

# Bichard RICS Review Post Release Q&A

Lord Michael Bichard introduced his independent Bichard RICS Review on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, which was commissioned by the RICS Governing Council to review the Institution's purpose, governance and strategy.

Lord Bichard, along with Nick Maclean, Interim Chair of Governing Council, RICS President Clement Lau and Interim CEO Richard Collins answered questions from RICS members and stakeholders. Further questions were submitted via the Lumi platform and to a dedicated email inbox: [bichardricsreview@rics.org](mailto:bichardricsreview@rics.org).

Please find listed below a selection of questions received with responses. Due to the volume of questions, some of them duplicates, we have published some of them here and some have been responded to directly. The email address will remain active for questions until 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

As a member of RICS staff I am proud of our members and the work of the institution and watching this online I am pleased to see the passion of members on the floor and on the panel. I fully support Lord Bichard's recommendations and wonder if he will be taking any formal role going forward in supporting RICS implement them. I would certainly welcome it.

Lord Bichard's contract is coming to an end with us shortly and no formal role has currently been identified, but Lord Bichard has offered further support in the coming months, which the Institution will take him up on if an appropriate opportunity arises.

Thank you for this session. 1<sup>st</sup> question: Will there be any internal staff reorganisation based on the recommendations? 2<sup>nd</sup> question: Does the new proposed structure recommend having more staff coming from real estate to understand the standards and public interest? Thank you again.

We value the expertise of all our staff and we will ensure that RICS is adequately resourced and that all our people, employees and non-executives are supported and equipped to help successfully deliver Lord Bichard's recommendations.

We are working at pace to recruit new talent into the vacancies we have open at the moment, and we are determined to make RICS a more attractive place to work whilst we forge ahead with these recommendations – which will ultimately help us attract the best people

I agree with what Lord Bichard says on diversity - the problem in Saudi Arabia is not being recognised officially in the country and that fact discourages locals from becoming members

As we strive for a more diverse membership we continue to speak with Governments across the Middle East to promote and endorse the benefits of joining RICS. We also plan to focus on early engagement with schools and universities, to increase awareness of the organisation and the benefits of joining.

Thank you for today's excellent session. 2022 is the 100 year anniversary of the 1st standard method of measurement, will the RICS consider giving more prominence to quantity surveying, rather than hiding it in 'construction'?

RICS will shortly be opening consultation on the changes to professional groups proposed within the Bichard RICS Review and we will welcome feedback on the potential structure and how we can develop new professional groups that best support strong engagement with the membership going forwards, especially in key sectors such as quantity surveying.

There are 13 countries who specifically criminalise transgender people, namely Brunei, the Gambia, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, South Sudan, Tonga, and the United Arab Emirates. Iran's Islamic Penal Code also has severe punishments for 'bending gender norms in your expression'. If the RICS is to spread its message of DE&I how can operations in these countries be justified?

This is an important issue for Governing Council's new DE&I Steering Group to consider. This is an ongoing challenge for us in terms of how we make changes to our international rules around professional conduct, and then enforce them in different jurisdictions where there are different legal frameworks in place.

We do need to continue to operate in those places where we have members we need to support - but we need to work through how we support those members whilst maintaining a commitment to our values.

For future elections to WRB's and GC, will we dispense with candidates who are 'endorsed' by RICS? If not, why?

Within the Bichard RICS Review, Lord Bichard suggested the Governing Council considers its current method of election and whether it wished to continue with a form of qualified election. Governing Council discussed this at length and believes that a form of qualification for election rather than endorsement for election is likely to be the best way to ensure that RICS gets the best mix of candidate skill sets to fit the different roles across our governance structure. It will be discussed at length, however, in the coming weeks as GC consider how to establish an election process that is more transparent, straightforward and member led.

Firstly thank you for all the work involved in this report. I'm particularly interested in transparency within RICS. Can assurances be given that all appointments to all boards will be open and transparent and advertised openly?

The vast majority of appointments will be made through open and transparent advertisements - this includes all the key leadership posts proposed, notably the Chair of the Board, the Director-General and the Senior Independent Governor.

Under Lord Bichard's proposals for the structure of Governing Council, it would have the right to appoint up to two members without going through an open recruitment process - this is to help ensure we can address any gaps in expertise or experience on Governing Council. We believe this is an important recommendation that will help us ensure we can establish a Governing Council that better represents the communities the profession serves.

Thank you Lord Bichard for your forward thinking report. What are the plans regarding RICS.org training and the seemingly connected iserve and the ongoing additional monetisation of training and access to informative documents. Should one fee cover all access? What are your thoughts?

As part of the Member Engagement, Experience and Value programme, this year a new CPD Support Pack was launched which includes access to global conferences, updates, local engagement sessions, webinars and access to Isurv channels.

The MEEV Working Group will be evaluating the success of this and uptake of different components as it considers what the CPD Support Pack might look like next year. In the longer term, this is no doubt a question that both the new Commercial Committee and the Membership Services Committee will wish to consider.

## Why isn't The University of the West Indies good enough to be RICS accredited?

RICS' accreditation for the University of the West Indies was withdrawn in November 2010. We have not received an application from the University since then and therefore cannot comment on whether the programme meets our accreditation standards.

The Qualifications and Assessments Committee (QAC) is currently reviewing our approach to accrediting undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes globally, in conjunction with the Entry, and Assessments, Steering Group (EASG) who are leading a review of routes to entry and membership.

## 92% of building surveyors are men and this has not changed since the 1980's. Why is the RICS the only property and construction profession with no women's group?

We know there is work to do to improve the number of women in the profession, albeit it has been growing steadily year on year, and the fact that only 19% of RICS Members are women reflects this.

Governing Council has recently convened a new group focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion to help drive this effort from the top. One of the first tasks for that group is considering what place specialist groups within the Institution should have and how they can be effectively convened and sustained. As Lord Bichard says, the Institution has a lot of work to do in this area to drive serious change and increase opportunities for underrepresented groups and Governing Council is determined to do that.

## Why are chartered surveyors not allowed to put on presentations in the RICS building to provide economic CPD for fellow chartered surveyors and network with each other. The building is only used for its admin staff and not for chartered surveyors who pay for it. This should change - why is it not possible. I have tried to put on events for years and I am told it's not possible.

Our Interim chief Executive, Richard Collins, is keen to see the building opened up to Members and used as widely as possible for networking and other purposes. A recent statement from the member-led Member Engagement, Experience and Value (MEEV) Working Group attested to this saying: "At our HQ in London a member-led working group, led by several past RICS presidents, has been collaborating with the RICS Workplace team on plans for Great George Street. The aim is to make the best use of space available to create more opportunities for member engagement in future."

RICS facilities are available for the types of events you reference as long as they are complimentary to the purpose of RICS and for the benefit of members and/or public advantage. There is also the opportunity for members to contribute to RICS organised CPD events and if they would like to do so they should contact [onlineacademy@rics.org](mailto:onlineacademy@rics.org) detailing their topic / area of specialism.

Why are there 3 grades of membership as this is very confusing to the general public and to members. Hon FRICS, FRICS and Assoc RICS should all be removed so we just have MRICS which should be earned (unlike Hon FRICS).

This is currently under review by the Standards and Regulation Board, who are considering if any changes might be needed in this area.

Are assessors being trained on unconscious bias? In order to tackle the diversity issue, we have to ensure candidates are assessed fairly. There can be more accountability on the part of assessors - measures could be put in place to audit them. This could be in the form of their performance in a video recording of the interview process

We do include unconscious bias training within our initial training for assessors, but we know there is more work to do in terms of improving our ongoing training and auditing.

Engaging with RICS can be incredibly frustrating. I know of one listed multi-national organisation who wants to discuss potentially collaborating with RICS, to their mutual benefit, but there is no engagement at all at executive level. If RICS is approached by a FTSE 100 organisation how would such an enquiry be handled?

We are sorry to hear of the frustrations you had experienced engaging with RICS, but if you wanted to pass on any further details about an organisation that would like to discuss collaborating with us, we would be happy to broker discussions at a senior level.

We absolutely welcome the prospect of more partnerships and collaborations at all levels.

Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill - Richard Review 3.22 & 3.23

Whilst I would concur 3.22 appears sensible – but perhaps over time the time scale might be better as 10 years.

However, I cannot agree that it is appropriate for LURB to single out RICS for this parliamentary scrutiny and RICS should seek to widen clause 186 to be ALL professional bodies – or removed all together. RICS should stand up to Government on these points to ensure not unduly tainted by this measure, that seem wholly inappropriate. I believe via the Privy Council Royal Charter there must already be appropriate opportunity to review the institution's Governance, but singling out the RICS within the plethora of different professional bodies is not right.

Thank you for your comments. Governing Council has given its support to Lord Bichard's recommendations, and is of the view that five years is proportionate balancing practicality with the importance of visible accountability and transparency. This is vital, given the important role the Institution and the profession play in public life.

Governing Council members understand the importance Government places upon RICS's work for the public advantage, but have communicated our concern at about the current drafting of Clause 186 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. We remain closely engaged with Government and at this time to encourage their adoption of Lord Bichard's recommendations, for which Government has indicated its support.

You may wish to raise your personal concerns about clause 186 with members of Parliament or members of the House of Lords, who will be debating the Bill in the coming months.

Are there going to be any overhauls on how presidents are elected. As a new member to the RICS, the process is terrible confusing and it seems we are only aware when there is a new president and nothing during the run up process. Should it be more representative and democratic?

The Bichard RICS Review proposed that the new merged Nominations and Remuneration Committee will oversee the Presidential appointments process in the future. Lord Bichard also suggested that Governing Council should consider whether the President is elected by Governing Council Members or by the whole profession, and that is something we will be discussing in the coming months.

I am interested in Lord Bichard's comments regarding the subtle changes to the role of the SRB, including that it will not be responsible for public affairs and delivery of products. While some professional standards are concerned with behaviour aimed at protecting the public interest, many standards issued by RICS relate to the technical standards members must follow. While the Regulatory function can and should be led by independent non-

members, are they the right group to determine what technical standards should be issued?

Lord Bichard considered the nature and impact of RICS's regulatory role as part of his review, but did not review the specific rules required of members and firms. A copy of the terms of reference can be found here: [Terms of Reference](#).

RICS standards apply to all 130,000 individual members and 10,000 surveying services firms. RICS provides regulatory oversight to support these members and firms with compliance and considers all concerns it receives to establish where there may be a need for disciplinary action. More information can be found at: [Regulation \(rics.org\)](#).

Lord Bichard's report has made specific recommendations in respect of regulatory governance, resourcing and responsibilities to ensure RICS remains robust and trusted, which Governing Council will now take forward.

There are a number of very good separate initiatives (e.g. some run by University alumni, some by individual companies) to encourage more young people from diverse backgrounds at an early stage (schools etc) into the real estate profession but do you feel there is a role for RICS to work much more collaboratively with these initiatives to break down the silos in which they operate and therefore to increase the overall effectiveness which will benefit all?

The RICS Early Engagement Team are fully in agreement with this statement and believe that the only way to truly succeed is to collaborate. They are working with several partners which aim to increase diversity, and are proactively targeting minority groups within opportunity areas. There are a vast number of organisations in this arena and we are open to receiving recommendations of those where we can gain greatest value.

What can the RICS do to raise the standards and ethics of the estate agency business. Why are there so few Chartered Surveyors involved directly in selling properties?

Working with The Property Ombudsman we have developed an overarching code for property agents based on the recommendations made by Lord Best in the 'Regulation of Property Agents Working Group, Final Report'. The code is now with the Department of Communities and Local Government and we have been discussing with them about how this could be adopted by all residential property agents.

In terms of the work that we are doing with regards to RICS standards, we are about to begin a review of all our agency and management standards. One of the areas that we will

be considering is why on the agency side, agents favour the Associate route as opposed to the Chartered route. We are currently looking for members to join working groups to review the standards, if you would be interested in finding out more please contact Mairead Carroll – [mcarroll2@rics.org.uk](mailto:mcarroll2@rics.org.uk)

**How is the RICS intending improve the profile and exposure of the RICS in the media. Surveyors have been conspicuous by their absence providing comment and advice during the Covid lockdown on the BBC News and other mass media consumer programmes such as Money Box, Rip Off Britain etc when real estate/property matters are featured?**

We are constantly seeking to improve our ways of working and success, and would always look to include our professionals where we can in press activity. We do have to prioritise our activity strategically, but would always look to publicise content items such as our consumer guides and public interest work.

It is worth noting, that RICS has been well represented across print, television and radio over the last twelve months – with extensive consumer pieces featured in the Sun’s property advice column and various BBC shows. Our thought leadership output is also regularly attracting UK-wide coverage – with the UK residential market survey picking up articles in the Mail, Mirror, Times and the ITV News website.

Just today our expert Gary Strong has been interviewed for a Rip Off Britain / The One Show about mould in residential properties and we are working with producers on another segment they are preparing.

In addition, we work with RICS members around the UK to feature their expertise in major broadcast pieces, such as the ITV national news at ten o’clock (on homes with Japanese knotweed) and regional radio (about our new right to light guidance). Where interviews aren’t possible we’ve liaised with producers to ensure RICS is included in public interest pieces about property, like BBC Morning Live’s recent piece on spray foam insulation issues.

**All members must meet the same standards of professionalism & competence. Why are subs so much lower for AssocRICS. Why should FRICS pay more? Are they to be discouraged? How can any member not be a Chartered Surveyor (AssocRICS)? The Public does not understand & is being misled.**

The process and structure of setting and agreeing subscription fees will be reviewed ahead of 2024 to ensure that this is simpler, clearer and fair for members at all stages of their career.



How can the RICS increase its effective influence in housing matters? I recently undertook a valuation of a flat in a three-storey modern brick cavity block, with admitted two minimal clad bays, that had an EWS1! The CML have clearly disregarded the RICS advice on fire risk re low rise residential buildings.

In terms of the valuation case you reference, the answer may be that the lender insisted upon it (all lenders set their own lending criteria based on their risk appetite); or a valuer was unsure about the cladding to the bays, and thought an EWS1 should be required. Or alternatively, the building owner may have had an EWS1 form done, thinking it was required.

Without more detail, it's difficult to know why this happened. In terms of the broader point about increasing influence in housing matters, we engage regularly with all relevant stakeholders including Government, the various and numerous trade bodies, BSA and UK Finance, and although you may not see evidence of this, as a lot of our work is behind closed doors, we can reassure him we are seen as the go to professional body delivering clear proportionate and authoritative advice to the public advantage.

Are there considerations to make the assessor role a paid position? And to record the APC interviews for independent auditing purposes?

You make important points about our assessment process. The Qualifications and Assessments Committee (QAC) is currently reviewing how we can improve our assessment processes globally, in conjunction with the Entry, and Assessments, Steering Group (EASG) who are leading a review of routes to entry and membership. This must include consideration of the role of members in the assessment processes, and the most appropriate mechanisms to quality assure the assessment process, whether that is recording Chartered Surveyor final assessment interviews or other written assessments.

Delighted with the extent and depth of coverage of the Bichard review and its outcomes and pleased that Self Regulation has been maintained but to be significantly strengthened. Given the extent of the work required to implement the recommendations and the speed necessary is RICS able to structure itself and cover the costs involved?

How will RICS fund all these changes? Richard and others talk of a budget. Where will the people resources, and more importantly, the money come from? Are we being realistic or just drawing up longer and longer lists. No money, no resources, no action, no change!

With regard to the work required to implement the reforms, we have acknowledged that it is a challenging transformation program, but we have committed to delivering it in the next 18 months and we believe this is achievable.

Whilst some recommendations do require investment, we are confident that the finances of RICS have been put on a sound footing, as described in our recently published Annual Report, through prudent financial management and planning. We are therefore in a position to implement Lord Bichard's recommendations in full without compromising the Institution's financial position.

