

# Proposed Electricians (Scotland) Bill

## Introduction

A proposal for a bill to provide for the protection of title and registration of electricians. The consultation runs from 19 August to 10 November 2020. All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer. All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response. Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded. Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here: [Consultation Document](#) [Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice attached to this consultation which explains how my personal data will be used

## About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)

**Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).**

SELECT is the trade association for the electrical contracting industry in Scotland. Founded in 1900 as The Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland, SELECT became the first trade association in the world to serve the electrical industry.

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Members carry out a wide range of design, manufacturing, testing and commissioning work and each is accredited to one or more of ten technical disciplines. Member companies have a collective turnover of around £1 billion and provide employment for 15,000 operatives.

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your name or the name of your organisation. (Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

SELECT

## Aim and approach

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

At present, anyone can claim to be an electrician and work on an electrical installation. It cannot be right that those who have completed a full apprenticeship and who work in the industry in a safe and competent manner, can be compromised by those who call themselves electricians but who have no or inadequate qualifications.

It is important to underline that we are seeking the regulation of individual electricians – not companies.

Q2. What do you think would be the main practical advantages of the proposed Bill?

An Economic Impact report of Regulating Electricians in Scotland (2018), by "4-consulting" showed that faulty electrical installations account for 7.1% of all fires in Scotland, and damage caused to property by these fires costs c. £9.6million.

A number of deaths and injuries are caused by such fires or electric shocks every year. The Health and Safety Executive estimates the financial cost to society of deaths and injuries – including to the health service, employers and the individuals themselves – and from this we can make a mid-range estimate of £6million of cost from this source.

Much of the cost of faulty electrical installation lies in malfunctioning or poorly-finished work that needs to be replaced. A number of surveys point to a proportion of domestic work which is substandard. Based on these and the data on underqualified electricians, we estimate a huge cost to consumers in getting poor or in some cases dangerous work put right.

By moving towards a regulated industry we would add extra safeguards especially to the general public.

Q3. What do you think would be the main practical disadvantages of the proposed Bill?

Some might say that regulation will lead to extra cost or "red tape", so we must make sure that costs and extra work are kept to a minimum. But there is already a scheme in place for registering individuals via the Scottish Joint Industry Board. With additional work and safeguards added, we could develop a very robust scheme at little additional cost.

Q4. Which of the following best expresses your view of the establishment of a single register for electricians?

Fully supportive

**Please give any views or comments on a single register and how it might be set up**

A single register based on the existing SJIB model would provide the comfort and security that someone calling themselves and electrician was qualified and competent to undertake electrical work.

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view of establishing protection of title for electricians?

Fully supportive

**Please give any views or comments either on the principle or practical operation of protection of title:**

Protection of title enhances the profession's status and reputation by restricting opportunities for the unskilled or semi-skilled. Everyone I speak to and say that there is no restriction over calling yourself an electrician without holding industry qualifications is amazed that no such rules are already in place. Who would argue over such a move?

## Financial Implications

Q6. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

	Significant increase in cost	Some increase in cost	Broadly cost-neutral	Some reduction in cost	Significant reduction in cost	Unsure
(a) Government and the public sector			X			
(b) Businesses			X			
(c) Individuals			X			

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

If we use existing frameworks like the SJIB, then the costs should not be prohibitive.

Q7. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

Data on qualifications in the industry suggest an association between higher qualifications and higher pay (and therefore costs). This can be read in two ways. It represents a cost to society in the sense that regulated tradesmen charge more to cover the cost of their training and those unable or unwilling to gain qualifications are excluded from the market – in other words the new system acts as a 'barrier to entry' that drives up costs.

Alternatively, higher wages imply higher productivity, quality of work and the fact that practitioners take a share of the benefits of the savings to be had from better safety in the form of higher wages.

Netting off costs against benefits, our research suggests a cautious estimate of net benefits to Scotland from proper regulation of electricians is c. £58million. This monetary figure includes all of the benefits from higher electrical standards, such as fewer injuries and deaths, better functioning installations, less need for call backs or for poor/unsafe work to be repaired leading to improved customer satisfaction.

## Equalities

Q8. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Slightly positive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The electrical industry, like many others in the construction sector has a very low level of women and ethnic minority entrants. There is a whole host of reasons for this and we are working hard to encourage more women and others into the industry. In our view, make the role of Electrician a protected title and by implication a "profession" alongside other competing protected roles will lead to greater interest and more women joining the industry which would be a significant advantage to us all.

The numbers required to enter the industry to maintain and indeed grow the workforce, bearing in mind the drive towards an electric economy is significant, therefore increasing the number of women and other ethnic minority and other entrants will mean a significant benefit to the country as a whole.

Q9. In what ways could any negative impact of the Bill on equality be minimised or avoided?

The SJIB operates, the Crediting Electrotechnical Competence (CEC) Scheme. This allows those who hold partial qualifications/and or experience to submit an application to be graded as an electrician. The application is then considered by industry experts and they will advise what if any additional training is required for the applicant to meet the criteria to become an electrician. A number of candidates go through the scheme on an annual basis and to alleviate any additional demand which may be placed on this scheme, we would suggest a lead in time of 18-24 months between enactment and implementation of a Bill.

## Sustainability

Q10. Do you consider that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably, i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Yes. Any impacts are likely to be positive. From an economic view, such a Bill will give clarity to customers and will reduce not only the impact of re-doing faulty work, thus saving time and money but also more importantly, having work done safely, which will not put lives or property at risk.

Our future heating and energy demands, driven by the government's own plans to increase more renewable installations and reduce our carbon footprint means that electricians will play an ever increasing role in delivering on these targets, so we must make sure these installations are done by properly qualified and trained workforce.

The government's own Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26, talks about issues including:

Investing £1.6 billion over the next five years to decarbonise heat in buildings, including £55 million new investment in energy efficiency and £95 million programme to decarbonise the public sector estate.

Invest over £2.8 billion in direct capital grant funding, over 5 years, to deliver more affordable and social homes, continuing to ensure the right types of homes in the right places reflecting and supporting Local Housing Strategies and regional development priorities.

These are significant investments, and the electrical industry will play a big part in delivering these, so, it's vital that those undertaking the work are trained and qualified to complete this work.

## General

Q11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

There is overwhelming evidence that the general public thinks that our profession is regulated when of course it is not. People are genuinely very surprised when told that you need no formal qualification to call yourself an electrician. All survey evidence points to this and to a strong demand from the public that electricians should be qualified in the interests of consumer safety.

Also, all the survey evidence shows that the public has little or no idea how to check that an electrician has qualifications. Most people only use an electrician's service once in a while and it's quite understandable that they have no clear idea where to start. Unfortunately some bogus tradesmen rely on this and present false credentials.

The case for action is overwhelming. Many electricians are fully trained and operate to the highest of standards and do a good and safe job wherever they work. You wouldn't expect anything less. However whilst most of the practising electricians do hold qualifications, quite a number do not and to save lives and protect the property its vital that regulation is introduced.