

Hayley Holness

Meet Hayley, our October master. Hayley joined Legal & General Retirement Institutional in July as Head of Investment for Real Estate Housing. Hayley sheds light on Legal & General's unique approach to the residential market and shares exciting plans for the future.

“ You have recently joined Legal & General, tell us about your new role and what inspired you to join the business?

Legal & General Retirement Institutional is a fast-growing business that is looking for new ways to deploy capital to address the substantial housing needs facing the UK as well as internationalise its investment programme. It's a very exciting time to be joining the organisation and overseeing the entry into overseas markets while establishing new investment programmes across affordable and market housing.

What's been most surprising/rewarding about joining Legal & General?

Legal & General is very entrepreneurial and in many ways has the energy of a start-up despite having a multi-billion-pound balance sheet and legacy dating back almost 200 years.

Name three things that we should be positive about in the industry today.

Residential real estate cash flows remain strong and as a sector we positively contributes to delivering vital housing infrastructure that benefits society in a number of ways.



What industry topics don't get enough air time in your opinion and why?

How the planning system can be an impediment to delivering housing in the UK. The relatively high degree of planning risk negatively influences the viability of housing investment for domestic and in particular, international capital.

What is the best decision you've made recently, and what was the worst?!

Best decision was to extend the work I do with Southwark's Youth Justice programme as a panel volunteer. I can really see the difference the referral programme makes in the lives of young people who often have fallen through the various cracks currently in the system. The worst decision I made was to go with a cheap insurance company for our car insurance renewal (don't ask!)

How did you get into real estate?

I got into real estate entirely by chance. My plan was to do political and economic risk consulting. I was offered an investment banking job when I finished my masters and thought the real estate group sounded more interesting than consumer and retail which was the other division I was offered.

What are people taking about most in the real estate industry today?

What the macro- economic outlook is for interest rates and what this means for asset pricing. Most real estate strategies and sectors have witnessed a fall in capital

allocations which is a major reversal in fortunes. Illiquid assets take time to reprice, and we are currently in a period of continued volatility and uncertainty.

Tell us something not many people know about you.

I speak Spanish and lived in Spain and France at various points in my life.

How did you end up living and working in London?

I ended up in London because my husband is English, though the city has very much become quite dear to me. Of all the places I've lived as an expat, London is the easiest place to feel at home, and I think that's a widely held view amongst the many foreigners who live here.

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

Coffee

What sport/team do you support – tell us something about this?

The Miami Heat, my home town basketball team though it is harder to follow now I live in London. I was a big fan during the Alonso Mourning era.

If you weren't working in real estate, what would you be doing and why?

International economic and political risk analysis. This was my original plan while at university and is still a passionate interest of mine.

Work from home, work from office or hybrid?

Hybrid – this is part of my contract. As a business given space constraints all employees on average can attend about 50% of the time currently.

WORDS OF WISDOM

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I wish I'd taken more risks. I'm inherently a prudent person in every aspect of my life; however, as I've gotten older my perspective on risk has evolved. Moving outside of one's comfort zone is often the best means of achieving growth.

As a working mother, what advice would you give to other working parents on how to manage the juggle?

Be open about your needs. Employees who feel they have balance in their personal lives are energised and more productive at work and so flexibility is a win-win for organisations and workers.

What are you most looking forward to in the remaining few months of 2023?

We are deploying the first wave of grants to help support delivery of more affordable homes in the UK. The first deals will close this year under this new programme which is very exciting.

Why is the residential market still so relevant to investors/developers?

When looking at investment performance across cycles the residential market has proven resilient as an inflationary hedge that can deliver cash flows even during economic downturns.

What is Legal & General's USP when it comes to the residential market?

We have long-term patient capital that can be used to drive positive social outcomes as well as delivering financial returns.

Tell us about some of the businesses plans for the future?

Working alongside colleagues in our Investment Management and Capital businesses, we are actively exploring making our first direct property investments in the US in 2024.