



Subject Update on ARB's Operational Activities
Purpose For Note
From ARB's Staff Team

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1. Summary

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

2. Open/Confidential Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential session.

3. 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 2017.

4. Key Points

Stakeholder Relations

Working with the professional bodies

We continue to maintain existing relationships with the RIBA and the other professional bodies for architects.

The Registrar wrote to each of the professional bodies last Autumn and asked for their help in disseminating information about the retention fee due date. All of the organisations replied positively, confirming they would help. Additionally both the central RIBA communications team and a number of RIBA branches responded to our requests to share our retention fee social media messages. In turn, we try to assist the professional bodies where possible, for example we are currently liaising with the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW) to participate in CPD events related to professional standards matters and introduction and the Architects Code of Conduct.

External Events

External events provide us with a key opportunity to meet existing and new stakeholders, while developing our staff's own knowledge of issues in the construction sector.

RIBA has recently held a number of events which have been attended by various members of our staff team including the President's Medals 2016, the Presidents Debate (which was on the subject of *Architecture: A Man's World*), and the RIBA Royal Gold Medal Student Crit. The Registrar also attended a RIBA Journal seminar on the subject of what Brexit might mean for the construction industry.

The Head of Registration attended a reception organised by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) which explored how equality and diversity issues could be progressed within the industry. The Registrar accepted an invitation to speak to Part 3 students at the Bartlett about ARB's role. We also recently met with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) to discuss what they are doing in relation to degree apprenticeships. In addition to this, a separate meeting was held with the Nursing and Midwifery Council on the same subject.

Regular liaison meetings

The Staff Team regularly meet with counterparts at other professional bodies and other regulators. Most recently Staff met with representatives of the RIBA's Education Department. Amongst the topics which were covered was the position regarding the Board's review of its UK routes to registration; the development of a degree apprenticeship and the RIBA's future links with other worldwide validation bodies. We're also working with other organisations including two regulators (the General Medical Council and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) on our Tone of Voice project which is covered in more detail later on in this report.

Apprenticeships

We recently attended a meeting with representatives of the Architecture Trailblazer Group; the group is seeking to establish new apprenticeship standards for the occupations of Architectural Assistant and Architect. We explained the Board's requirements for prescription. In mid-January 2017, the Department for Education issued a short survey seeking feedback regarding the initial proposals being put forward by the Trailblazer Group, to which we provided a response. We will continue to meet with the Trailblazer Group to advise them regarding the Board's requirements as the group develops the apprenticeship standards. The Prescription Committee has been kept up to date with developments; we will continue to keep both the Committee and the Board up to date on a regular basis as the Trailblazer Group continues its work.

Equality and diversity matters

Architects Benevolent Society (ABS)

Over the last year we have established a working relationship with the ABS. The ABS briefed members of the registration team about the work of the Society, so when members of staff had conversations with architects who mentioned financial difficulties or mental health issues, they were able to be signposted to the ABS for possible assistance. As a result of this, the ABS received a number of enquiries from architects.

Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust (SLCT)

We recently had a positive meeting with a representative of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. We discussed the diversity of the Register including the disproportionately low number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic architects. We discussed the possibility of inviting a representative from Trust to attend a post-Board session to give a presentation about the work of the Trust, and we will also be working to support the Stephen Lawrence Diversity Charter.

Lay Board Member – reaching out to our networks

Throughout December/January, we tapped into our networks in order to share information about the lay Board Member vacancies. As part of this, we reached out to contacts in networks for women in construction including by posting information on four LinkedIn Groups. The National Association of Women in Construction were very helpful and confirmed that they had included information about the role in an eBulletin with a circulation of over 1000 as well as posting about it on social media channels. Additionally, the Women in Sustainable Construction and Property group confirmed they had shared the vacancies on their site which has in the region of 1000 members. We also sent information to a representative of Freehold, a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender network in the construction sector, as well as Elevation Networks, who have advised previously that they would share information about our vacancies with their contacts.

Tone of Voice Project

We are adopting an approach undertaken by the General Medical Council (GMC) who have reviewed the tone of voice of their correspondence, particularly where it relates to disciplinary matters or removal from the Register. We are mindful of the concern that can be caused by regulatory correspondence and we are keen that whilst it is accurate and purposeful, it does not cause unnecessary distress. We have convened a project team which met for the first time in January 2017 to discuss the project aims and parameters. As well as members of the ARB staff team the project team also includes representatives from the General Medical Council, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Architects Benevolent Society and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development all of whom are interested in the mental health of their registrants. We have also informed the professional bodies about this project and advised them that we will be asking for their involvement as the project progresses.

EU Referendum

Architects, potential registrants and the trade press have all been asking for information about the likely impact of Brexit. We have confirmed that it is 'business as usual' until the Government provides us with more clarity regarding the position and produced a list of frequently asked questions which we are keeping under review and are committed to updating as and when we receive further information on this matter. The data we collect about visits to our website reflects the level of interest in this topic. The webpages related to the EU routes to registration and overseas qualifications ranked amongst the most popular on our site in 2016.

5. European Issues

European Stakeholders

As mentioned in November 2016, the European Commission is currently reviewing the effectiveness of the Services Directive. As part of this review, the Commission is considering the introduction of a Proportionality Directive, which will formalise the way in which member states should undertake the proportionality tests that look at how member states regulate professions. The Commission is also looking to introduce a Services E-Card, which will have a similar purpose to the European Professional Card. To date, ACE member organisations and members of the European Network of Architects Competent Authorities (ENACA) are reluctant to support the development of a Services E-Card, on the basis that the existing mechanisms for exchanging information works well and that the introduction of a Services E-Card could increase costs for the organisations which are responsible for issuing them/the registrants seeking them. We attended the Architects Council of Europe (ACE) General Assembly in early December 2016, at which the special session focussed in more detail on the above topics. Senior staff from the European Commission were present at the session and provided member organisations with further information and updates on these issues. Since returning to the UK, we have been in touch with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) to ensure that they keep us informed of any further developments. Following the issuance of the Commission's formal proposals regarding the Proportionality Directive and the Services E-Card Directive, we have, through our Government Departments, sought further clarification and more detail about the proposals to better gauge the impact that these Directives could have. We will be remaining in close contact with the respective Government Departments in order to monitor the position and as more information becomes available. We will also have attended a meeting of the European Commission's Architecture Sub-Group shortly before the Board meeting. The agenda is due to cover the above mentioned directive proposals as well as progress in relation to the mutual recognition agreement between the EU and Canada. A further, verbal, update will be given to the Board at its meeting.

6. Communicating ARB's work

Architects Code of Conduct and Practice

Towards the end of 2016 we undertook a number of communications activities to inform architects of new Code of Conduct. We produced a twelve point card which highlighted the key elements of the Code, which was sent to all registrants with their retention fee invoice. We also sent a communication to all registrants for whom we have an email address telling them about the Code, resulting in nearly 18,000 unique opens. We will continue to raise awareness of the new Code throughout 2017.

eBulletin

The unique open rate for the eBulletin was nearly 12,400, the highest in 2016. This is in part due to a substantial project undertaken by the registration team to contact architects with missing or invalid email addresses. Once again we also used the eBulletin to share

information about professional conduct matters. The Dear Architect column which provided a report on the type of complaints ARB receives about architects was the most popular article, followed by a piece on the new Code of Conduct.

Website

We have been conducting a project to move the website to a mobile friendly platform, update its content and improve its appearance. The testing phase should be commencing mid-February and we will share information about the launch of the new site as the project progresses.

Social media

During the retention fee collection period we used our social media channels to reach a wider audience. Twitter was particularly helpful during this time as we were able to send direct messages to some of our followers and ask them to share our messages with their audiences. This approach proved successful; in the last week of 2016 our retention fee messages on Twitter clocked up over 19,000k views.

7. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Accuracy of the Register

The Accuracy of the Register project is on-going, with staff amending records when accessing the database as well time being dedicated to the task by individuals from across the organisation. At the close of 2016 we completed a project to encourage architects without email addresses to provide one. This is important as 84% of architects removed from the register for non-payment in 2016 had not provided us with an email address; of those removed in 2017 that figure had fallen to 2%.

In January 2017, we completed a project to ensure that the nationality and country of qualification of every architect on the Register has been entered onto the system. We updated over 8000 records as part of this process.

Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2016

Following the 2016 removals for non-payment, as of 31 December 2016, 1007 architects of the 1437 removed had been re-entered on the Register (93%). Of the 1437 struck off in 2016, 98 were struck off again in January 2017.

Section 11 Project

On 17 January 2017, we emailed 355 architects whose retention fee invoice was returned as the addressee was no longer at the address. On 24 January 2017, we followed this email up with a formal letter under Section 11 of the Architects Act 1997 to 204 architects who did not act in response to the email. This is down from 620 architects in 2016. We will continue trying to contact the remaining architects via email and social media over the course of the year as we have done in previous years. We anticipate removing any architect who has not responded or updated their registered address from the Register in October 2017, before the 2018 retention fee notices are sent out.

2017 Retention Fee Collection

The percentage of the Register who paid on time is up from 96% in 2016 to 97% in 2017. As with previous years we drew on the feedback we had received from registrants when planning our retention fee communications. While a few registrants complained about too many reminders, many said they valued the additional prompts. Consequently we introduced additional text alerts. These prompts served as a targeted, proportionate focus of our resources and clearly had an impact as we saw payment spikes directly after text and email reminders were issued.

Despite every effort to alert and encourage payment before the deadline, on 5 January 2017 1204 architects were removed for non-payment of the retention fee, compared to 1438 in 2016 (a 16% reduction).

As of 27 January 2017, 482 applications to re-join have been received. The number of complaints about the deadline of 31 December has reduced significantly again on last year. Comments received on the process, our communications, and our service, feed in to our on-going commitment to improvements in this area.

We have waived the application fee, prescribed fee, or both, where extenuating circumstances or administrative errors on our part have resulted in the fee not being paid on time. As of 27 January 2017 we have waived thirteen fees, compared with 53 fees at approximately the same time last year.

A retention fee review session is being organised for February 2017. The Retention Fee Action Group will act on any feedback over the course of the year in preparation for the 2018 campaign and consideration will be given as to whether any action points fit within the scope of existing internal task and finish groups.

Email management system

We are in the process of trialling email management systems to enhance the management of information about the emails we receive, measure our performance against key performance indicators and ensure that all emails are dealt with. We undertook a full trial of one system in September 2016 and undertook a preliminary trial of another system in November 2016. Further trials of the latter system are planned for February 2017.

8. Committee Meetings

Professional Conduct Committee – 29 November 2016

Prescription Committee – 1 December 2016

Remuneration Committee – 1 December 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 1 and 2 December 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 6 to 8 December 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 15 December 2016

Professional Conduct Committee – 23 December 2016

Audit Committee 27 January 2017

Prescription Committee 12 and 26 January 2017

9. Future Meetings and Events

Prescription Committee – 23 February 2017

Investigations Oversight Committee – 24 February 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 22 and 23 February 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 1 March 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 2 and 3 March 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 13 and 14 March 2017

Audit Committee – 16 March 2017

Professional Conduct Committee - 20 March 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 27 to 29 March 2017

Prescription Committee – 30 March 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 5 and 6 April 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 10 and 11 April 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 13 April 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 25 April 2017

10. Resource Implications

The activities outlined above have been undertaken by the current staff complement. We are in the process of filling a vacancy in order to ensure we are fully staffed from Spring 2017 onwards. We will continue to monitor the position in terms of the organisation's workload over the coming months to ensure that we can continue to deliver the Business Plan 2017, as well as all of the ARB's core functions.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

14. Further Actions

These are referred to within the key points set out above.

