

ALEP Directors' Report
Tuesday 1 December 2020
ONLINE



No one could have predicted what would happen in the year 2020 - what a year it has been.

Tomorrow, we will come out of lockdown, many of us back into a somewhat confusing tier system, but I know that we will **all** be looking forward to some much-needed down time.

None of us knows what is round the corner and, despite the exciting promise of a vaccine, how COVID-19 might continue to impact our professional and personal lives over the coming months. To say this year has been a challenge is an understatement. Many businesses across all sectors have faced testing times and encountered situations that would have been unimaginable just one year ago. Many of us have lost people close to us, and we have also said goodbye to colleagues in the sector.

On a positive note, for ALEP, 2020 has re-affirmed to us the importance of the community that we have built up over the past 13 years. The 'community spirit' demonstrated by our members has really come to the fore, through relationships that members have forged during this tricky time, to their work together, and via our online networking opportunities.

As many members continue to work remotely and have limited physical contact with their colleagues, the last few months have shown how people are making an extra special effort at keeping in touch with their work-mates and peers in the sector. Indeed, ALEP events are usually occasions which bring professionals together for debate, discussion (and drinks!) but this year we have been compelled to move our events calendar online. No mean feat but having delivered our first-ever successful virtual Conference in October, we are looking forward to 2021 and hosting more events, which are likely to continue online for the time being. The first of these will be the ALEP Lecture, which will take the form of two 90 minute sessions on Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 March 2021. Our topic this year is 'Cladding and its impact on Enfranchisement'. Please save the dates.

In a year of such turmoil and uncertainty, I am proud to say that the Association continues to go from strength to strength. It has been a good year for membership applications – despite the pandemic – and our online enquiries and social engagement is higher than ever.

We can reflect on yet another year that has seen leasehold placed firmly under the microscope by government, the media, our colleagues in the wider property industry and consumers, too. Consultations continue and we await the Government's response to the Law Commission's recommendations. I remarked upon this in 2019 but it worth repeating today: whatever the outcome, the role of ALEP, as a professional and independent, apolitical association is to promote best practice, education, fairness and clarity to all members and the wider sector. We stand ready to work with government to provide advice on ensuring that any and all reforms are workable for all.

Despite COVID, our event calendar continued apace throughout 2020; we were the last organisation in the sector to hold a physical event in the form of the ALEP Lecture, which took place just before Lockdown. In July we held a 'Live at 6pm' event to discuss the Law Commission report – thanks to all who joined us from sunny terraces to listen to our speakers outline their thoughts.

We also held two CPD events in July, looking at the law and valuation practices in COVID19 – both were well attended and very well received. We also held an online coaching session, which focused on how best we can harness our 'career brains' in this most challenging times. We are lucky enough to be welcoming back our speaker, Lucinda Harlow, for a follow-up

session later this week. We also recently held an ALEP Coffee Break online, and we plan to make these a regular occurrence.

Though golf was permitted by September, as so many other aspects of our daily lives were restricted, we took the tough decision to cancel our annual golf day, which this year was sponsored by Fifield Glyn. We hope to return to Warley Park in May.

We took the traditional ALEP quiz online in early June, with over 100 members – and a parrot – joining us from up and down the country, and we look forward to a festive version, which is taking place next week.

I mentioned the success of our annual conference, which took place over four days in October, and huge thanks go to Team ALEP, who worked for many weeks to ensure that it ran without so much as a glitch. A total of 200 members and non-members joined in the twice-daily sessions, and the feedback was excellent. Thanks go to our speakers and all those who helped plan and shape this content.

Sadly, we are not able to end the year with our traditional seasonal drinks reception. I know it is the favourite event for many but, rest assured, we will organise a reception of some description – Spring/Summer – just as soon as such occasions are permitted.

Thank you to all who supported ALEP events in 2020. As always, we are grateful to our sponsor, Kerry London, which has supported us for an eighth consecutive year. The provision of moral support, as well as financial, is appreciated and we know that our members also appreciate the professional service – and favourable rates – Kerry London offers.

This year we were also pleased to welcome Zurich insurance to our ALEP family. The team joined us for our event in March, and sponsored the October conference, and we look forward to developing the relationship further in 2021.

DRIVE Marketing, an agency led by Clare Grove and me, continues to run the management of the Association and I am confident that the members receive prompt and efficient service. Clare, with the support of the directors, steers the association every year but has done an incredible job in navigating the association through the choppy waters of 2020. This year has been particularly tough for the events sector and my grateful thanks go to the ALEP team – Courtney and Georgie especially - for their tenacity in bringing our events online so successfully. Liza Smith, finance manager and administrator, also runs a tight ship and her work on the finances in this most challenging of years is hugely appreciated. More about that from Mark in a moment.

I would also like to thank all the members of the advisory committee for their guidance and support, particularly that of Mark Chick and John Midgley, and our Honorary President, Damian Greenish.

I am very proud of what TEAM ALEP has achieved in 2020. However, the successes and achievements of this year would simply not have been possible without the continued support and loyalty of our member firms and individual barristers. By attending our events in person and online, participating in consultations and planning, and supporting the Association in a myriad of ways, you continue to help us to take ALEP from strength to strength.

As we draw to a close, I would like to wish everyone all the very best and hope that 2021 brings success, happiness and continued good health.

Anna Bailey
Founder and Director