Local Government and Communities Committee

Building Regulations in Scotland

Submission from Callum Bunce

I have completed the online survey for the above and would also like to submit the statements below in response to the questions as noted in the online survey.

1. Should verification of building standards be extended to organisations other than local authorities?
   Yes. This would allow for applications to be dealt with by qualified Consultants, able to address applications on a more timeous turnaround without the constraints of an overburdened Local Authority which result in longer decision periods and repeat timescale cycles whenever observations require to be addressed. It would also deliver a more cost effective solution reducing the costs of Building Warrant applications and speeding up the delivery time. Having a private sector, replication of the English system, would help to reduce timescales and cost. It would also allow for greater interpretation of the regulations, as the English system, instead of the very rigid approach adopted by the Scottish System.

2. Should procedural regulations specify a minimum requirement for the inspection of ongoing building works, to ensure compliance with building standards?
   Domestic properties are provided with a 10 year guarantee provided by NHBC, Zurich etc. who have their own inspection regime to ensure compliance with their standards which are in line with Building Regulations and very often exceed the requirements in the building regulations i.e. to a higher standard. In addition to this, Building Warrants are issued with a letter requiring builders to arrange for inspection at critical stages in the construction. To increase on this inspection rate would result in a reduction of service with regards to reviewing Building Warrant applications.

3. Should there be a statutory system to provide redress for new home buyers whose properties are subsequently found not to meet building standards requirements?
   Properties are already subject to inspections by both Building Control and NHBC, Zurich or their equivalent. If these inspections are not sufficient to ensure that standards are met it is unlikely additional surveys will result in an improved end product. NHBC, Zurich etc already provide a method of recourse to have any deficient or defective works corrected or repaired.

4. Are the current building warrant and associated fees set at the correct level?
The fees for these are set high in comparison to the service delivered by the Local Authorities. We are paying high fees only to experience a long turnaround of Warrant Applications. In some authorities it is almost impossible to meet a Warrant Officer to discuss your application. With the high fees applied we would expect to be able to discuss the progress of applications with a Warrant Officer and to meet them when necessary in order to increase understanding of an application and reduce timescales for return.

5. Additional Comments:

Currently we are experiencing great difficulty in getting to meet Building Control Officers in order that we can discuss the submission and address / explain any areas that may differ from the norm. This was never an issue in the past. Building Control officers are very often reluctant to meet to discuss the application.

Kind Regards,
Callum Bunce