



Consultation on Fire and Smoke Alarms in Scottish Homes

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

This is a joint response from NAEA Propertymark and ARLA Propertymark

NAEA Propertymark is the UK's leading professional body for estate agency personnel; representing more than 11,000 offices from across the UK property sector. These include residential and commercial sales and lettings, property management, business transfer, auctioneering and land.

ARLA Propertymark is the UK's foremost professional and regulatory body for letting agents; representing over 9,000 members. ARLA Propertymark agents are professionals working at all levels of letting agency, from business owners to office employees.

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Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

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We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

X Yes

No

Questionnaire

Question 1: Do you think that there should be a new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in social rented housing?

Yes X No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that there should be a new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in social rented housing. Many vulnerable tenants are housed in social rented housing and we want to see fire safety standards increased across all tenures.

1 (a): If yes, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property? (see paragraph 19)

Yes X No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that a new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in social rented housing should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property. It is sensible that tenants receive the same level of protection irrespective of the type of housing tenure they occupy. This is particularly important in mixed tenure buildings.

1 (b): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply to social rented housing? If so, please give details.

We do not think that another standard should apply to social rented housing.

Question 2: Do you think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum standards, regardless of tenure, in all tenements and blocks, regardless of height?

Yes X No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum

standards, regardless of tenure, in all tenements and blocks, regardless of height. We agree with the Common Housing Quality Standard Forum that a large fire in a tenement or block of flats is likely to affect other flats in the same building. Therefore it is important that standards are consistent and fire can be detected properly.

2 (a): Alternatively, do you think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum standards, regardless of tenure, only within tenements and blocks higher than 18 metres?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

No, we do not think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum standards, regardless of tenure, only within tenements and blocks higher than 18 metres. We want to see robust fire safety standards for all residential buildings regardless of height.

2 (b): If you are in favour of a standard for flats, whether in all buildings or only those over 18 metres tall, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that the standard for flats, whether in all buildings or only those 18 metres tall should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property.

2 (c): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply? If so, please give details.

We do not think that another standard should apply.

Question 3: Do you think that there should be a common new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in all housing, regardless of tenure?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that there should be a common new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in all housing regardless of tenure. The London Fire Brigade warn that people are four times more likely to die in a fire in the home if there is no smoke alarm. Therefore it is vital that every single home in the UK has a fire alarm fitted.

3 (a): If yes, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

We do think that a common new standard for fire and smoke detectors in all housing, regardless of tenure should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property.

3 (b): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply?

Yes No Don't know If so, please give details?

We do not think that some other standard should apply.

Question 4: Do you think that any new standards should require fire and smoke detectors to be interlinked in different flats in the same building?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

We do not think that any new standards should require fire and smoke alarms to be interlinked in different flats in the same building. This could lead to unwanted fire alarm signals. However, interlinked alarms could be deemed necessary in higher risk properties. If interlinked alarms were introduced, we recommend that residents in flats receive clear guidance on evacuation procedures.

Question 5: If we introduce a new minimum cross-tenure standard, do you think that it should require fire and smoke detectors in common areas?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that a new minimum cross-tenure standards should require fire and smoke detectors in common areas. Whilst we recognise that alarms in communal areas could be set off accidentally and cause nuisance, we believe that the benefits of having them out-ways this possibility.

Question 6: Do you think that it would be acceptable to specify battery alarms in new standards, provided these meet the minimum criteria?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think it would be acceptable for the new standard to specify a minimum criteria for battery alarms. We believe that sealed battery alarms, designed to last the

lifetime of the unit (at least ten years), would provide the most adequate level of protection across all tenures, both in terms of longevity and cost.

6 (a): This would involve a change to the current Private Rented Sector guidance which requires mains wired smoke alarms. Please let us know your views about this.

Replacing mains-powered alarms can be complicated and costly since an electrician is needed to carry out the work. Therefore, we agree that if interlinking sealed battery units, with a warning device to alert occupiers to the expiry of the unit, were introduced then the current Private Rented Sector guidance should be updated. Any new guidance should give landlords the option to move to sealed battery units or maintain hard-wired alarms.

Question 7: Do you think that a minimum standard should specify a maximum age for alarms?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that a minimum standard should specify a maximum age for alarms. Studies show that ageing alarms can experience reduced sensitivity.

If yes, do you agree that the maximum age should be 10 years? If not, what alternative?

We agree that smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years, but the maximum age for alarms should also reflect the manufacturers' guidelines.

Question 8: Do you think that there should be any change to the rules on the location of alarms in the minimum standard?

Yes No Don't know If so, what?

We do not think that there should be any changes to the rules on the location of alarms in the minimum standard. The guidelines are already very prescriptive.

Question 9(a). Do you think there should be any other changes considered for any new standard for social landlords and owner occupiers

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

We do not think there should be any other changes considered for any new standard for social landlords and owner occupiers or the existing standard for private rented housing. The changes proposed would create a level playing field for fire safety

across all housing tenures in Scotland. The Scottish Government do, however, need to consider how the new requirements will be enforced particularly in the owner-occupied sector. We believe that a wide reaching communication campaign to households will be needed to guarantee compliance.

9(b). Do you think there should be any other changes considered for the existing standard for private rented housing?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

We do not think that there should be any other changes considered for the existing standard for private rented housing.

Question 10 (a): Do you think that it is reasonable for home owners to pay for the work needed to comply with a new minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms?

Yes No Don't know

If not, who do you think should meet these costs? Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think that it is reasonable for home owners to pay for the work needed to comply with a new minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms. Unlike private rented sector landlords and social landlords, in the vast majority of cases they will not have multiple properties that require alarms. In addition, a move to sealed battery alarms with a ten year life span would reduce costs and make it easier for all home owners to manage the condition of their alarms.

10 (b): Do you think that it is reasonable for social landlords to pay for the work needed for their properties to comply with a new minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms?

Yes No Don't know If not, who do you think should meet these costs? Please explain your answer.

Yes, we do think it is reasonable for social landlords to pay for the work needed for their properties to comply with a new minimum standard. The current rules have cost implications for private rented sector landlords and therefore it is appropriate to extend this responsibility to other tenures.

Question 11: Do you think that the timescale we have proposed for installing additional alarms is reasonable for

(a): One year for battery alarms?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Please see our response to Question 12

(b): Two years for mains wired alarms?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

Please see our response to Question 12

Question 12: Do you think that the timetable should be the same for both owner occupiers and social landlords?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

We do not think that the proposed timescales for installing additional alarms are reasonable. For the owner occupied sector, because of the low frequency in which people move house, if battery alarms are permitted (option A) there should be a requirement for these alarms to be placed in all homes two years after the point the property is sold. Sealed battery units are currently not widely used and we are concerned that a one year deadline is too tight and would be affected by a lack of supply and availability. Under option B the requirement should be for mains wired alarms to be fitted in property five years after the point of sale. A longer time is needed for the fitting of mains wired alarms because the work is more expensive and time consuming. Placing a requirement on home owners after the point of sale means that the onus is on them to enforce the rules and ensure their own property is safe. The requirements can also be enforced via home insurance providers. When the property is then resold this would need to be evidenced in the home report before the sale can go through. If the property is placed on the market again within the two or five year period, the relevant work would need to be carried out before the property can be legally sold. A staggered approach would allow for the relevant work to be carried out and over time all owner occupied homes would reach the minimum standard.

Question 13: Do you think existing enforcement routes are sufficient for the social housing sector?

Yes No Don't know Please explain your answer.

ARLA PropertyMark and NAEA PropertyMark represents letting agents in the private rented sector and sales agents. Therefore we do not have enough information to answer these questions.

13 (a): If not, what else do you think is needed to enforce a new standard in social housing? Please also tell us what additional support is needed, for example training or advice or guidance.

N/A

Question 14: Do you have any views on the most effective approaches to encouraging compliance with a minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms in the owner occupied sector?

In addition to the points we have outlined in response to Questions 11 and 12, the Scottish Government will need to embark on a wide ranging communication campaign should the rules be extended to home owners. Professional bodies such as NAEA Propertymark can assist the Scottish Government to do this through our agents who are members. The Scottish Government should also engage with insurance companies and mortgage lenders to ensure that information is disseminated as widely as possible and any new rules are adhered to.

Question 15: We have outlined other measures and approaches we are planning to consider in future work. Is there anything else we should be including?

We do not have anything to add.

Question 16: Do you think that there should be a new minimum standard for carbon monoxide detectors in (a) social rented housing

Yes X No Don't know

and (b) owner occupied housing?

Yes X No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

We do think that there should be a new minimum standard for carbon monoxide detectors in social rented and owner occupied housing. Carbon monoxide is known as the Silent Killer, because you can't see it, taste it or smell it and it can kill quickly with no warning. Each year carbon monoxide poisoning affects over 4,000 people in the UK. Everyone should have a safe place to live, regardless of tenure.

Since 1 December 2015 all private rented sector landlords have had to ensure that all properties they let to tenants have a carbon monoxide detector fitted regardless of when the tenancy started. However, the private rented sector in Scotland only represents around 14% of all households, so based on this statistic a large part of population may not have an alarm in their home and consequently the rules should be extended to social rented and owner occupied housing

Question 17: Do you have any comments on these impact assessments?

We do not have any comments on the impact assessments.

Question 18: Do you have any other comments on this consultation?

We do not have any further comments to make.