



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

Grenfell Tower Disaster

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ARB has released a public statement in relation to the Grenfell Tower disaster, which says:

A number of queries have been raised with ARB in respect of the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. In the main these related to the involvement or culpability of architects involved in the refurbishment of the tower. ARB has responsibilities to uphold good standards in the profession, both in terms of regulating the conduct and competence of individual professionals, and in ensuring that educational standards are sufficiently robust to produce architects capable of providing high quality architecture.

The exact causes of the fire are yet to be established, and there has been a Public Inquiry announced that will seek to establish the facts behind the disaster. ARB will be undertaking its own investigations as to the involvement of any architects, but not making any further comment unless and until disciplinary matters reach the public domain.

The fire has had tragic consequences for many people. ARB recognises that the fire has caused high levels of public concern which need to be addressed urgently. Since shortly after the fire we have been actively gathering information which may be relevant to the ARB's responsibilities. We are looking to establish the extent to which registered persons were involved with the tower and to identify any specific issues of general application which are relevant to ARB's role.

We expect more detailed and reliable information to become available over the coming weeks as the criminal investigation and public inquiry progress. We will take care not to take steps which would unnecessarily impede or cut across those investigations and inquiries. In the meantime ARB will not be reaching any conclusions prematurely in relation to those it regulates nor expressing any view or opinion which might suggest pre-judgement of the facts or of any actions or decisions which may be appropriate in the future. ARB does not propose, at present, to comment publically on the details of any investigations it may undertake.

Stakeholder Relations

We continue to work to maintain existing and build new stakeholder relationships. We share information about our regulatory role and latest work with a range of organisations at the same time as listening to and learning from others.

RIBA Liaison Meeting

In May 2017, the Registrar met with the Chief Executive and the Members Executive Director from the RIBA. This offered the opportunity to discuss different areas of each organisation's work and to share ideas.

Association for Professional Studies in Architecture (APSA)

We are in the process of establishing a regular pattern of liaison meetings with APSA, the first of which took place via a telephone conference call in mid-June 2017. Amongst other things we covered updates following the May Board meeting on the reviews of the Criteria and Procedures and also confirmed that we would be issuing the revised Practical Training Experience Frequently Asked Questions to all APSA members/Professional Studies Advisers and Part 3 Course Leaders. We also reminded APSA that if their institutions are seeking to make any significant changes to their qualification, they should to speak to us at the earliest opportunity. We also discussed the liaison visits schedule for 2017/2018 and how we could better engage new APSA members/new institutions in this. We also discussed making arrangements for future meetings/telephone conferences and our potential attendance at the APSA Autumn Forum.

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) /National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) (USA)

We undertook a high level discussion with representatives of NCARB/NAAB in mid-June regarding the potential development of a Mutual Recognition Agreement between the USA and the UK in late June 2017. ARB's Sponsor Lead from the Department for Communities and Local Government was also present. Further details will be provided at the Board meeting.

In brief, NCARB is a non-profit organisation made up of the architectural licensing boards of 54 states and territories. While each jurisdiction is responsible for regulating the practice of architecture within its borders, NCARB develops and administers national programs for licensure candidates and architects to ensure they have the mobility to go wherever their career takes them.

The NAAB accredits professional degrees in architecture offered by institutions accredited by a U.S. regional accrediting agency. All 54 US registration boards accept the NAAB-accredited degree for registration; 37 of those boards require it.

We will also be holding a telephone conference with our counterpart bodies in Australia and New Zealand planned in late June 2017. Further updates will be provided at the Board meeting.

Periodic Review

After the release of the Periodic Review Report, Andrew Newton from the Department for Communities and Local Government attended the ARB staff meeting in May to discuss the results with members of staff. It was an opportunity for staff members to ask any questions they had regarding the review.

Regulators' Innovation Hub

We were recently contacted by Ofsted, who are setting up a cross government group of interested inspectorates and regulators. We have signed up to the group which will enable us to share and learn with others. Initial areas for discussion will include digital transformation; data and intelligence; and human resources. We will use this as an opportunity to benchmark our own systems, policies and operations and where appropriate, make improvements to these.

Professions Together

The Communications Lead attended the Professions Together management team meeting and fed into the priority work areas for the organisation. Professions Together is a forum for regulatory and professional bodies to share best practice and information about current thinking and emerging trends in regulation. In addition to this, membership of Professions Together has enabled us to extend our network of contacts in a variety of sectors.

Office of Rail and Road

The Registrar recently met with the Chief Executive of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The ORR is the independent statutory regulator of the railways in England, Wales and Scotland and it also monitors the performance and efficiency of England's Strategic Road Network. The conversation covered the differences and parallels within sectoral and professional regulation. The different governance arrangements of the two organisations were also discussed. The ORR Board consists of twelve members including eight appointed lay members and four members of the executive including the Chief Executive. The Chair is a lay member appointed for a one year period and the other Board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport for a fixed term of up to five years. The meeting was positive and informative, and on-going contact will be maintained.

Which?

Which? has agreed to add a section on using an architect to its online advice guide. The consumer organisation has also advised us that it will include an article on the subject in the August issue of the Which? magazine. This follows the establishment of a constructive relationship with Which? over the last six months.

Trading Standards Conference

The Communications Lead is due to attend the Trading Standards Conference in Harrogate on Tuesday 27 June. This is an opportunity to meet people working at the front line of trading standards as well as representatives from organisations operating in the consumer sector.

Architects for Change

In mid-June the Registrar and Head of Professional Standards met with representatives from Architects for Change, one of the RIBA's expert advisory groups. Architects for Change were interested in understanding what equality and diversity data ARB collects and how much of this is published. We answered their questions and informed them that we analyse the data we collect to ensure that our regulatory processes are not discriminating against an individual or group. We also advised that we make aggregate equality and diversity data about the Register available so that external stakeholders can use it to inform thinking and debate. This was a constructive meeting and we will maintain future contact with this group. Architects for Change advised they will consider the information available and follow up with any questions which arise from this.

Solicitors Regulatory Authority Conference - Trust and the Market: Building Confidence

The Registrar attended a conference lead by the Solicitors Regulation Authority on Trust and the Market: Building Confidence on 22 June; the conference covered areas of challenge faced by regulators. The conference provided a good opportunity to speak to other regulators to discuss how to achieve an effective balance and approach to enforcement.

Apprenticeships

We have continued to monitor the progress of the Architecture Trailblazer Group as the Group moves forward and develops the apprenticeship standards and assessments. The Trailblazer Group has established a Provider Reference Group (PRG) which consists of 12 potential providers/institutions with a wide geographical spread across England and Wales. We attended the first meeting of the PRG meeting where we learned more about the Trailblazer Group's progress and about the policies which underpin the development of apprenticeships. A representative of the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) spoke at the meeting to update the group about the funding of apprenticeships and some of their responsibilities as providers. We also spoke to the group regarding the prescription of the apprenticeship degrees/awards. The PRG will continue to meet regularly and will be involved in future consultations on the draft standards and assessment plans, as well as being key contributors to the development of an end point assessment (EPA) for each apprenticeship.

Since the meeting took place, we have issued a call for any queries which providers may have in relation to ARB prescription when developing their provision to support the apprenticeship schemes. We will consider the queries, develop appropriate responses, where necessary seeking Board approval, and issue a series of frequently asked questions to assist providers/institutions.

Once the draft apprenticeship standards and assessments have been finalised by the Trailblazer Group, we have agreed to include an article in the July ebulletin regarding the consultation that they will need to undertake before approving the standards/assessments.

5. European Issues

We reviewed and updated our EU Referendum Frequently Asked Questions in late June following the publication of the Government's position regarding EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU. Only minor changes were made but we will continue to monitor the position and keep this document up to date.

We have been continuing to provide relevant statistics regarding the composition of the Register and the numbers of EU qualified individuals to the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for International Trade, and will continue to discuss the impact that the Government's position referred to above will have on the Register with these departments over the coming months.

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

We used the May ebulletin to update registrants on the work on the Board. The Dear Architect column was the most popular with 800 views followed by Nabila Zulfiqar's first Chair's message and the periodic review update which logged 386 and 370 views respectively.

Website

The redesigned website continues to perform well. Feedback has been largely positive, where issues have been highlighted these have been resolved promptly. Whilst visitor numbers have fallen slightly since the new website was launched there has also been a reduction in the bounce rate. This indicates that whilst there have been less visits to the site the quality of these visits has improved with less bots and more genuine visitors. This is further supported by the fact that the average time visitors spend on the site has increased since the launch.

Social media

Our social media audiences continue to climb steadily with LinkedIn followers recently passing 2,500. Twitter has reached over 1,800 followers and our Facebook page has just over 850 likes. The new website introduces a function to enable users to share our webpages so

we will be promoting this feature over the coming months. Recent messages which have proved popular include posts about the local authority project as well as posts directing architects to articles in the May ebulletin.

Exhibitions

We exhibited at the Homebuilding and Renovating Show in Glasgow on 20 and 21 May 2017. Board Member Guy Maxwell visited us at our stand. Our attendance was well received by consumers and architects and we trialled a new comment box for visitors to our stand to provide feedback so that we can tailor the resources we offer to the needs of our audience. The comments were positive and indicated that visitors felt the information we provided was extremely beneficial. The spot voting tool remained a popular draw and enabled us to pose simple questions to visitors about their awareness of the regulation of the profession, the 'Meeting your Architect' form was popular with in the region of 500 handed handed out over the two days.

Tone of Voice Project

Our project to review the tone of voice of our correspondence continues to progress well. We recently reviewed the feedback we have received from the external members of our advisory group which 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. We will use the insights received to inform our thinking as we move into the next phase of this exercise which will involve some redrafting our correspondence. We also agreed to produce a short tone of voice guide for the staff team which will focus on establishing a clear ARB style across departments.

7. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Systems improvements

Work is underway to implement software developed to store and process passlists electronically. It is envisaged that once the legacy data from existing passlists has been uploaded, the new system will not only streamline the processing of applications but give ARB the ability to manage its own data more effectively.

A full pilot of an email management system is underway in the Registration team. Two other systems were piloted in late 2016 and early 2017. It is envisaged that any product we do implement will give us a better handle of shared inboxes, tell us more about volumes and how quickly we respond to queries.

Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2017

Following the 2017 removals for non-payment, as of 20 June 2017, 690 architects of the 1182 removed had been re-entered on the Register (54%). 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 have identified 220 cases where there is a high risk of title

misuse.

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 running a project to attempt 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).

As of 20 June 2017, 95 architects had not responded to our concerns or updated their details. We will continue trying to contact the remaining architects via telephone, 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.

8. Committee Meetings

Professional Conduct Committee – 16 and 17 May

Professional Conduct Committee – 24 May

Prescription Committee – 25 May

Professional Conduct Committee – 7, 8 & 9 June

Audit Committee – 15 June

Professional Conduct Committee – 19 & 20 June

Prescription Committee – 22 June

Professional Conduct Committee – 23 June

Professional Conduct Committee – 26 June

Professional Conduct Committee – 3, 4 & 5 July

Professional Conduct Committee – 6 and 7 July

Remuneration Committee – 7 July

9. Future Meetings and Events

Professional Conduct Committee – 26 and 27 July

Professional Conduct Committee – 1 and 2 August

Professional Conduct Committee – 7 and 8 August

Professional Conduct Committee – 10 and 11 August

Prescription Committee – 16 August

Professional Conduct Committee – 12, 13 and 14 September

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

We have been invited to provide an update at SCHOSA's upcoming Summer meeting regarding the Board's position in relation to its reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications

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, specific impact assessments are undertaken.

14. Further Actions

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