**SCOTTISH POLICY FORUM**

**Housing and Homelessness**

1. **Overview**

The first Scottish Policy Forum paper of our policy review is exploring Housing and Homelessness. This topic touches on many policy areas – planning, energy efficiency, construction, access to finance or social security – but we will only focus on those that fall within the remit of the Scottish Parliament. That still leaves a big topic to look at, so we have framed the questions to be broad, allowing respondents flexibility in their contributions.

House-building, and the tension between development and conservation in particular, have been increasingly prominent in Scottish and UK media as well as in policy work. Towards the end of last summer, Ruth Davidson gave a significant speech on housing that we as a Party want to build on over the coming months.

Your contributions to this paper will help guide us in the right direction. As part of this process, we look forward not only to new policy suggestions, but also to feedback on existing policy positions. Our approach can be summed up in the motion for our debate at the Scottish Parliament late last year:

“*That the Parliament recognises that the lack of housing supply is one of the biggest challenges that Scotland faces and believes that the planning system needs urgent and radical reform; considers that a new deal on housing is required; believes that a national housing and infrastructure agency should be established and that the First Minister should appoint a cabinet secretary for housing and infrastructure; urges ministers to examine the case for a new generation of new towns and garden villages; recognises that improving existing properties and bringing empty ones back into use should form a core component of housing policy, and highlights the importance of housing for improving health and wellbeing and for meeting climate targets through energy efficiency and sustainable development*.”

As ever, if you want to send in comments on anything beyond the questions asked in this paper, you are very welcome to do so in the same submission. As a running theme through all future papers, **we are very keen to explore the balance of powers between central and local government**, so any comments on that will be gratefully received.

The final deadline for submissions is **Monday 30 April 2018.**

1. **Planning System**

The planning system often tops the list of reasons for delays in housing development and is also the source of many of the complaints that MSPs receive on a daily basis from constituents. Significant changes to planning were legislated for in 2006, but the disappointing performance (i.e. in the speed of decision-making) as well as structural issues (i.e. appeals process and infrastructure funding) have led to an independent review and a new Planning Bill introduced in December 2017.

* 1. **A Plan-led System**

The central aim of the reforms implemented in 2006 was to establish a “plan-led” system in Scotland. The 2017 Bill abolishes regional planning, but introduces powers to create local plans.

Multiple planning documents are produced across different levels of government. The Scottish Government brings the *National Planning Framework* and *Scottish Planning Policy* in front of Parliament. While the SPP serves as the main guidance document, the NPF sets out major infrastructure projects (e.g. Queensferry Crossing or AWPR). More detailed *Planning Advice Notes* and *Planning Circulars* are issued alongside the two documents.

The decision-making process differs according to what is known as ‘category of development.’ There are three categories of development: **national, major** and **local**.

**National** developments are designated in the National Planning Framework, which is considered by Parliament to establish their need. Decisions on **major** developments will normally be made by councillors of the relevant planning authority while **local** developments are likely to be decided by planning officers, under a scheme of delegation which devolves decision making powers over smaller scale developments from councillors to planning officers.[[1]](#footnote-1) Every council serves as a planning authority, as do the two National Parks, bringing the total number of planning authorities in Scotland to 34.

* 1. **Planning Decisions and Appeals**

After consideration of a planning application, a planning authority can decide to:

* grant permission unconditionally
* grant permission subject to certain conditions being met
* refuse permission

As a general rule, planning applications are decided upon by the relevant planning authority, i.e. the council. However, Scottish Ministers have the power to direct a planning authority to refer any planning application to them for their decision. This process is known as “**calling-in**” an application and occurs a few dozen times per year.

Where planning permission is granted subject to conditions or is refused, the applicant has the right to appeal that decision to either a local review body (for decisions on local developments made by a planning officer) or Scottish Ministers (for all other decisions).

Recently, calls have resurfaced for a so-called “**third party right of appeal**”. The “first party” to a planning application is the applicant, the “second party” is the planning authority and the “third party” is anyone else. The role of any third party in the development management process is limited to making representations to the planning authority, which are considered by the authority during the decision making process.

A third party right of appeal, in the form called for by campaigners, would grant certain categories of objector to a planning application a limited right to appeal against the award of planning permission for certain types of development, e.g. when the development is a departure from the policies and proposals in an adopted development plan.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Third party rights of appeal are sometimes also referred to as "equal rights of appeal". Some people also propose that appeal rights could be “equalised” by removing the right of the applicant to appeal in some circumstances, for example when the development is a departure from the development plan. Objectors to a third party right of appeal cite potential further delays in the planning system or a loss of competitiveness vis-à-vis the rest of the UK.

* 1. **Planning Fees**

Current legislation enables Scottish Ministers to make provision for the payment of fees to planning authorities of the amounts prescribed by regulations. In other words, planning fees are set centrally for different categories of development, with **no scope for local choice.**

The new Planning Bill 2017 makes several changes to broaden these regulation-making powers to provide more flexibility: for example, by enabling some discretionary charging for service provision, under which authorities may also in some circumstances choose to reduce or waive fees. Developers have said that they would not mind paying higher fees, if these resulted in faster decision-making by planning departments. Ring-fencing of fees or performance-linked fees have been mooted as potential solutions.

* 1. **Infrastructure Investment**

The provision of the right infrastructure has been a challenge to the development of most housing sites. Physical infrastructure work that is generally required to start a project includes roads, sewers, decontamination and demolition work. In addition, developers can be asked by local councils to contribute to the cost of broader infrastructure projects like schools.

More recently, section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 provides for planning obligations to be secured from developments. The **scope of such obligations has gradually grown** to include the provision of affordable housing and different types of infrastructure associated with the proposed development. Increasingly planning stakeholders have raised concerns about the growing scope and complexity of planning obligations, including the time and costs involved in negotiation, the fairness of only covering a few large applications, and the openness to public scrutiny.

In light of this, several options for financing infrastructure have been floated. The 2017 Planning Bill, for example, would give Scottish Ministers **the power to establish an infrastructure levy**. This power would be additional to those described above, rather than replacing them. Details of the levy scheme would be set out in regulations, which has caused some concern as it doesn’t allow for proper scrutiny as part of the Bill.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Another option that some, including the Scottish Conservatives, have mooted in the past was to legislate for a form of **land value capture**, which would involve the purchase of land at existing use value, rather than assumed value as at present. Since the value of land increases exponentially if planning permission for housing development is assumed (as opposed to, say, existing agricultural use) there is potential there to try and capture the uplift in value to invest in infrastructure. There are options on how this could be done, but they would all likely involve compulsory purchase, since landowners would be unlikely to sell below market value – although there have been cases where this model worked.

**Discussion Questions**

**Q1. What should be the priority in any planning system reforms? Increasing house-building? Faster decision-making? Local consultation and control?**

**Q2. How would you reconcile local opposition to a housing development with a regional/national need for housing supply?**

**Q3. Do you feel the planning decision-making and appeals process is working well? Would you support a third party right of appeal?**

**Q4. How can we best raise funding for infrastructure investment?**

1. **Private Housing**

There is cross-party consensus about the need for more homes. While Labour and the SNP focus on affordable housing targets, Scottish Conservatives have instead emphasised the need for an **all-tenure all-sector target** across private, affordable and social housing.

We have supported a gradual return to pre-recession levels of house-building (going from ca. 16,000 to 25,000 a year), increasing supply by 10% year on year, which would mean over 100,000 homes by the end of this Parliament.

* 1. **Supporting Home Ownership**

Conservatives have traditionally supported policy initiatives to encourage home ownership and support first-time buyers. From the Right to Buy, through Help to Buy, to abolishing Stamp Duty for first-time buyers, home ownership has been a strong theme in Conservative politics. More recently, with rising house prices and lending restrictions following the global economic crisis, the proportion of people in privately rented accommodation has increased – although it is still nowhere near continental levels.

* + 1. **LBTT**

The Scotland Act 2012 devolved Stamp Duty Land Tax to the Scottish Parliament. This was replaced by the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBTT) which came into force in April 2015. From 1 April 2016, the Scottish Government also introduced a new LBTT supplement on the purchase of additional residential properties, such as buy-to let properties and second homes. The differences in tax rates between the rest of the UK and Scotland are summarised below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **rUK Bands** | **rUK Rates** | **Scottish Bands** | **Scottish Rates** |
| £0-£125k | 0% | £0-£145k | 0% |
| £125k-£250k | 2% | £145k-£250k | 2% |
| £250k-£925k | 5% | £250k-£325k | 5% |
| £925k-£1.5m | 10% | £325k-£750k | 10% |
| £1.5m+ | 12% | £750k+ | 12% |

The sharp increase in tax rates for properties above £325,000 led to fears of a stagnation in sales and unintended consequences as a result. In the first 12 to 18 months of LBTT, sales volume slowed and prices stagnated, with estate agents reporting a significant slowdown in the middle and upper market. However, the latest statistics suggest that the market has rebounded, with sales and prices recovering.

* + 1. **Self-Build and Custom Build**

Not all housing is delivered by large construction companies. One area where there is much potential for progress is self-build and custom build. The statistics are staggering: In Austria **80% of all homes are self-built**. In Germany, France and Italy the figure is 60%. In the US and Australia it is over 40%. The figure in the UK, in stark contrast, is about 10%. And the demand seems to be there - a YouGov survey in October 2011 suggested that 53% of people in the UK would consider building their own home given the opportunity.

Self-build housing is on average cheaper than the average house price with most self-builders hiring an architect and builders to do the work, rather than needing to have experience themselves. Apart from issues with accessing finance, land supply and planning system delays are the two biggest barriers to self-build. We have previously highlighted how local authorities could **develop serviced plots and make them available under plot passports** (which specify basic parameters) to small developers and individuals without the need to acquire planning permission.

* 1. **Private Rent**

Both demand and supply factors have contributed to the growth in private rented housing. For example, demand has increased from the expansion of the higher education sector and increased numbers of migrant workers (both groups are more likely to live in private rented housing). With the decline of the social rented sector there is a buoyant demand for private rented properties. On the supply side, low interest rates, which can be favourable to buy to let investors, and owners experiencing difficulty selling their properties after the financial crisis have contributed to the supply of private rented housing.

The relative decline in owner occupation, and rise in private renting, may also be explained by **barriers to people becoming owner-occupiers**. Prior to the financial crisis there was a period of rapid increase in house prices and, for many households, owner-occupation became unaffordable. With the onset of the crisis this difficulty in accessing owner-occupation was exacerbated when the availability of high loan to value mortgages reduced and the need for buyers to have a higher deposit to secure a mortgage increased.[[4]](#footnote-4)

* + 1. **Tenancy Reform**

The Private Rented (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 introduced a new private residential tenancy to supersede the previous short assured and assured tenancies. The aim was to create a simplified tenancy regime providing greater security of tenure for tenants, along with security for investors.

In the past, tenancies were usually signed for an initial term of six months and could come to an end without the need for court action after that term has ended. At the end of the term of the let a landlord could end the tenancy, provided the correct procedures were followed. This was known as the “no-fault” ground for possession.

The new tenancy that came into force this year, is **open-ended and without a fixed term**, unlike the short assured tenancy. For a private residential tenancy to end, the tenant must give the landlord notice that they wish to leave, or the landlord has to give the tenant a notice to leave. That notice must set out which of the specified eviction grounds the landlord is using. If the tenant does not leave at the end of the tenancy, the landlord will have to apply to the new First Tier Tribunal Housing and Property Chamber for an eviction order to be made. Tenants will have recourse to the Tribunal if they think that their tenancy has been wrongfully terminated.

* + 1. **Short-term Holiday Lets**

Short-term holiday lets are privately owned flats or houses with their own cooking facilities that are let out in their entirety on a short-term basis (typically for weekends, a week or a fortnight). This sector has seen significant growth, particularly in popular tourist destinations such as central Edinburgh, which is largely driven by the development of online services such as Airbnb and Homeaway.

It is argued that the growth of short-term holiday lets, particularly concentrations of such lets in popular tourist destinations, is changing the affordability and residential character of some areas through increases in private rents, increases in house prices, and removing properties from the long-term private rental market. At present, the Scottish planning system does not generally control the use of flats or houses as short-term holiday lets.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Discussion Questions**

**Q5. Should supporting home ownership be a priority for government or should it focus on the rented sector (be it private, affordable or social)?**

**Q6. Do you have any suggestions on the levels/structure of LBTT?**

**Q7. How can we support “generation rent”?**

**Q8. Should short-term holiday lets be regulated and if yes, how?**

1. **Affordable and Social Housing**

The Scottish Government sets targets for how much affordable housing it wants to deliver through its Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP). In this context, “affordable housing” means:

* Social rented housing (provided by councils or Registered Social Landlords)
* Low cost home-ownership
* Mid-market rented housing

Over the five-year period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 the Scottish Government’s target is to deliver at least 50,000 affordable housing units, of which 35,000 will be for social rent. This represents a substantial increase of 67% on the previous five-year target for the delivery of at least 30,000 units (which was exceeded by over 3,000).

* 1. **Affordable Home Ownership**

Affordable home ownership has been mostly supported by the Help to Buy scheme, which mirrors the scheme operating south of the border. Help to Buy involves the Scottish Government taking **an equity share of up to 15%** of the value of a new build property bought from a home builder that has been approved to participate in the scheme.Larger homebuilders can participate in the main Help to Buy (Scotland) Affordable New Build Scheme while smaller developers participate in the Help to Buy (Scotland) Smaller Developers Scheme where ring-fenced funds are reserved for use by their customers. Mortgage lenders are likely to require a deposit of around 5% of the value of the home and the buyer’s mortgage plus their deposit must cover a combined minimum 85% of the total purchase price.

Targeting rural areas more specifically, the Rural Housing Fund is also available to a wide range of applicants, including community organisations and private developers. The fund has two components - the main one offers capital support (grant and loan) to enable the direct provision of new affordable housing and refurbishment of existing empty properties. A smaller component provides a contribution to feasibility studies.

* 1. **Social and Affordable Rent**

The majority of Scottish Government funding is provided, by way of grant, to councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to build new houses for social rent although the funding could also be used for low-cost home ownership, off-the shelf purchases or rehabilitations. RSLs use this Government subsidy, in addition to other sources of funding (most notably, private borrowing) to build houses. **There are around 160 RSLs operating in Scotland.**

Scottish Government subsidy for councils to build new homes has been available since 2009/10, when the government restarted the council house-building programme. Councils use the subsidy, in addition to a range of other sources, most notably public works loan board borrowing, to fund new building. Councils need to ensure that any new borrowing does not lead to an excessive rise in tenants’ rents.

Every year the Government also funds **a small number of mid-market rent schemes**, where it works with delivery partners on the provision of below market (but above social) rental homes. These can then in turn be offered to people on housing waiting lists whose circumstances are deemed to be suitable for this kind of property.

* 1. **Social Housing Allocation**

There are currently **an estimated 150,000 people on social housing waiting lists** across Scotland. Each council or RSL has its own rules for allocating housing. Some of the rules are based on the law, and others are up to the individual council or RSL to decide. The council or RSL must stick to these rules for letting their houses and can't make decisions according to other rules which aren't written down.[[6]](#footnote-6)

By law, there are three main groups of people who must be given priority (or 'reasonable preference') on council and RSL housing waiting lists:

* People living in unsuitable accommodation
* People whose homes are overcrowded or who have large families
* People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

A council or RSL can also take other factors into account when deciding on their allocation, for example **length of time on the list, medical and social needs or under-occupancy of the existing home** (where a tenant is looking to downsize). There are some things councils and RSLs are not allowed to take into account when allocating housing, for **example the length of time someone has lived in the area, debt and arrears, or any age or income**.

**Discussion Questions**

**Q9. How can government help those on housing waiting lists? How do we deliver more affordable homes?**

**Q10. Do you think there should be any central restrictions on housing allocations and how would you amend the existing ones?**

1. **Existing Properties**

While most of Scottish policy is focused on building new homes to meet future needs, if the current stock falls into disrepair then the benefits of increased housing supply is undermined.

* 1. **Empty Homes**

Newly built properties will always be only part of the solution to housing shortages. Over **34,000 properties in Scotland are long-term empty** – that is over double the number of new build completions last year. Bringing these properties back into use would make a significant difference. A 2016 survey by YouGov found that 75% of Scots believe that empty homes cause anti-social behaviour, 60% believe they reduce the amount of available housing and 54% report a decreased sense of safety caused by empty homes.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Scottish Government has legislated to allow local authorities to charge owners of long-term empty properties extra council tax. A number of grant and loan schemes also exist through which funds can be accessed to bring properties back into use. Other suggestions that have been floated in the past include **stronger compulsory purchase powers or the introduction of compulsory sale orders**, where properties are forced onto the open market. In addition, international examples of approaches include “**home on the farm” schemes or homesteading schemes,** under which properties are sold significantly below market price in exchange of agreed repairs and upgrades to be done by the new owner.

* 1. **Energy Efficiency**

One of the key features of the 2016 Scottish Conservative Manifesto was our commitment to energy efficiency. Investing in energy efficiency is a way of reducing Scotland’s carbon emissions as well as tackling fuel poverty. With clear knock-on effects on physical and mental health, it seems obvious to us that this should be a policy priority for all levels of government.

The Scottish Government has designated energy efficiency as a National Infrastructure Priority, the cornerstone of which will be Scotland’s Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) – planned to be a 15 to 20-year programme. There is very little detail available at the moment, but we believe that we should be focusing on the least energy efficient homes first and utilise significant capital investment, a range of loans, LBTT and council tax discounts as well as greater regulatory control, backed by incentives across all tenures.

* 1. **Tenement Maintenance**

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors believes that a significant proportion of Scotland’s existing housing stock is **at risk from lack of maintenance** and that this issue is most problematic in the case of buildings in common ownership – most notably tenements.

This issue involves a significant proportion of Scotland’s housing stock with a quarter (579,000) of all domestic dwellings being tenements. Of these 38 per cent were built pre-1919 – the second most common occupied property type in Scotland, behind post-1982 detached properties. The Scottish Housing Condition Survey highlighted the fact that the number of pre-1919 properties in “critical, urgent and extensive disrepair’ has increased, from 5% to 8%.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 gave councils powers to require owners to carry out work on substandard houses and to help with repairs and improvements to private property. However, through Freedom of Information we found that seventeen councils have not issued a single work notice in the past 5 years. Additionally, thirty of the thirty-two councils have never issued a maintenance order and eighteen have not used closing orders. In some years - including last year - as many as twenty-five councils did not issue work notices, which is the most favoured of their powers.

Beyond the powers that councils have, properties in common ownership can sometimes have factors (i.e. property managers) who have a responsibility for the maintenance of the property as a whole. No reliable statistics exist on the number of properties with a factor and legislation currently only requires factors to be registered, with a Code of Conduct to be followed. In the past, **calls have been made to make factoring compulsory**, although such a step could most likely only be taken for new developments.

**Discussion Questions**

**Q11. How can we bring the 34,000 empty residential properties back into use?**

**Q12. What government support should there for energy efficiency and other existing property upgrades?**

**Q13. Would you support mandatory factoring for all new common ownership developments?**

1. **Homelessness**

Homelessness in Scotland is an enduring issue that has challenged successive governments over many years. It is not a problem unique to Scotland and very few countries have addressed this issue completely. One of the most common misconceptions about homelessness is that it is the same as rough sleeping (i.e. sleeping outside). Homelessness also includes people who live in temporary accommodation, or are staying with friends/family, or are living in conditions that negatively affect their health.

Most recent statistics suggest that there have been almost 35,000 homeless applications made to local authorities in the last 12 months (out of which 1,500 self-identified as rough sleepers). Over the long-term, statistics show that, between 2002/03 and 2006/07, there was an increase in applications. The Scottish Government says that this is partly a consequence of changes in legislation which extended local authority duties to non-priority households. Recent reductions in the number of applications had been attributed to the impact of Housing Options or homelessness prevention strategies, **rather than due to any underlying changes in the drivers of homelessness**.

Despite recent progress with housing prevention, Shelter Scotland has argued for a new homelessness strategy – a call which Scottish Conservatives supported. Shelter say that “the organic nature of these – and other – developments, has led to change without clear coherent direction, important developments often being significantly delayed and increased understanding not leading to improved practice”.[[8]](#footnote-8)

* 1. **Reasons for Homelessness**

There are many reasons why people can find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness. Relationship breakdown is a common cause of homelessness but other reasons could also include being evicted due to mortgage or rent arrears, mental health issues or addiction problems.

The first part of this paper explored the supply of housing and, while undoubtedly a factor in broader considerations of homelessness, **the underlying causes that drive homelessness are much broader**. In order to address homelessness, there is a requirement to stop thinking about homelessness as just a housing issue, and rather to look at it as a wide-ranging systemic issue.

The Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Communities Committee recently published a report[[9]](#footnote-9) into homelessness that examined its causes throughout several evidence sessions. Many witnesses to the inquiry highlighted that major contributing factors to homelessness were the effects of poverty and financial arrears as well as a lack of choice in the housing system. The Committee also heard that homelessness is often a consequence of long term issues such as mental health, past trauma and disadvantaged childhoods.

* 1. **Rough Sleeping**

Recent statistics had noted a decline in rough sleeping over the last 10 years. However, statistics for 2016-17 showed that the number of applicants, who had reported sleeping rough the night before, had increased by 10% to 1,500 over the year. These figures are based on self-reported rough sleeping when making a homelessness application, so they are not an accurate reflection of the problem. Many witnesses to the Local Government and Communities Committee’s inquiry recognised and corroborated **an anecdotal increase in rough sleeping recently.**

The reasons for rough sleeping are very complex and also include issues that are outwith the scope of the Scottish Parliament – for example an insecure immigration status.

* 1. **Temporary and Permanent Accommodation**

Local authorities have a duty to assess homeless applications made to them. If the applicant is assessed as ‘unintentionally homeless’ the local authority has a duty to secure ‘settled’ accommodation for the applicant. This will normally mean a permanent social rented let, although the applicant may have to spend some time in temporary accommodation before a suitable property becomes available.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Local authorities may need to use temporary accommodation for the following categories: homeless households who are awaiting the outcome of a homeless assessment; those who are only entitled to temporary accommodation; or those who are waiting for permanent accommodation to be found. Recently, local authorities have reported **substantially lengthening periods of time spent in temporary accommodation**.

There is a mixed picture on the provision and quality of temporary accommodation across Scotland. Alongside the length of time being spent in temporary accommodation, often the quality and insecure nature of this type of property was also having an impact on people’s mental and/or physical health. **There is a legal limit** on the amount of time councils can keep families and pregnant women in unsuitable temporary accommodation – the Scottish Government is cutting the time limit from 14 to 7 days. Crisis Scotland has highlighted that this would improve the conditions for only a handful of homeless people and is campaigning to extend this limit to all homeless people.

* 1. **Housing Options and Housing First**

Scottish Government policy has encouraged homelessness prevention activities and the development of the “Housing Options” approach. Housing Options focuses on people’s personal circumstances and **helps explore the issues that can underpin housing problems**. Examples of Housing Options services are housing advice, health advice, budget management support and employability support, but the exact approach taken by local authorities will vary from area to area.

Five Housing Options Hubs (which receive Scottish Government financial support) have been established to help promote the Housing Options approach to homelessness and to share best practice across all Scottish local authorities. It has been broadly successful - around 55% of approaches for assistance were helped to resolve housing problems with Housing Options advice and did not go on to make a homeless application in 2016.

However, a study carried out by Glasgow Housing Options Steering Board confirmed that, following consultation with service users and third sector organisations, the Housing Options model **did not serve people with the most complex and multiple needs**. Many of the organisations who gave evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee argued that Housing First – a model pioneered in Finland - is the most suitable method for supporting homeless people with multiple and complex needs.

The basic premise behind the Housing First model is that those who present as homeless are provided with a house and a permanent tenancy unconditionally in addition to being provided with the right level of support and care to keep them successfully in the tenancy. **Permanent accommodation is then seen as the first critical step** towards tackling a series of complex problems for the tenant.

**Discussion Questions**

**Q14. How can we tackle the underlying causes of homelessness?**

**Q15. What can the government and local authorities do to tackle rough sleeping?**

**Q16. Do you have any suggestions in relation to temporary accommodation and the Housing First model?**

1. **Appendix A (Key Statistics)**

* **Owner-occupation is the most common form of housing tenure**. In 2015, 61% of households lived in owner occupied housing, 23%, lived in a social rented property (i.e. provided by councils or Registered Social Landlords) and 14% of households lived in privately rented accommodation (SPICe, *Housing Subject Profile*, Dec 2016).
* **One of the main changes since 1999 has been the rise in the number of households renting privately**. Around 5% of households lived in private rented housing in 1999 but, by 2015, this had risen to about 14% of households (an absolute rise of around 230,000 households).
* **The tenure profile across different local authorities in Scotland varies.** Generally, cities have lower levels of owner-occupied housing and higher levels of privately rented housing. For example, the proportion of dwellings that are owner-occupied ranges from 83% in East Renfrewshire to 44% in Glasgow City. The proportion of dwellings rented privately varies from 4% in East Renfrewshire to 27% in Edinburgh.
* Over the 25-year period 2014-2039, **Scotland’s population is expected to increase** by 7% (from 5.35 million to 5.7m) (National Records of Scotland).
* **An even greater rise in the number of households is predicted.** Over the 25-year period 2012 to 2037 the number of households in Scotland is projected to increase by 17% (from 2.39 million to 2.78 - an additional 395,000 households) (National Records of Scotland).
* **The number of new homes started has fallen by more than 40 per cent under the SNP.** In 2006 there were 28,582 new homes started and in 2016 there were 17,043 new homes started (*Housing Statistics for Scotland Quarterly Update*, 13 June 2017).
* **The number of new homes completed has fallen by more than a third.** In 2006 there were25,305 new homes completed and in 2016 there were 16,498 (*Housing Statistics for Scotland Quarterly Update*, 13 June 2017).
* **Home ownership has fallen under the SNP**. The percentage of housing stock that is owner occupied has declined from 62.1 per cent in 2006 to 57.9 per cent in 2015. In absolute terms it has fallen from 1.49 million to 1.48 million dwellings (Scottish Government, *Housing Statistics for Scotland 2017: Key Trends Summary Excel*, Chart 6b, 12 September 2017).
* **Council housing stock has declined.** The percentage of the total housing stock that is rented out by local authorities has fallen from 15.0 per cent in 2006 to 12.4 per cent in 2015. In absolute terms it has fallen from 362,000 to 317,000. This is despite Manifesto commitments to build more housing in the social rented sector (Scottish Government, *Housing Statistics for Scotland 2017: Key Trends Summary Excel*, Chart 6b, 12 September 2017).
* **The number of privately rented homes has almost doubled**. The number of privately rented homes has increased from 224,000 to 382,000 from 2006 to 2015. In percentage terms it has increased from 9.3 per cent to 15.0 per cent of the total housing stock (Scottish Government, *Housing Statistics for Scotland 2017: Key Trends Summary Excel*, Chart 6b, 12 September 2017).
* **The Shelter Scotland’s Commission on Housing and Wellbeing have estimated that 150,000 households are on the waiting list for a home.** They also estimated that 940,000 households were in fuel poverty, 73,000 are overcrowded and 29,000 people are homeless (Commission on Housing & Welfare, *A blueprint for Scotland’s future*, June 2015).
* **Figures published in the latest *Private Sector Statistics for Scotland* show that the average rents in Scotland across all properties have increased by over inflation, with 2 bedroom properties increasing by 19%.** In addition, average rents for 2-bedroom rental properties in Lothian and Greater Glasgow have increased by over 33% and 32% respectively between 2010 and 2017 (The Scottish Government, *Private Sector* *Rent Statistics Scotland 2010-2017,* 14 November 2017).
* **This rise in rents is having the greatest impact upon young people.** The Scottish Household Survey shows that the number of young people aged 16-34 who privately rent a property has also increased from 25% to 40% over the last ten years (National Statistics, *Scottish Household Survey 2016,* September 2017).
* **The number of homelessness applications over time has decreased since 2010**, with the latest annual figure of 34,864 applications being 22,842 (40%) less than the 57,706 applications in the 12 months to end September 2010.
* **The total number of long term empty properties and second homes increased** from 52,823 in 2006 to 2017 to 62,795.
* **The number of long term empty properties (more than 6 months) has increased dramatically** since to 2007 to 37,135 long term empty properties in September 2017.

1. SPICe, *Town and Country Planning in Scotland,* May 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SPICe, *The Planning (Scotland) Bill,* Jan 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. SPICe, *Planning (Scotland) Bill: Proposed Infrastructure Levy,* Feb 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. SPICe, *Housing Subject Profile*, Dec 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. SPICe, *The Planning (Scotland) Bill,* Jan 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/finding_a_place_to_live/renting_from_the_council/allocation_policies> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/empty_homes/scottish_empty_homes_partnership> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Shelter Scotland, *Homelessness: Far from Fixed*, Sept 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Local Government and Communities Committee, *Report on Homelessness,* Feb 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. SPICe, *Housing Subject Profile*, Dec 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)