



#PlayingOurPart

Homes for Scotland
Activity Report 2016

Chairman's Message

Dear colleague

2016 has been a particularly memorable year in many different ways for Homes for Scotland.

It started back in February with the appointment of our new Chief Executive Nicola Barclay, who was then able to manage the recruitment of a refreshed planning team that has subsequently done a first-class job of reflecting the needs and concerns of our members to the independent planning review.

In addition, we seized the opportunities presented by the Scottish Parliament elections to build relationships with new Ministers and engage with Members across the political spectrum.

In doing so, and in liaising with other key stakeholders, the scope of our activities has been as wide-ranging as ever – from skills and utilities to Help to Buy and the Consumer Code for Home Builders, and much else.

Meanwhile, in my second year as Chair, I never fail to be struck by the professionalism and focus of our member businesses, and I delight in seeing those qualities repeatedly matched by the passion and work ethic of the Homes for Scotland staff and an Executive Team that is guided by the most purposeful of objectives: housing Scotland's people.

It is clear your investment and your direct support in the shape of time, experience, insight and advice enable us to pursue our objective from a position of strength and authority, and with real constancy of purpose - helping to sustain the viability of not only your individual businesses but also the local communities you serve.

This reality proves that our members realise that our goal and their own outcomes are too important to be left to chance or to simply rely upon the efforts of others and hope for the best.

The fact is that the more members - and the more active members - we have, the even more successful we can be.

So can I close by suggesting that next time you meet colleagues in our sector, you might ask them: "Are you a member of Homes for Scotland?"

And, if not, whether they would be up for a call to allow us to explain how they too can play their part and help achieve cohesion, effectiveness and better results?

We will make that call.

Jim Mather
Chairman



Chief Executive's Message

Dear member

Nearly a full year into my role as Homes for Scotland Chief Executive, it is often difficult to believe how quickly time has passed – and how much our small but hugely driven team has undertaken on your behalf during the period.

Our activities expanded in 2016, with increased political engagement tying in to the Scottish Parliament election and adding to our planning and policy agendas.

More detail on this work follows, but a top priority for me has been to ensure that you are maximising the value of your investment in our organisation. I've been encouraged to see so many members directly feeding into our work challenging our industry's many stakeholders on the ever-increasing range of issues hampering the construction of much needed new homes of all tenures.

The crucial importance of this coming together to share views and experience was highlighted to me recently by a remark that home building has never felt harder, a fact that seems reflected by official statistics showing that the number of new homes completed during 2015-16 fell on the previous year.

And this summarises the thinking behind our **#PlayYourPart** theme: a call to action to all who have roles to play in helping to overcome the barriers to housing delivery – not only members but also politicians at all levels, local authority officials, local communities and other stakeholders.

Rather than home building being unduly difficult, we need to make it as easy as ABC by demonstrating **Ambition**, removing **Barriers** and working **Collaboratively**.

With council elections in May, we shall be emphasising these objectives throughout 2017. As ever, your support in helping us to achieve them is vital and I look forward to working with you over the coming year to make sure our industry continues to “play its part” in ensuring our country has enough homes of all types to meet the diverse housing needs and aspirations of its growing population.

Nicola Barclay
Chief Executive



Planning & Infrastructure. Policy. Public Affairs & Communications. PRS. Participation.



HFS Chair Jim Mather leading Board discussion.

The activity of Homes for Scotland is guided by its Board of industry leaders and is supported by members working directly with our Executive

Team through our various groups and committees, lending their expertise and knowledge to ensure our policy objectives meet the sector's needs.

Planning & Infrastructure

As the statistics below and in our accompanying infographic show, we have been exceptionally busy during 2016 providing full industry input on planning matters across the country and forging new positive relationships with key decision-makers at both local and national levels.

Particular workstreams to highlight are:

Scottish Planning Review

Work on the planning review gathered momentum as the year progressed with the Executive Team and members making active contributions to working groups on the six review themes. Noting the continuing broad reach of the review, we made a detailed submission to the Minister for Local Government and Housing to help inform thinking and prioritisation in the run-up to the publication of a White Paper (expected before the end of 2016), pushing for a clear focus on reforms which will quickly and effectively boost the industry's ability to deliver.

We have also highlighted the need to ensure that the effective operation of the current system is not forgotten amid the review, highlighting resource issues at DPEA and unsatisfactory outcomes from LDP examinations. We are advising on key research projects commissioned by the Scottish Government to inform emerging proposals and continue to seek a satisfactory outcome from ongoing debates on the consideration of effective land and marketability.

Proposed Tax on Vacant, Derelict and Development Land

We robustly outlined industry concerns regarding proposals to allow councils to levy a new tax on vacant, derelict and development land, contending that this would be an inappropriate and ineffective means of speeding up delivery which is founded on a fundamental misconception that home builders have financial incentives for holding on to land rather than developing it.

Strategic and Local Development Plans

HFS takes every opportunity to provide industry representation at development plan examination hearings to ensure that home builders' views and experiences are taken into account as plans are finalised. We also respond in detail to all important requests for further information. This involvement has helped examiners conclude there are shortfalls in housing land supply in a number of emerging plans, with authorities being urged to identify additional land through supplementary guidance or early plan reviews. In some cases, additional sites have been added to plans directly by reporters. We continue to highlight where the outcome of examinations expose weaknesses in the current plan-led system, urging the Scottish Government to act on its powers to intervene in plan preparation.

Our planning work in 2016 included:

- participating in **16** Scottish Government workshops / working groups on national planning policy and practice
- responding to **12** policy consultations on strategic and local policy and guidance
- engaging in the preparation of **29** housing land audits

Planning & Infrastructure

Government Interventions on Delivery

We have worked to raise industry awareness and influence the effectiveness of Scottish Government interventions aimed at unlocking planning barriers. Opportunities that have been promoted this year include the Housing Infrastructure Fund (a five year fund with up to £50m available in 2016/17) and the current search for pilot Simplified Planning Zone approaches to increasing housing delivery (£150,000 to support 3-4 SPZ housing pilots). We monitor early take-up and effect and will use this learning to recommend necessary scheme improvements and identify further opportunities for positive initiatives from central and local government.

Utilities

We increased our engagement with Scottish Water, facilitating a series of workshops and meetings to help resolve issues in relation to legacy vesting and working practices. We also extended our dialogue with utility providers to include Openreach, with the aim of ensuring that all customers are digitally connected from the day they move into their new home.

For further details, contact:

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HFS Head of Planning Tammy Adams (centre) with Board member John Low of Stewart Milne Homes and associate member Gillian Campbell of MacRoberts.

Policy

Among the ever-increasing range of issues we are addressing, key areas of focus this year included:

Help to Buy (Scotland)

We worked tirelessly on behalf of members to influence the shape and scope of the refocused Help to Buy scheme to provide the confidence necessary to maintain the building of homes and opening up of new sites. We continue to monitor the effects of the new parameters to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Land & Buildings Transaction Tax

Strong representations were made to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament Finance Committee about our concerns over the impact on sales for homes in the middle to higher property value brackets, with a call for an immediate review of the £325k to £750k band.

Skills

We escalated our work on the skills agenda to help ensure that the industry can not only attract the talent it requires to deliver the homes Scotland needs but also nurture existing staff. As a result, we secured £250,000 from the Construction Industry Training Board for a Professional Skills Fund which was launched in November for the exclusive benefit of levy-paying HFS members.

We also ensured industry concerns on the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy were heard by the Scottish Government, in efforts to ensure its impact does not deter investment in skills.

Smaller Builders

We continued to highlight the particular challenges facing smaller builders, resulting in the Scottish Government undertaking a dedicated survey, the findings of which will allow us to continue discussions on extra support for this crucial sector component.



HFS Policy Officer Michael Barton-Maynard engaging members on the technical agenda at our recent Play Your Part event.

Policy

Building Standards

Following the work undertaken in the build-up to the introduction of the 2015 Building Standards, we engaged with Building Standards Division and other stakeholders to assess the challenges these may pose the industry and understand what interventions can be made to ensure home builders have all the resources they need well in advance of their introduction.

Consumer Code for Home Builders

Our activities around the Consumer Code were focused to ensure it continues to meet the needs of home builders and that the guidance and training that goes alongside it provides clear support to staff interacting with customers.

For further details, contact:

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HFS Director of Policy Karen Campbell giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee on the operation of the Land & Buildings Transaction Tax.

Public Affairs & Communications

Multi-channel communication plays a crucial role in bringing the issues being addressed by our planning and policy colleagues to the attention of members and media.

Reflecting the importance we place on this, we continued to increase our usage of social media platforms, refreshed the formats we use to communicate and significantly expanded our political engagement activities during the year to ensure our messages are being heard by the right people at the right time. This activity will be replicated at local level in the run-up to May's council elections.

Our event delivery also stepped up a gear during the year, with another record-breaking attendance of 1100 guests at our Annual Lunch in May and a revamping of our September lunch event to highlight how members can get more involved in our work.

For further details, contact:

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Engaging with candidates ahead of the Scottish Parliament elections to enable them to demonstrate their support for home building New Presiding Officer Ken Macintosh signing our "brick wall" with Taylor Wimpey apprentice Mark Kidd.

Private Rented Sector (PRS)

We continued to support the work of Build To Rent Private Rented Sector Champion Gerry More in his efforts to create the necessary conditions to promote the opportunities for strategic growth.

This led to the extension of the role's funding for a further year.

For further details, contact:

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The emergence of a new, professionally-managed, institutionally-invested, purpose-built private rented sector will result in the rapid and volume delivery of high quality new housing, boosting flexibility, choice and affordability. With innovative design and modern construction techniques, supplemented by new standards of professional management and service delivery, it also represents an opportunity to transform customer experience of this growing tenure

Playing Your Part:

Our 200-strong membership is playing its full role in ensuring that Scotland has enough homes of **all** tenures to meet its diverse housing needs and aspirations.

For a full listing or to find out how you can help, visit **[homesforscotland.com](https://www.homesforscotland.com)**.



#PlayYourPart

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