

# RIBA President

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Elections 2026

## Nomination Statement

Prepared by:

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# I represent the under-estimated...

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The local, regional, national and international voice.

The unheard perspective.

The members, and the institution itself, who don't always recognise their full value.

Because unless we value ourselves, no one else will.

Too often, our expertise is taken for granted.

**Our role is challenged:** by stricter regulations, by pressure on fees, by the rapid rise of AI and much more.

And yet, **the value we bring** has never been more important.

**There is a lot of noise around us:** within our industry, our organisations, our nations and regions, and our daily lives. In that noise, it's easy to feel overlooked, undervalued and underestimated.

**But we should never forget this:** our skills shape the world people live in and our work changes lives.

**We define and represent architecture. That must remain at the forefront:** especially when we face our biggest challenges.

**And at the centre of it all sits the RIBA.**

## What does it mean to be the RIBA President?

The RIBA President is **our ambassador, our influencer and our supporter.**

It is about bringing people together around a shared purpose.

**Because until we raise our value, together, it will remain difficult to tackle the bigger challenges we all care about:** housing, climate

resilience, AI, fair fees, education, and the future of our talent pipeline.

**This is a moment for stabilisation.**

**A moment to strengthen purpose and values.**

**To improve communication—inside and out.**

**To become an organisation people don't just belong to, but want to be part of.**

**We need to create a culture of belonging.**

**A shared advocacy for why architects matter.**

**And we need consistency.**

The success of the Presidency should not depend on one individual's agenda. It should be built on **continuity**—on seamless transitions that create lasting, positive impact.

**This is a four-year commitment.** Supporting the current President, stepping into the role with clarity and purpose, and ensuring a strong foundation for the next.

## Why vote for me?

Well, that choice is yours.

You should choose the person who aligns with what you want the RIBA to be—how it represents you, how it engages with you, and whether it truly listens.

# My promise is simple...

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**I will lead from the front and be your Ambassador, your Influencer and your Supporter.**

I stand for:

- connection over hierarchy
- community over institution
- continuity over short-term agendas

Because, this is a team effort!

My career has prepared me to do exactly that.

**And, I have done this role before, as National Chair of Women in Property (WiP)**

## Your Ambassador

My approach is grounded in connection and representation.

**I understand the RIBA.** Since 2018, I have served at regional and national levels—on Regional and National Council, Board Nominations Committee, Standards Committee, as Co-Chair of the NW EDI Committee and on the RIBAJ Advisory Panel.

I understand the critical relationships between Board, National and Local structures—and the importance of trust, challenge and collaboration in delivering shared purpose.

I continue to serve and have built some strong and mutually respectful relationships at all levels within the RIBA and with volunteers, across the UK and Internationally.

I have been a practising architect for over 30

years, working within practices large and small. Throughout my career, I have advocated for our profession—engaging with schools, universities, communities and industry.

I am a **Director at Buttress Architects**, a B Corps certified practice and an Employee Ownership Trust. I work from our Manchester studio and lead on community regeneration, social value and EDI - embedding our purpose of “architecture for an equitable tomorrow” into practice. Something I am very proud to represent.

I understand governance, strategy, and organisational change. And I believe in leadership that is both strong and compassionate.

Many of my colleagues at Buttress say I am a positive Ambassador for our purpose and values.

As **National Chair of WiP**, I led at scale.

- We grew membership by 13.5%.
- We strengthened governance.
- And most importantly, we connected people across regions around a shared vision.

I focused on improving relationships between the Board, national teams and regional branches, creating space for two-way conversations, mutual respect and collective purpose.

That vision continues today.

*“Chithra brought commitment, empathy and drive to her year as National Chair, characteristics that now make her an invaluable Board Director. She is one of those rare individuals who inspires and unites others but also enjoys the challenges that go hand in hand with running a business.”*

Rachel Bell – Board Chair - Women in Property Limited.

## Your Influencer

My strength lies in building relationships.

**I lead from the front:** growing partnerships, influencing conversations, and raising the profile of the organisations I represent. I am resilient, and I approach difficult conversations with honesty, sensitivity and respect.

I regularly speak at national events on architecture, community, social value and EDI issues, including UKREiiF, UK Construction Week, London Build amongst others.

I contribute to industry publications, including Property Week, Construction News, RIBA J, North West Insider and Place North West and am a judge for national industry awards programmes.

I have engaged with policymakers including the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Women and Work, for which WiP is a long-standing contributor.

And all this is balanced with relationships with other professional bodies, including the RICS, RTPI, CIOB, Women in Architecture... and many more.

But I don't claim to have all the answers.

**What I do is listen and speak with confidence:** drawing on advice and expertise to help shape a shared, collective voice.

## Your Supporter

Leadership is not defined by titles.

It is defined by how we treat people.

**I lead with a human approach of openness, respect and collaboration:** one that listens - creating space for others to contribute, to challenge, and to feel heard.

**I represent a local voice.** An international or regional voice can be an overlooked perspective. The members who don't always see themselves reflected in the institution that represents them.

Originally from London, I have spent nearly three decades working in the North West. I understand both the opportunities and the gaps between central and local.

Right now, communication can feel one-way and we are missing opportunities to truly engage, to listen, and to act together.

**I support community.** Through my longstanding role as a Strategic Ambassador (and now Director) for social enterprise PLACED I have supported them in their goals to raise the importance of authentic consultation and engagement and the value of placemaking and the built environment. As a company Buttress are proud to support their Academy which inspires the next generation to find their place in our industry.

**I support the individual.** Through long-standing mentoring, supporting emerging talent and diverse voices for organisations such as WiP and the Future of Greater Manchester.

**I support education.** Working closely with universities to bridge the gap between study and practice. I have been involved in the RIBA mentoring, attended employer fairs and supported students with career advice. Similarly, I have been actively involved in Women in Property's National Student Awards, both in the North West and at national level. This long-standing programme shines a light on the amazing female undergraduate talent in our universities and helps unite business and academia.

The future of our profession depends on the people coming into it.

## **My ambition is simple, but significant:**

I believe in people.

RIBA should not feel like something you look at.

It should feel like something you are part of.

## **A community. Not just an institution.**

### **My ambition is to make RIBA:**

- More connected
- More inclusive
- More representative
- To strengthen our collective voice.
- To bridge regions and nations.
- To amplify diverse perspectives.
- To ensure every member feels they belong.
- To bring students and communities into the conversation.

**Because when people feel seen and heard, the institution becomes stronger—and the profession moves forward with it.**

# Making it Happen

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This is not about promises. It is about commitment and consistency.

## Now

I have already started by listening.

Through years of regional involvement and recent conversations with members across the UK and internationally, I am hearing recurring themes—challenges that persist, and opportunities we are not yet fully realising.

The question is not **what** needs to change.

It is **how we agree on priorities**—and act on them together.

## Year One

### President (Elect) – Listen and Learn

Clear decision-making structures are essential:

- Build a strong relationship with Chris Williamson and support his goals ensuring continuity
- Understand progress against the 2034 Masterplan and other initiatives.
- Begin structured consultation across regions and internationally
- Identify shared priorities

And we must ask an important question:

Why are some architects choosing not to rejoin or join?

Because if we are to be a true community, we must understand—and respond.

**This is about alignment and understanding.**

## Years Two and Three

### President - Deliver

- Define clear, realistic priorities based on what you tell me
- Deliver a focused, achievable plan
- Continue consultation to ensure it is working
- Embed continuity into long-term strategy

**Not stop-start change—but sustained progress.**

## Year Four

### Past President - Sustain

- Coordinate with the incoming President and strengthen relationship.
- Ensure continuity of strategy and delivery
- Maintain momentum

**Because meaningful change does not happen in isolation.**

## And Beyond.....

My commitment does not end with the role.

I will continue to support the RIBA—as I have throughout my career.

**Final Thought: If the RIBA is to become a community that truly reflects and supports all of us.....**

**What do you expect from your President?**

**And are you ready to be part of shaping that future?**

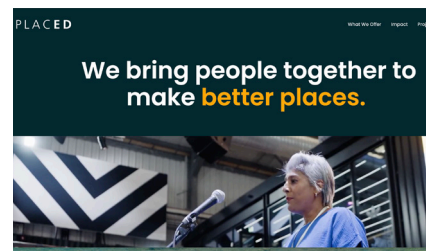


About me.....Best said by others

*“A wonderful friend of mine and a great supporter of the wider PLACED team. Chithra is a committed, active advocate for social value, inclusivity, and creating places that meet the needs of communities.*

*She’s probably also the most supportive and generous person I know - I think it is rare I mention her name to someone who hasn’t benefitted from meeting her”.*

Jo Harrop – Director- PLACED



# Thank you



Any questions, please contact  
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