

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Section 1

Q1) Do you think the Home Report is meeting its original objectives?

Yes No

Q1a) If yes, please explain why

Although not enough required in terms of :

Feedback on valuations

Feedback on repairs/condition

New Homes

Level, appropriateness and quality of maintenance and repairs

Q1b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q2) Are the original Home Report objectives still appropriate?

Yes No

Q2a) If yes, please explain why

If a single valuation, then feedback on valuation vs sale price achieved should be obtained – an imperfect analogy would be to a surgeon's mortality statistics. There should be a more direct link to the National House Condition Survey. In a perfect world there would be only one register, perhaps held and operated by the Planning Authority.

Q2b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q3) Should the Home Report play a more central role in promoting energy efficiency and property condition improvements among home owners?

Yes No

Q3a) If yes, please explain why

There should be a single point of contact for the Home Report information.

It should include information about planned and projected performance figures, and those actually achieved.

Knowledge of house condition is very important, as are the levels of investment in maintenance required and the appropriateness of repairs.

Q3b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q4) Should a national register of Home Reports be established?

Yes No

Q4a) If yes, please explain why including who should have responsibility for development and maintenance

N/A

Q4b) If no, please explain why

The Register should be held by Planning Authorities, and incorporate material including consents (planning, listed building, and building warrant, for instance) on a one-stop basis: like property clearance certificates. The building owner should be responsible for development and maintenance. Where surveys are carried out, they should be reported to the Planning Authority. Funding 'improvement grants' should be available for the improvement of housing stock which does not meet the standards set at any one time. Home Reports should be lodged with the Planning Authority and be in the public domain. There is no obvious reason why a property of £100000 value would necessarily require a cheaper report than a £200000 one. Scale, condition, complexity and location, as well as the costs of the surveyor, will all be relevant factors.

Section 2

Q5) Do you think the upfront cost of Home Reports is preventing potential sellers from putting their property onto the market?

Yes No

Q5a) If yes, please provide details.

N/A

Q6) Are you aware of any schemes available (e.g. deferred payment) to help potential sellers to pay for home reports?

Yes No although this not our area of expertise.

Q6a) If yes, please provide details

N/A

Q7) Are there any issues with the majority of Home Reports being commissioned through selling agents?

Yes No

Q7a) If yes, please explain why

There could be, or could be seen to be. Transparency is required. The contents of the HR and its cost to the seller should be in the public domain. There should be feedback on the relationship between valuation and sale price achieved: cumulative information on this should be kept available by the RICS or, failing that, the Planning Authorities.

Q7b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q8) Should other organisations be allowed to carry out the Single Survey (including valuation) and/or the Energy Report?

Yes No

Q8a) If yes, what other organisations and why

Other building professional bodies should be able to provide a service of HRs: with feedback on results it should be clear if the process is competitive.

Q8b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q9) In your experience is the requirement for a home report before marketing a property leading to delays in properties coming onto the market?

Yes No

Q9b) If no, please outline the implications of this.

A HR should be a prerequisite to the sale of a house, and therefore should not delay the sale. The fact that it exists should speed up any sale.

Q10) Are home reports a useful marketing tool for sellers?

Yes No

Q10a) If yes, please explain why

Anything which pulls together accurate information about a property, its location and performance, will be useful. They should also include digital photographic records – a minimum of all elevations and general views of associated ground(s) and structures. All of this information should be archived accessibly by the Planning Authority.

Q10b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q11) Is the 12 week deadline for marketing a property after completion of a home report appropriate and reasonable?

Yes No

Q11a) If yes, please explain why

There should be a 12 week maximum between lodging a HR with a public body.

Q11b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q12) Is the 28 day provision for removing a property from the market without requiring a new home report appropriate and reasonable?

Yes No

Q12a) If yes, please explain why

We recognise the issue of taking the property off the market. A 28 days maximum period is fine, but not for an unlimited period: it is suggested that an absolute maximum for HR time expiry should be three or at most five years

Q12b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q13) Are there any issues with potential buyers accessing home reports?

Yes No

Q13a) If yes, please provide an overview and outline the implications of this

HRs should be in the public domain and therefore freely available. The seller should not be in a position to deny access to such a report – the seller can decide to whom to sell or not to sell whether or not the report is in the public arena. Similarly, whether the HR is in the public arena should not affect the likelihood of surveyor liability/negligence. A good HR will be a positive advertisement for the HR surveyor's professional skills.

Q14) Is this the most appropriate way to enforce home report legislation?

Yes No

Q14a) If no, please explain why and how this could be improved

Trading Standards can check if the HR is prepared or available, but are not capable of qualitative judgements on adequacy or the provision of further advice to sellers or potential buyers. The Planning Authority should be given this function, and maintenance of a suite of information including planning history will be helpful to sellers and purchasers alike.

Q15) What are your views on mortgage lenders' acceptance of home report valuations?

Mortgage lenders would be mad to accept such figures at face value, but with feedback on valuation performance by surveyors, and public supervision of HRs, could at least be more confident that these are professional judgements which, with others, can be relied upon.

Q16) Are the redress options available to buyers reasonable and appropriate?

Yes No

Q16a) If no, please explain why and how these could be improved

Any surveyors of whichever building profession should be required to carry Professional Indemnity insurance to make any redress required deliverable. The Property Questionnaire should also be signed off by the building professional who completes the earlier components. Inaccurate or incomplete elements of the PQ should also open the door to legal redress. Some of the PQ components will therefore require to be redrafted or added to, at best.

Q17) Do these exceptions need to be amended?

Yes No

Q17a) If yes, please explain what amendments are required and why

A more comprehensive coverage of properties should be sought, and so exceptions minimised. It is difficult to see, from the evidence provided in the consultation paper, any reason to support the exceptions given

Section 3

Q18) Does the single survey element of the home report provide an appropriate and useful level of information?

Yes No

Q18a) If no, please explain why and what information should be removed and/or added

It would seem desirable that the various survey aspects and associated elements converge, so that there is a 'Common Scottish Survey' to be used which incorporates building condition, value, accessibility, energy, and so on.

Q19) Should the repairs categories in the single survey be amended to make them consistent with the categories used in the Scottish House Conditions Survey?

Yes No

Q19a) If yes, please explain why

Any 'CSS' should be of a similar structure to the SHCS in the first instance. Given the additional aspect of 'disrepair to critical elements' it is suggested that a 4-stage classification be developed in the longer term, adding the Single Survey's Category 1 to the three aspects of the SHCS.

Q19b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q20) Is the valuation element of the single survey a useful element of the home report? Yes No

Q20a) If yes, please explain why

To ensure that it continues to be useful, a comparison should be maintained between the valuation and the eventual sale price.

Q20b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q21) Is the information provided in the energy report appropriate and useful?

Yes No

Q21a) If yes, please explain why

Again, energy measurements are useful and, in particular, knowing the outcome of actual over predicted performance should be addressed. In addition to the 'ordinary' energy requirements it would be appropriate to assess the passive and locational components (including sustainable transport) aspects here.

Q21b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q22) Is the information provided in the property questionnaire appropriate and useful? Yes No

Q22a) If yes, please explain why

Yes, but only as far as it goes. A number of new items, and modifications to items already present, should be added to the PQ. It should address all of the matters which are normally the prerogative of the planning authority in the obtaining of property clearances. To give but a single example, the PQ does not refer to World Heritage Sites, Battlefields, Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes sites, nor to landscape designations including National Parks, National Scenic Areas, nor Sites of Special Scientific Interest. IHBC Scotland would be happy to suggest amendments to the Property Questionnaire.

As to the Single Survey, here and elsewhere attention should be drawn to the importance of appropriate repairs, matching in materials and details, without which the house may deteriorate and its value drop. This is vitally important where such changes may affect the character and where, for example, Listed Building Consent might be required, but is no less so where 'merely' decent traditional buildings are concerned, or where particular maintenance techniques may be necessary in response to local conditions or a particularly unusual build. It may also be that, for the long-term good of the building, previous thoughtless or inappropriate repairs will require to be unpicked in order to set the house on a path of righteous reliability once more.

Q22b) If no, please explain why

N/A

Q23) Should an additional question on land maintenance fees be added to the Property Questionnaire?

Yes No

Q23a) If yes, please explain why

Maintenance and/or adoption by others should certainly be addressed (and see comments at 22 above).

Q23b) If no, please explain why

N/A