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Wobble levels off as architects' confidence holds up

29 October 2015 | By David Rogers

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RIBA's workload barometer stabilises after successive drops

Architects' optimism about upcoming workloads stiffened in September after two successive months of falling confidence.

The overall Future Trends index remained at +21 after it halved in July to +22, nosediving from June's record of +44, and falling a further point the following month.

All nations and regions returned positive figures with Scotland the most optimistic while medium-sized firms – those with 11–50 staff – were the most optimistic among practices.

The private housing sector workload forecast in September rose slightly to +21 from +18 the previous month while the commercial sector workload forecast slipped a point to +13.

RIBA executive director members Adrian Dobson said: "Our responding practices continue to paint a picture of a healthy market for architectural services, with more opportunities to negotiate better fee levels and profit margins on projects beginning to rise."

But confidence in a recovery in public sector work remains shot with the sector forecast staying in negative territory with a score of -3.

The RIBA said 95% of responding practices expect their permanent staffing levels either to increase or to stay the same over the next few months.

Confidence among practices in the north was also strong with the survey highlighting growing recruitment in Manchester – Bennetts opened an office there earlier this month – with the wider north of England region starting to catch up with the optimism earlier this year of London and the south-east.

Earlier this month, the boss of the UK's only listed architect said the north had a better feel-good factor than those practices in the south.

"The regional issue is different," Aukett Swanke chief executive Nicholas Thompson said. "It came much later in the recovery process. With both residential and office markets in London seeing higher prices or rising rents, the economics of the new-build market outside of London became viable."



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