



For the first time since 2015 the country has not had to head to the polls. This has brought some stability but the political rhetoric and uncertainty around what 'Brexit' will look like has stopped any benefits that not stopping for an election might have brought.

Brexit has been the dominant topic with many domestic political issues being deprioritised or stalled as everyone waits to see the impact it will have on them. While Brexit dominates the political agenda, we have continued to reinforce the need to stay focussed on domestic issues especially in the built environment.

After Grenfell in June 2017, another emerging priority is better standards and regulations within the built environment. RICS has long championed this and as a regulator welcome any moves to make our industry a more transparent experience for all involved including consumers.

RICS has been working closely with all arms of Government on their changes to letting fees and regulation of agents, as well as working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on the issue of fire safety and the need to identify higher risk buildings with combustible cladding.

The government must address the growing need for low skilled and unskilled workers, or its plans for growth, especially in infrastructure, could be severely under resourced.

Politics plays a significant part in the delivery of infrastructure. It is indisputable that a planned interconnected infrastructure network which links in to housing, employment land and commercial development will lead to greater productivity and economic growth. Moreover, improving infrastructure will allow the UK to attract inward investment. RICS has welcomed the Government's examination of the planning system including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and viability assessments but encourage them to prioritise and highlight the need for strategic planning which looks not just at where people will live, but also where they will work, play and how they will get there while maintaining needs to decrease congestion and air pollution.

As Governments both national and local look to grow and attract inward investment, standards within the industry become even more important. In a market of uncertainty due to Brexit standards create stability and transparency. Our standards are there for those operating within the industry as well as those investing in it by bringing clarity to how things are valued and measured, creating what is essentially a universal language for investors, developers, government and the community.

We have taken the lead in addressing the need for International Standards and now have a full range developed with a wide range of partners and supporting organisations that are being adopted initially into our Professional Statements and then embedded within our stakeholder processes.

In a recent RICS Q2 Construction and Infrastructure market survey, 80% of respondents reported workloads had slowed amid financial constraints including access to bank finance and credit, cash flow and liquidity challenges, impeding building activity. Contributors reported that the



Manor Barn, Canterbury.

private industrial and housing sectors were seeing the most significant easing in activity, with rail, road and energy subsectors expected to see the strongest growth.

As well as investment, skills are also a growing impediment as contributors expected employment expectations to remain strong. The government must address the growing need for low skilled and unskilled workers, or its plans for growth, especially in infrastructure, could be severely under resourced. Approximately 30 percent of the current UK construction sector is over 50 and with nearly 8 percent of workers being from the EU, with thousands of new workers needed while a domestic long-term workforce is created through education pathways including T-Levels and apprenticeships.

RICS has been working with Government on their Construction T-Level with a Design, Surveying and Planning Pathway. We also support their reinvigoration of apprenticeships as a genuine alternative to higher education. Currently we are one of the few sectors with apprenticeship growth following the apprenticeship levy.

RICS supports the Kent Property Market Report as a great tool which highlights the many projects completed, and showcases the development within the region which in turn helps to attract investment and people enabling the region to grow and thrive. In a period of uncertainty this is especially important.

Christian Cubitt
Director Communications and Engagement, UK Markets