the investment made acquiring a shopping centre c9 years ago now wouldn't generate the value paid. It is held for regeneration purposes and a red flag had been raised. Mike Forster said that it is similar at Chorley where property is viewed as an asset to assist in funding the deficit. He did say that there are challenges around tenants' ability to pay rent. Marie Percival said that there are challenges with dealing with charities and the voluntary sector in Preston with their requirements for peppercorn rents having an impact on revenue. Giles Cooper advised that Cumberland is looking for quick wins to generate cash. The meeting concluded with Mike Forster asking if anyone had done any agreements for Electric Vehicle Charging Points. Comments were made that Fylde and Bury were in negotiations on this. Peter Gregory suggested that this question has been posted on the ACES website forum.

David Mee. ACES NW Branch Secretary. April 2024.

RURAL BRANCH

ACES Rural Branch

To follow

SCOTTISH BRANCH

ACES Scottish (and Irish) Branch Report:

At our most recent virtual branch meeting on February 2nd 2024 we had 15 members in attendance.

Meeting opened with David Baird, Chair, extending condolences on behalf of ACES and paying tribute to the untimely passing of David Mitchell of ACES Exec, Chair of Valuation Working Group and RICS. David's widespread and valued contribution to RICS, Scottish Government, ACES and Valuation Working Group over many years admired and acknowledged by all. Noted many ACES members absent from branch meeting for Davids funeral.

In all 45 parties joined for the CPD session on Renewables: Windfarm Battery Storage & Valuation provided by Gavin Falconer head of Renewables at Forestry & Land Scotland. The branch has for some time been encouraging all member bodies to invite surveying staff to the CPD sessions to both provide CPD and encourage staff to become further involved in ACES in general. Feedback is that these are popular events welcomed by those attending

There was in addition the usual discussion forum covering various topics including R.A.A.C , Police Scotland.(One Public Estate). Heating Buildings. (Heat pumps, Building upgrades Costs of improvements), Common Good Issues. (Public consultation approaches, alienability, and Court costs.)

The branch has two active subgroups covering Valuation and Asset Management who meet throughout the year and are attended and appreciated by those staff actively involved in those areas from member bodies. The branch encourages participation from persons who would not normally attend branch meetings for in depth discussion forums and exchange of ideas and best practice. Alistair Watson of VOA has recently accepted and appointed to the Executive to Chair the Branch Valuation Working Group following David Mitchells passing.

Our next branch meeting is our ACES Spring outing which is a hybrid event hosted by West Lothian Council on Friday 7th June. This will only be our second in Spring outing since Covid and will hopefully be a good day out for branch discussions, CPD and social networking with new and existing members is anticipated by all.

Robert Harkness

ACES Scottish Branch Secretary

[Back to contents page](#)

SOUTH EAST BRANCH

To follow

SOUTH WEST BRANCH

To follow

[Back to contents page](#)

WELSH BRANCH

Welsh Branch Report

Spring Meeting – 14th February 2024

Following its AGM held as a 'live' meeting in November, the Welsh Branch reverted to online (or virtual) for its first meeting of 2024, held on Valentine's Day (or Ash Wednesday this year).

After the Chairman's welcome and the usual roll call (which revealed we had thirty-eight online 'attendees') and apologies, the Branch Secretary encouraged the members of this combined CLAW and ACES group to submit articles for the ACES Terrier, especially where awards had been won for achievements in the end of year CLAW and Ystadau Cymru conferences and awards in Wales. He also provided feedback from the ACES Council meeting held on 19th January, noting that the success of the first cohort of GCSE in the Built Environment examination results in Wales seemed to have sparked interest in introducing the subject in England. The Branch Secretary confirmed that ACES President, Sara Cameron, and Branch Liaison Officer, Marcus Perry, had accepted the invitations to attend our next meeting, which is to be a 'live' event, on Tuesday 14th May when we look forward to giving them a warm Welsh welcome.

Geoff Bacon and Jonathan Fearn provided updates on CLAW matters, reporting that, in addition to the five previously existing groups within CLAW, a new Housing group was being set up. Jonathan reminded us that the CPD at our meetings (see below) is sponsored by CLAW and that CLAW also provides funding for research topics; this had been used in the past to produce Asset Management and Valuation guidance for local authorities in Wales and proposals for new research projects are currently sought.

Sam Rees, Senior Public Affairs Officer, RICS Wales, said RICS has new information on Damp and Mould as well as Retrofitting which would be of interest to the new CLAW Housing group to assist with the required surveys of Social Housing to ensure adherence to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS). On RICS Wales events, there was an upcoming meeting in Cardiff Bay to discuss cladding and valuations of high-rise flats and this year's RICS Wales Conference will take place in Cardiff on 4th June. Sam reported that from 6th April all Building Control officers in England and Wales must be registered, but there is a severe shortage with some local authorities at risk of having none at all. He also updated us on progress with accredited degree course in Wales noting that there is a growing interest in degree apprenticeships following the success of the unique Network 75 (*q.v.*) scheme at the University of South Wales. The Chairman pointed out that we now have to ensure that there are sufficient work placements for these apprentices; a balance of students and placement places needs to be achieved and maintained.

Moving on to Ystadau Cymru and Welsh Government matters, Clare Phillips advised that YC is dependent on just Amanda Mark and herself since Dr. Claire Bloomfield's retirement in December. They are forming thematic groups around, e.g., Asbestos, RAAC and Building Safety, with Welsh Government's Building Safety officer helping out while a good link has been established with Constructing Excellence Wales and the CAT (Community Asset Transfer) group is also being re-formed. Clare reminded all of the Asset Collaboration Programme Grant Scheme, noting that last year the Capital was all used but the Revenue grants were not fully utilised and urged all to not miss the opportunity this year. For WG,

Nigel Thomas said that the Land Release Fund (LRF) will be available again next year and reminded all that it includes buildings, targeting stalled schemes with grants of up to £5 million possible. Nigel provided an update on the replacement for e-PIMS, called InSite, being developed by PlanOn, a company with a track record in Building Management, saying it is due for release to UK Government organisations in Spring but will not be available to other organisations until much later in the year. However, he warned users against over-dependency on e-PIMS as it is struggling on older technology and needs to be replaced soon.

Discussions moved on to Valuation & Estates and Asset Management matters, the main part of which was comparisons and contrasts of how the various Property & Estates and Asset Management teams in each local authority are structured, under which directorates they sit within their authorities, what areas of responsibility they have (e.g. Estate Management, Energy, Corporate Landlord, Asset Management, Disposals, Regeneration Projects, Rating Appeals, etc.)(though none seemed to provide S.106 Development Appraisals for Planning colleagues?), how many Chartered Surveyors in each team, etc. There were some instances where property teams had been broken up, some even being split into different directorates, following political pressure and overall, there was a remarkable lack of consistency in team structures and composition across the various local authorities. The secondary topics were of targets being set by finance teams for capital and revenue raising from property with little understanding of property markets and property's lack of liquidity in the real world and also finance-led audits of asset valuations with similar lack of understanding of different valuation methods and their application.

CPD Session - Chris Brain (www.chrisbrainassociates.com)

In the afternoon session Chris again provided two hours of formal CPD, covering updates and news on the Public Sector across Britain, Finance and Finance in Wales, the Impact of the Financial Cuts in England, Commercialism and the Fallout at Thurrock Council, Asset Management looking at the dwindling numbers of public swimming pools, adapting buildings for an ageing population, 'greening' proposals frustrated by rapidly rising costs and a legal challenge to a county council's sale for £34m of land it had bought for £1 in 1985 for community use; Flexible Working and central government intervention in the trialling by a local authority of a four-day working week. Chris went on to look at Valuation matters, reviewing the proposals in the HM Treasury consultation (which had just closed on 16th February) on possible permissible indexation of asset valuations (noting that the CIPFA Code does not currently permit any form of indexation), CIPFA-LASAAC consultation proposals to address the local authority audit backlog including "simplifying the professional revaluation of operational property" and then consider in detail a RICS paper on The impact of ESG on the future of real estate valuations. Chris moved on to Net Zero Carbon and Air Quality, looking at an LGA survey of the public on preparedness for the impacts of climate change (only 5% felt prepared) and the role of local authorities in air quality in locations such as Bath and Glasgow as well as vehicle-emissions-based parking charges in Westminster (surely vehicles have zero emissions while parked?). On Health and Safety Chris noted that while some schools badly affected by RAAC will be rebuilt and some others will get grant funding to remove RAAC, pupils are increasingly being taken out of schools affected by RAAC as parents with safety concerns move their children into neighbouring schools, thus impacting the funding of each school. On Levelling Up funding, one County Council is considering seeking a Judicial Review of how the Government allocated the LU funding following an admission by a former Levelling Up Minister that the rules had been changed after Round Two bids had been submitted. The Council had spent £1.2m on submitting a second bid, subsequently disallowed because its Round One bid had been successful.

Finally, on Housing, Chris reported that councillors in Ealing had approved a £150m plan to acquire housing to replenish its social housing stock which had fallen by nearly 50% between 2011 and 2023 leading to 411 families living in B&B accommodation and a further 208 families living in hotels at a cost of £50,000 per family per year.

A very interesting and informative start to the year; we look forward to more in similar vein.

Gerry Devine, Welsh Branch Secretary

[Back to contents page](#)