

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

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Karen Holmes at karenh@arb.org.uk or on 020 7580 5861

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

Fraudulent application to Register

On 9 August 2017, Ms Leopoldine Van Daalen was found guilty of four charges under the Fraud Act 2006 at Southwark Crown Court. The case related to an attempt to access the prescribed examination at Part 2 through the submission of several fraudulent documents, including a falsified degree certificate and fabricated references. Ms Van Daalen had pleaded not guilty to all charges. The case returns for sentencing on 12 September 2017 with all options, including a custodial sentence, still open to the judge.

Stakeholder Relations

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

We attended and provided SCHOSA with an update about our work at its Summer meeting. Our presentation gave an overview of the outcomes of the DCLG's Periodic Review report, drew attention to our Brexit FAQs and covered the Board's upcoming business as usual reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications. No significant queries or issues were raised by those attending the meeting in relation to any of these

topics. The meeting provided us with a useful opportunity to network with Heads of Schools, and/or their representatives, and to discuss some of the issues that they were dealing with.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

A representative from the QAA provided a presentation and question and answer session for the Prescription Committee at its meeting of 16 August 2017. The presentation focussed on the role of the QAA, how this role has changed over the last two years, and an overview of the revised approach to quality assessment. Information was also provided on sector developments such as the establishment of the Office for Students and the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Which?

The summer period has seen a number of successes as a result of our stakeholder engagement activity with consumer facing organisations. Most notably, following ongoing communications with the consumer organisation Which?, information regarding engaging an architect is now available in the Which? advice guide. This is freely accessible online and is not restricted solely to Which? members, the information can be viewed at the following links:

<http://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/im-thinking-of-hiring-an-architect-what-do-i-need-to-know#what-you-need-to-do-to-protect-yourself>

<http://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-complain-about-bad-architectural-work>

Citizens Advice

Following communications with the Operations Senior Officer at Citizens Advice we have agreed to provide brief advice sheets regarding ARB's regulatory role and the regulation of architects for dissemination to the advisers who work in local Citizens Advice branches.

Houzz

We continue to maintain a good relationship with Houzz which is an online design community, connecting homeowners and suppliers using eye-catching images of homes. We had a very constructive meeting with Houzz in August to discuss opportunities for joint working. We are exploring whether Houzz can use the data sharing policy, recently agreed by the Board, to enable registered architects with profiles on the Houzz website to use the ARB logo as part of their profile. We have also been advised by our contacts at Houzz that they can include information on the site regarding the Register and ARB's role as a statutory regulator. This work links into our objectives to raise awareness of architects as regulated professionals and the Register as a valuable tool to support informed decision making.

Apprenticeships

We have continued to attend the Architecture Trailblazer Group's meetings as it seeks to develop the architectural assistant and architect standards, the models of academic provision

which will sit within the apprenticeships and the end point assessments for each standard. The Architecture Trailblazer Group launched an initial consultation on the draft standards for the architectural assistant and the architect apprenticeships in late July. We provided a high level response to the consultation which was noted by the Prescription Committee at its most recent meeting. We are undertaking work to develop a set of Frequently Asked Questions for potential education providers which will focus on ARB's prescription requirements.

5. Reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications

In accordance with the timeframes agreed by the Board in July, we have:

- Sought and obtained confirmation from the DCLG that the Department is content for us to progress with the pre-consultation phase of review process. The Department has agreed that we should discuss the Board's intended direction of travel in relation to the Criteria and Procedures reviews once the pre-consultation phase has been completed and ahead of the Board's meeting in November so that it can ensure it is comfortable for the Board to progress with its reviews of the Criteria and the Procedures documents;
- Engaged the services of an independent consultant to assist us with various aspects of the review;
- With the agreement and support of the Chair, developed and issued adverts and role descriptions with the Board in order to populate the Task and Finish Groups which will review and analyse the pre-consultation feedback later this Autumn, before the Board makes strategic decisions regarding the next phases of the reviews. The details of the roles have been available on our website and were widely publicised through our social media networks, e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Google+. We have pushed information about these roles through our regulatory networks and the networks of others such as established E&D groups, of which we are a member. We will be shortlisting and interviewing for these roles in late September;
- Developed and issued an online pre-consultation feedback survey to gather stakeholder views regarding the current Criteria and Procedures. The details of the survey have been circulated widely through our social media networks and our extensive network of contacts;
- Organised a series of five UK-wide round table meetings in order to gather feedback on a face to face basis from stakeholders. These meetings will take place in late September; and
- Set up meetings with the other key stakeholders that hold the Criteria in common with ARB, i.e., the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Quality Assurance Agency in order to initiate formal discussions about their views in relation to the Criteria/the Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture.

We have additionally developed more detail project plans for each phase of the reviews, and are in the process of finalising bespoke risk registers, equality and diversity impact assessments and a communications plan.

Following the Board meeting, we will include an article in the Ebulletin which sets out the details of the review, the Board's objectives in relation to the reviews, the overarching project timeframes and details as to how stakeholders can contribute to the pre-consultation phase.

Further updates will be provided at the Board meeting.

6. Communicating ARB's work

We use a wide range of communications tools to disseminate our messages, selecting the tools and tailoring the content to meet the needs of the audience.

eBulletin

The July ebulletin saw a slight fall in readership numbers although this was anticipated given the holiday period and the fact that the bulletin did not contain any major announcements, compared to recent ebulletins which covered matters relating to the Periodic Review and Brexit. Nonetheless, it still logged 11,325 unique opens which is broadly in line with the usual rate. The most popular stories were the regular prescription column which logged 327 views, the piece on Brexit FAQs with 316 views and the Dear Architect column with 257 views.

Annual Report

The Annual Report was launched via an eblast on 31 July 2017. We also circulated it to our wider stakeholder networks including Investigations Pool members, examiners, solicitors involved in the professional conduct process, colleagues at other regulators, contacts at organisations such as Architects Council of Europe and European Network of Architects' Competent Authorities along with contacts at consumer organisations such as Citizens Advice, Which? and Homeowners Alliance. At the time of writing full month one data was not yet available but the statistics to date show that visits to the microsite are up significantly on last year's month one stats. There have already been a total of 2,384 visits to the microsite, up a substantial 71% on the 1,394 first month visits for the 2015 Report. We are currently working on producing a PDF version of the 2016 Report which will be made available on our website shortly.

Exhibitions

We are currently undertaking preparations to exhibit at the London Homebuilding and Renovating Show which will take place at Excel from 22 to 24 September 2017. We are looking at new ways of engaging visitors and collecting feedback building on the successes we have seen over recent shows using the voting tool and comments box to facilitate conversations.

7. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Systems improvements

Work is underway to implement software developed to store and process passlists electronically. We are in the process of uploading legacy data from existing passlists to make the system operational. Once the new system is up and running it will streamline the processing of applications but give ARB the ability to manage its own data more effectively.

Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2017

Following the 2017 removals for non-payment, as of 16 August 2017, 725 architects of the 1182 removed had been re-entered on the Register (61%). Following February's post retention fee 'wash-up' event, a new process for administering BACS payments has been drawn up and work to communicate with large companies paying for their employees is underway.

In April, it was reported that work is also underway to identify those former registrants who were removed for non-payment in 2016 and 2017, to establish whether they are still using the title 'architect' in business or practice. This work remains ongoing and at present, the Professional Standards team identified 220 potential cases where there was a high risk of title misuse. 115 of these have been closed, with 86 of those involved being reinstated to the Register. As of 16 August 2017, 39 cases remain open.

Section 11 Project

Section 11 of the Architects Act 1997 provides that architects must provide us with a correct address for Registration. We are currently attempting to contact architects with incorrect addresses and if unsuccessful, ultimately remove them from the Register under Section 11 (for failing to provide correct contact information).

In January 2017, we emailed 355 architects whose retention fee invoice was returned as the addressee was no longer at the address. We followed this email up with a formal letter to 204 architects who did not act in response to the email. (This is down from 620 architects in 2016). On 24 July 2017, we sent a second letter to the 69 of this group who had not contacted us, informing them that they would be removed from the Register in three months if they did not change their address or respond.

As of 16 August 2017, 51 architects had not responded to our concerns or updated their details. This is fewer than the number removed in November 2016 (58). We will continue trying to contact the remaining architects via telephone, email and social media.

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.

8. Committee Meetings

Prescription Committee – 16 August 2017

Remuneration Committee (via telephone conference) – 31 August 2017

9. Future Meetings and Events

Professional Conduct Committee – 18 September 2017

Prescription Committee – 25 September 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 25& 26 September 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 5 October 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 6 October 2017

Audit Committee – 10 October 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 30 October – 2 November 2017

Investigations Oversight Committee – 2 November 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 3 November 2017

Prescription Committee – 16 November 2017

Professional Conduct Committee – 20 – 22 November 2017

Architects Council of Europe - Finance Committee and General Co-ordination Group meetings – 5 October 2017

Architects Council of Europe – Professional Qualifications Directive/Professional Practical Training Experience/Regulatory Questions and Issues Working Group meetings – 19 October 2017

European Network of Architects Competent Authorities Meeting – 20 October 2017

ARB/Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture Liaison Meeting – 20 October 2017

Association for Professional Studies in Architecture Autumn Forum – 3 November 2017

10. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

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, carries out specific impact assessments. For example, these are being undertaken on the Criteria and Procedures reviews. ARB is also involved in the development of the Apprenticeship scheme which may assist in widening participation in the scheme.

14. Further Actions

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