

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 enquires 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 bunkerred 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