



MANIFESTO



Surveying Scotland

Building the foundations for a fair, sustainable
and prosperous future

RICS Scotland manifesto 2026-2031





Foreword

The 2026 Scottish Parliament election comes at a time of profound change and uncertainty, both at home and abroad. Economic pressures, global instability and the impacts of climate change are reshaping the way we live, work and build. In this context, the built environment stands at its most critical juncture in decades. Decisions taken in the next parliamentary term will determine how Scotland meets the challenges of net zero, addresses the housing emergency and secures sustainable, resilient communities for future generations.

RICS represents professionals at the forefront of shaping the places where we live and work. Surveyors play a pivotal role in enabling housing delivery, improving building safety, managing land and supporting investment in low-carbon infrastructure. Yet Scotland's built environment now faces unprecedented strain, from ageing housing stock and rising repair needs to skills shortages, affordability pressures and the urgent demand for greener and more energy-efficient buildings.

This manifesto sets out practical, evidence-based policy proposals that would allow the next Scottish government to work in partnership with industry to deliver lasting change. It focuses on five interlinked priorities that will define the coming decade:

- 1 **tackling the housing emergency**
- 2 **driving the green economy**
- 3 **ensuring we maintain our **existing assets****
- 4 **securing the future of **Scotland's land**** and
- 5 **delivering the **skills and workforce** necessary to achieve these ambitions.**

We believe these priorities are inseparable. Progress on housing must go hand in hand with sustainable land use, energy transition and the creation of safe, well-maintained buildings. By embedding professional standards, supporting the workforce and aligning policy with long-term investment, Scotland can build the foundations for a fairer, more sustainable and prosperous future – one where the built environment is not just a sector of the economy, but a driver of national well-being and resilience.



Professor Norman K
McLennan FRICS FCICES
RICS Scotland Board Chair

Places with purpose: addressing the housing emergency



Scotland is facing a housing emergency driven by rising demand, constrained supply and affordability pressures across both the public and private sectors. Meeting this challenge requires not only delivering more safe, sustainable and affordable homes, but also ensuring the transport, utilities, green spaces and community facilities needed to create truly liveable places.

RICS members are central to this effort. Chartered surveyors provide trusted Home Reports that support confidence in the housing market; quantity surveyors help deliver homes and infrastructure efficiently and affordably; planning and development specialists unlock viable sites for mixed-use development; and building control and valuation professionals safeguard the long-term quality, safety and resilience of Scotland's built environment.

Yet Scotland must overcome system-wide challenges, from skills shortages and complex planning processes, to viability pressures and deteriorating existing stock, before it can effectively confront its housing emergency. RICS members bring the expertise, technical rigour and professional leadership needed to help navigate these challenges and support the delivery of the homes Scotland urgently needs.

RICS calls on the Scottish government to:

- commit to the recommendations of the Home Report Review Working Group, ensuring greater flexibility in updating the document in the future and that it remains user-friendly
- establish a Housing Land Agency that will integrate relevant housing functions, planning and development with local authorities and communities
- centralise housing authorities to avoid widespread variation across Scotland. System integration could also provide a stronger basis for management and investment
- require each government department to develop an action statement, setting out how it can and will contribute to alleviating the housing emergency
- introduce a presumption in favour of modern methods of construction for social housing
- ensure all local development plans are up to date.

Protecting Scotland's existing assets

Scotland's built environment reflects a rich architectural legacy, but it also faces growing pressures. With some 455,000 homes built before 1919, Scotland has some of the UK's oldest housing stock – buildings that are central to national identity yet increasingly exposed to climate-related deterioration. In 2022, nearly half of all dwellings showed disrepair to critical elements, and one in five required urgent work. The issue is particularly acute in pre-1919 homes, where 32% displayed urgent disrepair despite making up just 18% of Scotland's total stock.

Challenges extend beyond historic buildings. The discovery of RAAC in public infrastructure and the ongoing cladding remediation programme highlight wider safety and material risks. Tenement maintenance remains a persistent problem, hindered by fragmented ownership and inconsistent upkeep.

Together, these issues underscore the need for a long-term national strategy for repair, maintenance and building safety to ensure Scotland's homes and public buildings remain safe, resilient and sustainable.

RICS calls on the Scottish government to:

- accept and implement the [Scottish Law Commission's recommendations](#) on establishing compulsory owners' associations for tenements
- accept and implement the recommendations from the cross-party [Working Group on Tenement Maintenance](#) around building reserve funds and five-yearly maintenance reports
- immediately accelerate the cladding remediation programme by adopting proven approaches from Wales and England, and fully utilising professional expertise, to deliver a faster and more effective system
- introduce a VAT reimbursement fund for repair, maintenance and improvement of existing buildings, creating financial parity with the construction of new-build residential property.





'Achieving Scotland's climate goals will require more than technical capability alone [...] It demands sustained investment, measurable and verifiable standards, and long-term regulatory certainty.'

The green economy

Scotland's transition to a green economy is central to its ambitions for a just and prosperous future. As the nation works to decarbonise its buildings, infrastructure and industries – which contribute around 40% of Scotland's total emissions – the property, land and construction sectors stand at the forefront of this change, shaping how sustainability is embedded throughout the built environment.

RICS and its members play a pivotal role in this transformation. From undertaking retrofit assessments for homes and commercial buildings to improve energy performance, to undertaking whole-life carbon assessments that guide sustainable design and investment decisions, RICS professionals are driving the shift toward low-carbon, resource-efficient practice.

Yet achieving Scotland's climate goals will require more than technical capability alone, as highlighted by RICS' [Sustainability report 2025](#). It demands sustained investment, measurable and verifiable standards, and long-term regulatory certainty. Without these foundations, Scotland risks falling short of its net zero commitments and missing the opportunity to ensure that everyone can live in healthy, efficient and resilient homes.



RICS calls on the Scottish government to:

- establish clear quality assurance frameworks to ensure that retrofit measures meet high standards, harmonising [PAS 2035, BS 40104](#) and RICS' [Residential retrofit standard](#)
- reform the operation of Home Energy Scotland to ensure homeowners can receive expert and impartial guidance on selecting appropriate retrofit measures, backed up by professional body regulation and professional indemnity insurance
- implement robust monitoring and compliance mechanisms to prevent poor installations
- establish a Ministerial Oversight Group on retrofit, as [recommended](#) by industry groups in Scotland; through this group, develop a long-term retrofit delivery plan with a joined-up approach to funding, regulating and incentivising retrofit work across Scotland
- introduce legislation requiring the measurement and reporting of embodied carbon in line with the RICS standard [Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment](#).

46%

of construction professionals do not measure carbon emissions across projects.

What are investors and occupiers looking for in sustainable buildings?

86%

say green building certification is important for investors.

94%

say occupiers prioritise indoor environmental quality.



Scotland's land

Scotland's land is one of its greatest assets, shaping its identity, supporting its economy and underpinning ambitions for a fairer, greener future. From dense urban areas to productive farmland and remote uplands, how land is managed and developed is central to meeting Scotland's social, environmental and economic goals.

RICS members are integral to this work. Land surveyors, agents and managers help ensure land is used efficiently, sustainably and in the public interest, supporting tasks from registration and valuation to negotiating access, boundaries, and overrun and oversail agreements – all increasingly important as renewable energy projects expand.



As Scotland advances land reform, climate adaptation and its net zero transition, the role of RICS members becomes even more critical. By balancing competing pressures, protecting natural capital and guiding development with evidence-based advice, they help ensure Scotland's land is managed and shared in ways that remain sustainable, resilient and inclusive for generations to come.

RICS calls on the Scottish government to:

- support planning services in local authorities through adequate funding
- provide training to land agents and valuers as a result of land reform legislative changes
- explore [Section 75](#) flexibility – specifically payment levels (viability) and possible staged or staggered payments
- revisit available rating reliefs to ensure Scotland's high streets remain competitive
- embed standardisation into overrun and oversail agreements, and compulsory purchase orders (CPOs), to improve certainty for landowners and viability for developers
- embed ADR (such as RICS' [ADR for Compulsory Purchase Disputes](#)) into statutory CPO guidance to greatly enhance early and effective engagement.

'RICS members [...] help ensure Scotland's land is managed and shared in ways that remain sustainable, resilient and inclusive for generations to come.'

Skills and workforce

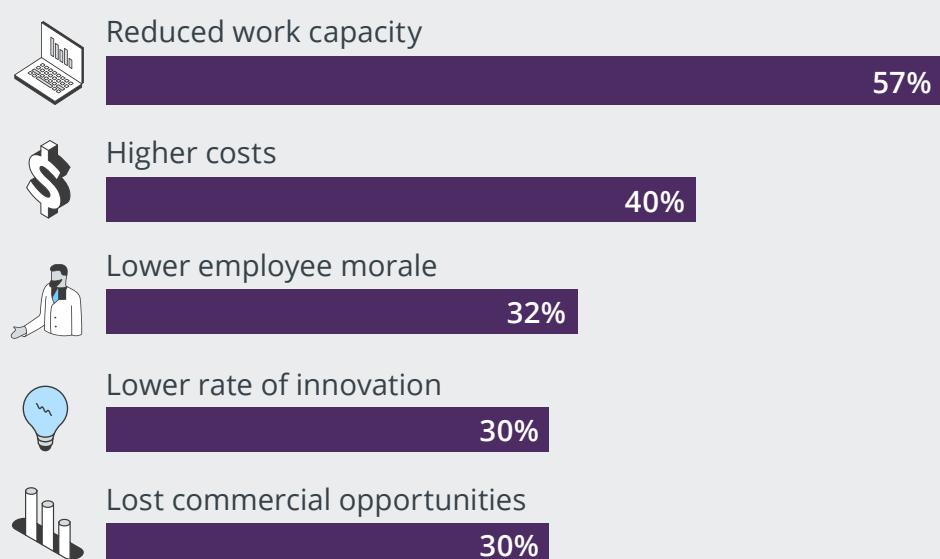
A highly skilled workforce is central to delivering Scotland's ambitions for new housing, modern infrastructure and a just transition to a net zero economy.

Specialists such as surveyors provide the technical expertise and regulatory assurance that enable projects to be planned, financed and delivered efficiently. Their contribution underpins everything from accelerating affordable housing supply to maintaining resilient transport networks and supporting large-scale decarbonisation programmes.

Yet Scotland is currently not positioned to meet this demand, with a need to hire at least 10,000 more people in the construction sector by 2028. University and college pathways into surveying and related built environment professions have contracted in recent years, reducing opportunities for new entrants. This has been seen explicitly with building surveying courses in Scotland. At the same time, potential learners face financial, geographic and awareness barriers that limit access to these careers.

Globally, employers report persistent skills shortages, as highlighted by RICS' [Surveying skills report 2025](#), with many struggling to recruit and retain the talent needed, impacting on work capacity and employee morale. These same challenges are being felt across Scotland; therefore, addressing this is critical to realising Scotland's long-term economic, social and environmental goals.

How, if at all, is the skills shortage impacting your work?

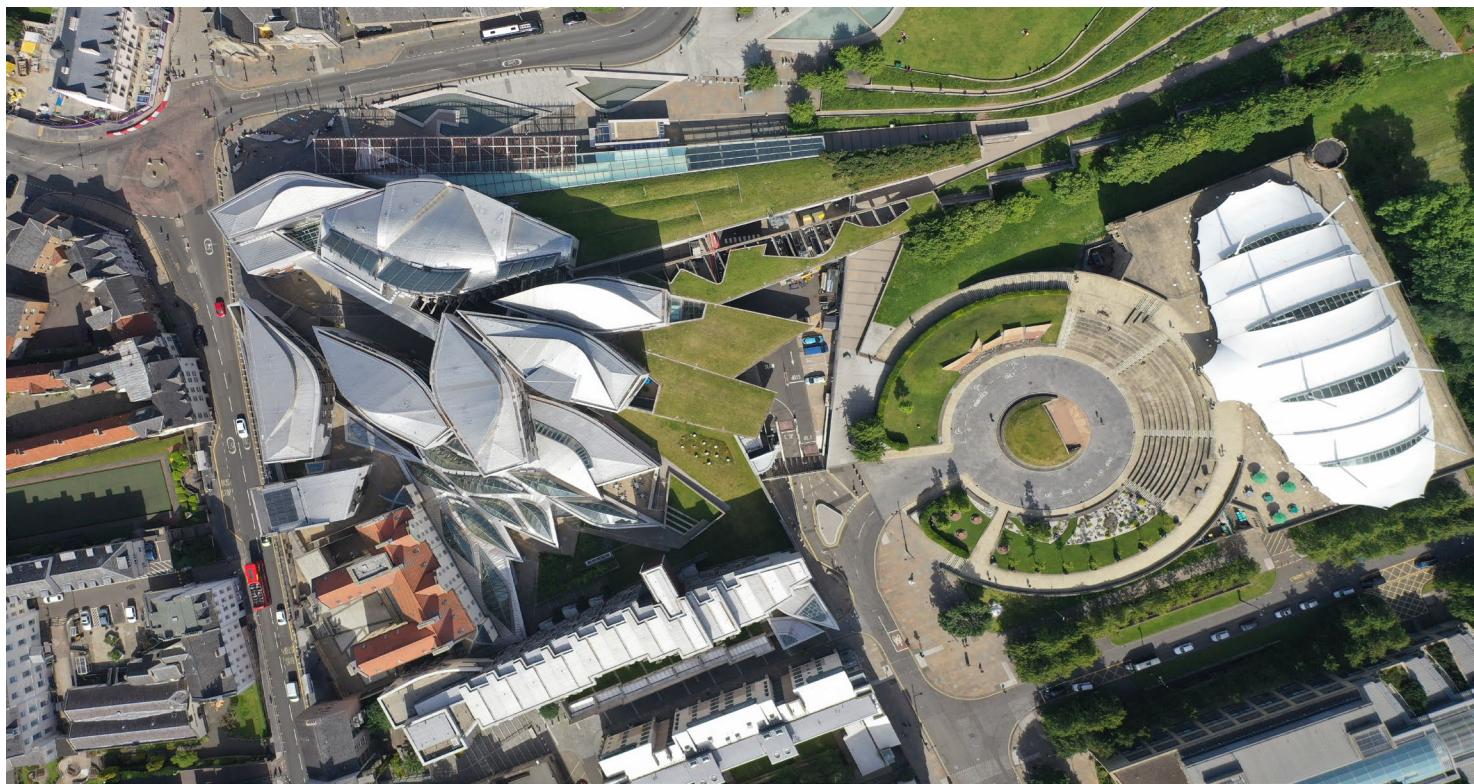


From [RICS' Surveying skills report 2025](#)

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RICS calls on the Scottish government to:

- align with the UK commitment to provide fully funded apprenticeship training for all SME-employed apprentices aged under 25
- ensure adequate funding for Scotland's assessors, and invest in attracting future talent into both the assessor and building verifier professions, safeguarding the timely and effective delivery of revaluations and building verification services
- urgently review building surveying and commercial valuation course provision across Scotland
- review Scottish government funding provision for higher education, tying funding for courses in with Scotland's economic needs and employability ratings, rather than focusing heavily on student numbers on courses
- integrate surveyors (and other skilled professionals) into the [Energy Skills Passport](#)
- provide funding to develop a scheme, similar to Access to Creative Education in Scotland, with the intention of introducing senior-phase pupils to a career in the built environment.



Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

Enquiries
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