PRESS RELEASE

1st December 2014

Addressing fuel poverty in Scotland’s traditional homes

Experts are to advise Scottish Government that fuel poverty, which already affects 27% of Scottish households¹, could be significantly reduced if steps are taken to tackle poor maintenance in traditional buildings.

Tomorrow, at an event entitled ‘Addressing Fuel Poverty in Traditional Buildings’, a group of experts will inform MSP about an initiative to reduce fuel poverty. Poor energy efficiency is a key factor in fuel poverty. Buildings that are poorly maintained are more likely to suffer from poor energy efficiency, and it’s a stark reality that an estimated 92% of Scottish buildings constructed before 1919 need some form of repair².

The initiative being put forward is an in-depth survey of residential buildings that would establish more clearly the links between energy efficiency and property condition, in particular causes of drafts and dampness inside buildings. The outcomes of the survey would help homeowners prioritise repairs to keep their properties adequately maintained, and would assist Scottish Government in producing suitable advice and encouragement.

Emily Tracey from the BGS Building Stones team, who is one of the experts presenting at tomorrow’s event, said: “Nearly half a million Scottish homes were constructed before 1919, and many have not been adequately maintained. Traditional homes can be made more energy efficient, often through relatively easy and minor interventions. The first step in tackling fuel poverty should be to keep properties well maintained, making sure they are wind and water tight. Clear information about the links between property maintenance and energy efficiency, and sound advice about appropriate repairs, would help homeowners achieve this goal.”

The day of Parliamentary events begins at 12:45pm with Emily Tracey (BGS), Chiara Ronchini (ICOMOS-ISCES) and Jamie Baker (East Lothian Council) delivering presentations about fuel poverty and traditional buildings to the Cross Party Group for Construction in the Scottish Parliament. At 5pm Nigel Don MSP will submit a motion for debate on the Parliament floor looking at the same issues. The presenters believe support here is vital if Scottish Government is to achieve its aim “to ensure that by November 2016, so far as is reasonably practicable, people are not living in fuel poverty in Scotland.”

Sarah Speirs, Director RICS Scotland, said “RICS welcomed the Scottish Government’s ‘Sustainable Housing Strategy’, and we have worked with Government Ministers and Officials in making the strategy’s ambitious vision a reality. We are committed to ensuring that traditional buildings are given equal attention to other housing types, such as new builds, when we consider energy efficiency measures. RICS endorses action that addresses poor housing conditions and makes a priority of suitable repairs and maintenance undertaken by regulated professionals.”

*Ends*
The following list of reports and background information was compiled by the 'Addressing fuel poverty in Traditional Buildings' organising committee for the attention of those attending the Parliament debate:

We believe the condition of Scotland’s properties needs to be urgently addressed by undertaking repairs to failed critical elements. Particular attention should be paid to traditional homes (pre 1919) due to highest level of disrepair and of fuel poverty.

CARBON EFFICIENCY OF PROPERTIES LINKED TO CONDITION


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dwelling Age</th>
<th>2012 Fuel Poverty</th>
<th>2012 Disrepair</th>
<th>Any Extensive Disrepair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-1919</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-1944</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-1964</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1982</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-1982</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the longer term there have been reductions across dwellings in all age bands except those constructed before 1919.

CONDITION AND FINANCIAL IMPACT

2. The Scottish Housing Condition Survey 2012 states that just over eighty percent (81%) of dwellings in Scotland have some disrepair. Older dwellings are more likely to have some form of disrepair with 92% of those built before 1919 having some disrepair compared with 54% of dwellings built after 1982.

3. Scottish Stone Liaison Group’s report, authored by the British Geological Survey, “Safeguarding Glasgow's Stone-built Heritage” found that “97% of stone buildings in Glasgow would require some repairs by 2020” with the “average cost of repair for the 24,412 stone facades of around £24,000 per façade.” That is almost £600 million in stone repairs required for Glasgow alone.

The Scottish House Condition Survey - 2009-2011 stated that 732,000 dwellings in private tenure spent just over £2 billion in that three year period.

The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland states that £600 million is spent each year on pre 1919 buildings in Scotland. Despite this the current condition is poor and property owners are not aware of the full extent of their buildings disrepair.

The Scottish Small Towns Report 2007-2013 stated that “every town surveyed had instance of serious disrepair.” The report suggested that approximately 70% of the properties surveyed would benefit from or will be required to have works carried out to remove serious defects.

LOW CARBON IMPACT

The residential sector accounts for 33% of carbon emissions in Scotland. Of the existing domestic structures we have today, 85% will still be in use by 2050 when the Climate Change (Scotland) Act has specified an 80% reduction in carbon emissions.
The Scottish Government issued *Home that don’t Cost the Earth*: a consultation on Scotland’s Sustainable Housing Strategy” and it outlined a hierarchy of needs to look after properties:

- **Make sure that your home is wind and watertight and that it is structurally sound;** make sure that it stays that way by carrying out regular maintenance.
- **Make sure that work is done properly because poor quality repairs may be ineffective and can cost more in the long run.**
- Consider retrofitting appropriate insulation.
- Make sure that your home is properly ventilated because this is essential to keep it healthy.
- Review your boiler to ensure that it is efficient.
- Ensure that points 1-5 have been addressed before considering microrenewable technology.

The Confidential Reporting on Structural Safety for Scottish Buildings report stated “When damage does occur to the envelope of a building, the energy performance of the building may be reduced, but opportunities could be taken with repair and maintenance programmes to install energy improving measures.”

The Historic Scotland Traditional Building Skills Strategy stated “A well maintenance building is one which is more energy efficient”.

Historic Scotland’s Short Guide *Fabric Improvements for Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings* states: “It should be said that proper and regular maintenance is a prerequisite to undertaking energy efficiency improvements in a traditional building. If a building is not watertight there is little point in making energy efficiency upgrades”, such as the home insulation.

**PART SOLUTION**

The Scottish Housing Condition Survey 2012 states there is only an average of 2% disrepair to both external walls and roofs while Safeguarding Glasgow’s Stone Built Heritage (which undertook more in-depth surveys) states the level of disrepair is significantly higher.

We believe there is a need for an in-depth housing condition survey to determine the true extent of Scotland’s traditional buildings and identify common areas of failure. This could be used to educate property owners in prioritising the funds spent on their home (£600M per year) to make them wind and watertight. This preventative spend would avoid increased costs of major repairs at a later date, repairs that may reduce the market value of a property.

Surveyors could also gain access to the common failures of these buildings and review them when undertaking Home Reports to ensure a more accurate reflection of the properties condition. In doing so, it will inject confidence to those considering buying traditional houses as they will know the common failures for a building of that age and build will have been reviewed.

**CONCLUSION**

- **Homes need to be wind and watertight to be fuel efficient.**
- **Need to identify common causes for water and wind ingress**
- **Need to influence home owners in prioritising the funds they spend on their house.**
- **In-depth Housing Condition Survey could assist in informing, empowering and influencing the funds spent on Scotland’s homes**
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Notes for Editors

The following are available for interview:

- Emily Tracey, BGS Building Stones, Edinburgh

The British Geological Survey

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