

Joint statement on Brexit – July 2017

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) represent a combined membership of over 175,000 skilled professionals. We develop, maintain and export professional services and standards, as well as accredit university courses across the globe. Together, our members make a vital contribution to the global success of the UK construction industry - a sector worth over £100 billion to the UK economy.

Following the triggering of Article 50 and the result of the General Election, we have come together and identified four key areas of focus for the UK Government in Brexit negotiations that will ensure the UK built environment sector can continue to flourish and grow. These key areas supplement our shared priorities on Brexit, published in September 2016: Access to skills, common stands, research excellence, infrastructure investment, devolution commitment, and community development.

1. THE UK BUILT ENVIRONMENT SECTOR HAS A HIGHLY SKILLED, FLEXIBLE AND DIVERSE TALENT POOL, AND IS A MAGNET FOR THE BEST PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

The strength of the construction sector relies upon the expertise and skills of our people. As professional bodies we are committed to working with government to broaden access to our professions, ensuring that they are an attractive and welcoming career for people from all backgrounds. It is also essential that the UK built environment continues to act as magnet for the brightest and the best professionals from the EU and across the world. These individuals bring skills and expertise but also the language and cultural understanding that strengthen our sector's reach.

- **Government and industry must work together to develop a skilled construction workforce which addresses skills gaps now, and ensures that we can be at the forefront of developing and recruiting a talented workforce into the future;**
- **The Government must ensure that the UK's future migration system enables the built environment sector to attract talent from the EU and across the world;**
- **The Government must confirm the status of non-UK EU nationals working in the UK, securing their future contribution to the success of the UK built environment sector;**
- **Mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the UK and the EU must be maintained, and new agreements developed with key global markets.**

2. THE UK IS A GLOBAL LEADER IN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Professional standards bring confidence and certainty to markets and are underpinned by a regulatory regime. Leadership in professional standards is central to the UK's success as a global hub for the built environment. The UK has led Europe in demanding and delivering a regulatory regime that supports high quality design, construction and cost management. This ensures that UK construction can be greener, safer and more efficient.

For the built environment, continued promotion and protection of smart product and professional standards is at the heart of ensuring that the UK can continue to support its traditional strengths, whilst allowing industry to open up to new opportunities. Undermining these standards leaves UK businesses in a vulnerable position - reducing the focus on quality while unable to compete on a global stage. A new relationship with the EU and the world should not

be associated with a race to the bottom. Environmental credentials and high quality building standards must be encouraged for the sustainable growth and future competitive advantage of our towns and cities.

- **The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill must ensure that the UK's environmental standards are protected;**
- **Governments across the UK must collaborate to ensure that world-leading environmental standards are applied;**
- **The UK must continue to be party to the European Committee for Standardisation's (CEN) and European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC) to ensure that the UK can continue to drive the best standards.**

3. BUILT ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONALS HAVE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO GROW INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Leaving the EU provides the UK with the opportunity to strengthen international growth of the UK built environment sector. The UK currently has trade deals with just two of its top 10 non-EU trading partners, yet approximately 60% of UK trade is with non-EU countries¹. Trade deals with the USA or China alone would give the UK a trading arena nearly twice the size of the EU. UK built environment professionals would particularly benefit from new UK trade agreements with areas experiencing rapidly growing construction markets such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, China, India, Latin America and the USA.

Government support for exports can play a critical role in providing coordination, financial help and risk mitigation to businesses, helping them to access new markets and international customers. However, the various forms of Government export support tend to be fragmented and difficult to navigate. Provision of industry-specific, locally based advice and support for SMEs could play a major role in enabling businesses, particularly outside London and the South East, who wish to export.

- **Prioritise new trade agreements, which include trade in services, and ensure there is action to address internal barriers in the priority markets, as well as addressing broader barriers such as mutual recognition of professional qualifications;**
- **Join up sources of trade and export funding, and support from government;**
- **Expand the scope and range of export support programmes for small businesses including access to trade missions.**

4. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT SECTOR IS STRONG ACROSS THE NATIONS AND REGIONS OF THE UK, SUPPORTED BY WORLD-LEADING INFRASTRUCTURE

Construction managers, town planners, architects and chartered surveyors are responsible for the buildings in which we live, learn, work and play. It is essential that the built environment sector continues to deliver homes, infrastructure and high-skilled jobs across the nations and regions of the UK. However, this will be hampered unless we do more to tackle the major infrastructure challenges we face. With a housing crisis, and growing concerns around energy, telecoms, road, rail and airport capacity, governments across the UK must seek and entice prospective investors to consider infrastructure of all kinds. Providing confidence to the construction industry - through infrastructure funding and development - will provide stability during this period of uncertainty, and ensure that the UK is well-placed to take advantage of growth opportunities in the future. Further regional devolution will enable a rebalancing of the economy and help to ensure infrastructure spending is efficient, timely, coordinated and accountable.

- **The Government must set out long-term investment plans and funding for infrastructure, housing and other key sectors to reduce the volatility in the construction market. Where appropriate, transitional arrangements should be put in place to reflect the impact of leaving the EU;**
- **The Government should ensure that the potential of communities across the UK can be unlocked through robust devolution deals that provide greater flexibility to tackle housing and infrastructure needs.**

¹ [HM Revenue & Customs UK Overseas Trade Statistics July 2015](#)