

ALEP Director's Report 2024

The past year has been something of a roller coaster for the sector; at last year's AGM, leasehold reform had featured in the King's Speech, a Ground Rent consultation had been announced and, hot off the press, was the introduction of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill. Mr Gove, then Housing Minister, had signalled his intention to get the Bill passed by the next general election – roll on several months and so the Act was introduced in wash-up.

We now have challenges to the Act on the grounds of Human Rights, and an acknowledgement from Matthew Pennycook just last month that the Act's implementation is a lot more challenging than first thought.

ALEP members continue to express their views on the reforms and, whatever side of the fence one sits, it is clear that there is much to do and many hurdles to clear. 2025 promises a raft of timelines, consultations and discussion aplenty, and ALEP will continue to monitor developments closely. We have had a number of meetings with MHCLG this year – and will continue to work with its leasehold reform team, providing advisory and technical support.

On Thursday 8 February, ALEP intervened in a Supreme Court case for the first time in the Association's history. Our purpose in doing so - to seek clarification and, potentially, changes to the law in relation to service of notices – was significant. Lord Justice Briggs credited the “scholarly and helpful intervention” of ALEP and the counsel's “carefully prepared and very helpful submissions on this difficult piece of legislation” made on ALEP's behalf. We reiterate here our thanks to Philp Rainey KC and Mark Loveday of Tanfield Chambers for their excellent pro bono work on the part of ALEP, as well as the team at Bishop & Sewell. As experts in this area, we will all of us look forward to the further development of the law and its wider application.

Legislation and reforms aside, ALEP continues to grow and though we report the same number of members as 2023 (mainly due to retirement and mergers) we have also welcomed new members over the course of the year. The trend of firms taking up additional office listings also continues.

Our PR and Regional Working Groups are now well established. Thank you to PR chair, Mark Wilson, the rotating regional chairs and all members who contribute to these groups.

Of course, the PR Working Group has had its work cut out this year, and our thanks to its members who have provided comments and opinions, and written articles, all of which have contributed to a greater number of headlines in the press.

We have appeared on BBC radio and television, and featured in the Mail, and the Financial Times, as well as trade press. Our thanks also extend to Penny Norton, who was recruited in 2023 to support our PR effort. She continues to forge relationships with the media with the aim of making our voice heard amongst other, louder contributors.

ALEP - as an association with members who act for freeholders and leaseholders - has always taken an apolitical stance, but as reforms progress, we understand there may a need to become more vocal as the representative voice of the enfranchisement sector.

Our Regional Working Group works hard to raise ALEP's profile outside of London – and we hope to gain further support and increase this activity in 2025.

Kerry London is our long-term sponsor, and we are delighted that they continue to support all our events, providing friendship as well as financial support – and service to our members. Zurich has also signalled its intention to renew its sponsorship for 2025, and the number of members and other non-member organisations supporting our event programme has continued to grow this year.

In March, we held our annual lecture at One Great George Street. While in Westminster, we took the opportunity to invite MPs to an open Q&A session. We welcomed Sir Peter Bottomley, who popped in to see what was going on, as well as three other interested parties and though we were not inundated, it was an important exercise and one that we plan to repeat in 2025.

In May, we headed back to Hertfordshire for the ALEP – Kerry London day, and welcomed a record number of novices, as well as our loyal ALEP golfers. The weather cheered as the day progressed and an enjoyable time was had by all.

Our annual conference took place in October at the Royal College of Physicians. Thank you to the 250+ delegates that attended this event that tackled the weighty subjects of short leases, valuation methods, commonhold and Human Rights.

We have held fewer online events this year as we have juggled consultations– and plan to increase this activity in the coming months. Please continue to visit our website and LinkedIn for updates and news.

ALEP was founded in 2007, not only with the aim of raising standards, but also of forging relationships in the sector. Over 100 members have registered to attend tonight's Seasonal Drinks Reception, an event that is always a welcome celebration and chance to network with friends in the sector. It is also an opportunity to remember those colleagues we have lost in the past year, and in years past.

We extend our thanks to our Advisory Committee, whose wise counsel and governance steers ALEP throughout the year. We are also grateful to Clare, Elle and Lucy, who together manage the day-to-day operations, membership administration and events. Our thanks also go to Lisa Carter who manages the finances so ably.

Ultimately, the achievements and milestones reached by ALEP in 2024 were made possible by the steadfast support and commitment of our members. Your active participation, whether through attending events, engaging in consultations, or contributing in various capacities, has been the driving force behind ALEP's ongoing success and profile.

As we bid farewell to 2024 and look forward to the opportunities and challenges of 2025, we extend our heartfelt wishes for your continued health and happiness.

On behalf of the ALEP directors:

Mark Chick
John Midgley