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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 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, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

4. Stakeholder Relations

Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN)
In December we met with three representatives of ACAN, which is a network of individuals within architecture and the built environment taking action to address the twin crises of climate and ecological breakdown[1]. We explained the steps we are taking to review how the Criteria currently deal with the education of architecture students in relation to climate change, and ACAN followed up the meeting with a letter imploring ARB to declare a climate emergency, review the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice, and expedite that review of the Criteria. We will be considering all of their points and responding accordingly.

[**Architects Council of Europe (ACE)**](#)
The ACE is composed of 43 member organisations which are the national regulatory and professional representative bodies in the EU Member States, the accession countries, Switzerland and Norway. Through its members, the ACE represents the interests of over 600,000 architects from 31 countries in Europe.

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[1] www.architectscan.org

We will have attended the ACE's Regulatory Questions and Issues Working Group meeting by the time the Board meets in late January 2020. This Working Group was established by ACE to reflect on competition and regulatory issues that affect the architectural profession. The meeting agenda is focussed primarily on the de-regulatory pressures placed on member organisations and how these issues can be addressed. We will provide any additional and relevant updates at the Board's meeting on 27 January 2020.

Architecture Trailblazer Group
A group of 20 practices responsible for creating, in 2018, the apprenticeship standards and end point assessment documents for the Architectural Assistant and Architect Apprenticeships. Chaired by Fosters + Partners and conducted in collaboration with ARB, RIBA and several UK universities.

We attended a meeting convened by the Group in mid-January 2020. Amongst other things, changes to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's policies, Occupational Standards and End Point Assessment plans and the funding of the Level 6, Architectural Assistant Apprenticeship were discussed. It also provided employers/practices, the RIBA and ARB with the opportunity to provide feedback from their perspectives. We will provide any additional and relevant updates at the Board's meeting on 27 January 2020.

Criteria Review
In July 2019 the Board decided that a targeted piece of work should be undertaken to consider the competencies required for those entering the Register in respect of fire/life safety design, and climate change.

Two working groups have been formed, and include experts in the fields of fire/life safety design and climate change, experts in higher education, and the RIBA & RIAS. The working groups are chaired by Richard Parnaby. Both groups have met and are making good progress towards their objectives, which are to have made recommendations (after a consultation period) for the Board to make a final decision on in autumn 2020.

Hackitt Review
The Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was announced by government in July 2017 following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and was led by Dame Judith Hackitt. Its purpose was to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future. One of those recommendations was that there should be a competence framework specifically for those involved in the design, construction and maintenance of Higher-Risk Residential Buildings.

ARB is a member of the working group that is considering the competencies that should be required for architects and building designers involved in Higher-Risk Residential Buildings. The substantive work of that Group has now finished, and the report Raising the Bar was published for consultation. The Group is currently considering whether its section of the report should be amended in light of those consultation responses, before the overall report is finalised after 30 January 2020.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
The QAA safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education (HE) wherever

it is delivered around the world. Their main areas of work include reviewing HE, Access to HE, the UK Quality Code and providing advice and guidance.

We reported in December that the QAA was in the process of consulting on a revised version of the Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement following a review of the Statement during the summer 2019. It was noted that the QAA was proposing to change its approach of embedding ARB's Criteria at Part 1 and Part 2 levels within the document and appending the ARB's Part 3 Criteria by including links to ARB's website pages instead. In accordance with the Board's decision, the Executive wrote formally to the QAA about its concerns in relation to this revised approach and that the final version of the Statement should make clear ARB's requirements would additionally need to be met by those institutions seeking prescription of their qualifications. Once the outcomes of the QAA's consultation are known, we will update the Board.

Stakeholder Research
With support from a leading consultancy, we are in the process of conducting stakeholder research project to enable us to strengthen relationships, benchmark current impact, improve our activities and assess future performance. The project is focused on two main areas, awareness of ARB and views on how well we do what we do.

All quantitative surveys have now been completed. The majority of the planned, qualitative in-depth interviews are underway with the last few due to take place early in the new year. This will conclude the fieldwork after which analysis and drafting of the final report will take place.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)
Each Head of every UK Recognised School of Architecture is a member of SCHOSA. They also have a number of associate members of schools. It provides a forum for debate and exchange of ideas between Heads trying to achieve similar goals in different institutions.

We met with representatives of SCHOSA Council as part of our series of regular liaison meetings in mid-January 2020. We provided SCHOSA Council members with updates on the progress of our focussed reviews of the Criteria in relation to the climate emergency and life/fire safety. Other key issues that were discussed included updates on the review of QAA's Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement; the UK's exit from the European Union and the implications of this following 31 January 2020, as well as the consultation in relation to our Prescribed Examination processes. SCHOSA representatives also flagged up that they were looking into the future funding of architecture qualifications and would brief the Executive on developments in this area at a future meeting. Further to the ARB Chair's meeting with representatives of SCHOSA in late 2019, SCHOSA wrote to the Chair in mid-January 2020 to confirm their commitment to contributing to the Board's discussions about its review of the competences needed to join and remain on the Register. Further engagement between the Chair and SCHOSA will take place during 2020.

Transitions London
A social enterprise dedicated to making the engineering jobs market more effective and more inclusive – by accessing the skills of refugee professional. It aims to increase the hiring success rates for Engineering, Architecture & Business Services candidates and employers.

In January 2020 members of the Registration Team met with Vicky Johnson, an Employment

Advisor with Transitions London. Transitions contacted us in December as they are currently working with a small cohort of candidates who worked as architects or in related roles in their home countries. They wished to find out more about the process of qualification to assist them in supporting the candidates. It was a productive meeting and we expect to hear more from Transitions about an event that they are organising for their candidates shortly.

6.   EU Exit

Given recent developments in Parliament, we are anticipating that the Withdrawal Bill will now be approved and that the UK/EU will move into the implementation/transition period after 31 January 2020. In this scenario, the existing provisions as set out in the Act and the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive will continue to operate as they currently do. We will be ensuring that the position is clear on our website and providing stakeholders with updates via our E-bulletin and social media channels. The next steps are likely to involve the Executive working closely with Government to advise on relevant aspects the future economic partnership.   We will continue to provide the Board with regular updates as matters move forward.

8.   Communicating ARB's work

Publications
Earned media (content not directly created by ARB but by others without payment) is a highly trusted source of information. Earned press coverage enables us to inform and raise awareness of ARB and our regulatory activities with a range of stakeholders. In addition significant earned coverage in a national newspaper that will be seen by a large readership would cost thousands if the equivalent space was bought as advertising.

Since the last Board meeting on 9 December 2019, we have been referenced in a least 12 articles, published 5 news releases and responded to 5 press enquiries.

We did not have cause to reach out to any publications in order to coordinate the correction of factual errors in their content and/or educate them on the restrictions around the use of the title.

EBulletin
Our eBulletins remind the profession of their responsibilities and provide updates on decisions made by the Board as well as other information of interest and relevance to architects. Issues are published after Board meetings, which are usually held around five times a year.

The notification for the December eBulletin, distributed 16 December 2019, was delivered to 42,326 recipients and opened by 12,985 in the first week following publication. The December eBulletin microsite received 8,820 page views in the first week. The December eBulletin microsite was the edition since tracking began in 2015.

To help ensure the Register is kept up to date, the eBulletin email prominently features recipient contact details together with a click through option to update. We received approximately 924 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the eBulletin was sent out compared to 396 in the previous week, an increase of approximately 133%.

Website (arb.org.uk)
The five main Fee webpages have received a total of 4,357 views since 19 September 2019, a 109% increase compared with the same period last year.

In addition to an update of all associated webpages, new Retention Fee FAQs were published on 19 September 2019. For the first time FAQs for those coordinating payment for others (e.g. employers) were produced and have received 128 views since launch.

There were 47,091 sessions (a period of sustained engagement by a user) on the Fee payment portal from its 11 October go live date. This compares with 42,807 sessions in the same time period last year (a 10% increase). Over half (54%) of all retention fee payments were made online.

10. **Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency**

Numbers on Register
On 31 December 2019, the Register stood at 42,547. As 16 January 2020, there were 41,591 architects on the Register. Of these, 8,926 were EU nationals (not including UK). 7,621 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8326 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2019 (figure from 17 January 2019), 7126 residing in the UK. In 2018 there 8,108 EU nationals (not including UK) on the Register with 6,943 based in the UK. This demonstrates that the Register is still growing and that the number of EU nationals on the Register and with addresses in the UK is still increasing.

Email data
The email management system used to track email traffic coming into the main generic information account (monitored by Registration), indicates that in 2019 we sent 15,038 replies to queries received. This compares to 11,713 sent in 2018 (28% increase).

The most popular topics were 'the prescribed examination' (1284) 'request for EU certification' (1220), 'changes of address' (1074), 'UK applications (777)', 'EU applications' (772) and 'Brexit' (729). In 2018, the most popular topics were 'changes of address' (1342), 'the prescribed examination' (1332), 'retention fee' (672), 'general queries' (668), 'UK application' (664) and EU application (610).

These figures indicate that the increase in correspondence during 2019 can largely be attributed to the impact of the UK's pending exit from the European Union.

Retention fee campaign
The retention fee campaign has now concluded. As for the 2018 and 2019 fee, 97% of the Register made their payment on time and 3% were removed for non-payment. The Register grows in size year on year so the number of actual payments taken increased by 3%. We removed 1332 architects for non-payment of the retention fee at the start of the year. 337 (25%) of these have since reinstated. We received 41,206 payments, though are yet to formally reconcile this figure. We will undertake a review of the retention fee campaign and look to implement any improvements from errors, omissions and near misses as well as complaints.

69 of those removed from the Register in 2020 were also removed in 2019, with six being removed in 2020, 2019 and 2018.

For 2020, 489 EU nationals were removed from the Register for non-payment (37% of the total figure). The figure for 2018 was 388 (35% of the total of 1,096).

For 2020, architects (0.1% of the Register) who joined the Register via the EU route were removed for non-payment. This is the same as last year when 0.1% of EU route individuals were also removed.

Over half of all payments (54%) were made online, and more payments were made this way than last year. The second most popular method was Direct Debits which made up 25% of all payments.

Registration EU matters

As reported above, we are tracking the number of architects with EU nationality (other than UK) entering and leaving the Register. We note that the number of EU nationals on the Register is still increasing at a faster pace than in 2018.

Overall, in 2019, 961 architects joined the Register via the EU routes compared with 836 in the same period in 2018 (15% increase), 945 in 2017 (1% increase) and 1,232 in 2016 (22% decrease).

Finally, the number of certificates we have issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased exponentially in 2019, with 732 being issued in 2019. This is already 228% higher than in 2018, when 223 were processed across the year. In 2016, the year the referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU, 105 certificates were issued in the whole year.

Application Management System

Work is now underway with developers to design and develop a fully integrated, paperless application management system for all applications joining, re-joining and leaving the Register. This will bring many benefits that include driving efficiency, reducing paper use and will also provide a wide range of management information and statistics. Roll out of the application management system is expected by the beginning of June 2020.

11. **Committee Meetings held since December Board Meeting**
    Prescription Committee Induction Day – 15 January 2020
    Prescription Committee – 21 January 2020
    Audit & Risk Assurance Committee – 24 January 2020

12. **Future Meetings and Events**
    Professional Conduct Committee – 6 to 10 January 2020
    Professional Conduct Committee – 20 to 22 January 2020
    Professional Conduct Committee – 3 to 7 February 2020

Professional Conduct Committee – 10 to 14 February 2020
Professional Conduct Committee – 25 to 28 February 2020
Prescription Committee – 4 March 2020
Professional Conduct Committee – 3 to 5 March 2020
We are in the process of finalising future dates for Committee meetings.

13. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

14. 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.

There are risks associated with the UK's exit from the EU which are subject to a separate risk management programme. Risks relating to a 'no deal' exit from the EU have abated since the last report as have concerns around the retention fee collection and the potential for a greater than expected number of architects to be removed for non-payment of the fee.

Further detail of specific risks to the organisation and in relation to operations will be provided in the confidential Registrar's report.

15. Communication

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

16. Equality and Diversity Implications

None other than dealt with in the body of the paper

17. Further Actions

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