



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	13 May 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

Bureau Architectenregister, Netherlands

The Bureau Architectenregister is the Dutch Competent Authority for Architects. We met with our counterparts in late March 2016. Our Dutch counterparts wished to learn more about our prescription and registration processes, and how we deal with UK and European notifications to the European Commission. We, in turn, were able to learn more about the Dutch registration processes, including an update on the introduction of practical training requirements in the Netherlands.

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), USA

We recently met with the Senior Architect and Adviser to the Chief Executive Officer of NCARB, who was visiting Europe on a fact finding exercise. NCARB is keen to strengthen links with their European counterparts, and is particularly interested in the UK's education and registration processes. We were able to share information about our respective routes to registration and where commonalities occur.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA) Spring Conference

We attended and provided a presentation to SCHOSA members about our recent work/the Qualifications Directive and the current ground rules regarding the prescription of qualifications at the SCHOSA Spring Forum in Belfast. This was a useful opportunity to

disseminate the information that we have learned about Article 46 of the revised Qualifications Directive and its interpretation to date. It also provided the opportunity to remind institutions of the current position regarding our requirements for prescription and registration. The Board may wish to note that Professor Don Gray has taken over as the Chair of SCHOSA as Professor Alex Wright has completed his term of office in that role.

Royal Institute of British Architects

We met with the Director of Education to catch up on matters of common interest in mid-February 2016. Discussion largely focussed on what we had learned to date about the revised Qualifications Directive and the interpretation of Article 46. The RIBA is keen to progress a review of the Criteria, which are held in common for the purposes of prescription and validation. We have, however, explained that we are unable to commence a review of the Criteria, or our review of the routes to registration, until the outcomes of the Periodic Review are known. We will be meeting with our RIBA counterparts more regularly as we learn more about the interpretation of Article 46 of the Directive.

We met with the RIBA's Director of Membership to learn more about the RIBA's review of its membership categories, and in particular, the RIBA's revised requirements for European qualified individuals wishing to become members of the RIBA. We will continue to liaise to find efficient ways of working so that there are streamlined checking processes in place for those who wish to register in the UK and join the RIBA.

Professional Qualifications Directive

We are continuing to work closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to ensure that we properly understand the revised requirements within the Directive, specifically in relation to the notification of compliant qualifications to the European Commission for listing under Annex V.

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

We recently attended the ACE's General Co-ordination Meeting. The meeting provided a useful opportunity to catch up on the work that ACE has been undertaking, particularly in relation to the bedding in of the Qualifications Directive across all Member States and the commencement of the European Commission's review of the Services Directive.

Stakeholders from the profession

We continue to work hard to build and maintain stakeholder relationships with architects and organisations representing the profession. In February we met with the Architects Benevolent Society's (ABS) Chief Executive and External Relations Manager to discuss possible areas of joint working. This resulted in a follow-up meeting with the ABS, which was attended by one of the ABS's Welfare Officers. During this discussion we heard about the personal and professional issues about which architects contact ABS. This was a productive meeting and, as a next step, the ABS Welfare Officers have accepted an invitation to spend a half day with different members of the ARB team to learn about different elements of our regulator role and so that we can build relationships as a basis for any future working. We also met with an RIBA counterpart to share relevant information about communicating with the profession.

Stakeholders from the consumer sector

We have been working with stakeholders from the consumer sector as part of our strategy to reach out to their networks to inform them about the Register of Architects. We met with staff from Houzz, an online home improvement community, and discussions with this organisation continue. We are looking to see if there is an opportunity to work together to support the public to make informed choices. We also met with representatives from the Committee on Advertising Practice (CAP). They were concerned about the issue of misuse of title and are interested in ARB referring a suitable misuse of title complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority ASA (CAP forms a part of the same regulatory structure as the ASA). In addition to this, we met with the Chief Executive of the HomeOwners Alliance (HOA) who updated us on the organisation's current work and asked us for content for the HOA website. Furthermore, we are in the process of organising a catch-up meeting with TrustMark.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed both to increasing the amount of equality and diversity data we hold and to using this information to ensure that we genuinely operate in an inclusive/non-discriminatory manner. We recently implemented changes to our online systems so that registrants, who have not submitted this data, are prompted to do so when they log on to update their details. The architects' election provided us with an excellent opportunity to develop relationships with a number of stakeholders in this sector including the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC); Urbanistas and Freehold. We are keen to develop further relationships with organisations championing groups under-represented within this industry.

Additionally, we have arranged a meeting with the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) who are recognised as being very strong on equality and diversity matters following past criticism, we are keen to learn about their approach and how it translates into their policies and procedures.

The Planning Portal

The Planning Portal is an online tool; it is used by many local authorities to manage public facing elements of their planning process. Over the last few years we have been in touch with the team at the Planning Portal, to ask them to include more information about ARB on their website. In January 2016, DCLG appointed an external provider, TerraQuest, to run the Planning Portal. This provider has been looking at ways to develop the business including identifying suppliers to operate 'Find an Agent' services to enable members of the public to locate providers of construction related services, including information about architects. Whilst we are unable to enter into a commercial arrangement we strongly recommended that the Portal should direct consumers looking for architects to ARB. Unfortunately, the Portal did not shortlist us, advising us that this was in part due to the overall user experience and support offered to users, and in part due to commercial reasons. We will, of course, continue to remain in touch with the Planning Portal team and work with them wherever possible.

Regulatory affairs

We are a member of a communications network for regulators which provides communications professionals in the sector with a forum to discuss developments in regulatory affairs and share advice on best practice. We hosted the most recent meeting of this group in April 2016 at which we discussed our approaches to communications planning and evaluation. We also spoke about the production of Annual Reports; from this conversation it became clear that there is a trend to streamline these documents. Other regulators are simplifying these reports, publishing financial accounts and headline information but not duplicating the reporting of information which has already been placed in the public domain. The Communications Lead will investigate this further, with a view to adopting this approach in 2017.

Communicating ARB's work

Homebuilding and Renovating Show

We had a very successful time exhibiting at the Homebuilding and Renovating Show at the NEC in Birmingham. We had in the region of 1000 visitors to our stand over the course of the show. The 'Meeting your Architect' forms were once again well received with, in the region of, 800 distributed to visitors. Furthermore, we accepted an invitation to present a Masterclass informing the public about the Register of Architects and ARB's role. In addition to this, we were able to use our new spot survey tool for the first time; this allows visitors to answer questions by placing tokens in voting tubes to select an answer. It's a very visual, interactive tool and it went down very well with almost 500 visitors participating. We will build up a pool of data over the course of the year which we can use to inform our future communication messages and activities. Initial findings highlight the importance consumers attribute to recommendation, reputation and registered status when selecting a professional.

The messages we have been promoting in Q1 2016

Our messaging on social media and via our website has focused on informing architects about the new Board members. We have also sought to promote engagement by encouraging stakeholders to respond to the consultation on changes to the Code of Conduct and by applying for the vacancies on the Professional Conduct Committee.

eBulletin

The last eBulletin was well received with over 10,000 unique opens. The articles about misuse of title and the growing Register were the most well read, closely followed by the piece on the retention fee roundup.

Social media

On social media popular messages differed between channels, Twitter users responded well to messages encouraging architects to submit equality and diversity data. On Facebook election messages proved popular and on LinkedIn posts related to the registration process and information for students went down well with audiences. LinkedIn is our most popular social media channel; our audience on this has grown to over 2000 followers. Our online videos also continue to be well received by stakeholders; we have recently passed 21,000 views across all our videos and we are considering how we can further develop our use of this medium.

Website

Traffic to the main ARB website has grown substantially in the last quarter and traffic to the online Register has also increased slightly. There were over 83,000 visitors to the ARB website in quarter one of 2016, up 17% on the same period for 2015. The reinstatement period and the election are likely to have had an impact on these numbers. Traffic to the online Register was 79,500 in quarter one of 2016 up by over 1000 on the same period for 2015. Whilst this is healthy number, we plan to undertake further work to drive traffic to the Register including the website redesign project outlined below and using social media to refer people to the online Register.

We are committed to conducting a project to redesign our website to reflect both feedback from users and changes in technology since the last major redesign of the website in 2013. Our stakeholders informed us that, whilst the information we provide on the website is useful, they find it difficult to navigate. The growth in portable devices also means that any future version of the website must be mobile compatible. Money has been set aside to undertake this project in 2016 and work has commenced on mapping the current content of the site in preparation for the redesign exercise.

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.

As of 12 April 2016, 289 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, writing to their bank 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 2015

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 12 April 2016, 870 applications to re-join have been received.

The number of complaints in general regarding the retention fee and about the deadline of 31 December 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	-	26 February 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	1 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	2 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	7 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	14 – 16 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	24 March 2016
Audit Committee	-	17 March 2016
Prescription Committee	-	31 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	5 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	7 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	11 - 13 April 2016
Board Induction Day	-	21 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	22 April 2016
Board Induction Day	-	29 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	9 – 11 May 2016

6. Future Meetings and Events

Prescription Committee	-	19 May 2016
Audit Committee	-	16 June 2016 - <i>currently being rescheduled</i>
Prescription Committee	-	23 June 2016

7. Anticipated dates for future Board reports on particular projects within the Business Plan July 2016

Review of the Code of Conduct

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

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