



PRESS RELEASE

29 June 2005

HOUSE BUILDERS WELCOME PLANNING WHITE PAPER
requirement to update development plans every five years most significant
element

Scotland's house building industry, the largest user of the country's planning system and the largest source of private investment in the Scottish economy, today broadly welcomed the new White Paper on modernising the planning system published by the Scottish Executive.

Allan Lundmark, Director of Planning at Homes for Scotland, the organisation representing companies building 95% of the country's new homes, said: "An efficient, forward-looking planning system is an essential requirement for meeting the Scottish Executive's objective of sustainable economic growth and addressing its wider social agenda. We are pleased to see the Minister putting investment at the heart of policy and trying to deliver a system that looks to the needs of the future instead of the failures of the past."

Lundmark identified the introduction of a statutory requirement to ensure that development plans are updated every five years as being the most significant element of the package of measures announced. Drawing on the example of Ireland, he said:

"Scotland cannot afford out of date plans if it is to remain competitive. We urgently need to change the current situation whereby 75% of our local plans were adopted more than five years ago." He called for the Minister to be given and use the necessary powers to update development plans where councils fail to meet that five-year requirement.



The decision to give statutory weight to the National Planning Framework is also important according to Lundmark. Noting that planning had to deliver in partnership with other key stakeholders, he urged Mr Chisholm to take statutory powers to require major infrastructure providers, such as Scottish Water, to conform to the Framework through commitments in their capital programmes.

Lundmark welcomes the Minister's commitment to widen public involvement in the formulation of development plans and in pre-application discussions. He said "It is important that community interests are at the heart of decision-making and that narrow concerns driven by a NIMBY agenda do not stand in the way of the investment that is necessary to see our communities grow and prosper."

However, Lundmark did express concern about two issues:

- the reduction in the time limit within which an appeal can be submitted following refusal of an application from six to three months. This proposal is likely to increase the number of appeals as decisions to appeal will not benefit from the mature consideration that flows from an adequate time to reflect on the merits or otherwise of a planning authority's determination.
- the transfer of responsibility for neighbour notification on planning applications to planning authorities. A planning application could be lost if an under-resourced planning authority failed to follow the required procedure. That could expose a planning authority to claims for compensation.



In closing, Lundmark noted that the Minister was committed to ensuring greater compliance with planning decisions. He welcomed the proposals noting that Homes for Scotland supported the promotion of a planning system which inspired confidence on the part of communities and the development industry.

Lundmark said:

“The changes announced today, while welcome, must be accompanied by a change in attitude in many of Scotland planning authorities. Too many authorities still see their role as preventing, rather than promoting, development.”

“Investment in housing is critical if Scotland is to grow and prosper. The house building industry needs a planning system that gives it certainty in relation to investment decisions and clarity on wider expectations such as design and sustainability. Today it appears that Mr Chisholm has committed himself to delivering such a system.”

###

For further information, please contact:
Jennifer Kennedy – Homes for Scotland
Tel: 0131 243 2595
Email: j.kennedy@homesforscotland.com

Notes to editors:

1. Allan Lundmark is available for further comment or interview this afternoon.
2. 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 95% of all new homes in Scotland. The industry is the largest user of the country’s planning system and the largest source of private investment in the Scottish economy contributing £4.8 billion.