



SPF VOICE

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Could this be the future for
Green FreePorts in Scotland?
See our Policy Insights inside...

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It is with great sadness that I begin my first Chair's column with a tribute to Mandy Catterall, Head of Government Relations at the SPF until recently. Mandy was unexpectedly taken from us after a short illness and passed away with family present in hospital on 1 July. Thank you to the many members who have written in to express their shock and respects for Mandy, who worked for SPF with dedication, professionalism and a fair sense of humour for over a decade.

Annual Conference

Although at the time we could not foresee the terrible news I reported above, it was good to see so many familiar – and new – faces at our recent annual conference at the EICC. With around 200 people attending in-person and others watching the live stream, it was a fantastic return to our major events series after a long hiatus, and the team and I look forward to building on this going forward.

What struck me from the various panel sessions at the conference was the sense of collegiality that emerged between contributors, regardless of whether they were from the private sector or representing central or local government. From addressing the challenges faced in the planning system to turning around the fortunes of our town and city centres, it was heartening to see a collective vision emerge from the sessions and a mutual understanding that collaboration will be essential going forward.

And the need for collaboration is just as critical as ever as, yet again, we enter another period of economic uncertainty. The significant impacts of rising construction

and occupational costs and material shortages, as well as constrained public sector budgets and a lack of labour are just a few of the challenges that lie ahead for the Scottish real estate industry. All will require co-operation to address if we are to ensure that our built environment is in the best possible position to meet the changing and diverse needs of communities across Scotland and that our buildings support the transition to a net zero economy.

Fostering these relationships and facilitating these discussions will be my priority during my term as SPF Chair, not just between the industry and local and national governments, but within the industry too. Already in June, members and local authority officials have met to discuss regional priorities and investment, and we are looking to expand on existing links with the wider-industry and public sector organisations, too.

Before I sign off, I would like to give my congratulations to the Scottish board members of the BPF Futures junior professionals' network who pulled off a spectacular Scottish launch event at Brodies office in Edinburgh. The in-person event brought together 75 of our industry's future leaders to network and hear a little more about what the BPF Futures can offer. One of these benefits is access to a mentorship scheme starting in September. If you would like to volunteer to become a mentor or take part as a mentee, please do get in touch with Murray (mhorn@bpf.org.uk).

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POLICY INSIGHTS

WILL GREEN FREEPORTS STOKE INVESTMENT?

In a welcome collaboration, Scottish and UK Ministers have agreed a process for approving two Scottish Green Freeports. On 20 June five Bids were submitted from a combination of authorities across Scotland. The bids include Orkney Green Freeport; Aberdeen and Peterhead Green Freeport; Clyde Green Freeport; Forth Green Freeport; and Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport. The successful bids will need to prove that they will deliver sustainable and productive employment and economic development. The Scottish Government is determined that there will be an emphasis on quality jobs that will support the country's transition to a net zero economy. The current timeline is that the successful bids should be announced by the end of August. This coincides with the present Scottish Government Permitted Development Rights consultation which closes on 3 August, whereby PDR within ports areas is specifically addressed.

The proposal for 'green freeports' is not without controversy and the experience of enterprise zones has also had mixed responses from members historically. However, the freeports concept is one that is being taken forward strongly in England and there is therefore a question of retaining competitiveness. Certainly, the aim of supporting infrastructure and investment through the Green Freeports model is enticing and UK officials have acknowledged the Scottish prospectus benefited from learning the lessons of England's earlier bid process.

SCOTTISH PBSA REVIEW MOVES AHEAD

Next month, the university researchers leading the government's review of the PBSA, known as CaCHE, the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, will submit their findings to government officials overseeing the review. The research will then inform official advice to be presented to Scottish Ministers that will determine the proposed future regulation of the PBSA sector in Scotland. We do expect there to be public consultation in the usual manner, but the government's proposals leading that consultation will have been greatly informed by the CaCHE research. The research itself focuses on issues of affordability, well-being and the relationship between the

private sector student accommodation providers, institutions and local authorities. This research has conducted a well-informed survey, with nearly 1,000 student respondents as well as qualitative interviews with students and stakeholders.

There is a separate consideration which is that officials are also considering the relationship between the PBSA and local taxation contributions. We understand that officials will also provide advice to Ministers on proposals for local taxation and the PBSA in Autumn. We believe that any such consideration needs to be holistic and consider other factors, such as the cost of HMOs in Scotland. One conclusion should be drawn from these initiatives: the PBSA is likely to see some significant regulatory and potentially tax proposals within the next 6-12 months.

COVID LEGISLATION USED TO CHANGE RESIDENTIAL TENANCY LAW

Scottish private rented sector landlords face further uncertainty on repossession as the government has decided to retain emergency coronavirus powers that changed tribunal determinations on grounds of repossession to be discretionary rather than, for some grounds (rent arrears, looking to sell a property). There is also the retention

of pre-action protocols by landlords to support tenants in rent arrears. The SPF argued that these proposals were not appropriate, premature and were un-costed. Other organisations such as the Scottish Association of Landlords, Scottish Land & Estates and even the National Trust for Scotland made similar arguments. Despite a well-fought debate and argument in the Scottish Parliament, the government carried the day with its Green Party partners. In a likely sign of proposals to come when we do see a Housing Bill, to implement the current A New Deal for Tenants – the draft rented Sector Strategy consultation, Scottish Labour MSP Mercedes Vialba attempted to introduce an outright right freeze on private rented residential sector tenancies throughout Scotland until 31 December 2024. This was one of the most bitterly debated amendments of the day with the proposal eventually going down by 94 votes to 21 – Scottish Labour voting for the amendments and all other parties opposing.



REGIONAL INSIGHTS

Inverness

Highland Council closes proposed plan consultation for Inner Moray Firth

The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan proposal has closed. This area covers Inverness as well as key settlements along the Moray Firth. The plan highlights key opportunities for housing and economic development. Meanwhile **Opportunity Cromarty Firth Green Freeport** is one of the bids under consideration by Scottish Ministers. The SPF is due to meet with Highland Council in early September.

Aberdeen

SPF hosts Invest Aberdeen at 210 Bistro

SPF members and guests met for an informal dinner on 23 June together with Invest Aberdeen.

The dinner discussed key developments in the north-east. This included the bid for a green freeport by Aberdeen and Peterhead, submitted on 20 June.

Glasgow

SPF and Beaufort capital host Glasgow City Council at regional dinner

On 16 June at the Glasgow Grand Central, the SPF held a small dinner with Glasgow City Council and key developers, kindly sponsored by Beaufort Capital. The meeting covered a range of issues focused on supporting development investment in the city and addressed the potential of wider regional opportunities. Meanwhile, the **Clyde Green Freeport Bid** was submitted on 20 June to UK and Scottish Ministers.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh and Fife launch Firth of Forth Green FreePort Bid

On 20 June, a bid support by businesses, academic and public authorities including comprising Edinburgh, Falkirk and Fife councils, INEOS, Forth Ports and Babcock, submitted a bid for Green Freeport status.

This bid covers the length of the Firth of Forth from Leith through to Grangemouth. Details may be obtained [here](#).

ENVIRONMENT



NET ZERO PLEDGE

Together we can speed up the pace of change

Sign up now

bpf.org.uk/net-zero-pledge

#bpfnetzeropledge



Are you ready to take the BPF Net Zero Pledge?

The target of reaching net zero will require all SPF and BPF members to show leadership and to make real and meaningful commitments to drive the transition to a net zero sector.

The built environment is a major source of carbon emissions, responsible for around 40% of emissions globally. This is why many members have already made great strides in reviewing their operations and their impact on the environment and set stretching targets – often dedicating entire teams to driving forward their sustainability strategies. However, not all members have the resources or bandwidth to enact change now.

That's why we're launching our Net Zero Pledge and asking all of our 400 corporate members, small and large alike, to work together to reach net zero. To help explain more about the pledge, we've answered a few frequently asked questions below.

Who can take the Pledge?

All existing BPF-SPF members are eligible to take the Pledge. New members will be encouraged to take the Pledge as part of the process of joining the BPF.

What commitments do I make when I take the Pledge?

Members who take the Pledge commit to three principal actions:

- commit to setting net zero carbon targets and plans;
- commit to sharing research, knowledge and insight on an open-source basis; and
- members commit to supporting each other, and the wider industry, to accelerate the transition to net zero.

Why should I take the Pledge?

If you take the Pledge, you'll join a community of organisations committed to tackling climate change and to driving the decarbonisation of their businesses and

assets. You will also have access to expertise from across the sector and the potential to share with, and learn from, peers.

You'll also be making a public commitment and helping to show how the industry is determined to play its part in the transition to a net zero UK.

How do I take the Pledge?

You can apply to take the Pledge online. As part of the application process, you'll be asked to complete a short questionnaire. We may also be in touch for more information if necessary. Once approved, we'll send confirmation that you have taken the Pledge.

Is there a fee involved?

No. There is no fee or charge involved in taking the Pledge.

My organisation doesn't have net zero targets and plans in place yet. Can I still take the Pledge?

Yes! However, you must commit to setting net zero targets and having a plan in place within one year of taking the Pledge.

We recognise that it can take time to develop plans, and that the first step is often to develop a baseline against which carbon reduction targets can be set. We will be providing resources to members to help set targets and develop plans.

Does the BPF-SPF have net zero targets and plans?

We're currently working with Planet Mark, a UN Race to Zero partner, to develop our own net zero targets and plans. They will also independently verify our work and progress.

Where can I get more information or take the Pledge?

If you would like to find out more, please contact Rob (Assistant Director – Sustainability, BPF) or have a look at our [website](#).

Think you're ready to take the Pledge? That's great, you can get started [here](#)