

# Cross-Party Group on Housing Meeting

20 May 2025, 18:30-20:00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP – Convener

Ariane Burgess MSP – Deputy Convener

Invited guests

None

Non-MSP Group Members

Abigail Fletcher

Andrew Knight

Anna Gardiner

David Petrie

Eva Ablett

Janet Haugh

Jennifer Kennedy

Jocelyne Fleming

John Boyle

Ken Gibb

Natasha Douglas

Shelley Hutton

Taylor, Slurp

Alex Clarke

Andrea Finkel-Gates

Archie Rintoul

Ayobami Illori

Catherine Wales

Deborah Hay

Dr Keith Baker

Garry Cowan

Helen Murdoch

Lara Balkwill

Louise Devlin

Michael Tornow

Moira Bayne  
Norah Fletcher  
Pedro Cameron  
Sharon Egan  
Tom Ockendon  
Viki Fox

## Apologies

Megan Gallacher MSP

## Agenda item 1: Welcome

Graham Simpson opened the meeting and welcomed members.

GS made a note of the CPG's student homelessness report and pushback from the St Andrews Confederation of Residents Associations (CSARA). The report has subsequently been reviewed and amended.

## Agenda item 2: Minutes and Matters Arising

GS proposed the minutes from the previous meeting. AF seconded.

Application for membership from Consumer Scotland was accepted by the CPG

There were no other matters arising.

## Agenda item 3: Presentation by David Raine, Homes for Scotland

SME home builders report 2024 addressed data gap re. SMEs in Scotland using Register of Scotland data – Scot Gov not collecting this.

Number of active SMEs down 2/3rds since GFC. Falling market share, numbers, sales and value. Weaker SME contribution to homebuilding.

SMEs strong delivery for rural housing and brownfield sites. Planning a key area of concern to members responding to survey, CMA report Feb 2024 but no Scot Gov response to this yet.

Concerns with utilities/problems with Scottish Water, electricity connections for charging points/heat pumps.

Recommendations in report: planning system needs to be faster and need new innovative funding streams to support SMEs, especially in pre-development stages. Public sector should share in risk and reward.

AAPG good engagement on SMEs. CPG should allocate a regular slot to discuss issues facing SMEs – possible Members debate.

## Agenda item 4: Presentation by Natasha Douglas, Bancon Homes

Argyll and Bute first local authority to declare a housing emergency, there are now 13 and 53.1% of Scotland population living in an area that has declared a housing emergency.

Local authorities are preparing new local development plans. Lack of readily available allocated sites, delivery unlikely until 2030s. Interim guidance is needed from chief planner to support short-term delivery of non-allocated sites.

Difficult to gain planning permission for non-allocated sites, resistance from authorities e.g. parking standards.

Need a generous supply of housing land. Consultees/planning sector need to grasp the message of the housing emergency – lack of resources, planning fees regularly increased and need to be ringfenced.

Fees for appeals can cost up to £71K. Appeal to local review body has a fee of c.£11K. councillors aren't qualified planners/solicitors. Removes fair justice system – SMEs push button on non-determination appeals, delay delivery.

More red tape with Sepa flood maps rendering many sites no longer developable. Sepa difficult for SMEs to engage with.

Need faster technical consents- Scottish Water frustrate things, roads construction consent is lengthy and can take up to 6 months after planning consent. Surveys and reports require £100,000s upfront and that is before any appeal has taken place.

Energy constraint – building standards more onerous re. energy efficiency, EVs/heat pumps. Greater demand for electricity per home, stalls sites.

Need more £ for affordable housing delivery. Scot Gov 2032 target (100,000 affordable homes) stalled.

Building infrastructure levy – consultation closed last year. No information on likely costs, SMEs no comfort they will be exempt

## Agenda item 5: Discussion

Planning applications take too long to be processed, consultees don't come back within necessary timeframes. Lack of resource for LAs to respond within deadlines – planning infrastructure bill at Westminster removing some unnecessary consultees.

SMEs can invest £1000s into decision, ties up equity, reduces lending. Delays in consenting system can grind down whole business. Retention of site staff also a challenge.

Ariane Burgess: Planning officers should visit site, communicate their wishes. Waiting process can be ambiguous – is there a similar pattern across local authorities re. pre-application service?

- Bancon experience different quality of service across LAs. Some charge for pre-application process, Aberdeenshire doesn't. South Lanarkshire doesn't have resource to offer a pre-application process. Need feedback/interaction with planning officers and consultees. Working relationships are a mixed bag across Scotland.

John Boyle: over 500 SMEs dissolved in 2023, not surprising given the challenges they are facing. Lending risk, planning risk, construction risk, sales risk. Lose small builders, impact on rural Scotland.

Shelley Hutton: 98 homes development can be let because no capacity on the grid. Upgrades not until late 2020s, homes are built but no grid capacity. Need 6x as much electricity as for a house with a gas boiler, electricity will be the biggest blocker going forward. SFHA multiple members experiencing this.

Luke Fraser: Opportunity for SMEs to work on community led housing. Issues with economies of scale. Planning major issue for islands – 1/3 housing stock in Orkney has heat pumps.

Ariane Burgess: Moray developer using material that looks like concrete block but is held together by wood chips, thinking about embodied carbon. Technical standards need to be signed off by warranty providers too.

Tom Ockendon: issue with new supply but also retrofit specifications which exclude local SMEs. Relies on certain accreditation.

Forthcoming regulations at Local Gov, Housing + Planning Committee next Tuesday (27<sup>th</sup>) with Ivan McKee.

## Agenda item 6: Next meeting

No other business.

Date of next meeting, 16 September 2025