



Subject	Communications Plan Update		
Status	Open Session		
Purpose	For Note		
From	Sandra Ison, Communications Lead		
History	Parent Committee	First Submitted	Revision Number
	N/A	15/09/2016	1

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Sandra Ison on 020 7580 5861

1. Purpose

To note the Communications Plan Update for ARB. The Communications Plan Update is included as [Annex A](#).

For Note

2. Terms of Reference

Communications is a business function which is used to support the delivery of ARB's remit, as such communications objectives are agreed alongside other business planning activities and published in the annual business plan. The 2016 communications objectives formed part of the 2016 Business Plan and are included in [Annex B](#). This report focuses on the delivery of the communication related objectives. Other business areas referred to in [Annex B](#) were reported on at the Board meeting on 14 July 2016 in the Mid-Year Report Against the Business Plan and are not covered here.

3. Open

4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

To protect the users and potential users of architects' services and to support architects through regulation.

To do this ARB works to increase public and professional awareness of the role, functions and culture of ARB and the UK Register of Architects. It proactively communicates with stakeholders to maintain and enhance the reputation of ARB as an independent statutory regulator which maintains professional standards and public confidence in the profession.

The Board agreed ARB's Communication Strategy at its meeting on 12 February 2014 which outlined our planned communications activity and identified three key communications aims to support the delivery of the business plan.

5. Key Points

- i. **Stakeholders** - For many years we have had solid relationships with key groups including architects, professional bodies, schools of architecture and students. Since 2014 we have extended our networks further, contacting homeowner/consumer bodies and regulators we weren't in touch with previously. In 2016, our focus has been on building new links with organisations operating in the equality and diversity sector.
- ii. **Communications tools** – We use a range of different tools including social media, the ebulletin and our website to communicate with our audiences. Our online resources continue to be popular with all stakeholders and so extending our digital offer continues to remain a priority. Highlights in this area include work currently being undertaken to restructure the website and plans to develop further online videos to extend resources offered via this format.
- iii. **Communications themes** – As a regulator with a clear statutory remit, we must be consistent about the messages we communicate. We work to inform all stakeholders about our regulatory role. We call on architects to provide us with up-to-date contact details and to refer to their registered status. We also focus on reaching out to consumers, encouraging them to check the Register and make informed decisions.
- iv. **Looking forward** – We have reflected on ARB's communications activity over the last 12 months and set out priorities for the year ahead. Maintaining and developing stakeholder relationships will remain a key pillar of our work as will extending our online offer to meet growing demand for resources in a digital format.

6. Risk Implications

The reputation of ARB is impacted not just by what the organisation delivers on but also by how ARB communicates with those who have an interest in its work. Inadequate or inappropriate communication presents a reputational risk in terms of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the role of ARB and the context within which it operates.

The Communications Plan sets out the tasks which are undertaken to achieve the aims of the Communications Strategy. ARB mitigates reputational risk by communicating in accordance with the goals, methods and values agreed in the Communications Strategy. This Strategy provides the Board with clarity and reassurance that the organisation is operating within clearly defined parameters, thus building and protecting its reputation as an effective statutory regulator.

In 2016, an independent review of ARB's stakeholder activity was undertaken by the Board's internal auditors to explore risks related to this area. This resulted in the implementation of a press handling policy to mitigate the reputational risks linked to dealing with press enquiries. The independent review also recommended that a stakeholder audit be conducted to capture information about new contacts, this process is currently underway with the Board identifying a range of new stakeholders.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the website restructuring project will lead to the launch of a new website based on an IT platform which is easy for staff to update and where duplicate pages are not present. This will substantially mitigate the risks associated with outdated information remaining on hidden areas of the site, which the staff team had identified as an area of concern.

7. Resource Implications

The financial implications of the Communications Plan have been factored into the 2016 budget and the proposed 2017 budget.

8. Communication

The Communications Strategy is available in the policy section of the website. Regular update reports to the Board provide the Board with an opportunity to review progress.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

As set out in the Communications Strategy, ARB is committed to communicating in a way which reflects its role as an inclusive organisation.

The Board and staff team have undertaken a proactive approach to deliver on this responsibility. For all concerned our work in this regard represents a genuine undertaking to do things properly, not simply a tick box exercise. We have worked to gather more Equality and Diversity (E&D) data from those who use our services. We have also met with organisations who work in the E&D sector to gain insights into their thinking and policies. We continue to work hard to embed what we have learned into our day to day work. We want to be sure that we carefully consider the data we collect and have the skills and processes to respond to any issues it raises.

Our communications will continue to be based on the principle of promoting equality of opportunity for everybody who has dealings with us, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, religion, belief system, sexual orientation or age.