

Formal link announced between the Scottish, English and Welsh building standards organisations

By Paul Everall

I am very pleased to announce, within LABC, that LABSS (Local Authority Building Standards Scotland) and LABC (Local Authority Building Control in Wales and England) have made a formal agreement to join together on key activities.

Both LABSS and LABC pledge to work together to promote and provide:

- a) independent, public sector regulatory standards and practices that are used to ensure safe, efficient, sustainable, healthy and accessible buildings;
- b) research on best practice, technical development and support for innovation within the building industry and positive support of regulatory policy;
- c) practical help to customers - building professionals, manufacturers, developers, contractors, trades, communities and property owners.

The primary reason for this agreement is for both organisations to build the case for building standards systems built on the public service ethos and to influence policy at government level in Scotland, Wales and England.

In addition, LABSS and LABC will align and jointly deliver some services, to develop customer support, improve efficiency and consistency. To this end both organisations will create working groups to develop research, policies, technical guidance and improve customer relationship management. This cooperation will commence with specific schemes and actions and be allowed to develop as additional activities or value added services are found to be relevant. As well as improving technical functions, development will also support 'smarter working' to improve local authority efficiencies, plus local authority collaboration to share services.

Paul Everall, LABC's Chief Executive comments on the new Agreement. *"We welcome our new working relationship with colleagues in Scotland. We have an enormous amount in*

common, not just technical matters, but also through providing excellent services to our communities and to the construction industry. By working together we will have a larger research base and be able to share the development of new approaches to our work and to improving performance.”

Muir Somerville, Chair of LABBS adds to Paul’s comments. *“It is a fact that we share customers and that major manufacturers and distributors work across our national borders. It makes sense and will be more efficient to share information and to give customers and industry a more streamlined service. Whilst the administrative mechanisms of our systems are different, the underlying technical standards and design requirements are actually very similar. By pooling our resources and working together we can deliver better value. In the final analysis we are all committed to building safe, environmentally sound and high performing buildings.”*

A number of specific initiatives are being worked on. The alignment of LABSS’s Scottish Type Approval Scheme and LABC’s Registered Details schemes is a top priority so that building designers, specifiers and manufacturers can get more pre-approval of solutions and designs. Other tasks include adding additional customer services, products and partnerships. Joint research on technical matters, compliance outcomes and customer opinion will also be shared.