



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 5 March 2020 Board meeting.

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. Stakeholder Relations

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

The ACE is composed of 43 member organisations which are the national regulatory and professional representative bodies in the EU Member States, the accession countries, Switzerland and Norway. Through its members, the ACE represents the interests of over 600,000 architects from 31 countries in Europe.

A series of ACE meetings were due to take place in mid-March 2020 in Brussels; the meetings were cancelled as a result of the pandemic, however all member organisations were asked to provide written comments on the papers ahead of a meeting of the ACE Executive Group. We responded and provided comments on papers that were relevant to our areas of work, which included the issues relating to the potential acceptance of non-EU qualifications under the automatic recognition regime; the development of new documents needed for the recognition of qualifications and the progress of the ACE Ad Hoc Brexit Working Group. We are due to attend the ACE's General Assembly at the end of May 2020, which will be a virtual meeting.

In addition to the above, the ACE President wrote to the ARB Chair in April 2020, inviting the

ARB to engage in discussions about the recognition of qualifications for architects. After discussion by the Board in early May, the ARB Chair has now accepted the invitation to engage in the discussions confirming that the ARB wishes to continue its positive engagement with other EU regulators through the ACE, but noting that any agreement with our EU counterparts would need to follow the conclusion of, and align with, the formal EU-UK negotiations. We are awaiting further information from the ACE in terms of when they would like to commence those discussions.

British Institute of Interior Design (BIID)

(BIID) is the only professional institute for interior designers in the UK, and represents both the commercial and residential sectors. There are entry, conduct and CPD requirements for members. They offer a directory of Registered Interior Designers®.

Our Public Awareness Lead and Communications Manager held a virtual meeting with the Chief Operating Officer of the BIID to discuss opportunities to support each other in areas of common interest. The meeting generated a few possible activities which are being given considered for their feasibility.

Criteria Review

In July 2019 the Board decided that a targeted piece of work should be undertaken to consider the competencies required for those entering the Register in respect of fire/life safety design, and climate change.

The two working groups have completed their work, their recommendations will be considered by the Policy Committee in the near future.

Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Department for International Trade's Expert Trade Advisory Groups/Technical Trade Groups

We have been regularly attending a series of Expert Trade and Technical Trade group meetings which are hosted by DBEIS/DIT and attended by other relevant Departments including the MHCLG; the Government has established these to seek expert technical input from specific sectors, including the architecture and engineering sector. The outputs of these meetings are being used to inform Government's thinking about the establishment of new trade agreements, as well as the renegotiation of existing trade agreements.

Prescribed Examination Seminar

On 11 March 2020, staff attended a seminar evening offered by the Bartlett School of Architecture to provide information to candidates preparing for the ARB Prescribed Examination to assist with queries and guidance about the process. The evening was well attended and generated a number of follow up queries by email and telephone, where candidates were seeking clarification on their own specific circumstances.

Regulators Network Forum

The Regulators Network Forum is a voluntary executive network; it offers an opportunity for representatives of all types of regulatory bodies to share information and best practice on a regular basis.

We attended the most recent meeting of the Regulators Network Forum in early March. The meeting focussed on sharing information about the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

within the regulatory sphere. It provided interesting insights as to how several large scale regulatory bodies are making use of AI to support their work.

Stakeholder Research

With support from a leading consultancy, we conducted a stakeholder research project to enable us to strengthen relationships, benchmark current impact, improve our activities and assess future performance. The project is focused on two main areas, awareness of ARB and views on how well we do what we do.

All fieldwork was completed in January 2020 and the research agency presented the top level finding at the Board meeting on 5 March 2020. Feedback from the Board was used to inform the final report, the first version of which was provided at the end of March. Further feedback has been provided and the next version is expected imminently, along with the other project deliverables.

Hackitt Review

The Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was announced by government in July 2017 following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and was led by Dame Judith Hackitt. Its purpose was to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future. One of those recommendations was that there should be a competence framework specifically for those involved in the design, construction and maintenance of Higher-Risk Residential Buildings.

ARB is a member of the working group that is considering the competencies that should be required for architects and building designers involved in Higher-Risk Residential Buildings. The substantive work of that Group has now finished, and the report [Raising the Bar](#) was published for consultation. The Group is currently establishing which professional bodies are going to create the courses/qualifications that will allow architects to access the framework and be deemed as competent to work on HRRBs.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

Each Head of every UK Recognised School of Architecture is a member of SCHOSA. They also have a number of associate members of schools. It provides a forum for debate and exchange of ideas between Heads trying to achieve similar goals in different institutions.

We have been holding regular telephone and virtual meetings with representatives of SCHOSA Council since the UK entered the lockdown period. We asked SCHOSA Council to gather feedback from SCHOSA members in relation to a range of issues relating to the challenges institutions, their staff and students were facing as a result of the pandemic, as well as what the impact the closure of their sites/moving their teaching and assessments online etc., may have. We have also been seeking their views on the likely future and longer term impacts of the pandemic.

We have used the information that SCHOSA Council has provided to inform our thinking and the information we have issued to institutions in terms of how we will continue to deal with prescription-related matters.

As well as our regular meetings with SCHOSA Council, we attended SCHOSA's virtual Forum

on 1 May 2020. The meeting was exceptionally well attended with 67 institutions represented. SCHOSA had asked ARB to provide responses to a series of pre-prepared questions; many of the questions requested that the ARB produce technical advice for institutions looking to make changes to their assessment regulations. The Executive confirmed to SCHOSA members that the Board's primary objective was to ensure that standards continued to be maintained and that the Criteria at the appropriate level continues to be met by those successfully gaining their prescribed awards. It was also confirmed that if further guidance was needed, this would need to be developed and considered by the Board.

We have further meetings planned in late May/early June 2020 and will continue to liaise with SCHOSA Council over the coming weeks and months.

5. EU Exit

Further to the UK's exit from the EU on 31 January 2020, we have continued to review and update our Brexit website pages where needed so that our information remains current and reflects our position during the implementation period.

We have been continuing to provide technical advice and have made contributions to Government discussions about the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Also see above in relation to the Architects Council of Europe.

6. Mutual Recognition Agreements

In early March we re-established contact with the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) in the USA to recommence the work we had previously been doing to explore the development of a mutual recognition agreement between the UK and the USA.

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) is a non-profit organisation made up of the architectural licensing boards of 55 U.S. states and territories. While each jurisdiction is responsible for regulating the practice of architecture within its borders, NCARB develops and administers national programs for candidates pursuing architectural licensure and helps architects expand their professional reach through the NCARB Certificate.

We have agreed to restart the work we were doing to map our respective registration and prescription requirements against one another, so that we can identify commonalities and any potential gaps. We have agreed to meet again virtually in early July to discuss the outcomes of our respective mapping exercises.

6. Communicating ARB's work

Publications

Earned media (content not directly created by ARB but by others without payment) is a highly trusted source of information. Earned press coverage enables us to inform and raise awareness of ARB and our regulatory activities with a range of stakeholders. In addition

significant earned coverage in a national newspaper that will be seen by a large readership would cost thousands if the equivalent space was bought as advertising.

Since the Board meeting on 5 March 2020, we have been referenced in a least 32 articles, published 6 news releases and responded to 9 press enquiries.

We reached out to 4 publications in order to coordinate the correction of factual errors in their content and/or educate them on the restrictions around the use of the title.

EBulletin

Our eBulletins remind the profession of their responsibilities and provide updates on decisions made by the Board as well as other information of interest and relevance to architects. Issues are published after Board meetings, which are usually held around five times a year.

The March eBulletin notification email, distributed 11 March 2020, was delivered to 41,901 architects and opened by 14,220 in the first week following publication. The March eBulletin microsite received 4,445 page views in the first week. The March eBulletin microsite was the sixth most popular edition since tracking began in 2015. The *Chair's Message* was the most popular microsite article of the edition.

To help ensure the Register is kept up to date, the eBulletin email prominently features recipient contact details together with a click through option to update. We received approximately 421 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the eBulletin was sent out compared to 88 in the previous week, an increase of 378%.

ARB channels

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we established a dedicated section of the arb.org.uk website to convey all information relevant to the situation. Our usual social media approach was also adapted to focus on coronavirus messaging. This new messaging includes information on how ARB is operating (e.g. working remotely), guidance for architects during this time and specific information on the prescription on qualifications and prescribed exams. The content is being regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the latest development and Government advice.

The optimisation project for the online Architects Register is now underway. Test data is being prepared and the ARB team will be holding its first 'discovery' meeting with the developers in mid-May. Project aims include ensuring the Register continues to service its regulatory purpose while meeting accessibility requirements, improving responsiveness across on all devices, being in line with current ARB branding and improving user experience in key areas.

As part of the Public Awareness project, in May a refreshed title protection policy page was launched, aimed at providing easily understood information. In addition, two new title protection case studies were added to this section of our main website. Case studies help illustrate how title misuse can occur, the range of actions we take and what can happen as a result of misuse. They help inform and protect the public and act as a deterrent to anyone who may misuse the title, in error or otherwise.

7. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Numbers on Register

As of 6 May 2020, there were 42,480 architects on the Register. Of these, 9,204 were EU nationals (not including UK). 7825 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8,926 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2020 (figure from 16 January 2020), with 7,621 residing in the UK. Although the number of EU nationals on the Register continues to rise, there has been a decline in EU nationals joining the Register via the EU route since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Of the 1,332 removed for non-payment of the retention fee at the start of the year, 695 (52%) have now been reinstated to the Register.

Application Management System (AMS)

Work continues with developers to design and develop a fully integrated, paperless application management system for all application types both joining and leaving the Register. This will bring many benefits that include driving efficiency, reducing paper use and will also provide a wide range of management information. Roll out of the application management system is expected by the end of July 2020.

8. COVID-19 –Operations

Staff Team:

The staff team continue to work from home, and have been since 18 March 2020. Individual teams as well as the whole staff team remain in regular contact by phone, video and chat functions.

Preparations to return to the office are underway, with the likely introduction of a rotational staff team approach to ensure on site social distancing is maintained. As part of these preparations, we have circulated a survey to all staff to help to identify and address any concerns or anxieties there might be around returning to the office, particularly in respect of commuting.

Professional Conduct Committee Hearings

The majority of Professional Conduct Committee hearings have been postponed. Two have been deemed as appropriate to continue with via Zoom video conference after agreement from the parties, but the ultimate decision on whether any case can proceed will always rest with the PCC panel itself

The Investigations team is currently risk assessing all of the scheduled PCC cases to decide how this work can be progressed safely and line with government guidelines on social distancing.

Prescribed Examinations:

The examinations scheduled for June have been cancelled, and all exam candidates notified. Candidates have been informed that we are exploring alternative options for the running of the examinations, but that we must be mindful of the regulatory assurance that the

prescribed examination process must deliver. We are exploring the feasibility of running the examinations remotely and have discussed this with a number of examiners. A paper on this proposal will be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

Candidates have been generally understanding of the situation, however there are a small number of candidates who require Part 1 equivalence before they can start their Part 2 courses this coming autumn. We have written to the schools concerned to set out ARB's position on access to education and requirements that are necessary at the point of registration. ARB has no requirements that hinder access to education, and we do not require that students enrolling on Part 2 or Part 3 programmes have secured antecedent prescribed qualifications or passed the ARB Prescribed Examination as a precondition of entry.

Prescribed Qualifications:

As noted above, we have been in regular dialogue with the representatives of SCHOSA, as well as other key stakeholders such as the Association for Professional Studies in Architecture and the Royal Institute of British Architects, in recent weeks in order to better understand the impact that the pandemic is having on institutions, schools of architecture and their staff and students.

We have issued initial communications setting out the Board's expectations at this time; how we dealing with course changes that institutions need to make to their qualifications, in particular how we are dealing with Part 3 level course changes. We have developed protocols to expedite the consideration of changes relating to Part 3 Oral Examinations. We are in the process of developing and issuing information about how we will continue to deal with prescription submissions that are currently under consideration; this will be followed with the development of further information about how we will handle submissions that are due from September 2020 onwards.

The ARB Prescription Committee is meeting monthly to deal with prescription matters which fall within its terms of reference.

9. Management structure

We have amended the names of the management groups within ARB to better reflect their roles and responsibility. The hitherto Operational Management Group (Registrar, Heads of Finance & Resources, Qualifications & Governance, Registration and Professional Standards) will now be called the Senior Leadership Group (SLG).

The management group of Investigations Manager, Registration Manager, Operations Manager, Communications Manager and Qualifications Manager will now be referred to as the Operational Management Group (OMG).

Work is now being carried out to make the appropriate amends to all of ARB's internal and external literature to reflect the change.

10. Professional indemnity insurance

The Board will be aware of the current difficulties faced by architects in securing adequate and appropriate PII, particularly in relation to fire-safety design. ARB decided to carry out a survey of all architects in respect of PII, to seek evidence on which it might base regulatory decisions.

An external research company have been carrying out a survey on behalf of ARB, which closed in early May. At the time of writing the survey results are being collated and analysed; there were 1,763 responses, which was more than anticipated and gives an early reflection on the importance of this issue to the profession.

Once the analysis has been completed we will be reporting the findings to the Board, for further discussion.

10. Committee Meetings held since March Board Meeting

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – 6 April 2020

Board Meeting – 8 April 2020

Remuneration and Appointments Committee– 9 April 2020

Remuneration and Appointments Committee – 15 April and 22 April 2020

Prescription Committee - 21 April 2020

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – 22 April 2020

Board Meeting – 4 May 2020

Prescription Committee – 12 May 2020

11. Future Meetings and Events

Remuneration and Appointments Committee – 27 May 2020

Prescription Committee – 5 June 2020

12. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

13. 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.

There are continued risks associated with the UK's exit from the EU which have been captured in a separate, dedicated EU Exit risk analysis. Now that the UK/EU has entered the implementation period, negotiations to agree a new deal are continuing at Government level. We will be working closely with Government to provide technical advice as a new agreement is developed. Depending on the progress of the negotiations, as well as the scope and nature of the new agreement, we are likely to be working within a fast paced and changing environment and will face challenges in terms developing revised systems to and implementing them so that they are ready for implementation from 1 January 2021. Discussions between the ARB and the ACE with regard to the recognition of qualifications in architecture will need to be dealt with carefully and by ensuring that ARB's position, i.e., any

agreement with our EU counterparts would need to follow the conclusion of, and align with, the formal EU-UK negotiations, is clear to our the ACE/other EU regulatory bodies.

As noted, the working groups looking at the competencies required in relation to life/fire safety and climate change are making progress. As the work moves forward and the consultation is issued, it will be important to ensure that stakeholders are provided with clear information in relation to the updated requirements and proposed implementation plans, and are provided with an adequate period of time to comment on the proposals. The working groups will need to then consider the consultation responses and make adjustments to the proposals before the Board finally approves them later in 2020.

In relation to the pandemic, we have in place a dedicated risk register which will assist the Board in monitoring the ongoing risks surrounding ARB's statutory functions and operational activities.

14. Communication

The update on ARB's operational activities, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

14. Equality and Diversity Implications

Particular care will need to be taken when making decisions in respect of re-opening the office, to ensure that those employees with protected characteristics (or dependants with protected characteristics) are not disproportionately affected by those decisions. A full risk and equality impact assessment will be carried out at the appropriate time.

15. Further Actions

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