



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel meeting: 17 June 2021

Includes key decisions and actions arising from the virtual meeting.

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Present

Present

Christine Wheeler (Chair) Welsh Government Head of Climate Change and Fuel Poverty

Hywel Lloyd

Active Building Centre

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Joanna Seymour	Warm Wales
Ceri Cryer	Age Cymru
Chris Jones	Care and Repair Cymru
Karen Henwood	Cardiff University
Sam Hughes	Citizens Advice Bureau
Stuart Ropke	Community Housing Cymru
Alex Osborne	Disability Wales
Laura McGaide	Energy Savings Trust
Jack Wilkinson - Dix	Energy Saving Trust
Dr Rose Chard	Energy Systems Catapult
Melody Carraro	Energy UK
Sam Worrell	Gypsies & Travellers Wales
Andy Regan	Institute of Welsh Affairs
Rhian Hughes	Money and Pensions Services
Ben Saltmarsh	National Energy Action (NEA) Cymru
Peter Smith	National Energy Action
Tim Thomas	National Residential Landlords Association

Mike Anderson	Ofgem
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George Jones	Office of Older People's Commission for Wales
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Louise Woodfine	Public Health Wales
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Dr Steffan Evans	The Bevan Foundation
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Nigel Winnan	Wales & West Utilities
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Neville Rookes	Welsh Local Government Association
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Tracy Cullen	Western Power Distribution
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Welsh Government

Mark Alexander	Head of Domestic and Public Sector Energy Efficiency
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Nina Ley	Head of Domestic Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty
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Hayley Floyd	Delivery & Performance – Health
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Sarah King	Prosperous Futures
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Sarah Laing-Gibbens	Housing & Regeneration
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Abi Woodham	Knowledge and Analytical Services
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Gowan Watkins	Knowledge and Analytical Services
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Secretariat

Steve Chamberlain	Fuel Poverty Policy
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Sarah Paul	Fuel Poverty Policy
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Tudur Jones	Fuel Poverty Policy
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Matt Jenkins	Fuel Poverty Policy
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1. Apologies for non-attendance

1.1. Apologies for non-attendance were received and recorded on behalf of Sean O'Neill (Children in Wales), Jo Atkinson (Active Building Centre), Sophie Howe (Future Generations Commissioner) and Gethin While, (Welsh Government).

2. Introductions

2.1. On behalf of the Ministers for Climate Change and Social Justice, representatives were welcomed to the inaugural meeting of the Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel and invited to introduce themselves. Following on from introductions, the panel were reminded that the meeting will continue in listening mode until views are invited from the chair. The Chair provided a short overview of the purpose of the group in relation to the new Government's objectives to build an economy, which is stronger, greener and fairer. Supporting actions set out in the fuel poverty plan 2021-2035 will be integral to the new Programme for Government.

3. Terms of Reference (Paper FPAP/01/2021)

3.1. The Terms of Reference were circulated to panel members prior to the meeting. Comments had been received from members, suggesting points of clarification in relation to the role of the panel, specifically in relation to quality

assurance. It was suggested also the Terms of Reference should be amended to provide a scrutiny role for the panel.

3.2. The Welsh Government agreed to clarify wording within the Terms of Reference to clarify the role of the panel and reflect the points made by members. It was noted, however, the scrutiny of the Welsh Ministers in the exercise of their functions is a matter for the Senedd and its committees. Adding a “scrutiny” role to the Terms of Reference for the Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel may be perceived as an infringement of the Senedd’s functions.

4. Tackling Fuel Poverty 2021 - 2035: Action Plan

4.1. The Welsh Government gave a short presentation on action since the publication of the fuel poverty plan on 2 March. Work on developing interim targets to be incorporated into the plan has started. Progress on other actions are on the agenda. In discussion, points made by Panel members included:

- The future Warm Homes Programme should seek to install many more heat pumps and look at opportunities, for example around batteries
- Tackling fuel poverty is linked to action to decarbonise Welsh homes.
- An important and welcome addition to the plan is the goal to influence UK Government and GB organisations outside Wales on issues such as the Energy Company Obligation Scheme, targets for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and related policy matters.
- Fuel poverty is an extension of wider poverty issues and there is a need to co-ordinate action.
- The need to develop interim fuel poverty targets in accordance with Ministerial commitments.

4.2. It was noted the home energy efficiency measures to be included in the next iteration of the Warm Homes programme will be set out in the public consultation, which is expected to start by no later than the end of December 2021. The appointment of a Minister for Social Justice demonstrates the commitment to working across Government to tackle fuel poverty and climate change. The UK Government’s proposed public consultation on revisions to the

Energy Company Obligation scheme will provide an opportunity to influence the design of the new scheme. Members were encouraged to participate in the consultation. Other consultations were set out in the horizon scanning document circulated prior to the meeting.

5. Revised Fuel Poverty Projections and Dashboard

5.1. Abi Woodham was invited to give a short presentation about work to prepare revised projections of fuel poverty and the development of the fuel poverty dashboard. A short question and answer session followed. The Welsh Government confirmed:

- The impact of COVID 19 on levels of fuel poverty on households will be included in the assessment.
- Data available and published by the UK Government and Ofgem will be added to the dashboard to provide a clearer picture of activities in Wales.
- In the absence of a housing conditions survey, work is ongoing to identify and where possible utilise administrative data sources.
- Work is ongoing to develop an on line fuel poverty eligibility checker. It is hoped this will assist in the targeting of support for lower income households experiencing fuel poverty.

6. Draft Cold Weather Resilience Plan paper FPAP/02/2021

6.1. The fuel poverty plan 2021-2035 requires the Welsh Government to prepare, publish and keep under review a winter, or cold weather resilience plan. A draft document was circulated for comment prior to the meeting. The following points were noted.

- Care and Repair Cymru in partnership with Welsh Health Boards is facilitating engagement workshops to begin discussions over future plans of the 'Hospital to a Healthier Home (H2HH) service, a project identified in the draft plan.
- Whether Welsh Government should amend the name of the plan to better reflect the adverse weather patterns being experienced - excess deaths from excessive heat are increasing.
- The need to take a fabric first approach, tackling minor repairs are important actions and would benefit from further detail.
- A need to expand support for rural households and those off the gas grid
- Reflect on how organisations work in collaboration with health sector partners to support the implementation of NICE guidance.

6.2. The Welsh Government invited members with an interest to participate in a sub group to further develop the proposed plan and noted the Plan would not be fully in place for this winter.

Action 1: Secretariat to convene a sub group meeting to develop the cold weather resilience plan.

7. Face to Face (In-Home) Energy Advice Service Pilot

7.1. The pilot was commissioned at the end of 2020 and grant funding was awarded to a consortium led by Warm Wales in January. The purpose of the pilot is to inform proposals for delivering home energy efficiency advice and support services, tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable households and those disengaged from the domestic energy market. Warm Wales gave a short presentation about the pilot and the progress made since its launch in January. There followed a short question and answer session.

7.2. Members recognised delivering in home advice services during pandemic lockdown has created added complexity. Nonetheless, the evidence gathered through the pilot will prove useful. Many partner organisations have developed

alternative arrangements.

7.3. The Welsh Government confirmed an extension until the end of March 2022 is being considered to enable data for a full year to be gathered. Any additional funding will be subject to normal Welsh Government procedures. Current advice to households is provided on request from the Warm Homes Programme Nest Scheme. Acknowledging action is being taken to raise awareness of the service, the Welsh Government is keen to develop an advice and support model more tailored to meet individual needs.

8. Next iteration of Warm Homes Programme (WHP) paper FPAP/03/2021

8.1. A gap analysis paper in relation to the next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme was circulated to panel members prior to the meeting. Members were invited to identify any evidence additional evidence sources. Stephen Chamberlain was also invited to give an overview of the gap analysis, followed by a short question & answer session. The following points were made:

- Ensure decarbonisation targets are met in a fair way, ensuring all energy consumers are brought along together.
- There is concern over the balance of decarbonisation activity against the alleviation of fuel poverty and delivery of future targets.
- A quicker response to new technologies in the next WHP iteration is needed in order to meet net zero targets.
- Ensure fuel poor households are not left behind in the transition to smart technology.
- Wales needs more skilled and trained contractors and installers to enable delivery of low and zero carbon energy efficiency measures.

8.2. The Welsh Government is keen to find the right balance as the best decarbonisation approach may not be suitable for a low income household. Smart technology and skills will be considered as part of the consultation, which is intended to start not later than the end of December 2021. In the meantime,

members were encouraged to provide feedback on the eleven questions set out in the gap analysis report and share, if possible, known relevant skills/training programmes with Welsh Government.

Action 2: The panel was invited to share any evidence for the gap analysis to enable us to inform our own position with evidence.

9. Agenda Item 7: Welsh Housing Quality Standard – EPC Targets

9.1. Sarah Laing – Gibbens was invited to give a short presentation on the timeline and proposals for revisions to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) followed by short question and answer session.

9.2. WHQS sets the standard for social homes in Wales and has driven a significant improvement of social stock in Wales through a long term programme of investment. Members were keen to see EPC target improvements removed and instead focus on energy wealth. Also, the number and location of homes to be improved will continue to be an estimate until all homes in Wales are accurately assessed e.g. using the PAS 2035. Members also pointed out Registered Social Landlords are best placed to develop, deliver and manage the whole upgrade process, including funding, for all tenures and markets.

9.3. WHQS is a data driven approach and the new iteration will focus on a suite of requirements which balance energy efficiency requirements against decarbonisation requirements. The Optimised Retrofit Programme supports social landlords to understand how they will decarb stock and make it more energy efficient.

10. Concluding remarks: The next meeting is due to take place in September, date TBC. The Chair thanked Panel members and invited them to email the secretariat with suggestions for inclusion on the agenda. Members were also asked to confirm if they are happy for their contact details to be shared with other members to enable collaboration outside of the Panel forum.

11. **There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12:30.**

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