



# Energy Review

## SPRING 2022

The quarterly journal of Energy Action Scotland



# LIVING IN EXCEPTIONAL TIMES

The phrase exceptional times is beginning to seem like a cliché. With each issue of our Energy Review we have to find new ways to express the devastating impact of the convergence of public health and energy.

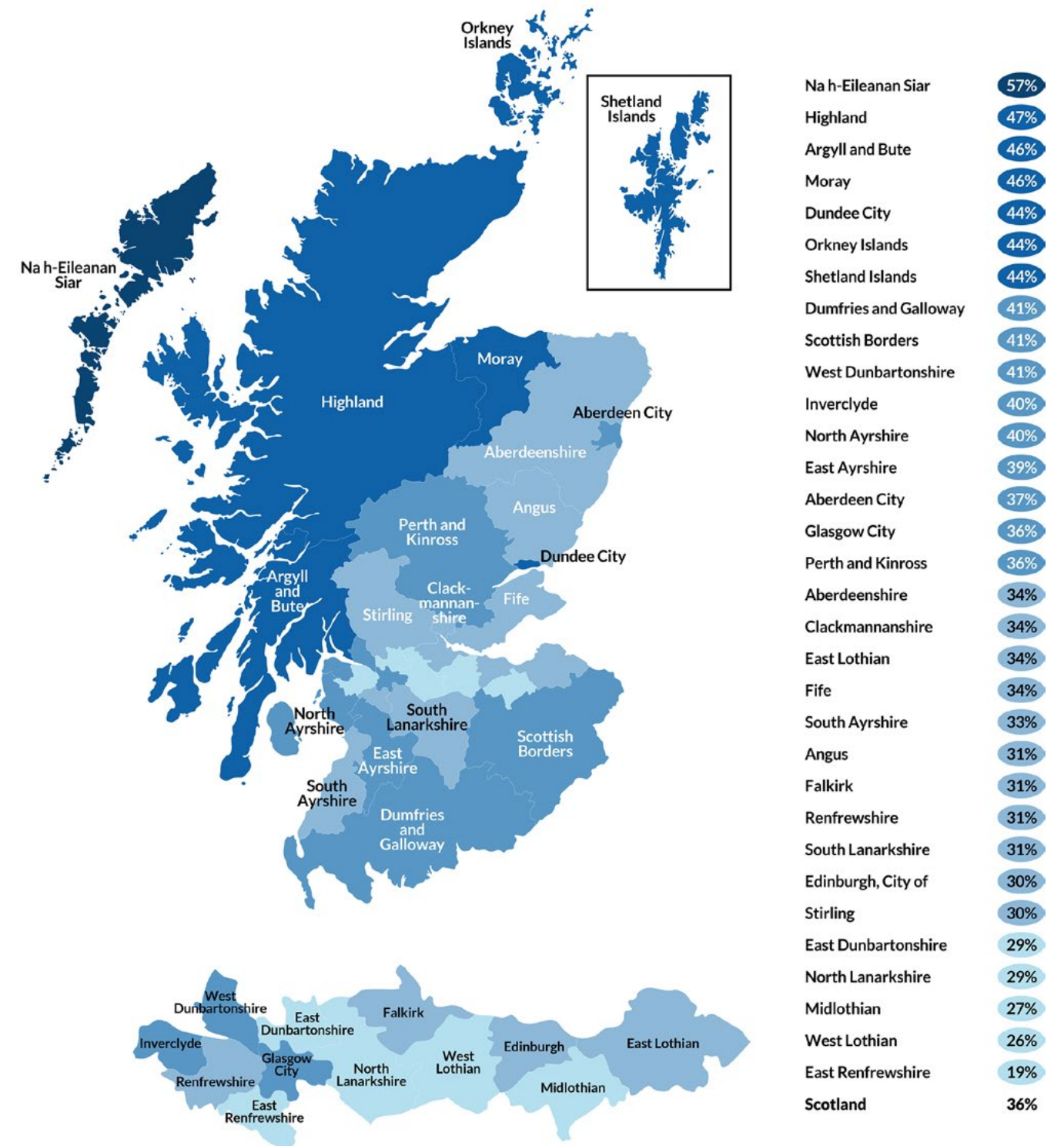


**Frazer Scott,**  
Chief Executive Officer

During 2021 and into 2022, 31 energy suppliers have failed. Four of those were obligated to provide Warm Home Discount rebates to low-income vulnerable customers and millions of customers in Britain now sit at energy prices entirely dictated by the energy price cap. Switching isn't advocated, there are no 'good' tariffs for domestic customers. Martin Lewis has emerged as the leading consumer champion for fairness in the energy market and we all appreciate what he has done to advise and support worried households. He is a Fuel Poverty Hero and has helped ensure the public are better informed.

Scotland has a new Fuel Poverty Strategy with an attendant action plan eclipsed by the engulfing energy price crisis. Driven by rocketing wholesale gas prices we are witnessing the highest domestic energy prices in living memory, and it looks set to get worse, a lot worse, before it gets better. Our Heat in Buildings Strategy looks like it needs an injection of investment from somewhere to drive insulation levels, efficient heating systems and low carbon solutions that reduce pressures on hard pressed households.

## FUEL POVERTY BY LOCAL AUTHORITY



February 2022 Source: Statement by Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, Kate Forbes MSP



Leading commentators and researchers from the Resolution Foundation to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, our friends at National Energy Action and Citizens Advice Scotland have all predicted the devastating socio-economic impact.

At least it was a mild winter. That's something, but little comfort to those who have been least able to afford heat in power as a 54% increase in the costs of energy is introduced 1 April 2022. Analysts are predicting that this is a precursor to a further eye watering increase in the region of £1000 come October. Energy is becoming increasingly unaffordable to a growing number of households.

Fuel poverty is increasing, without a shadow of doubt. It is outstripping any rate of improvement that we should be seeing after decades of investment. Scottish Government estimates that there will be a 43% increase in households in fuel poverty. Over 1 in 3 households struggling with almost 600,000 households in extreme fuel poverty. But this isn't spread evenly and our latest revision of the fuel poverty map of Scotland estimates that in some parts of Scotland we are seeing or approaching half of households in fuel poverty.

Solutions are needed. It is all very well to point out the obvious disaster but this an emergency with a long-standing underlying condition. A crisis response is needed but not one that distracts from longer term goals.

We've been clear that the UK Government needs to act. It has responsibility for reserved matters that affect people in Scotland and it is frankly incredible that there remains VAT on domestic energy bills. The VAT tax take from households is set to increase unfairly burdening those that can least afford it despite the fact that energy is essential for health and wellbeing. Green levies need to be removed from electricity bills, a windfall tax applied to the excessive profits of oil and gas giants and indeed those renewable generators also profiting from high market prices. We believe that general taxation is always the fairest way to support the transformation needed to meet our NetZero ambitions rather than levies on bills.

**We are going to need heroic effort. There is six months before the winter period begins. We stand at the threshold of a very real humanitarian disaster.**

Responses from governments have been woefully inadequate with flat, shallow support benefiting many that didn't need or want it. No quantum of targeted support to address the well-known geographic and demographic inequalities.

Our members, the local, regional and national support organisations are stretched and are anticipating an enormous increase in the need and demand for their services. Yet, there is no shift in the landscape to support them to deal with rising national insurance contributions, increasing inflation, stagnant pay and real term cuts in their funding. It is time that the state stepped up and recognised the need to invest in services that improve life chances, support health and wellbeing and save lives.

At a very basic level some households in desperate need are receiving essential warmth packs, clothing, bedding, flasks to help them get through days where there is no money.

We need to triage support for even more households and consider essential energy efficiency kit, with radiator reflector sheets, draft excluders, pipe lagging where DIY or handy services could help vulnerable people. Low-cost measures to bring about higher levels of comfort or reduce

consumption. It is time to consider that in meeting our long-term ambitions we need to help more people more quickly. Rates of insulation are too low across Scotland's housing. Accelerating this through area-based support can quickly reach people in need and pay back periods are reducing as energy prices remain high. There is a clear argument for this but there needs to be a financial mechanism that encourages people to introduce these measures without putting additional pressure on household budgets. It is still disturbing that government budgets for these sorts of measures are consistently underspent and that vitally important services such as Tigh Innse Gall, in the Western Isles, are unable to maintain economically viable services.

There needs to be clarity over the future of the Warm Home Discount in Scotland and indeed these rebates need to be higher and the mechanism that is mobilised for the Cold Weather Payment system could be used to provide more support to the lowest income households next winter.

The Energy Company Obligation, which provides investment through energy suppliers, urgently needs to be remobilised but it should be re framed for this initial period. Deep, whole house retrofit is transformative for those that receive it but the levels of investment available can benefit a very few at a time of extreme crisis. It too should move to provide more prolific improvements in insulation in the areas where fuel poverty is greatest.

At our conference in March we recognised some of Scotland's Fuel Poverty Heroes, and I know that there are many, many more. We are going to need heroic effort. There is six months before the winter period begins. We stand at the threshold of a very real humanitarian disaster. We are going to do what we can to push for change, to advocate for our members and the people that they support. We will continue to work with organisations to address inequalities and to provide support for ultra-vulnerable households, not well served by other support. Everything that we and you can do, has the potential to improve lives, to save lives. It is incumbent on us to do this in a Scotland that genuinely believes in fairness and a just transition towards NetZero.

# FUEL POVERTY HEROES 2022



Our recent annual conference opened with Frazer Scott hosting the awards presentation to our Fuel Poverty Heroes 2022.

The nominations were moving in the extreme as we saw the breadth and depth of help and support our members offer as an indication of the level of need that exist across Scotland.

Announcing the winners, Frazer said,

**“How many of us would have imagined that in March 2022, almost exactly two years after we first heard the word ‘Covid’, we would only be starting to re-emerge out of our safe cocoons to re-start and revitalise our work in this new, post virus, world.**

**“Many of us won’t return to offices, many of us will continue to innovate and adapt to meet the needs of those who can’t join us in real life, those who must continue to self-isolate and those have been left weakened by Covid as well as those in danger of overwhelm in this perfect storm of price hikes and economic uncertainty.**

**“The people working across Scotland’s fuel poverty landscape continue to perform at extraordinary levels. Again and again we hear about the value of the ‘personal touch’, so many who ‘go the extra mile’ and invest in their own community with their time, compassion and expertise.**

**“Our professional colleagues are supporting people in crisis, dealing with their energy debts, providing real practical support and it wouldn’t be a stretch to say this has helped safeguard the health and wellbeing of people in need.**

**“For the second year, these awards are not about winners but heroes. Energy Action Scotland openly invited nominations which ranged from individuals to teams.**



“In no particular order, our Fuel Poverty Heroes for 2022 are:

**Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT)**

This team of three have become the go-to innovators in local support. Not only did they produce a comic strip to help kids reduce energy use but their latest initiative is the Occupancy Assessment Initiative which calculates the level of fuel poverty with a precision we haven't seen before. As well as creating and innovating they are undertaking demonstrations and supplier advocacy, providing measures and offering top up to the community, not just Hillcrest tenants.



**Paisley Housing Association**

A second whole team award, this time for Paisley Housing Association. These City & Guilds qualified advisers are dealing with majority of their tenants in lowest 10% income average as well as the majority of properties being tenements. The team offer an holistic assessment of needs and their support strategy includes an awareness that when tenants are struggling with their energy bills they are struggling to pay all their bills.



**South Seeds**

Serving the community of South Central Glasgow, Poppy Ives and Agnes Berner have undertaken more than 500 face to face appointments in 5 months with each of them working only 3 days a week. Many of these appointments are held with people for whom English is not their first language and despite the volume and complexity of the need they serve, those five months have led to over £36,000 in energy related payments being pulled into the community, which is more than their combined salaries.



We also have recognised the sustained efforts of an individual that has for so many years championed the cause of fuel poverty. It feels so wrong to describe this as a lifetime award but is a recognition that they are indeed a Fuel Poverty Hero

That person is **Ann Loughrey**, someone who has shaped so much of what we know, what we do and what we aspire to.

It's not everyone that can say they successfully campaigned for a new term to be recognized and added to the Oxford English Dictionary. Ann Loughrey can, and that term was fuel poverty.

The long and winding road towards social justice is made up of people who fought for change, fought for wider recognition of inequality and made it impossible to ignore the human cost of failing government policy.

Ann's journey took her from a job creation opportunity at Heatwise Dumbarton in 1987, to the top of the political agenda in a devolved Scotland with a £350 million central heating programme pledge from Donald Dewar's formative Government. Crossing swords with politicians of all parties and none in Scotland and in Westminster is grist to the mill of a leader at Energy Action Scotland with Ann managing to secure cross party support for ending fuel poverty.

Ann has just stepped back from her role as the independent Chair of the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel and continues to support and mentor many working in fuel poverty and in her local community in Helensburgh. In recognition of 34 years fighting fuel poverty, it was a pleasure to award Ann Loughrey, truly an inspiration.



Finally, 2021 and into 2022 has been a time like no other. Advice services are under incredible pressure and without a doubt it has been harder than ever to steer people and reduce the burdens they face. Switching or changing tariffs is no longer an option to reduce costs, the public are increasingly aware and concerned about the impact of energy bills in their lives.

Without a doubt one individual has helped the public get a better grip on the situation. They have managed to explain to mass audiences the issues in the domestic energy market. We look to them for a steer on what to do next. They have championed better choices for consumers and better outcomes from governments and the energy industry. We trust them.

That person is Moneysavingexpert **Martin Lewis**, a Fuel Poverty Champion 2022.

[Watch Martin's video here...](#)





# WORKING WITH THE NHS TO KEEP PATIENTS WARM AND WELL AT HOME

**Recognising that living in a warm home is very much linked to good physical and mental health, Home Energy Scotland – delivered in the south east by Changeworks – have been working with the NHS to support patients at vaccination clinics who may be at risk of fuel poverty.**

Our advisors talked to patients and gave them advice on how they could make simple changes to their energy use which would help save money on their bills. They also arranged to follow up with any patients they believed might be eligible for further support such as free energy efficiency improvements through the Scottish Government funded Warmer Homes Scotland programme. Through these clinics we are supporting over 1,100 patients.

One householder we supported said, “I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, as I didn’t feel able to do anything about the situation I was in myself. The support from Home Energy Scotland has made such a big change to my life. The constant worry has been taken away, I’m sleeping better and I’ve not felt this good in a long time. I can’t thank them enough. Their advisors were kind, caring, empathetic, and very good listeners and made me feel comfortable throughout the support they gave me.”

This kind of feedback drove us on in our determination to adapt our delivery throughout the pandemic so we could continue to support more people who needed our help. Our close partnership with the NHS developed in 2021, seeing us delivering advice and support at vaccine clinics across Edinburgh, West Lothian and Fife.

The team also designed innovative promotional literature for the vaccination site at Ingliston, which incorporated a QR code. This built on increased public

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awareness of using this technology, supported efforts to maintain distancing, and enabled us to reach an even wider group than usual as patients could ‘self-refer’ for help. More than 450 patients contacted us which is a great outcome as they wouldn’t have got the support they needed if this hadn’t been trialled. The success of this means we are now able to continue supporting in this way at vaccine centres over the coming months.

Centre Manager Jamie Gray said, “Once again the support our advisors have received from NHS staff at these sites has been invaluable, and the reception from patients has been extremely positive as people are so concerned about rising energy costs in the news. Home Energy Scotland are grateful to have this opportunity to support them through our partnership with the NHS, providing a range of free and impartial advice and referrals to schemes such as Warmer Home Scotland for help with insulation and heating.”

Funded by the Scottish Government, Changeworks delivers Home Energy Scotland advice centres in South East Scotland and Highlands and Islands on behalf of Energy Saving Trust.

Changeworks is always up for innovative partnerships that allow us to reach more householders to keep them warm, so if you’ve got an opportunity, we’re ready and waiting. Get in touch with us via email or call 0131 555 4010.



# FUEL POVERTY



and the transition  
to net zero

Dr Fraser Stewart,  
Policy Research Consultant

Fuel poverty and climate change remain high on the political agenda in Scotland. This is hardly surprising given how challenging meeting targets has proven to be. When combined with the COVID-19 public health crisis and escalating costs of energy, this highlights a need to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Scottish Ministers have been clear that responding to the pandemic and the climate emergency will need to deliver a resilient economy in a way that supports wellbeing and transitions us toward a greener, net zero, country.

The Scottish Government's approach to date has been largely phased, with specific interventions designed to respond to economic and public health requirements as they emerge. However, while the combined impacts of current crises can be devastating, responding to them presents as a once in a generation opportunity to invest in Scotland's existing housing stock. This will help to eradicate fuel poverty by providing warm and healthy homes that are as near to zero carbon as possible. To be a success this radical transformation will need to be planned carefully so that the costs of heat decarbonisation are minimised, shared fairly, and those at risk of fuel poverty are not left behind.

**“...the investment required to transition to net zero is significant, coming just as we face a cost-of-living crisis.”**

The Heat in Buildings Strategy estimates the investment required in Scotland's homes and buildings could be as much as £33 billion. The average cost of installing a heat pump is around £10,000, with an additional £2,000 required for energy efficiency measures. This compares to around £2,500 for replacing a fossil fuel boiler. However, the cost of converting to low and zero emissions heating systems is likely to vary across different properties and location. Some already high performing properties will require little or no investment. For others the costs will be lower than the average because other types of zero emissions heating systems, such as heat networks, will offer a more cost-effective solution than heat pumps. There will however be some hard-to-treat properties where the cost will be significantly higher.

Scotland has a good record of supporting vulnerable and low-income households with the costs of improving the energy performance of their homes. Nevertheless, the investment required to transition to net zero is significant, coming just as we face a cost-of-living crisis. The Scottish Government's commitment to investing to address challenges and unlock opportunities is welcome, however more (public and private) investment will be required if everyone is to benefit equally from a low or zero carbon future. Only then will the transition be a just one.

[Read more from Dr Fraser Stewart here](#)



# As energy prices are due to rise, we can't ignore the plight of those rationing their energy use

My undergraduate dissertation project was an analysis of the relationship between heavy metal concentrations in soils and stream sediments in England and Wales, a tiny contribution to a much bigger project studying factors linked to outbreaks of bovine tuberculosis (conclusion: don't blame badgers). It taught me a very important lesson – always pay attention to residual data.

Dr Keith Baker

Residual data are those points on a plot that are so far from the others that they don't seem to make sense. When confronted with such data a good scientist will first try to verify whether they are real, or the result of a problem with the data collection method and then, if they are real, investigate them further. A bad scientist, or one trained in traditional social science methods, will usually assume they're errors, draw a line through the plot, report the usual measures of statistical significance, and move on. And until a few years ago, this was what Ofgem was doing

with household energy data. But then this is the same regulator which treats Economy 10 tariffs, to which around a third of Scottish householders are subscribed, as 'non-standard'.

This means that, for many years, Ofgem was effectively able to ignore the existence of one of the most vulnerable groups of energy users - those householders who severely ration their energy use, or disconnect themselves from their supplies. These are householders who are so fuel poor that they will put a small amount of money into their prepayment meters

each month, say £20 to £40, and when it runs out, they do without. In a so-called modern society, it should be seen as a scandal that they exist.

Yet it was a late as December 2020 that Ofgem concluded a process that has led to the introduction of some, fairly limited, measures to support these householders. A welcome development, but one which was too little, too late, and enacted by a regulator that has long been unfit for its purpose.

Back in 2015, I led a project that identified a number of self-rationing householders in Scotland. We didn't set

out to find them, it was simply a case of spotting some residual data points, verifying them, and then investigating further. We only had access to a tiny fraction of the data that passes through Ofgem's hands, but we listened to what our project partners were telling us, and that evidence made its way into EPRi's founding statement.

We still don't have a definitive picture of the numbers and types of householders who self-ration or self-disconnect, but a 2017/18 report by Citizens Advice found that around 140,000 householders with PPM's (16%) self-disconnected from their energy supply because they couldn't afford to top up their prepayment meter. 87% of these were on benefits, and 88% contained a child or someone with long term health issues. 72% were vulnerable to cold homes (containing children or people with health issues), 34% were in full time work, 63% were under the age of 34, and only 9% had contacted their supplier for help. Anecdotally, they also found a correlation between the rising use of food banks in areas where Universal Credit was being rolled-out in Scotland due to the hiatus in people receiving their benefits payment.

That latter point chimes with our own evidence on how fuel poverty can be a temporary condition, but one which affects householders more the deeper and longer they fall into it, and the more they are affected the longer they take to recover from it. Now think of how badly these householders will have been affected by Ofgem's prolonged inaction.

But it's also too simplistic to put all the blame at Ofgem's feet. Our own research on exploring the energy advocacy needs of fuel poor householders has pointed out how the Scottish Government could've been doing much more to support fuel poor and otherwise vulnerable householders through better resourcing of those organisations – specifically local authorities, housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureaux, and community-based energy advocacy organisations (and specifically not the Energy Saving Trust) – who are best placed to support them. Some of these organisations have been doing just that through providing discretionary funding

Dr Keith Baker is a Research Fellow in Fuel Poverty and Energy Policy at the Built Environment Asset Management (BEAM) Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University; a Co-founder of the Energy Poverty Research initiative (EPRi); and Convenor of Common Weal's Energy Working Group. This article is an updated version of an article published by Common Weal on 7th October 2021.

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on an ad-hoc basis but, through no fault of their own, this amounts to crumbs from the table. (The journal paper is behind a paywall but you can find a free version on the publications page of the EPRi website).

And, whilst we're at it, we need a change in language. This may seem like a minor point but these householders are not, as termed by Warmworks who manage the Warmer Homes Scheme, 'customers', they are clients. A customer is "someone who buys goods or services from a shop or business", whereas a client is "a person being dealt with by social or medical services". At least below a certain level of consumption, energy is an essential service, and people don't shop around for benefits if they can't afford it. Due to a phenomenon known as verbal overshadowing, how we talk about them mentally frames how we treat them.

The Scottish Government finally published its long-delayed Fuel Poverty Strategy in December 2021, just before energy prices rose significantly as we entered the winter heating season. The strategy includes a number of positive changes, such as a financial uplift for remote rural and island communities, an addition based directly on our work, and the adoption of a measure of income based on the Minimum Income

Standard, based on work by ourselves and others, but these are crumbs. The Scottish Government is still clinging to the belief that fuel poverty is still best tackled by a fabric first approach, which will be driven by Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) - both of which fly in the face of what the evidence is telling us.

We have long advocated a shift to a 'folk first' holistic and people-centric approach – indeed, our work on this has been published in one of the most respected journals in the world – but, for whatever reasons, the Scottish Government thinks it knows better. It is also proposing to 'reform' EPCs, but the proposals outlined in the recent consultation will do little or nothing to rectify the fundamental problems that underpin them. We have issued an extensive joint response to this consultation (also available on the EPRi website) in which we reiterate our pledge that, should the Scottish Government introduce mandatory energy efficiency improvements for homes based on EPCs (as they stand and under the proposed 'reforms') we will provide free, independent expert witness support to householders who will be adversely affected by this policy.

Looking ahead, with energy prices now spiralling, the energy price cap being raised in April of this year, and likely to be raised again in October, plus the impacts of Covid, Brexit and the Ukraine war (the effect of the latter being relatively minor for the UK), we can expect much worse to come, and there is no sign that the Scottish Government is prepared for it. Some might've hoped that the SNP's effective coalition with the Scottish Greens would've led to some improvements in energy policy but, instead, they have now, amongst other things, jointly overseen the publication of what is, at best, a very lacklustre draft Heat in Buildings Strategy, and a draft Hydrogen Action Plan that greenwashes blue hydrogen. Whilst both Common Weal and EPRi are in favour of independence, we have to ask how much longer the people of Scotland can put up with an administration that is repeatedly failing to tackle climate change and fuel poverty?



# HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND – WARMING MORE HOMES WITH HEAT PUMPS



**Given the concern around rising energy bills, we want to ensure that people are aware of the support available to keep their home warm this winter. At Home Energy Scotland we continue to focus on improving the energy efficiency of homes making them warmer and more affordable to heat to help eradicate fuel poverty and support de-carbonisation targets. Replacing fossil fuel heating with low and zero emissions heating, like a heat pump, can help reduce carbon and reduce household energy costs.**

Energy Saving Trust research in January 2021 revealed that just over half of Scottish residents have heard of heat pumps. So, it's no surprise that many people who are offered one are not familiar with how a heat pump works and have questions about costs, home comfort and installation. Home Energy Scotland can help, with knowledgeable specialist advisors who can explain how heat pumps work, outline the financial support available, and what to expect before, during and after installation.

For many households the cost of a new heating system is a barrier to making an upgrade, as is an understanding of what to expect from a new heating system in terms of management, maintenance, and costs. We are here to help with advice and access to funding for people of all circumstances. There is financial support worth up to £5,000 available to eligible households to make their home more energy efficient through Warmer Homes Scotland, and there's an interest-free loan and cashback from the Scottish Government to support households that are more able to pay but haven't got the money to invest up-front. Both are available across Scotland and are accessed through Home Energy Scotland.

For some households, energy efficiency is realised when an existing outdated heating system is replaced with heat pump technology. Heat pumps – usually air source or ground source – are modern, low carbon heating systems that are much more energy efficient than boilers and traditional electric heating. They play a crucial role in meeting Scotland's net zero targets and addressing the climate emergency.

Harry Mayers, head of Home Energy Scotland, said: "Home Energy Scotland continues to focus on improving the energy efficiency of homes, making them warmer and more affordable to heat, with the number of heat pumps being installed through Warmer Homes Scotland increasing year on year."

Heat pumps extract renewable heat from the air or from the ground and transfer it into heating and hot water. The heat output is greater than the electricity input, which makes it an energy-efficient heating system. The benefits to the household include relatively easy installation, lower

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associated costs, and minimal ongoing maintenance. They are also an extremely low carbon heating option.

Technically heat pumps are suitable for many households if there is sufficient outdoor space, and space inside for a hot water tank. A heat pump uses electricity to run and is most cost effective when replacing an electric or coal heating system. For homes using LPG or oil, a heat pump should

save money on running costs with the installation of a well-designed system. They are most suitable for a well-insulated and draught-free home. There are many variables to be considered and that's why householders need advice and information to help them make the right choice.

Home Energy Scotland can provide free training to advisors from other advice-giving organisations, covering:

- **key facts about heat pumps**
- **how to control and use a heat pump**
- **suitable tariffs and metering**
- **what properties are suitable**
- **potential savings**
- **available funding and resources**

We've already delivered this free training to advisors from 12 Citizens Advice Bureaux, Citizens Advice Scotland and housing associations, with positive feedback indicating participants found it improved their knowledge of heat pumps and confidence in advising householders about them.

This builds on our training for advisors on electric heating and restricted meter tariffs and we can deliver these sessions flexibly to suit the needs of our partners. Contact [HES\\_Partnerships@est.org.uk](mailto:HES_Partnerships@est.org.uk) to enquire about joining an upcoming session or to arrange bespoke training for your organisation.

For information and resources info for householders you speak to take a look at the new heat pump webpages on the Home Energy Scotland website:

- **Case studies about our 'heat pump heroes' – members of the Green Homes Network that have installed heat pumps and want to encourage others to do the same.**
- **Two new videos explaining what air source and ground source heat pumps are and how they work.**
- **Four articles about heat pumps:**
  - An introduction to how heat pumps work**
  - Heat pump myths explored**
  - Grants and funding for heat pump installation**
  - Heat pump installation checklist and guide.**



# WHAT ARE YOU WEARING (TO KEEP YOU WARM).



...When I was a teenager, my mum used to shout at me as I tried to sneak out the front door – what are you wearing?! Possibly with good cause, it was the early 80s, era of post punk, and I was probably draped in black netting and a can of hairspray holding up my spikey hair, puncturing the ozone layer all on its own and eye make that would terrify Alice Cooper.

40 years later, a reformed goth (on the outside) and academic researcher, I am now asking the same question – What are you wearing? Have you ever put your winter jumper on but felt that you are still cold? You go and put another layer on, and you feel heavy with the burden of layers, and you don't feel any warmer. Then you start to feel uncomfortable, maybe a little bit sweaty but still not very warm. Sometimes we take for granted that because we picked up and bought a jumper, in the “jumper section” that it was designed to keep us warm. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, it is designed to make us think that it will keep us warm, because it feels soft to the touch.

Clothes shopping online or instore can seem overwhelming if we don't know what we're looking for. The countless choices of styles, colours and fibres can be confusing. Some helpful suggestions are presented below, to help shoppers navigate their winter wardrobe shop.



## Check the label

A new item of clothing is required to have a label in the inside with helpful information that explains:

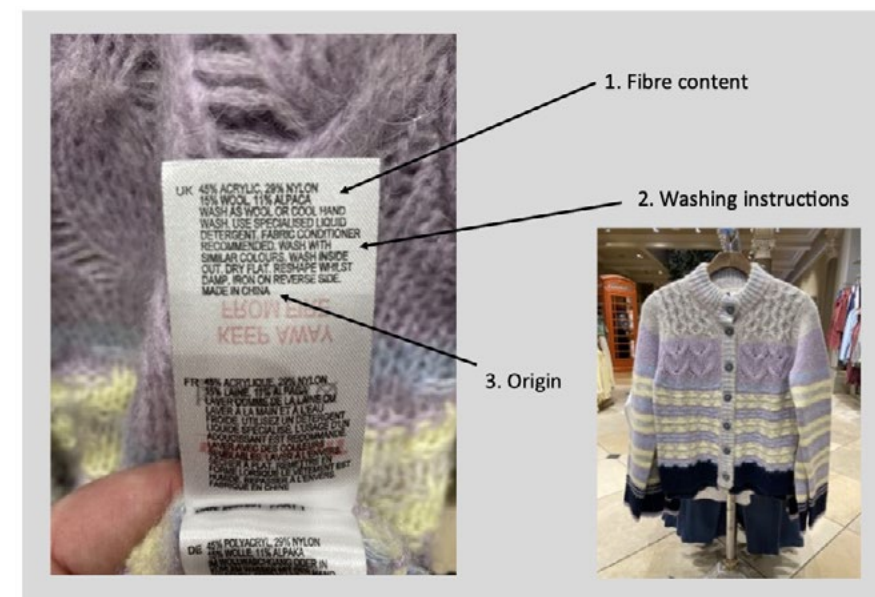
1. What it's made from (fibre content)
2. How to look after it (washing instructions)
3. Where it was manufactured (country of origin)

Natural fibres such as wool and cotton are the healthiest fibres worn next to the skin, whereas synthetic fibres such as polyester and nylon, restrict the natural breathability of our skin and make us sweat. Synthetic fibres do have other positive uses, such as waterproof clothing, and gym wear but natural fibres are always the best to keep us warm.



Natural fibres	
Cotton	Keep us warm, by regulating our body heat
Wool	
Angora	
Alpaca	
Synthetic (oil based)	
Polyester	Retain our body heat and makes us sweat, but doesn't keep us warm
Acrylic	
Nylon	

In the example below, the cardigan is made from wool and synthetic fibres knitted together. This is a cheaper way of manufacturing clothing that will have some heat properties, but will not perform as well as a 100% wool jumper



## Layer up with light wool accessories

Wool jumpers can be more expensive, whereas a small collection of wool accessories can cost less and still add some warmth without heavy layering. Whilst we're still transitioning from working at home to stepping back into the office environment, a light wool scarf wrapped snugly around the neck, provides some protection from draughty areas particularly if sitting for long periods of time. A pair of fingerless gloves will heat up cold fingers until they get going on the keyboard or operating machinery. Wearing colourful, striped, or patterned knitwear when indoors, can make the idea of wearing layers seem less of an essential and more of a style statement.

## Buy natural fibre clothing from your local charity shop or resale platforms

If you have the time, charity retail shopping can be very fruitful. The same rules apply to checking the labels and condition of an item of clothing to make sure it does contain natural fibres. Look out for sellers on digital resale platforms such as eBay and DePop, good sellers give clear, thorough descriptions of what an item of clothing is made from.

## End of season sales

Sometimes we're tempted by a bargain, but a bargain is only that, if we can get real benefit from it. As the winter retail season comes to an end, shops heavily discount clothing, up to 70-80% off in some cases. Getting into the habit of buying essential clothing off season, means you have access to higher quality clothing items for the next winter. Always check the labels before a purchase.



## Tributes paid to Audrey Gallacher OBE

It is with great sadness that Energy UK confirms the passing of Audrey Gallacher OBE, who died on Saturday 22 January after a long battle with cancer.

Audrey served as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Policy of Energy UK, having joined the Association in 2016. In 2021, she received an OBE for her outstanding contribution to the industry and leaves a legacy that has directly benefited consumers, from designing standards for the treatment of pre-payment meter customers, to her role as a commissioner on the independent Commission for Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances.

Audrey worked tirelessly to champion consumer issues across the energy system, and was fearless about challenging industry and policymakers alike to do better for ordinary people. She was also respected for her deep knowledge of the energy sector on issues ranging as widely as energy economics, market design, and public policy. Prior to joining Energy UK, she was Director of Energy at the statutory consumer watchdog Citizen's Advice and began her career with the energy regulator, Ofgem.

Audrey gave a lot of time to supporting her colleagues in the energy industry with their own career development, particularly young people from diverse or underprivileged backgrounds. This is as much the legacy of her leadership as the changes she made in industry. She was also a trustee for the Fuel Bank Foundation, a charity that helps people in fuel crisis, and volunteered as a befriender for Age Concern Epsom & Ewell.



**Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive of Energy UK**, said:

"From the beginning of her career, Audrey championed consumers and worked tirelessly to improve the energy sector. She continued to work throughout her illness, maintaining her trademark good humour and get-stuff-done attitude. We are incredibly moved by the response from all those who knew and loved Audrey. Her passing will be a shock to many, especially all of us who have benefited from her knowledge and her kindness. Our thoughts are with her family and loved ones at this awful time. Energy UK will remember Audrey as an inspiring role model, a dear friend - and the life and soul of any party."

**Lord John Hutton, Chairman of the Board of Energy UK**, said:

"Throughout her career Audrey was a great champion for energy consumers. She brought integrity and passion to her work for Energy UK and I will miss her good humour and wise counsel. It was an honour to have worked with her"

**Matthew Cole, Director of the Fuel Bank Foundation**, said:

"Audrey was a tireless campaigner, championing the voices of those who were not heard, striving to make the world a fairer place. Under her stewardship Fuel Bank grew from a small idea into a national charity that had helped over half a million people. We will miss you Audrey."

**Gillian Cooper, Head of Energy Policy at Citizens Advice**, said:

"Audrey was a passionate advocate for energy consumers and an inspiration to me and many others for her relentless focus on making things better for people. She ensured the sector delivered better value for money, improved customer service and support for households in vulnerable circumstances. But most of all Audrey was a wonderful human being and friend - warm, funny and caring - and will be deeply missed by everyone who knew her"

**Lawrence Slade, former Chief Executive of Energy UK**, said:

"Audrey was simply a wonderful person. Both in the office and outside of it, she always had time for people, was always willing to help or volunteer, to be a friendly ear and a candid advisor. But most of all it was her shining personality, commitment to doing the right thing and ability to inject a sense of fun into life. She will be greatly missed."

Reproduced courtesy of Energy UK

In summer 2021 Francis Ahanonu joined Energy Action Scotland as our first ever Robertson Trust Intern. He came to help us with our communications, research, and policy work. He helped us, by questioning and challenging, to sharpen our social media and to frame some of our existing work. Francis's contribution to our work was incredibly valuable. This was more impressive as we were all working remotely and our opportunities to spend real time together were few and far between.



[Read Francis' full report here](#)

We are grateful of the support of the Robertson Trust for providing us with the opportunity. We are particularly grateful to Francis for an impressive piece of research which he has completed into health and fuel poverty. It is a stark but fascinating read. Over to you, Francis!

### Tell us a bit about yourself

I'm currently in my honours year (4th year) of my immunology degree at the University of Edinburgh. I was born in Nigeria, and I've grown up in England and Scotland. I'm a big fan of football fan and of most sports. Outside of study and work I enjoy cooking, going to festivals and trying out new experiences with friends.

### What was your road to joining EAS as an intern?

I am a Robertson Trust scholar and part of being a scholar entails doing an internship after finishing your 3rd year. So I let the Trust know what I might be interested in doing during summer and EAS was one of the companies that appealed to me. Once I had expressed interest I was offered an interview, online of course, along with 2 other candidates, and not too long afterwards I heard back from Frazer at Energy Action Scotland that he'd love for me to join the team as an intern.

### Did your internship change your understanding of fuel poverty and its effects?

The internship vastly shaped my view on fuel poverty. It's much more common than I had thought of in Scotland. It made me aware of what fuel poverty might look like as it may not solely mean not being able to afford gas or electric bills, there are many nuances to what fuel poverty is. The effects of fuel poverty can be detrimental to one's mental and physical health, but the exact relationship is still not completely known which, given the risks, is scary. The internship made me aware of the sad reality of how badly people are impacted by fuel poverty and how things might even get worse for households especially during a pandemic or with the rise of fuel prices.

### What is next for you in life?

Hopefully I'll get to finish my University work in May, and then I would want to take a bit of a break as being in education for so long can be very demanding. I would want to travel and discover different parts of the world while working part-time. After this I would want to find a full-time job that's fulfilling and purposeful just like that of the work done at Energy Action Scotland. But, if the last few years have taught us anything, you never know how things might turn out. It is far from predictable





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