

Building Standards Hub – Fire Engineering Working Group

Background, Terms of Reference and Membership

Working group to take forward tasks outlined in Stage 4 of the Building Standards Hub Pilot Scope of Work

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction:

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 a [Ministerial Working Group](#) was set up to review building and fire safety regulatory frameworks. The Group commissioned two review panels for building standards; [Compliance and Enforcement](#) and [Fire Safety](#) that subsequently published their own recommendations.

Recommendation by the Review Panel on Compliance and Enforcement concluded that, whilst the core elements of the current building standards system should be maintained, some reshaping of the system is necessary to ensure that it addresses identified weaknesses. The verification delivery model is one area that has been identified as requiring reshaping. Both Review panels identified the potential for a 'national or central hub' that would provide expertise in specialist and safety critical areas of design of complex buildings.

As a result, the Building Standards Futures Programme Board was set up to provide guidance and direction on the development and implementation of the recommendations made by the Review Panels on [Compliance and Enforcement](#) and [Fire Safety](#).

The Board's remit is to strategically advise and direct a broad programme of work aimed at improving the performance, expertise, resilience and sustainability of the Scottish building standards framework and services across Scotland.

Recommendations are being taken forward through seven work streams:

- Workforce Strategy
- Compliance Plan Approach
- Certification Strategy
- Technical Strategy
- Digital Transformation
- Verification Standards
- Verification Delivery Model

This working group forms part of the Verification Delivery Model work stream, which includes the Hub Pilot project.

Background:

The LABSS options appraisal, proposing reshaping of the building standards system was considered by The Futures Board Delivery Model Working Group which resulted

Building Standards Hub – Fire Engineering Working Group

in the setting up of The Delivery Model Development Group (DMDG) to deliver the proposal.

The DMDG is a joint group between the BSD and Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) and has been established to take forward the proposal to develop and deliver the Building Standards Hub to drive change in the delivery of the Building Standards System with an aim to:

- Deliver excellent Public Service.
- Drive efficiencies.
- Increase capacity to deliver across all types of construction work.
- Ensure investment in skills and new technology.
- Provide resilience.
- Increase consistency.

The Pilot programme was established to demonstrate the viability and sustainability of the Building Standards Hub (BSH) and identify the improvements that could be made to the current building standards delivery model. This strengthening of the current delivery model includes the development of regional partnerships, the centralised administration of national building standards system services and specialist activities.

The Pilot Hub is managed and operated by two appointed Directors, one half FTE administration and technical support and the LABSS consultant. The Hub is supported by LABSS and the BSD in partnership with the host local authority (Fife Council).

The seven work subject areas being covered under the BSH Pilot are:

1. Implement a Business Plan: Monitor progress, assess benefits, assess risk, report outcomes.
2. Investigate establishing BSH - responsibilities; work sharing practices; national decisions.
3. Investigate establishing Enhanced Partnership Working – Operational Partnerships.
4. Investigate establishing a Fire Hub.
5. Investigate establishing a Structural Engineering Hub.
6. Investigate establishing a Digital Hub.
7. Investigate establishing a Knowledge and Learning hub.

These work stages are running concurrently and there is a degree of interdependence between them. As such, progress on certain stages is reliant upon development in another, also meaning that they will not necessarily progress or reach conclusion in the order presented.

This working group relates to subject area 4, this being to investigate establishing a Fire Hub.

Building Standards Hub – Fire Engineering Working Group

Remit of the Working Group:

The working group will consider its work in two phases.

Phase 1 - Creation and operation of a fire engineering hub.

Phase 2 - S34 review and related matters.

S34 refers to Section 34 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and allows for Scottish Ministers to request certain information from Local Authority verifiers. The current S34 letter requires the verifier to notify the BSD on the complexity and staff competence of those verifying applications of a particular type. The current S34 letter is provided alongside this document. Link to most recent amendment to the S34 letter covering applications using BS 8414/BR135 -

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-standards---notification-of-application-for-building-warrant-section-2-0-fire-letter-to-local-authority-verifiers/>

Remit of phase 1:

- To agree the purpose of a fire engineering hub
- To agree the type of building warrant application that the hub will consider, including clarifying/re-defining the levels of complexity currently outlined in the S34 notification requirement, this will include consideration of high-risk buildings.
- To agree the operational aspects of the hub:
 - Participants
 - Format of meetings and communication lines
 - Remuneration
- To confirm the status of hub decisions
- To discuss and agree other possible subject areas which could be considered by the hub e.g. equivalent legislative compliance pathways other than using technical handbook guidance, review of functional standards in Section 2: Fire following 17 years of implementation.

Remit of phase 2:

- Consider matters which will influence potential amendments to the current S34 instruction, such as:
 - Defining risk
 - Establishing risk categories
 - Understanding complexity of building design, construction and verification methods currently used by fire engineers and verifiers (including modelling, software used etc)
 - Development of a 'fire engineering verification method' to assist engineers and verifiers with deviations from the Technical Handbooks
 - Allocation risk assessment protocols
 - Verifier competence and qualifications
- Review current S34 instruction and propose amendments as required.
- Consider preparation of fire engineering solution assessment competency matrix based on risk, complexity, and verifier competence levels.

Building Standards Hub – Fire Engineering Working Group

Output:

This working group is intended to be a medium-life group over approximately 12-18 months. It is possible that the outcome of Phase 1 (i.e., the hub), could be used as the forum for consideration of items under Phase 2.

Governance:

Most papers which support the work of the group will be in the public domain, but some discussion may require access to confidential policy documents. Group participants may be involved in discussions that lead to the BSD developing recommendations to Ministers. Material generated by the Working Group should remain confidential while these discussions are ongoing.

It should be highlighted that information and the notes of proceedings may fall subject to the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Therefore, it may be appropriate to release notes of meetings. These meetings are conducted under the 'Chatham House Rule'. Records of meetings will not attribute comments or advice to particular members. This is to encourage openness and the free exchange of information amongst participants.

Should you find that a conflict of interest arises between your business/work interests and your role on the Working Group, we would advise that it is incumbent on you to identify such to the Chair of the Working Group. Further guidance in this regard can be provided if required. Otherwise, we would simply reiterate the need to maintain confidentiality on relevant matters.

Delivery Model Development Group:

The findings of the Working Group will be reported to the Delivery Model Development Group.

Membership

Name	Organisation
Alan McAulay (Chair)	Building Standards Hub
Stephen Garvin	Scottish Government Building Standards Division
Colin Hird	Scottish Government Building Standards Division
John Paul Breslin	LABSS
Raymond Barlow	LABSS
Peter Drummond	RIAS
Hugh McNamara	IFE
Angus Law	University of Edinburgh
Stuart Russell	NHS
Bill Connolly	NHS
Alison Scott	SFRS
Scott Thomson	Construction Scotland
Iain McLaren	RICS

Building Standards Hub – Fire Engineering Working Group

Meeting Schedule:

First meeting – 02.05.2023

Second meeting – 13.06.2023

Further meetings to be confirmed.

Publication of Working Group Papers

The final Terms of Reference, agendas and minutes of this working group will be published on the LABSS Website, Futures Board area.