Professional regulation of built environment professionals in England

CIAT membership update, March 2026.

1. CIAT members and affiliates will be aware that there is major discussion of professional regulation of built environment professionals in England currently taking place.

2. Regulatory reform is both an opportunity for Architectural Technology professionals to secure a level playing field with other built environment professions, and a potential threat, if functions integral to the work of the profession end up being reserved to other professionals. CIAT is therefore committing significant internal resources to engaging with key stakeholders to shape the outcomes of reform.

3. This briefing summarises the context for reform, CIAT's position, and ongoing activities in this area.

Context

4. Professional regulation was identified as a key weakness in England's built environment sector regulatory framework following the Grenfell Tower Fire. Some changes have already been implemented or are in train, including the introduction of the Building Regulations Principal Designer (PD) and Principal Contractor (PC) roles, regulation of Building Control Inspectors, and regulation of fire engineers. However, it is now highly likely that the Government will extend professional regulation.

5. Key recent developments include:

   - The **launch of the Single Construction Regulator prospectus** by Government, which makes clear that professional regulation will be part of the SCR's remit, with a **consultation on a "professions strategy"** to follow this spring.

   - The **publication by the Construction Industry Council and separately by CABE, of proposals for regulation** whereby functions are reserved to members of professional institutes (PIs), overseen by a built environment council or similar.

   - The **resignation of ARB membership by the RIBA President and Chair**, their call for repeal of the Architects Act 1997, and proposal for reservation of functions to suitably qualified professionals, overseen by a cross-sector umbrella body.

Summary of CIAT's position

6. CIAT recognises that, following the results of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, **some level of professional regulation is inevitable**. The Institute is not opposed to this, where it delivers clear safety or quality benefits to clients and society.

7. **CIAT supports the repeal of the Architects Act**.

   - Protection of architect title does not provide protection to the public, does not reflect common usage, and creates unfairness by excluding competent Chartered Architectural Technologists and other design professionals.

   - This would not preclude the maintenance of existing Chartered titles (Chartered Architectural Technologist, RIBA Chartered Architect etc), which reflect additional professional qualifications and ongoing commitments to high standards of professional practice.

8. **CIAT believes that regulation should be proportionate to risks**, and should be as light touch as possible, to ensure that unnecessary burdens are not placed on professionals.

   - **CIAT favours regulation of safety critical functions** only at this time, as other outcomes are proportionately regulated through the Building Regulations.

9. **CIAT does not support mandating Professional Institute membership as a means of regulation**.

   - The primary function of PIs is to drive forward best practice, rather than to set minimum regulatory standards.

   - PI membership is diverse, with members working in different jurisdictions and areas of practice**.**

   - Mandating PI membership would undermine the core purpose of PIs and would require PI members to meet a single set of requirements which may not reflect their specific areas of practice.

10. CIAT currently favours the following broad model (N.B. this is not a finalised proposal):

    - **Regulate sets of safety critical functions** (not whole professions), and titles associated with those sets of functions (e.g. Building Regulations PD)

    - **Define the competencies required** to deliver those functions and **provide all professionals with fair opportunity to demonstrate competence** through registration and periodic revalidation. Individuals already on a robust register should be grandfathered into the new regime.

    - Additionally, **ensure organisations offering those services demonstrate capacity and capability** to deliver them, through regular, light-touch licensing.

    - **Utilise the expertise of PIs to manage registration and revalidation**, with oversight from the Single Construction Regulator, while keeping this separate from PI membership.

11. CIAT recommends starting with the role of Building Regulations PD as a defined safety critical design role, but this model can equally be applied to fire engineers or other roles as needed. CIAT is calling for reform of PD and PC titles, to avoid confusion between Construction Design and Management Regulations and Building Regulations roles.

CIAT activity

12. In June last year, CIAT's Executive Board approved an outline position paper on professional regulation: https://architecturaltechnology.com/resource/safety-innovation-and-diversity-in-building-design-june-2025-pdf.html

13. CIAT is now expanding this position into a detailed set of proposals, which will be shared with key stakeholders.

14. CIAT is meeting regularly with the Government team leading work on regulation of design professionals. CIAT is supporting them as they develop their thinking and will feed into the Government's "professions strategy" consultation in due course.

15. CIAT is meeting regularly with key sector stakeholders, including RIBA, CIC and others. There is broad cross-sector agreement that regulation must work for all partners.

16. In engagement with parliamentarians, CIAT is highlighting the potential risks of regulation which is overly burdensome, or which excludes significant numbers of professionals.

17. CIAT continues to welcome input from its members, which should be directed to externalaffairs@ciat.global in the first instance.

For more information, contact externalaffairs@ciat.global.