

**Scottish Building Standards Hub (SBSH)  
Fire Engineering Expert Hub Working Group – sixth meeting.  
Tuesday 11 February 2025  
10:00 – 12:00**

**Attendees**

Alan McAulay, SBSH (Chair)  
John Paul Breslin, Stirling Council (LABSS)  
Raymond Barlow, Glasgow City Council (LABSS)  
Alison Scott, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
William Connolly, NHS Scotland  
Scott Thomson, University of Glasgow  
Angus Law, University of Edinburgh  
Stephen Garvin, Building Standards Division, Scottish Government  
Colin Hird, Building Standards Division, Scottish Government  
Benny Rooney, Building Standards Division, Scottish Government  
Scott Young, Building Standards Division, Scottish Government  
Peter Drummond, RIAS  
Hugh McNamara, ARUP (IFE Scottish Branch)  
Emma Emslie, SBSH  
Susan Paterson, SBSH

**Apologies**

Stuart Russell, NHS Scotland  
Iain McLaren, RICS

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the 6th meeting of this working group and introduced EE (SBSH Expert Technical Support Surveyor – Fire) & SP (SBSH Administration and Technical support Officer).

**2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

No comments were raised on the draft note of the meeting in May 2024, this note will now be published on the LABSS website.

**3. General update on Key SBSH activity**

AMCA provided an update on key SBSH developments since the previous working group meeting, as noted below:

- SBSH formally launched on the 24 May 2024, formal Ministerial launch event held in September 2024.
- First SBSH advisory board meeting held in November 2024, chair and vice chair were elected at that meeting. The Chair is Gary Mees (CIAT), and the

Vice Chair is Laura Shanks (LABSS). The next meeting of the board will be in March 2025, representation on the board comes from SOLACE, COSLA, LABSS, BSD, Certifiers, Fife Council, and the wider construction sector.

- 8 FTE staff now in place, as noted below:
  - 2 Directors
  - 1 Learning and Development Manager
  - 2 Expert Surveyors
  - 2 Technical Support Surveyors
  - 1 Admin and Technical Support Officer
  - 2.5 FTE remain vacant (1 Technical Support Surveyor, 1 L&D Officer and 0.5 Admin and Technical Support Officer)
- Now fully delivering the services previously provided by LABSS, these being the Scottish Type Approval Scheme, Information Papers and the LABSS Dispute Resolution Process. In addition, extensive work continues around learning and development.

#### **4. Outcomes of discussion with the SBSH Operational Support Group**

AMCA noted previous work undertaken to update the Operational Support Group on the progress of this working group, this also included a summary of SBSH work to date and the wider context of this work. A summary of this discussion with the Operational Support Group was shared with the members of the working group via email in November 2024.

That communication noted that the creation of the permanent SBSH and the work during the pilot period created a stronger working relationship with stakeholders than existed in previous years.

In addition, it was noted that the work over the last few years has provided information on the small number of 'complex' applications typically received in Scotland.

AMCA advised that the Operational Support Group agreed that it may be more appropriate and proportionate and less bureaucratic to facilitate support to verifiers on rare 'complex' applications through an 'operational partnership model', where the SBSH 'brokers' a relationship between the verifier and relevant SME directly, as opposed to this being formalised through a specific hub.

The Operational Support Group also agreed that a collaborative forum is still considered appropriate for non-direct verification related matters i.e. those of wider national interest.

#### **5. SBSH direct support – examples**

AMCA referred working group members to the supporting information paper for this meeting which outlines examples of direct support currently being provided by the SBSH.

This direct support is in the following areas:

- General inquiry support to verifiers and other stakeholders
- Fire engineering peer review support to verifiers
- Dispute resolution processing
- STAS alternative to design support
- Information paper publication
- Learning and development

The purpose of providing this information is to give an idea of the type and volume of activity being managed by the SBSH directly without having to seek further support.

AMCA noted specific examples of the support being provided, some of which involve medium complexity design solutions.

Working group members sought clarification on the processes which support the provision of such advice. In response AMCA outlined the administrative processes introduced by the SBSH to record, validate, and respond to such enquiries.

Working group members also raised the issue of the status of any SBSH advice, how and who should make contact and whether there is a payment for the provision of such advice. AMCA confirmed that anyone can contact the SBSH and noted that contact details are on the SBSH website. AMCA also confirmed that while advice may be provided by the SBSH, the Local Authority Verifier still makes the decision to grant any building warrant application. AMCA also noted that no fee is applicable for the provision of this general advice.

## **6a. FireHub - Operational partnership**

AMCA outlined the principles of this area of FireHub support, as noted below.

In situations where a verifier requires support on a particular building warrant application that includes elements of complex fire engineering, which are beyond the competency of the staff within the SBSH, the SBSH will engage with relevant organisations to source the necessary support required by the verifier.

AMCA noted the advantages of the operational partnership approach, these being:

- Reduced administrative arrangements
- Potentially quicker support to the verifier
- SME would not attract any additional professional liability
- More proportionate to the nature and incidences of complex construction in Scotland.

The working group agreed to this approach being taken forward, with a period of review, reflection, and adjustment to be undertaken once the approach is embedded within the system.

In response to this agreement, the SBSH will take forward the following actions:

- Formal notification of this agreement to the SBSH Operational Support Group (Complete).
- Relevant process information to be outlined on the SBSH website (Ongoing).
- Update to LABSS members at MM/GM's (Complete)

Post meeting note - While formal arrangements for the operational partnership approach are ongoing, any verifier wishing support on an application which includes complex fire engineering can approach the SBSH at any time to discuss the provision of such support. It has also been confirmed that the SBSH will cover any reasonable costs associated with the creation of an operational partnership between the verifier and the relevant subject matter expert.

## **6b. FireHub - Collaborative forum**

AMCA outlined the principles of a collaborative forum which are also outlined in the supporting papers for the meeting.

AMCA clarified that discussions and outcomes from the forum would not relate to specific building warrant applications but could be used to inform future LABSS Information Papers. AMCA added that discussions could also support future learning and development priorities and inform specific research projects which could be undertaken by the SBSH.

It is expected that membership of the FireHub Collaborative Forum would be similar to the membership of this working group.

AMCA provided examples of current areas of discussion which could be considered by the FireHub Collaborative Forum.

The working group also agreed to this approach being taken forward.

Action - SBSH will take forward steps to set up, coordinate and administrate the FireHub Collaborative Forum.

Such arrangements will be reviewed and agreed by the FireHub Collaborative Forum as part of its first meeting.

## **7. Next Steps**

Actions resulting from discussions at this meeting are summarised below:

FireHub - Operational partnership:

- Formal notification of this agreement to the SBSH Operational Support Group (Complete).
- Relevant process information to be outlined on the SBSH website (Ongoing).

- Update to LABSS members at MM/GM's (Complete)

FireHub - Collaborative forum:

- SBSH will take forward actions to set up, coordinate and administrate the FireHub Collaborative Forum.

## **8. AOB and Date of Next Meeting**

The agreed outcomes from this meeting will formally close this working group. AMCA thanked everyone for participating.

End.