



**Subject** Update from the Chief Executive  
**Purpose** For Note  
**From** Chief Executive

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### 1. Summary

To provide an update from the Chief Executive on the operational activities of the Executive team.

### 2. Open Session

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

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

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

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

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

### 4. New approaches to external communications and engagement using IT based analytics

We have now used targeted email campaigns to communicate with architects on a range of topics, from establishing direct debits, updating them on EU Exit changes, and launching our sustainability and climate change, as well as highlighting the newly redesigned register.

We have gathered useful insights into how architects want to receive information from us, and how long a communication campaign can last. We have applied the fact that most architects (65%) open our emails within the first 3 hours of it being sent, and that a similar proportion do so on a smartphone. We also know that within 72hrs of the email being sent, few if any architects who have not opened the email already, do so.

This intelligence allows us to incrementally improve the way we design the emails, and also to improve our website landing page, to improve coherence of message and style. Changes we have made include:-

- Simplifying the message to be clear if the architect needs to do anything, and the timescale
- “Uncluttering” the message and website, introducing clear navigation pathways such as pay your fee, update your details, raise a concern, request an EU certificate. The feedback on these changes has been universally positive.
- Using survey technology builds datasets, that can be used to target other campaigns. For example, we know that nearly 2,500 architects are clear they do not want a direct debit, so we can exclude them from future campaigns, reducing frustration and demonstrating we listen to their feedback.
- The same technology allows us to know who had further clicks into our website, and we can use this to build a picture of the most (and least) popular areas of our guidance. This can help prioritise review and updating activities, and use this sample to evaluate any future changes.
- Providing “pulse” survey questions as part of a message can help understand the topics that stakeholders are interested or not interested in, and simple graphics can be incorporated into the webpage to show interactivity and stimulate discussion.

We are carefully considering how we utilise this approach in the future, and to support our wider engagement activities.

## **5. Update on retention fee collection**

The statutory notice for the 2021 retention fee was despatched in hard copy and electronically, on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Response rates have been favourable, supported by a number of targeted campaigns.

As time of compiling this update, 25,796 registrants had paid their fee. This equates to 60% of the current register. This compares favourably with 22,503 architects who had paid on the equivalent day in 2019, being around 15% higher.

Additionally, the campaign to increase direct debits has resulted in nearly 700 new mandates, taking the total to 10,452. The direct debit payments were taken successfully on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. The failed rate of debit mandates was low, and we are manually contacting 81 architects to make alternative arrangements to pay.

Weekly targeted text and emails are planned and scheduled to facilitate the remaining retention fees to be collected in advance of the 31 December 2020 deadline.

Payment preferences appear to be changing this year, with a much higher rate of BACS payments, and payment via our secure online portal for debit/credit cards. We are monitoring this carefully, and will provide a verbal update at the Board.

## **6. EU Exit and mutual recognition of qualifications**

We are working in a rapidly changing environment and are making regular updates to our

website in order to support those seeking to register in the EU before 31 December 2020. We have continued to issue reminders about registering in EU States before the Implementation Period ends through all our communications channels and have been working closely with the professional bodies to do this.

We are continuing to keep in close contact with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Once the government make an announcement as to what the arrangements will be beyond 1 January 2021, we will update our website accordingly.

We have been attending a series of online UK-wide roundtable events, which have been hosted by the MHCLG. The MHCLG is running these meetings as part of the consultation they are undertaking on the proposed changes to the Architects Act 1997. To date we have attended the sessions for the North West England, the North East England and Yorkshire, Northern Ireland, London and the Midlands and East of England. A session as also run for higher education institutions. The meetings will continue into the New Year.

**7. ARB office and staff team during lockdown**

Since the announcement that London was placed in Tier 2, we continue to follow government advice that *'if you can effectively from home you should continue to do so*. Anyone who needs to attend the office must book in with the Operations Manager in advance so that we can continue to operate safely.

We continue to seek ways to support ARB staff team while working from home, as they are ARB's most valuable asset.

**8. Resource Implications**

Only as identified in the paper.

**9. Risk Implications**

ARB's CEO's 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.

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

**10. Communication**

The update from the Chief Executive, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

**11. Further Actions**

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