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Nickie Aiken | Grimshaw | Donald Insall Associates
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KEEPING LONDON OPEN

Dean Bové, head of marketing and communications at One Works, looks at what's needed to keep London design to the fore in a post-Brexit UK

London has established itself as one of the most prominent international design hubs in the world, attracting talent from every corner of the globe to work on projects at home and abroad. Walk into any large or medium-sized practice and you will meet professionals from all continents, united by common design goals and the chance to work on some of the best projects in the industry. There's no denying that the UK's EU membership has played a huge role in this, thanks to the free and easy movement of practitioners of the highest standard. Not only that, but Europe is currently the most important export market for our design services. We are wedded to our continental partners and we must maintain links to mainland Europe if we are to continue to thrive.

The capital is highly regarded for its openness and cultural diversity, creating a melting pot of talent and ingenuity. The 'scene' that has been created in London, across many sectors, is the product of a multitude of different attitudes and approaches to business and creative problems. Therefore, there is no single solution to the challenge of maintaining our global standing in a post-Brexit world. We will have to rethink how we operate on a day-to-day basis, accept some compromises and work together beyond political limitations. The industry must adapt but that is not going to be easy as architecture has a tendency to respond to change slower than any other profession.

One of the defining characteristics of London throughout its chequered

history is its resilience during difficult circumstances. Our industry must adopt this strength and build on our current international reputation while we are still EU members. We can shore up existing relationships and build new ones that can weather the storm of the approaching divorce. More recently, London has also become known for a growth in entrepreneurship, with more confidence in SMEs that can act more nimbly and more collaboratively than established corporate bodies. We're seeing a major change in the 21st century, where thinking big while acting small can deliver the best results. One Works is an Italian practice, but it has grown into a global design and consultancy firm by forging international relations and creating partnerships with local businesses on the ground.

Collaboration will be the key to London's success in the future, with opportunities likely to be found through foreign partners that care little for the machinations between governments. Finding new cooperative relationships that work for everyone will involve grit and energy, but luckily that's something the city was built upon. The London that is recognised around the world today is not made of buildings and infrastructure, it is the product of the people that live and work here. We must continue to attract the best talent and give them a good reason to stay here if we are to preserve our role as one of the leading cities of design in the world. ●

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