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2016 DBA Design Effectiveness Awards

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Deborah Dawton, Chief Executive

Opening speech

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and a very warm welcome to Tobacco Dock and to the 2016 DBA Design Effectiveness Awards ceremony. I'd like to extend a big thank you to our sponsors Denmaur, Package Design, Red Setter and UPM Raflatac for their valued support, to our judges for their commitment to the DBA and to all of you for your commitment to proving design's effectiveness. I'm delighted to see you here this evening to celebrate the very best of design in business.

The DBA put a stake in the ground some time ago to position design in its rightful place as a potent business asset. You all understand the power of design to produce significant returns in business. But how many of you are still frustrated that design's full potential, it's strategic potential, its potential to transform when brought to the strategy-setting table of a business, the boardroom...why isn't design's full potential being realised there?

Where does the responsibility for that failure lie? With the boards? With the business schools? With us, with the design industry?

Whether you're a design leader sitting within a business or an agency, we are all part of an industry that is designing a better future for business, for government... ultimately for ourselves, and the people around us. We know that the evidence for design is comprehensive and profound but until we can make the case in terms that are meaningful in the boardroom, until we communicate the strategic value of design in language that resonates with business, until as an industry, we speak with Design Authority, then the full depth and breath of impact that design can wield, will not be fully felt. The full return on design investment will not be felt by shareholders or citizens.

It is all of our responsibility to make that happen, not just those of you who are working at the coalface, a step or two from the boardroom. And that's why the DBA is leading this charge. It's time for a new stake in the ground. **And our purpose is to make sure that no business is void of the design authority it needs to make its**

decisions, just as it would be unthinkable not to have a finance director managing the cash.

You know, and I know, that design *is* competitive advantage. To support our thriving industry, the DBA works to engage design wherever it lives and breathes; we galvanise and empower all those who understand the strategic power of design.

Within the DBA membership we boast not only, some of the best creative businesses in the world, but also some of the most progressive global brands. And through that we're building a unique network of design leaders – individuals sitting in both agencies and corporations. Last year we attracted a record number of agency members and our corporate membership continues to go from strength to strength with Lego and Grohe joining only last week. Our members sit in design agencies and FTSE 100 businesses; what they have in common is a belief in excellence, of good working practices and a commitment to effective design. The quality of work we'll be celebrating tonight is testament to that.

In the thirty years since the DBA was formed, we've been working steadily and effectively to achieve change, and to champion the value of design. We now have a confident, mature and thriving design sector. Figures recently released by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport put the UK design sector as the second largest in the world after the US. And the DBA is now the biggest representative body for design in the UK. The creative industries are growing at almost twice the rate of the wider UK economy and within the creative industries design is experiencing the fastest growth.

In industry, the businesses leading the way right now are businesses that all have design running through their veins. It's their life-blood. It's in their DNA. But it's not there by chance. It's because their boards understand the value of design – it's considered a critical part of the decision-making structure within the business.

Added at the right time, and allowed to prove itself, **design is the yeast in the business mix – quite often a small, timely, critical ingredient to success.** These companies know that the closer design gets to the heart of business, the broader and deeper the impact can be. They know that in this age, where there's more choice, more competition, more awareness, design creates differentiation, inspires

customers, drives advocacy, develops loyalty and sustains value. They too know that design is competitive advantage.

It's time for us to take these arguments for design to all businesses and it's time for us to do it together, as one industry, with design authority.

This is what you can expect to see at the very forefront of the DBA's activities in the coming months and years. We'll be providing the framework and support for change. We'll be spearheading the assault to empower you to shape the future of design in industry, and through the myriad of organisations that support government in the delivery of all the services we interact with as citizens.

Dare to imagine right now the type of discussion you'll enjoy in the boardrooms of the businesses you breathe this message into.

This is why in the last year we ramped up communications with members. I've never done so much listening... to actively seek your views and to better understand and respond to the challenges you are facing. It's why we are undertaking a strategic review of the DBA with the help of our board of directors, to best position the DBA to lead this charge. And it's why we joined the Creative Industries Federation, and why I sit on their Advisory Council, so that our members' views are central to an organisation that brings the creative industries together as a united force before Government.

It is also why the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards are so fundamentally important. The Awards, and the incredible range and quality of winning work that we are here to celebrate tonight, are the foundations on which we can build the arguments for design. They shine a light on what is possible when the best business brains and the best design brains come together in true partnership.

To talk about your work, simply as "packaging" or "interiors" is to reduce the impact of what you have achieved and positions design in a way that doesn't make sense to business, it remains an operational tactic. If we're here to celebrate the impact of design, then it's time we all talked about design in language that resonates with business. So this year, we've identified five overriding themes running through your work; five tangible outcomes of effective design that illustrate and champion the

depth and breadth of the impact that design can wield on business, government and society.

It's your work, these case studies, your abilities, and your impact in business and society that develops the authority of **our** argument. It is our **collective** power that will drive home the message that design **is** competitive advantage. And we will deliver that message with authority.

So enjoy celebrating your achievements this evening, enjoy meeting your fellow awardees, networking with people who are on the same page as you because tomorrow we launch the assault on those that aren't here tonight! Thank you.