

Cross-Party Group on Housing

17 May 2023, 18:00-19:30

Minute

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP – Convener
Ariane Burgess MSP – Deputy Convener
Sarah Boyack MSP

Invited guests

Joseph Kilroy, Chartered Institute of Building
Fabrice Leveque, WWF

Non-MSP Group Members

Gareth James, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
Ailish McCafferty, Scottish Parliament
Alastair Hackland, Hackland + Dore Architects
Alice Earley, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
Amrou Motawa, Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative
Andrea Finkel-Gates, Scotland's Housing Network
Anna Gardiner, Scottish Land & Estates
Carolyn Johnstone, Salvation Army
Claire Cassidy, Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative
Clare Dunlop, Brodies LLP
Colette McDiarmid, MND Scotland
Corrie Innes, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Daryl McIntosh, SHARE
David Aitchison, Shelter Scotland
David Petrie, Age Scotland
David Somervell, Cohousing Scotland
Derek Grubb, DX2 Consultancy
Eugene Mullan, Smith Scott Mullan Associates
Gavin Dewar, Scottish Parliament
Gillian Campbell, Existing Homes Alliance
Helen Murdoch, The Salvation Army
Hew Edgar, Registers of Scotland
Janice Russell, McTaggart Construction Limited
Jocelyne Fleming, Chartered Institute of Building
John Boyle, Rettie & Co
Josh Hill, Scottish Parliament

Karen Swift, Turning Point Scotland
Keith Baker, BEAM Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University / Common Weal
Ken Wilkie, Arcadis
Lisa Innes, GCIL
Martin Robertson, EMA Architecture + Design
Neil Clapperton, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association
Nicholas Harrington, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
Pedro Cameron, Housing Options Scotland
Peter Barrett, Perth and Kinross Council
Rhiannon Sims, Crisis
Robert Toomey, RICS
Ryan Barclay, Housing Options Scotland
Shelley Hutton, Places for People Scotland
Sherina Peek, ALACHO
Stephen Connor, Tenants Information Service (TIS)
Steven Tolson, RICS Scotland
Supitha Dematagoda, Homes for Scotland

Apologies

Ken Gibb, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
Archie Rintoul, Independent
Emma Doyle, Public Health Scotland
Alice Simpson, Homes for Good
Mike Heffron, Under One Roof Scotland
Craig Sanderson, Edinburgh Poverty Commission
Alastair Cameron, Rural Housing Scotland
Norrie MacPhail, Cohousing Scotland
Norah Fletcher, HSCP

Agenda item 1: Welcome

Graham Simpson MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by Stephen Conner and seconded by Colette McDiarmid.

There were no applications for membership from non-MSP individuals or organisations. Ben Macpherson MSP joined.

Agenda item 3: Levelling the playing field, not Scotland's built environment: a case for retrofit over demolition?

Jocelyne Fleming and Jospeh Kilroy from the Chartered Institute of Building gave a presentation on the case for retrofit over demolition in Scotland. The presentation was

a summary of research undertaken by CIOB, which can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.ciob.org/industry/policy-research/levelling-playing-field>

Jocelyne and Joseph suggested that the tax system could be used as a powerful financial lever for improving the quality, sustainability and energy efficiency of the built environment.

They noted that under the current UK tax structure, 20% VAT is applied on most repair and maintenance. Most demolition and new build projects are not charged VAT at all. Therefore, the UK's current VAT structure financially incentivises demolition and rebuild over renovation and retrofit projects.

They pointed to evidence that options for retrofit may perform better in carbon terms than in new build options, and that research suggests that if VAT on the sector was reduced from 20% to 5%, it could generate £80-400 million in Scottish GVA and support between 1,500 and 7,500 full-time equivalent jobs in Scotland.

Their recommendations to Scottish Government include introducing a demolition levy, undertaking pre-demolition assessments to ascertain whether or not retrofit is possible, and undertaking waste audits given that more than half of the UK's construction and development waste goes directly to landfill.

Action: Graham to write to the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights, Partick Harvie MSP, in support of the CIOB's call for the Scottish Government to undertake a feasibility study regarding the implementation of a demolitions levy.

Action: Graham to write to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Victoria Atkins MP, in support of the CIOB's call to reform VAT on repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) works.

Agenda item 4: Making retrofit work: customer journeys to net zero homes

Fabrice Leveque from WWF gave a presentation on the next steps for zero carbon heat in Scotland. The presentation drew on research undertaken by WWF, which can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/our-reports/wwf-affordable-warmth-scotland>

Fabrice noted that there has been too little retrofit activity (evidence suggests actual climate emissions from existing homes have not remained static since 2014) and that regulation (i.e. minimum standards of energy efficiency, phasing out of fossil fuel boilers, etc.) is key to unlocking scale.

Fabrice noted that heat pumps are the most cost effective solution to bring homes up to (equivalent of) EPC 'C' rating when comparing upfront, running and maintenance costs over 15 years.

It was suggested that most houses could achieve lower energy bills by fitting more energy efficiency measures and/or larger radiators, solar panels, etc.

Their study found that costs start at £4,500 (after Scottish Government grant applied) and that costs are likely to fall in the future.

Recommendations included: more ambition needed to meet climate targets; earlier deadlines for action on e.g., phasing out gas boilers; and, continued grant support for all households alongside regulation.

Gillian Campbell from The Existing Homes Alliance then gave a presentation on creating successful customer journeys to net zero owner occupied homes. The presentation drew on research by the EHA, which can be accessed via the link below:

<https://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/news/customer-journeys-to-net-zero-homes/>

The EHA identify three main challenges: 1) engagement, advice and support; 2) finance; and 3) multi-ownership buildings.

They suggest that successful “customer journeys” include four key stages: 1) raising awareness (e.g., through national and local campaigns); 2) finding out more and taking action (e.g. via one-stop shops, digital platforms, etc.); 3) proceeding with insulation work (e.g. via local and cooperative approaches, etc.); and 4) accessing post-installation support (i.e. to use new systems, or access redress).

Agenda item 5: AOCB

It was noted that the new Housing Minister, Paul McLennan MSP, has expressed an interest in attending the next meeting.

Action: Josh Hill to invite Minister to next meeting.

Graham expressed an interest in visiting the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative to learn more about the tenure model.

Action: Gareth James to liaise with ESH Co-op to arrange a visit.

Members are invited to submit suggestions for future agenda items.

Agenda item 6: Next meeting

TBC – Graham Simpson MSP will liaise with the secretariat and deputy convener to plan future meetings and topics.