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# Proposal for a public sector maintenance programme

1 May 2020



A paper issued on behalf of the  
Construction Industry Coronavirus (CICV) Forum

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## INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this policy document is to set out the framework for a Government-led initiative to encourage a large scale public sector programme of maintenance of its asset base..

## BACKGROUND AND KEY MESSAGES

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- The current lockdown situation imposed by the Covid-19 crisis means that many publicly owned buildings, such as schools, colleges, museums and libraries, are vacant.
- During this period of inactivity, there is the risk that the buildings are not going to be maintained and kept in a condition that is statutorily compliant, with an added risk that they will not be operating at an optimum level.
- In addition to the importance of maintenance activities being sustained to avoid such risk, an opportunity exists to take a proactive approach to the asset management of the public estate.
- The establishment of a large-scale, public sector programme of maintenance would reap significant economic and societal benefits through supporting many SME contractors across the construction industry (and beyond), and reduce potential public safety risks, respectively.
- A progressive and coordinated programme of maintenance will provide the construction industry with the short-term economic activity required at this time, and save the public sector funds in the long term.

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## TARGET AUDIENCE

This policy proposal is directed to the Scottish Government, and Heads of Property and Maintenance responsible for the asset management across the public estate.

## CHALLENGES

- During the Covid-19 imposed lockdown, many public sector buildings will not be occupied (or only partially occupied). As such, statutory maintenance needs to be carried out to ensure the buildings remain complaint and safe to return to following lockdown.
- Failure to continue with statutory maintenance activities (carried out in accordance with safe operating procedures) may result in the buildings deteriorating prematurely, or to a point that will require considerable, costly remediation works to return them to full compliance prior to reoccupation. The likelihood of legionella in unattended water systems, for example, is a key concern.
- Unoccupied buildings will not have the benefit of a regular maintainer or user feedback, nor early warning(s) of fabric or system failure. As such, there is potential for an increase in asset deterioration as a result of this lack of formal and informal monitoring, and this could pose a risk to public safety now, and post-lockdown.
- The additional time required to bring an unoccupied and unmaintained building back into use may prevent an efficient and prompt return to full operation by the building users.
- The curtailment of regular maintenance may compromise warranty arrangements and lead to limited contractual recourse in the event of premature fabric or system failure.

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## OPPORTUNITIES

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- Periods of building shutdown due to the Covid-19 imposed lockdown offer unrestricted access which would not otherwise be available to the same extent during normal operational conditions.
- The extensive nature of the lockdown offers the opportunity to undertake thorough conditions surveys across buildings.
- Enhanced value for money can be achieved through economies of scale available by the consolidation of surveys, remediation and essential upgrades across a group or range of buildings, and through collaboration among public sector bodies.
- Using the lockdown and consequential shutdowns to undertake surveys, and identifying repair and maintenance requirements in a manner not otherwise possible, disruptive downtime can be avoided in the future. Surveys – which should be carried out by a suitably qualified property professionals – can be undertaken safely by developing building specific Risk Assessments and Method Statements (RAMS).
- Making a commitment to undertaking condition surveys, and repair and improvement works identified by those surveys, will help to keep contractors, suppliers and supply chains economically active (many of which will be Scottish SMEs). Inactivity now could lead to an elongated recovery in the future.
- The lockdown, and consequential shutdowns, offer the public sector a significant opportunity to undertake carbon reduction improvements, informed by the conditions surveys to existing buildings, thus actively supporting the Scottish Government's green agenda priorities.
- Post-lockdown, the surveys will inform the public sector on the extent of planned preventative maintenance and backlog maintenance necessary to protect their estates. A programme of backlog maintenance works presents an opportunity for the public sector to have immediate pipeline works going to market thus providing valuable work to the construction sector.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The **Scottish Government** should:

- Support this initiative by approving this policy and providing financial assistance for surveys, and remediation and upgrade works.

**Public bodies** should:

- Consider instructing condition surveys to be undertaken across the shutdown estate, taking cognisance of, and adhering to, safe operating procedures.

- Make use of any existing collaborative forums, such as Scottish Heads of Property Services (SHOPS), the Hub Territory Partnering Boards, and Scape Group etc, to seek consolidation opportunities to drive enhanced value for money from surveys, design work and subsequent delivery of maintenance, repair and upgrade works.

- Consider how energy reduction and environmental and sustainability improvements can be incorporated in works to be undertaken during or immediately following the shutdown periods afforded by the Covid-19 lockdown.

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## Current members of the Construction Industry Coronavirus (CICV) Forum:

- Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE)
- British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA)
- Builders Merchants Federation (BMF)
- Building Engineering Services Association (BESA)
- Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)
- Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)
- Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA Scotland)
- Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA)
- Electrical Distributors' Association (EDA)
- Federation of Master Builders (FMB)
- Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS)
- Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA)
- National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC)
- Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
- Scaffolding Association
- Scottish Building Federation (SBF)
- Scottish Contractors Group
- Scottish Plant Owners Association (SPOA)
- SNIPEF
- SELECT
- Stone Federation (GB)

### Further information



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