

We're Housing Scotland



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Kay Blair
Chair
The Scottish Housing Regulator
Highlander House
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25th November 2011

Dear Kay

Thank you for giving SFHA the opportunity to comment on the new regulator's proposals for regulating social housing in Scotland. We enclose our submission which addresses all of your questions and highlights the key concerns of our members. Given the range of work ahead as you refine your guidance and we undertake work to Model Rules and various codes, we look forward to opportunities for frequent and detailed dialogue with you and your team in the months ahead.

SFHA represents the majority of cooperatives and housing associations of all shapes and sizes across Scotland. We have been engaging with our members to understand their views about your proposals. We found a consensus about which issues from the paper required comment and input from SFHA.

Our members are successful and diverse independent social businesses. They have a strong track record in terms of:

- the quality of housing and service provision;
- attention to the real issues about place and community which concern people.

Uniquely in the UK, many housing associations and cooperatives in Scotland have grown out of collective community action and tenants retain a strong and valued role in governance of associations generally, and especially in cooperatives. So it is too simplistic to view RSL tenants just as individual consumers needing protection from their landlord. Many of our detailed comments reflect that view.

We all value regulation and we all need to have a regulatory regime which is credible and earns the respect of the regulated bodies. We all need all RSLs to be responsible for the quality of their own organisations and to safeguard the viability of their organisations. It is not in anyone's interests to encourage mere compliance with a regulatory regime. Ever greater specification contained within these proposals risks tipping the regulator into micromanagement which you are seeking to avoid.

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You will already be aware of the most controversial aspects of the proposals – about the imposition of time limits on governing body members. We invite you to recognise the contribution made by governing body members in establishing and sustaining organisations to date in their mission to provide housing, improve lives and sustain communities. We will work with our members to support them in what we all recognise to be the importance of achieving good governance by sustaining governing body members' knowledge and skills, and by helping RSLs to get the balance right between vital experience and new blood.

You have emphasised that you are listening to views about your proposals. If you are really listening, then please withdraw your proposals to impose limits on service. We fear that it will divert attention away from service to tenants at a very difficult time for them and for our members. There are other ways to encourage and sustain good governance.

I look forward to meeting you in the near future

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mary Taylor', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Mary Taylor
Chief Executive