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Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 9 September where you asked me to set out answers to the following for the Committee.

Aspects of Housing to 2040:

- **Cooperation with the private sector on building new homes to achieve the ambitions of Housing to 2040**

The private sector is key to the delivery of our Housing to 2040 ambitions and we welcome continued joint working and collaboration with partners such as Homes for Scotland.

We recognise the contribution the home building industry makes to improving access to good quality housing which in turn is a vital part of our drive to secure economic growth, promote social justice, strengthen communities and tackle inequality.

As new and improved homes are delivered across all tenures, the housebuilding industry has a major role to play in delivering the ambitions of Housing to 2040 and a green recovery. We see Homes for Scotland as a key partner in helping to drive the changes set out to achieve net zero (through modernisation of housing development, increased quality standards, off-site construction, and heat decarbonisation); create jobs; and improve investment in construction skills for the future.

We recognise the contribution that the private sector makes to the delivery of our affordable homes both through direct construction and through developer contributions.

The Scottish Government has published in July this year, [research](#) on the value, incidence and impact of developer contributions which demonstrates the important linkages that exist across the housing tenures.

The report highlighted that in 2019-20 an estimated £310 million was provided through affordable housing contributions (accounting for 63% of all planning contributions).

- **Update the Committee with details of plans to support delivery of affordable homes in remote and rural areas and how the Scottish Government monitors the impact of investment in affordable homes.**

We recognise that good quality, affordable housing is essential to help attract and retain people in Scotland's remote and rural communities. The recently announced Programme for Government makes clear that the Scottish Government is committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, 70% of which will be available for social rent and 10% will be in our remote, rural and island communities.

We will develop a Remote, Rural & Islands Housing Action Plan to ensure we meet the housing needs of those areas and help sustain and grow population to these communities. This new plan will be backed by at least £45 million as part of our overall affordable housing supply programme funding over this parliament.

Local authorities as the statutory housing authority, are responsible for assessing housing need and demand and setting out in their Local Housing Strategies (LHS) priorities for housing supply and related housing services. The Scottish Government expects all local authorities to undertake annual reviews of their LHS actions and to report on progress in support of effective local monitoring.

We know the ambition to deliver 110,000 affordable homes will play a key role in helping Scotland's economy to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting a total investment package of around £18 billion and up to 15,000 jobs each year. We are considering a governance process and monitoring framework plan for Housing to 2040 which will be established later this year following discussions with key stakeholders. Housing to 2040 needs to be able to respond to emerging challenges and changing contexts so we will undertake a separate, more detailed evaluation of specific programmes and policies at appropriate points in their cycle. We will also undertake periodic reviews of Housing to 2040, setting out the progress we are making and identifying where changes might be needed.

There is also a range of statistics and indicators that are useful to consider, for example Scottish Government statistical publications such as the Social Tenants in Scotland Compendium Statistics, along with annual reports from the Scottish Household Survey, provide a range of data on the characteristics of people in social housing, including information on the protected equality characteristics of people who benefit from social housing.

- **Details of the proposed plans to work on a shared understanding of affordable housing. The Committee would appreciate detailed information on the challenges of developing this understanding and the benefits that will accrue from such a shared understanding.**

The lack of a shared understanding means that an 'affordable rent' means slightly different things to councils, housing associations, private sector landlords and tenants. We cannot ensure that a proportion of housing is genuinely affordable to households at Scottish living wage levels if we do not have a common understanding.

This is why Housing to 2040 sets out an aim to develop a shared understanding of affordability which is fit for the future and takes into account the inequalities and economics of the housing market, the financial sustainability of the affordable rented sector and the real costs of housing.

To do this we will work with, and consider the views of, a wider range of stakeholders, some of whom are not finding their needs adequately met by the market. This work is currently at an early stage.

We are in early discussions with stakeholders to identify the most effective way to take forward this shared work which will allow the greatest diversity of input while providing clear actionable output and would be happy to engage with the Committee further as work develops.

- **Timescales for legislation to introduce a new tenure-neutral housing standard. What is the purpose of this standard and how will it lead to better quality homes.**

Current housing standards allow for exceptions in some local circumstances, such as homes in rural areas, agricultural properties or hard to treat buildings. This results in the unacceptable position where those with the fewest options and the least recourse are more likely to have to live in sub-standard housing. Overall, this means we cannot guarantee that everyone has a good quality of home, regardless of whether they own it or rent it from a private or social landlord – and some homes are left behind entirely.

Our aim is that the New Housing Standard for Scotland will cover all homes new or existing, including agricultural properties, mobile homes and tied accommodation. We aim to ensure that there will be no margins of tolerance, no exemptions and no “acceptable levels” of sub-standard homes in urban, rural or island communities, deprived communities or in tenements. This will mean our existing homes will keep pace with new homes, with no one left behind.

The Standard will be aligned to the proposed regulatory standards for energy efficiency and heating. We aim to consult later this year on a new Housing Standard for Scotland; publish a draft standard in 2023 and progress legislation in 2024-25, for phased introduction from 2025 to 2030.

- **Progress the Scottish Government has made with implementing the recommendations of the Parliamentary Working Group on Tenement Maintenance and the likelihood of legislative reform by 2025.**

The Scottish Government will engage with the Scottish Law Commission (SLC) to develop a law reform project with a view to a new Tenements Bill. We anticipate that this project will produce a Bill towards the end of this Parliamentary term. Officials have asked the SLC to consider how mechanisms for cooperation between owners can also support decarbonisation measures and fire safety.

Our intention is for the Tenements Bill to be aligned with the development of the New Housing Standard for Scotland and with our planned Bill on zero emissions heating and energy efficiency, so that the three pieces of legislation will work together to support action to reduce carbon emissions in shared buildings.

We have commissioned further research on Building Reserve Funds, which was one of the recommendations from the working group. The aim of this research is to determine what the contribution levels should be for tenement owners to ensure owners, especially those in mixed tenure buildings, are able to work together towards the maintenance and upkeep of their building. We expect to receive the results of this research by the end of the year.

- **The Scottish Government’s view on the level of public awareness of the need to change the way homes are heated to help meet the net zero carbon ambition.**

The transition to decarbonised heating will affect us all. While this is a lead for the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport we agree that the decarbonisation of housing will be a vital area for collaboration across our portfolios and working with the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants’ Rights.

It will be important that we are all involved in the decisions about how our homes and buildings are to be transformed and how the transition is managed. This will need to be underpinned by increasing awareness of energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems, open and transparent decision making and an inclusive, people centred approach.

In the draft Heat in Buildings Strategy, the Scottish Government committed to developing and implementing a bespoke public engagement strategy for heat in buildings, with a focus on: raising the profile of energy efficiency and zero emissions heating options so that people are aware of the benefits and begin to see them as a positive choice; as well as enabling people to actively participate in shaping the development of policy, incentives, and local level heat and energy efficiency planning; and promoting the support that is on offer to maximise take up. Our final Heat in Buildings Strategy will confirm our approach.

- **The Scottish Government’s approach to building on the work undertaken during the pandemic to eradicate homelessness.**

Ending homelessness was already a priority for the Scottish Government prior to the pandemic and we have some of the strongest legislative rights for those experiencing homelessness in the world. This was achieved because of a common purpose – a partnership between government, the third sector and with people who have lived experience of homelessness to ensure that we have rights established in law to ensure settled, secure accommodation is seen as a right and not a privilege.

In June 2020, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group was reconvened at the Scottish Government’s request. They produced a comprehensive set of recommendations which was used to update our Ending Homelessness Together action plan and guide our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This updated action plan renews our commitment to ending homelessness by placing greater emphasis on prevention, accelerating the implementation to rapid rehousing and ending the use of night shelters and dormitory style provision. We also reaffirmed our commitment in our 2021-22 Programme for Government to ensure that everyone has a safe, warm place to call home. We will achieve this by building further on our ambitious programme of affordable housebuilding and eradicating homelessness and rough sleeping. This work will be backed by a further £50 million from our Ending Homelessness Together Fund this parliamentary term.

We do not want to see anyone returning to the streets and we have invested over £37.5 million to support councils prioritise settled accommodation for all through the implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. We will continue to work with partners, including local authorities, to ensure people are moved as rapidly as possible from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation. We will focus on preventing homelessness from happening in the first place and work will begin later this year, with partners across the sector, to implement the recommendations made by the Prevention Review Group. This pandemic has shown us what we can achieve and we want to continue to build on this progress to end homelessness and rough sleeping in Scotland for good. I will shortly present

the annual report on Ending Homelessness Together to parliament which sets out our progress against our actions to end homelessness in the last 12 months.

- **How the Scottish Government will be taking the recommendations in the Social Housing Zero Emissions Taskforce report forward.**

We welcome the report of the Zero Emissions Social Housing Taskforce. We will give the recommendations careful consideration as we continue our joint working with the social housing sector to respond to the climate emergency.

The Scottish Government remains committed to ensuring housing plays its full role in achieving net zero. Social housing has shown strong leadership on improving fabric energy efficiency, which has supported tenants to reduce their energy bills, and contributed carbon savings. This early leadership puts the sector in a position to champion and rollout zero emission heat measures in the most efficient parts of its building stock. However, we recognise that rent and fuel costs remain affordable for social housing tenants.

Fabric improvement alone will not get us close to our targets for net zero and we need to develop a stronger focus on heating system change, though without exacerbating fuel poverty. We remain committed to working with the social housing sector and encourage the sector to take full advantage of the support available including through our Social Housing Net Zero Fund through which we have allocated £30 million of investment to support decarbonisation of social housing this year.

- **The extent to which planning of new homes accounts for the requirements of housing to meet objectives of the Climate Change Plan, for example in incorporating low carbon heating infrastructure and heat networks.**

Planning for housing should not be considered in isolation from planning for places as a whole. Our current national planning policy is set out in National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy both published in 2014. These aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a variety of place-based measures and remain in-force until replaced. Resource efficiency is highlighted in the policy as one of six qualities of successful place. In addition heat networks and promoting walkable places are also included. Since then the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 includes meeting greenhouse gas emissions targets as one of six outcomes for the National Planning Framework to address.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is in preparation and the NPF4 Position Statement (November 2020) clearly establishes climate change as a guiding principle to be addressed in NPF4 and highlights a range of opportunities and potential policy changes being considered. National Planning Framework 4 will incorporate Scottish Planning Policy and will have the status of a development plan meaning it can be used to inform day to day decision making by planning authorities. We will lay a draft National Planning Framework 4 this autumn, and consult widely on it.

The Scottish Government is committed to developing regulations to ensure that from 2024, new buildings must use heating systems which produce zero direct emissions (at the point of use). We have previously consulted on our approach to achieve this through our proposed New Build Heat Standard (NBHS). The findings from this initial scoping consultation are helping to inform the development of the NBHS, with a further technical consultation planned for 2022.

In addition, we are consulting at present upon [improved minimum energy standards](#) for new homes, to be confirmed in late 2021 and implemented in 2022. Proposals include more challenging **emissions** targets for new homes with a focus on reducing heat demand, the introduction of a new energy target and action that support the aims of the proposed 2024 New Build Heat Standard.

- **The extent to which councils have the capacity to develop and implement Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies and how the Scottish Government support councils with this.**

All 32 Scottish local authorities have participated in the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) pilot programme, which tested different approaches for LHEES and built capacity within councils.

Following completion of the pilot programme in early 2021, the Scottish Government has developed a standard methodology for LHEES and is currently funding 14 local authorities to use this to build on their pilots and begin to create local authority area wide LHEES.

The Scottish Government is also working in partnership with COSLA, SOLACE and local government colleagues to establish appropriate governance and resourcing arrangements to enable LHEES to be in place across all local authority areas by the end of 2023.

I hope that the responses above address those issues you raised but please let me know if you require any further information or clarifications.

Yours sincerely,

SHONA ROBISON