

New powers to tackle dangerous buildings

✖ Last week, MSPs voted to pass the Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Bill

The Member's Bill, promoted by Labour MSP, David Stewart, will give Local Authorities with much needed extra powers to recoup their costs when dealing with defective and dangerous buildings. It reintroduces charging orders which will enable Local Authorities to recover their costs in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

Speaking in the Scottish Parliament, David Stewart said:- "I am delighted that my Bill passed stage three with support across the chamber, and this is the culmination of 4 years hard work."

"During its passage through Parliament it was clear that this measure had widespread support from Local Authorities and the wider building sector. It is a testament to what can be achieved when ordinary Members and the government work co-operatively."

"Too many buildings have been allowed to drift into disrepair and need urgent remedy. It is, of course, the owners' responsibility to repair buildings. My Bill aims to enable councils to carry out desperately needed repairs whilst shifting the financial burden back to the owners themselves."

"I am optimistic that that Local Authorities will proactively use this new power to ensure they will not be out of pocket when stepping in to deal with building standards issues. This will mean they will feel more confident in carrying out repairs, hopefully leading to less repairs being delayed, scaled back or even cancelled due to concerns over cost recovery. Indirectly, it will hopefully also stimulate the

repair and maintenance sector of the construction industry as more repairs will be carried out.”

Lothian Labour MSP Sarah Boyack said:- “This is a positive Bill which will help struggling Local Authorities re-coup their costs of dealing with various building standard Issues. It is estimated that only that only 50% of debts are recovered and that currently there could be over £3.9 million outstanding.”

“Dangerous and defective buildings are a real problem across Scotland, with up to 81% of dwellings in need of some kind of repair. In the Lothians 46 Dangerous Building notices were issued in 2011-2012. These are not just unsafe to the public, they are an eyesore; they can have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area by driving down house prices on a street or making town centres seem unwelcoming.”

Scottish Building Federation Managing Director, Vaughan Hart said:- “SBF supports this legislation as a welcome move to support the repair of unsafe buildings in Scotland.”

“Buildings that are not properly maintained can pose a major risk to the public, particularly in built-up areas. Local authorities have an important responsibility to protect the public by repairing buildings that are dangerous. This legislation would enable them to do that with greater confidence as they can recover the associated costs from the building owner.”