

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH BUILDING FEDERATION

Thank you for the recent opportunity to give evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee. A modern efficient planning system that applies policy effectively and acts a responsible enabler, rather than an impediment, is crucial to our member companies within the Scottish construction industry.

There are some points that were raised at this meeting that I would like the opportunity to clarify and expand upon, that time did not allow for on the day.

35,000 House Building Target

As a Federation we do **not** represent the volume house builders. However, we do have many member companies, some of which are second and third generation family businesses, who provide much needed housing across a variety of tenures and often in the more rural areas of Scotland. Equally, many of our member companies operate across the full range of the construction sector and certainly rely upon the associated infrastructure and public sector work that is linked with a healthy house building sector.

As was correctly pointed out at the meeting, in normal market conditions the annual number of homes completed in Scotland in a given year should be around the 24,000 mark. This figure is market driven and reflects the available land supply, the adopted local and structural plans, and the public money available for the provision of much needed social and affordable housing.

At the time when Firm Foundations set a target of 35,000, we welcomed the figure as an ambitious but achievable goal. However this was predicated on the understanding that significant funding would be forthcoming over a sustained period to increase capacity.

To date there has been no clear strategy to achieve this aspiration and the target is not a feature of the workforce planning carried out by the industry.

National Planning Framework 2 and its impact on the Scottish Construction Industry

As I stated in my evidence, there is little in NPF2 that is of immediate importance to our members. In the current climate, with capacity in the construction industry shrinking at an alarming rate, any project that keeps skilled tradesmen in the industry is of national importance to our sector.

The Planning Act was conceived during a period of growth and whilst it is correct that the framework is put in place for the future, NPF must ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the system and clear unambiguous direction from the Scottish Government regarding the national priorities. In the current climate, those national priorities must go beyond a list of projects, to include cultural change within local authority planning departments.

NPF2 can be a catalyst to ensure that infrastructure projects move from conception and into construction. If it is to be more than an aspirational wish list then it must be tied to clear guidance on funding, including the detail and availability of funds through the Scottish Futures Trust.

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