



## Fife Council focuses on contractor competence

**The scale and variety of projects carried out by Fife County Council gives it a valuable insight into the major issues confronting the building engineering industry – and it has been sharing its know-how with other BESA members since it joined the Association in 2012.**

Fife Council has a sizeable capital spending requirement and wide range of projects continually on the go. Its in-house Direct Labour Organisation (Building Services), which is based in Glenrothes, carries out around £120m worth of property work a year of which about 45% is sub-contracted.

It was the first local authority to join the Association and will only use BESA members where sub-contractors are required.

Building Services maintains Fife's 30,000 Council houses and 1,500 public buildings. Projects range from minor repairs to the construction of large school extensions and, most recently, a new build community centre. Fife was the first council in Scotland to build new social housing for 30 years.

Fife's DLO directly employs 870 staff – 150 of whom are engaged in mechanical services and another 170 are electrical engineers. It also has over 100 apprentices on its roster.

"Being the only local authority member of BESA in Scotland gives us a great sense of pride about the benchmark we have set for others," says heating replacement team manager Robert Fletcher. "Being a BESA member is proof to our clients that we are committed to providing a high quality service with the full support of a major industry body – and we would encourage other local authorities to become members for the same reason.

### Active

"Being an active BESA member allows us, as a main contractor, to ensure that only competent sub-contractors can tender for our commercial mechanical work packages, which is an essential requirement, and is stipulated in our pre-qualification questionnaire," adds Mr Fletcher.

Networking with other parts of the supply chain and playing a part in reshaping the industry are other benefits of Association membership, he believes.

"BESA membership gives us an opportunity to take part in industry forums and share project models with each other. For example, our system for inspecting and assessing domestic properties has been adopted by other councils, which improves continuity across the industry."

There is also plenty of experience to call upon within the organisation to inform this work with core internal staff including architects, consulting engineers, and energy managers.

Fife also has a property services division, which procures the design elements before the DLO carries out much of the implementation. Very large projects, like Cardenden Primary School, are then delivered in partnership with other contractors.

The organisation also likes to 'grow its own' skills and is running a large apprenticeship programme – another area where it is collaborating with BESA as training evolves to meet requirements for new and more diverse skills.

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