# Scottish Government's retreat from green heating pledges alarms construction sector



The Scottish Government's recent decision to abandon its green heating pledges has raised alarms within the construction sector, highlighting potential implications for future net-zero initiatives. Select, Scotland's largest construction trade association, has expressed concerns that this shift could undermine the confidence of contractors in governmental commitments towards environmental sustainability.

Alan Wilson, managing director of Select, remarked on the situation, stating, “While there is some logic in a delay given the high costs of implementation, yet again the industry has been told to prepare for future workload demands and have trained and upskilled operatives to install these technologies – only to be let down again,” as reported by Construction News. He further questioned how many times the government could prompt the industry to prepare for such work only to reverse its stance, suggesting that the repeated changes in policy may lead to contractors becoming disillusioned with future government requests for preparation.

The legislation in question aimed to phase out polluting heating systems, a key priority for the Scottish Government, which had been pursuing its Heat in Buildings Bill and engaging in consultations as recently as the previous year. However, Gillian Martin, the cabinet secretary for net zero and energy, informed the Scottish Parliament that concerns over fuel poverty have necessitated a reconsideration of the draft bill's introduction “in its current form.” She stated, “I will introduce a Heat in Buildings Bill when I can be satisfied that the interventions in it will decrease fuel poverty at the same time as they decarbonise houses.”

The proposed legislation would have prohibited gas boilers after 2045, requiring new homeowners to replace old polluting systems within a specified period. The Existing Homes Alliance, which comprises manufacturers, contractors, installers, and advisers, has argued that a lack of clarity and delayed standards could impede progress towards net-zero targets. They noted in a letter sent on 26 March to First Minister John Swinney that the postponement of these standards has already discouraged suppliers and contractors from preparing for the anticipated demand.

Concerns about the construction sector's capacity to meet these ambitious targets have been echoed throughout the industry. The government’s own advisors previously warned that the 2045 deadline set in the draft bill may be overly ambitious. The Chartered Institute of Building highlighted that without addressing the escalating skills shortages within the construction industry, any new legislation could ultimately falter. The institute noted, “At present, Scotland simply does not have the number of qualified people required to install clean heating systems at the pace and scale required to meet these targets.”

Research conducted by the Construction Industry Training Board has indicated that a substantial workforce would need to be trained to achieve the net-zero targets, estimating that around 22,500 individuals across Scotland must be educated in energy efficiency by the year 2028.

As discussions around net-zero targets continue to evolve, the implications of the Scottish Government's policy shifts are likely to be closely monitored by both industry stakeholders and lawmakers, reflecting the complexities intertwined with managing environmental commitments in conjunction with economic factors and workforce capabilities.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://loveworlduk.org/scottish-government-halts-plans-for-green-heating-upgrades/> - This URL supports the claim that the Scottish Government has halted plans for green heating upgrades under the Heat in Buildings Bill due to concerns over affordability and fuel poverty.
* <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/mixed-reactions-as-scottish-government-scraps-heat-in-buildings-bill> - This article corroborates the mixed reactions to the Scottish Government's decision to scrap the Heat in Buildings Bill and highlights the diverse views from political leaders and environmental groups.
* <https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/campaigners-deliver-damning-verdict-on-climate-action-in-2024/> - This URL discusses the broader context of Scotland's climate action, including criticism of the government's handling of climate policies and the importance of addressing emissions from heating systems.
* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/heat-buildings-strategy-achieving-net-zero-emissions-scotlands-buildings/> - This publication by the Scottish Government details the Heat in Buildings Strategy, which aimed to achieve net-zero emissions in Scotland's buildings but faced challenges in implementation.
* <https://www.citb.co.uk/about-citb/news-opinion/blogs/understanding-skills-gap-net-zero/> - This resource from the Construction Industry Training Board discusses the skills gap and the need for workforce training to meet net-zero targets, echoing concerns about Scotland's construction sector capacity.
* <https://www.cibo.org.uk/landing-page/skills-shortage/> - The Chartered Institute of Building provides information on skills shortages in the construction industry, which aligns with the concerns mentioned about Scotland's ability to meet its environmental targets.