Dear Bob

I am writing to you as Convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee to inform you of my intention to launch our consultation on “Energy efficiency and condition standards in private rented housing” on 7th April.

The Committee will be aware that the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 gave Ministers powers to regulate for the improvement of the energy efficiency of domestic and non-domestic properties. The Scottish Government has introduced standards for non-domestic buildings of a certain scale, and registered social landlords are already working towards achieving the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by 2020.

In the Committee’s report on the draft Climate Change Plan the Committee noted its concerns regarding the delay in bringing forward the consultation on energy efficiency standards in the private sector. As discussed with the Committee on 22 February 2017, the Scottish Government reluctantly took the decision to postpone the consultation on minimum energy efficiency standards, originally planned for 2015, due to the uncertainty caused by the UK Government which announced a series of changes to funding arrangements for energy efficiency, including slashing funding for the Energy Company Obligation and ending funding for the Green Deal Finance Company. The Scottish Government felt that it was unfair to consult on mandating energy efficiency improvements at a time when funding options for energy efficiency were uncertain and in a state of flux.
In contrast to decisions taken at the UK level, Scottish Ministers have designated energy efficiency as a national infrastructure priority and, as set out in the draft Climate Change Plan, are committed to taking long-term action to reduce the energy demand of, and decarbonise the heat supply to, our residential, services and industrial sectors. The cornerstone of this is Scotland’s Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP), and as you know we are currently consulting on the policy and programme design for this ambitious new programme. We know that to realise real transformation we need to make the best use of the tools available to us. Regulation has a key role to play within this, helping to drive action and so make it the norm to invest in energy efficiency.

As part of SEEP, I am therefore pleased to inform you of my intention to launch on 7 April the SEEP consultation on “Energy efficiency and condition standards in private rented housing”.

I am committed to driving action to improve both the energy efficiency and condition standards in privately rented housing in Scotland. With this consultation the Scottish Government is inviting views on minimum standards that would improve the energy efficiency of the worst performing properties in the private rented sector, supporting our work to tackle climate change and also fuel poverty, where our aspiration is to remove poor energy efficiency of properties as a driver for fuel poverty. This standard will be raised over time, ensuring that all tenants are able to enjoy the same benefits of a warm home.

It will also set out when consultation on improving the energy efficiency of owner occupied housing will be brought forward.

We are also seeking views on amendments to the repairing standard, which already applies to the majority of private tenancies in Scotland; to ensure that private rented houses are in a good condition. The consultation will be open until 30 June.

I have also copied this letter to Gordon Lindhurst, the Convener of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, as they have an interest in the on-going development of Scotland’s Energy Efficiency Programme.

Kind regards

KEVIN STEWART