

Warm Homes Bill briefing series - Autumn 2017

This is one of a series of briefings proposing measures for inclusion in the forthcoming Warm Homes Bill. We wish to ensure the Bill addresses barriers and creates opportunities to bring low-carbon and affordable warmth to all households in Scotland.

Legislative proposals – Local authority duty

The Warm Homes Bill should place duties on local authorities to develop and implement Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies.

Rationale

The Scottish Government is currently considering responses to a *high-level policy scoping consultation* on Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES). This includes a proposal to place a duty on local authorities to develop and deliver a LHEES in consultation and coordination with local partners.¹

LHEES are proposed as an integral part of the Scottish Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) which in turn is the vehicle being designed to deliver the Scottish Government's National Infrastructure Priority on energy efficiency (NIP). SEEP itself will cover domestic and non-domestic buildings and is intended to be delivered through a combination of locally-led area-based programmes and national programmes as appropriate.

The NIP was announced in 2015 and its delivery through SEEP is due to be launched in 2018, following significant piloting of potential approaches, and to run for 15 to 20 years. As LHEES will include the coordination of activities on energy performance in homes its functions also overlap with fuel poverty policy. A new Fuel Poverty Strategy is expected to be consulted upon this autumn.

We welcome the LHEES proposals and their alignment and integration with the aims of the draft Climate Change Plan, Energy Strategy and SEEP. The proposals outline an integrated approach across the policy areas of fuel poverty, climate change and economic development.

We believe the proposed alignment of local (LHEES) and national (SEEP) energy efficiency targets with the requirements of the Fuel Poverty Strategy would help deliver the coordinated approach required across economic, social and environmental aspects of energy policy and is to be applauded. We feel local authorities are well placed to coordinate the local delivery of LHEES, building upon their experiences in developing and delivering Area-Based Home Energy Efficiency Schemes and Local Housing Strategies.

However, the Alliance is concerned about the timescales for the roll out of LHEES as it is unclear when duties would be put into legislation and implemented. Any delay to the development and implementation of LHEES will have an adverse impact on planning and coordinating the locally-led

¹ Scottish Government, *Consultation on Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategies, and Regulation of District Heating (Jan. 2017)* <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/01/9139>

elements of SEEP. It would also inhibit the roll out of local elements of the new Fuel Poverty Strategy, both of which should launch in 2018.

As such we believe that, while various elements of LHEES are still to be agreed, high-level duties on local authorities to develop and deliver them must be established with some urgency. Following the establishment of such duties statutory guidance can be developed and informed by the outcomes of the pilots. The Warm Homes Bill provides the opportunity to establish these duties during this parliamentary year. Alternatively, another legislative vehicle needs to be developed and implemented within a similar timescale so that the urgent work of SEEP and the Fuel Poverty Strategy are not hindered by slow progress of LHEES.

Details

We are aware that there are various details to be worked out in relation to LHEES surrounding resourcing, national guidance and support, reporting frameworks, governance and oversight. There is also an ongoing pilot phase which will inform its development.

However, the Alliance is clear that there are several high-level duties which can be agreed and established now and required through the Warm Homes Bill.

These include:

- All local authorities will, individually or in collaboration with other local authorities, develop and implement a LHEES by an agreed date.
- LHEES will be developed and delivered after consultation and in partnership with a range of relevant partners.
- LHEES will be aligned to targets and timeframes set by the Fuel Poverty Strategy, SEEP, the Climate Change Plan and the Energy Strategy.
- A standardised reporting framework will be developed for local authorities which will include, but not be limited to impacts on fuel poverty, carbon emissions and energy demand.
- Local authorities will regularly monitor and report on the performance of each LHEES against this framework and review their strategies as required.

Further information:

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ExHA is a coalition of housing, environmental, fuel poverty and industry organisations calling for urgent action to transform Scotland's existing housing stock.