Dear Convener,

ENERGY EFFICIENT SCOTLAND: PROGRESS UPDATE DECEMBER 2019

We are writing to update the Committee on progress to address emissions from buildings in the light of the global climate emergency. Our new landmark Climate Change Act, passed by Parliament this autumn, maintains Scotland’s position as having the most stringent climate change legislation in the world. The new 75% target for 2030 goes far beyond what the IPCC says is needed globally, and we are considering carefully what this means for the built environment.

The Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, launched in May 2018, set out a trajectory for making all buildings in Scotland warmer, greener and more efficient by 2040, and we have continued to deliver on those plans.

We now need the next stage of our plans to reflect the accelerated pace required to meet the challenge of the global climate emergency, and in particular to deliver on the clearly-expressed wishes of Parliament to go faster and further to meet the new 2030 target of 75% emissions reductions.

As a result of the new 2030 target, we now need to revise policies and proposals to deliver emissions reduction from the buildings sector. The Scottish Government has committed to publish an update to the Climate Change Plan to reflect the additional effort these new targets require across all sectors by 30 April 2020. As a result, the next published update to the Energy Efficient Scotland Routemap needs to take account of this and will now be published in spring 2020 to align with the update to the Plan and our Heat Decarbonisation Policy Statement.
We are already accelerating the pace of delivery of the Energy Efficient Scotland programme in the light of the amended target. We recognise that this will require a new delivery structure that can rapidly be put in place during 2020.

Following discussion with a range of stakeholders and an independent report provided by KPMG on the options for delivery structure, we have decided to press ahead with a new, dedicated internal structure within the Scottish Government that will support accelerated delivery across the programme. It is our view that an internal structure provides the appropriate flexibility to allow us to adjust as rapidly as possible to the changing context, which other options would not.

As a result of this decision, we recognise the corresponding need for governance to provide oversight of the programme and for decision-making to be taken together with key partners, in particular in local government. This will ensure that commitments made are deliverable in the most efficient and effective way, and can support change over a 20 year period. We are in discussion with COSLA and SOLACE about finalising strategic governance arrangements to oversee delivery of the programme. We have already sought support and advice from stakeholders and suppliers in shaping decisions until now, and the programme will continue to do so throughout its lifetime.

The Energy Efficient Scotland programme is continuing apace. We are due shortly to lay regulations to improve energy efficiency of homes in the Private Rented Sector from April 2020, and will publish a public consultation on energy efficiency standards in owner-occupied housing. This consultation will seek views on introducing legally binding standards for owner-occupied homes, and bringing forward the start date for these by six years, to 2024.

This all builds on work already achieved for social housing, with the launch of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (EESSH 2) in June this year, setting higher targets to 2032. Combined with our ongoing range of domestic and non-domestic delivery programmes - with grants and support for those in fuel poverty, and loan schemes and bespoke, impartial advice for households and businesses – this demonstrates that where we can take action now, we are doing so.

We hope that the Committee will recognise that the approach we have outlined for emissions from buildings demonstrates that the Scottish Government is responding seriously to the new, stretching, climate targets set by Parliament. It is right that the Scottish Government ensures that the Energy Efficient Scotland programme responds to this challenge. The details which we have set out of new delivery and governance arrangements will allow us to accelerate the programme with our partners in the light of the Global Climate Emergency.

We will continue to keep the Committee informed as this work develops.