



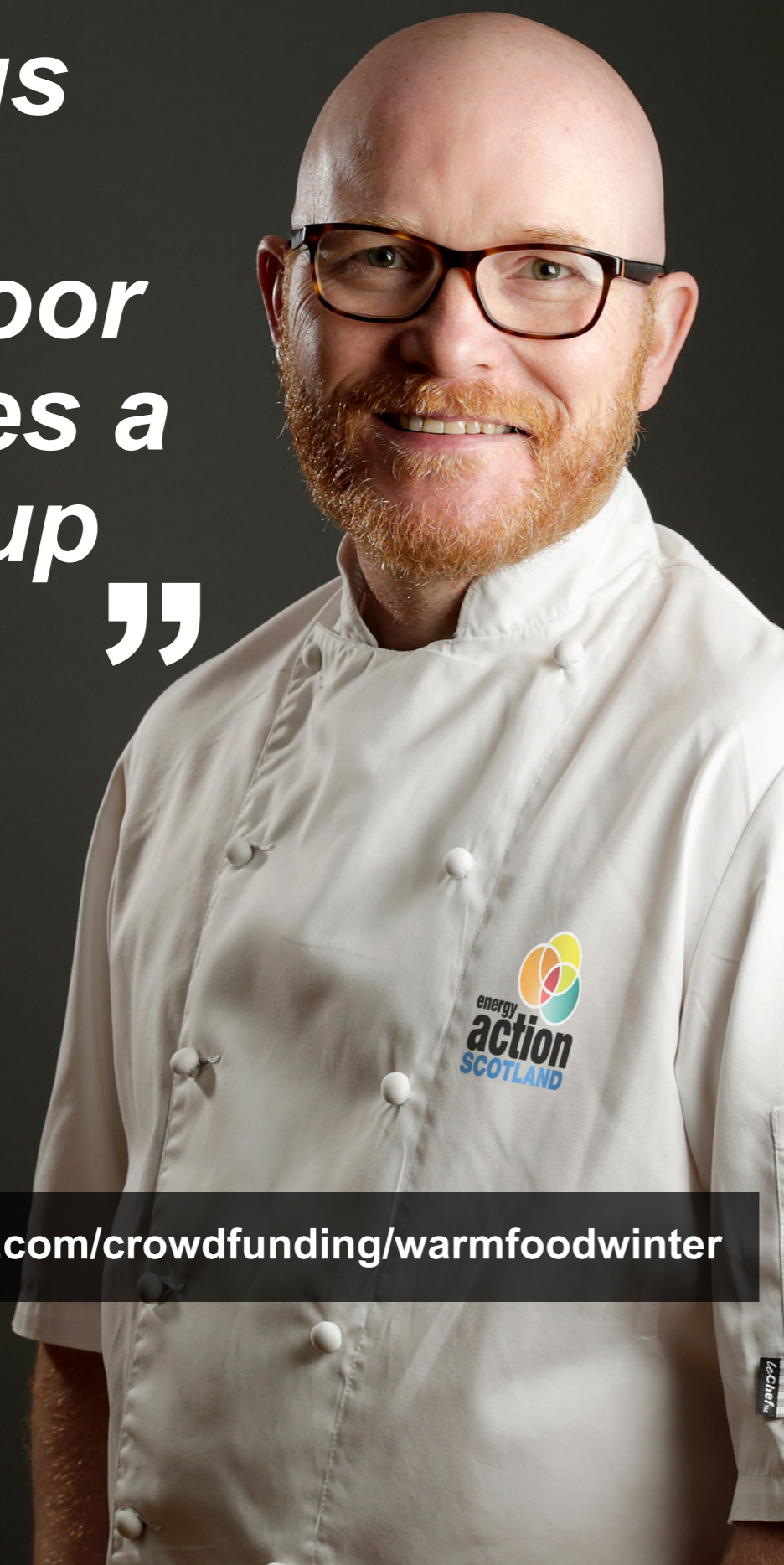
Energy Review

SPRING 2021

The quarterly journal of Energy Action Scotland



“
*Help us
give
fuel poor
families a
hand up*
”



www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/warmfoodwinter

Winds of Change is a pretty popular song title, from the Beach Boys to the Bee Gees, but seems apt for the current time. It has been bitterly cold wind this winter but it very much feels that there is a real sense that socially, we are heading towards a better place. And that is good news indeed.

The Heat Networks Bill has progressed through Stage 3. Consensus and cross-party working has ensured that this Bill has all the right elements to enable developments that not only offer the prospect of lower carbon local energy, but where the heat dimension of fuel poverty can have a real and positive impact on households. We worked closely with Citizens Advice Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations to ensure a fairer outcome for households. The Heat in Buildings Strategy is out for consultation which marks another important step to ensure that Scotland makes progress that ensures that the efficiency of homes is no longer one of the drivers of fuel poverty.

Many of the relief measures of both the UK and Scottish Governments will end during 2021/22. The £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit has supported many families, the Job Retention Scheme has ensured that many people have continued to receive a significant proportion of their income, but we are all concerned what will happen when they are removed.

The Scottish Government has delivered a £100million winter support package of which £7million was earmarked for fuel poverty activities.

The first of these enabled crisis payments through the Fuel Bank Foundation for not only pre-payment customers, but also those with oil and solid fuels. The Child Winter Heating Assistance has brought new financial support and Scottish Government is going to be responsible for additional benefits including the Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payment. I am sure Scotland can implement these benefits in ways that will truly benefit those that need it most.

I know advisory and support services have been called upon to deliver unprecedented levels of support to hard pressed households. Installers have done what they can to keep efficiency improvements moving but it hasn't been easy, and lockdowns have undoubtedly reduced the rate of change.

In the midst of all this, I have been absolutely delighted by the response of the public and our members over the winter. Over 250 families will benefit from a programmable pressure cooker to help them reduce the energy consumption and costs associated with preparing a warm, nutritious meal. AC Whyte and Warmworks helped us secure the support of Scotland's National Chef, Gary MacLean. Housing

WINDS OF CHANGE

Frazer Scott,
Chief Executive Officer

associations, Almond, Hillcrest, Paisley and Ruchazie as well as the Vibrant Communities project in East Ayrshire have all supported the campaign. Instant Brand, one of the leading manufacturers of multicookers, supports the campaign, providing a very generous discount. Our campaign is about the real and present need to help people reduce their outgoings. Energy efficient appliances can make a huge difference but the opportunity costs can be high. Regardless of what lies ahead, let us remember that working together we can make a difference.

It isn't getting easier for households. Ofgem announced an increase in the default tariff cap during February which will add hundreds to the costs of many bills from April onwards. Some of that increase is in part to recover Covid-19 debts, the end of which we are promised but have yet to see. A recent Ombudsman Services report shows that consumers want a greener future. The cost of meeting NetZero looms large. It is so important that the level of investment is made but it needs to be fair.

Working with our sister organisation, National Energy Action, we stressed the need to protect vulnerable households to Ofgem and in its decision on future energy networks it doubled the allocation of funds for activities to support vulnerable and fuel poor households.

In our last Energy Review, I was able to reflect on the latest fuel poverty figures published by the Scottish Government. These figures showed that there was no real improvement in the levels of fuel poverty. All of which related to our world pre-Covid. The signals were there that fuel poverty was increasing and there can be no doubt that this is very much the case.

This is a real cause for concern. Inequalities have increased, those on lower incomes have spent more whilst those on higher incomes have saved. There are some green shoots but whilst there is no strategy for fuel poverty reduction, we will surely use this hiatus to allow us to learn the full lessons of Covid-19 to be gathered ahead of a 2021 publication. I know that we are all ready to help.

But I am optimistic and not just because of the resolve of our members, the ambition of Government,



In the midst of all this, I have been absolutely delighted by the response of the public and our members over the winter.

broad spectrum of political agreement and the desire for change amongst those that need it most. We will need this help because we are not seeing the shoots of recovery or progress that we need to see.

The Scottish Housing Condition Survey 2019 was published on 1 December 2020. It is our point of reference, where we hope to see progress, however the 2019 figures show little real progress in reducing levels of fuel poverty.

The latest fuel poverty statistics shows that rates of fuel poverty have remained similar compared to the previous year. In 2019 the level of fuel poverty was 24.6%, representing around 613,000 households. This is similar to the 2018 fuel poverty rate.

Those in extreme fuel poverty were 12.4%, equivalent to around 311,000 households. This is a marked increase. Whilst some of this can be explained by sharp increases in energy costs, the implication of this rise in extreme fuel poverty is tens of thousands of

households in the most difficult of circumstances.

The median gap for fuel poor households in 2019 was £700, higher than the £610 in 2018. Ofgem has proposed to add £21 to all bills to help pay for debts accrued during Covid. Net Zero progress also looks set to add to the costs of households at rates that will outstrip the benefit of efficiency measures and income levels, which look set to fall.

Those in rural Scotland experienced a significant increase in fuel poverty, rising from 33% to 44%. A stark reminder of the continuing issues affecting households where there is no gas, harsher climatic conditions, lower incomes, and a higher proportion of inefficient homes

I haven't forgotten that all of this occurred before Covid-19 arrived. Scottish Government estimates suggest that fuel poverty could rise to 29% of households as a result of the social and economic impacts of the virus.

Citizens Advice Scotland has warned of growing concerns about debt and utility debt in particular through the excellent work of the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

It seems like a good time to have a really solid strategy in place to provide the high level strategic framework against which we can make progress. The fuel poverty targets have set in statute Scotland's ambition to all but eradicate fuel poverty. We are currently operating without a strategy. It is understandable there has been disruption to the normal development of strategies and plans. But the death associated with living with fuel poverty over the winter months will not stop. The hardship of families is not reducing. They should not have to wait to understand how help will come.

As organisations working to support households, our ideas, creativity and resolve are needed to support Government. The sector has stepped up during Covid to help so many households yet there remain many who did not reach out or were not reached.

It cannot do this alone.

THE SCOTTISH PANTRY NETWORK

Pantries offer surplus food and produce to customers at reduced prices taking inspiration from similar models seen elsewhere in North America, Europe and other parts of the UK. There are different models throughout the UK but at the Scottish Pantry Network anyone who wants to use the pantry can do so, there is no means testing.

It costs £2.50 to get approximately £15 worth of food, there are no prices for individual items or lines.

Since their opening, the Pantries in Glasgow have shown real and tangible signs of being sustainable and have integrated into the wider communities at a time when the Covid pandemic has meant they are a real lifeline for most some of the most vulnerable communities.

The Pantries were planned, pre-Covid, to tackle the already critical levels of food insecurity related issues across our most deprived neighbourhoods. The food is mainly supplied through Fareshare Glasgow and the West,

which distributes surplus food across its region. However, there is still an estimated 250,000 tonnes of edible surplus food in the UK that ends up in landfill. "It's that issue of turning the tap on the true available surplus to allow us to expand and develop a dignified approach to food insecurity," says Jim Burns, Director of Operations at Fareshare Glasgow and West, the food charity that helped Councillor Mandy Morgan establish the Pantry Network.

It's this focus on dignity that has won the initiative praise and contributed to its success, according to Burns. "It's a shopping experience. It needs to look like a shop, feel like a shop... It's the whole shopping experience that makes it dignified," he says. "People are going in and getting a similar selection. They don't feel like it's surplus or end-of-life or poor-quality food – because it isn't. What the pantry doesn't have, I would say that someone would have saved enough on their food bill to allow them to buy it."





The Pantry goes beyond a local shop as it serves as a community hub

Councillor Morgan added, “People come into the Pantry and are surprised as it’s not what they were expecting... I would shop here! It’s about coming in and feeling you’re like everybody else. You’re not coming here because you can’t afford to shop anywhere else, you’re coming here because it’s good to come here. Food would end up in landfill if we don’t use it. But obviously it’s good for your pocket as well.” The Pantry is just like any other shop, set out like a shop and has shelves full of brand products that you would find in any other shop or supermarket and reflects the Scottish Government dignity principles, by giving people the power of choice.

The Pantry goes beyond a local shop as it serves as a community hub with a space for courses or helping get people back into work, as well as wrap around services. Unfortunately, this aspect has yet to be fully developed due to ongoing social distancing needs but will become more important once the public health situation improves says Councillor Morgan.

But despite the pandemic this integrated approach has seen the Pantry go from strength to strength. We have worked on innovative ways with the city council on referral pathways to get people the help they require. With six Pantries now across the city,

linked to the Scottish Pantry Network, and the level of engagement they have seen over the past eight months, it is easy to see how the Pantries have already surpassed the vision laid out in its business plan, with “the kind of numbers we were seeing in the first few weeks of the Pantry [forecast] in years two and three”, according to the Councillor. There is also great cause to be excited as the network is already expanding. We have already moved into Inverclyde and are having conversations with Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire Councils.

Successful beginnings, without a doubt. But is the Pantry sustainable in the long term?

Councillor Morgan and Burns both think it is. Early signs show the model is in a strong position. We recognise there will be a need for seed funding and that they aren’t going to become 100% sustainable so there will be an element of grant income required. It is simple elements such as a small front-of-store and a flexible back-of-store to help drive down operating costs, and the membership model of the Pantry will be able to support the shop given the immediate need.

However there are other challenges, transport in the city is only a help if you want to travel into the city centre as it doesn’t make traveling locally very easy so we wanted to make the Pantries as accessible and inclusive as possible. Therefore TSPN worked with Glasgow City Council and Community Transport Glasgow to secure a bus service to take people to the Pantries. This not only helps accessibility it also ensures the shops are being used to

help generate income making them more sustainable.

But for Councillor Morgan, the Pantry’s biggest impact has been on her community. “Before, when I used to have surgeries for constituents, hardly anyone used to come. But now when I’m in the Pantry, people say to me, ‘Can I just have a wee word with you?’ They don’t want to go anywhere formal; it’s about getting to know your community. It just shows you that the community feels more comfortable to come and speak to a politician when the space is theirs.”



The Energy Redress Scheme: Reaching the vulnerable and driving the change to alleviate fuel poverty



The Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme (Energy Redress Scheme) funds projects across England, Scotland and Wales that support vulnerable energy consumers. Managed and delivered by Energy Saving Trust since 2018 on behalf of energy regulator Ofgem, the scheme collects voluntary payments from energy companies that may have breached rules and redistributes the funding as grants to charities in Great Britain.

Nine funding rounds later and the scheme is showing no signs of slowing down. To date, over £21 million has been awarded to 130 charities with plans to announce successful projects in Round 10 next month. In addition to this, a further £10 million crisis fund has also been distributed over the last year, providing funding to charities to distribute fuel vouchers to people on pre-payment meters and at risk of self-disconnection due to the pandemic.

Reaching vulnerable energy consumers in Scotland

27 projects worth over £3.9 million have been funded in Scotland so far, with several other projects covering Great Britain also benefitting Scottish consumers. In addition, over £3.3 million in funding has been provided to Scottish projects through the crisis fund.

The scheme has funded a range of projects, from research studies to delivering tailored energy advice services and the distribution of energy saving measures such as energy efficient lightbulbs and draught-proofing. The scheme's core priority of supporting energy consumers in vulnerable situations aims to help people who are most at risk from cold homes and high energy bills.

Energy Redress Scheme projects work closely alongside the Scottish government's energy and fuel poverty programmes, ensuring that all funded projects can refer clients to support through Home Energy Scotland.

Despite the effects Covid-19 has had on the population, the Energy Redress Scheme continues to allocate funding to projects to ensure vulnerable households have access to the appropriate support through these challenging times.

Senior project manager for the scheme, Graham Ayling, commented:

"The Covid-19 pandemic has hit people in vulnerable situations and the charities that support them especially hard, putting many more people in a position where they struggle to pay fuel bills. The charities that the Energy Redress Scheme supports are working hard to adapt to social distancing and continue to provide support to those who need it most. Our team has made

sure that funds have continued to be available throughout this difficult time."

One example of a Scotland based charity delivering great work under the scheme is Clackmannanshire Citizens Advice Bureau. They secured £42,012.19 in Round 2 for their Local Energy Advice Project (LEAP), which ran from February 2019 to March 2021.

The two-year advice project aimed to help Clackmannanshire householders become more aware of their energy use. The project has provided both one-to-one advice as well as group sessions to more than 2,000 residents. To help promote the service to those most in need, they have held sessions for more than 90 frontline workers and volunteers.

Jonny Miller, managing director at Clackmannanshire Citizens Advice Bureau said:

"The funding we received allowed us to provide our free, confidential and impartial energy advice to our local community all year round and deal with more complex, ongoing casework. It also allowed us to build partnerships and relationships in our community to establish that they can come to us for specialist energy advice, which has been crucial to reach those most in need, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic."

Impact of the scheme to date

The projects funded by the scheme have already reached over 70,000 people with energy advice and support. This number will only increase as more projects complete their work programmes and new projects are funded. Consumers have been supported through a combination of home visits, face-to-face appointments, telephone and online advice, with thousands more reached with information at community events, through online resources and local media.

Key recorded outputs include:

- **energy advice provided to over 70,000 distinct households**
- **160 new jobs created and 780 volunteering opportunities**
- **over 7,000 small energy saving measures installed or provided to vulnerable households**
- **over £2.5m recorded savings through advice**

More information on the outputs of the scheme covering the period up to the end of 2020 can be found in the Energy Redress Scheme 2020 Impact Report, which is available online.

Looking forward

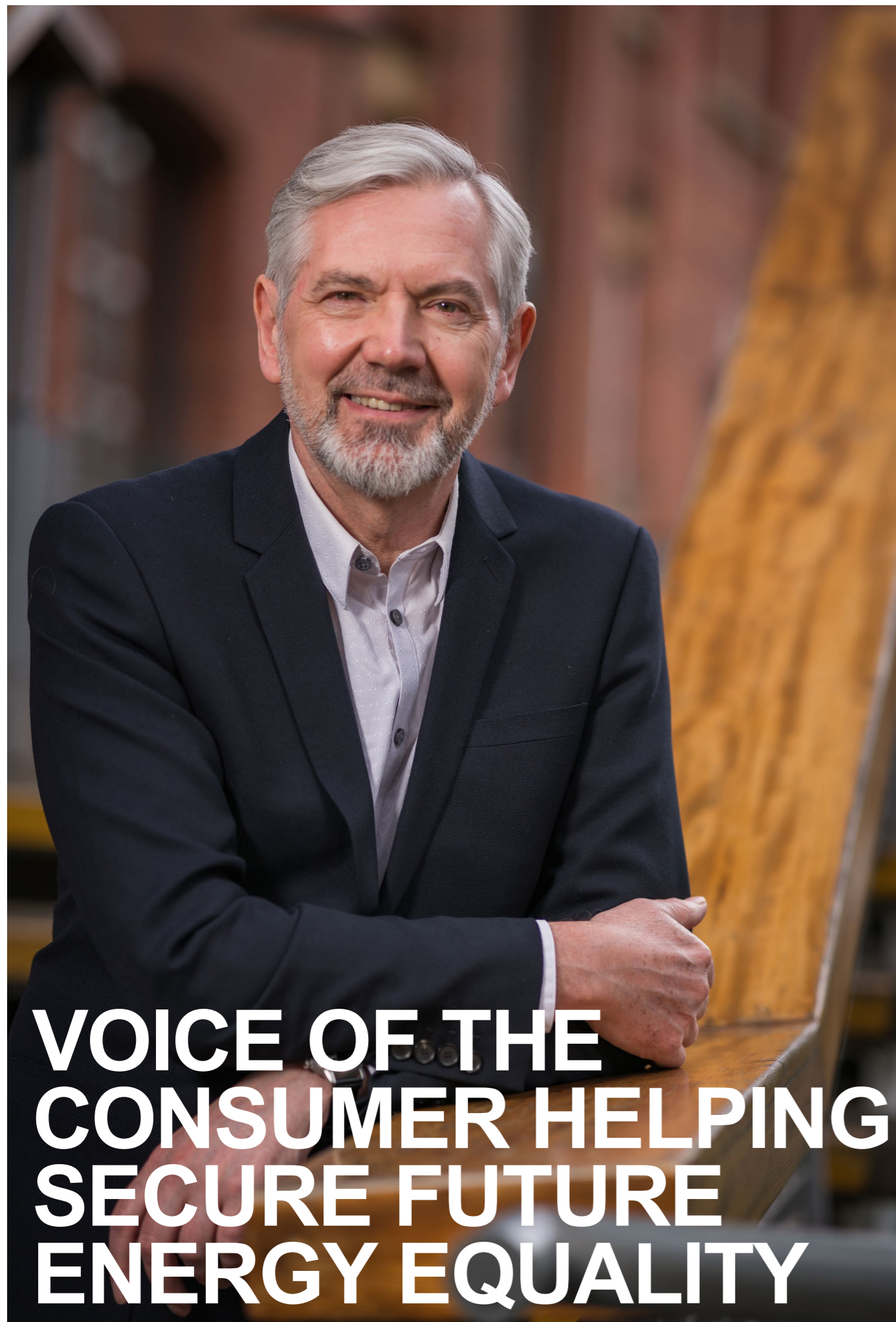
The scheme continues to evolve to ensure that it meets the needs of energy consumers and address the UK's ambitions to tackle the climate emergency. A new funding stream was launched in December 2020 to support charity initiatives that reduce the climate change impact associated with energy use. The Carbon Emissions Reduction Fund looks to support the UK's target of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The first round of the Carbon Emissions Reduction Fund closed to applications in February 2021, and successful projects will be announced soon.

In addition to these priorities, the scheme also incorporates a smaller fund for innovative projects that benefit energy consumers.

Funding rounds usually open on a quarterly basis and charities must be registered with the scheme to apply. Other organisations can be involved in delivering Energy Redress Scheme funded projects, but the projects must be led by a charity.

Further information on the fund, case studies and resources produced by funded projects can be found on the scheme website: energyredress.org.uk. Organisations interested in applying to future funding rounds can register online via the website. This will ensure you are ready to apply and will be notified of any new funds.



One of the biggest challenges in the monumental task of moving towards a carbon neutral society is ensuring those currently at the bottom of the energy ladder don't get left there.

So says the new chair of the Energy Consumers Council, Lewis Shand Smith, whose job it is to help guarantee this doesn't happen.

The former UK Energy Ombudsman job is to be the voice of the consumer during what will be an unprecedented period of change and upheaval in the way energy is supplied and used.

'So far it's been a exciting learning curve, without doubt climate change presents us all with the biggest infrastructure change project certainly in my lifetime if not ever,' he said.

'Moving from where we are now, reliant on fossil fuels to a net zero carbon society is a huge project.

'My real concern during this journey is that we really need to make sure that those who are already in fuel poverty are not left behind.'

It is estimated that over 25% of households in Scotland are currently living in fuel poverty defined by the government as any household spending more than 10% of their income on energy - after housing costs have been deducted.

The Energy Consumers Commission (ECC) was set up in 2020 to give consumers a bigger influence over energy sector decisions that would affect them.

Its goals are straightforward, to achieve improved outcomes for energy consumers in any disputes and to ensure fairness as everyone moves to a zero carbon energy system. It can achieve this through being the clear connection between consumers and decision makers in Government and industry.

Lewis said that one of the key tasks for him and the ECC was to make sure people didn't keep their head buried in the sand due to the enormity of the task ahead.

'Those that don't engage for whatever reason need to be reached, this crisis is going to affect everyone, it will change the way we all live our lives.

'As we move from primarily gas to electric heating we need to make sure that this is done with all consumers in mind and that those currently living on the margins are brought along.

'And we're not just talking about moving from gas to electricity, we are looking at a massive retrofit of homes to ensure that they meet much tighter environmental standards.

'Although a huge challenge, it is also a huge opportunity to banish fuel poverty once and for all.

'How we can start the process of tackling this will be a key part of our work next year.'

Over the coming year the ECC will be concentrating on three main areas of work, looking at ways of helping people in energy debt particularly those in vulnerable situations, helping to improve supplier Best Practice and Customer Service and improving engagement with consumers.

'There is a real danger that people will think that all this change is something that they are being forced into, so part of our role is to ensure people become engaged with this process of change, and understand why it is necessary,' added Lewis.

'No new houses will be built connected to the gas main from 2025 big changes are happening and happening now, we need to be helping to communicate all of this to consumers.'

The Commission will become part of Consumer Scotland later this year.

Home Energy Scotland

working with organisations across Scotland to support people who live in electrically heated homes.

Over 280,000 households in Scotland have electric heating. These households are statistically more likely to be in fuel poverty, with 51% fitting Scottish Government's definition (compared with around 25% of Scottish households as a whole). This means they are more likely to have a low income, live in an inefficient home and face higher energy costs. Crucially, many electric heating systems are designed to work with specific, restricted meter types, making it more difficult for these households to switch supplier and access the full market.

In January and February 2021, Home Energy Scotland has delivered training on electric heating, metering, and billing to more than 60 organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureaux, local advice providers, councils, and housing associations.

The training details:

- The various electric heating systems, giving participants a thorough insight into their design and operation.

- Heating controls and how to run the system to provide a cosy, comfortable home as cost-effectively as possible.
- Electric meter types, including single rate, Economy 7, ComfortPlus Control and Total Heat with Total Control and other types of restricted meter tariffs.
- Consumer rights, including the Competition and Market Authority's Restricted Meter Remedy, and other energy supplier obligations.
- Pathways to change heating system, meter type or energy supplier, with real life examples and savings statistics generated through our energy modelling software.

As well as sharing expertise, the online training sessions have provided a great opportunity for discussion across industry about how to best support some of Scotland's most vulnerable householders.

Home Energy Scotland looks to make sure all households in Scotland can access the energy advice they need. Partnering with organisations already delivering an excellent service and supporting households with electric heating helps make this possible.

Here's what some of the people who have had the training said about it.

- *"The course was presented very clearly and professionally. It was clear that the training was conducted by someone very passionate and super informed about the subject matter!"*
- *"They made this course very comprehensive and very informative, in turn has given me more knowledge about electric heating, metering and billing."*
- *"Home Energy Scotland were very knowledgeable and excellent at explaining and addressing questions."*
- *"The course covered a lot of ground, very interesting and about the right length and level for me."*

We are delighted with the uptake and are looking forward to working with more organisations to give good advice on electric heating, metering and billing.

If your organisation could benefit from receiving this free training, you can find out more on Home Energy Scotland's website,

homeenergyscotland.org/helping-other-organisations-give-good-advice-on-electric-heating.



ABERDEEN HEAT & POWER (AH&P) was formed in 2002 to develop and manage district heating schemes across Aberdeen to alleviate fuel poverty. To check our domestic heat customers are not in fuel poverty, we carry out a benchmarking exercise each year in advance of setting our heat charges.

We take account of the amount each household pays us for their heating and hot water, plus the estimated cost of an average household's electricity consumption for all other uses, such as cooking, laundry, and entertainment, taking account of house sizes.

We know the size of each property supplied with heat but we don't know how many people live in each property, so we assume that only 1 person lives in the one-bedroomed or sheltered flats, and only two people live in the 2, 3 or 4 bedroomed flats or houses, and that the lowest level of state pension for a single person or a couple is the only income available to our heat customers.



We have around 3000 domestic heat customers and two models of billing for heat. First is a flat rate charge, which is mainly used in multi-storey blocks and sheltered housing schemes, with the heat charge being paid through the Council's Heat with Rent scheme. This provides unlimited heat, doesn't penalise those householders who live in harder to heat properties, and ensures customers maintain an adequate level of thermal comfort without having to worry about unexpected high heating costs. The second model is where we have installed individual heat meters. For these properties we know the actual heat consumption per property over the previous year and use this to work out their heating costs.

If any customer is identified as potentially being in fuel poverty, as a not-for-profit company, we have a social responsibility to act on this information. We contact any household we believe may be paying more than 10% of their income on fuel costs, to identify whether they need advice on the use of their heating system or whether, for example, they would benefit from being referred to another organisation for a benefit check.

AH&P reports the outcome of this benchmarking exercise to the Board annually before any decision is made on the heat charge for the coming year. By setting our heat charges at a price that is affordable, we are able to continue our commitment to provide affordable heat for all.

HELPING RURAL HOUSEHOLDERS STRUGGLING TO PAY THEIR FUEL BILLS

In the Scottish Highlands, 32 per cent of residents can't afford to heat their homes without getting into debt. In harder to reach areas, that can be as high as 70 per cent – that's down to expensive off-gas fuels and heating systems in draughty homes, with higher frequency of seasonal income.

That's where the Rural Affordable Warmth project comes in, with Changeworks Affordable Warmth Services advisors standing by to help.

For seven years Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Services team has been working in Ross and Cromarty, Badenoch and Strathspey or those living in or around Inverness to help people facing these challenges. This support can include communicating

directly with the energy company or Ombudsman to resolve billing issues, helping demystify meters and bills, energy saving tips, support to find cheaper tariffs and applications to discounts.

So far, the project has supported over 700 people in two years to be warm in their homes with 45 per cent of the people being supported with their energy debt issues. Nearly 40 per cent were supported to access benefits and 15 per cent accessed free energy efficient improvements for their homes. Overall, the project has saved Highland residents £559,000 to date.

One person the project has helped is Mrs S, who has electric heating and had unaffordable high bills. She had tried to switch supplier but was declined by other companies because of the type of tariff she was on. She felt trapped so she came to us for help.

By addressing billing issues with the supplier on her behalf, investigating options for switching and helping her apply for the Warm Home Discount, our advisor saved her an impressive £440. Mrs S's home is now warm, and she is



not worried about her bills. Mrs S said: "The stress from trying to deal with the company and billing issues on my own had caused me a lot of anxiety and physical complications. CAB introduced me to Changeworks. The adviser really listened to me and was determined to get an outcome in my favour. He represented me very well when he took over the phone calls with the energy company. I was relieved and absolutely delighted with the outcome."

Residents in Ross and Cromarty, Badenoch and Strathspey or those living in or around Inverness can get in touch to access Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Services today. Contact the Affordable Warmth Services team on 0800 870 8800 (free) or email warmth@changeworks.org.uk.

The Rural Affordable Warmth project is made possible by industry initiatives funding from Scottish Power, SSE and E.ON. The Affordable Warmth Services are free and impartial. Changeworks works in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureaux in the region to enable eligible people to access funds.



Information on fuel poverty is from Scottish Government (2018) Scottish House Condition Survey: 2016-18 Local Authority Tables and The Highland Council (2020) Highland Council calls on UK Government to use its powers to help reduce fuel poverty https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/12833/highland_council_calls_on_uk_government_to_use_its_powers_to_help_reduce_fuel_poverty/

The transition to net zero should not be borne by those who are least able to afford it

Cassandra Dove,
SFHA Research and Policy Lead

Scotland has ambitious plans to tackle the climate emergency, however, the transition to net zero should not be borne by those who are least able to afford it. The social sector has been leading the way on energy efficiency, having invested in excess of £400 million to deliver the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESHS). Yet over a third of households in the social sector remain in fuel poverty. As we move towards the new milestone for EESHS2 in 2032, our members want to ensure investment decisions are in the tenant's best interests.



The path to net zero will require further improvements in the existing stock combined with accelerated deployment of zero or low emissions heating systems. Compared to fossil fuel heating, these technologies will require significant investments, and we are currently working with Changeworks to understand the overall costs and the expected impacts for tenants. Without adequate funding to support these measures, we risk are at risk of failing to tackle fuel poverty and putting further pressures on social sector rents.

Building the new affordable homes which Scotland needs¹ is also becoming increasingly challenging due to rising infrastructure and construction costs alongside the need for improved energy standards. New developments will need to achieve zero emissions from heat by 2024 with the forthcoming Affordable Housing Supply Programme proposed as a way of testing solutions – and their expected costs. Delivering on this standard will only be achieved if subsidy rates are increased in line with increasing development costs and additional support is available for the end users.

It is imperative that the shift towards net zero is aligned with Scotland's commitment to eradicate fuel poverty. Our members already support tenants who are struggling with their energy bills, helping them to access affordable warmth. This activity has become even more critical during the pandemic and while emergency funding (e.g. Supporting Communities Fund and Social Housing Tenants Fuel Support Fund) has been welcomed, a longer-term approach for tackling fuel poverty is needed. The delayed Fuel Poverty strategy needs to be published as a matter of urgency, and we are supporting calls for increased funding for fuel poverty and energy efficiency to make sure noone is left behind in this transition.

1. Dunning et al. (2020). Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post-21 <https://www.sfha.co.uk/news/news-category/sfha-news/news-article/delivering-53000-affordable-homes-will-kick-start-scotlands-economic-recovery>

Will reforming EPCs tackle energy efficiency and fuel poverty?



Energy performance certificates have long been the weakest link the Scottish Government's energy efficiency and fuel poverty policies, yet many readers have attended consultation events to be told that any discussion of reforming EPCs is off the agenda. The adherence to the flawed certification system frustrates the well-informed attempts to deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable households when the programmes are designed to deliver on the assumptions and errors embedded into the EPCs (and let's not forget the lobbying by those with vested interests in delivering rdSAP-based home energy checks).

Given that the fuel poor are not the average households, assuming that they are, as SAP does, is merely chasing carbon savings that are not there to be saved.

This battle has recently reached a new flashpoint with the Scottish Government's proposals for mandatory improvements to properties, leading us to pledge free expert witness support to any householders seeking to take action if they are forced to make changes to their homes recommended by an EPC assessment which, in practice, would have negligible or negative effects on their energy consumption.

But now there seem to be cracks growing in that wall. The Scottish Government's consultation on the Draft Heat in Buildings Strategy accepts the need for EPCs to be reformed, and gives some indication of what those reforms might look like. Essentially, EPCs need to be able to provide three things: a like-for-like energy and carbon performance comparison between dwellings; a reasonably accurate indicator of the energy costs householders can expect from living in a property; and an indicative set of recommended measures with associated costs and financial and carbon savings from investing in them. As things stand EPCs manage ok with the first if we accept all models have limitations, but by far the most significant impact comes from behavioural variations which can only be properly accounted for with actual fuel spend.

Both EPRI (with Common Weal) and EAS (with Alembic Research) have outlined the changes we wish to see in our reports, '[Energy Performance Certificates: An Alternative Approach](#)' and '[A Review of Domestic and Non-Domestic Energy Performance](#)

[Certificates in Scotland](#)'. The problems that need to be addressed lie with what goes into an EPC, what comes out, and what they are to be used for, but all are solvable. We can make more and better use of real data and largely eliminate the use of rdSAP, although expect some pushback on this where it relates to accessing the household energy data collected by Westminster; we can reform EPCs to provide better more useful outputs for householders – even simply requiring the recommendations to be parsed by a chartered surveyor or similarly qualified professional would be a start; and we can deal with what they're used for through a concerted effort to educate civil servants about their limitations.

However, as regards tackling fuel poverty, this means accepting that continuing to develop policy focused on fabric first interventions that are designed to resolve the issues identified in SAP outputs will not be effectively addressing fuel poverty; it will be solving SAP. So, we must ask the question of whether we should even be tackling fuel poverty using SAP/ EPC-driven interventions that enable households to afford to maintain a reasonable heating regime, or whether it is about reporting on carbon savings based on assumptions that fail under the most basic scrutiny. Given that the fuel poor are not the average households, assuming that they are, as SAP does, is merely chasing carbon savings that are not there to be saved. To build policy on these assumptions is building policy to fail, and more significantly it is the vulnerable householders that are failed through lack of appropriate support.

With this in mind, reforming EPCs to include an estimate of energy costs, contextualised for existing dwellings by suitably anonymised information on their occupants, should go some way to enabling householders and tenants to buy or rent properties with affordable energy costs, and reforming the recommendations should help prevent owners wasting money on installing inappropriate energy efficiency measures. But that still leaves the problem of the assumption that fuel poverty is inherently driven by energy inefficiency, so whilst we lobby for reforming EPCs as a means of tackling energy inefficiency through 'fabric first' approaches, we cannot afford to take our eyes off the ball that is the need for a 'folk first' approaches that address the underlying social and economic causes of fuel poverty. However, recognition of a need to reform EPCs from the Scottish Government is a small but potentially significant step towards reform that recognises the limitations of EPCs, and gives us some hope that the needs of the fuel poor will someday no longer be sacrificed on the altar of pursuing non-existent carbon savings.

Dr Keith Baker & Dr Ron Mould
Co-founders, The Energy Poverty Research initiative (EPRI)

W. www.energypovertyresearch.org

EPRI is an independent spin-out organisation from the Built Environment Asset Management (BEAM) Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University

17 - 19 MARCH 2021

Join us online at the **SCOTTISH FUEL POVERTY CONFERENCE 2021:** *Fuel Poverty and the Road to Recovery*

This past year has seen quite extraordinary measures to protect the health and wellbeing of our people. Our members and partners have worked hard to provide support to ensure that people could access support, advice and improvements to their homes. It hasn't been plain sailing and there is a worrying increase in the number of fuel poor households in Scotland. Scottish Parliamentary elections are just around the corner, a new fuel poverty strategy is being developed and, as Glasgow waits to host COP26 during 2021, there is a huge focus on the future of our planet. This is a time to focus on what we have learned during COVID-19 and how we can work together to help make a real change to the lives of people in Scotland.

We will be gathering online this year to deliver a series of themed sessions with experts across a range of fields, leading the debate to challenge our perceptions and help us uncover how we are going to make a genuine difference.

**Unlike our Annual Conference, this will be open to all
and FREE of charge.**

Join Energy Action Scotland in helping to change the policy landscape.

*Please be aware that you must book to attend each session as they are individual events.
To book places follow the link for each session:*

SESSION 1

Fuel Poverty: are we making progress?

In 2019, Scotland passed into legislation the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act. It provides us with a new definition of fuel poverty that identifies the importance of achieving the right temperature to support health and wellbeing. It also sets a target to reduce fuel poverty to only 5% of households by 2040. In this session we will hear the Minister's reflections on progress to date and plans for the future as well as the views of industry and housing providers. A must for those with an interest in the strategy and delivery of measures to improve the lives of fuel poor households in Scotland

Chaired by Energy Action Scotland CEO, Frazer Scott, speakers will be: Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning; Liz Marquis, Convener, Energy Action Scotland and Chief Executive of the Energy Agency; Lewis Shand-Smith, Chair, Energy Consumer Commission; Sally Thomas, Chief Executive, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations; and Kendal Morris – SPEN

This session will include the Scottish Fuel Poverty Award Presentation

SESSION 2

Vulnerability: how do we protect people in need?

The word 'vulnerability' is much used but how can we define this state, better and more consistently? We will hear how it can be defined and categorised to support better understanding. Industry has a new voluntary commitment, the Vulnerability Commitment, bringing together energy companies to achieve a consistent approach to supporting those in most need. There have been regulatory protections provided and during COVID these have been enhanced. Health and social care professionals are at the frontline dealing with vulnerable people and the real impact that living in fuel poverty has. Hear from those working with vulnerable people including the energy regulator, to industry and those supporting people at the sharp end. How can we better protect people and prevent harm?

Speakers: Stewart Wilson, TIG (Chair); Dennis Berg, Senior Policy Manager, Ofgem; Dan Alchin, Deputy Director, Retail, Energy UK; Kate Morrison, Strategic Lead for Fair Markets, Citizens Advice Scotland; Dr Elizabeth Blakelock, Principal Policy Manager – Energy Supplier Monitoring and Performance, Citizens Advice; Dr John Budd, Deep End GP Movement

SESSION 3

Funding: how can we accelerate change and identify what needs to be done?

Fuel poverty arises from four distinct factors, the efficiency of homes, the affordability of energy, household income and how people interact with their homes. In order to eradicate fuel poverty, investment at all levels and across society will need to be targeted and mobilised. We will need great face to face advice, employability programmes and practical education to help people get the best out of their situation and measures to improve the quality of homes. Some help is needed immediately while others will take longer. Hear from those that distribute funding aimed at creating social justice. They will provide positive examples of the impact of the work they support and can help inspire the sort of action we need to help those experiencing increasing levels of fuel poverty as a result of COVID.

Speakers: Lynda Mitchell, Energy Action Scotland (Chair); Cassandra Dove, Policy Lead for Fuel Poverty, SFHA; Freya Burns, Changeworks; Graham Ayling, Senior Project Manager, Energy Redress, Energy Saving Trust; Elaine Gibb, Partnerships & Learning Manager, William Grant Foundation; Matthew Cole, Chair of Trustees, Fuel Bank Foundation; Jim McCormick, Chief Executive, The Robertson Trust

SESSION 4

NetZero: how will we deliver a fair and inclusive transition?

That there is a Climate Emergency is undeniable and there is growing commitment and resolve to address this. We have world leading, binding targets in Scotland and have made great progress in decarbonising the production of electricity. Achieving NetZero and decarbonising heat remains a huge challenge but strategies and plans aim to mobilise business and households are being created. Incentivising and engaging with those that have the least in society has real visibility. Hear from the Minister who has ensured that fuel poverty benefits are fundamental to the new Heat Networks Bill, from the Just Transition Commission on how NetZero ambitions can and must engage with low income, fuel poor households and from the energy networks, who will be investing in the infrastructure necessary to reduce our emissions and deliver a resilient energy system.

Speakers: Frazer Scott, Energy Action Scotland (Chair); Simon Maine, Director of Corporate Affairs, OVO Energy; Professor Jim Skea, Chair, Just Transition Commission; Lucy Gillie, General Manager, South Seeds

SESSION 5

Wellbeing: is fuel poverty widening health inequalities and damaging the health of the nation?

Thousands of people die each year in Scotland as a direct result of living in fuel poverty. Living a cold, damp homes and being unable to power essential devices to cook, wash and clean reduces the quality of life and impacts on health and outcomes. COVID has highlighted an ever-widening gap in social inequality, further penalising those on the lowest incomes and in the poorest quality homes. Reports suggest that low-income households have had to spend more during COVID yet wealthier households have saved. In this session we will hear from experts about inequality, health and fuel poverty in Scotland.

Speakers: Adam Scorer, Energy Action Scotland (Chair); Lukas Hardt, Wellbeing Economy Alliance; Jack Evans, Scotland Policy and Partnerships Manager, Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Katrina Reid, Public Health Scotland; Meena Bhagat, Research Officer, Energy Agency; Professor Ade Kearns, Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow

SESSION 6

Political Hustings: what priority will fuel poverty have in the next Scottish Parliament?

Scottish Parliament elections will be held in May 2021. Ahead of the publication of party election manifestos, this session is a chance to hear from representatives of the main parties in Scotland. Join us to hear how each party will prioritise fuel poverty and the steps they will take to reduce it and its impact in Scotland.

Speakers will include the fuel poverty spokespeople from each of the major Scottish political parties



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