

Stewardship and Responsibility: A Policy Framework for Private Housing in Scotland

A Response from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland  
[www.rics-scotland.org-uk](http://www.rics-scotland.org-uk)

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Stewardship and Responsibility: A Policy Framework for Private Housing in Scotland

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland (RICS Scotland) has noted the above consultation paper and is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

RICS Scotland is the principal body representing professionals employed in the land, property and construction sectors. The Institution represents some 9,000 members: 7,000 chartered surveyors, 200 technical members and 1,800 students and trainees. Our members practise in sixteen land, property and construction markets and are employed in private practice, in central and local government, in public agencies, in academic institutions, in business organisations and in non-governmental organisations. As part of its Royal Charter, the Institution has a commitment to provide advice to the government of the day and, in doing so, has an obligation to bear in mind the public interest as well as the interests of its members. RICS Scotland is therefore in a unique position to provide a balanced, apolitical perspective on issues of importance to the land, property and construction sectors.

Having considered this consultation document at length, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland wishes to make the following comments.

General Comments

RICS Scotland welcomes the general focus and direction taken by the Scottish Executive as it aims to improve the quality, fabric and management of private housing in Scotland. We are of the opinion that the suggested improvements will help to improve Scotland's built environment as well as providing better living conditions for many people living in private housing. The Institution is also grateful that the Scottish Executive has recognised RICS Scotland's members as the property professionals who can assist landlords and owneroccupiers in the management of their properties.

In terms of improving the operation of the housing market (as outlined in chapter three), RICS Scotland has already committed itself to working closely with the Executive on this matter.

Therefore, no further comment on this particular aspect of the report will be included in this response.

Page 15 - paragraphs 63 - 65

RICS Scotland would suggest that thermal efficiency would be best assessed by a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating as opposed to "a basic level of thermal insulation" as this term is yet to be defined.

Page 15 - paragraph 67 and page 18 - paragraph 5

Condensation may occur because of deficiencies in heating, ventilation and or the insulation of a property. However, it may be the case that that heating and ventilation systems are not being used properly. In the first case, replacing or improving the current system can resolve the problem. In the second case, the requirement is provide advice to residents to ensure they can use their equipment properly.

Page 19 - paragraph 80

RICS Scotland welcomes the proposed introduction of a Scottish Housing Quality Standard. However, to ensure that the quality standard is comparable throughout Scotland, the criteria for the information collected must be standardised.

Page 21 - paragraph 89

Building regulations refer to SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) ratings, as do most government agencies. We find it confusing that the report refers to NHER and query why.

Page 65 - paragraph 277

It may be more appropriate to include the number of bed spaces a dwelling has instead of the using the floor area as a criteria for establishing usage of communal facilities, such as lifts and door entry systems.

Page 69 - paragraph 294

RICS Scotland welcomes the recommendation that owners employ good quality professional management services.

Page 107

The tribunal process appears to be very much weighted in the favour of the tenant. In order to ensure that an equitable system is operated, we strongly advise that there should be some mechanism in place to ensure that landlords are able to refer issues regarding failures of tenants to meet their obligations.

Page 109 - recommendation 131

There should be an option for a landlord to give a tenant consent to adapt a house, on condition that the house is reinstated by the tenant at the end of the tenancy.

Page 199 - recommendations

The recommendations made in this section are likely to prove difficult for landlords and housing managers operating in more than one local authority area.

Further to these comments, RICS Scotland is of the opinion that a standardised schedule should be issued by all landlord /agents when renting a property. This schedule should provide in-depth information regarding the operation and maintenance of any equipment located in the building. Schedules of this nature are generally issued when commercial premises are let and we feel that this would be a beneficial addition to the residential letting process.

On behalf of RICS Scotland, I hope that these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

Head of Public Policy