

For the 9 March 2024 Academic Awards ceremony

## **James Woodward's introduction of Alan Smith for the Keynote Address**

If you google 'Alan Smith', your server will throw up a whole number of goodly people. Some of you may know that Alan Smith is a footballer, now coach. Others, including a member of the platform party, believe that Alan Smith is the Bishop of Saint Albans and a regular participant in our democracy through his Episcopal seat in the House of Lords.

No, Google -- Alan Smith is neither of these – he is the First Church Estates Commissioner of the Church of England. He is the steward of the church's historic resources which are used to support ministry and mission. And, friends, as jobs go, I don't need to tell you that this is quite a responsibility!

He brings to this work a deep sense of calling and grounded-ness as an active member of his local parish church in Harrow. The volumes of Whitaker's Almanack on his shelves (revealed during our zoom calls leading up to today) are a visual reminder of his passion for cricket. Alan is also an author and an advocate for participation, inclusion, and social justice.

As the 13th holder of this office, he bears his responsibilities with both grace and a disarming lightness of touch. He told me that his 27 years as a senior financial executive with HSBC served as preparation for this vocation of working with these historic resources for the common good of all the peoples of these lands.

Alan has the gift of discerning wisdom that can be pursued in realistic and effective ways. He has a genius for understanding the large picture, recognising the importance of levers and strategic details, while always noticing the elements that so often are ignored or undervalued.

As a leader, he has impressive skills in mediating ways ahead which are creative, but also inclusive.

He is beginning to sound like a good graduate of Sarum!

Graduates, colleagues, families, and friends – please welcome Alan Smith.