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## Update on ARB's Communication Plan

It is 12 months since the last full communications update to the Board in September 2015. Whilst regular summaries are provided via the Operational Activities document, the following report offers an overview of the communications activity undertaken during this period. It sets out how work has been undertaken to support the delivery of the objectives set in the 2016 business plan.

Our communications effort has continued to focus on building and maintaining stakeholder relationships. This work is essential so that we can tap into the networks of others, which enables us to expand our reach. Nonetheless, alongside this stakeholder activity, we continue to use other communications tools including our website, social media and ebulletin to disseminate information to our audiences.

In September 2014, the Board noted our communications strategy which sets out three key communications aims. These underpin the annual objectives we set and the resulting work we undertake and are listed below:

- i. To increase public and professional awareness of the role and functions of ARB.
- ii. To continue to raise awareness of the Register, specifically explaining to users of architectural services what registration means, and the importance of checking the Register before engaging an architect.
- iii. To extend the network of stakeholders to support ARB to deliver its business plan.

ARB's communications function supports the organisation to achieve its business objectives and thus deliver ARB's statutory remit, as set out in the Architects Act 1997.

This report will commence with a recap of the 2016 business objectives and will follow with information about communications work undertaken to deliver on these. It will include reflections on successes and areas for improvement, as well as identifying priorities for the coming year.

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### **Communications objectives in the 2016 business plan**

Communications objectives are integral to the 2016 business plan. The plan sets out specific communications tasks with regards to expanding stakeholder networks. It also outlines a commitment to further harnessing technology to develop the use of communications tools including the website, social media and the ebulletin. [Annex B](#) contains the communications objectives covered in the 2016 business plan.

Additionally, communications objectives are woven throughout the wider business aims. These relate to our regulatory functions which cover registration, prescription, professional conduct and protection of title. Communications is key to the effective delivery of all of these functions as we work to provide informative resources to consumers and clients, registrants, applicants, candidates, schools of architecture, professional bodies and other built environment stakeholders who use our services.

As a public body, committed to transparency and accountability, it is essential that we communicate our effectiveness, both in terms of highlighting successes and identifying and acting upon areas where improvement is needed. As such, we see communications as a two way process covering not simply the dissemination of information but also encompassing listening and, where appropriate, responding to feedback, advice and the experience of others. In this way, it is also an evolutionary process as we amend resources to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

Additionally, in 2016, an independent review of ARB's stakeholder activity was undertaken by the Board's internal auditors. This was a very helpful exercise which resulted in a number of recommendations which we have subsequently implemented. These are also discussed during the course of this report.

### **Stakeholder Relationships**

We continue to work hard to maintain existing stakeholder relationships and develop new ones. For many years, we have had strong relationships with architects, students and schools of architecture. Professional bodies are also key stakeholders for ARB. We are in touch with employees in a range of different roles within these organisations, they provide us with insights into the views of their members and share key messages via their networks. These traditional stakeholders are core to our work and we report on our interactions with these organisations, groups and individuals via the regular Operational Activity Report which is presented at each Board meeting as well as reports relating to our different regulatory functions.

In 2014, the Board oversaw the implementation of a new communications strategy which set out a more proactive approach to communication, particularly in the area of expanding stakeholder networks to include contacts from consumer and client organisations and regulators with whom we weren't previously in touch. Over the last year we have had a further push on building links with those operating in the equality and diversity sector. Information outlining progress made with these relationships is provided below with the focus being on contact over the last twelve months.

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The independent stakeholder review recommended that the matrix used to manage and record stakeholder relationships be updated to include specific deadlines and relationship owners. This work has been undertaken and a regular programme of review meetings has been established.

### **Consumer and client organisations**

**HomeOwners Alliance** – We have maintained a good relationship with HomeOwners Alliance, a membership organisation established to provide a voice for homeowners. The Alliance continues to use our ‘Meeting your architect’ form on its website. It has also expressed an interest in receiving further editorial information and we intend to use this opportunity to inform stakeholders about the revised Code of Conduct which will be launched at the beginning of 2017.

**TrustMark** - TrustMark operates under a government licence agreement, it provides consumers with a website listing a network of vetted suppliers. We continue constructive discussions with TrustMark about the possibility of a formal link with the TrustMark website so that those searching for architects are directed to the ARB Register. In the meantime, our contacts at TrustMark have recently added ARB to the useful links section on its website.

**Which? and the Citizens Advice Bureau** - Which? Local, a website containing supplier reviews and advice for Which? members continues to maintain an ‘architect’ category and to display the ARB logo next to those on ARB’s Register and we are in touch with the site moderator. Following a reorganisation in the Which? policy team, our former policy contacts have left but alternative members of staff have now been identified and a meeting requested. We also continue to work to re-establish a relationship with Citizens Advice, whilst ARB is included in their popular Advice Guide, we believe there is potential to expand upon the information covered.

**Houzz** - We have had several meetings with Houzz, an international online home renovation and design platform for consumers and suppliers which enables them to share images and information. The most recent of these was with the organisation’s newly appointed Chief Executive and Industry Marketing Manager for the UK and Ireland. They are keen to enable architects with profiles on the Houzz website to raise awareness of their registered status and have asked us to share registrant data with them. We have said that we could explore this idea but have stressed that data can only be shared for regulatory purposes and, not as a source of marketing information.

**Planning Portal** – The Planning Portal is an online tool used by a significant number of local authorities to manage the public facing elements of their planning process. The portal was initially established by the UK government and in 2015 it became a private entity, owned as a joint venture between the Department for Communities and Local Government and Terraquest Ltd.

We have been in touch with the Planning Portal for several years. It is widely used by the general public and, consequently, we believe that it should direct consumers looking for architects to ARB to verify their registered status. In 2016 the Portal team advised us that they were looking at ways to develop their business including identifying suppliers to provide a new ‘find a trade professional’ service. Their aim was to enable members of the public to locate providers of construction services, including architects. Whilst we are unable to enter into a commercial arrangement we strongly

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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 the support offered to users, and in part due to commercial reasons. We will continue to remain in touch with the Planning Portal team and work with them wherever possible.

## **Regulators**

**Regulator communications group** - Our Communications Lead is part of a network of communications professionals working in regulatory bodies. Many of the attendees work for health regulators including the General Medical Council, the General Dental Council, the General Chiropractic Council and the General Osteopathic Council. This group meets several times a year to share best practice and information on developments in the regulation sector related to communications. We also tap into this network for informal advice, as and when we need it, and this has enabled us to gather information about regulator's policies on matters such as social media and press handling to support us with work in these areas. (Please note, we have other links with regulators which we use for sharing information related to other specific aspects of our regulatory work.)

**UK Inter Professional Group** - We are working with colleagues from other bodies to re-launch the UK Inter Professional Group (UKIPG). This is a network of organisations with a regulatory remit which currently provides us with a cost effective way of sharing a broad range of benchmarking information with peers in the wider regulatory sector. In particular, the Communications Lead has been able to establish strong relationships with colleagues at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Science Council through this group. The Communications Lead has been assisting with UKIPG's project to relaunch its website which has provided staff with a valuable learning opportunity at a time when we are undertaking a similar piece of work on our own website.

**Government Communications Service** - The Communications Lead also attends meetings of a network of communications professionals from across the Government Communications Service (GCS). This group is made up of representatives from different government departments as well as employees from arms-length bodies (ALBs). It was set up as part of the GCS improvement programme to promote high standards across the board and it is an excellent forum to learn about communication trends and developments from a range of sectors.

## **Equality and diversity contacts**

Building relationships with stakeholders in the equality and diversity sector has been a major feature of our stakeholder activity over the last twelve months, this has been based on a three pronged approach:

- i) Continue to collect equality and diversity data from registrants;
- ii) Reach out to equality and diversity networks to enable us to recruit from a more diverse pool of candidates;
- iii) Meet with organisations undertaking leading edge equality and diversity work and learn from them.

**Collecting equality and diversity data** - As set out in our Equality Scheme, the Board and staff team are genuinely committed to operating in line with the public sector equality duty. In 2015 we conducted a survey of registrants, asking them to submit equality and diversity information. This

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resulted in 5,000 architects providing us with this data and meant that by the end of 2015 we held this material for about 13,000 (some 35% of the Register). Realising that we could not conduct another survey for some time, we have amended the online portal to ask architects who have not yet submitted data to provide this information at the same time as updating their contact details or paying their fee. This feature has only been launched recently and we will report on its impact at the year end.

***Reaching out to equality and diversity networks for recruitment*** – Prior to the election and appointment of new Board members the previous Board reiterated their commitment to reaching out to a wide pool of potential candidates including those which are traditionally not well represented at Board level. This was met with enthusiastic support from the staff team who contacted a number of groups in the construction sector including Freehold, an LGBT network, the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and Urbanistas, networks which represent women. Freehold included information about the Board vacancies in a mail out to members; NAWIC promoted the vacancies at its conference and Urbanistas London group invited the Communications Lead to speak at a members event. We were also able to tap into the Equality and Diversity Forum who included the vacancies in its regular ebulletin.

***Meet organisations undertaking leading E&D work*** – We want to be certain that we are using the E&D information we collect to ensure that our services and recruitment processes do not present unintentional barriers to any groups. For these reasons we are meeting with organisations who are seen as leaders in this field to learn from their experience and advice. We have met with the Judicial Appointments Commission, who have developed a structured approach to assess the different stages of their recruitment process to ensure fairness throughout the entire recruitment journey. We have also met with the Chief Executive of Elevation Networks, a charity which supports those from disadvantaged groups into employment, who advised us on the barriers faced by young people.

***Architects Benevolent Society (ABS)*** - We have had a series of meetings with the Architects Benevolent Society this year to explore the possibility of joint working. In June, we hosted ABS's two welfare officers for a half day visit, during which they met with representatives of ARB's various regulatory teams and told us about the financial and personal challenges faced by the people they help. A further meeting is planned for early September to follow up on the points covered during this visit.

### **Members of the Public**

Members of the public are increasingly undertaking major home improvement schemes on their properties. In addition to this, the number of consumers opting for self-build projects is growing. Our focus, when communicating with this key stakeholder group, is to support the public to make informed choices. We want consumers to understand the benefits of using someone on the statutory Register and we want them to understand what issues they must discuss. We want to inform the public about the role of ARB and how the regulator can help.

Over the last year we have exhibited at the Home Building and Renovating show and Grand Designs Live to provide face to face advice to consumers and to listen to their experiences and concerns. We also received a substantial volume of enquiries via phone and email from members of the public

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asking for advice on how to find an architect, and some raising concerns about an architect's conduct or work.

## **Communications Tools**

### **Meeting your Architect Tool**

In response to the questions we received from members of the public we have developed a 'Meeting your architect' tool which is a form aimed at guiding consumers through an initial meeting with an architect to prompt them to ask about the issues which, if not clarified, can lead to complaints later on. This tool was launched in October 2014 and has proved extremely successful with 4,700 copies distributed since its launch, when both online and hard copies are counted. 1,270 of these have been distributed so far this year alone with two exhibitions planned for later this year, when we expect to hand out a further 1600 copies.

### **Annual Report**

As a public body it is crucial that we provide accessible information about ARB and how we have delivered our regulatory remit and business objectives. Transparency and accountability are key to our values and so it is essential that this information becomes a matter of public record. In this way stakeholders can access information about our performance in any one year. ARB's Annual Reports dating back to 2000 are all available online. Our stakeholders often use this historical information to facilitate comparisons of the profile of the Register and ARB's performance over time.

In 2014 we made changes to the information we provide in our annual report, bringing it into line with the style used by other regulators. We included information about our regulatory role and how we have delivered on this as well as narrative information from our report against our business plan.

The 2015 Annual Report was published on 18 July 2016, this Report outlines our regulatory role and sets out how we have delivered against our objectives. In the first month after it was launched it received 1,394 views, an increase on the previous year's month one visits by 8%. We believe this is partly due to the fact that it was launched earlier than the previous year, just before the holiday period and so we are planning for a similar launch date in 2017. We have also promoted the Annual Report via the July ebulletin and social media messaging, including using infographics designed by a member of the staff team. In the past, we have seen readership numbers for Annual Reports climb throughout the year as stakeholders use these resources to look up facts and figures as and when they need them and we anticipate the same pattern this year.

### **Ebulletin**

The ebulletin is an extremely important tool for us because it is the key medium we use to proactively contact the profession. We send out five ebulletins annually, they are sent out within a few days of each Board meeting. In February 2015 we refreshed the design of the ebulletin, it was updated to encourage stakeholders to read more of the content as well as providing detailed tracking information regarding which stories are the most popular with readers. One of our objectives was to use the ebulletin to raise awareness of the Code of Conduct. To address this matter we launched a regular 'Dear Architect' column where we include information about the Code and related issues.

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Information asking architects to provide updated contact details has been moved to a more prominent position in the ebulletin and we regularly include articles reinforcing this point.

This has had a significant impact on the number of architects updating their contact details, for example the week after the July 2016 ebulletin was sent out we received 356 contact detail updates, compared to 79 the previous week. In 2015 we opened up readership to all through the addition of a new sign-up feature. In 2016, we have sought to further grow readership, including a wider range of articles and using eye-catching images and titles. This approach has built on the success of the previous year with the May 2016 ebulletin being the most popular to date. It clocked up nearly 12,000 unique opens, which equates to an open rate of 37% compared to the industry standard of 25%. The most popular stories in the May issue covered ARB thwarting the fraudulent attempt to register as an architect (which clocked up 1,145 views); the regular 'Dear Architect' column (920 views) and the piece about the new Board members (788 views). Typically, stories providing advice to architects about the Code and articles about misuse of title prosecutions are consistently popular amongst the registrant readership.

### **Online Videos**

We have grasped the opportunities offered by the trend towards offering online services making many of our services accessible in this way. This enables our stakeholders to submit information at a time and place which is convenient to them. It also has the advantage of driving down costs which ultimately means best value for the registrants who fund the regulation of the profession.

As part of this online strategy we have developed online videos providing advice and information on a range of matters. Over the last few years we have noted a marked increase in the views of these videos with service users clearly wanting to access content via this medium.

The current suite of videos covers key elements of our existing regulatory role including the registration process, the prescribed examination, advice for consumers considering using an architect and advice for architects on how to avoid complaints. So far in 2016, these videos have already clocked up over 6,300 views which equates to 256.65 hours of viewing time. The most popular videos in 2016 so far have been those entitled, 'Are you eligible to register with the Architects Registration Board?' and 'How to prepare for the Architects Registration Board's examination' which have achieved 2,147 and 1,804 views respectively.

We are keen to commission further videos and are looking at undertaking further work in this area, extending the subject matter we cover.

### **Registration Route Finder**

Feedback from those applying for registration and enquiries dealt with by staff clearly identified an issue with prospective registrants struggling to identify which route to registration applied to them. Consequently, we developed an online route finder which supports applicants to identify their route to registration and directing them to the appropriate area of the website. This has proved extremely popular, since its launch in October 2014 it has had 7,370 visitors. It was particularly well used during 2015 but has fallen back this year with 1,243 visits. This is consistent with our expectation that interested parties would view the tool initially to identify possible routes and that the search numbers

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would settle down over time. The visitor number broadly equates to almost three quarters of all registrants joining for the first time which suggests good usage of the tool amongst this group. Nonetheless, we plan to have a further push to promote the route finder over the coming months via social media and an ebulletin article.

### **ARB Website and Online Register**

Over recent years, since the relaunch of the website in February 2012, our website strategy has focused on increasing the number of referrals to the website. Whilst visitor numbers have been growing the extent of the increases has slowed down over the last few years. Year-to-date visits to the website stand at 194,399 up 7% from the 181,661 recorded for the same period in 2015, additionally year-to-date visits to the Register stand at 192,096, up 2% from 188,851 for the same period in 2015. Whilst these are still very positive and we have continued with our strategy to increase visitor numbers, it became clear in 2015 that this approach alone was not sufficient.

Consequently, as part of the Board's commitment to harness technology to provide efficient and effective services to stakeholders, the 2016 business plan included a commitment to restructure the website. The reasons for this are threefold. Firstly, feedback gained through internal and external focus groups showed that whilst users felt that the information contained on the site was of a high quality, they found the site difficult to navigate and felt that some of the terminology used was technical and confusing. Secondly, the technology underpinning the existing site is now relatively dated and thus updating the site is time consuming and complicated, presenting risks for us in terms of duplicate and obsolete information. Thirdly, as the use of mobile devices becomes more prevalent, the methods by which users access our site are changing and so it has become clear that upgrading is needed to address this issue.

Significant progress has been made with this project so far during 2016, a new site map has been developed and duplicate pages have been identified and removed. Staff from across the organisation are committed to this restructuring exercise and the next stage will be to redraft content with the focus being on maintaining the quality of the information whilst clarifying some of the language used.

### **Social Media**

ARB established its social media presence at the end of 2013. We have been growing our audiences ever since and have established a reliable internal process for signing-off messages. We have the following social media channels – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and YouTube. Our social media strategy is about building links with stakeholders and key spokespeople who have large audiences and asking them to share our messages with their followers. Our audiences are largely made up of architects and others in the construction profession and so they are effective tools for providing information to registrants, applicants and students.

Once again, key success areas this year have been LinkedIn where our followers have grown from 1,815 to 2,172 and YouTube where views have increased by well over 6,000 from 17,797 to 23,973.

In summer 2016, we implemented a more engaging approach to our social media messaging. The need for this was identified during the digital focus groups we conducted previously. A member of the team who is very passionate about social media has taken on this role, using design software to

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produce bespoke graphics which has enabled us to significantly increase our use of images and infographics. This has proved successful and engagement analytics for our messaging have improved with more messages being shared and liked which helps us to reach a wider audience.

### **Press**

There has been regular coverage of ARB news in the trade press in the last year, we issued press releases about a range of matters related to Board governance including the elections and appointments processes and the election of a new Chair. We also posted news releases about professional conduct cases and misuse of title cases. The majority of our news releases are picked up and result in coverage. Articles are on the whole balanced in tone, at times they contain critical comments or eye-catching headlines but any negatives are offset by quotes from ARB spokespeople reinforcing ARB's regulatory role. In the later part of this year we plan to have a push on communicating our messages to non-trade press, we will target both local and national publications as we have had limited coverage in these this year.

Additionally, this year, in response to a recommendation from the independent review of our stakeholder activity we have formalised our press handling policy, this is included in the revised staff handbook and has been highlighted to the staff team at a recent meeting. This measure mitigates the reputational risk of staff being misquoted by establishing a clear protocol for the handling of press enquiries and compliments social media guidance already issued to the Board and staff team.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is very important to us, we need the views of those who use our services to know what works and what could simply be done in a better way. We receive feedback in a range of different ways:

**Structured surveys** - As we are keen to capture the views of those who use our services, we collect feedback covering all areas of the organisation's core functions. This includes in relation to new registrants experience of the online application facility as well as the views of candidates who have sat the Prescribed Examination. We also ask for feedback from those who have used the complaints process up until the Investigation Panel, including both the views of complainants and architects. Additionally, we receive and log feedback from those who have visited our stand at consumer shows; and from schools who have made applications through the Board's Prescription process.

**Press** – Whilst the majority of feedback comes via the above channels, some feedback is made via public forums including articles in the trade press which contain quotes from both ARB spokespeople and stakeholders. Seven articles about ARB, or referencing ARB data, were published during quarters three and four of 2015. Six of these were in the trade press and one was in the Financial Times, the latter was a discussion piece covering the average age of people working in a range of different professions.

The number of stories is substantially less than the 17 articles published in the first half of the year. The difference can be attributed, in part, to the high number of articles which are normally published at the beginning of each year relating to non-payment of the retention fee. It is also probable that

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this drop is due to the postponement of certain projects which are likely to generate coverage, whilst the periodic review has been underway.

**Social media** - We also receive comments via social media. Where possible we seek to reply to these, although we are mindful that responses given via social media can be seen by all and therefore must provide generic, useful information and not disclose personal data.

**Customer service complaints** - Feedback on customer service complaints is generally received from those who re-join the Register when they have been removed for non-payment at the beginning of the year. There were seven negative comments received during this reporting period with regards to the fee notices sent at the end of 2015. These comments have been considered by the Retention Fee Action Group who are currently planning the collection of the 2017 retention fee.

All feedback is important to us, we review it and it helps inform our future work planning. The feedback we receive impacts on a range of things including the improvements we make to our online systems; how and when we communicate key notices including the retention fee payment information and, at times, it results in us changing our processes or implementing new ones.

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## **Key Communications Themes**

We have identified key messages which we consistently communicate across all our channels. These are set out below:

***Update your details*** – It is essential that we have up-to-date registrant details. This requirement is set out in the Act and is fundamentally important not least for the public, who check the Register to verify an individual's registered status. We also require these details to contact registrants about matters including the fee, complaints and consultations. The refreshed ebulletin was designed to encourage architects to update their details and we have also pushed this message in articles in the ebulletin and via social media.

***Use the logo if you are an architect*** – We work to encourage architects to visually display their registered status via the use of the logo on signage, marketing materials and letterhead to raise awareness of the Register and to support the consumer to make informed choices. This message has been promoted to registrants in retention fee communications and via banner adverts in the ebulletin. We have recently used social media messages to encourage architects to submit views on whether they wish to see the logo made available in alternative formats.

***Role of a regulator*** – Our remit as a statutory regulator is set out in an Act of Parliament. It is of paramount importance that we get this message across so that registrants, the public and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of what we can and cannot do for them. We consistently promote messages about our role as a regulator across all channels including press releases which, where possible, contain quotes referring to our regulatory role. Additionally, the redesigned Annual Report, now incorporates more information about our statutory remit. On social media we are increasing the use of infographics and imagery highlighting our regulatory functions.

***Code of conduct*** – The Architects Code is central to our regulatory role in setting and maintaining standards. It is crucial that we communicate about the Code to all stakeholders, particularly architects and the public. Architects need to be familiar with the Code so they are aware of what they need to do to provide good service to their clients and avoid complaints. Consumers need to know about it so they know what they can expect when engaging an architect.

In 2016, following a consultation process the Board agreed a revised Code of Conduct. This will be rolled out in early 2017 and a staff task group has already had an initial meeting to plan how to communicate the revised Code.

***Making informed decisions*** – A key principle of our work is operating in the public interest, key to this is supporting the public to make informed decisions. We use this language widely across all our channels to encourage architects to highlight their registered status and to encourage the public to check the Register.

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## Looking forward

A good degree of progress has been made within our communications function over the last twelve months and this has in turn led to clear aims for the rest of 2016 and 2017. These are listed below:

- ***Continue to build and maintain relationships with client organisations, regulators and the equality and diversity sector*** – This continues to remain a key part of our communications strategy, and, as set out above, we have developed a strong network of stakeholders within this sector. Like all regulators, we operate in the public interest and so maintaining and strengthening links with client and consumer groups remains a priority. Following this year's independent review of our stakeholder activity by the Board's internal auditor, we are acting upon the advice of the reviewer to conduct a stakeholder audit. This is currently underway and we have already benefitted from Board Members providing contact details of new stakeholders and advice in this regard.
  - ***Continue to strengthen relationships with existing key stakeholders*** – Our traditional stakeholders including our contacts at professional bodies, schools of architecture and associated groups, students and government remain key to our work and we will continue to strengthen these crucial links. The solid relationships we have with these groups will be key in implementing the outcomes of the periodic review and any changes which occur following the EU referendum.
  - ***Continue project to restructure the website*** – As outlined earlier in this report, already during 2016 work has been undertaken on the first phase of the website restructuring project. Staff from across the organisation are committed to producing a site containing high quality content which is easy for users to access and simple for staff to update. We are on target for producing this site by the end of 2016, a period of testing is then anticipated before formal launch in early 2017.
  - ***Undertake project to review tone of voice of correspondence*** – A staff task group has initiated a project to review the tone of voice of ARB's correspondence to ensure that it is clear and does not cause unnecessary distress to recipients. We have met with representatives of the General Medical Council who conducted a similar project, for advice on how to approach this piece of work. Subsequently a project team has been established, containing internal and external representatives, and this review is due to commence in the coming months. Wider changes to the look and feel of our outward facing materials have also been considered. A house-keeping exercise has been undertaken to remove obsolete materials from the office and use up existing stocks. Once the look and feel of the restructured website is established we will be able to undertake further work on these materials. We recognise there will always be a need for hard copies of certain materials but our guiding principle going forward will be to produce materials in a digital format, where possible, so that they can be updated easily and with minimal expense.
  - ***Develop additional online videos*** – The popularity of online videos as a communication tool is growing with 6,000 views of our existing videos already logged during 2016. We are keen to produce further videos possibly covering topics including 'The regulators role' and 'Information for students – what is meant by a prescribed course' as well as publishing videos of staff presenting on key topics.
  - ***Local authority project*** – We are recommencing our project to contact local authorities and ask them to include links from the planning sections of their sites to the ARB website or online Register. Local authority websites are a key source of information for consumers who are
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considering undertaking home improvement/development projects and to have links to the ARB website would raise awareness of the fact that architects are regulated and facilitate informed choice.

- ***Continue to encourage listings companies to include a category for architect*** – So far we have had limited success encouraging listings companies to establish an architect category (with only Which? Local, a site for Which? Members, adopting this approach). Listings providers are concerned that introducing such a category would alienate potential advertisers. Nonetheless, we continue to promote this as best practice because it would support informed decision making for consumers.

### **Concluding Remarks**

ARB's communications function provides a key service supporting the organisation to deliver on its statutory remit and the objectives set in the annual business plan.

2016 has seen further work on developing and maintaining stakeholder relationships with the work undertaken to connect with Equality and Diversity networks standing out as a highlight over the last twelve months.

Communications tools including the website, ebulletin and social media continue to be used effectively to enable ARB to deliver key messages to its different stakeholder groups. Whilst issues have been identified with the website, in terms of the need to update the technology underpinning it and to make the content easier to navigate, these are being addressed by a website restructuring project which is already well underway.

In 2017, our commitment to maintaining and building stakeholder relationships will remain at the heart of our work and we be reaching out to these networks as we commence our Review of Routes to Registration. Additionally, we will be using our communications tools as we inform stakeholders about the revised Code and encourage architects to refer to their registered status.

The outcome of the periodic review will provide clarity on the future direction of the organisation and will no doubt impact on future communications objectives. Nonetheless, communications will continue as an enabling force conveying ARB's key messages in accordance with its commitment to transparency and accountability.

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