



Subject	Update on ARB's Operational Activities		
Status	Open Session		
Purpose	For Note		
From	Registrar & Chief Executive		
History	Parent Committee	First Submitted	Revision Number
	N/A	14 July 2016	N/A

1. Purpose

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

For Note

2. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services, and support architects through Regulation. ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives and delivers against the Business Plan 2016.

3. Key points

Stakeholder Relations

Royal Institute of British Architects

We ran two sessions for staff working in the RIBA's Membership Office, during which we were able to explain more about ARB's routes to registration and how we deal with applications for registration. This was a valuable opportunity to share information with our RIBA counterparts and learn more about one another's processes. We provided a detailed overview of ARB's routes to registration, with written scenarios covering the various types of European applications. We provided a walk-through covering how ARB handles the online applications from end to end together with a demonstration of ARB's database facilities. The response was positive and RIBA offered to host an equivalent meeting which we hope to arrange soon.

Europe

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

We participated in the ACE's Professional Qualifications Directive/Professional Practical Experience Working Group's telephone conference in late May. This provided a useful opportunity to catch up on and share information in relation to the interpretation of the Directive and how other Member States are embedding the revised requirements of the

Directive. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the development of a survey which will be sent to all ACE Member Organisations to gather information about the national level accreditation processes which operate in each Member State. Staff have been involved in the development of this survey. The ACE intend to use the results of the survey to put together information about the processes which operate across Europe, as well as the European Commission's notification process, so that this can be used when wider mutual recognition agreements are being negotiated with other countries outside Europe. The ACE also reminded its member organisations that the European Commission was due to commence its five-yearly review of the Professional Qualifications Directive in 2017 and noted that ACE would be commencing its preparations for the potential review during the second half of 2016.

Professional Qualifications Directive

We recently met with representatives of DG GROW at the European Commission. DG GROW is the department which oversees the Professional Qualifications Directive and deals with the notification of qualifications in architecture for listing under Annex V of the Directive. We were able to explore various elements of the revisions which have recently been made to Article 46 of the Directive and its interpretation. Further feedback has been provided to the Prescription Committee in order to assist it with its work in dealing with the prescription of qualifications.

Services Directive

The European Commission has published a public consultation on a proposal to introduce a services passport and address regulatory barriers in the construction and business services sectors. ARB has the opportunity to respond in its capacity as a national authority (ARB is the Competent Authority for architects under the Services Directive). After careful consideration of the scope of the consultation it was decided that we should not submit a response at this stage but that any developments should be closely monitored.

Stakeholders from the consumer and construction sectors

We have been very involved in stakeholder engagement activity over recent months. We held a catch up meeting with TrustMark, with whom we are exploring whether there is a way to direct consumers from their website to information about ARB and the Register of Architects. We also met with representatives from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who were keen to discuss how risk management is covered in the curriculum for students of architecture.

As part of our work to inform our stakeholders about our regulatory role and to establish good relationships with key contacts at other organisations, we have hosted visits from a number of bodies working in the sector. The Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC) spoke about their interest in ensuring those who work on historic buildings are competent to do so. The Architects Benevolent Society (ABS) were keen to learn more about our role and processes and we continue to work together to explore whether there are opportunities for joint working.

Equality and Diversity

We met with a representative from the Judicial Appointments Commission, which is recognised as having a solid approach to equality and diversity policy following past criticism. They shared information about their approach, including analysing the different elements of their appointments process to ensure the whole procedure was free from discrimination. They also talked about their long term approach to educational outreach and how they spend time visiting schools, colleges and universities to sow the seeds, amongst young people, about the potential of a career in the judiciary.

Regulatory affairs

A member of the staff team attended a conference covering issues related to consumers, construction and the law to remain informed about relevant issues and meet with other stakeholders.

Communicating ARB's work

Students aiming to apply for Prescribed Examination – Bartlett Seminar Evening

In late May 2016, we attended one of the Bartlett's workshop evenings covering how students of architecture might prepare for the Prescribed Examination process. We attended so as to ensure that any students with more complicated technical questions on the process would be able to receive clear directions. The evening went smoothly, and individuals with very specific questions were invited to get in touch directly with us after the event for tailored advice.

eBulletin

The last ebulletin, which was sent out in May 2016, was the most popular to date since the redesigned ebulletin was launched at the beginning of 2015. There were nearly 12,000 unique opens of the message in the week after it was sent out, compared to 10,500 for the previous ebulletin. This represents a unique open rate of 37%, compared to the industry standard for architecture and construction of 24.92%. The story about ARB thwarting a fraudulent attempt to register as an architect was the most popular ebulletin piece to date clocking up 1145 views. Other popular articles included the regular 'Dear Architect' column, which provides information about professional standards matters, and the story encouraging architects to provide us with up-to-date contact information. The latter no-doubt contributed to the 474 updates we received in the week after the ebulletin was sent out, compared to the x updates received in the previous week.

Social media

Our social media audiences continue to grow steadily. Messages containing images continue to be popular and are more likely to be shared by our audiences and so, where possible, we are using photos and considering how we can develop our use of imagery. We have typically adopted a conservative approach to messaging, using our channels to point our stakeholders to information. Nonetheless, we recognise that there is scope for greater engagement on social media and so are undertaking a low level trial of this approach. In the first instance, this has seen us asking architects for feedback on what alternative file formats would make it

easier for them to download the logo.

Website

Visits to the website and online Register are up on 2015. Year-to-date visits to the main website reached 130,430 by the end of May 2016, up 11% on the previous year's number and visits to the Register for the same period reached 126,626, up 2% on the 2015 number.

Additionally, we continue work on the website redesign project. Work is going well on mapping out content and planning is underway for the new website. We are currently tackling the issue of duplicate pages as we want to remove the need to update information in multiple locations.

4. Administration of the Register

Accuracy of the Register

The Accuracy project is on-going, with staff amending records when accessing the database as well as the use of dedicated time through cross-team working.

The Registrants services section of the website has recently been amended to allow architects to update their equality and diversity information. The online application portal is currently being reviewed to ensure all necessary details are provided in the correct format for the benefit of the Register.

Section 11 Project

On 29 February 2016 a letter was sent to 620 architects whose address we were aware was not up to date. The majority of which we were aware of due to their annual retention fee invoice being returned. Any architect who currently pays their retention fee by direct debit was sent a letter via their bank on 3 May 2016.

As of 20 June 2016, 393 architects have been successfully contacted and up to date details have been provided. Over the next six months an attempt will be made to contact the remaining architects via telephone, LinkedIn, and through internet searches. If any architects have not made contact by 29 November 2016, their name will be removed under Section 11 of the Act.

Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2016

2016 Retention Fee Collection

Despite every effort to alert and encourage payment before the deadline, on 5 January 2016, 1,438 (110 of those 1,438 were also removed in 2015 for non-payment) architects were removed for non-payment of the retention fee, compared to 1,824 in 2015, a 21% reduction.

As of 22 June 2016 917 applications to re-join have been received.

The number of complaints in general regarding the retention fee and about the deadline of 31 December of each year has reduced significantly.

Comments received on the process, our communications and our service, feed in to our on-going commitment to improvements in this area.

As we do every year, we have considered a number of cases of extenuating circumstances based on evidence, or administration issues within the organisation, and where appropriate we have waived the application fee or the prescribed fee, or both. To date we have waived 73 fees.

Members of the staff team have re-formed the retention fee task group to carefully review the 2016 retention fee collection process and the feedback received. Last year this proved to be a successful initiative and the group's review led to the introduction of a number of changes including the text reminder service, issuing the top ten tips email and establishing a process for to deal with the issues raised by the direct debit dormancy period. The group has a number of potential ideas for change, based on the experience of the 2016 retention fee collection process, they are currently exploring these and further improvements will be made to the process.

5. Committee Meetings

Professional Conduct Committee – 17 May 2016

Prescription Committee - 19 May 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 23 to 25 May 2016

Investigations Oversight Committee – 2 June 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 9 and 10 June 2016

Audit Committee - 10 June 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 13 to 16 June 2016 (Case not concluded)

Prescription Committee - 23 June 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 6 July 2016

6. Future Meetings and Events

Professional Conduct Committee – 25 to 27 July 2016

Prescription Committee – 28 July 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 28 and 29 July 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 16 and 17 August 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 24 and 25 August 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 26 and 30 August 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 5 to 7 September 2016

Prescription Committee – 8 September 2016

7. Risk Implications

ARB's Operational Activities Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

8. Resource Implications

Staff resources continue to be stretched to capacity. We have recently considered the current structure, to ensure resources are positioned where needed, now and in the future.

9. Communication

The update on ARB's operational activities, updates the Board on ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

ARB takes equality implications into account in all areas of its work and where appropriate, specific impact assessments are undertaken.