Local Government and Communities Committee

Building Regulations in Scotland

Submission from UNISON Scotland

UNISON represents over 150,000 workers providing public services in Scotland. Our members work across public, private and voluntary sectors. These include the professionals in Local Government who deliver building standards services. UNISON Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence from the Local Government and Communities Committee regarding the future of Building Regulations.

**Should verification of building standards be extended to organisations other than local authorities?**

No. We are very much of the view that the verification of building standards should remain the province of local authorities. A single body performing this function for a locality allows the development not only of economies of scale, but also a detailed knowledge of the area and any particular issues or local features. Were the system open to commercial competition there is a great deal of potential for such local knowledge to be lost. We also think that having the Local authority as the sole verifier avoids the potential for conflict of interest. We would support the contention that private sector verifiers could damage the impartiality of the system, and agree that private sector verifiers lack of accountability to elected members, removes an important democratic safeguard.

**Should procedural regulations specify a minimum requirement for the inspection of ongoing building works, to ensure compliance with building standards?**

Yes we believe there should be a minimum requirement for ongoing inspection. This would help ensure a consistent level of inspection of building works and also improve compliance. This would in turn offer an additional level of reassurance to new build property buyers. It should however be stressed that any such commitment would need to be resourced properly if it were to be carried out effectively.

**Should there be a statutory system to provide redress for new home buyers whose properties are subsequently found not to meet building standards requirements?**

Any such scheme would have to be carefully designed in order that ultimate responsibility would lie with builders and contractors whose work had failed to live up to standards.
Are the current building warrant and associated fees set at the correct level?

There is no evidence that the current fee regime is seen as prohibitive – or that the levels of fees are themselves a significant driver of evasion.

Mike J Kirby
Scottish Secretary
UNISON Scotland