

# Housing Bill to allow homeowners to get on with repairs

✘ Lothian Labour MSP, Sarah Boyack, has welcomed new laws to help homeowners get on with common repairs to their property.

The provisions, passed yesterday evening as part of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, will allow owners to ask the Council to pay a share of common repair work on behalf of missing or uncooperative owners.

The Council will then be able to recover the cost from the owner over a period of between 5 and 30 years although the owner can appeal the duration of the repayment period.

The new provisions will help to address delays to common repairs where a majority of owners are unable to proceed because of missing or uncooperative owners – a situation that has often left repairs incomplete or forced owners down the route of statutory repairs.

During the passage of the bill, Ms Boyack successfully moved amendments which could see similar powers provided to housing associations to help them take forward building repairs in properties where they have tenants.

Speaking following the passage of the Bill, Ms Boyack said: “Over the years I’ve handled a number of cases where efforts to take forward joint building repairs have been frustrated by one or two owners.

“Up to now, other owners have often been forced to club together to pay the missing share with little prospect of recovering their money due to the cost of court action. The only alternative has been to leave repairs until the point

where they become dangerous or approach the council for a statutory repair.

“The city is still dealing with the legacy of the statutory repairs scandal and while the Council continues to develop a new scheme, we need to find ways to support homeowners to get on with repairs themselves.

“These new provisions will allow owners to ask the Council to step in with a guarantee that they will be able to recover their costs. This is a big step forward and it is important that the new measures are implemented as soon as possible.

“I am delighted that the Scottish Government accepted my argument to potentially extend these powers to housing associations and will be lobbying Ministers to take the issue forward.

“In Edinburgh, I know of associations that have been forced to sell properties as they can't afford necessary repairs. Not only does this reduce the availability of social housing, where provision is already a major concern, it also reduces the money available to associations to provide services to their tenants.

“Every homeowner has a responsibility to maintain their home to a safe standard and the provisions in the Housing Bill will hopefully make it easier for owners to work together on repairs.”

***Photo Jon Davey Photography***