Open letter, from “A New Chapter” Group to President Stewart Henderson of the RIAS (the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland – architects’ professional body), 9 November 2017

**A New Chapter** is a loose (and growing) association of over 150 Scottish architects: many RIAS members, but all concerned at what they see as a lack of effectiveness, poor governance and insufficient financial accountability in Scottish architecture’s professional body. We want an organisation to better champion the profession and provide more meaningful support in the many crises which have afflicted us for too long; from the institutionalised contempt for our professional skills represented by the ongoing PFI scandals and the procurement cesspool we have to wade through; to the housing crisis we should be engaged in averting, and to those of inclusivity, sustainability and wellbeing that we should be leading.

We’ve tried to engage. We have tried raising questions directly with our President, Stewart Henderson, in our letters of 12 September and 20 October, only to receive either no answer or a brush-off. By way of reassurance Mr. Henderson did disclose that formal reviews were being conducted by external consultants. Apart from a Governance Review we were advised there were other enquiries into staff salaries and “probity”. Having since then asked our Council Representatives to share the findings of these reviews we are advised these are confidential and that they are not at liberty to share any of the findings with ordinary members.

As government regulation and best practice makes transparency and accountability essential across the Charities Sector, the RIAS appears to have become increasingly secretive and autocratic. We have a President who is not elected by any of us, the general membership – someone who has not even served on Council and who, along with our Secretary, appears to dictate proceedings.

We understand that a Special Meeting of Council was called on 7 November. Such meetings are highly unusual, if not unprecedented, and while the purpose has not been revealed it is no stretch of the imagination to think that such unprecedented investigations into Probity, Governance and Staff Pay may have been on the agenda, to discuss the findings of all these Reviews. However, none of our elected members are willing to talk and it would appear all those who attended have been sworn to absolute secrecy.
First: this is not acceptable. RIAS Council are the legal Trustees of the RIAS – a charitable body – and have direct responsibilities to both the members whose financial contributions fund it and the Charity Commission whose regulations govern it.

Second: we are not daft. Why would anyone instruct expensive consultants to carry out a Probity Review if there had not been grounds for concern? If the RIAS had been given a clean bill of health as the President implied in the current edition of the RIAS Quarterly, why the big secret? Following a year when the RIAS appears to have had a significant over-spend, and had to pass a cap around asking practices to make significant one-off donations, are we to think that a review of staff pay and benefits is just a coincidence? There is now growing concern that these Reviews have uncovered serious failures of governance and serious financial mismanagement; and that, faced with this, the small, self-perpetuating, male fiefdom that controls the organisation, appears to be acting to protect itself from the results of its failings.

Our polite requests having been ignored we now publically demand that we, as members, whose organisation this is, have the following revealed to us, via our representatives on Council and local Chapter Presidents:

. A breakdown of pay received by the Incorporations’ most senior employees, including recent wage rises, bonus payments and other financial benefits;

. How exactly Council exercises its responsibility to set staff remuneration as stated in the Annual Accounts;

. A copy of the independent salaries benchmarking Review, with personal details removed as may be required by data protection law, but otherwise un-redacted.

. A copy of the independent Probity Review, again with personal details removed as may be required by data protection law, but otherwise un-redacted.

. A copy of the independent Governance Review into existing management practices, not just what new policies and procedures are being proposed.

Finally, and in general, we deplore the general self-satisfied torpor and bunkered closed-up-ness that afflicts the RIAS, and demand that a culture of openness and inclusivity is now embraced. We would like to see much of the old establishment give way to a more representative group, with a better balance
of younger and female members, and a new commitment to our responsibilities to society to better face the challenges in front of us,

Yours Sincerely,

**Members and Fellows:**
Malcolm Fraser  
Jude Barber  
Robin Livingstone  
Ewan Anderson  
Chris Stewart  
Mary Arnold Foster  
Will Tunnell  
Gerry Hogan  
Akiko Kobayashi  
Matt Bridgestock  
Peter Johnson  
Robin Webster  
Kieran Gaffney  
Calum Duncan  
Michael Roper  
Paul Stallan  
John Gilbert  
Jim Johnson  
David Jamieson  
Emma Wood  
Lauren Li Porter  
Iain Monteith  
Robin Sutherland  
Gillian Hanley  
Matt McKenna  
Karen Nugent  
Gillies MacPhail  
Paul Barham  
Alison Glen
Rosalind Love
Peter Richardson
Helen Lucas
Karen Manson
Ian Springford
Scott Abercrombie
Ian Irvine
Matt Loader
Honor Thomson
Charlie Hussey
Mel Sutherland
Fiona McNeill
Pete Mclaughlan
Andy Campbell
Rory Flyn
Marc Williamson
Marc Kilkenny
Kevin Adams
Michael Dougal
Mark Philip
Sam Boyle
Ruth Marsh
Frances Heslop
Professor Christopher Platt
Iain Malcolmson
Suzanne Malcolmson
Laura Stephen
Neil Stephen
Oliver Chapman
Gordon Duffy
Adrian Stewart

Architects and others – retired, non-members, interested and concerned:
Clare Armstrong
Christopher Gray
Will Cairns
Anthony Hemmings
David Seel
Fiona McLachlan
Sam Foster
Kerry Nicol
Rachael Scott
Graham Currie
Nicola McLachlan
Ewan Imrie
Eilidh Izat
Fiona Welch
Andy Summers
Neil Dargie
Christina Gaiger
Peter Wilson
Suzanne Ewing
Lee Ivett
Tamsin Cunningham
Lizzie Smith
Liz Simpson
Rory McCoy
Charlie Sutherland
Mairi Laverty
Neil McGuire
Suzanne Sharif
Chris Dobson
Sean Douglas
Caitlin Macleod
Chloe Yuill
Andy Gower
Lucy Miller
Gavin Murray
Raffa Esposito
Lucy Sacker
Anne Duff
Jonathan Millard
Raffa Esposito