



PRESS RELEASE

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PLANNERS CREATE HOUSING CRISIS IN LOTHIANS

The house building industry today slammed the abysmal performance record of East Lothian, Midlothian and City of Edinburgh Councils' planning departments and accused them of creating a housing crisis in the area.

The Scottish Executive expects local authorities to decide on 80% of major residential planning applications within four months but figures prepared for a recent meeting of the Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee show that the Councils have spectacularly failed to process anything like this target within the given timeframe:

% of Major Residential Planning Applications decided within 4 months

Local Authority	(01/04/03 – 31/03/04)	
	<u>Target</u>	<u>Actual</u>
City of Edinburgh	80%	16%
East Lothian	80%	5%
Midlothian	80%	0%

(source: Scottish Executive)

Allan Lundmark, Director of Planning at Homes for Scotland, the organisation that represents companies building over 90% of the country's new homes, described the situation as "scandalous at a time when people are still struggling to find new homes and problems of affordability are escalating".



He went on: “The house building industry is ready to make significant investment throughout the Lothians. But, instead of councillors in Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian utilising this investment to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities, it would appear that they prefer to preside over a planning system that keeps much needed investment locked up in filing cabinets.”

“In contrast, West Lothian Council (at 58%) is well above the Scottish average and is clearly working hard to ensure that investment in housing is given priority.”

Calling for an urgent overhaul of Scotland’s planning system, Lundmark also bitterly condemned Scottish Executive proposals to introduce a Third Party Right of Appeal, noting that, on the basis of current figures, it would serve only to grind the current planning system to a virtual halt and ensure investment was frustrated even further.

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Notes to editors:

Homes for Scotland (www.homesforscotland.com) is the representative membership body for the home building and residential development industry in Scotland. Its member companies provide over 90% all new homes in Scotland. The largest user of the planning system in Scotland, the industry also contributes more than £3.5 billion to the economy and employs more than 110,000 people.