**CEO Report for the 2019 AGM**

I am pleased to be able to report that during the past year, AR has continued to work hard and successfully on behalf of its members.

Membership is strong and well represents our industry with some 1200 members nearly half of which are owners and occupiers with the rest made up of agents, advisors, planners and other technical specialists.

A healthy and representative membership is crucial to AR’s lobbying work. It gives us an pool of talent and experience on which we can draw and gives legitimacy to our claim to represent our sector when we lobby Government and other regulators.

We have undertaken a full schedule of our principal activities – lobbying, professional advancement sessions, networking events and charitable fund raising.

In our charitable work, AR has continued to raise funds for good causes including supporting various charity appeals from Variety, The Children’s Charity who we shall be supporting again this year at our Christmas lunch. In addition, we have continued to make smaller individual contributions to charities nominated by members. Overall, a record of generosity of which our members can be truly proud.

Regarding professional development and networking, we have held a full programme of events throughout the year, all of which were well attended. As well as providing CPD events throughout the year we have held our regular programme of First Friday networking events and hope to be able to continue with these next year and will be introducing “Thirsty Thursdays”. We also continue to support various social and sporting events including Quiz, Tenpin Bowling and our annual golf day. Last month our annual conference was held again at the Royal Institution, with around 300 members attending. We also provided the opportunity for members to talk after the conference sessions to leading retailers and this was also was well attended.

Turning to lobbying, the continuing pre-occupation of the Government with Brexit and the housing crisis has resulted in a continuation of the slowdown in the heavy legislative and regulatory workload I reported at the 2018 AGM.

Notwithstanding this, the major issues we have responded to are very important ones for our sector. These have included:-

* trying with other business organisations to limit the damaging impact of ‘the new Check and Challenge procedures for business rates appeals;
* responding to a number of new mandatory regulatory proposals coming forward from Government as part of its continuing drive to improve energy efficiency in commercial buildings including energy performance certificates, streamlined energy and carbon reporting and decarbonisation of the UK economy;
* digital services tax;
* developer contributions;
* land value capture
* consultations in Wales and Scotland on proposals to change the planning systems and business rates and appeals.
* Lastly, for the first time, AR appeared in support of members at an Examination in Public of a major development plan when we gave evidence in support of members objecting to policies proposed in the New London Plan.

All of these issues have been designated by the Board as priorities for AR.

Concomitant with the much narrower focus of Government legislative activity, we have not commissioned any new research this year.

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In addition to the above work, AR has continued to regularly review planning appeals and court decisions, announcements by regulatory bodies, emerging trends in the retail industry and economic and employment metrics, so as to identify issues of concern to our sector.

In summary, a solid year of performance in all our four principal activities creating a sound platform for moving forward in 2020 when following the general election and assuming the Brexit issue is finally resolved, a plethora of new legislation is anticipated.

Will McKee

Accessible Retail

Chief Executive