

# Board Paper

for Open session

Subject: **Chief Executive's Report**

To note a report from the ARB's Chief Executive on matters relating to the running of the Board's business

Board meeting:

14 July 2025

Agenda item:

13

Action:

- For noting ☒
- For discussion ☐
- For decision ☐

## Purpose

To provide an update from the Chief Executive on matters relating to the Board's business including progress updates on the Board's five key strategic priorities as well as additional operational issues.

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## Recommendations

The Board is asked to note this paper.

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## Annexes

None

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## Author/Key Contact

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### 1. Open Session

- 1.1. This item will be noted in the open session of the Board meeting.

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## 2. Background and Key points

### *Continuous Improvement*

- 2.1 In preparation for the 2026 retention fee, we are upgrading the payment software that allows credit and debit card payments to be accepted via CRM. As payment technology improves, and security and fraud protection develops, more transactions risk being rejected or delayed. In the last retention fee cycle, we had a failure rate of around 2% of transactions, and around 15% of those were where the architect was located overseas. This resulted in significant manual payments being taken, and additional correspondence with architects. It also increased our removal for non-payment rate.
- 2.2 The new version of the software will also allow integration with Apple and Google payment methods, unlocking new routes to payments, using different devices. Feedback from architects was that these payment mechanisms were expected from a modern and efficient organisation.
- 2.3 We will implement the software, which will also apply to those who apply for application, re-joins or certification, in July, allowing rigorous testing ahead of the retention fee cycle, due to start in October 2025.
- 2.4 As part of this change to payments, we are also intending to remove the option of payment by direct debit. Since the Board's requirement to make an online professional declaration before payment can be taken, the number of direct debits has decreased by over 60%, with only 3,324 architects currently having an active debit in place.
- 2.5 As the direct debit only applies to the retention fee, and is a single payment taken in December, the system has to be switched on and off each year, requiring third party changes to MyARB. These changes require resource to code and test, and then deploy. The costs exceed £5,000 per annum, and expose risk of outage to the CRM during the income collection period. As the proportion of architects is now less than 8% of the Register, we propose that the balance of expenditure and risk is outweighed by the benefits, and that the new payment methods above are more appropriate, and provide clearer confirmations to architects that their fee is paid.
- 2.6 In preparation for this change, we contacted all 3,324 architects with a direct debit, to explain the proposed changes, and invite any feedback on impact. We were particularly interested to ensure we considered any reasonable adjustments. Architects were invited to submit comments using an embedded survey, similar to

those used in other ARB communications campaigns, including the invitation to confirm they understood the proposed changes.

- 2.7 Of the 3,324 emails sent, 2,790 were opened. Of these, 543 individuals positively confirmed that they understood the changes. Only 27 feedback comments were received. No reasonable adjustments were identified, and the comments related to perceived convenience. Some comments referenced the loss of monthly payments, which is something not offered by the ARB system.
- 2.8 On the basis of the engagement activity, SLG reviewed the proposals, and agreed them. We will confirm with those architects who have a direct debit, that their mandate has been cancelled, and set out the future payment methods. We'll also update our website and ensure our 2026 retention fee communications make architects' responsibilities clear.

### *Continuing Professional Development*

- 2.9 We are continuing our targeted communications work, focusing on those who deferred their CPD for incorrect reasons. Our personalised email campaign reminds individuals of their CPD responsibilities in the context of their behaviour in 2024, and reinforces the importance of professional development. Feedback we have received reinforces our assessment of the scale of culture change for some registrants as well as the challenges of any new process deployment.
- 2.10 Our enforcement approach means that no architect will be removed at the end of 2025 for non-compliance with the CPD Scheme (every architect in this situation will be given a further 28 days to complete their CPD recording, and then a further short 'appeal' period). Nevertheless, the purpose of the CPD scheme is not to simply be compliant, but to help architects maintain and develop their competence. Our messaging will therefore remain focussed on the benefits of the CPD scheme, rather than solely on mere regulatory compliance.
- 2.11 We are currently piloting an AI tool, that may offer us the ability to automatically review all CPD records held within MyARB, rather than just the few selected as part of the annual review process. If successful, that tool will allow quantitative and qualitative analysis of CPD records and allow us to run wider reports on the data so we can shape future regulatory decisions. No registrant would be removed as a result of an AI assessment.

### *EOS Transformation Update*

- 2.12 We have launched the invitation to tender for a new supplier to complete our CRM development programme of work including the development of case management functionality within the Microsoft Power Apps platform.
- 2.13 The tender has been issued through the Constellia Neutral Vendor Framework. Potential suppliers have four weeks to present their submissions.

### *Professionalism and Code of Conduct*

- 2.14 The new Code of Conduct was published on 19 June, ahead of an implementation date of 1 September. It was sent to all registrants the following day in ARB Insight, and was covered in the trade press. Alongside it we published three completed guidance documents (and a consultation report) with a further consultation launched on three more guidance documents. The final tranche of guidance is to be developed this year and consulted on in early 2026. The webpage hosting the new Code sets out exactly what guidance is in place. A Q&A webinar on the new Code is being held in July, and further communications will continue up to its implementation date of 1 September.
- 2.15 To build on our work on professionalism and culture, we are drafting plans for a professional conference this autumn. The conference will discuss culture and the importance of improving it with an audience of architects, and invite input into the final tranche of guidance (including leadership, mentoring and inclusion) through workshop sessions.

### *Education*

- 2.16 Following publication of our plans to change Professional Practical Experience (PPE) we hosted an online workshop with learning providers and other relevant stakeholders who have joined our Architectural Educators Engagement Network. Attendees discussed the potential formats of the Record of Competency and ways to improve culture – the discussions included informal online polls and breakout room conversations, summarised here for information. There were 54 attendees in the session. In an online poll, 26 out of 34 attendees voted for a digital ROC developed and managed by ARB; 1 voted for a manual ROC managed by ARB and 7 for ARB to approve ROCs developed by others. Ideas for improving culture generally pressed ARB to go further, and several attendees expressed a desire for us to reconsider our decision not to mandate CPD on mentoring, and also suggested CPD on inclusion.
- 2.17 Internally, we are preparing draft Terms of Reference and invitations for the new reference group to support the development of requirements and, later, the format of a new Record of Competency. Similarly, we're drafting a schedule and target attendees for focus groups to support the definition and requirements for a

coordinating role for learning providers. We intend to start both over the summer.

- 2.18 We have received applications for 23 new qualifications under the new education framework. These are from 17 different Providers, two of which are not currently providers of accredited qualifications. As part of our commitment to provide information to potential trainees, we have developed a section of the ARB website to set out progress of applications for new qualifications. The information can be found at: [Applications for Accreditation of Qualifications - ARB](#)

### *People Update*

- 2.19 The Learning and Development Strategy continues to be developed, where we have recently engaged with a new online provider called Kallidus. This provider will replace the current provider of our online offering, Shine and the LinkedIn Learning platform. This is a hugely positive move to reflect our strategy in providing more content to develop our staff along with a cost saving in the medium to long term. The new platform will enable us to enhance our online offering for staff and associates, through improved access to compliance training courses as well as being able to develop our own modules in HR employment practices and emerging business areas.
- 2.20 We are in the process of applying to be a Visa Sponsorship organisation through the Home Office. This is to enable us to employ individuals on visas where certain specific criteria are met. We are currently supporting one staff member through the process.
- 2.21 As Board Members have recently been asked to complete neuro diversity training, we thought it would be of interest to note what the executive are doing to support staff. Where managers have staff that have shared that they are neuro diverse we provide support in terms of prompts to use when in discussion and guidance and advice on what adjustments could be made as part of that support. For employees that share they are neuro diverse, we explore how best they feel they can be supported, some may need particular IT programs or tools to enable them to work as effectively as possible. The HR team ensure that they keep their own knowledge up to date through continued learning and attending events to understand current thinking and support tools.
- 2.22 Sage HR work continues including moving our Associates onto the platform, this is part of the ongoing work to improve how we hold information on them whilst also enabling them to update their personal information in an improved and efficient way.

## *International Updates*

- 2.23 The ARB/ROAC (Regulatory Organizations of Architecture in Canada) mutual recognition agreement (MRA) opened for applications on 14 May 2025. Initial interest in UK architects seeking to register in Canada has been high. ARB has issued 47 certificates to individuals who meet the relevant eligibility criteria so that they can secure registration in one of the Canadian Provinces or Territories. Three further applications transpired to be ineligible for the certificate, and a further seven applications are at some stage of processing. We have received two certificates from ROAC. Individuals who have secured the relevant certification from ROAC are asked to undertake the UK Adaptation Assessment, which they need to pass in order to join the UK Register. We will be undertaking a small number of promotional activities to raise awareness of the MRA over the Summer, in addition to those which we've already undertaken. In June we hosted a small delegation from ROAC for three days. As well as discussions about our respective approaches to our core responsibilities, ROAC members also visited UK education providers and practices.
- 2.24 We met with our MRA partners from Australia (the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA)) and New Zealand (the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB)) in mid-June 2025 in order to conduct our Annual Monitoring Meeting. We use this meeting to discuss the ongoing operation of the MRA, as well as sharing good practice and discussing how we improve the agreement and operations. Following personnel changes within our partner organisations, we will now be picking up discussions about the review of the MRA. We'll be seeking to determine whether we can broaden the scope of the MRA so that a wider range of qualified individuals are eligible to use it. We also discussed ways in which we could collect information about the value that the MRA was bringing and how we could raise further awareness of the agreement in the future.
- 2.25 MRA Annual Monitoring Meetings with our US partners (the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB)), our Hong Kong partners (Hong Kong Institute of Architects) and our Irish partners (the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland) will be arranged and take place across the remainder of the year. We will be reviewing our MRA with NCARB later this autumn and into 2026 in a similar way to the work we'll be undertaking to review our agreement with AACA and NZRAB.
- 2.26 We will be publishing the consultation report on our international routes overhaul (i.e. proposals to change the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment) in July. Internally, following the Board's decision in its last meeting, the project team has started developing a detailed programme for the next stages of the work, and

has drafted a discussion paper on the new route for candidates with partial qualifications.

### *Governance Updates*

2.27 A verbal update on the recruitment of the independent members of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee will be provided at the Board's meeting on 14 July.

2.28 The most recent Board Workshop took place on 12 June 2025.

### *Overview of discussion and action at the Board Workshop on 12 June*

2.29 Board members received a recap on ARB's current financial position and the vision for the medium term financial and operating model.

2.30 A progress update on the formation of the 2026 – 2030 Corporate Strategy was provided to the Board. The Board's feedback was taken into account, and next steps were discussed.

2.31 The Board was provided with an update on regulatory reform. ARB's objectives and approach to this were set out and discussed.

2.32 The Board was provided with updates and reflections following the first year of operating the new CPD scheme. Discussions were held about the challenges around the take up of the scheme.

2.33 Board Members received an update on ARB's response to the PPE Commission's recommendations. Board members broke into groups to discuss key points around culture changes and mentoring and the proposed Record of Competency.

2.34 The Board was provided with an overview and recap about ARB's approach to risk, including the roles and responsibilities for risk across the organisation. The risk appetite was considered and an update on key risk areas was also provided to the Board. Further discussions and briefings would take place later in the year.

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## 3. Resource Implications

3.1. There are no specific resource implications arising from the Chief Executive's report.

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## 4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. Risks relating to each of the initiatives set out in this paper have been considered separately, either as part of specific Board papers and discussions, or incorporated into project, programme or corporate risk registers.

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## 5. Equality and Diversity implications

- 5.1. There are no specific EDI implications arising out of this paper, however a number of key strategic priorities are either directly or indirectly designed to support and promote EDI. We are in the process to developing a new EDI strategy with a range of goals and targeted actions. This will come to the Board early in 2025 and will be published once it had been agreed.
- 5.2. Our international work will directly have an impact on the diversity of the registrant population. The same applies to our education reform work, particularly looking at Professional Practical Experience.

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## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Board is asked to note this paper.