

Topic: The purpose of RICS as a professional body

Introduction and background

For over 150 years, members of this profession have delivered positive change in the societies they serve. They have built towns and cities, managed land, fostered communities and been expert stewards and protectors of the built and natural environment.

Society's needs have changed from when RICS was established in 1868, and so have the global challenges and opportunities that members must navigate to meet these needs successfully. However, our objectives as a professional body, as outlined in our Charter, are to secure the advancement and facilitate the acquisition of that knowledge which constitutes the profession of a surveyor, and to maintain and promote the usefulness of the profession for the public advantage in the United Kingdom – and in any other part of the worlds. These feel as relevant today as they did 150 years ago.

RICS' purpose remains, therefore, as:

- a) a global professional, standards and regulatory body
- b) existing to secure the advancement and usefulness of the profession for the public advantage
- c) focused on setting standards and assuring these standards are in the public interest
- d) delivering support that is valued by RICS members and their employers
- e) developing members' professional skills and knowledge and
- f) expanding opportunities for members to apply those professional skills.

To fulfil this purpose effectively RICS must also ensure that it:

- a) maintains trust and confidence in the profession and itself
- b) maintains its own and the profession's relevance in a fast-changing world and
- c) remains financially secure to maintain RICS for future generations of professional members.

The process of reviewing our strategy and business plan will enable us to ensure that we continue to focus on delivering against our core purpose, and that the activities we undertake as a professional body continue to contribute effectively to delivering this purpose. This consultation provides an important stage in this process, ensuring Governing Council has the insight it needs to help it make the best possible decisions about our future.

Current activities to achieve our purpose

As a professional body working for the public advantage, the activities we undertake to deliver our purpose are relatively broad. They encompass leadership, engagement, support and enforcement (of professional standards). For any professional body, continuously ensuring that the right balance and focus between activities is maintained is in many ways the most critical challenge; more challenging than defining the organisational purpose with clarity. The main professional body activities we undertake can be summarised as:

- a) setting standards for entry into membership
- b) supporting trainees and admitting members to the profession in accordance with those standards
- c) maintaining a register of members and assuring members' continuing competence
- d) setting professional and technical standards and regulating against these standards
- e) engaging with members, and facilitating networking between members, to gain insight and input to support the work of RICS and their fellow members
- f) understanding the differing markets that our global membership work in and ensuring our strategies and work are appropriately tailored and targeted to be relevant to all members
- g) providing professional support to members through guidance, information, knowledge and training
- h) working with employers to help them train, develop and support members and others working in the sector
- i) providing a clear leadership voice, with members, on the major issues affecting the natural and built environment and professional surveying practice
- j) engaging with market participants, including governments, financial institutions and employers to increase understanding of the profession, its standards and work so that they choose to adopt our standards and work with members to increase professionalism in the sector
- k) delivering relevant products and services to third parties to reinvest profits in delivering the purpose of RICS.

Entry into the profession – (a) and (b)

The decision to admit an individual to membership of a profession is the single most important decision a professional body makes with that member. Entry standards and processes for all grades of membership are critical to ensuring confidence in the profession. They provide the gateway to membership, ensuring individuals have the right knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours at the point of entry.

The consultation paper on **qualification and entry** sets out our current activities and areas we are developing in more detail.

Setting standards and assuring competence and conduct – (c) and (d)

In order to maintain the profession for the public advantage, we need to secure the trust and confidence of the public, members, and other stakeholders through our standards and assurance activities. The consultation paper on **standards and professional assurance** provides further details on a model of assurance based on supporting members to professional excellence.

Engagement and involvement – (e)

Open, effective and honest engagement with members is critical to RICS, as it is to all professional bodies. Our move to a 'digital first' approach in all we do provides real opportunities to enhance both the quality and quantity of RICS member engagement. However, in seizing these opportunities we must also be aware of the need to retain the most valuable aspects of the

previous ways of engaging. The consultation paper on **member engagement** seeks detailed views on these issues.

Relevant Market Strategies – (f)

We recognise that the markets we operate in have different requirements, and in order to implement these activities, we developed market strategies and action plans for the UK & Ireland, as well as for markets across the Americas, Asia Pacific and EMEA. We are determined to ensure that we remain relevant and trusted by all members and support them effectively wherever they practice. Our digital first approach enables us to do this. There are, however, a small number of global markets where we currently have a significant number of members and where significant opportunities for growth and influence exist. In addition to the UK, these markets are Hong Kong, China, India, Australia, Singapore, UAE, Germany, USA and Canada – over 65% of non-UK based members are in these markets. We also focus on a number of other key locations for specific reasons, such as Brussels for its role in Europe, or Kenya as a base for Sub-Saharan Africa. Singapore and Dubai will also play a wider role as the ‘hubs’ for our activities in Asia Pacific and AEMEA respectively.

While grounded in the overarching RICS strategy and business plan, the specific strategies and plans for each market are flexed to reflect the unique circumstances each market represents.

Information, knowledge, training and development – (g) and (h)

Our work in developing training and events allows us to deliver knowledge, best practice and thought leadership to new entrants, qualified professionals and others with an interest in the built environment. Training is also one of our leading commercial product offerings, and by providing high quality paid-for training, we are able to support the funding of other core activities of RICS and deliver free and reduced cost training.

We know that many members found the CPD packages we offered during COVID-19 incredibly helpful. As a result, we launched our new RICS Professional Support Packages last year to continue supporting members in their development. These packages are exclusively for RICS candidates and members and cover the latest industry trends, technical best practice and legislation. They are designed to be a hub for all professional development needs for a one-off annual cost. We will continue to develop these offerings and further targeted training opportunities.

We want to help establish the profession, and provide access to it, in markets where traditional routes to membership may not be prevalent. In 2013, RICS founded a School of the Built Environment in New Delhi and a second campus opened in Mumbai in 2016. The School offers postgraduate programmes in real estate, construction, quantity surveying and facilities management; undergraduate programmes in real estate and construction; and an active PhD. The programmes include industry-led teaching with hands-on learning for nearly 1,000 students.

Advocacy and growing professional influence – (i)

Over time some professional bodies have reduced their focus on advocating the profession for the public advantage in order to avoid criticism of being a trade body and not operating in the public interest. We do not believe the two need to be mutually exclusive, and RICS could become



bolder in its advocating activities – seeking to promote the value of RICS standards and the professional competence and expertise of members on key global issues affecting the built and natural environment, and professionalism.

We produce recognised standards and thought leadership that are adopted by governments and clients all around the world. This drives value to members and registered firms through increasing demand for their services. However, we believe that we can do more to communicate and celebrate adoption successes to share this market demand and drive further value to RICS members and firms.

Promoting professionalism and professional standards and advancing knowledge – (j)

The epicentre of delivering professionalism for the public advantage is the professional and client relationship. The value of RICS professionalism comes from market demand for services. Our influencing work therefore focuses on clients, governments and other influential stakeholders to adopt RICS standards, and recognise RICS professionals and registered firms as the source of realising value and solving key challenges.

In order to be trusted, RICS also needs to demonstrate leadership in areas of external change and challenge for society and the profession. We have therefore been developing our thought leadership work to focus on issues that advance the profession in key areas, such as fire safety, climate and resilience, diversity and inclusion, and the future of cities and infrastructure. We have done this by expanding our annual World Built Environment Forum into a 365-day virtual thought leadership hub that will become the principal place for leading thinking and networking of ideas in the built and natural environments. More information on our future-focussed thought leadership, can be found in [corresponding consultation papers](#).

Providing products and Services (k)

We offer a number of products and services, which are highly relevant to the delivery of professional standards, support the profession and also provide income to support other activities RICS undertakes to further its purpose. These include:

- **isurv** – isurv is an online knowledge hub, designed especially for built environment professionals. It provides access to standards, guidance, industry resources and templates, and gives advice to support your day-to-day work while ensuring you remain compliant.
- **Building Cost Information Service (BCIS)** – for the past 50 years, we have been collecting, collating, analysing, modelling and interpreting cost information. BCIS makes that information easily accessible through our online applications, data licensing and publications. We also provide consultancy and research support.
- **Dispute Resolution Services (DRS)** – DRS is the world’s oldest and largest provider of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services in the land, property and construction industries. Over the last four decades, DRS has appointed dispute resolvers in nearly a quarter of a million cases. Internationally, DRS resolves around \$2 billion USD worth of disputes every year – keeping these cases out of the courts and supporting members and their clients.

Strategies and objectives

As set out above, the decisions for professional bodies about the balance of activities that go towards delivering their purpose is critical. Although the core activities – particularly those profession activities of entry, standards, assurance and regulation – will always be central, the balance will flex over time depending on a whole range of profession, market, social, economic, political and technological factors. As an organisation, we have to continually evaluate and adjust strategies and plans in the light of these factors. The Governing Council's current strategic review and this consultation are a part of that process and will result in revised strategies and business plans for the future.

Member input through this consultation will help Governing Council in this process.

Questions

1. Do the objectives of RICS/our purpose under the Charter still reflect the role of RICS as a professional body in the 21st century?
2. Do you agree with how that purpose is summarised in (a) to (f)?

If no, please provide reasons

3. Do you agree with the three issues (a) to (c), which we must also ensure in delivering our purpose?

If no, please provide reasons

4. Please rank the three most important activities (from the list (a) to (k)) that you believe we must deliver in order to meet our purpose.
5. Please rank the three least important activities (from the list (a) to (k)) that you believe we must deliver in order to meet our purpose.
6. Do you believe that RICS could be bolder in promoting and advocating the profession for the public advantage?

If yes, how?

7. Are RICS products and services valued by you?

Which ones are most valued:

isurv

DRS

BCIS

Other (please specify)

8. Do you support RICS providing high quality paid-for training in combination with free and low-cost options?

9. Do you agree with our current market strategy of supporting all members digitally with particular attention on those markets where a substantial number of RICS members are already based and opportunities for further growth exist?

Further comments

10. What activities would you like to see RICS undertake in your market (please comment on whether these activities should be digital or physical)?

11. Do you think RICS should become an education provider, in addition to our professional training, as we are currently doing with the School of the Built Environment in India?

12. Are there any other comments you wish to make that will help our review of the purpose of a professional body?

13. Do you give RICS permission to publish your responses?

Where possible, please respond in English through our [iconsult platform](#). If you would prefer to respond in another language please email any completed forms to review2021@rics.org