



RTPI Scotland

mediation of space · making of place

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23 February 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

Call for evidence on Building Regulations in Scotland

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:

- Support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public;
- Maintain the professional standards of our members;
- Support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- Maintain high standards of planning education;
- Develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- Support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland;
- Improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

RTPI Scotland welcomes this opportunity to submit written evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee regarding its scrutiny of building regulations in Scotland.

Our comments relate to the first question on which views are sought: 'Should verification of building standards be extended to organisations other than local authorities?'. The acute resource pressures currently being felt by local authorities are well documented. RTPI Scotland understands that as well as supporting calls for proper resourcing, steps need to be taken to make resourcing 'smarter'. This can include more and better use of technology and skills sharing. It also includes however thinking about how procedure can be simplified so that the workload of local government services is reduced. In this vein there have been discussions for some time about seeking to merge consents for various related pre-development procedures for which local government has responsibility. This would mean that only one consent need be obtained for, for example, planning permission, building regulations, and roads development.

RTPI Scotland understands that Scottish Government is in ongoing conversations with relevant stakeholders, including Heads of Planning Scotland, about how this could be taken forward.

Extending powers to verify building standards to bodies other than local authorities could have the unintended consequence of making it much harder, if not impossible, to make such a change

to procedures. This could represent a missed opportunity to streamline how local government discharges its responsibilities.

I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to kate.houghton@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Houghton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kate Houghton
Policy and Practice Officer