



SPF VOICE

APRIL 2024

2024 CONFERENCE SPECIAL

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Maria Francké

SPF Chair

Director Maria Francké Planning

Rarely has the old adage a week is a long time in politics been more apparent. As I (re) write this column the balance of power at Holyrood remains finely balanced with the dramatic events of Thursday (25 April), when Humza Yousaf abruptly ended the Bute House Agreement for Government with the Scottish Greens. On Monday this week, events have taken a further course with the resignation of the First Minister. The end of the Bute House Agreement in Scottish politics occurred just one day after our annual conference held in Glasgow, at the University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre. Thank you once again for such strong support at this new venue, and in particular to our sponsors from Robertson Group, Ocean Terminal, Invest Aberdeen, Invest Dundee, Invest Edinburgh and from our host city, Invest Glasgow.

Our conference theme of 'Creative Places for a New Economy' was addressed by some 29 industry experts and politicians from across the political spectrum. We took the opportunity of the presence of key politicians to deliver another clear message to the Scottish government that their Housing Bill proposals for rent controls, unless amended, will potentially deter £billions of investment in new homes and economic benefit for Scotland. We have already reinforced this message publicly in view of the decision of the First Minister to end the Bute House Agreement.

The conference again supported a strong element of BPF Futures, as well as our new colleagues from the UK PropTech Association. This was the second successful Futures event in little over a week, as on the 16th April with huge thanks to Shepherd + Wedderburn our Vice Chair, Drum's Stuart Oag, successfully chaired a high level breakfast question and answer panel session with Megan Greene, a Monetary Policy Committee member for the Bank of England alongside Will Dowson, Agent for Scotland for the Bank. Just under 60 Futures members were able to benefit from hearing first hand from one of the economic decision makers in the UK and learn more of the connection with the role of the MPC and its wider impacts on the UK economy and real estate sector.

To end on a further positive note, it was a delight for me to formally announce on the day that Jonathan Guthrie of Robertson Group has kindly agreed to become our incoming Vice Chair. Jonathan is very well known and connected with many of you and he brings a hugely valuable range of experience across central and local government, as well as extensive private sector know how and expertise.

Welcome Jonathan!

Yours sincerely,

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A little peek at what we've got planned

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OT

SPF Annual Conference



Keynote Speeches

Maira Francké, SPF Chair & Maria Francké Planning

BPF's CEO, Melanie Leech led off the formalities for our 24 April Annual Conference by inviting our Chair, Maria Francké, to make the opening address to the 250 strong conference audience. In her address the Chair highlighted the challenges facing the industry with rent control policy being the single most critical issue that SPF members had raised during the year – but with the planning system and NPF4 following close as core concerns. Maria thanked the SPF members for their support and input into multiple areas of government consultation and stressed that it was vital that the industry came together to contribute to the political challenges of the day because ultimately the regulations, policies and taxes that flowed from these engagements affected our working environment.



Mark Allan, BPF President and Landsec CEO

Our next speaker, Landsec's CEO Mark Allan brought a perspective from one of the UK's few FTSE 100 registered property companies. Mark is also the current President of the BPF and has led their preparations for the impending UK General Election this year. Mark underlined his belief not only in the importance of the industry to the UK economy and communities, but the role of the sector in providing solutions to challenges facing governments across the UK in terms of economic growth, jobs and housing.



Daniel Johnson MSP, Scottish Labour Spokesperson for the Economy, Business and Fair Work

The platform was therefore set to hear from our final keynote speaker, Scottish Labour's Daniel Johnson MSP, Scottish Labour spokesperson for the Economy, Business and Fair work. In an impromptu address made without notes, Mr Johnson spoke to the audience about his belief in the importance of the industry in building economic growth as well as providing much needed investment. He highlighted the need to address the supply challenge to tackle the housing crisis. On which point, Mr Johnson set the scene for a detailed discussion with the Housing Minister covered elsewhere in this Voice...



Panel Sessions

Attracting New Investment for Communities

Panellists: **Gillian McLees**, **Paul McLennan MSP**, Minister for Housing; **Chris Stewart**, Chris Stewart Group; **Ed Crockett**, Europa Capital; **James Blakey**, Moda Living.

With the Housing (Scotland) Bill only recently introduced, delegates eagerly awaited the opportunity to question the Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan MSP on how exactly he sees the legislation will drive investment into new homes. The panel session began with the Minister providing insights on his vision to increase the number of homes of all tenures emphasising the importance of working closely with the industry to ensure Scotland is the most attractive place to invest. The audience and other panellists were quick to highlight that the Housing Bill is at odds with this vision and has simply 'killed the market' and 'turned off the taps for investment'. An impromptu vote was initiated by the panel showing a large proportion of the audience not convinced that the Housing Bill would do anything to improve the supply of housing. Panellists also argued that Scotland is not only competing for investment against other UK cities but also on an international scale where investing in areas that do not have rent controls is far less risky.



Achieving a Sustainable Built Environment

Panellists: **Alan Stark**, SPF Sustainability & Building Design Committee chair, **Patrick Harvie MSP**, Minister for Zero Carbon, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights; **David Steen**, UKGBC, **Mairi Murray**, BakerHicks and **Peter Kerr**, Atelier Ten.

The panel kicked off with Ministerial insights from Patrick Harvie MSP on the Scottish Government's plans to decarbonise the built environment and how the Heat in Buildings Bill will play a key role in that. He mentioned the bill will be introduced in this session of the Parliament where the consultation on this Bill was closed last month. In the last financial year (2022-23), £170m of funding through government's schemes helped over 138,000 households through the Home Energy Scotland advice service. The panellists were quick to mention the need of certainty. It took 3 years after the publication of the Heat in Buildings Strategy for the framework of this Bill to appear and we are only 21 years away from the 2045 targets.

After last week's announcement of the government turning their back on their 2030 target, uncertainty continues to loom over the industry who are left without any guidance on decarbonising the non-domestic sector. Panellists also highlighted supply chain issues and the lack of green skills and technology. The Minister mentioned they are constantly relaying the issue of reducing the unit price of electricity to the UK Government to incentivise the use of electricity.

The panellists argued that practical issues in tenements and older buildings makes it almost impossible to be connected to a heat network. The Minister reassured that technology will come into the market soon, enabling tenements to be connected to district heat networks. The panel conveyed that instead of adding more carbon to our buildings and importing materials, there should be a focus on using vernacular building materials.

The audience raised the concern of a huge disconnect between the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the Heat in Buildings Bill. The Minister reassured the government will make sure that both the Bills work together.



Assuring a sustainable future



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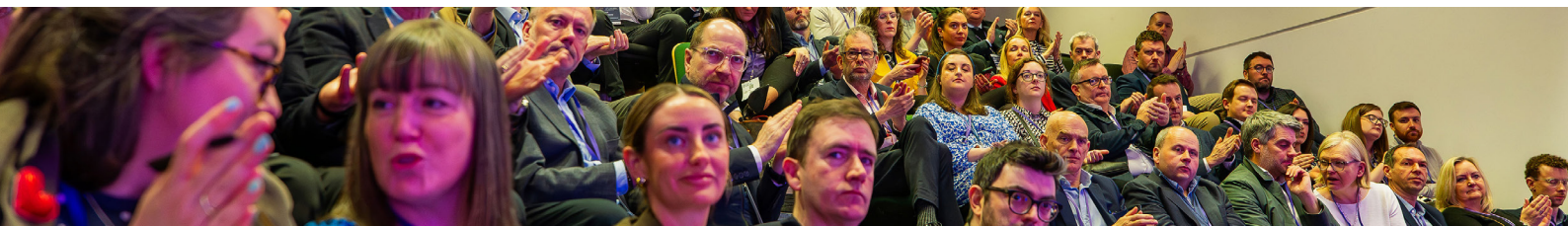
How do we Create Great Places?

Panellists: **Maria Francké**, SPF Chair and Maria Francké Planning, **Craig McLaren**, National Planning Improvement Champion, **Sarah Shaw**, Glasgow City Council, **Jonathan Guthrie**, Robertson Group, **Daniel McKendry**, Architecture and Design Scotland.

This panel mainly focused on the role of planning in delivering great places. Craig McLaren, the National Planning Improvement Champion provided insights on his recent engagements with stakeholders where certainty of a masterplan, leadership to deliver it and the lack of resources and funding were found to be the most pressing issues. It is estimated that 730 planners are needed over the next 10-15 years to cover the projected growth of the entire sector. The planning department workforce has seen a decline of 16% across Scotland and is at their lowest level in five years. This is coupled with a 28.6% decrease in planning expenditure in past twelve years.

The panellists echoed Craig's concerns and emphasised the need for a balanced approach by engaging both investors and people who live in places. The audience raised concern over improving the planning process and how it can become a platform for investment. Craig said this is a common concern and he is engaging with bodies like HOPS to have greater collaboration and the new role of Chief Planning Officers in each authority will guide this. He also recommended the apprenticeship programme to bring in new young planners directly into the professional and re-employing retired planners on a flexible basis.

Another aspect of improving the planning performance was focused on digitisation to help with fast pacing of processes. Budgetary cuts have impacted that, but Daniel recommended the role of AI in aligning data and reducing duplication on platforms like GIS, more interactive online consultation for better reach and engagements with community and stakeholders.



A Modern Approach to Real Estate

Panellists: **Sammy Pahal**, UKPropTech Association; **Emily Brodie**, TFT; **Angus Lutton**, Buccleuch Property; **Iain Smith**, Brodies; **Katherine Gunderson**, Grand Bequest.

This panel was a collaboration between BPF Futures, our junior professional network and our recent merger, the UKPropTech Association. The format was a debate on whether technology can help bridge divides or serves to widen gaps in the property industry. A quick poll of the audience pre-debate revealed that most of the audience thought technology bridged divides. Team 'bridging divides' provided some useful examples of how technology has created new opportunities for businesses and employees to operate anywhere in the world and the swift adoption of technology and hybrid work patterns has created greater flexibility particularly for parents and carers. On the other hand, panellists argued the importance of a physical office environment for learning and development particularly in early careers and the knock-on effects in the city centre economies as a result of increased home working. The debate ended with another audience poll revealing slightly more people thought that technology widened differences than before but overall technology was perceived to bridge gaps in the property industry.



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Dundee **CHANGING**
FOR THE FUTURE

Revitalising our Towns and Cities

Panellists: **Stuart Oag**, Drum Property Group; **Cllr John Alexander**, Dundee City Council, **Diarmaid Lawlor**, Scottish Futures Trust; **Jen Lawie**, Aberdeen City Council; **Michelle MacLeod**, Ocean Terminal.

Our final panel was chaired by SPF Vice Chair and Drum Property Group Director Stuart Oag and in many ways encapsulated the themes the conference had considered throughout the day. Beginning with insights from the Leader of Dundee City Council, and Chair of the Scottish Cities Alliance, Councillor John Alexander the panel highlighted examples of positive regeneration and reinvestment. Councillor Alexander highlighted the crucial need for collaboration with the private sector. This theme was built on by Diarmaid Lawlor from the SFT, who made an impassioned plea for deeds not just words, noting the abundance of strategies and proposals to support regeneration over many years. Jen Lawie from Aberdeen City Council explained the need for proactive intervention with the Union Street Initiative with a key focus on increasing footfall. From the private sector Jonathan Guthrie from Robertson Group underlined the need for strong strategic partnerships between private and public sectors. Michelle Macleod added to this by highlighting the importance to town centre regeneration of long term investors such as that demonstrated by Ambassador Group with their Ocean Terminal investment in Edinburgh.



What you said on the day about key issues

28.5% would prioritise investment in infrastructure

Our conference comperé Melanie Leech invited the audience to give their thoughts on our industry's key issues. The SPF team had identified 5 main issues that we have heard highlighted in our engagements with members in the past year. We asked the conference to rate these issues in order of importance. The results were very close with 28.5% people voting for investment in infrastructure as top priority, closely followed by building more homes with 24.33% votes and 21.33% voting for investing in planning resources. We will continue our engagement with the government in relaying these and wider industry issues.



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The Aberdeen City Region is a world-class business location with a rich industrial, commercial and international heritage. The region is benefiting from investment on a significant scale, with nearly £16 billion of public and private infrastructure investment due to be delivered over the next decade. This investment pipeline will create an energised, connected and revitalised region, with an increased importance on regenerating the city and town centres.

The Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan is a 25-year regeneration programme which will deliver 50 economic, infrastructure, environmental and community projects, transforming the city centre while conserving its proud heritage. Aberdeen City Council is working in partnership with regional organisations on 'Our Union Street', a joint venture which aims to breathe new life into the city's main street. Among many initiatives in the programme, the Council has launched a £500,000 Empty Shops Grant Scheme to support property owners and new or potential tenants on Union Street.

The region's coastal towns are also a priority, with £20 million from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund awarded to Aberdeenshire Council for the

refurbishment of Macduff's Marine Aquarium and the development of the Peterhead Cultural Project. Last month, Peterhead was also awarded £20 million from the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns programme to regenerate the town centre over the next decade, a transformational initiative which will boost Peterhead's local economy and improve quality of life for residents.

As one of Scotland's first two Investment Zones, the region will be supported with up to £160 million in targeted investment, tax reliefs and other incentives over ten years. The North East Scotland Investment Zone will boost productivity, accelerate innovation-led business growth and provide more high-priority jobs in the region through targeted investment in the priority sectors of Green Energy and Digital Tech.

With the region's ambitious investment pipeline and huge economic potential, there has never been a better time to invest in the Aberdeen City Region. Invest Aberdeen is on hand to welcome you here, providing a single point of contact to explore opportunities for your business.



SAVE THE DATE
SPF Annual Dinner
Thursday

10
October
2024

EICC - Edinburgh

6pm-late