

The Role of Local Government and its cross sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland

21/01/2022

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's historic and contemporary built environment. BEFS is a supporting member of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

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Other relevant consultation responses from BEFS can be seen below, as many issues overlap and demand associative consideration:

[Draft Heat in Buildings Strategy, Achieving Net Zero Emissions in Scotland's Buildings Consultation](#)

[Developing Scotland's Circular Economy](#)

[Housing to 2040](#)

[Domestic Energy Performance Certificates \(EPC\) Reform Consultation](#)

[NPF4 Committee for Local Government, Housing and Planning – Call for Views](#)

[Proposals for Regulations on Local Place Plans](#)

BEFS will be responding only to relevant questions of the consultation, as below:

- 1. How effective are councils at strategic planning, budgeting, and making procurement decisions that align with net zero goals? If there are barriers, what are they?**

BEFS is mindful of the potential for different council departments working to conflicting priorities and policies, which could present barriers to a holistic approach to decisions towards net zero and effective strategic planning.

We would that consider that net zero goals being understood within the context of existing and historic built environment is essential – as a key part of housing, jobs and infrastructure for example. This would allow for strategic decisions around affordable, sustainable materials, the relevant skills to undertake repair and maintenance, and appropriate climate change adaptations.

- 2. What role can the local government planning system and local development plans do to help us reach net zero? Could the planning system do more?**

Local Development Plans can take into account our existing built environment ensuring that both the historic environment and our wider existing built environment are key a key part of planning decisions. The [draft NPF4](#) outlines spatial strategies for Sustainable, Liveable, Productive and Distinctive places, with positive approaches towards the existing built environment, including 20 minute neighbourhoods.

3. What innovation, skills and capacity are needed in the local government workforce when it comes to making net zero achievable? Does that capacity exist or are there gaps?

Local Authorities are being asked to deliver on a wide number of relatively new policies and strategies in relation to net zero – skills gaps need to be addressed and the skills put in place to deliver these. For example, [The Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) and the [draft NPF4](#) both introduce new areas that are likely to require specialist skills and expertise which in turn will require additional funding for reskilling and upskilling. We would consider that skills around net zero in relation to the historic and existing built environment – such as assessing EPC ratings - could usefully be expanded, with a recognition that this may also include drawing on external expertise

We would also highlight that to deliver the above the relevant skills, appropriate materials and supply chains for materials must be in place; recognising a skills shortage, [Skills Investment Plans](#) for Construction and for Scotland’s Historic Environment Sector provide points for expanding the skills sector across the built environment.

5. How well do councils partner with the voluntary sector and social enterprises to work towards net zero goals? Are there instances of good practice you can point to or areas where opportunities are being missed?

BEFS would highlight the work undertaken by City Heritage Trusts in partnership with Local Authorities; examples can be seen in the work of [Glasgow City Heritage Trust](#), [Stirling City Heritage Trust](#) and [Aberdeen City Heritage Trust](#) around training and grants for repair and maintenance, a key approach to buildings in supporting net zero goals. These are examples that could be taken forward more widely.

6. How well do councils involve local communities in decision-making on major net zero projects and how do they support community-led initiatives?

Local Place Plans, if well resourced, could present a solution to better incorporating and engaging local communities in decisions about their places. In BEFS [recent response to the consultation on Proposals for Regulations on Local Place Plans](#) it was noted that guidance and further clarity is needed around a number of issues around engagement, notably the lack of resourcing for either communities or Local & Planning Authorities – this was felt to be a barrier to both community involvement and the support Local Authorities can provide.

11. How are councils working with cross-sectoral partners to promote recycling and a “circular economy”?

BEFS would highlight the role the existing built environment can play in a sustainable circular economy. The embodied energy present, and the potential for positive interventions is huge. Adapting, repurposing and reusing buildings presents an enormous opportunity to provide carbon solutions, solutions which can

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provide benefits to economy, people and place. Planning and decision making as part of the planning process are an important part of maximising these benefits.

Whilst BEFS would promote maintenance, retention and reuse primarily there are also mechanisms which help to promote circularity of building materials. Material Passport schemes are being considered in various countries and the arguments for sustainability and circularity could suggest this is a path worthy of exploration – from suppliers, through procurement to building managers and those designing and building adaptations.

BEFS would reiterate that not only valuing the embodied energy in our buildings, and assessing full-lifecycle considerations, but that considering national and local policies to support a circular economy which incentivise a culture change: driving maintenance, retention, reuse and repurposing of our existing built environment – will be key to meeting Scotland’s ambitions for a circular economy, climate targets, and social responsibilities.

Other areas for consideration are:

- *Changes to taxation structures for traditional buildings*

Incentivisation for use and reuse of traditional buildings through income tax powers.

Enabling, through conservation and continued use, the full potential of Scotland’s built heritage asset by removing unequal application of taxation and VAT on restoration, maintenance and conservation works, whether through graduated relief or other fiscal incentives.

- *New Policies and Standards for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation for built heritage including development of appropriate measures for carbon, embodied energy and energy efficiency emergency:*

Incentivise a culture change, driving maintenance, retention, reuse and repurposing of existing heritage assets.

- *Recognise the unique challenges and limitations of the current assessment for energy efficiency improvements to traditionally constructed properties*

Energy efficiency is rarely assessed in ways which reflect the true benefits of these construction techniques. Review how built heritage assets are assessed and develop more appropriate assessment EPC tools for traditionally constructed properties.

BEFS responses to a number of Consultations in relation to the Built Environment can be found at: <https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/consultations/>

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference: **Publish response with name**

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise? **YES**

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