



BEFS

**BUILT ENVIRONMENT
FORUM SCOTLAND**

Year in **Review**

Built Environment Forum Scotland
2023-2024

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Introduction

**BELOW IS AN OVERVIEW
OF OUR ACTIVITY FOR
2023-2024**

Uniting the sector that cares for and promotes Scotland's distinctive built environment for people to use, appreciate and enjoy.



BEFS would like to thank all Members and Associates for their continued support and valuable input into BEFS work. Whilst we work with many of you regularly, below is an overview of some of our activity for 2023/24 in case you missed anything!

Proactive

Approach to responding to Member and Sector needs

- On behalf of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), BEFS undertook a [Portfolio Review](#) project, documenting properties the NTS has in its care and looking at how the Trust's portfolio might evolve in the future. This was a complex piece of work, harnessing BEFS unique skills and perspective as an organisation.
- Our Place in Time was replaced by Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment, following a 12-week consultation period. BEFS **led the sector engagement**, hosting a series of workshops. BEFS Director was invited to launch the strategy at the SHEF Conference in summer 2023, and BEFS remains a member of the Steering Group for OPOF.
- BEFS Director gave **evidence** to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee and to the Committee on Local Government, Housing and Planning on the NPF4 one year review.



- BEFS **developed** and published a [Policy Map](#), to help visualise the complex and interconnected policy landscape towards enabling more joined up and holistic sector advocacy.
- BEFS took part in the Building Futures Summit, part of a number of climate events held by the Royal Geographical Society, which brought together thirty leaders from across the built environment sector. The Summit was summarised in a [report](#) which was published in June 2023, with BEFS **leading** the strand of work in relation to Building Data.
- In November 2023 BEFS and SPAB **hosted** a joint CPD conference on Churches in Transition and planning for the future which was well received and attended by around 70 delegates.
- 2023 also saw the launch the [Sustainable Investment Tool \(SIT\)](#) which was developed by BEFS and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to help visualise the different values associated with existing buildings and their related projects, mapping out the positive outcomes for Wellbeing, Climate, Culture, and Economy. The SIT was released by BEFS with the support of HES, on behalf of the Our Place in Time – Built Heritage Investment Group (BHIG) and supports the new strategy for Scotland’s historic environment Our Past, Our Future.
- The Tenement Working Group reconvened during Autumn 2023, with BEFS and Under One Roof as secretariat. Work in this period has resulted in a significant milestone in reviewing tenement law, with the Scottish Law Commission [Discussion Paper](#) on Compulsory Owners’ Associations published as one of the recommendations of the group, alongside working groups towards five yearly inspections and the establishment of building reserve funds.
- In December 2023 BEFS celebrated its 20th year at Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh. A publication, [BEFS20](#), covered the highlights of BEFS activities over the past two decades.
- In spring 2024 the report, [Meeting Scotland’s Retrofit Challenge: solutions from the industry](#) was released by CIOB, BEFS and sector partners, **recommending** a Ministerial Oversight Group for Retrofit.
- In May 2024 BEFS, on behalf of COG, wrote to the Minister for Public Finance and the Chief Planner to outline concerns and request a pause to the implementation of phase 3 of Permitted Development Rights (PDR) in relation to Conservation Areas, noting the serious economic and place-impacting unintended consequences of these amendments.
- BEFS continues to coordinate the [Places of Worship Forum \(POWF\)](#), [Conservation Officer Group \(COG\)](#), and the [Historic Environment Working Group \(HEWG\)](#).
- We continue to grow our communications engagement, with Bulletin subscribers, Twitter followers, and LinkedIn connections all significantly increased throughout the year.



BEFS

has continued to respond to consultations on behalf of Members and contribute to research.

Areas of work have included:

- Net Zero
- Traditional Skills
- Reinforced Autoclaved Concrete (RAAC)
- Heat in Buildings
- Our Past, Our Future
- Churches in Transition, through the Places of Worship Forum (POWF)
- Local Authorities and decision making for the historic environment, through the Conservation Officer Group
- Wellbeing and a Just Transition
- Planning, e.g. Masterplan Consent Area Regulations, The National Planning Framework and Development Plan Amendment Regulations, Investing in Planning
- VAT
- Tenement maintenance, repair and a fabric first approach, alongside Retrofit
- Wider Retrofit agenda
- Parliamentary and budget scrutiny

BEFS submitted **24** policy responses this financial year. Topics addressed included:

- Review of the National Outcomes
- Council Tax on Second and Empty Homes
- Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods
- New National Parks
- Budget Scrutiny for 2024-25 and Funding for Culture
- Permitted Development Rights
- The Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill
- Community Engagement in Local Development Planning
- The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill
- EPC reform
- Accessibility and Adaptability of Scotland's Homes
- Mandatory Training on Planning for Elected Members
- Management of Burial Grounds Regulations in Scotland
- The Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill
- Ambitions for the Planning System
- Building Standards
- The Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill
- Devolving Powers for a Scottish Building Safety Levy
- The Heat in Buildings Bill
- The Draft Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030
- The Home Energy Model
- Inclusive Design for Town Centres and Busy Streets
- The National Performance Framework and local development plans
- Masterplan Consent Regulations
- Investing in Planning

Wider Impact

- BEFS continues to work with a number of teams within Scottish Government such as the Energy Efficiency and Zero Emissions Team and the Heat in Buildings Team, and meets regularly with the Scottish Government Culture Division, Sponsorship and Historic Environment Team.
- BEFS continues to attend the UK Wide Heritage Chat throughout the year, where the Heritage Alliance, Cadw, Communities Directorate (NI), HES, Historic England and NLHF meet to discuss matters of policy across all Nations.
- BEFS is a supporting Member of the Climate Heritage Network, and a Member of Europa Nostra.

BEFS Team & Board

At the December 2023 AGM Ian Baxter stood down from the Board – huge thanks to Ian for all his support and work over the years!

We said farewell to Roland Laposi as Communications Officer in 2023 and throughout 2023 and 2024 recruited two new team members, welcoming Jonna Meredith to the post of Policy and Communications Officer and Malini Chakrabarty as Communications Lead. These roles were made possible as part of the NLHF Fit for The Future project, growing BEFS impact working on behalf of Members.

Recent months have seen further significant changes to BEFS Team, with former Director Ailsa Macfarlane moving to a new role in July 2024, and Hazel Johnson being appointed as BEFS new Director. Ilona McAllister has taken on the new role of Head of Operations and remains Company Secretary.

Whilst the BEFS team all continue to work remotely, we are always happy to connect via Teams or Zoom and will endeavour to host as many in person meetings and workshops as possible to maintain strong connections with all our Members. And, a catch up over a coffee and cake is always a welcome suggestion.

Looking Forward

BEFS has continued to examine its strategic aims, seeking to identify where we can better support Members and deepen the impact of our work. Over the coming year we will work with Members and the wider built environment sector to amplify and lead a coherent sector voice, across the vast and complex policy landscape within which we all operate.

Key areas for BEFS work will be supporting the strategy for the historic environment, Our Past, Our Future, and working to deliver Net Zero – identifying and championing the benefits of the existing built

environment across government portfolios, and seeking collective solutions across all our work.

As part of Fit for the Future, BEFS are also undertaking a Business Development Programme to review internal and external policies and to develop our EDI work and impact.

You can find our Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024 [here](#).