

PE1444/E

Housing, Regeneration and Welfare Directorate
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Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



By email to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

28 March 2013

Dear Mr Todd

PUBLIC PETITION TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT [PE1444](#)

Thank you for your letter of 1 March to the Scottish Government and Historic Scotland in relation to the above petition from Florance Kennedy which seeks incentives for mutual repairs on tenement properties.

You ask 3 questions, to which I will respond in turn.

Q1 - The Committee was interested to hear about the *development of a pilot Traditional Building Healthcheck scheme*. Please would you provide more details of the scheme?

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP hosted the *Stimulating Demand for Traditional Skills* Summit in November 2012. At the event, she highlighted the need for a new approach to stimulating proactive repair and maintenance of Scotland's traditional buildings, which form 19% of Scotland's residential building stock. She published a document summarising the findings of research, including especially the Scottish House Condition Survey, which suggests that 75% of traditional buildings show disrepair to critical elements, and 53% are in urgent need of repair.

Ms Hyslop announced that Historic Scotland will be developing and launching a *Traditional Building Health Check* scheme in pursuit of the objective to stimulate proactive repair and maintenance, and demand for traditional skills. This will see Historic Scotland working in partnership with CITB-ConstructionSkills Scotland and Stirling City Heritage Trust to develop a pilot scheme. The *Traditional Building Healthcheck* will be a subsidised subscription scheme which will provide independent inspections of traditional buildings at the request of the owner. The inspection reports will identify issues with traditional buildings, that, when addressed, will stimulate the repair and maintenance market through using appropriately skilled and qualified contractors to undertake any work identified.

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The detailed development of the pilot is underway with Stirling City Heritage Trust, with training and local stakeholder engagement planned for this year. The property inspection element of the project will commence on 1st April 2014.

For more information about the supporting literature, follow the link below to access the evidence paper summary report or the executive summary report from Stirling City Heritage Trust.

[A Scottish Monument Watch – Full report \[PDF, 4.23MB\]](#)

[A Scottish Monument Watch – Report summary \[PDF, 1.69MB\]](#)

There is also an evidence report which provides a summary of the data analysis carried out by Historic Scotland to provide evidence of the current need for proactive maintenance and repair of the traditional building stock in Scotland:

[Establishing the Need for Traditional Skills \[PDF, 677KB\]](#)

Q2 - What is the proposed timetable for publication of the final Sustainable Housing Strategy?

We plan to publish the final Sustainable Housing Strategy during the first half of 2013.

Q3 - What are your views on the points made by the petitioner in her letter of 3 February 2013?

I am sorry to hear that the petitioner did not feel that the previous response from Historic Scotland was an adequate response from the Scottish Government. Historic Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government, charged with safeguarding the nation's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment on behalf of Scottish Ministers. As such, it represents the views of Scottish Ministers, and the Scottish Government was of the view that the letter represented a collective response.

I note that Ms Kennedy asks the Scottish Government to provide grant aid to encourage repairs to historic stock, or to give its reasons why this is not supported.

Historic Scotland runs a number of grant schemes that provide assistance to owners of historic buildings. Details of all the grant schemes can be found here. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/grants.htm>

Of particular note are the conservation area regeneration schemes of which there are now 47 which are distributing £27m through individual local authorities. City heritage trusts have an annual budget of £2.5m to distribute to owners of historic properties for repair schemes.

Nevertheless, the primary responsibility to carry out and pay for repairs and maintenance to privately owned properties falls to the home owner, not the Scottish or UK Governments. Details on how tenement owners should agree on repairs to common parts of tenements can be set out in title deeds. If title deeds are silent or unclear, provision is contained in the Tenement Management Scheme contained in Schedule 1 to the Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004.

Although clearly it is the owners' responsibility to maintain their properties, we recognise that there are some owners who will need additional assistance to be able to carry out work on their homes. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 provides broad discretionary powers for local authorities to help. The kind of help provided in different circumstances is best determined by each local authority taking into account its local priorities and budgets, but may include financial assistance in the form of grants or loans, or practical advice and guidance. All local authorities must publish a statement of assistance which sets out what assistance is available in different situations.

As the petitioner and the Committee may be aware, Edinburgh City Council has been using slightly different powers under the City of Edinburgh District Council Order Confirmation Act 1991 to require repairs to properties. The Scottish Government cannot comment on an on-going investigation, but I can confirm that the powers under the 2006 Act to provide discretionary assistance, and to take action to improve properties, is available to the Council.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours Sincerely

STEPHEN GARLAND
Head of Housing Sustainability Strategy Unit