Board Paper

for Open session

Board meeting:

14 October 2026

Agenda item:

06

Action:

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

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

Purpose

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

Recommendations

The Board is asked to note this paper.

Annexes

N/A

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

Routes to registration and Readiness for Practice UK online module

3.1. We launched two new routes to registration on 10 September. These routes are part of the Board's aim to simplify the process, and widen diversity of the Register. The routes were widely consulted on in 2025 and 2026.

3.2. The first route (Partial Qualifications) related to those with no Part 1 accredited qualification, but an ARB accredited Part 2 and Part 3. The route is targeted at those who are not eligible for the Prescribed Examination, and were therefore prevented from registering, despite having higher level qualifications and working in the sector (although not as a registered architect). The second route replaced the historic Competency Standards Group route, and applied to those who either had left the Register for more than two years, or who had gained their Part 3 more than two years ago, but never registered.

3.3. Both routes require the applicant to demonstrate recent experience in the sector (for at least two out of the past three years), and for either a self-assessment of competency, or a reference from a current, registered architect.

3.4. We have had a good response to the Partial Qualifications route, with 25 individuals joining the Register at time of writing, and a further 15 applications in progress. The characteristics of the applicants provides clear evidence of diversity in ethnicity, gender and age, as hoped. We have had very positive social media posts regarding the launch of the routes, and continue to monitor this. Employers and registered architects have readily engaged with the reference process.

3.5. We have had fewer applications for the replacement for the CSG route (two applications so far), but this is entirely in line with the pattern of applications in the latter part of the Registration year. Again, we will continue to monitor uptake, but response to the website, guidance and associated materials has also been positive.

3.6. Since the Board's meeting on 22 July 2026, we have work closely with our developer to complete the build of the new Readiness for Practice UK online module, and in September, we moved into the final User Acceptance Testing (UAT) phase. We are scheduled to complete the UAT phase in early October. Once our developers have received the UAT feedback, final adjustments will be made and then the module will be ready for launch, in tandem with the launch of our revised Mutual Recognition Agreements, and as planned in Spring 2027.

People update

3.7. The Board will be aware that we have appointed to the Independent Member for the People Committee role. They will join ARB from 1st November and will attend the in-person People Committee Meeting on 12th November. A full induction programme is being planned for them to gain an understanding of ARB's work and meet individuals from the Executive and the Board.

3.8. Marta Musolino from MHCLG will be joining ARB on secondment as Head of Policy from 5th October. The secondment will be for a year, and she will work closely with colleagues across the organisation to further enhance our Policy development work, providing valuable insight and expertise.

3.9. Following the work that Purpose Union carried out over a year ago with the recommendation of having an Employee Resourcing Group – this work has developed over the summer with valuable input from our staff. The proposed action is that ARB has an Inclusion Employee Network, which will build on the high level of employee engagement, facilitating inter-connectivity and working collaboratively to drive ideas and ways to improve cross team connections. The network will be employee led with representatives from each directorate. We are seeking views from staff on the detail prior to launching the network from January 2027.

Governance Update

3.10. The Board will be aware that we have commenced an externally facilitated Board and Committees Effectiveness Review, which will run throughout the Autumn 2026. The review includes a document review, an online survey, meeting observations of the autumn Board and Committee meetings, interviews with Board and Committee members and focus groups amongst other things. The Board will receive a presentation on the outcomes of the review at its last meeting of the year.

3.11. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Public Appointment Team is continuing to progress the current Board Members

recruitment exercise to find five permanent Board Members (4 x architect and 1 x lay members). This is on track to be completed before the end of the year.

Overview of the discussion and actions arising from the Board Workshop sessions held on 22 July and, 15 and 16 September 2026:

22 July 2026

3.12. The Board was provided with a presentation highlighting the outcomes of the recent Stakeholder Perceptions of ARB research which had been undertaken.

3.13. The Board was provided with updates on the work the Executive had been undertaking to explore the potential to apply fee variations for new applicants and existing architects, and had the opportunity to discuss this further ahead of the 2027 budget and fees discussions which would be held later in the year.

3.14. The Board also received updates on the discussions that the Built Environment Professional Regulation Working Group had held.

15 and 16 September 2026

3.15. The workshop sessions took place in Leeds.

3.16. Board Members had the opportunity to visit one of two education providers, Leeds Beckett University or the University of Leeds. Both providers offered qualifications which had recently been accredited through ARB's new accreditation process. Members heard the different experience and contexts from the providers from the early implementation of these new qualifications, and highlighted some of the immediate challenges in responding to the Board's recent decisions on professional practical experience.

3.17. With support from the Leeds Society of Architects, the Board held a Practices Roundtable. Discussions centred around ARB's Continuing Professional Development scheme and the research that had been undertaken in relation to Workplace Culture. A 'Question and Answer' session also formed part of the session.

3.18. The Board was provided with the opportunity to discuss initial proposals regarding the 2027 budget, fees and business plan.

3.19. The Board heard a presentation from Ben Rimmington, Director General for Buildings, Fire and Resilience at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which has a base in Leeds.

3.20. Progress on misuse of title was discussed including plans to enhance our communications of ARBs work in this area.

3.21. The Board also discussed how it could understand and measure the impact of the recent changes it had to the regulatory framework in the future.

3.22. Work in all areas would be taken forward further to the Board's discussions.

International Update

3.23. Updates on the work we are undertaking to revise the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) that ARB holds with the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) and the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB), to develop new proposals regarding a potential UK/EU recognition arrangement and to develop a new MRA with the South African Council for the Architectural Profession, are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3.24. We have held positive and productive annual monitoring meetings with the AACA and NZRAB, as well as with the Hong Kong Institute of Architects and the Architects Registration Board Hong Kong. This reaffirmed that these recognition arrangements are continuing to run smoothly and effectively. We will be commencing a review of our Memorandum of Understanding with our Hong Kong partners later this year.

3.25. We are in the process of briefing all relevant MRA partners regarding the transition from the outgoing UK Adaptation Assessment to the new Readiness for Practice UK module.

3.26. The Chief Executive and Registrar was asked to participate at a panel discussion and give the key note international address at SACAPs inaugural education conference in Cape Town. In addition to participation in the conference, the Chief Executive had a number of meetings with local employers and attended a roundtable with the Cape Institute for Architecture.

Registration and Accreditation update

3.27. The Register has returned to over 40,000 architects (40,075 on 24 September), and our receipt and processing of applications is on matching our assumptions for income that were included in 2026 budget and forecast. Quarter 4 of the year contains approximately 50% of our expected new joiners.

3.28. We have completed and deployed all of the changes to CRM, to allow us to collect the 2027 retention fee, and to record the relevant CPD and

professional declarations. We have agreed a data sharing approach with RIBA for those who record on the RIBA system, and will work with them to facilitate a single CPD assessment process in January 2027. We anticipate that the CPD assessment process will conclude by the end of February/early March, which will be earlier than this year. We have prepared clear and direct communications regarding RIBA members' responsibilities to comply with ARB's statutory CPD Scheme, and RIBA have agreed to promote this.

3.29. We are about to conclude the Accreditation Fee collection process, and will issue final demands to the small number of Providers who have not yet paid. The compliance of Providers has been higher, and payments made more quickly this year. No Providers have issued us with intention to cease provision of accredited qualifications, though some are considering whether to reduce the number of variants of existing qualifications (for instance those with, and without, a year abroad). Our analysis does not indicate any adverse impact on our income.

3.30. We are working closely with Providers to move to accreditation of Practice Outcomes qualifications, now the Board has made its final decisions on Professional Practical Experience. All existing 29 Part 3 Providers have indicated their intention to at least transition that qualification to the new Practice Outcomes by December 2028. Three Providers have submitted combined Academic and Practice Outcomes qualifications, and we are conducting the first review of one of these on 2 October 2026. We will have a clearer idea of the pace of these new qualifications, as they depend on internal higher education governance and QA systems, in early 2027.

CIBSE Building Safety Conference

3.31. The Chief Executive and Registrar was participated in a panel discussion at the CIBSE Building Safety Conference in September. It was an opportunity to set out the Board's regulatory vision and how changes ARB had been introduced to promote competency across the profession including mandatory CPD.

3. Resource Implications

3.1. There are a number of resource implications related to issues highlighted in this paper, but they will be set out separately for the Board. For example, implementing the new routes for registration, updating the prescribed examination and the development of the readiness to practice module all carry resource implications.

3.2. There were some costs associated with the participation at the SACAP conference in Cape Town but the majority of the flight costs were covered by funding from the government 'Ricardo Fund' given the links to the MRA development.

3.3. We are aware that there will be additional pressure relating to the establishment and running of the expert working group on professional regulation in the built environment. We will keep the Board updated on any unforeseen costs, but at the moment we believe the work can be delivered without any significant additional budget. If there were additional costs, these would be discussed with MHCLG.

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.

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.

5.2. Our work to deliver new routes to registration, ARBs reform of education and training and our international work will positively impact on the diversity of the registrant population. We expect a positive impact relating to the reforms to Professional Practical Experience requirements.

6. Recommendations

6.1. The Board is asked to note this paper.