

Mineral Products Association Scotland

Priorities for Scotland

OVERVIEW

1. The Foundation of the Economy

The Scottish mineral products sector supplies materials that are essential to almost every aspect of our lives: aggregates (crushed rock, sand, and gravel), recycled aggregates, asphalt, cement, concrete, dimension stone, lime, mortar, and industrial sands.

These mineral products have shaped Scotland's landscape, from the granite, sandstone, and concrete of our urban environment, to the bucolic rural settings of former quarry sites that have been restored to nature.

While we have abundant reserves of these essential minerals, the sector faces a number of policy challenges that must be addressed in order to ensure it can continue supporting Scotland's economy and environment. These include a growing tax burden, high energy prices, and issues around planning, permitting, and land use.

All the while, these essential materials have supplied, and continue to be required to supply, the projects and industries that power Scotland's economy: homes, schools, hospitals, roads, railways, ports, and even manufacturing, agriculture, and energy infrastructure.

Scotland requires infrastructure investment, and it is fundamental to our economy that both the Scottish Government and UK Government drive its delivery.

2. Contribution to the Scottish Economy

- A recent report found that the Scottish quarried aggregates industry alone generated £450 million in gross value added for the Scottish economy in 2024, and raised £99.1 million in tax contributions
- The Scottish mineral products sector produces almost 30 million tonnes of aggregates, concrete, and asphalt per year, and operates from over 200 sites
- The quarried aggregates industry alone directly employs nearly 5,000 people across Scotland
- As the largest supplier to the construction sector, the mineral products sector supports many more jobs in its supply chain. Construction contributes 11% of Scotland's economic output and directly employs 234,000 people
- The primary aggregates sector's average labour productivity is £113,850 per worker, well above the Scottish average of £74,420

KEY ISSUES

1. Taxation

Over the last five years, a combination of primarily UK Government policies have significantly increased the cumulative tax burden on businesses in the mineral products sector. This combined with other factors has deterred investment in the sector, and in some cases led to redundancies and sites being mothballed.

Against this backdrop, the Scottish Aggregates Tax (SAT) replaced the UK-wide Aggregates Levy in Scotland in April 2026. MPA Scotland engaged actively with the Scottish Government, Revenue Scotland, and other stakeholders to ensure the new tax was implemented smoothly, without market distortion, and without increasing the cumulative tax burden on Scottish aggregates producers so they can compete fairly.

However, calls continue for the SAT rate to be increased, to diverge further from the rest of the UK, or even to be regionalised, usually with the stated aim of increasing the use of recycled aggregates. In addition to the economic damage such proposals would cause, this ambition is highly unlikely to be realised.

Indeed, our members, who produce both primary and recycled aggregates, are fully aware that there is only a finite volume of construction and demolition waste to be used as recycled aggregates. The Scottish Government's own figures highlighted 87% of which is already used in this way. There is little scope to significantly increase this as much of the remaining 13% is silt and other soft wastes that are not recyclable into usable products. Recycled aggregates, the supply of which relies on demolition activity, must also meet specific standards and specifications to be usable. To further inform on this issue, MPA Scotland have recently commissioned consultants to undertake research into the availability of recycled aggregates in Scotland.

Recommendations:

- **The Scottish Aggregates Tax should not be diverged further from, or increased to a higher rate than, the UK Aggregates Levy**
- **No regional variation of the Scottish Aggregates Tax**
- **Introduce a sustainability fund to contribute towards projects in communities near aggregates extraction sites, funded by revenue from the Scottish Aggregates Tax**
- **The quarrying exemption for the Scottish Landfill Tax, which facilitates quarry restoration, should be maintained and rates should not be increased**
- **No increase to Land and Buildings Transaction Tax**
- **No increase in non-domestic rates**

2. Planning and permitting

Aggregates are essential for the construction of homes, other buildings, and transport and energy infrastructure, which are vital for the Scottish Government's infrastructure investment plans and wider ambitions for the economy and environment.

It is therefore necessary to ensure a suitable reserve of aggregates capable of meeting future demand, both in terms of volume and quality, as well as a steady pipeline of demand so businesses in the sector can continue to operate and invest with confidence. Supply of mineral products cannot be taken for granted; it must be planned, managed, and monitored to ensure demand is met on a secure and sustainable basis.

However, for many years there has been inadequate replenishment of permitted aggregates reserves in Scotland, despite low levels of housebuilding and Scotland's natural abundance of these minerals.

This is unsustainable, and urgent reform to the mineral planning system is needed to ensure the sector can continue supplying essential materials for the housing and infrastructure Scotland needs. For example, there is a planning requirement for a landbank of at least ten years, but this should be considered a minimum, not a target.

Recommendations:

- **Review mineral planning and permitting to reduce cost, delay, uncertainty, and bureaucracy, to ensure the supply of essential permitted aggregates reserves to satisfy the needs of the Scottish economy and the ambition of the Scottish Government**
- **Utilise planning hubs to ensure all planning authorities in Scotland have access to specialist mineral planning expertise**
- **Oppose proposals to make Review of Old Mineral Permissions (ROMP) processes even more complex for operators**
- **Appoint a cabinet-level minister for construction and infrastructure to provide policy coherence and strategic leadership**



Photo: Thistle and fly | Glensanda Quarry, Oban | by Tony Robinson

3. Energy and net zero

The mineral products sector is both committed to decarbonisation and essential for supplying the projects needed to deliver Scotland's energy transition.

Cement is an energy-intensive industry with one plant in Scotland at Dunbar, and the UK-wide cement and concrete industry has a roadmap to net zero by 2050. Delivering this will require collaboration between the Scottish Government and Westminster to deliver CCUS in Scotland, as well as zero-carbon electricity and sustainable fuel being available in sufficient quantities, and infrastructure such as new or upgraded grid connections being delivered quickly and affordably.

The sector will also play a critical role in delivering the energy infrastructure needed for Scotland's green transition. Floating offshore wind, for example, can use domestic concrete for their substructures, although this will require Scottish Government support to encourage projects to use domestic supply chains, and deliver maximum economic benefit to Scotland, rather than relying on imports from countries like Norway. Mineral products will also be essential for the ports and transport infrastructure necessary to deliver the energy transition.

Decarbonising the built environment will also be key to achieving net zero. However, the Scottish Government's stated aim of increasing the use of timber in construction is ill-advised and based on outdated assumptions.

Recent research from the Future Homes Hub has found a minimal difference in the whole-life carbon of timber-frame constructions versus masonry constructions, and Scottish Government policy should reflect this by taking a 'materials-neutral' approach to promoting all lower-carbon building materials, including low-carbon cement and concrete.

Recommendations:

- **Continue the Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund to support investment in decarbonising industrial sites**
- **Work with the UK Government to deploy CCUS in Scotland, including for dispersed sites, and ensure Scotland has the necessary skilled workforce to meet the CCUS industry's future need**
- **Invest in port infrastructure to enable use of domestic supply chains for offshore wind installations**
- **Incentivise offshore wind projects to use domestic supply chains, including for concrete (and associated aggregates and cement) to maximise the socio-economic benefit to Scotland**
- **Replace the specific promotion of timber in construction with a materials-neutral approach that equally supports all lower-carbon building materials**

4. Biodiversity

MPA Scotland members have a proud, decades-long record of enhancing biodiversity in Scotland by restoring former quarry sites to nature.

Due to the long-term, but ultimately transient, nature of mineral extraction, the sector's contribution to biodiversity is unique, and includes some of the most ambitious restoration projects and specialist habitat creation projects.

Any effort to require developments to deliver biodiversity net gain should reflect this unique contribution with an industry-specific metric, in order to avoid inadvertently discouraging businesses from pursuing the most ambitious and innovative projects that ultimately deliver the most net gain.

Recommendation:

- **Ensure any metric for mandatory biodiversity net gain is industry-specific**

5. Scottish Minerals Forum

The Scottish mineral products industry, Scottish Government, and others could collaborate more closely on all the issues outlined above.

MPA Scotland would be keen to see a Scottish Minerals Forum established, looking at forward planning and reserve replenishment, as well as assisting in the cost-effective and sustainable delivery of key infrastructure projects. Such a forum would provide improved dialogue between our sector and the Scottish Government, and would provide an opportunity to consider further opportunities for recycling and innovation. This forum would be a good way to ensure the sector can be fully engaged in decisions that affect its future and importantly its contribution to the Scottish economy.

Recommendation:

- **Establish a Scottish Minerals Forum for dialogue on issues relevant to the sector, including forward planning and reserve replenishment to meet the needs and ambition of the Scottish economy**



Photo: Cloddach Quarry, Elgin

More detail and further questions

Scan the QR code to view our Key Documents for Political Stakeholders



For any queries please contact Alan Doak, Director on 07710 594708 or at Alan.Doak@mineralproducts.org

About MPA Scotland

MPA Scotland is an affiliate of the wider Mineral Products Association, and represents thirteen independent SME quarrying companies, as well as five major and global companies. Collectively, these businesses employ over 3,000 people across Scotland.

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