

APPOINTMENT OF VERIFIERS from 1 May 2011

THE BUILDING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The current economy

The Scottish Association of Building Standard Managers [SABSM] and all of Scotland's current Building Standard services providers – the 32 Local Authorities – would urge caution at this time of economic uncertainty in seeking any major overhaul or diminution of the current Building Standards services model.

1.2 Background and achievements

- 1.2.1 The administration of Building Standards and the responsibility for verification has always lain with the Local Authorities and has always been subject to control, constraint, review and audit. As a consequence Building Standards in Scotland have historically always been provided as a “public service” charged primarily with protecting the public interest. Importantly, ALL enforcement functions to achieve ultimate compliance lie ONLY with the Local Authorities.
- 1.2.2 Local Authorities have seamlessly adopted fundamental changes in the interpretation and administration of more flexible and challenging Building Regulations and Technical Standards to meet the demands of industry professionals and to address energy conservation, sustainability issues and compliance.
- 1.2.3 They have accepted, developed and enhanced new and accountable business planning systems, and to quote from the Optimal Economics Ltd Report “Research Project to Support the Appointment of Verifiers”, hereinafter referred to the Optimal Economics Report:
“.....there have been significant improvements in the quality of service from Building Standards departments in recent years and that the audits and balanced scorecard have resulted in a highly positive culture change in many Local Authority Building Standards departments.”

1.3 The Future

1.3.1 Local Authorities are the best placed Building Standards verification service provider to:

- React to major inward investment proposals by offering **a locally delivered one stop shop development service** linking Building Standards with other Local Authority and agency based regulatory services.
- Provide a fully integrated Building Standards service **linking non verification activities including the enforcement of unauthorised and non compliant works**.
- **Guarantee a non discriminatory service** – pre application consultation, warrant verification and full guidance through the process, and acceptance of certificates of completion for all warrants, no matter how small or large.
- **Deliver the Government's aims** of “better compliance” and “better conservation of energy use”.
- Contribute to the Scottish Government aims of **reducing CO₂ emissions from buildings** through the integrated approval process with Planning.

1.3.2 SABSM have the support and commitment from all 32 authorities to promote and act on their behalf and will continue this work with a collegiate approach and continue to build on quality service delivery to reflect the aims of the National Outcome to: *“simplify the delivery of public services and make partnerships work across organisational boundaries; provide co-operation between departments; and make best use of the innate talent and experience of its staff”*

1.3.3 SABSM and Local Authority Building Standards services will continue to work with the Scottish Government's Building Standards Division:

- in setting challenging, yet achievable targets to reflect the ever changing financial climate, and
- examine how we deliver service to meet the demands of our customers and focus on improving consistency and predictability in performance delivery nationwide in conjunction with our cross boundary Consortia.

1.3.4 The appointment of Local Authority Building Standards service providers as sole verifiers will continue, will introduce and will deliver a commitment to:

- Develop and keep under review **a national Building Standards customer charter**, setting minimum standards of service delivery and measurable performance targets and aimed at delivering customer requirements.
- Set challenging **time based performance targets** for low cost building projects, recognising their value to economic recovery.
- Support and enhance economic development in order to encourage growth in the construction industry by meeting the demands of high cost projects. We will provide **assurance of service delivery by offering processing agreements** to cover all phases of development from pre-application to project completion.
- Improve consistency and avoid repeat assessment by entering into **a national partnership agreement to accept building type design** without the requirement for individual authority review.

- **Re-evaluate how compliance is monitored and enforced**, including the use of site inspections, testing regimes and certification, in association with other construction professionals and service providers.
- Participate in regular **national customer surveys** to facilitate performance comparison, gauge customer opinion, and refine service delivery all with the aim of achieving excellence in customer satisfaction.
- **Continual improvement by** publishing Building Standards service plans/balanced scorecards and **monitoring performance against targets**.
- Provide **a qualified fit for purpose workforce**.
- Work together by benchmarking, peer review, joint working and shared training aimed at **improving the baseline quality of service delivery nationwide**.
- Engage with other service providers and construction professionals and **integrate appropriate best practice into the Local Authority model**.

1.4 Conclusion

1.4.1 To quote from the Optimal Economics Report:

“The current system of verification as operated by the Local Authorities in Scotland is acknowledged to achieve fully the objective of serving the public interest and buildings erected in Scotland are generally considered to be safe and comply with building regulations.”

1.4.2 Clearly Local Authority Building Standards service providers are best placed to meet the demands of the range of customers and to deliver a rounded Building Standards service in the public interest. Their permanent reappointment as sole verifiers will provide Councils with the confidence to fully support and invest in Building Standards as a key driver to Scotland's economic recovery.