

4. Please indicate which category best describes your organisation

(Tick one only)

Executive Agencies and NDPBs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other statutory organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registered Social Landlord	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative body for private sector organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative body for third sector/equality organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative body for community organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative body for professionals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Third sector/equality organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state...	<input type="checkbox"/>

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Are the vision and objectives as set out in sections 19 and 20 appropriate for Scotland's Sustainable Housing Strategy? Please answer Yes or No and provide fuller explanation if you wish.

Yes No

Yes, the Council welcomes the strategy, although it may be prudent to review the 2016 target for ensuring no one is in fuel poverty. Measures in the social rented sector to achieve the SHQS by 2015, will have a significant and beneficial mitigating effect on fuel poverty, however, as identified within the Strategy, there is much more that needs to be done across all tenures. The proposed step change in the provision of energy efficient homes to 2030, including a national retrofit programme will continue to affect the rate at which fuel poverty is alleviated as well as reduce carbon emissions.

As the other two main facets of fuel poverty (cost and income) are largely outwith the control of authorities, there is a need for any national strategy and appropriate regulation to try to influence energy companies approach to pricing and tariffs and any related advice they provide to customers, including information given as part of door step fuel switching. More specifically, for example, in fuel poor households, the paradox is that those consumers end up paying a premium because they do not/ cannot use direct debit or are on expensive pre – paid meter tariffs.

2. What do you think are the main barriers that prevent home owners and landlords from installing energy efficiency measures?

There are a range of potential barriers to installation of energy efficiency measures. For example, some there may be technical difficulties with particular house types; additional ancillary costs e.g. scaffolding blocks for cavity wall insulation, asbestos surveys in lofts. In the current economic climate, many owners / private landlords will be reluctant to upgrade and invest unless they have to – so some expenditure will only arise if replacement work is needed.

Moreover where it is a common dwelling, many owners will be reluctant to pay for measures that don't appear to directly benefit themselves. Often the upfront cost versus the payback period is perceived to be too long, and many people now believe that the savings promised will be eaten up by future price rises, negating the benefit.

There may be practical issues which prevent take up and our experience would point to access issues to private rented tenants / owners homes, the extent of potential disruption, assistance in clearing loft spaces and in many cases considerable time spent convincing landlords / owners of benefits. There are also potentially some concerns about the reliability, effectiveness and cost of newer / renewable technology which can preclude take up.

3. Please explain any practical solutions and/or incentives to overcome any barriers you have identified.

We have worked closely with partners to help promote uptake and related benefits – this can and has been relatively intensive in terms of staff /contractor time. Whilst UHIS provided funds to support scaffolding of blocks, the council has provided additional capital resources to carry out asbestos surveys in loft spaces prior to the installation of loft insulation.

For some of the practical issues described earlier, we have dedicated staff time and resources to provide advice and practical help to landlords / owners on energy usage and benefits and to assist clearing attic spaces prior to installation work.

4. Given Scotland's diverse range of housing, what support is needed to enable people to get energy efficiency measures installed?

There are a number of key challenges including house type, geographical location, age of stock etc and on this basis, it is recognised, that the related cost of measures will vary accordingly. The harder and more costly to treat homes and areas will obviously require more effort to achieve results. The support has to include a clear articulation and understanding of what is needed (standards) and an incentive scheme that enables owners/landlords to achieve them. The obligation to do something along with a package of financial measures to support achieving these standards (however funded) has to assist in making sure that the 'compelling' case referred to at 1.16 is achievable.

In some cases, changes to, for example planning laws may be required to permit retro fitting external wall insulation or renewable technologies such as PV panels.

5. (a) What specific issues need to be addressed in respect of improving energy efficiency in rural areas, particularly more remote or island areas?

The key obstacles relate primarily to fuel type – although in the longer term, unless gas supplies and costs can be assured, this may not be the answer to achieving lower costs and greater energy efficiency on a national scale. Where practical and feasible, extension of the gas grid to rural areas would assist, however it is more likely that promotion of renewable technologies e.g. wind turbines, PV panels, ground source, biomass and district heating schemes will provide a more effective solution alongside very high insulation standards.

This in turn, will only work effectively if the capital and running costs can be reduced from the currently high levels and it is can demonstrably produced tangible benefits for consumers.

5. (b) How should these be addressed?

There needs to be a clarity of what needs to be done in each area;

coordination of approach and available resources and as part of the strategy a simple and consistent message about these, as well as what expectations are on owners, landlords and tenants as users of energy. As part of this, the role of energy companies and their approach to pricing and tariffs and any related advice they provide to customers may require appropriate regulation to ensure everyone is pulling in the same direction. To influence change, encouraging the independent gas transporter market to install mains where feasible by allowing them to apply 'fuel poor vouchers' to discount the cost of installing gas mains.

6. Taking into account the models and funding sources outlined in section 1.20-1.37, what role might local authorities and other agencies play in bringing about a step change in retrofitting Scotland's housing?

The coordination of action / funding availability across a local authority area is vital – other wise there is a risk that progress will be disjointed and ad-hoc. This would effectively mean an enabling role for councils in the context of an appropriate Green deal delivery mechanism and funding regime based on an agreed formula.

7. What role should the Scottish Government play in a National Retrofit Programme?

The strategy rightly sets ambitions for achieving significant energy and carbon reduction gains – however it needs to ensure that there are long term commitments to support the delivery of the aims of the strategy or it will fail. Overcoming obstacles such as non participation in programmes, ensuring adequate and targeted funding to incentivise progress and ensuring that all parties including energy companies, individuals and organisations are pulling in the same direction. As part of this, public education and long term funding commitments to the National Retrofit Programme are essential. With the previously successful UHIS schemes, local authorities became enablers and could make best use of existing resources and structures to implement the programme.

8. What role could the devolution of additional powers play in achieving more retrofit?

The main role of devolved powers would be to ensure that the FIT and RHI which are reserved to the UK Government could be revised / altered to suit the promotion of greater uptake of micro generation in a Scottish context. The other reserved matter is VAT on Improvement work which could, if varied, stimulate considerable investment on necessary works in the private sector.

9. What further action is needed to achieve the scale of change required to existing homes?

It might be that an incentive based approach has to be mirrored with an array of 'sticks' through possible legislation which compels action by landlords and owners to meet and achieve certain standards through energy efficiency measures. In relation to home owners, the single sellers' survey could continue to effect a cultural shift in terms of how far a home meets or doesn't meet certain standards and what measures – (possibly reflected in the price) would have to be taken to achieve these.

10. How can we make sure a National Retrofit Programme maximises benefits to all consumers (for example, older people, those from ethnic minorities, those with long term illness or disability)?

Through the fair and equitable operation of the Retrofit Programme. It should be delivered to ensure that it maximises the benefits to all groups by offering support and assistance, advice and practical help in the delivery of measures to homes. Specific requirements for particular needs groups can be taken into account as part of any programmed works.

11. (a) Should the Scottish Government consider whether a single mandatory condition standard (beyond the tolerable standard) should apply to all properties, irrespective of tenure?

Yes No

11. (b) If so, how would that be enforced?

In principle yes, a standard for the private sector (which covers around 70% of tenure) which is the same as applies to social housing would seem sensible. However in practice, this would be difficult to enforce and there are current limitations in the SHQS in terms of how far beyond the standard stock needs to be improved to meet the new requirements. In addition, the differentiation in standards by stock type proposed for the social housing energy standard would need to be mirrored in the private sector. Whilst it is recognised that good basic repair and house condition are important, the main focus of this strategy should be on defining the standards in relation to energy efficiency as set out in 2.52. Enforcement across all tenures would place potential additional burdens on local authority legal, private sector, environmental health and building control services – it is essential that these are adequately resourced and that there is sufficient capacity to do so.

There would need to be more debate around timing of the introduction of any standards and consideration given to the full extent of implementation

12. (a) In box 6 we identify a checklist for maintaining a quality home. Do you agree with our proposed hierarchy of needs?

Yes No

12. (b) If you think anything is missing or in the wrong place please explain your views.

In principle it is useful to have a checklist. However, this would not present practical guidance or assistance to owners as it stands. In relation to aspects of maintenance a schedule of what, when and how would be useful rather than saying make sure you complete basic maintenance. In addition, some of these are simply about practical lifestyle tips/ advice, rather than a hierarchy of maintenance for a property – for example, making sure its properly ventilated is a vastly different thing than retrofitting insulation.

As part of the ongoing education of owners, a more helpful guide therefore might be provided which enables owners to self assess/MOT against all of the key elements / criteria and allow essential maintenance to be carried out alongside appropriate tips for doing so. Add in that essential maintenance should be carried out prior to any cosmetic or non essential works.

One of the problems that many owners experience is not that they pay for less skilled trades people, but that they have concern about trust worthy companies and getting good impartial information of the potential cost of works prior to embarking on it.

13. Should local authorities be able to require that owners improve their properties in the same way they can require that they repair them? For example, could poor energy efficiency be a trigger for a work notice? Please answer Yes or No and provide further explanation if you wish, for example on how this might work.

Yes No

Again yes in principle, however improvements in mixed tenure blocks are often prevented on the basis that owners are unable to afford works – serving a notice might resolve the work being carried out, but unless there is financial support up front, authorities would be carrying potentially significant debt until any repayment charges could be recovered.

14. Should local authorities have a power to enforce decisions taken by owners under the title deeds, tenement management scheme or by unanimity? For example, should they have explicit powers to pay missing shares of owners who are not paying for communal repair work, in the same way they can for agreed maintenance work? Please answer Yes or No and provide further explanation, if you wish.

Yes No

Whilst it would be useful to have these powers, as described above, there will be a limit on the financial and resource capacity of authorities to carry significant levels of debt in respect of owners' shares.

15. Should local authorities be able to automatically issue maintenance orders on any property which has had a work notice? Please provide further explanation if you wish.

Yes No

16. Should the process for using maintenance orders be streamlined, and if so, how? Please answer Yes or No and provide further explanation, if you wish.

Yes No

Yes, It would be helpful if the process was able to be made quicker and easier.

17. Should local authorities be able to: a. issue work notices on housing affecting the amenity, and b. require work such as to improve safety and security on properties which are out with a Housing Renewal area? Please answer Yes or No and provide further explanation if you wish.

Yes No

As above, the extension of powers would be helpful; however as noted above, there will be a limit on authorities' financial and resource capacity to use these.

18. Should local authorities be able to issue repayment charges for work done on commercial properties, in the same way they can for residential premises? Please answer Yes or No and provide further explanation below, if you wish.

Yes No

Yes since these can be linked to housing condition e.g. flats above shops.

19. What action, if any, do you think the Government should take to make it easier to dismiss and replace property factors?

It is important that the new Property Factors Act is allowed to time to become established and that related guidance follows. However, factors should only be dismissed if the intent is to replace. It is important that residents obtain value for money from good property factors, however, if there becomes a focus on ease of dismissal, perhaps because owners don't like a particular maintenance regime, it could become even harder for common repairs to be carried out.

20. What action can be taken to raise the importance placed by owners and tenants on the energy efficiency of their properties?

This has to be linked to an approach which ensures long term educational focus on the importance of energy efficiency, effects a culture shift. Some practical steps relate to heightened publicity and indeed already most energy companies promote and raise awareness particularly in relation to cost savings which can be made when energy consumption is reduced.

At the time there is a change of home, the EPC can act as a catalyst for action.

21. Should the Scottish Government introduce minimum energy efficiency standards for private sector housing?

Yes, as noted earlier in response to Q11, the same minimum energy standards should apply to the Private Sector as to social housing although there will be significant issues over enforcement. If the private sector is not governed by minimum standards, it is unlikely that national carbon reduction targets will be met.

22. How could we amend EPCs to make them a more useful tool for influencing behaviour change to improve energy efficiency?

EPCs need to be easily understood by residents therefore it is important that they are produced in an easy to read and understand format and are explained to people when issued. However EPCs are fixed at a point in time and whilst they may influence some action and activity to improve energy efficiency, they won't necessarily address ongoing action. Moreover for tenants whether in the private or social rented sector, it is up to landlords to take action, so they may have little effect.

Smart metering which enables continual monitoring of energy use and begins to allow people to understand the cost of using appliances is key future tool for long term change.

23. Are there other key principles that we ought to consider when looking at the possible introduction of regulations?

Clear guidance to be given to local authorities and other stake holders on how and when the regulations will be brought in and the circumstances in which they will apply. The other aspect of regulations that need to be considered is how practical and enforceable they are including appropriate lead in times and resourcing if required. Any linkages and overlaps with other regulations should also be covered to ensure that they work effectively.

24. How could regulation be used to support the uptake of incentives?

Part of any regulation is effectively about the sanctions which are required in the event that new energy efficiency standards on private sector including sign posting and advice on where funding may be available.

25. In section 2.68 we identify design options for the standard. Do you have any views on the options set out in that report? Are there other options that we should be considering?

These options seem appropriate.

26. Do you agree that any regulations for private sector housing ought to reflect the energy efficiency capacity of the property and/or location, as is proposed for the social sector?

Yes No

Agree that regulation in the private sector should mirror that which is proposed for the public sector.

27. If you agree with Q26, should houses of the same type in the social and private sectors be expected to meet the same standard?

Yes No

Yes, there should be no variance in the minimum standard to be achieved for the same type of property in both private and public sectors.

28. Are there other specific issues we need to consider in introducing regulation on the energy efficiency of the home for particular groups of people, for example older people, those with disabilities, people from minority ethnic communities?

Making the regulations, clear, concise and easily understood for all sections of society including the incentives and any related enforcement that would apply

29. Should we consider additional trigger points to point of sale or rental? If so, what?

Yes No

Yes, trigger points could be linked to applications for planning permission of building warrant to make energy efficiency measures a condition of the approval for other works.

30. Should rollout of any regulation across the owner occupied and PRS sectors be phased or all at once? If you think that rollout should be phased how do you think this should be done?

Yes No

Phased by varying standards over time – would seem to be a practical way of ensuring standards are raised in a stepped way – with the objective of meeting the minimum, energy standards by a certain date and raised to a higher standard by a later date.

31. What other issues around enforcement do we need to think about when considering how different approaches to regulation might work?

Fines may not be appropriate if cost of the measures is a barrier to owners carrying out the works. Sanctions could include a restriction on selling or

renting the property until the necessary measures are complete.

32. In sections 2.76-2.79 we suggest that one way of regulating would be to issue sanctions.

(a) Do you think that sanctions on owners should be used to enforce regulations?

Yes No

(b) Should owners be able to pass the sanction or obligation on to buyers?

Yes No

No, the obligation should be executed before the sale.

33. The Scottish Government does not intend to regulate before 2015. The working group will consider what options for timing of any regulation might be appropriate, but, given all the points set out in sections 2.80-2.81, from when do you think it might be appropriate to apply regulations?

Since the private sector do not have to comply with the SHQS by 2015 enforcement should be in place by the next milestone of 2020 to meet the same energy efficiency standards as social housing by this date.

34. (a) In Section 3.4 we describe the range of legislative and policy levers that we believe are available to help us transform the financial market such that it values warm, high quality, low carbon homes. Do you agree that this is the full range of levers?

Yes No

34. (b) Can you suggest any other ways to help transform the market for more energy efficient, sustainable homes?

Suggest a reduction in the Council tax for energy efficient properties.

35. What changes would be required to current survey and lending practice to enable mortgage lenders to take account of the income from new technology or savings on energy bills?

Increase in the importance of the EPC and RdSAP rating. In a free market economy only the market will decide if energy efficient homes will attract a higher re-sale value.

36. Section 3.15 lists a range of challenges that may prevent the benefits of a more sustainable, energy efficient home being fully recognised in its value. What further challenges, if any, need to be addressed?

An apathy of the public to recognise the significance of energy efficient measures being installed in properties. These measures need to be "talked-up" by prospective sellers and estate agents to raise awareness.

37. (a) Sections 3.16-3.22 set out the action that Scottish Government is currently developing to encourage greater recognition of the value of sustainable homes. Do you agree that this action is appropriate?

Yes No

37. (b) What further action is needed to influence consumers and the market?

Nation-wide advertising campaigns to raise public awareness.

38. What steps can we take to ensure that we design and develop sustainable neighbourhoods?

Could this not be done through changes to the planning legislation?

39. Section 4.10 sets out the main challenges to address in taking forward our aim of new build transformation. What further challenges, if any, need to be addressed?

Developments and innovation will be led by market forces. Increased costs of homes incorporating new technologies will be a disincentive.

40. What action is needed to increase the capacity for developing and bringing to market innovative methods of construction?

Tax incentives could be introduced to encourage innovation.
Replicable

41. What further changes to the operation of the Government's affordable housing supply programme would help to enable it to champion greener construction methods and technologies in the medium term?

Increase subsidy to incentivise

42. What further action is needed to influence the construction industry to make greater use of innovative methods to deliver more greener new homes?

The current housing market makes it particularly difficult for the sector – costs of meeting the proposed standards

43. (a) Has Chapter 5 of this consultation identified the key challenges to ensuring Scottish companies have the skills to take advantage of the opportunities expected to be on offer?

Yes No

43. (b) If not, What other challenges are there?

44. What further action is needed to ensure there is appropriate investment in skills and training to meet these opportunities?

45. How can the construction industry be made more aware of the potential funding and support for skills and training development opportunities and engage effectively with those providing training to ensure that it meets their current and future needs?

46. How do we ensure that skills and training opportunities are provided on an equitable basis to all groups in society?

The promotion of career direction advice and the related training and skills development requirements for areas of employment is part of the careers advice process in schools and as people make choices about their future. In this context, working with the sector/ industry, Skills Development Scotland and schools, there is scope to promotion opportunities to address any gender or other imbalance.

47. Apart from training and skills opportunities are there any other issues that should be addressed to make employment in construction and other industries becomes more representative?

48. Please describe any specific difficulties relating to skills and training that apply to those in remote and island areas and your view on how these may be addressed.

N/A