



National Grid Transco



KEEPING SCOTLAND WARM

Manifesto to end Fuel Poverty in Scotland 2004

Energy Action Scotland (EAS) asked its members in summer 2004 to respond to a survey on fuel poverty in light of the *Fuel Poverty in Scotland: Scottish House Condition Survey 2002 follow-up report* published in April by Communities Scotland. The aim was to establish the views of those working in the fuel poverty field as to how to achieve the ambitious targets of a 30% reduction in fuel poverty by 2006, a further reduction by 2010, and the eradication of fuel poverty by 2016.

The Scottish House Condition Survey and the follow-up report found that the number of households in fuel poverty in Scotland had fallen from 738,000 (35%) in 1996 to 286,000 (13%) in 2002. The main factors causing fuel poverty are poor energy efficiency of the house, high price of domestic fuel and low disposable household income. The reports estimate that half the reduction was due to increases in household income; 35% was due to reduced fuel prices and 15% due to improved energy efficiency of housing.

Since the follow-up report was published, fuel prices have started to rise sharply; a trend which is widely expected to continue. The report stated that for every 5% rise in average annual fuel price, an estimated 30,000 more households would go into fuel poverty. The Scottish Executive's Central Heating Programme and Warm Deal scheme are due to be reviewed in the next financial year. With increases in income unlikely to keep pace with fuel price rises, improvements in the energy efficiency of homes will become all the more important.

EAS, as part of the Keeping Scotland Warm campaign, last published its manifesto for ending fuel poverty in 2002 – 2003 prior to the Scottish Parliamentary elections. Of the eleven recommendations made at that time, to date, two have been addressed with one other under consideration.

This document presents the updated recommendations for tackling fuel poverty, based on the views and experience of EAS members across Scotland. A summary of responses is also available. They will be presented to appropriate Ministers and Committees at the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Parliament and the UK Government.

The expectation of 60% of respondents is that the number of households living in fuel poverty will rise in the short to medium term. Fuel poverty proofing homes will therefore become more and more important if solutions are to be sustainable. Income maximisation is a key recommendation. Others include tackling hard to treat properties and widening the eligibility for heating and insulation grants. Choice of domestic fuel, tariffs and payment methods, as well as schemes to help the most vulnerable afford fuel bills, are also required. Coordination between social, environmental, housing and health policies is essential.

Key recommendations overleaf ...

Key Recommendations for Ending Fuel Poverty

Of the three main factors affecting fuel poverty, one (energy efficiency of the home) is a matter devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the other two (domestic fuel price and disposable household income) are matters reserved to the UK Government.

- need continuation of current grant schemes for heating, insulation and other energy efficiency measures but with wider eligibility, more measures, more funding and full grants for the over 60s
- need mechanisms, tools and indicators including the use of current scheme databases to identify the fuel poor and therefore to analyse, map, prioritise and plan future initiatives
- government, fuel companies (under their social obligations) and other agencies need to address the problem of people moving in/out of fuel poverty as circumstances change, whether personal or economic
- need homes to be as energy efficient as possible ie 'fuel poverty proof'
- more funding to carry out income maximisation assessments is essential and all energy efficiency schemes should include benefits checks, energy advice and information on the Priority Services Register and Fuel Direct
- funding is required for fuel switching eg from electricity to gas, wood pellets, solar water heating or a modern electric unit etc
- need funding for more measures for hard to treat properties eg small scale renewables, although not at the expense of existing measures
- need better communication with private landlords eg through registration schemes and give them incentives or set requirements for improving the energy efficiency of their properties
- need better coordination between social and environmental policies and avoidance of schemes competing to deliver broadly the same measures to the same client groups
- raise the general public awareness of schemes to tackle fuel poverty.

Keeping Scotland Warm is an initiative by Energy Action Scotland, National Grid Transco and UNISONScotland to bring the issue of fuel poverty before the Scottish Parliament

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