

The Scottish Government  
St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG



02 February 2021

By email only: [electriciansregulationconsultation@gov.scot](mailto:electriciansregulationconsultation@gov.scot)

Dear Sirs

### **A consultation on the regulation of electricians**

We are writing to you in relation to the consultation on the regulation of electricians. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this issue. APIL is committed to campaigning for reform to improve the law for injured people and to prevent needless injuries. Faulty electrical work undertaken by incompetent and unskilled electricians presents risk of injury to consumers and the general public through potential electric shocks and fires. The Pye Tait Consulting report on the regulation of electricians outlines that, based on fire statistics, they estimate that there could be 400 accidental fires caused by faulty electrical work each year in Scotland. They also predict that this could involve 1,000 people and may cause up to 4 deaths and 100 injuries per year<sup>1</sup>. Some statistics show the extent of this problem in other areas of the UK. In England in 2019/20, there were 13 fatalities and 468 injuries as a result of electrical distribution fires and 7 fatalities and 511 injuries as a result of other electrical appliance fires<sup>2</sup>. In Northern Ireland in 2019, 58% of house fires were caused by electricity resulting in 129 injuries and 1 fatality<sup>3</sup>. In addition, Wales has the highest proportion of fires caused by electricity than other parts of the UK (62% in Wales compared to 53% in England)<sup>4</sup>. The Pye Tait Consulting estimations in addition to the statistics show the extent of injuries and deaths which occur as a result of fires caused by faulty electrical work.

This is only part of the picture. There is a wider picture of injury and/or deaths caused by faulty electrical work that has not been analysed. The information given is only based on fire statistics and do not represent injuries caused by electric shocks. These instances are not reported and data is unavailable. For example, the risk of death or injury as a result of an electric shock is emphasised through the recent death of a seven-year-old boy who was subjected to a fatal electric shock due to poor electrical work<sup>5</sup>. This demonstrates that there is a significant risk to the general public, yet there is no data to show the extent of injuries and deaths caused by electric shocks.

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<sup>1</sup> Pye Tait Consulting, The Regulation of Electricians in Scotland For the Scottish Government's Directorate of Energy and Climate Change (May 2019) p 6

<sup>2</sup> Gov.UK Fire Statistics Incident Level Datasets updated 14 January 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-incident-level-datasets>

<sup>3</sup> Electrical Safety First <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/northern-ireland/>

<sup>4</sup> Electrical Safety First <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/wales/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/romford-london-electric-shock-harvey-tyrell-b900661.html>

Whilst the intentions behind the consultation are sound, the information available does not allow consideration of the full extent of the potential harm individuals are suffering. Wider research must be carried out to assess the extent of the risk of needless injury to the general public across the UK both in relation to fires and electric shocks. Whilst we support the aims of the Scottish Government in this regard, we are concerned that the protection of consumers through the regulation of electricians is a wider issue which should be dealt with by the UK Government.

The Pye Tait report, referenced by the Government's consultation document, states that in the UK an unqualified person can undertake electrical work in the same way as those who have qualifications and training<sup>6</sup>. It specifically mentions that this is a UK wide issue<sup>7</sup>. In order to raise standards and reduce poor electrical work by rogue traders which endangers the general public, it is crucial that mandatory measures are implemented across the board.

Mandatory measures rather than voluntary measures will ensure protection for electricians and their firms in addition to consumers who may be at risk of injury from poor electrical work.

### **Protection of title**

As highlighted in the consultation document, protection of title would ensure that unqualified people will be unable to refer to themselves as an electrician. This is important because members of the public will then be aware that an individual calling themselves an electrician is sufficiently skilled. APIL agrees that protection of title is not sufficient to deal with sub-standard electrical work due to the risk of injury to members of the public.

### **Specific qualifications**

Introducing specific qualification requirements in Scotland would not only be consistent with the qualifications required in England, but it would also ensure that electricians meet a certain standard of skill in electrical work to reduce the number of injuries caused by poor workmanship. Introducing these steps would ensure consistency in the level of workmanship.

### **Register of electricians**

In addition, a comprehensive register of electricians and firms, like the widely recognised Gas Safety Register, will also help to regulate electricians and their work. A register will give the general public confidence in choosing an electrician or electrical firm, knowing that they are qualified to undertake the work required. It is crucial that safety is the priority. Requiring electrical firms to be on a register by law will improve safety for the general public by ensuring initial and on-going competence, like those who voluntarily register to regulators of electrical installations such as NICEIC<sup>8</sup>. These mandatory measures will help to combat sub-standard electrical work which subjects the general public to risk of injury by making it unlawful for an unqualified person to undertake electrical work.

The mandatory measures outlined above should be implemented throughout the UK for consistency in regulations. These measures come under consumer protection and therefore it would be more appropriate for the UK Government to undertake a wide review of the limitations of current requirements and the impact which they have on the general public. Although increasing public awareness of qualifications and competency are important in

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<sup>6</sup> Pye Tait Consulting (n 1) p 4

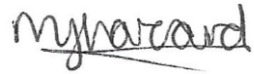
<sup>7</sup> Pye Tait Consulting (n 1) p 4

<sup>8</sup> NICEIC <https://www.niceic.com/find-a-contractor/why-choose-us>

improving consumer safety, the mandatory measures as well as public awareness of those mandatory measures would make it more difficult for unqualified people to undertake electrical work, thus reducing the potential risk of injury to consumers.

We hope that our comments prove useful to you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "m. hazard". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Meyer Hazard

Legal Policy Assistant