Local Government and Communities Committee

Building Regulations in Scotland

Submission from Innes Associates

Dear Sir(s),

I am writing as the owner of a commercial building surveying practice and member of RICS.

We are based in Edinburgh and work for multi-national investors who have UK wide portfolio’s. Our work often requires us to submit building warrant applications, most often for relatively simple alterations to existing buildings to enable new Tenants to take occupation. Most of our work is within the industrial sector.

We have experienced increasing frustration and delays in the last 24 months on the backlog of building warrant applications and the constant need for us to juggle client expectations and commercial pressures with the need to obtain building warrant approval for works. In many cases this leaves us with having to tell the client that they need to either proceed with works ‘at risk’ or risk losing the potential new Tenant.

The industry we work in is very fast moving and Tenants will often need to be operational within 6-8 weeks of agreeing to take on a new unit. In the past we would have at least been able to obtain a building warrant report in that timeframe. Now we are regularly having to wait up to 12-13 weeks before we even receive the building warrant report.

I would gladly provide details of our clients, most of whom are HQ’d in London who will testify to the issues they face in Scotland and see this as another good reason not to invest in Scotland. At a time where political uncertainty in Scotland remains greater than the remainder of the UK, we need every bit of assistance in getting clients to choose to invest in what they perceive to be a ‘riskier’ part of the UK. I have one client who has said the main reason they are not choosing to invest in Scotland is the ‘bureaucratic building regs system’ rather than the political landscape.

Having worked in England for a period of 8 years and still occasionally having projects in England, the difference in using approved inspectors is enormous. Allowing approved inspectors to provide a service in Scotland would be a massive step forward and boost for the Scottish Construction Industry.

I do not believe many (if any) building surveyors or other RICS members currently working in the private sector would necessarily have the wish or capacity to take on
the role of approved inspectors and I think many current local authority employed inspectors would fulfil this role.

It is not the case (in my opinion) that the current building control surveyors are of poor quality or are not well trained, they are simply under resourced and working to a bureaucratic system that seems to promote adversity.

I would urge you to take the necessary steps to at least open up the system to approved inspectors and provide clients with the choice of who to use.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Steven Thomson BSc (Hons) MRICS
Director
Innes Associates