



**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](mailto:karenh@arb.org.uk) or on 020 7580 5861

---

## 1. Summary

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

## 2. Open/Confidential Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential session.

## 3. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

- Protect the users and potential users of architects' services, and
- Support architects through Regulation

ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

## 4. Key Points

### Stakeholder Relations

#### Westminster Trading Standards

We reached out to Trading Standards to explore whether there would be any interest or benefits in sharing information about the prosecutions brought against those holding themselves out to be architects with local trading standards officers (TSOs). This began by contacting National Trading Standards and led to reaching out to our local branch, Westminster. We met with Senior Officers in mid-May and quickly expanded our discussion to cover a range of ways ARB and Westminster Trading Standards may be able to develop ways of working which could raise awareness of the Register and the regulation of the profession with Trading Standards Officers (and by proxy, the public), as well as strengthen each other's consumer protection activities and support more proportionate and cost effective action. These proposals are being considered for their viability and alignment with ARB objectives and duties.

### **Research**

Having engaged with colleagues in the field, we have built on this insight to develop a draft 'Request for Proposal' document outlining our objectives and expectations for this project. The document is being reviewed and refined ahead of dissemination, which will include discussions with the Board.

### **Youth Employment UK**

Following a telephone meeting in March we provided Youth Employment UK (a non-profit organisation dedicated to tackling youth unemployment) with a range of joint working proposals designed to make effective and efficient use of our resources and with our remit in mind. We were advised that Youth Employment UK (YEUK) are undergoing some organisational changes at the moment but that they would be in touch in due course to discuss our suggestion further. Engagement with YEUK could support potential future architects in understanding what's expected of them as professionals, as well as raise awareness of the Register, the Code and ARB's regulation of the profession YEUK's audience as potential users of architects' services.

### **Chartered Institute of Trading Standards**

We met with a representative of the Consumer Codes Approval Scheme to share information about our organisation and explore potential collaborative communication initiatives in light of common ground in regards to codes of practice and the use of logos to signify independently recognised standard status. Proposals resulting from this engagement are being considered for their viability and alignment with ARB objectives and duties.

### **Hackitt Review**

A Steering Group on Competences for Building, chaired by Graham Watts OBE and made up of organisations from across the construction and fire sectors, has come together to take forward the recommendations and proposals in Chapter 5 and Appendix E of Dame Judith Hackitt's *Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety*.

The Steering Group is developing a plan for an overarching body to provide oversight of competence requirements and support the delivery of competent individuals within the construction industry. As part of the work of this steering group, 11 working groups have been established to developing specific competency frameworks and accreditation pathways.

ARB will lead the group working on enhanced competences of architects and other building designers. The work undertaken as part of this Steering Group work stream is separate to, but will likely inform, the consideration ARB will undertake of Dame Hackitt's proposal for government and the Architects Registration Board (ARB) to consider the competence of those on the Register of Architects and use the ARB's current review of the UK standards of education for graduates to look critically at the level of fire safety design within those standards.

The Steering Group is a sub-group of the Government-led Industry Response Group which will make quarterly reports on progress to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

### **Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)**

We held one of our regular meetings with representatives of SCHOSA Council on the 18 May 2018, members of SCHOSA Council reiterated their interest in being involved in the early drafts of the revised Criteria. ARB staff requested that they submit any further feedback on the Board's position following its meeting on 11 May 2018. SCHOSA's feedback was received and passed to the Task and Finish Group. We have been invited to and will be attending SCHOSA's Spring Meeting in late June 2018. We will be providing updates to SCHOSA members regarding the progress of the business as usual reviews of the Criteria and the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications; our position regarding apprenticeship; the work we are doing to prepare for the UK's departure from the European Union; and the business as usual review of the Prescribed Examination. Further relevant updates will be provided to the Board at its meeting on 19 July 2018.

### **5. Apprenticeships**

Further to the discussions with the Board, we have continued to feedback the Board's views and comments on the development of the architectural assistant and architect standards and the end point assessment documents to the Architecture Trailblazer Group Lead and the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA). We understand that the IfA has now approved both standards and end point assessment documents and these are now available for employers and education providers to use.

The Prescription Committee has discussed the implications of the apprenticeships and what steps it will need to take in order to process applications for prescription/course changes to the academic provision which will sit within the apprenticeship framework; the Committee received a briefing from the Architecture Trailblazer Group Lead in May 2018. Representatives of the Qualifications Team also presented at the Trailblazer Group's most recent forum to explain the prescription process to providers/other stakeholders involved in the apprenticeships.

We have published a set of frequently asked questions for institutions seeking to develop provision which will sit within the framework. The 'Degree Apprenticeship FAQs for Institutions' are now live on the ARB website ([here](#)). Staff will write to Heads of School and Professional Studies Advisers in the coming weeks to make them aware of the FAQs and they will be highlighted via our social media channels over the next month.

### **6. Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)**

#### **Discussions with the Australian Accreditation Council for Architects (ACA)**

Since the last Board meeting, we have held a telephone call with the Chief Executive of the ACA to further discuss the potential development of a mutual recognition agreement. The discussions have continued to be high level; we have agreed to deepen our exploration of the mapping exercises that we have started to pinpoint areas of commonality and difference between our respective registration and prescription processes. We have also ensured that both the MHCLG and the Department for International Trade were aware of our discussions and debriefed them following the call. We are actively engaged in discussions with both departments as to how ARB could further discussions about the establishment of agreements with international partners and will be arranging a tripartite meeting between ourselves and

both departments in the coming weeks.

## 8. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The General Data Protection Regulation came into force (via the Data Protection Act 2018) on 25 May 2018. ARB has taken the required steps to remain compliant with these changes to data protection legislation, and has presented the work undertaken and any residual risks to the Audit Committee. A further audit of compliance will be undertaken later in the year.

## 9. Communicating ARB's work

As always we continue to use a range of communications tools to support the functions of ARB.

### Publications

ARB have received eight separate press enquiries and put out two new releases since the last Board meeting in May resulting in a number of articles referencing ARB, primarily in the trade press. An ARB generated article is in development for distribution before the end of the year. We have recently introduced a system for tracking performance of news releases from 2018 and beyond, updated our press distribution list and acquired software that may help our news releases reach a wider group.

### Website

In late May we reviewed and refreshed the 'Partnerships' page of the ARB main website. The name was changed to Useful Links and the links to other organisations and resources of interest to our stakeholders were refreshed to ensure they were functional and reflected the current organisation name. Based on initial performance statistics, unique page views appear to have initially dropped, however the bounce rate (where someone leaves a page without interacting with it) as well as the time spent viewing the page has improved. This could suggest that users are now finding information they expected and are interested in, however we will have a clearer picture with further analysis of performance over time.

### Ebulletin

The latest Ebulletin was published on 18 May 2018. We actively track performance in the first week following publication. The email was sent to 38,575 architects, 2% more than the last edition in February 2018. Subsequent visits to the microsite were 2% higher than in February, and page views were up by nearly 17%. The *Dear Architect* article on GDPR featured in the May edition is the most popular article since we began recording performance in 2015.

In addition to serving as a point of contact to our registrants the Ebulletin is a cost effective way to help ensure the Register is kept up to date. The Ebulletin email prominently features the recipient's contact details at the top of the message together with a click through option to update this information. We received 430 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the Ebulletin was sent out compared to the 76 in the previous week.

### **2017 Annual Report**

The 2017 Annual Report was launched via an eblast on 29 June 2018 – with both microsite and pdf versions available. A news release as well as supporting social media content was also produced to raise awareness of its launch. In addition the Report was circulated to our wider stakeholder networks including those who support ARB in the work we do such as Investigation Pool members and examiners, other regulators and professional bodies as well as our contacts at a number of consumer organisations. At the time of writing performance data is not available but will be included in the next update to the Board.

The Report was also sent to the MHCLG as section 8 of the Architects Registration Board Framework Document outlines the requirement for us to submit a draft of the report to the Department two weeks before the proposed publication date and for our accounts to be laid in parliament.

### **Exhibitions**

We exhibited at the National Homebuilding and Renovating Show at the NEC Birmingham from the 22 March to the 25 March 2018. Our attendance was again well received by consumers, architects and students. We retrieved positive feedback in our comments box and visitors felt the information we provided was extremely beneficial. The voting tool remained a popular draw and enabled us to pose simple questions to visitors about their awareness of the Register. We handed out over 700 'Meeting your Architect' forms over the 4 days and received positive feedback on this form from architects and consumers visiting the stand.

It was evident from comments received from consumers that the ARB logo is now being recognised, and many architect exhibitors at the show were displaying the ARB logo on their stands.

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

### **Numbers on Register**

On 31 December 2017, the Register stood at 39,988. The Register as of 1 July 2018 stands at 40,559.

### **Prescribed Examination Review**

As was reported in May and in line with the agreed 2018 Business Plan, we are commencing a 'business as usual' review of the Procedures for the Prescribed Examination ('the exam'). The scope of the review was established as:

- Explore whether the procedures remain fit for purpose following completion of the Criteria/Procedure reviews
- Explore whether the eligibility requirements remain fit for purpose

- Explore whether the process is efficient and robust in offering assurance that those who pass the exam have equivalent competence to an architect undertaking an ARB prescribed qualification at the appropriate level

Any revised or updated procedures for 'the exam' should enable the Board to:

- Continue to discharge its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) of the Architects Act 1997 ('the Act'); and
- Ensure that 'the exam' process supports the admission of competent individuals to the Register, in that individuals given 'equivalence' to Part 1 or Part 2 through 'the exam' have demonstrated that they are competent against all of the Criteria and to the required level.

A further objective is to ensure that processes are streamlined insofar as is possible, but that achieving this does not come at the expense of ARB discharging its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b).

We have concluded the first stages of our pre-consultation process and are compiling the views of the stakeholders who responded, including the Prescription Committee as the Committee overseeing the process. The ultimate decision for approval will lie with the Board.

We will be holding a session with examiners and independent examiners in August, and a further open roundtable event in London in August to discuss key themes that have emerged from the pre-consultation process.

We will provide a further update to Board in September, and pending the outcome of the Criteria review, which is integral to the progression of the latter stages of the Prescribed Examination review, hope to be able to present recommendations to the Board in November.

### **Systems improvements**

We reported at the February Board meeting that we had introduced a new email management system and presented figures from the first quarter of 2018 in May.

Since the start of 2018, 7762 email conversations were logged in the general inbox, with a total of 13,006 emails sent by team members. The five most popular subjects were categorized as 'change of address' (533), 'prescribed examination' (472), 'reinstatement' (391), 'general query' (354) and 'EU application' (338). The average time for responses to emails across the team was 1 working day. We are starting to gather data on where queries about the prescribed examination are coming from. The data set is limited at the moment but we hope that over time, we will have a clearer idea of where interest in the applying via this route comes from.

Work continues to implement software developed to store and process pass lists electronically and we will be piloting the system using live applications imminently. Greenwich University and Southbank University are currently assisting with the pilot as an external user of the system, which will see schools directly upload their pass lists to ARB's system. The system was penetration tested by specialists at the end of June and some minor adjustments will be made before it goes live.

The perceived benefits will be faster processing times, greater control of the title of prescribed awards being handed out to students, and the ability to structure the data and link specific qualifications to an individual's registration record. It is hoped that as the system is further developed, the conversion of the paper files into structured data which we have already undertaken, and the continued collection of pass lists as structured data, will give us greater insight into the number of architects we anticipate registering with us year on year.

### **Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2018**

Following the removal of 1202 architects for non-payment on 4 January 2018, as of 29 June 2018, 665 architects had been re-entered on the Register (55%).

In 2017, 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. The Professional Standards team identified 220 potential cases where there was a high risk of title misuse. As of 29 June 2018, all cases have been resolved.

### **Section 11 Process**

Section 11 of the Architects Act 1997 states that architects must provide us with a correct address for registration. To ensure the Register is accurate we attempt to contact architects with incorrect addresses and if unsuccessful, will ultimately remove them from the Register under Section 11 (for failing to provide correct contact information).

On 18 January 2018, we emailed 361 architects (355 in 2016) whose retention fee invoice was returned as the addressee was no longer at the address. On 24 January 2018 we wrote to 200 architects who still had not updated their contact details to begin formal proceedings. As of 29 June 2018, 79 of those architects still have not contacted us or updated their address. A second letter will be sent out to them on 24 July 2018.

By way of comparison, we wrote to 204 architects in 2017 with 14 eventually being removed on 24 October 2017.

Section 3 of the Architects Act states that the Register should include the regular business address of each registered person. Writing out to architects whose post is returned and eventually removing those who do not engage with us from the Register, helps us ensure that the Register is accurate. We are careful to remind architects that we engage with of their responsibilities as professionals whilst remaining polite in our communications.

### **Registration EU matters**

We are monitoring the number of architects with EU nationality or qualifications entering and leaving the Register. At February's Board meeting we reported that the number of architects registering through the EU route was approximately 23% lower in 2017 than in 2016 (1232 in 2016 to 945 in 2017).

We also reported that there was a marginal increase in EU qualified architects resigning from the Register in 2017. In 2016, 28% of resigning architects were of EU nationality (other than UK) against 33% in 2017. We also reported that in 2017, 32% of architects removed from the Register for non-payment were of EU nationality (other than UK) against 30% in 2016.

Only 15 architects have resigned from the Register between 1 January and 21 June 2018 in total, meaning there is no meaningful data to assess whether the trend is developing.

The number registering from the EU continues to be lower than in 2016 and 2017, with only 413 applications being processed via the EU route in quarter one and two of 2018, against 722 and 568 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. This is a 27 per cent drop from 2017 to 2018.

The number of certificates being issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased since 2017, with 95 being issued in the first two quarters of 2018, against 80 in the first two quarters of 2017.

#### **11. Committee Meetings held since the February Board Meeting**

14 – 17 May 2018 – Professional Conduct Committee

17 May 2018 – Prescription Committee

18 May 2018 – Remuneration Committee

5 – 7 June 2018 – Professional Conduct Committee

8 June 2018 – Investigations Oversight Committee

12 June 2018 – Professional Conduct Committee

15 June 2018 – Audit Committee

19 – 21 June 2018 – Professional Conduct Committee

21 June – Prescription Committee

2 – 4 July 2018 – Professional Conduct Committee

#### **12. Future Meetings and Events**

16 August 2018 – Prescription Committee

#### **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.



**15. 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.

**16. Equality and Diversity Implications**

Equality and Diversity implications are considered in relation to individual line items.

By attending consumer shows, we are striving to ensure that we reach the public through as many different mediums as possible. Whilst online platforms are readily available, we acknowledge that many people still prefer a face to face interaction.

The work we are set to undertake to revise the Prescribed Examination process will be subject to a full equality impact assessment in due course. The pre consultation exercise has sought to draw out any concerns or views about the inclusivity of the process and equality and diversity will be at the forefront of procedural development.

In relation to the Criteria and Procedures reviews outlined above, we have undertaken an initial Equality Impact Assessment and will carry out a further impact assessment once the revised documents have been drafted.

Further work is still ongoing in Registration to ensure our web pages accessible to everyone who might need to use them and will be drawing on the feedback to inform our position.

**17. Further Actions**

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