

Roundtable Summary Report

# More Homes Scotland

## *Turning a National Housing Agency into a Delivery Machine*

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Convened by & in partnership with



May 2026

# A few words *from the Chair*



This impact report captures the key themes, tensions, and recommendations from our More Homes Scotland roundtable, convened by Building Relations in partnership with Burness Paull. I would like to thank all the guests who took part for their time, insight, and the strength of the discussion, which brought together leaders from Scotland's housing, planning, development, investment, and policy sectors.

The conversation focused on a central question: how More Homes Scotland can move from strategic ambition to a practical delivery engine. A clear message emerged – ***Scotland's challenge is not ambition, but alignment.***

While there is strong support for the intent behind More Homes Scotland, participants highlighted that success will depend on a clearly defined mandate, real authority, and a focused role in unlocking barriers to delivery across the system. Impact reports like this are important because they help capture and share informed perspectives, promote wider debate, and provide policymakers with practical insight to shape and strengthen future policy development.

We hope this report is both informative and thought provoking!

**Rachel Colgan**  
Founding Director

# What is More Homes Scotland & *why does it Matter?*

**More Homes Scotland is a national housing agency being set up by the Scottish Government to help increase the number of homes being built across Scotland.** The aim is to speed up housebuilding, unlock stalled developments, support rural and island housing, and bring together public and private investment to deliver more homes more quickly.

It was against this backdrop that we invited a panel of experts to take a closer look at this new agency and robustly review its mandate – to ensure it becomes a practical delivery vehicle rather than just another layer of ambition. Participants were asked not only to diagnose what is broken in the current system, but to focus on solutions and the specific actions the agency should test and adopt in its first phase.

The discussion consistently returned to the same core question: how can Scotland create an institution capable of aligning the system behind housing delivery, rather than asking developers, housing providers and local authorities to do that work themselves?







# Executive *summary*

**The roundtable revealed broad support for the ambition behind More Homes Scotland, alongside clear caution about creating another layer of strategy without the authority, clarity and commercial focus required to unlock delivery.**

Participants argued that Scotland does not lack ambition. It lacks a sufficiently joined-up system capable of aligning land, infrastructure, planning, finance, standards and public sector decision-making behind the shared goal of getting more homes built. As Jocelyne Fleming put it: *“None of those pieces are moving in harmony. We ask a lot of developers and non-market housing providers to put those pieces together themselves, and what I would love to see from More Homes Scotland is that puzzle work being done first.”*

A strong message from the discussion was that More Homes Scotland must be designed as a whole-system enabler with real authority. Participants argued that it must be able to convene, align and, where necessary, compel action across the delivery chain, including public landowners, infrastructure providers, regulators, local authorities and funding bodies. Without that, there was concern that the agency risks being well-intentioned but ineffective.



*“Is there a risk that if you do not give the agency teeth, and you rely purely on cultural change, that if cultural change then does not happen, the agency is ineffective?”* **Alasdair Sutherland**

There was also clear consensus that housing should be treated not simply as a social policy issue, but as economic infrastructure. Participants linked housing delivery to growth, labour mobility, place-making, community wellbeing, health outcomes, and national productivity.

As Eddie Wighton said: *“The first country in Europe to solve housing, will become the economic powerhouse of Europe. For example; we cannot bring well-educated people into teaching at our universities if we cannot offer them a house for their family. We cannot end homelessness without housing.”*

If designed well, More Homes Scotland could become a strategic driver of economic and social renewal rather than simply another housing body. But to achieve that, participants were clear that it must be practical, empowered, commercially credible and firmly focused on delivery.

Rachel Colgan  
Building Relations

Delegate bios

**Louise Chambers**  
Senior Lecturer in Development  
and Business Administration  
at the University of  
Birmingham

**Eddie Wright**  
Senior Lecturer in  
Business Administration  
at the University of  
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Delegate bios

**Eve McGuarich**  
Senior Lecturer in  
Business Administration  
at the University of  
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**Neil Rutherford**  
Senior Lecturer in  
Business Administration  
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# Discussion *Highlights*

# Key *discussion points*

## Scotland's housing challenge is systemic, not isolated

A central theme throughout the discussion was that housing delivery is being held back not by one failure, but by the interaction of multiple disconnected systems. Participants described a landscape in which land, planning, infrastructure, funding, technical approvals, housing standards and policy objectives often operate in parallel rather than in alignment. The result is delay, duplication, cost inflation and uncertainty. One of the clearest formulations from the room, put forward by Jocelyne Fleming, was simple: *"Systems, not silos."*

Several contributors warned against the temptation to treat More Homes Scotland purely as a supply agency. Housing delivery does not function in isolation. It must be linked to place-making, retrofit, net zero goals, infrastructure, regeneration and long-term community outcomes. That means the agency cannot succeed if it focuses narrowly on housing numbers while becoming detached from the wider system that determines whether homes can actually be delivered.



*"Development does not function alone. Stock replacement, retrofit, net zero objectives, place-making and regeneration are all absolutely crucial, and we need a systems-wide approach to that."* **Susie Fitton**



## The new agency needs authority, clarity & a delivery mandate

Participants stressed the need for the agency to have genuine authority. A recurring concern was that cultural change alone will not be enough. If More Homes Scotland is expected only to encourage better collaboration, but lacks the power to shift behaviour, remove obstacles or require action from others, it will struggle to deliver meaningful change.

There was strong support for an agency that sits close enough to government to influence policy, public assets and investment decisions, while operating with a commercial, delivery-focused mindset. Several participants argued that it should be judged against outcomes, not simply process, and should operate with the urgency, accountability and practical mindset more commonly associated with economic development than with conventional public administration.



Neil Ross made the governance point clearly: *“That first step into governance and how it is set up, and who is in charge of creating the vision, the strategic vision of what it can look like, is so important. Depoliticising it, and establishing a national approach straight into Scottish Government, while recognising local authority nuance and place-making, is absolutely critical. That is the first step.”*



*“There needs to be a massive cultural shift, with development seen as a positive, and the people who are regulators turning themselves into enablers.”* **Pauline Mills**

Participants also argued that coordination must be backed by practical authority. Pauline Mills added: *“We need government to be incredibly directive about what it wants to achieve here and bring everybody to the table with a compulsion to deliver.”*

## Land supply & enabling infrastructure remain critical barriers

Land supply emerged as one of the most immediate and practical barriers to delivery, especially for SMEs. Participants described a market in which developable land is scarce, strategic land is slow to come forward, and many allocated sites remain heavily constrained in practice.

Even where land is technically available, the costs and risks associated with infrastructure, servicing and prolonged planning processes can make schemes unviable. A particularly resonant concept in the discussion was the idea of a “land shop” model. Pauline Mills added: *“We just need somewhere that we can go for land. The way that we have to access land is really ineffective in a competitive market. You have to overpay, and you are competing against all your peers for the same sites, and there simply is not enough.”*

However, this model was not framed simply as a mechanism for assembling or releasing land, but rather, more holistically, as a place where developers could access land alongside the practical support needed to unlock it. In this model, the agency would not just identify sites, but help solve the constraints attached to them, whether those involve fragmented ownership, utilities, drainage, education, roads, flood risk or legal complexity.



**Jocelyne Fleming captured the ambition of that model when she said:** *We are going to give you a pre-packaged development opportunity that says: here is the land we would like you to develop, here is the financing that could come with it, all in one application.”*

There was clear support for a more active public role in land assembly, infrastructure funding and de-risking difficult sites, especially where early capital lock-up prevents SME participation. Contributors argued that the agency could play a valuable role by intervening earlier, packaging up sites more effectively and providing a more coordinated route through the enabling works required to make development possible.

Louise Chambers also underlined the practical burden this placed on developers: *“Key sites which could deliver valuable housing can be held back by fragmented ownership, existing infrastructure constraints or other related issues, and could be addressed differently. At the moment that burden falls on the developer, which adds more time, more cost and more viability pressure.”*



## Planning is a major friction point within a wider delivery chain

The discussion recognised that **planning is not the sole cause of delivery delays, but it remains a major pressure point within a wider chain of friction.** Participants described an overly layered regulatory system, with national and local policies often overlapping or conflicting, and with site promoters having to navigate extensive policy and technical requirements before gaining a decision.

There was frustration that sites already allocated in local development plans still often face prolonged dispute and uncertainty at application stage. Speakers also highlighted the lack of consistency across local authorities, particularly around road construction consent, developer obligations and interpretation of standards. That variability increases cost, slows down decision-making and makes it harder for developers, especially SMEs, to scale activity across multiple areas.



*“Thirty-two local authorities in Scotland means 32 different sets of interpretations of the guidelines and the rules.”* **Eddie Wighton**

Joe Larner added an important planning and governance perspective: *“You need local officers, respected and known to their council, making decisions, not someone being parachuted in from central government. Government would be better suited by staying in its lane of policy making, getting that right, and then setting it and forgetting it in terms of the planning system.”*

The wider point was that the agency should not focus narrowly on planning speed alone. It should also help create a more coherent delivery environment, with clearer rules, more consistent expectations and a stronger sense that all parts of the system are working towards the same objective.

## SMEs could contribute more, but only with structural reform

The roundtable highlighted the untapped contribution smaller builders could make to Scotland's housing supply, particularly in local markets and rural areas. The appetite to grow is there, participants said, but the current system places disproportionate burdens on smaller firms. Lengthy planning timescales, up-front capital exposure, bond requirements, infrastructure uncertainty and limited access to long-term capital all act as barriers to entry and growth.

Eddie Wighton described the current process before even reaching a funder as involving a long series of separate steps, many of them costly and difficult to explain outside the sector. That complexity itself was seen as part of the problem. If policymakers do not fully understand the route to delivery, they are unlikely to remove the right obstacles.



*“There is a housing emergency at one end, and then everybody has a box to tick to get to the other end. That is the problem. It is not joined up.”* **Eve McCurrich**

Eve McCurrich also made the capital challenge clear: *“All our money is tied up with excessive lengths of planning and technical consents. There is no money shop at the moment for us to get long-term patient capital in Scotland. We can get senior debt, but we cannot get long-term patient capital.”*

There was a strong feeling that supporting SME delivery should be part of the agency's core mission, not a secondary consideration. That includes improving access to land, unlocking long-term capital and reducing the cumulative burden of technical and regulatory hurdles. As Susie Fitton noted: *“Support for smaller and rural housing providers to start or scale up development activity is really key, and there also needs to be meaningful consultation with RSLs as part of any co-designed agency.”*

## Fragmented infrastructure decisions stall development

**A major operational theme was the difficulty of securing timely, coordinated responses from infrastructure bodies and utility providers.** Scottish Water, SEPA, roads authorities, energy providers and other agencies were repeatedly cited as part of a fragmented approvals environment in which responsibility is dispersed and developers are left to do the joining up themselves.

Brownfield development was identified as particularly difficult, with drainage and surface water issues offering a clear example of how current systems can stall delivery for extended periods. Contributors argued that More Homes Scotland should have a direct role in convening the right parties, aligning expectations and, where necessary, compelling a more joined-up and pragmatic response.

Pauline Mills said: *"If we had an organisation that could unlock those kinds of things, it would make the path much clearer. There needs to be a proper directive from the agency around how we achieve development."*



**Justin Lamb made a similar point about the need for practical coordination:**

*"What we need to try and do is bring them closer together. Local authorities, drainage, education, flood maps and energy providers SSE and SPEN. Everybody needs to be in the same room and pointing in the same direction."*



## Policy layering is eroding viability

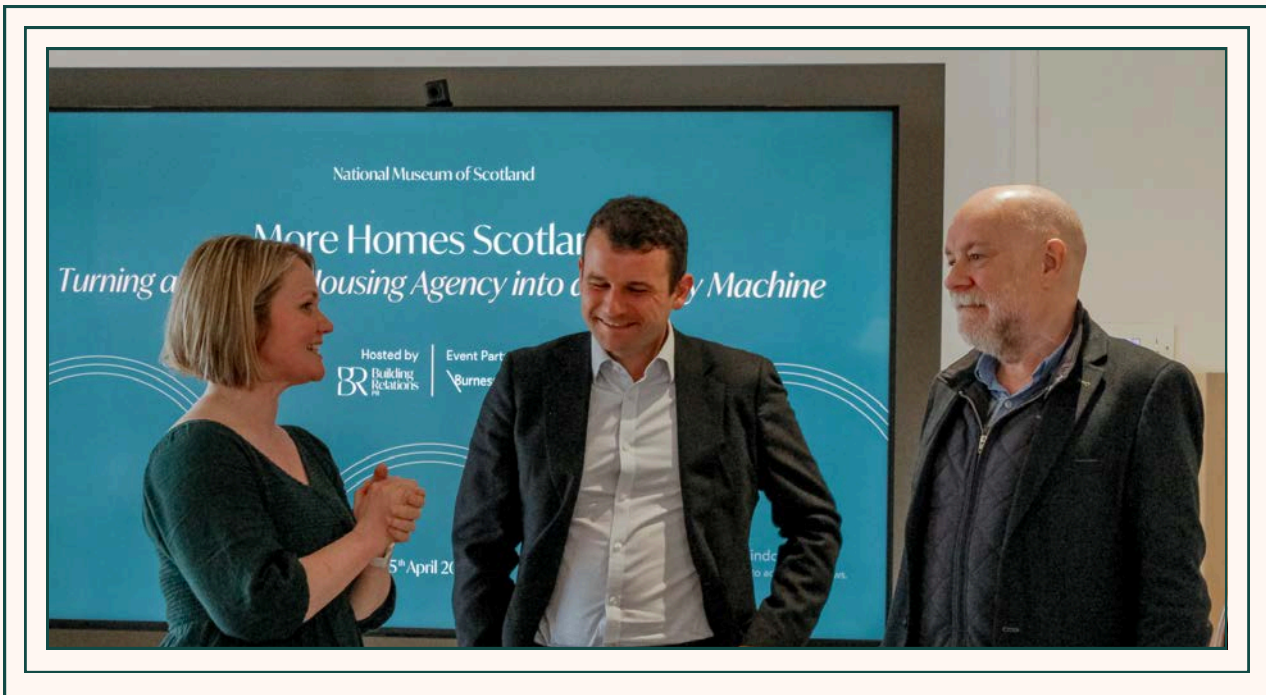
Several participants raised concern about the cumulative effect of regulatory change, developer contributions and policy layering on scheme viability. The issue was not that individual policy goals are wrong in themselves, but that they are often introduced without sufficient assessment of their combined impact on cost, deliverability and investment confidence.



Quoting from the Association for Rental Living's recent open letter to government calling for support for the UK build-to-rent sector, Alasdair Sutherland described the current position as the product of years of "cumulative regulatory layering without economic assessment".

Others in the room made the same point in more operational terms. One participant said: "What we have at the moment is a raft of policy introduced within very short timeframes, with no real understanding of the technical or financial implications for the industry. That cannot be allowed to continue." This was especially acute in relation to energy standards, affordable housing requirements, developer obligations and brownfield delivery.

Contributors warned that without greater stability and a more explicit understanding of trade-offs, Scotland risks making delivery progressively harder, even where demand and political ambition remain strong. Eddie Wighton added: "Policy changes so often, and standards change so frequently, that it is incredibly difficult for businesses to plan ahead, invest with confidence, or scale delivery."



## The agency should build on proven delivery models

The room was clear that Scotland does not need to start from scratch. Participants pointed to examples from Scotland's own history, as well as international models, that show the value of strong delivery institutions, up-front infrastructure, clear accountability and coordinated intervention.

The discussion referenced Development Corporations, Scottish Homes, large-scale regeneration programmes and international examples such as Canada's efforts to integrate land, finance and housing delivery more effectively.



*"We have done it before. New Town Development Corporations are a model that could be picked up. They were tasked with delivering sites, preparing infrastructure, and they were set targets and outcomes."*

**Calum Murray**

He also sounded a note of caution: *"One thing that disturbed me, looking back, was that it took an enormous amount of time to set it up and then properly engage with the private sector."* There was support for the Scottish Government's stated intention to refine the agency through testing and learning, but participants stressed that this must be backed by robust evaluation, honest feedback loops and a willingness to adapt quickly where interventions are not working.

Jocelyne Fleming said: *"There needs to be evaluation metrics built into this thing from the start, so that if we begin aggressively in one direction and it is not working, that has to be okay, and the agency has to be able to pivot and work better."*

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Rachel Colgan  
Building Relations



Jocelyne Fleming

# Insights & *Recommendations*

Neil Rutherford  
Scottish Future



# Headline *findings*

MORE HOMES SCOTLAND NEEDS A SHARPER DIAGNOSIS

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DELIVERY REQUIRES A WHOLE-SYSTEM MODEL

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AUTHORITY MATTERS AS MUCH AS AMBITION

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PREDICTABILITY IS ESSENTIAL TO INVESTMENT & DELIVERY

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HOUSING SHOULD BE FRAMED AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

## *Recommendations*

- Define the agency's **purpose & market failure** clearly
- Equip the agency with **formal powers** to coordinate & unblock delivery
- Develop a practical '**land shop**' model
- Intervene earlier on **infrastructure & site enabling**
- Create better routes to **land & patient capital** for SMEs
- Drive greater **national consistency** across the system
- Test policy ambition **against viability & deliverability**
- Embed **evaluation, review & course correction** from the outset

# Key *takeaways*

**There was clear frustration around the table with the friction, delay and fragmentation of the current system, but also a strong sense that Scotland already understands many of the barriers and, in several cases, already knows what better looks like.**

- The challenge now is not simply to restate the problem, but to design an institution capable of acting on it.
- If More Homes Scotland can align land, infrastructure, finance, planning and delivery behind a common purpose, it has the potential to become far more than a new housing body.
- It could become a catalyst for growth, confidence and long-term renewal. To do so, however, it will need to be practical, empowered, commercially credible and firmly focused on delivery.

As Eddie Wighton put it:  
***“We cannot end homelessness  
without housing.”***

# About *us*

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## *Building Relations PR*

**We are property PR professionals.** Building Relations is a PR and communications agency specialising in the property and built environment sector. We work with a range of organisations, from housebuilders and developers to construction firms and student refurbishment specialists. Co-led by Founder Rachel Colgan and Kathryn Reucroft, who have over 40 years of PR experience, we are a strong team of over 25 property PR professionals. This year, we were ranked among PR Week's Top 150 agencies, and we are proud to have recently achieved B Corp certification.

At Building Relations PR, we offer a variety of services, from traditional PR to boundary-pushing virtual activations, community relations, event management, corporate communications, public affairs, crisis management, social media, awards writing, podcasts, and design. ***We are property industry experts, proactive, and results-driven.***

## *Burness Paull LLP*

Burness Paull is a leading, Scotland-headquartered law firm, focussed on delivering consistently high-quality advice and service to our clients wherever it is they do business around the world. Our market-leading real estate team – supported by experts in planning, construction, financing, and tax – are regularly involved in complex, high-profile property developments, transactions, and disputes across Scotland. We advise across all commercial real estate sectors and have the largest and most active team of housebuilding lawyers in Scotland, *with expertise in all elements of delivering new-build housing of all types and tenures.*

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# Building Relations PR May 2026

# Roundtable *Report*

## A special thank you *to our guests...*

**Alasdair Sutherland** Head of Planning & Environment at Burness Paull LLP | **Louise Chambers** Real Estate Partner at Burness Paull LLP | **Eddie Wighton** Founder of Invertay Homes | **Pauline Mills** Technical Director at Taylor Wimpey | **Neil Ross** Development Director at Places for People | **Eve McCurrich** Managing Director at Whiteburn | **Neil Rutherford** Senior Associate Director at Scottish Futures Trust | **Susie Fitton** Policy Manager at Scottish Federation of Housing Associations | **Craig Fairfoull** Board Director at Dundas Estates & Development Co Ltd | **Joe Larner** Director at Larner McGrath | **Dr Jocelyne Fleming** Scotland Policy & Public Affairs Lead at Chartered Institute of Building | **Justin Lamb** Director at Justin Lamb Associates Ltd | **Calum Murray** Director at CCG (Scotland) Ltd