

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).

ECA is the UK's largest trade association representing electrotechnical and engineering services organisations, at regional, national and European level. ECA works closely with SELECT, who represent the sector in Scotland.

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

ECA Member firms have a combined turnover in excess of £6 billion annually. Member firms carry out design, installation, inspection, testing, maintenance and monitoring activity across the domestic, commercial, industrial and public sectors. This ranges from power and lighting to data communications, to energy efficiency and renewables, as well as the design and installation of cutting-edge building control technologies.

ECA's 2,600 members range from SME electrotechnical businesses to nationwide engineering services organisations that employ thousands of professionals on major UK projects.

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).

ECA (electrotechnical and engineering services body)

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.

Those who have completed a full apprenticeship, or equivalent, have secured a rigorous, industry-recognised and independently assessed professional competence-based qualification, equipping them to work in a safe and ethical manner.

However, their position is compromised by those who opt to use the title 'electrician' but have inadequate or no qualifications to do so. This situation leads to in-built pricing advantages for incompetent individuals and the businesses who employ them, and ultimately puts lives at risk by allowing unsafe installations and maintenance work to be carried out unchecked.

The lack of regulation of competence in this critical area for electrical and building safety undermines appropriately qualified individuals, Scotland's apprenticeship system, and the businesses who make the effort to train and employ competent people.

We understand that this proposal seeks the regulation of individual electricians – not businesses - but by doing so it will help to level-up the playing field for those businesses who promote quality, safety, competency and integrity.

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

We understand that a 2018 economic impact report by "4-consulting" on regulating electricians in Scotland showed that faulty electrical installations account for 7.1 per cent of all fires in Scotland, and that

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damage caused to property by these fires' costs circa £9.6 million.

A number of deaths and injuries are caused by such fires or by electric shocks every year. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) annually estimates the financial cost to society from deaths and injuries, including to the health service, employers and the individuals themselves. From this HSE information, our Scottish counterparts SELECT have made a mid-range estimate of £6 million of the cost from these sources. Much of the cost of faulty electrical installation lies in malfunctioning or poorly finished work that should have been carried out competently in the first instance and subsequently then requires replacement.

A number of surveys point to a proportion of domestic work which is substandard. Based on these surveys and data on underqualified electricians, SELECT estimates a huge cost to consumers in getting poor, or in some cases dangerous, work put right. By moving towards a regulated occupation, extra safeguards for the general public would be introduced, guarding against the risk of tragedies such as Grenfell recurring in Scotland, due to a lack of entry-level competence requirements.

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 it's important to 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 (SJIB) – a body which represents a partnership between employers and unions in this key area of industry. With additional work and safeguards added, Scotland could develop a very robust scheme at little additional cost.

Due to the highly mobile UK workforce and ability to freely trade across the UK, it is vital that the integrity of the UK's internal market is not compromised by any reforms which prevent competent electricians with equivalent qualifications from England, Wales or Northern Ireland undertaking work in Scotland.

Scotland will require the ability to ensure supply meets demand and in doing so will need to be able to recruit competent and suitably professionally qualified individuals to meet the demand for competence in the Scottish domestic, private and public sector. Fortunately, the SJIB already has mutual recognition arrangements in place with the equivalent JIB for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (which is a co-owner with the SJIB of the UK-wide Electrotechnical Certification Scheme).

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 an electrician was qualified and competent to undertake electrical work. Mutual recognition arrangements between this and equivalent JIB arrangements for England, Wales and Northern Ireland would also need to be replicated, to ensure the free movement of suitably qualified and competent individuals around the UK.

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:

Establishing protection of title would enhance the profession's status and reputation by restricting opportunities for the unskilled or semi-skilled. Currently many so-called electricians are free to undertake

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

work following the completion of a short course (which is often just four weeks long). Such a situation puts into question the safety and integrity of installations, meaning that other workers and the general public are at risk.

The skills, knowledge experience and behaviours required to be a competent electrician (including the requisite safety awareness and regard for human life) are at least as onerous as any other profession. However, other professions such as solicitors, doctors and accountants are either protected by law and/or registered for competence.

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 existing frameworks like the SJIB are used, then the costs should not be prohibitive. The costs identified above in relation to human life and other costs associated with incompetent workers using the title of electrician would become a saving, which would off-set any transitional costs of introducing such a scheme.

The existing scheme could be enhanced by the use of smart technology and digital training records to provide a dynamic and transparent register of continuing professional development and upskilling training at minimal cost.

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 suggests an association between higher qualifications and higher pay (and therefore costs). This can be read in two ways.

It could be implied this represents a cost to society in the sense that regulated tradespeople 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.

However, higher wages due to competency and qualifications in other professions give rise to higher productivity, quality of work and reduced risk to human life.

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

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

We cannot see any other way in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively without compromising its objectives. Most regulated professions (e.g. solicitors) are based around a statutory or regulatory protection of the profession, under which a streamlined, open and competitive infrastructure can be maintained at minimal cost to maintain the integrity, professionalism and continued professional development of that craft, trade or profession.

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?

Positive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

The electrical industry, like many others in the construction and engineering sectors, has an aging demographic with very low levels of diversity in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity. There are a whole host of reasons for this. We are working hard throughout the UK to improve the image of engineering, breakdown stereotypes, recognise the relationship between equality, diversity, and inclusion with productivity and profitability. Furthermore, we are encouraging interest in careers in the industry from within these under-represented groups.

Making any role have a protected title, including an 'electrician', by implication makes this a "profession". This development puts the role alongside other competing protected professions. This leads to greater accessibility, equality and inclusion, encouraging those from minority groups to join the industry.

The numbers required to enter the industry to maintain and indeed grow the workforce is significant. The drive towards an electrified economy, electric vehicles, smart assisted living, renewable energy and net-zero carbon targets are a factor in this. Therefore, increasing the talent pool and demographics willing to consider the industry as a viable career opportunity will mean a significant benefit to both workers and businesses in Scotland.

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

The Bill itself should not have a negative impact. Protecting the title of 'electrician' will elevate it to a profession. Any negative impact would only be felt if the non-legislative infrastructure which follows the statute/regulation insufficiently caters for equality, diversity and inclusion within its entry routes.

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.

Any impacts are likely to be positive. From an economic point of view, such a Bill will give clarity to customers and will reduce the impact of rectifying faulty work, thus saving time and money. Furthermore,

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?

and more importantly, it will lead to work being done safely, which will prevent lives or property being put at risk.

Scotland's future heating and energy demands are driven by the Scottish Government's own plans to increase more renewable installations and reduce its carbon footprint. This means that electricians will play an ever-increasing role in delivering on these targets, so it's important these installations are done by a properly qualified, competent and trained workforce.

The Scottish Government's own Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26, refers to:

- Investing £1.6 billion over the next five years to decarbonise heat in buildings, including £55 million of new investment in energy efficiency and a £95 million programme to decarbonise the public sector estate.
- Investing over £2.8 billion in direct capital grant funding, over five years, to deliver more affordable and social homes, continue to ensure the right types of homes in the right places, and reflect and support Local Housing Strategies and regional development priorities.

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

General

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

The electrical sector throughout the UK has a highly flexible, agile, responsive and mobile workforce where supply often moves to meet demand.

Businesses and individuals in Scotland and throughout the UK are currently able to move freely, as competent, professional and suitably qualified individuals. Preserving the SJIB's existing mutual recognition arrangements with the JIB for England, Wales and Northern Ireland will ensure Scotland retains access to the wider UK profession, at no additional cost to suitably qualified workers or their employers.