



**ACES COUNCIL 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Liaison Officer & Branch Reports**

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**ITEM 20**

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**ACES Council 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Liaison Officer Reports**

**Commercial, Strategic & Agricultural Asset Management Report**

Verbal report to follow...

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## **Rating & Taxation Report**

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## **Valuation Report**

To follow...

**Chris Brain**  
**Valuation Liaison Officer**  
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**Malcolm Williams**

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## **Branch Liaison**

Report on main agenda.

**Marcus Perry**

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## **Branch Reports**

### **EASTERN BRANCH**

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#### **Chair's Report**

**Alan Richards**

**Chair, ACES Eastern Branch**

#### **Secretary Report**

**Jacqueline Cumiskey**

**Secretary, Eastern Branch**

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## **HEART OF ENGLAND BRANCH**

### **Branch Report**

#### **Heart of England Branch Report for April Council**

February's Branch Meeting was held at RICS Offices in Colmore Row, Birmingham making use of their facilities for a hybrid meeting with 18 attendees, including several FACES members.

We welcomed Marcus Perry, ACES Branch Liaison Officer who shared the proposed tri fold ACES promotional leaflet. Mavesh Ibrar, RICS Public Affairs Officer provided an update on RICS matters and issues affecting the public sector and the Branch Chair Andrew Stirling gave a presentation on Developing Estates Infrastructure Strategies for NHS Integrated Care Systems.

It was good to note that 5 new members have joined the branch since last November's AGM. Professional matters raised and discussed included High Street Rental Auctions, Hope Value in Compulsory Purchase and Crematoria comparables.

In between the Branch meetings, our monthly on line catch ups continue and these provide a useful medium for requesting advice and sharing matters of interest. Plans are underway to introduce a more formal CPD element to these.

**Kevin Moore BSc MSc FRICS**  
**Secretary**

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## **LONDON BRANCH**

### **London Branch Report for April Council**

London Branch has met twice so far in 2025. On 24 January we met at the office of Team London Bridge, the local Business Improvement District. Their Chief Executive gave a short presentation about the work of the organisation locally and BIDs nationally which levy a total of £150m. Janes Wynne and Theo Underwood of Network Rail then gave a presentation on business space in the railway estate, land relinquished to allow the building so far of 17,000 new homes nationally, developments in the London area and the breadth of their commercial portfolio. Members discussed numerous issues of relevance including regeneration schemes, Right to Buy, accommodation for young people leaving care, a Thames riverside strategy, local government reform just outside London and central Government estates initiatives. Attendance totalled 24.

On 28 March, the Branch again met at an office of Camden Council with a total of 14 attending. Esther Robinson-Wild gave a presentation on heritage buildings and her work as a trustee of the Architectural Heritage Fund. She highlighted regeneration projects nationally centred on heritage assets and some of the issues, pitfalls and results. Members also covered topics of interest including defective building cladding, new projects for central government, electric vehicle charging, regeneration projects with new housing, software options and development funding.

The tenth anniversary of the Avison Young series of Espresso briefings was marked by an in person event at AYs offices on 3 April. Many LB members were in attendance for this event which began as a collaboration between ACES and GVA. Martyn Saunders of Avison Young was joined by officers from Hillingdon, Ealing and Redbridge boroughs in a presentation about regeneration and growth benefits presented by the Elizabeth Line. This was followed by q&a and confirmation that further Espresso events will take place later in the year.

**Chris Sutton**

## **NORTH EAST BRANCH**

### **NORTH EAST BRANCH NEWS**

Whilst the branch hasn't had any meetings in 2025 there has been plenty going on behind the scenes.

Firstly, it has been agreed that I would take on the role of Joint Branch Secretary to assist with some of the administrative functions of the branch. Helen Stubbs is to continue with the front facing secretarial duties.

In addition, as agreed at the AGM last year, we have been working on an online questionnaire for branch members to seek their views on setting a programme of events for 2025 and beyond.

The questionnaire was finally agreed by the Branch Executive in March and I would like to express a big thank you to David Pethen, ACES Assistant Secretary for formatting, circulating and providing analysis of the answers. We had a good response with over 55% of members responding.

The questionnaire sought member views on the form, content and frequency of branch activity and will be shared with the membership. Here is a brief summary of some of the findings:

- 21 Branch Members responded
- There was a very strong preference for CPD and networking at in-person branch meetings with a majority looking for 3-6 hours CPD per meeting
- The vast majority considered the length of previous in-person meetings to be "about right"
- The majority had preference for 1-2 annual in person meetings with some preferring 2-3 meetings
- In terms of location for in-person meetings, the views were mixed but many preferred locations with good rail and road (with accessible parking), access with suggestions including Teeside, Darlington, Leeds, Sheffield and North Yorkshire.
- There was a fairly even split preferring 1-2 and 3-4 Virtual meetings per year which showed a demand for this format.
- For virtual meetings the majority preferred a different format and length to in-person meetings with a preference for shorter meetings of 1-2 hours covering topical issues, catch-up and exchange of views.
- Microsoft Teams was the preferred platform for virtual meetings, although over half also were happy to use Zoom
- There was a varied list of suggestions for topics at branch meetings with topics including general CPD, L&T, Valuations, APC, Legal updates, Housing investment, National ACES updates and local government specific issues. There was also mention of recruitment and retention issues and tours of new facilities.

- The vast majority were happy with email communication although there was some interest in setting up a WhatsApp group.

Moving forward the Branch Executive is due to discuss the survey findings and agree a programme of branch activity for 2025 and we should be in a position to publish our 2025 programme by the end of April.

**John Read**

**ACES North East Branch, Joint Secretary**

## **NORTH WEST BRANCH**

To follow

## **RURAL BRANCH**

### **ACES Rural Branch note for the ACES Terrier (Spring 2025), and Council**

ACES Rural Branch members met at the Farmers Fayre, Stoneleigh on 28 November 2024 for an interesting day of topical and focused CPD followed by the Branch AGM.

19 members from 13 different Local Authorities spanning the Country from Cornwall to Norfolk attended.

At the meeting members received a presentation from Giles Hunt, Land and Estates Director at the National Trust, and star of the popular Channel 4 series 'Our Dream Farm'. The presentation followed with a good discussion on how managers of Council Farms can work more closely with managers of the National Trust and other Charitable, Institutional, and Private sector landlords' agents to improve the performance of the 'farming ladder'. Delegates were left in no doubt that these rural landlords see Council Farms as a critical part of farming's next generation supply chain!

The Rural Branch has been approached by former ACES member Helen Mcleod-Bakie (formerly of Pembrokeshire County Council and now with Bruton Knowles) who is working with CIPFA and wanting to discuss an ACES/CIPFA jointly published best practice guidance note on Rural Estate Asset Valuations. The Rural Branch is currently reviewing its own guidance note in advance of pending discussions with Helen and CIPFA.

The AGM followed and the following 'officers' were voted in:

- Chair – Josie Palmer, Hampshire County Council
- Vice Chair – Rebecca Roper, Cambridgeshire County Council
- Secretary – Dan Meek, Norse Group
- Treasurer – Stephen Morgan, Cornwall Council
- CIPFA Liaison Officer – David Job, Cheshire East & West
- DEFRA Farm Tenancy Forum delegate – Dan Meek, Norse Group
- Welsh Government Liaison Officer - Vacant

The Rural Branch secretary has attended one virtual and one in person Farm Tenancy Forum (FTF) meeting with the DEFRA, Industry stakeholders such as the NFU, TFA, CLA, YFC, ALA, and others. Farming Minister, the Rt Hon Daniel Zeichner MP, also attends the in person meetings. Matters being discussed include the impact on the tenant farming sector of the Autumn budget announcements – not just the controversial headline APR 'tax grab' but many less obvious impacts. One particular issue affecting Council Farm tenants which is being discussed with DEFRA and RPA officials is the inability for an incoming tenant to break a former tenants Agri- Environment Scheme contract without the express consent of the former tenant, who may have a vested interest in not giving consent.

It was understood the Law Commission had been asked to consider a review of the agricultural landlord and tenant legislation as part of its programme for the next 24 months.

The FTF was asked if there were any specific parts of the legislation that it wanted looked at.

Members were also briefed on the role of the forthcoming Tenant Farming Commissioner. One of the key roles of the Commissioner would be to ensure the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Code of Practice is upheld by all parties to include landlords, tenants, and their respective professional and legal advisers.

For further information please contact the ACES Rural Branch Secretary -  
Dan Meek, BSc. (Hons) MRICS FAAV, Director of Estates & Valuation at South West Norse Ltd.  
Tel: 01392 351066  
Email: [dan.meek@norsegroup.co.uk](mailto:dan.meek@norsegroup.co.uk)

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## **SCOTTISH BRANCH**

The Scottish Branch last met virtually on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025 Meeting and was well attended and a new member welcomed. The next meeting was provisionally proposed as a hybrid meeting for 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025, possibly at Glasgow City Council for the summer ACES visit. Venues further north are to be- considered for future meetings.

The treasurer gave the finance report and the Branch Executive had discussed the cost of funding for attending National ACES events which can be £900 per person, so would require an increase in subscriptions from £25pa to £50pa. National Council funding may be available to assist in these costs (though Scottish Branch should also contribute). This would take the annual fee to £175 including the ACES national fee.

A fee increase to £50 for 2026 was approved unanimously at the branch meeting.

Reports were received on the Valuation and Asset Management Working Groups which continue to meet regularly. 3hrs CPD available from reading Alistair Watson's latest guidance issued after the last AGM, whilst MOTO's & IFRS 16 are be covered in a presentation. RAAC, Tacit Relocation and Auditor queries also being considered for future topics to be covered.

There followed a discussion on how the branch might formally respond to consultations such as Tacit Relocation currently. A working group set up by Sport Scotland is also running a "state of the estate" consultation exercise. The group were encouraged to complete the Sport Scotland survey and return to allow a more accurate picture. Further discussion topics included "Battery Box"; training structures for young surveyors and a future presentation on the new RICS red book.

The meeting was followed by a CPD session which covered energy and battery storage sites; RICS red book updates; RAAC; IFRS 16 and Tacit Relocation.

**Scottish Branch Secretary**

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**SOUTH EAST BRANCH**

To Follow

## **SOUTH WEST BRANCH**

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## WELSH BRANCH

### Welsh Branch Report – Spring 2025

Spring Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Following the pattern established last year our first meeting of 2025 was held online and was attended by twenty-eight participants, eighteen of whom were ACES members (including one guest from another ACES Branch) and the other ten under CLAW (Consortium of Local Authorities ion Wales) membership. ACES Welsh Branch meetings are held jointly with the CLAW Asset Management and Estates Group.

The Branch Chairman, Ben Winstanley, provided feedback from the ACES Council meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January and the Branch Secretary updated the group on some membership changes including a new member from a new-to-ACES organisation, resignations and transfers and advised them of the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> April for ACES Terrier articles.

Having dispensed with these regular items we moved on to Asset Management and Estates Matters and one topic which has been in the forefront of discussion in recent meetings is Team Structures and Restructuring. However, on this occasion, the topic widened from Property and Estates Team structures to Directorates and Council structures. Since Devolution in Wales the Welsh Government has twice reviewed the 1996 Local Government Reorganisation when the twenty-two Unitary Local Authorities in Wales were created but has not bitten the bullet to reduce that number, instead urging Local Authorities to collaborate with neighbouring authorities to improve efficiency and make savings. This has happened in a limited way some service areas, e.g., a Shared Regulatory Services covers the Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend Council areas and was particularly active in enforcing the regulations during the Covid lockdowns. Now it seems various factors such as the shortage of professional staff (Chartered Surveyors, Architects, Solicitors, etc.), agile working and a reduction of the operational estate are pushing local authorities into more collaborative practices. One Property Manager reported that there is no QS in that authority and so there is a need to engage the services of a QS in a neighbour authority while another Property Manager has three property solicitors in the team but has difficulty getting architects (who are not in the Property team) to do work for Estates because they are taking on work from neighbouring authorities. It appears difficulty in recruiting Directors, especially to some of the smaller LAs, has led them to seek the services of Directors from neighbouring authorities, possibly leading to longer-term joint working partnerships. Another Property Manager felt there was scope for internal rationalisation, stating that there is a Building Maintenance team in one directorate (Housing) and a Construction Services team in another (Place) alongside the Estates team leading to duplication of van travel, which, in a geographically large area could be expensive. On being asked if there is a Corporate Landlord model operating there the answer was 'No but we are working to make a case for it'. Another PM warned that this model is not a magic bullet and in those authorities with Housing stock, a Housing Maintenance team was usually needed to deal with repetitive maintenance jobs while the Property team needed Construction Services to deal with reactive maintenance in e.g., schools, Statutory Maintenance and Compliance, sometimes retaining those roles for properties that had been leased out under Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

The Chairman moved the discussion on to Operational Property and Rationalisation Plans saying that in his LA a new Chief Executive was making a drive towards customer service

and so was getting more staff back into the office. Cardiff's Property Manager told the attendees that Cardiff Council is building a new County Hall as part of the Cardiff Arena development (as has been extensively reported in the local press) and this new headquarters will replace three pre-Covid office buildings with total floor area of reduced by around 75% as there is now more agile working. The immediate Past Chairman said his NHS Specialist Estates team would remain in their leased space in the short to medium term but they had found working from home to be more effective. The relatively new Property manager in Pembrokeshire reported that he had inherited a situation where the various Council departments were largely responsible for the property they occupied but he has been working hard to change that as there is too much underused space in dispersed buildings (incl. County Hall) which is too costly, so rationalisation is needed. In Monmouthshire working from home had become standard practice post-Covid but a new Chief Executive now wants more people in the office. However, after rationalisation there is not enough office space (one floor in County Hall is leased to a third party) so there is now an office booking system in use and meeting rooms are part of this with small meeting pods for 2 or 3 people in person and often 7 or 8 others joining remotely. Blaenau Gwent was the first Council in Wales to move to fully agile working (all office staff contracts are 'work from home') and two of the three office buildings have been disposed but a new Director has taken a different view and taken the third office off the market saying that senior managers should be more visible in the office. When he Chairman mentioned his date says on a Friday a lot less people come into the office another Property Manager said data can be a powerful tool, e.g., showing swings in energy use, and well-selected property data has brought Property Management back to the top of the agenda. Closing the office for one day a week can be a good way of showing cost savings but bear in mind that some people such as social workers may need to be on call in the office, so Property Managers need to always be on top of their data.

The Chairman picked up the topic of Climate Change and Net Zero reporting that he had had discussions with Welsh Government personnel in which he was seeking to clarify their definition of Net Zero, His perception is that Net Zero by 2030 is largely regarded by them as a target that they are working towards rather than something seen as achievable. One Property Manager said that Property and Energy teams need to work together and recalled a situation where an Energy Team had changed the lighting systems in building without first consulting the Building Maintenance team which led to bad results as older buildings can be problematic for Maintenance. Pembrokeshire's Property Manager said Energy in his LA does not sit near Property but he has been trying to get them on board and has some good work ongoing.

The WG review of CATs (Community Asset Transfers) in conjunction with Cardiff University was the next item of discussion. It was suggested in our last meeting that this was heavily weighted towards community groups. Pembrokeshire's Property Manager reported that he had attended a meeting and Kelly Daniels from RCT had done a really useful presentation from which he took the view that the main reason for CATs was the continuation of a service to the local community in a particular building. He has tended to veer away from charities as his experience has been they need too much support even though most CATs are done at a peppercorn rent. The Branch Secretary commented that external auditors at a previous authority had recommended that CATs and similar lettings to churches and charities be done at a reasonable commercial rent with any concessions or support being made in the form of an annual grant. The auditors' view was that arrangements made thus were more transparent to the paying public who ultimately bore the cost of such support.

Regarding Data Cymru and KPIs, which was next on the agenda, the Branch Secretary reported that Helen McLeod-Baikie, who was unable to attend, as one of the CIPFA/ACES SAM Diploma presenters, had e-mailed to say that she was a little surprised at the hesitancy of colleagues in adopting KPIs as suggested by Data Cymru in a previous meeting. She drew attention to the subject of data as part of the SAM course and felt that the importance of data gathering, assimilation and use as set out in the SAM Diploma should be brought to the attention of the group. The Branch Secretary also reported that he had the previous day received a message via the ACES website from an auditor in Audit Wales who was seeking to set up an interview with Branch Officers and he had passed the enquiry to the Branch Chairman and Vice-chairman who agreed to take the matter forward.

One valuer from North Wales asked if any other authorities had approaches from companies about battery storage facilities. The Chairman and Vice-chairman both confirmed that they had. In the Chairman's case forty sites had been identified by one company but only six of these were likely to be viable and the company (Amp Energy) had only offered a premium of £10,000 or a rent £1,000 p.a. per site. In the Vice-chairman's case the company had identified over ninety sites which had subsequently been whittled down to nineteen but in his view some of those are not viable. The North Wales valuer said the company that had approached him was called Innova and they had offered to do all the planning work. The Vice-chairman said these seem to be specialist companies but it would be interesting to know what other companies were in this market to gauge the level of competition for sites. The Chairman said he and a colleague had done some work on this a few years ago when he was in another authority and his view is the market seems to be led by a wish for grid resilience.

Immediate past Branch Chairman, Clive Ball, provided an update on the Real Estate Degree course at the University of South Wales (USW) which he was instrumental in setting up and mentioned that he was astounded to have received not one but two ACES Awards for Excellence (Community Champion and Project of the Year). The Branch Secretary apologised that he had overlooked these awards when dealing with ACES matters earlier in the meeting and all present offered well deserved congratulations to Clive. One Network 75 student on the course was in attendance at the meeting.

Our CPD Sessions in 2025 are again being provided by Chris Brain. In this session Chris covered Public Sector Finance, Asset Management, Housing, Climate Change, Air Quality and Asset Valuation.

In Public Sector Finance Chris examined the Draft Welsh Government Budget and its potential effects on Welsh Local Government finances as well as the continuing financial challenges being faced by local authorities in England. In Asset Management Chris looked at "A decade of cuts" a Senedd (Welsh Parliament) report which considered the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport in Wales, and, in the light of a recent review by NIESR (the National Institute of Economic and Social Research), considered the likely impact of some 23 PFI schemes across the public sector in Wales that are due to come to an end in the near future. Chris also looked at disagreements between parties to the Stoke schools PFI, the largest of its kind in England, which will be among the first to expire in October 2025. Other items included were Crumbling Public Buildings, the future of Worcestershire's County Hall, the rate of shop closures as analysed by the Centre for Retail Research, South Cambridgeshire DC's consultation on its four-day-week trial, the Law Commission consultation on the security of tenure provisions in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 and, last but by no means least, the fallout for the RICS from the High Court judgement in Iya Patarkatsishvili & Vevhen Hunyak v. William Woodward-Fisher.

In Housing, Chris brought to our attention dangerous staircases identified by Newcastle City Council, LB Havering plans to convert an office block to alleviate homelessness in the borough and the submissions for new towns across England.

Climate Change topics included Peterborough's 'roadmap to net zero', Doncaster's planning approval for a huge battery energy storage site in Yorkshire, BT's scrapping of its programme to convert its street cabinets into EV charging points and "Halting and Reversing the Loss of Nature and Biodiversity by 2030", a report by the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee of the Senedd. In Air Quality news was Greater Manchester's decision not to implement a Clean Air Zone but to instead take an investment-led approach to air pollution by bringing in lower and zero emission buses and taxis and new traffic management measures.

In the second part of the session (over an hour) on Valuation Chris explored in detail recent changes to the RICS Red Book. He set out key areas of which valuers need to be aware and also their implications for value and the valuer. These areas included VPGA 8 – ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) (and Sustainability too) in the Valuation of Real Estate interests; VPGA 11 – Valuer relationship with the Auditor; VPGA 10 – Material Valuation Uncertainty and VPS 1 – Master Service Agreements. Each of these key areas was explored in depth looking at factors such as constraints and risks, ESG data and inputs ((IVS 104) and the RICS Red Book ESG 'checklist', Chris went on to discuss the just closed CIPFA/LASAAC Code Consultation following the recent HM Treasury Thematic review. The three key consultation areas were Measurement Principles for EUV and DRC, Valuation Frequency and Indexation. These were again examined in detail and considered against the revised requirements of VPGA 11 and VPGA 10, the valuer's role, the auditor's role and how these are interdependent, the need to avoid 'standardisation' in material value uncertainty and, where a Master Service Agreement exists, whether the valuer needs to confirm in writing any separate additional terms of engagement.

What an information packed CPD session of just over two hours! It must make the ACES membership fee worth it for the CPD alone!

**Gerry Devine, Welsh Branch Secretary**

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