

Latest figures reveal too many Scottish homes still too cold, too damp

Existing Homes Alliance Scotland media release

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The latest Scottish House Condition Survey has again demonstrated the urgent need for a significant increase in funding for home energy efficiency, the Existing Homes Alliance has argued today. The figures [1] show that nearly 750,000 households are still in fuel poverty, almost one home in three, with 200,000 households in extreme fuel poverty.

The Alliance welcomes the fact that fuel poverty has reduced by 4%, but this small drop is partly related to lower fuel prices – which is at best a temporary situation. Improved energy efficiency has made a real difference, thanks to government investment, with rates of fuel poverty lowest in the most energy efficient properties. The Existing Homes Alliance [2] is urging Ministers to adopt the recommendation of the Fuel Poverty Strategic Working Group that all homes should be brought up to at least an EPC band C by 2025 [3]. These latest figures show that more than half of Scotland's housing stock is still below this minimum level, keeping fuel bills unnecessarily high and contributing to ill health and early deaths.

Lori McElroy, chair of the Existing Homes Alliance, said:

"We know investment in existing energy efficiency programmes is working, but progress is still too slow, and the thousands of people still living in fuel poverty can't afford to wait. Each year these figures remind us how much work is still to be done before every household in Scotland lives in a warm, dry and healthy home that they can afford to heat. Important as good standards are for new properties, we need a substantial commitment to energy efficiency as a true national infrastructure priority to make sure we are not still having this debate in ten years' time. It simply cannot be acceptable for almost a third of households still to be struggling to pay fuel bills and heat their homes in a country as rich as Scotland."

Mary Taylor, Chief Executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, said:

"The housing association sector already works with the kind of minimum standards we believe should apply to all Scotland's homes, and as a result our tenants already benefit from the kind of well-insulated homes that everyone in Scotland should be living in. Unlike many other problems we face as a society, we know what the answer is here, and we know how rapidly energy efficiency pays for itself, both for householders and for the wider economy. Let's work together and get the job done."

Lori McElroy, chair of the Existing Homes Alliance, continued:

"This is the year by which the Scottish Government was legally required to eliminate fuel poverty, and we know Ministers are as disappointed as we are that that target was not met, despite some progress, as these figures show all too clearly."

"Many of the pieces are already in place for a renewed focus on fuel poverty and home energy efficiency. We know next year a new fuel poverty strategy will be published, which must set an ambitious but achievable target for ending fuel poverty in Scotland. With sufficient investment the Scottish Government can help ensure that all homes in this country are up to at least the standard set by EPC Band C, and that fuel poverty becomes a thing of the past in this country."

[1] The Scottish House Condition Survey Key Findings 2015 are here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511081.pdf>

[2] More information on the Alliance is available here:

<http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/>

[3] See recommendation 25 on energy performance, on page 43. "The SEEP [Scottish Energy Efficiency Programme] Programme should include a milestone towards achieving this anti-fuel poverty aim [the elimination of poor energy performance of a property as a driver of fuel poverty throughout Scotland], with all properties of fuel poor households upgraded to at least an EPC band C by 2025 with five-yearly targets set for progress towards EPC band B thereafter."

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00508195.pdf>